

Irma S. Rombauer



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Irma Starkloff Rombauer (30 October 1877 - 14 October 1962) was the author of *The Joy of Cooking*. It is one of the world's most-published cookbooks, having been in print continuously since 1936. She graduated from the all-girls preparatory school [Mary Institute](#) in 1901 and later attended [Washington University](#) in St. Louis. Rombauer privately published the *The Joy of Cooking* in 1931 in [St. Louis, Missouri](#). It was illustrated by her daughter [Marion Rombauer Becker](#), also a graduate of Mary Institute (1931) and at the time an art teacher at local private school [John Burroughs School](#). The Rombauers self-published early editions of the book; it was picked up by a commercial printing house, the [Bobbs-Merrill Company](#), in 1936.

In 1998, Irma Rombauer was inducted into the [St. Louis Walk of Fame](#).

External links

- [Biography by Rombauer's daughter](#). Part of a series of Notable American Unitarian biographies



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The Joy of Cooking

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This article is about the cookbook. For the folk-rock band, see [Joy of Cooking \(band\)](#).

The Joy of Cooking

THE ALL-PURPOSE COOKBOOK

joy
OF
COOKING
The American Household Classic
Newly Revised and Expanded
With Over 4500 Recipes
and 1000 Informative Illustrations

by IRMA S. ROMBAUER and
MARION ROMBAUER BECKER



Cover of 1975 edition

Author	Irma S. Rombauer
Genre(s)	Cookbook
<u>Publisher</u>	Bobbs-Merrill Company , Simon and Schuster
Publication date	1931
<u>ISBN</u>	0-02-604570-2
<u>OCLC Number</u>	1444322

The Joy of Cooking is one of the United States' most-published [cookbooks](#), having been in print continuously since 1936 and with more than 18 million copies sold. It was privately published in 1931 by [Irma S. Rombauer](#), a homemaker in [St. Louis, Missouri](#), who was struggling emotionally and financially after her husband's suicide the previous year. Rombauer had 3,000 copies printed by A.C. Clayton, a company which had printed labels for fancy St. Louis shoe companies and for [Listerine](#), but never a book. In 1936, the book was picked up by a commercial printing house, the [Bobbs-Merrill Company](#). *Joy* is the backbone of many home cooks' libraries and is commonly found in commercial kitchens as well.

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First Edition (1931)

In 1931, Rombauer, a recent widow needing a way to support her family, self-published "The Joy of Cooking: A Compilation of Reliable Recipes with a Casual Culinary Chat."

The book was illustrated by Rombauer's daughter, [Marion Rombauer Becker](#), who directed the art department at [John Burroughs School](#). Working on weekends during the winter of 1930-31, Marion designed [the cover](#), which depicted [St. Martha of Bethany](#), the [patron saint](#) of cooking, slaying a dragon. She also produced silhouette cutouts to illustrate chapter headings.^[1]

Much slimmer and more conversational than later editions, the original [Depression](#)-era edition included sections on canning, pickling, and instructions on how to use meats such as [squirrel](#), [opossum](#) and [raccoon](#).

1962-1964 Editions



 Well-worn copies of the book from the library of [Julia Child](#) on display at the [National Museum of American History](#)

In 1962, a revised edition of *Joy* was published, the first since Irma Rombauer's death. This edition was released without Marion Becker's consent. Subsequent releases of the book in 1963 and 1964 were essentially massive corrections, and Becker was known to swap copies of the 1962 edition for later corrected versions ^{[[citation needed](#)]}.

This edition was published in paperback format (most notably, a two-volume [mass market paperback](#) edition) . It is still widely available in used bookstores. The 1964 edition was also released as a single-volume comb-ring bound paperback mass-market edition starting in November 1973 and continuing into the early 1990s ([ISBN 0-452-25665-8](#)).

1975 Edition

The 1975 edition was the last to be edited by Becker, and remains the most popular. More than 1,000 pages long, it became a staple in kitchens throughout the country. Though many of the sections may feel dated to the contemporary American palate, many home chefs still find it a useful reference and it is still widely consulted. The foreword to this edition explains that Becker's favorite recipes include "[Cockaigne](#)" in the name, (e.g., "Fruit Cake Cockaigne"), after the name of her country home in Anderson Township, near Cincinnati, Ohio. ^{[[21](#)]}

The 1975 edition remained in print, primarily in various inexpensive [paperback](#) editions, until the 75th Anniversary edition arrived in 2006.

1997 Edition

After the 1975 edition, the project lay unchanged for about 20 years. In the mid-1990s, publisher [Simon and Schuster](#), which owns the *Joy* copyrights, hired influential cookbook editor Maria Guarnaschelli, formerly of Willam Morrow, and editor of works by [Jeff Smith](#) and others. Guarnaschelli, under the supervision of Rombauer's grandson [Ethan Becker](#), oversaw the creation of the controversial 1997 edition. The new edition kept the concise style of its predecessors, but dropped the conversational first-person narration. Much of the book was ghostwritten by teams of expert chefs instead of the single dedicated amateur that Irma Rombauer had been when she created the book. The 1997 version is fairly comprehensive, covering a great deal of detail that is not traditionally part of^{[[citation needed](#)]} American cooking; however, it deleted much information about ingredients and frozen desserts.

Originally sold with the title *The All-New, All-Purpose Joy of Cooking*, it was reissued in February 2008 with the title *The 1997 Joy of Cooking* after being sold for some time alongside the 2006 edition.

75th Anniversary Edition

In 2006, a 75th Anniversary edition was published, containing 4,500 recipes and returning Rombauer's original voice to the book. The new version removes some of the professionalism of the 1997 edition and returns many simpler recipes and recipes assisted by ready-made products such as [cream of mushroom soup](#) and store-bought wontons. The 2006 edition also reinstates the cocktail section and the frozen desserts section, and restores much of the information that was deleted in the 1997 edition.

The new version includes a new index section called "Joy Classics" that contains 35 recipes from 1931-1975 and a new nutrition section.

Other Special Editions and Printings

In 1995, a hardbound edition illustrated by Ginnie Hofmann and Ikki Matsumoto was briefly released.

In 1998, a reproduction, described as "a perfect facsimile of that original 1931 edition," was released.

References

- [^] ["IRMA ROMBAUER: THE JOY OF COOKING, 1877-1962". <http://harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians/rombauer.html>. Retrieved 2007-12-18.](#)
- [^] See articles in the Cincinnati Enquirer, October 25, 2006, and on the CBS News website, November 1, 2006.^[1]

Further reading

- Mendelson, Anne. *Stand Facing The Stove: The Story Of The Women Who Gave America The Joy Of Cooking*. Scribner, 1996.

External links

- [The Online Home of the Joy of Cooking](#)
- [Publication history](#)
- [Biography by Author Irma Rombauer's daughter](#). Part of a series of Notable American Unitarian biographies

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Joy_of_Cooking

<http://www.thejoykitchen.com/>