Oxford Companion one of 20 best cookbooks!

8 Nov 2007 by JR

The James Beard Awards are hugely influential in the US. Everyone in food and drink even nominated for 'a Beard' makes a big fuss about it. That's why I'm so thrilled that our Oxford Companion to Wine

is the only drinks book to appear in the James Beard Book Awards Committee's 20 Essential Books to Build Your Culinary Library just announced to acknowledge the 20th anniversary of the James Beard Foundation

and the publication of a new edition of James Beard's classic cookbook *Beard on Food*. It looks as though Rick Stein and I are the only authors never resident in the US to have made it on to the list. We're both 1971 Oxford graduates made CBEs in 2003 and regularly fattened up together by Bill Baker of Reid Wines outside Bristol. (Wonder how many of the titles below he has on his shelves?)

Here's what the committee has to say about the list: "The James Beard Foundation Book Awards Committee has compiled a list of 20 essential cookbooks. The collection, which was limited to books currently in print, can serve as the core of any cook's library, whether the person is new to the kitchen or an experienced cook.

"Of the hundreds of excellent culinary books published every year, only a few speak to the cook in a certain way. While some books say "delicious," some say "beautiful" or "inspirational," it is the rare book that says "you can depend on me." The James Beard Foundation Book Awards Committee's selections provide a wealth of practical information including ingredient selection, equipment use, proper cooking techniques, recipe ideas, menu planning and wine pairing. They also provide inspiration, advice, and a shared sense of joy in the craft of cooking. All of the books were written by established authorities in their fields whose work continues to be valid and useful year after year

"'We tried to make the list both broad and deep by including various types of cooking, major international cuisines, and reference," says Kathleen Purvis, Chair of the James Beard Foundation Book Awards Committee. "We've included several general cookbooks, too, which could be considered 'the core of the core.' That group of books contains answers and inspiration for just about any cook, any day, in any kitchen."

"While the selections are subjective, the list is the product of the opinions of seasoned culinary publishing professionals with over 250 years of experience combined. The James Beard Foundation Books Awards Committee members have been writing, editing, reviewing, buying, and selling cookbooks for decades across the country.

The James Beard Book Awards Committee's 20 Essential Books to Build Your Culinary Library:

American Cookery (BBS Publishing Corporation, 1996), James Beard

Authentic Mexican: Regional Cooking from the Heart of Mexico (William Morrow Cookbooks, 2007), Rick Bayless

Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook (Better Homes and Gardens, 2004)

Classic Indian Cooking (William Morrow Cookbooks, 1980), Julie Sahni

Complete Techniques (Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2001), Jacques Pépin and Léon Perer

Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking (Macmillan, 1995), Marcella Hazan

How to Cook Everything: Simple Recipes for Great Food (Wiley, 2006), Mark Bittman

The Joy of Cooking (Scribner, 2006), Irma S Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker

The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion: The All-Purpose Baking Cookbook (Countryman Press, 2003)

Maida Heatter's Book of Great Desserts (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1999), Maida Heatter

Martha Stewart's Hors d'Oeuvres Handbook (Clarkson Potter, 1999), Martha Stewart

Mastering the Art of French Cooking Volume One (Knopf, 2001), Julia Child, Louisette Bertholle, and Simone Beck

The Modern Art of Chinese Cooking: Techniques and Recipes (William Morrow Cookbooks, 1996) Barbara Tropp

The New Food Lover's Companion (Barron's Educational Series, 2007), Sharon Tyler Herbst

***The Oxford Companion to Wine* (Oxford University Press, 2nd edn 2006), Jancis Robinson**

Rick Stein's Complete Seafood (Ten Speed Press, 2004), Rick Stein

The Silver Palate Cookbook (Workman Publishing Company, 2007), Sheila Lukins and Julie Rosso

The Thrill of the Grill: Techniques, Recipes, and Down-Home Barbecue (William Morrow Cookbooks, 2002) Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby

Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone (Broadway, 2007), Deborah Madison

The Way to Cook (Knopf, 1993), Julia Child

The list was chosen by committee members Pat Adrian, formerly editor-in-chief of *The Good Cook*, a division of Bookspan; Pat Brown, former editor of *Bon Appetit* and *Cuisine* magazine; Lee Svitak Dean, food editor of the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*; Doralece Lipoli Dullaghan, director of strategic partnerships for Sur La Table; Jan Turner Hazard, former food editor of *Ladies Home Journal*; Martha Holmberg, food editor of *The Oregonian*; Kathleen Purvis, food editor of *The Charlotte Observer*; Irene Sax, food writing instructor for New York University and a reviewer for *The New York Daily News* and *Epicurious*; Nach Waxman, owner of Kitchen Arts & Letters; and Rita Wolfson, former editor with Doubleday & Co.

The James Beard Foundation is dedicated to "celebrating, preserving, and nurturing America's culinary heritage and diversity in order to elevate the appreciation of our culinary excellence. A cookbook author and teacher with an encyclopedic knowledge about food, James Beard, who died in 1985, was a champion of American cuisine. He helped educate and mentor generations of professional chefs and food enthusiasts. Today, the Beard Foundation continues in the same spirit by administering a number of diverse programs that include educational initiatives, food industry awards, scholarships to culinary schools, and publications, and by maintaining the historic James Beard House in New York City's Greenwich Village as a "performance space" for visiting chefs. For more information, see www.jamesbeard.org