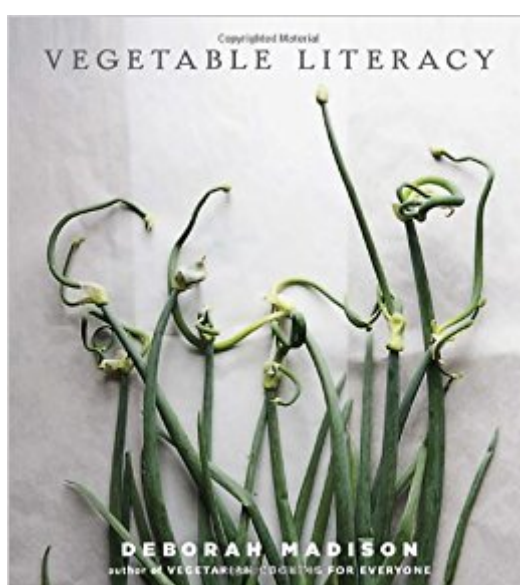


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# Vegetable Literacy: Cooking And Gardening With Twelve Families From The Edible Plant Kingdom, With Over 300 Deliciously Simple Recipes



## Synopsis

In her latest cookbook, Deborah Madison, America's leading authority on vegetarian cooking and author of *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*, reveals the surprising relationships between vegetables, edible flowers, and herbs within the same botanical families, and how understanding these connections can help home cooks see everyday vegetables in new light. For over three decades, Deborah Madison has been at the vanguard of the vegetarian cooking movement, authoring classic books on the subject and emboldening millions of readers to cook simple, elegant, plant-based food. This groundbreaking new cookbook is Madison's crowning achievement: a celebration of the diversity of the plant kingdom, and an exploration of the fascinating relationships between vegetables, edible flowers, herbs, and familiar wild plants within the same botanical families. Destined to become the new standard reference for cooking vegetables, *Vegetable Literacy* shows cooks that, because of their shared characteristics, vegetables within the same family can be used interchangeably in cooking. It presents an entirely new way of looking at vegetables, drawing on Madison's deep knowledge of cooking, gardening, and botany. For example, knowing that dill, chervil, cumin, parsley, coriander, anise, lovage, and caraway come from the umbellifer family makes it clear why they're such good matches for carrots, also a member of that family. With more than 300 classic and exquisitely simple recipes, Madison brings this wealth of information together in dishes that highlight a world of complementary flavors. Griddled Artichokes with Tarragon Mayonnaise, Tomato Soup and Cilantro with Black Quinoa, Tuscan Kale Salad with Slivered Brussels Sprouts and Sesame Dressing, Kohlrabi Slaw with Frizzy Mustard Greens, and Fresh Peas with Sage on Baked Ricotta showcase combinations that are simultaneously familiar and revelatory. Inspiring improvisation in the kitchen and curiosity in the garden, *Vegetable Literacy* is an unparalleled look at culinary vegetables and plants that will forever change the way we eat and cook.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Featured Recipe from Vegetable Literacy: Ivory Carrot Soup with a Fine Dice of Orange Carrots

Serves 4-6 Ingredients 1 tablespoon butter 1 tablespoon olive oil 1 onion, thinly sliced 1 pound white carrots, scrubbed and thinly sliced 1 tablespoon raw white rice Sea salt 1/2 teaspoon sugar 1 thyme sprig 4 cups water or light chicken stock Few tablespoons finely diced orange carrots and/or other colored carrots Freshly ground pepper About 1 tablespoon minced fine green carrot tops

Directions Warm the butter and oil in a soup pot and add the onion, white carrots, rice, 1 teaspoon salt, and the sugar and thyme. Cook over medium heat for several minutes, turning everything occasionally. Add 1 cup of the water, cover, turn down the heat, and cook while you heat the remaining 3 cups water. When the water is hot, add it to the pot, cover, and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. While the soup is cooking, cook the diced carrots in salted boiling water for about 3 minutes and then drain. When ready, let cool slightly, then remove and discard the thyme sprig. Puree the soup until smooth in a blender. Taste for salt and season with the pepper. Reheat if it has cooled. Ladle the soup into bowls, scatter the diced carrots and carrot tops over each serving, and serve.

Featured Recipe from Vegetable Literacy: Peas with Baked Ricotta and Bread Crumbs Serves 2 Ingredients Olive oil 1 cup high-quality ricotta cheese, such as hand-dipped full-fat ricotta 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh bread crumbs 4 teaspoons butter 2 large shallots or 1/2 small onion, finely diced (about 1/3 cup) 5 small sage leaves, minced (about 1 1/2 teaspoons) 1 1/2 pounds pod peas, shucked (about 1 cup) Grated zest of 1 lemon Sea salt and freshly ground pepper Chunk of Parmesan cheese, for grating Directions Heat the oven to 375° F. Lightly oil a small baking dish; a round Spanish earthenware dish about 6 inches across is perfect for this amount. If your ricotta is wet and milky, drain it first by putting it in a colander and pressing out the excess liquid. Pack the ricotta into the dish, drizzle a little olive oil over the surface, and bake 20 minutes or until the cheese has begun to set and brown on top. Cover the surface with the bread crumbs and continue to bake until the bread crumbs are browned and crisp, another 10 minutes. (The amount of time it takes for ricotta cheese to bake until set can vary tremendously, so it may well take longer than the times given here, especially if it wasn't drained.) When the

cheese is finished baking, heat the butter in a small skillet over medium heat. When the butter foams, add the shallots and sage and cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Add the peas, 1/2 cup water, and the lemon zest. Simmer until the peas are bright green and tender; the time will vary, but it should be 3 to 5 minutes. Whatever you do, don't let them turn gray. Season with salt and a little freshly ground pepper, not too much. Divide the ricotta between 2 plates. Spoon the peas over the cheese. Grate some Parmesan over all and enjoy while warm. With Pasta: Cook 1 cup or so pasta shells in boiling, salted water. Drain and toss them with the peas, cooked as above, and then with the ricotta. The peas nestle in the pasta, like little green pearls.

**\*Starred Review\*** Committed vegetarians will cheer over another book from the hands of Madison. One of the nation's best-known vegetarian cooks, Madison has practiced her craft both at Alice Waters's Chez Panisse and her own restaurant. Comprehensive and exhaustive, this new cookbook surveys the world of edible plant products in rigorous scientific groupings. Both text and color photographs educate readers to discover correlations and kinships and to explore how recipes adapt to encompass related ingredients. All of the nightshade family—eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes, and peppers—appear together. A sandwich of spinach, caramelized onions, and roasted peppers neighbors a sort of casserole assembled from little-known quelites (lamb's quarters) and mushrooms layered with corn tortillas. Madison introduces even more curious vegetables, such as fourwing saltbush. Although most recipes fall into the vegan category, there are plenty of dairy products and eggs to broaden recipes' appeal. Madison herself confesses partiality to tomatoes baked in cream. A necessary addition for both reference and circulating collections. --Mark Knoblauch

If you have created a vegetable garden, and worked it even just one year or worked it more years than you care to count, you will be hooked on this book by the second page of the introduction. It contains a wealth of information; so much information, that you should not wait for your local library to get a copy: You need it NOW, and you will refer to it way too often to have to rely on the library's copy. If you are considering putting in your first vegetable garden, or if you often buy from a farmers' market or a local produce stand, you need to order this book, too. You will love it and, not only will you cook its recipes; you will be able to create your own favorites from all the tips included. If you buy your produce from the grocery store, you will find a lot of great recipes and a lot of information on unfamiliar edible plants, grains, grasses, herbs, beans and vegetables. But (I'd roughly estimate that) a fifth of the information provided will not be of value to the grocery-store-buyer, since the book

provides information on varieties available and how to make use of all parts of the plant: From seedlings that you weed out, to leaf tops of edible roots, to roots of edible tops, to bolted stems and flowers, etc. In other words, parts of the plant that grocery-store-buyers don't often see. But, I'd bet good money that anyone who reads this book and doesn't have a garden, will be hurriedly searching for a sunny piece of earth in which to pitch a shovel! I won't go into the great information that you can find by reading this product page on . Definitely take advantage of the "Look Inside" feature. And definitely take a look at Deborah Madison's other published books. I find it a waste of space to list chapters and covered topics and ingredients in a review when it's all there in the "Look Inside". Deborah Madison has been writing quality cook books for ages. It was her book *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone* that helped me convince the men in my family that they were not going to die if there wasn't meat on the dinner plate (that was back in the 1990s). But the point I'm trying to make is this: Madison has vast experience with veggies, grains, grasses, herbs, and beans. She has the necessary expertise, writing style and refined taste buds to put together a valuable and worthwhile cook book. What may not be obvious by browsing through the Contents and Index pages:--Besides the main star ingredient, other ingredients that flavor the recipes are not hard to locate. They are not necessarily limited to everyday ingredients with which we are all familiar: For instance, if you don't already know ghee and miso paste, you will be introduced to it in some of these recipes.--For most of the plants, you will find what I call a "food thesaurus" listing or section; "good companions" is what Madison calls them. You will have to remember those "companions" yourself, because they are not listed in the index.--You won't find recipes where the featured vegetable is NOT the primary flavor. In other words, you won't find chicken, salmon, sausage recipes with accompanying veggies and herbs or sauces made of the highlighted veggie or herb. You might find fish and meats mentioned in the "Good Companions" listed, but, again, you won't find them listed in the index.--This is not a vegan book: There are eggs, butter, cream and such. Actually, there are some very nice egg recipes. We've tried the egg salad with tarragon (I used Mexican tarragon, because that's what grows in my Southern garden and eggs from our own hens.)--This is NOT a how-to-garden book. Although it does list some seed recommendations.--This is NOT a book that is slanted towards where Madison lives and gardens in New Mexico. Meaning, you will not find information that is inappropriate for your area. (I think that is a great accomplishment on Madison's part: That she was able to make the book very personable, but still refrain from giving us information--stated as fact--that is unsuitable or different for the various parts of the U.S. (For instance, I must plant my summer squash and tomatoes in early March. My zukes are finished in June and my tomatoes are over in July. Your tomatoes may last

until the first frost.) It is a pet peeve of mine that so many vegetable gardening cookbooks assume I have tomatoes in August...--Cooking techniques are explained. And many, many techniques are employed: Steaming, sauteing, roasting, baking, grilling, braising and pressure cooking. If there are recipes for breaded and fried veggies, I don't remember seeing them. (Thank you for that!!!)--There are so many fantastic and helpful tips: How about this one? The extra-long stem on an artichoke is meant to be used: Peel, slice, drop in acidulated water, then braise, saute, or toss them into a soup.-- The simplicity of the recipes that forces the focus onto a specific vegetable, sort of reminds me of *Tender: A Cook and His Vegetable Patch* by Nigel Slater. But I like this book a whole lot better because it is definitely slanted towards American ways, names, places, available ingredients, available seeds and measurements\*\*\*. (Slater's book, while it is filled with wonderful recipes and ideas, is slanted towards a British audience.)--\*\*\*There is an adequate conversion chart of measurements at the very end of the book. Being on the last page, it is very easy to flip to. (It's a bit hard to read: Green ink and not a large type point size.)--Unlike the two books by Lawson, this book does NOT have many photographs, as it is meant to be a wealth of information, not just pretty pictures to look at. (I think it could have used some more pictures, though. But then the book would have weighed a ton.) It is definitely not a coffee table book.--There are many soup recipes--and that is important in our family. There are all kinds of salads, side dishes, and main dishes. Best of all: I'm very happy to see there are hardly any pasta recipes. They seem to be a dime a dozen these days...--We've become fans of quite a lot of Asian greens lately--they do so well in our gardens; and of course some are mentioned in this book--bok choy and Chinese broccoli and perilla (shiso) to mention a few, but I will still be referring to my favorite Asian cook books (and the Kitazawa Seed catalog) for most of them.I've only had this book a short few days, but we've already sampled several recipes. We cook from our garden, so I was kind of limited in the recipes I could choose from--it being mid-March in the Coastal Plains of Texas. But follows is a list of what I created so far, and the recipes have worked and so have the flavor combinations: Grilled Onions with Cinnamon Butter (using the first of the 1015 Texas Onions from down in the Valley); Braised Parsley Root (with the last from the garden--had to get them out to make room for two very special cherry tomatoes, both originating from further down south); Chard Soup with Cumin, Cilantro and Lime; and to use up two lonely rutabagas, I combined ideas from the Winter Stew of Braised Rutabagas Carrots, Potatoes and Parsley, and Rutabaga Soup with Gorgonzola Toasts.I'm really looking forward to trying almost all the recipes in this book. And, much to my delight, we've got quite a few of those mentioned in this book already planted in our garden.

Some of my favorite cookbooks are not those that the newest or most interesting recipes, but those that make me think differently about a whole class or category of food (think James Peterson's *Sauces: Classical and Contemporary Sauce Making* or Diane Morgan's *Roots: The Definitive Compendium with more than 225 Recipes*). *Vegetable Literacy* does just that. Deborah Madison translates her years of experience with vegetarian cooking into a beautiful homage to vegetables. One of the key premises of this book is that understanding the relationships between vegetables may influence the way you think about and use them. For example, the Knotweed family includes buckwheat, sorrel, and rhubarb. Knowing the relationship between these ingredients may inform your use of them. Thus, you may choose to add rhubarb to buckwheat muffins, knowing that the two share a phylogenetic family and thus have a natural affinity. *Vegetable Literacy* is organized by vegetable family. Each member of the family is described in detail, with great information about appearance, history, and nutrients. The entry also includes excellent varieties to look for, information about using other portions of the plant, "kitchen wisdom," and other foods with which the vegetable pairs well. In addition to all of this fantastic information about vegetables (both common and uncommon -- how much did I know about salsify before this book? Absolutely nothing), *Vegetable Literacy* contains some fantastic recipes. Armed with new knowledge about the relationships between vegetable families, I loved exploring some new flavor combinations. Thus far, I've tried several recipes from this book with excellent success. The Braised Endive with Gorgonzola is amazing (I had it over polenta, as the author recommends). And I also love the Thick Marjoram Sauce with Capers and Green Olives (it's fantastic on bruschetta). One thing to be aware of is that these recipes are (duh) very vegetable-centric. There are many salads, soups, sauces, appetizers, and vinaigrettes, but fewer recipes for hearty main dishes. Each of the recipes is designed to let the flavors of its vegetable ingredients truly shine. Personally, I love this approach, but readers looking for hearty vegetarian main courses might want to look elsewhere. Of course, the information in this book is easily applied to other recipes so you can branch out on your own. Overall, *Vegetable Literacy* is an essential addition to any cook's bookshelf. Its recipes are only the beginning of what makes this such a valuable resource. After understanding the relationships between plant families and learning which vegetables naturally pair well with others, you will be well-suited to adapt your favorite recipes accordingly. *Vegetable Literacy* is not just a cookbook; it's a guide to understanding plant life and employing that knowledge in your kitchen. Enjoy!

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