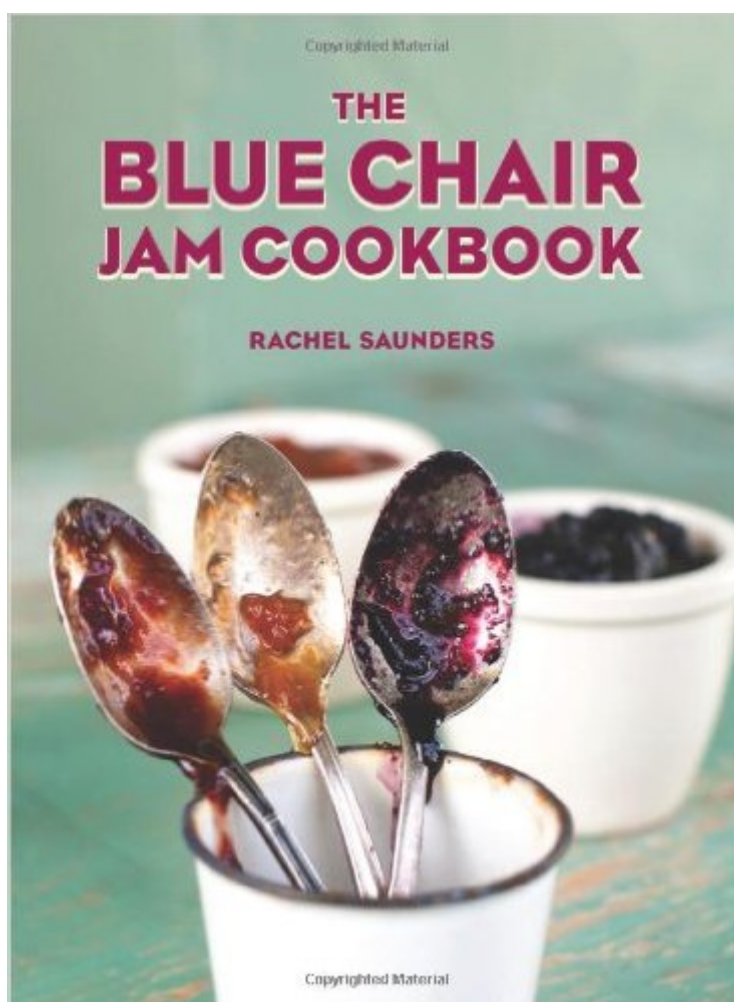


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The Blue Chair Jam Cookbook



Synopsis

Not your grandma's jam book, Blue Chair Fruit: Jam, Jelly & Marmalade is the definitive jam book of the 21st century approaching the nostalgic preserving kitchen with a modern sustainable eye. Author Rachel Saunders is the owner of the Bay Area's artisanal jam producer, Blue Chair Fruit. Rachel Saunders's The Blue Chair Jam Cookbook is the definitive jam and marmalade cookbook of the 21st century. In addition to offering more than 100 original jam, jelly, and marmalade recipes, master jam artisan Rachel Saunders shares all of her technical preserving knowledge, as well as her unique jam maker's perspective on fruit. Rachel combines nostalgia with a modern, sustainable approach to creating fresh and vividly flavored preserves. The recipes are divided into chapters based on the seasons, and each chapter is organized by month and type of fruit. Sample recipes include Strawberry-Marsala Jam with Rosemary, Italian Lemon Marmalade, and Early Girl Tomato Jam. More than 100 stunning photographs by Sara Remington illustrate each part of the preserving process--from the different stages of cooking to testing for doneness to the final canning stage. Each recipe includes an approximate yield and a suggested shelf life, in addition to details on recommended equipment, including Rachel's beloved copper jam pot. The Blue Chair Jam Cookbook gives all measurements by weight rather than volume, making it the most exact and reliable American jam book on the market. More than 20 recipe variations are provided, along with detailed information about common and rare fruits, hybrid varieties, and flavor combinations. Nothing is left to chance or overlooked; Rachel explains every aspect of jam and marmalade making in step-by-step detail. The Blue Chair Jam Cookbook is a one-of-a-kind, must-have resource for home and professional cooks alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I haven't made jam for over 20 years, back when it was very difficult to find interesting pectin-free recipes, but when I saw this book, I knew I had to have it. While I can get Blue Chair jam locally (like the author, I live in the San Francisco Bay Area), the price makes me hesitate to throw a jar into my grocery cart, even though I'm well aware of how much labor goes into that little jar, and as much as I *love* Rachel's fig jam with ginger. I was initially put off by all the full-page photographs of the author looking fey in her jammy wonderland--Rachel with vintage accessories, Rachel wandering through a misty orchard, Rachel caressing airbrushed fruit--I would have preferred, say, a photograph detailing how to skin a green almond. It's a gorgeous book and I wondered if its target audience was the folks who like to lie in bed and look at the pictures in cookbooks, but actually eat takeout much of the time. My first recipe (strawberry-Meyer lemon marmalade) was a qualified success. The recipe specified covering lemon slices in a "medium" saucepan with one inch of water, but I think I used too large a pan, and ended up with too much water to cook off. I also couldn't get the hang of Rachel's method of testing when the jam is done, which involves putting a specific number of spoons in the freezer, and checking the texture of the jam as it sets up on a cold spoon. I omitted the rose geranium cuttings (there's a limit to the produce I can come up with, even in the Bay Area). It was a very good marmalade, but a little tight in texture, as I'd overcooked it a bit. For my second recipe (strawberry-kiwi jam), I went back to my tried-and-true method of testing the jam on a saucer in the fridge. Rachel's description of when the jam is done was spot-on.

I'm giving this book three stars because I can't do what I'd really like to, which is to give it both five stars and one star at the same time. It is a beautiful, well-written yet disempowering, inspiring and infuriating collection of recipes and information. Full-page photographs occupy nearly every other leaf of this massive volume; open it anywhere and you're almost certain to be assaulted by an intoxicating obscenity of color and texture that will tweak your salivary glands into involuntary action. Less attractively, The Blue Chair never stops working very, very hard to sell you a particular fantasy lifestyle. In this respect it's evocative of early Martha Stewart, because the author herself is packaged in a panoply of pretty poses along with the fruit spreads. She appears over and over again -- picking fruit, holding fruit, cutting and stirring fruit. Always her clothing is impeccably matched to the fruit she is picking or the blossoms she is snipping. Always her hair is perfectly coiffed. Never is there a hint of effort or haste or disarray. These images are so brazenly fantastic

that I can't help feeling manipulated. But perhaps I'm just in a sour mood? After all, isn't there a place for fantasy? Must I ascribe such dark motives? Might it all have been meant in good fun? Maybe. But what most seriously damages this book for me is the sheer impracticality, often bordering on impossibility, of so many of the recipes. The author runs her jam company in an affluent city, in one of the best areas of the country for fruit growers. It makes perfect sense for her to base her company there and to make the best of the amazing ingredients she has access to, but she does not seem aware of how fortunate she is to have such resources.

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