



momofuku **milk** bar

**christina tosi**

foreword by david chang





momofuku milk bar



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christina tosi

with courtney mcbroom

photographs by gabriele stabile  
and mark ibold



**A.**

Absolute Press

To Peter, Hannah, Oscar,  
and Hazel for putting this book  
in motion, for baking and eating  
and BabyBjörning and double  
dutching and doggy sitting





# contents

foreword 6

introductions 7

real talk 14

ingredients 16

equipment 22

techniques 26

**cereal milk™** 31

**the crunch** 49

**the crumb** 71

**graham crust** 108

**fudge sauce** 132

**liquid cheesecake** 146

**nut brittle** 167

**nut crunch** 183

**the ganache** 205

**mother dough** 218

**bonus track: crack pie™** 242

acknowledgments 251

index 252

# foreword

When Momofuku Noodle Bar opened in 2004, we had no intention of ever serving desserts. We thought measuring out ingredients and baking was for wusses. Sometimes for regular customers we'd send out Hershey's Kisses or ice cream sandwiches that I would buy at the bodega across the street. We fooled around with an ill-advised and short-lived cupcake program for a second. Hiring a pastry chef was the furthest thing from my mind back in the day. I'd rather have hired an extra sous-chef than spend money on someone who spins sugar and bakes cookies. That's what I thought.

Then I met Christina Tosi.

The Department of Health had showed up at the restaurant and dumped bleach all over hundreds of dollars of pork belly we had stored in vacuum-sealed bags. The DOH required anyone cooking with a vacuum sealing system to have a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan, a crazy complex record-keeping system more common at food factories than ramen bars. Wylie Dufresne felt my pain and sent over Christina from wd~50, where she'd just implemented such a plan for him. She quickly and single-handedly saved us from DOH hell.

She was running these kinds of plans for several top New York City restaurants at the time, which would have been a full-time job in itself for most people. But I realized Tosi was not like most people and that we had a lot in common; she burns the candle at both ends and takes a flamethrower to the middle.

So I hired Tosi to help us organize our "office"—a desk in a hallway. Instead, she started organizing the company.

At the same time, she was working as a cashier at Ssäm Bar during the burrito phase, training for marathons at night, and somehow finding time to bake at home. Every day she came in to work she brought in something homemade—and amazing. Nothing tasted like it was made in a tiny Brooklyn apartment kitchen with no special ingredients and very little time. I practically lived on that stuff while we were trying to help Ssäm Bar transition from a failing Mexican-Korean burrito joint into something that would be around for more than a year.

Her cookies and pies, like many things that made their way onto the menu—the bo ssäms, the fried chicken dinner—started out just for the staff. I would constantly say she



should sell them; I was a broken record. I don't know what or when or how, but I must've worn her out. It seems like one day Tosi was writing up an HACCP plan and then she was making me promise never to buy desserts again for the restaurants. She had finally taken my hints about tackling a more culinary role at Momofuku. Even though it was five years ago, it seems like five minutes ago.

She knew how things worked by then and wasn't disappointed to bake in the basement . . . from the sugar, flour, and butter we already had on hand . . . after doing her "etc." job by day and running around the city doing HACCP plans for other restaurants . . .

Tosi has many talents: she is a dog whisperer; she can consume more sugar than seemingly humanly possible without keeling over; she is the most stubborn person I know. But it's her insane work ethic and brilliant mind that make her so special in my book.

I've always found that when you get talented people, you coach them up to a certain point and then let them loose. Tosi reset the bar in terms of that theory. Milk Bar wouldn't be—let alone be what it is—without her. This is the story of how it came to be and where it is now as she guides it into unknown territories.

One final word of advice before you dive in: Don't let her nice demeanor and southern charm fool you; underneath she is a ruthless killer . . . just like her recipes in this book, where deceptively simple flavors and ingredients combine in ways that make grown men whimper. Resistance to her sugar manifesto is futile.

**David Chang**

# introductions

are awkward, especially in kitchens. Everyone's sizing each other up and no one wants to take the time to learn your name until you've been to the battle of dinner service enough nights in a row to show that you aren't going anywhere. The best way to get through it is to just throw your hand out there and share.

My name is Christina Tosi. I am twenty-nine. We opened Momofuku Milk Bar six days after my twenty-seventh birthday. I never thought I'd be where I am today.

I was born in Ohio and raised in Virginia. Both of my grandmothers are avid bakers, nurturing souls, and ferocious card sharks. The matriarchs of my family bake for every occasion, large or small—birthday, bake sale, and, more often than not, just because.

We are a kinship of sweet teeth on both sides of the family, some more refined and some more restrained than others. My mother cannot give up ice cream for the life of her, because she just can't bear the thought of having to go to bed on an "empty" stomach. My father was known to substitute a chocolate ice cream cone for any meal of the day.

I'm worse than either of them, to be honest. I've had a crippling cookie dough problem ever since I can remember.

My older sister and I were always allowed to help out in the kitchen. Like most kids, we would lick the beater from a batch of cookies. But for me, it was never enough. I would shape one cookie and then eat a handful of dough, or just eat the dough shamelessly until my grandmother caught on and chided me in her strident country-Ohio accent. I was always in big trouble, because I was going to do some combination of (a) spoiling my appetite, (b) making myself sick, and/or (c) getting salmonella poisoning. (She only invoked salmonella when I had managed to eat nearly an entire batch of cookie dough, which happened more often than I think she noticed.)

The old gals cut me off, and besides, it was high time I learned how to properly fend for myself. That's when I really started baking. I followed their same baking patterns. Baking was something that could, should, and did happen every day in my kitchen, too. Nothing went to waste and every baked good had character. Leftovers got incorporated into the following day's creation and each day became a challenge to put a new spin on an old favorite.

In high school and college, I fell madly in love with math and foreign languages. Baking was a hobby, not a profession. I worked at a restaurant while attending college in Virginia, waiting tables until they let me work as a morning prep cook. I





baked at my apartment in my off-hours every day, and I got my coworkers and schoolmates hopped up on my home-made desserts. I was the girl who always brought cookies or a pie or a cake. Always. Especially if it was somebody's birthday.

For two consecutive summers, a dear friend managed to convince the powers that be at a conference center on Star Island, New Hampshire, to hire me to help run their bakery. Breads and sweets for seven hundred people, three meals a day. Early mornings, late nights. I didn't talk to normal people about normal things; I baked and baked and baked, and I called my mom (and sister) every once in a while. I couldn't get enough of it.

One day on the way back from Star Island to Lacy Springs, Virginia, where I lived after college with friends who became family, I decided I'd move myself to New York City and go to cooking school. I looked on the internet and found the French Culinary Institute. Sounded good. Their rigorous pastry arts program was six months long—perfect for an antsy, overachieving student like myself.

I was going to school to study pastry in New York City, I told my family and friends as I began to plan my move

north. They weren't exactly dumbfounded—everybody knew how much I liked to bake—but I had only been to the city once before, a day trip when I was a teenager. And I'd never really talked about trade school; I had a good ol' college degree. But once I get an idea in my head, I'm hard to dissuade. I'm hardheaded to a fault.

While attending classes at the FCI by day, I worked as a hostess at Aquagrill by night to pay the rent and get a feel for a city restaurant. (Actually, I answered phones at the beginning, because they thought I was a joke; then they let me hostess once they saw I wouldn't let people walk all over me; and then I graduated to whatever the lady version of *maitre d'* is—I actually wore a suit to work!) Soon after, I secured an externship that turned into a job at Bouley, under pastry chef Alex Grunert. The pastry cook who trained me at Bouley told me it would be the hardest job I'd ever have. And it kind of was, though after every hard day, I was ready to push it even further the next.

I tried dabbling in everything with any minute of free time. The city was all mine. I interned at *Saveur* magazine, because I thought I might want to be a food writer. I styled food and catered and consulted. I worked as a food runner at *per se*. But with each side job, I missed being in the kitchen.

I found myself walking into wd-50 one day and offering to work for free. (As long as I could make the rent with a paying gig, I would work for free anywhere in my free time.) Eventually they offered me a job.

I respected the chef, Wylie Dufresne, enormously. His approach to food was thoughtful, reasonable, logical, scientific. Every flavor pairing and composed dish had a purpose, an influence, and a level of independent thought that was revolutionary to my view of food. I grew the most as a cook while working there. Wylie, sous-chef Mikey Sheerin, and Sam Mason, the pastry chef to whom I reported, challenged me daily. Everything I cooked for family meal and everything I did to prep our pastry kitchen for service, setup, and breakdown was inspected, double-checked. If they had questions, I had to have answers, and "No, chef," or "I don't know, chef," were not words I ever liked to say.

I left the city after wd-50. I just had to get out. I had been pushing since I'd arrived four years earlier. I went back to Virginia first, spent time with the wonderful old gals in my life—Mom, Ang, my aunt Fran, my grandmas. I baked and I slept. I went to Thailand. Then I was ready to go back.

One day, Wylie's good friend David Chang, chef/owner of Momofuku, called about some issues he was having with the New York City Department of Health. One of the skills I'd acquired on the side was how to write a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan—a food-service safety plan that typically fills up a two-inch-thick binder—so that Wylie could cook sous vide without the city breathing down his neck.

I was just putzing around at that point, toying with the idea that writing HACCP plans would be the next phase of my “career.” I knew I wanted to be in charge of my own kitchen, but I didn't think anyone would really hire me to be the head gal. I'm not really sure I believed I had enough vision/creativity/experience to be in charge of a pastry department, either. I was still a little too young and impressionable—and euphoric.

Dave quickly made an offer for me to be the “etc.” of the small but growing team at Momofuku. I love me a good challenge, getting in on the ground floor and growing alongside everything and everyone else, moving and shaking, fighting an uphill battle—I love to organize, develop, figure it all out as a part of a team of believers. Momofuku Noodle Bar was a success at that point; Ssäm Bar was a burrito bar, not the restaurant it is today.

There was never a mention of kitchen work. It was more office stuff, or tit shit, as Dave and I called it. (I even worked the cash register!) Looking back, I think he secretly had a plan all along—he just knew I needed some time to grow into it.

I went to work, gave it my all, and came home to my oven and jars of sugar. I baked every night, and the next day I brought baked goods to the “office”—a glorified closet where Dave and I and two other people worked full time.

Dave would shovel the sweets into his mouth and joke about how I should start making desserts for the restaurants. We would laugh at how it would even happen. Who would plate desserts if we made them? And, more important, with a restaurant menu that was such a crazy hodgepodge of culinary approaches, what would we even serve? The idea of dessert seemed so far-fetched.

One day I brought in a toasted-miso crack pie, and Dave started in again. He started laughing and told me to go make a dessert for service that night. I laughed too, said, “OK,” and went back to whatever office work I was doing. But then Dave looked at me and said, “Seriously, go make a dessert for service tonight.”

I looked at him, slowly realizing he wasn't joking, and started hedging, “Well . . . But . . . I don't even know what I'd make. . . .”

He stared back, now stern and slightly cold. “Make this, or make those cookies. I don't care what the fuck you make. Just make something. And make sure it's fucking delicious.”

I gave a quick head nod and let myself out of the office. I had no idea what I was going to do, but knew what I needed to do. And that's how our strawberry shortcake—simple, fast, and seasonal, the best thing I could come up with on short notice—was born. I think people who ate at Ssäm that night, people who were used to there being nothing for dessert but frozen mochi right out of the box, were excited that there was a new option. We sold some shortcakes. So the next day I made them again.

That's how it started. There were a lot of horrible mistakes that never made it to the menu. Some days I made five things that sucked. Then one day something would taste really good. And climbing up the hill became less painful than the downward spiral of failure.

I knew I wanted to draw on my influences, from both professional kitchens and home cooking adventures, and find a balance between the two. Mostly it was a challenge. To figure out what my voice was—how, stylistically, my food would translate. Luckily enough, Momofuku was the perfect home for desserts with no name, slightly confusing to some, but always thoughtful and delicious.

As a small restaurant group, with tight spaces and limited resources, we quickly learned that boundaries and limitations breed creativity. This always rang true for me, the one-person pastry department with no real prep table to call home.

There was no ice cream machine and no service freezer, just the walk-in freezer downstairs, a healthy jog from the upstairs service kitchen. There was no real heat source for baking anything to order—à la minute—or warming things for service. I prepped Ssäm Bar's desserts, and the garde-manger cook (the person doing oysters and appetizers) would plate and serve them. Garde-manger had eight to ten other menu items coming off their station on a given night; dessert was *not* a priority. I had to come up with recipes that were bulletproof. And the desserts had to appear thoughtfully composed, even without any of the elements that you typically get with dessert served at a fancy Manhattan restaurant.

So I came up with ways to make desserts seem larger than the sum of their parts: shortcakes and pies somehow became elevated into something more. Everyone in the kitchen would get their spoons in something before it made it onto the menu. And I would make sure that the recipe was just right before we served it. Once Ssäm had two steady desserts, I moved on to Noodle Bar.

Noodle Bar had already grown up and moved up the block from its original tiny space—which would later become Ko—into a spacious (by Momofuku standards) new location. I pushed as hard as possible for a soft-serve machine. I had been hell-bent on having dessert at the original tiny Noodle Bar, but it was a turn-and-burn operation. Diners would sometimes be in and out in an hour. So the idea of instituting a dessert program that would keep them in our tiny place for any longer than usual was not a popular one. But soft-serve was the easiest way for me to make dessert in bulk form, serve it quickly and affordably at the larger Noodle Bar location, and maintain a thoughtful perspective on food with interesting flavors—steeping milk was something I learned to love doing at wd~50.

Once Noodle Bar was running smoothly in its new location, Ko opened. We quickly flipped the space into a tasting-menu-only, online-reservations-only establishment. We had a lot of bad ideas for tasting-menu desserts, and deep down, I think Dave, Serp (Peter Serpico, the chef de cuisine, who runs the restaurant), and I knew I was just going to have to hide out in the Ssäm Bar basement and, come hell or high water, figure something out. The only productive thing that came from the original group meetings was a collaborative love affair with the idea of a deep-fried apple pie and the fact that I was going to need a little help in the form of an FCI extern. Enter Marian Mar.

Dave and a few other Momo guys went to the FCI career fair one day, mostly in search of savory cooks for their kitchens, and Dave promised he'd find me someone. Most people didn't even know the Momofukus served dessert, let alone thought of dropping off a pastry résumé. Except Marian.

Mar showed up at Ssäm Bar one night at 8 p.m. for the first night of her "externship" and helped me prep until about 2 a.m. We wore winter hats and turtlenecks because the basement was freezing. Giggled and figured shit out. This continued once or twice a week for the next few months. Little did either of us know Marian would become the anchor, lifesaver, soulmate, sister, and sous-chef who made and saved our little pastry department.

Mar stood next to me watching me pull out my hair trying to make a deep-fried apple pie. She looked at me like I was a little insane when, days before Ko was set to open, I told her about this cereal milk idea I had instead. I mean, I had to start looking at other options if I couldn't get the fried apple pie I promised figured out.

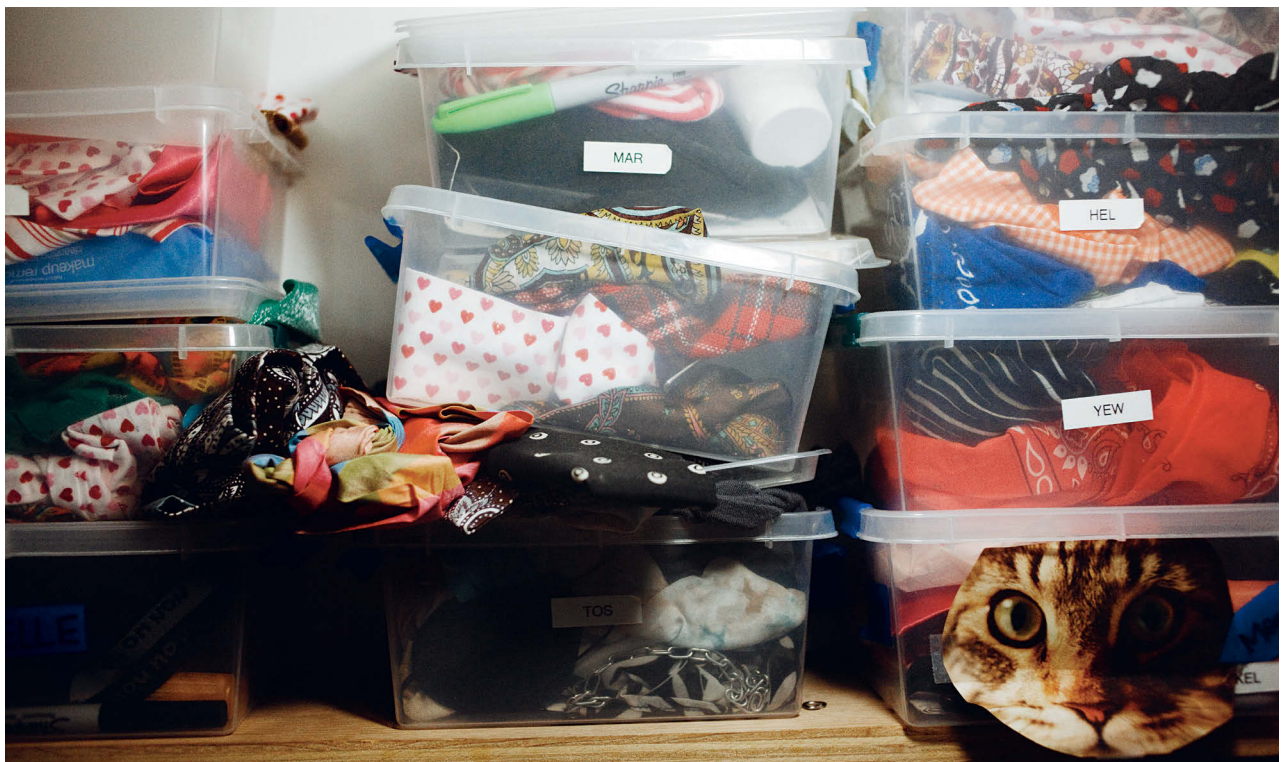
We tasted my next few attempts at an apple pie with Serp, as well as the cereal milk panna cotta I was working on. The panna cotta had a pretty boring banana cream with it, and he wanted something slightly different. He said, "I may be crazy, but what about avocado?" Both me and Mar perked up. Being a California girl, Mar loves avocados, and we'd really wanted to use them in a dessert. In fact, we had an avocado puree all ready, waiting for inspiration to strike. And there it was.

This is the essence of how we come up with things. We make things that we are interested in. We make them taste good. Then we stand in front of our fridge, with the door open, just like you do at home when you're trying to figure out what to make for dinner or eat for a midnight snack. We pick and pull out things we've been working on and see where we can merge ideas and flavors. We try to be intelligent about it. But most of the time, it's a eureka moment that we didn't even know we were working toward.

I finally came up with a deep-fried apple pie—a kind of take on the Hostess or McDonald's apple pies we all grew up on—through some messed-up, backwards, forget-everything-you've-ever-learned-about-pie-dough stroke of stupidity and kept moving. We opened our two-man pastry department at Ko by packing up five large pails of staple ingredients and a toolbox of equipment and moving them from Ssäm to Ko in the back of a lovely little '93 Subaru station wagon, the "company car."

Once we had a little prep table to call our own and more regularish hours, we began menu developing, putting better systems into place in the restaurants for our dessert programs, and, of course, making family-meal dessert daily. I developed a firm belief while working in restaurants in this city that family meal, the one prepared daily for your peers, is one of the most important meals you'll cook. The respect and integrity you put into it speaks very highly of you as a cook—and of how much you care about your fellow cooks. Often pastry is exempt from being required to contribute to family meal. But once I started full time at wd~50, I made it a personal requirement.

I would joke with anyone I worked next to that making family meal was my zen moment. I went back to my self-proclaimed roots; I baked without measuring (sacrilege



to most accomplished bakers) and used whatever mise-en-place was over- or underbaked or left over. Family meal is meant to be delicious and nurturing. I made what I knew from years of baking for myself—something I affectionately called crack pie because you can't stop eating it, cookies galore, brownies, etc. If there was a birthday within our three growing restaurants, I would make a layer cake with the same notion, using fillings we had on hand for our desserts.

Little did we know that making family-meal desserts with our in-house mise-en-place for the other restaurants would be recipe testing for our next project.

One day, tumbling down the stairs from the sidewalk into Ko's basement, Dave said, "Hey, if we could get you a bakery space, would you do it? The Laundromat next to Ssäm is closing, and we need to scoop up that space before someone else does."

"OK," I said. I'd come to realize that having a bakery was what I wanted as an end goal. I just didn't think it would come so soon.

"No, but seriously—if we could get that space for you to have as a bakery or something, would you really do it?" he asked.

"I said yes. I'll do it," I shot back, puffing up my shoulders.

It's funny to think that's how most of our big conversations go. They're quick and to the point. Dave and I get each

other, I think, on a level that most people don't, or maybe it's just that no one has understood either of us before. It's usually just a few sentences of dialogue; we figure out the hard stuff later. We are both people of our words, fearless of a challenge, and self-confident to a fault. We will do anything to make something work. It's one-half rock-hard work ethic, one-quarter pride, and one-quarter spite, I think.

With a skeleton crew of me, Mar, and Emily, an amazing Culinary Institute of America extern we picked up along the way, we began menu developing for a bakery that had no rules and no bounds. We would finish our daily prep for the restaurants as quickly as possible and make ourselves sick from testing and tasting thousands of versions of cookie dough, cake batter, and soft-serve ice cream bases.

A separate skeleton crew of Joshua Corey, our handsome "handyman" if you asked him his title, Dave, Drew Salmon, Momofuku's COO, and I began designing, contracting, and building out the space. We bought pendant lamps at walmart.com and contemplated what furniture, if any, should exist. None of us had ever opened a bakery, and the bakery I ran on Star Island was nothing like this, except I sure did know how to use an old eighty-quart mixer and wasn't afraid of scooping cookie dough out of it.

Long days turned into long nights, into yelling at contractors and slamming down phones. Our lives became mudding ceilings, sourcing the right nondescript display case, and painting the walls and ceilings in "hint of mint" when we should have been sleeping.

Only a small handful of people knew that Momofuku even had a pastry department, but we were determined to build a bakery that belonged to us, and we were going to do it as best we could. And by small handful, I mean really small. Milk Bar started with very few employees, working seven days a week, seventeen hours a day or more. Helen Jo joined our team for no good reason that I could see except that Marian, Emily, and my zombie-like state somehow enchanted her. James Mark, formerly the low man on the totem pole at Ko, who had baked a different loaf of bread for practically every family meal, became our overnight bread baker.

It wasn't long before the doors officially opened and the place was packed. Lines out into the cold all times of day. Customers were often confused by the crazy ice cream flavors we served morning till midnight, by the series of flavors that were always expanding and contracting, and we didn't begrudge them the confusion. We were making it up as we went along, but—and I can't express this more sincerely—we were truly surprised at how much people were into it. At a certain point, Anderson Cooper was plugging our crack pie on television. Things had turned surreal. Dave swears he knew it was going to work all along.

A year and a half passed. We opened our second Milk Bar location in midtown. Business was booming, but we were on top of each other, mixing and baking from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. in 700 square feet of space. We'd hoist sheet pans of cookie dough over the heads of our patrons several times a day to get them to a refrigerator to chill for an hour or two before we hoisted the pans back to our oven to bake off for the evening and late-night crowds.

We needed a bigger boat. There are only so many chest freezers from Craigslist you can squeeze into an already cramped basement, so many cookie fridges you can surreptitiously put out on the floor of Milk Bar, and so many tables you can take over for shipping and special orders while telling guests they have to stand somewhere else to eat their slice of pistachio layer pie.

We found and signed a lease on a huge warehouse space that would be our castle, our kingdom, our home. Cue noise: car screeching to a halt. Only thing is, it wouldn't be rezoned and kitchen-ready for another four months.

So we chose the next best (and only other) option: schlepping our kitchen up to Spanish Harlem to bake in a stranger's fourth-story rental kitchen, using a stranger's dingy refrigerators, a stranger's elevator that always seemed to break down when the deliveries



were obscenely large, and, even worse, a stranger's wonky ovens.

And there we perched, in a barely-air-conditioned 90- to 100-degree kitchen for a long summer. We baked, and we developed a delivery system, a packaging system, an "oh, shit" list to keep us on top of every single disaster we could and surely did encounter at 113th Street and Third Avenue. We were in boot camp all over again. We climbed those stairs with fifty-pound bags of flour on our shoulders or wobbled down them with twenty-four-quart tubs of soft-serve ice cream to take to Noodle Bar. We screamed, we sweated. We tried to hide it when we were down at the restaurants. We scrubbed sheet pans at 3 a.m. until we hired and trained a dishwashing staff. We carpooled up and down the FDR Drive at all hours of the morning and night.

Then, just when the summer of 2010 cooled off, our new kitchen in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, was ready. And by ready, I mean empty, clean, and ready for us to do it all over again, one more time.

We painted the creepy rooms with leftover paint from everyone's past home painting experiments (mostly mine), hung pictures of dogs and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles on the empty walls, and assembled enough prep tables and metro shelves to fill thousands of square feet. My mother, aunt, and sister stuffed my poor brother-in-law's truck full of yard-sale furniture to cart across state lines for our



makeshift offices. We made friends with big guys with big dollies and trucks with lifts. And we rented U-Haul trucks and moved our ever-expanding kitchen from Spanish Harlem to our home. Finally.

After just two years, we caught up on sleep (kind of). We wooed an amazingly talented staff to join us in our plight. Each one of us has a different background, a different attitude, and a different view on life and food.

Helen Jo stuck by my side, whether we were spray-painting a rusty dough sheeter gold and naming her Beyoncé, running outside to pet a puppy, or commanding an entire kitchen to work faster! Leslie Behrens entered full force with blonde like you have never seen before, and a love for key lime pie turned cake that let us know she was a lifer. Yewande Komolafe, our wanderlust Nigerian princess, reminded us daily to be fierce with attitude and never to miss an episode of *This American Life*. Helen Hollyman, with her patience and hilarity, taught us how to wrangle quirky customers with grace and poise while laughing inside all the way. Sarah Buck danced into our basement and schooled us in the art of bouncing to Reggaeton while corralling a sassy staff into banging out a prep list in record time. Courtney McBroom, cool as a cucumber, hilarious, and vulgar to a fault at times, is my mighty kitchen stand-in, silently reminding me it will all be OK, even if I take a day off (she's also half of the hilariousness of this text). Maggie Cantwell, equally nosy and hungry at all times, now runs

our operations and reminds us to be good women, girlfriends, and wives, all while balancing spreadsheets and telling cooks what it was like when she was in the kitchen. Louis Fabbrini, the tall, dark, and handsome Doogie Howser of Milk Bar, has somehow managed to know and love the cause among a jungle of crazy women and balance a delivery staff, an etc. staff, a technology infrastructure, and a Milk Bar world-domination scheme, all at the age of twenty-two and then twenty-three. Alison Roman, our West Coast transplant, is so ridiculous in spirit, chatter, and skill that we just give her some jars to fill with jokes or drama—or her next amazing batch of flavored butter, jelly, or jam. Alex Wilson, God bless her, flies strong and solo most of the time, ricocheting off each Milk Bar, and generally managing our laughter levels, homemade apron distribution, cookie pars, and locations all the while.

We are a family. We call each other out on bullshit, push each other to be better everythings, and catch each other when it all blows up in our faces. We have lost sanity and sleep over new desserts. We argue about and challenge the ways we make each recipe, the way we serve each item, the way we get each dessert to you with the shortest line and in the friendliest way possible.

The heart of our daily lives at Milk Bar is the core of this book—warm, hardworking, strong, humble, and straightforward. I'm excited and scared to share it with you. We are no geniuses. Putting it down on paper for someone else to read leaves us vulnerable to the ease that is the essence of our desserts' success.

There are no tricky secrets to what we do—it's about getting in there, working smart, and making something delicious out of everyday ingredients. The only things you need that are not already in your cupboards are a few funny ingredients that will make you shake your head in disbelief. Our recipes exist to appeal and to relate to everyone.

We all started off as home cooks, and we never stray far from our roots. This cookbook is a collection of the recipes from our lives and love affairs with food that we have adapted, adjusted, tasted once and tasted twice, and made in the Momofuku spirit. They are simple and tasty. They are salty and sweet. If you ever wanted to start a pastry department, then open a bakery, then grow an empire out of a few employees, young by birth or at heart—or just turn on your oven and make something super-tasty—you really only need the ten mother recipes you'll find here. Honestly, that's how we did it.

# real talk

In our kitchen, **real talk** means we break it down for you. Good-bye niceties: just cold, hard truths is what real talk is all about. When one of us is not doing the right thing, copping a bad attitude, feeling sorry for him- or herself, being lazy, or underperforming (we're all human), we all know what's needed to get each other back on track. Real talk.

So. Here's how it's going to go. I'm surrendering all of my favorite recipes to you. Letting you into our world. We are a tight-knit, loving bunch, unafraid of eating too much cookie dough or of slathering our bread with too much butter. We are our own breed of home bakers with formal educations, and we strive to make thoughtful, clever food that hits home every time. We work hard. We laugh hard. We love to share our takes on baked goods with anyone and everyone. We are incredibly casual but never cavalier. We are deadly serious and deadly accurate when it matters. Spend some time understanding how we laid out this cookbook, read our ridiculous mantras, understand the need for certain ingredients and kitchenware—and you will be one of us.

Cooking any of the recipes in this book is like working a day at Milk Bar side by side with us. But before you're even given a time card to work in our kitchen, you have to pass the ultimate test. Are you a hardbody?

**hardbody** is a term we use at Milk Bar to describe a person who goes above and beyond. Softbodies need not apply in our kitchen. (We like softbodies as people, we just don't like working next to them.) Every single person who works with us is either a hardbody or a hardbody-in-training.

A hardbody never complains—a hardbody isn't afraid to work through the toughest of times. No heat in the winter? Snowsuits under your chef's whites. No AC in the summer? Sweat to the oldies and keep working. No elevator, no room for the one hundred gallons of organic milk to be delivered, a flat tire on the van, a broken dolly? No problem. We are hardbodies. We got it.

Maybe you're mixing a huge batch of cookie dough and your industrial-size mixer shifts the bed. A softbody would surely give up. But not a hardbody. You've never lived until you've mixed one hundred pounds of compost cookie dough by hand and then raced to scoop it with your lunatic boss. Just ask Heather Pelletier. The people need their cookies!

A hardbody approaches each recipe and task with a sense of humor. A hardbody keeps cool and keeps creative. As

you read through this book, you'll find that a striking number of these recipes were the result of burning, or mismeasuring, or just throwing some leftovers into the mixing bowl. A hardbody knows there's always a brilliant recipe waiting to be invented with leftover Ritz crunch or overproofed mother dough.

Everybody gets a hardbody litmus test before they become one of us. Once they've shown us their hardbody potential, they are allowed through our doors and let into the fold. They are officially a part of Milk Bar. They are family.

**clocking in** at Milk Bar means showing up. You put on your kitchen whites, pull your hair back, and get your notebook and Sharpie out to make a prep list and plan your day of baking. Turn on some tunes and get in the zone.

To get started at home, you need to clock in too—make sure you and your kitchen are ready to dedicate some time to the food. You've got to make the kitchen you're about to bake in your own. Put on your favorite album, or tune your radio in to NPR. Have your favorite oven mitts, apron, and head scarf ready. Hang pictures of puppies all over the place. It matters—I promise.

This cookbook is designed to help make your life in the kitchen easy. Get yourself organized before you start. Understand how the cookbook works. Understand how we work. Know what recipes you want to make.

You must know what you're about to get into before you get into it. In our kitchen, prep lists and clipboards abound (thirty-three is the current count—more clipboards than employees), to get each other up to speed once we've clocked in, so that we're not lost in a sea of sugar and sheet pans when we start our day.



In French cooking, there are four “mother sauces.” Most every French sauce is a derivative of one of these four sauces. It is a known fact that if you master the mother sauces, you can make nearly anything in French cooking. I like to think the same is true of the Milk Bar pastry kitchen.

I flew solo at the beginning, but as the restaurants slowly grew, so did the techniques and dessert menus. I had to be smart about prep work and mise-en-place. We built three pastry departments, three retail bakery locations, and one sweet stronghold out of ten **mother recipes**—nine sweet ones and one bread dough.

Start with a mother recipe and discover the range of desserts that stems from that recipe. Following the mother recipe in each chapter are recipe **variations**, where the main ingredients and flavor profiles change but the technique remains more or less the same.

Next to some recipes, you will see **sidebars**, or references to the hows and whys of a given technique or an ingredient used in the recipe. Recipes used beyond a single chapter—in recipes you can find **elsewhere in this book**—are also noted, to give you ideas, to help you find new ways to use your favorites. We’re setting you up real good.

“**Setting yourself up for success**” is a phrase we love to use seriously and sarcastically alike in the kitchen. When someone doesn’t wash the mixing bowl or leaves you without enough cornflakes to make cereal milk, they are not setting you up for success, and you let them know it. Loudly. But mostly we use it sarcastically, because we love being aware of one another and really value setting ourselves and each other up for a successful day in the kitchen.

To set yourself up at home, first decide what you want to accomplish. Are you making cookies for a bake sale or planning a fancy dinner party for later in the week, or do you just want to try out a few mother recipes and keep them in your fridge or freezer for a snack (or until you’re ready to master the art of the Cereal Milk Ice Cream Pie, page 59, or the Chocolate Malt Layer Cake, page 139)? Once you’ve determined that, make yourself a prep list. Organize your recipe(s) before you actually start. Baking can seem difficult when you try to do too much at once. Some recipes take a little longer to execute, but they’re well worth the commitment. Plan for this when you clock in.

# ingredients

We choose our ingredients for many different reasons—be it flavor, ease of use, or the result in a final recipe. Both Milk Bar and Momofuku in general have always been about in-your-face flavor. We rarely make anything that is soft, gentle, or quiet. It's almost always loud.

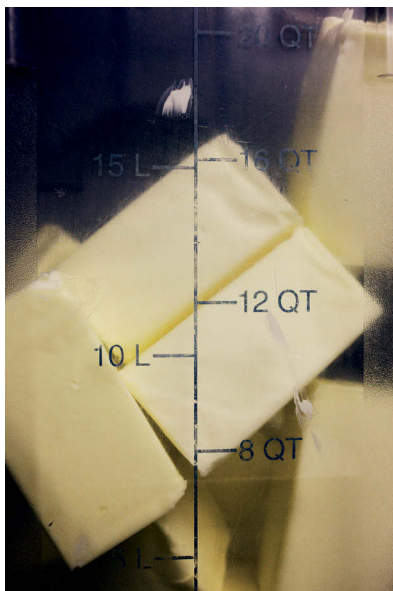
Here are the whys and why nots of every ingredient, along with a lot of baking tips and tricks of the trade. This isn't a throwaway section, a snooze fest. Educate yourself and read on. Can't find an ingredient at your local supermarket or specialty food mart? Never underestimate the power of the internet.

## baking powder and bicarbonate of soda

We do pretty classic American baking, so we stick to good ol' baking powder and bicarbonate of soda to give our cookies and cakes a little bit of lift. We use them in our cookies to help control spread, to help them brown, and to keep them balanced in flavor and texture. We like an aerated cookie that's crispy on the outside and fudgy in the center. We use double-action baking powder exclusively. Any brand of bicarbonate of soda will do—just make sure you don't use the bicarb that you keep in the refrigerator to soak up all those stinky smells (unless, of course, you like your blueberry cookies to taste like leftover Indian food).

## butter

We love butter at Milk Bar. I grew up with a mother who used only margarine, which is tragic, because butter makes or breaks the quality of a baked good. We spend a lot of money on really good butter, and we've never changed the kind we use. Plugrá is a European-style brand of American butter made from cultured dairy, which makes it that much tastier. Its butterfat content is 82 percent and it's very yellow. Always opt for unsalted butter, so you can control the amount of salt in your baked goods.



## chocolate

Valrhona is a delicious, dependable chocolate, whether you are using it for chocolate work or in baking. The first real pastry chef I ever worked for used Valrhona. He swore by it, and I followed suit. We use fèves or pistoles (discs or chips) of this fancy chocolate because they're easier to measure, portion, and melt down than the large gold-bar-like slabs of gourmet chocolate you often see.

I like Valrhona's 72% Araguani chocolate the most. It's a really nice dark chocolate—not too bitter, with slight floral notes that allow you to do more delicate things with it if need be,

but it also bakes off with taste and integrity, letting everyone know it's a high-quality chocolate. The 55% Valrhona is a great semisweet chocolate; it's not too milky, and it's not too sweet. I feel the same way about the versatility of Valrhona's white chocolate; it's not too cloying, and it doesn't taste too much like cocoa butter or vanilla, as many white chocolates do.

## chocolate chips, mini

We use Barry Callebaut semisweet mini chocolate chips. They are the perfect size and flavor. We always use these tiny chips because they give you a little chocolate chip in every bite of any cookie or cake they're used in.

## citric acid

You can find citric acid sometimes labelled sour salt in health food shops and online. We use citric acid most often to enhance the flavor of our seasonal recipes. It's not hard to find, so please don't skip it. Though you can use lemon or lime juice for tartness in its place, citric acid doesn't impart any flavor and it doesn't add liquid to the recipe—it's greatest allure.

### cocoa powder

Don't mess around with cocoa powder. We use Valrhona brand. It is a Dutch-processed, or alkalized, unsweetened cocoa powder, meaning it has been treated with an alkali to neutralize its acidity. If you are going to use supermarket cocoa powder, don't expect your chocolate desserts to look or taste as dark and fudgy as ours.

### cream

When we call for cream, there is no substitution. It is one of the key ingredients of crack pie. We use it in our Graham Crust (page 112). We use it in our ganache recipes (see page 205). Cream has ridiculously cool emulsifying properties. You can use cold cream to bind any dairy-based product that has broken or been overwhipped. If you are making Banana Cream (page 91), for example, and you walk away from your mixer while whipping the cream, only to return to find stiff peaks where soft peaks should be, all you have to do is gently stir a small amount of cold cream into the mix, and it will magically turn the hard peaks back into beautiful, soft, billowy peaks.

Get your cream (whipping or double) from a local farmer if possible. Milk Thistle (see page 46) can't keep up with the amount of cream we go through in a week, but their product is a delicious one that we would always use if we could. Just be sure to shake that farm-fresh cream well before using.

### eggs

Every egg that we call for in this cookbook is a medium egg. We get them from a nearby Pennsylvania Dutch farm. Find fresh eggs from a local farm if possible; just remember that their shells are typically thinner than that of your average supermarket egg—so be careful, or strain your eggs through a fine-mesh sieve once

cracked to be sure no shards of shell remain. Save extra yolks or whites—there are plenty of recipes that call for one or the other.

### extracts and food coloring

One of the first things I learned at wd~50 is that Wylie hates food extracts (and food coloring). He believes people rely on them as crutches, which can be true, especially on the savory side. However, extracts are much more common in the pastry field. Because of working with Wylie, I always feel like I have to explain myself twenty times, so here goes: At Milk Bar, we don't use extracts (or food coloring) excessively, and we certainly don't use them as a crutch. When we use them, it's always for a really good reason, usually just to enhance a flavor that we've already put into something.

Peppermint extract (used in our mint cheesecake and mint glaze) provides 100 percent peppermint flavor; fresh mint doesn't give you the same cooling, deep mint flavor as the extract. Fresh mint also oxidizes, turning brown when you bake it. Of course, Wylie would probably say something like, "You should figure out

a way to make it green with spinach juice." But spinach-juice cheesecake just doesn't sound as good. Hope I didn't let you down, chef.

Bananas are not yellow when they are cooked down and used in a cake or cream—or ice cream—they are brown. And nobody wants to eat a brown cake, cream, or ice cream. We don't use an ungodly amount of food coloring; and if you don't want to use it at all at home, you don't have to. But guess what? You are going to be face-to-face with a brown banana cream pie or banana cake, and that's a fact.

### feuillettine

Feuillettine, French in origin, is tiny flakes of impossibly thin, seemingly toasted crepe bits. We use Cacao Barry feuillettine in the nut crunch recipes; it is a natural partner to nut-based pastes. Feuillettine is an ingredient worth seeking out (in specialty baking stores or online) and having in your kitchen because of its insane, one-of-a-kind texture. There is really no substitution for it; cornflakes or Rice Krispies do not produce the same results.



One thing to note about feuilletine: it gets soggy if you put it in a liquid that isn't 100-percent fat-based—enter Dave Chang, who likes to stumble into the pastry kitchen, take a scoop of feuilletine, pour milk over it, and inhale it in seconds, just before it turns to mush.

### flour

Because our cookies have such a high butter ratio, we like the extra protein content of bread flour to help bind them together. I would never have guessed that the high protein content would make such a difference, but it does. It's one of those secrets. Only thing is, when making the cookies, you must be vigilant about not overmixing the dough. If you mix it even a little too long after adding the flour, the protein in the flour will start to develop gluten and your finished product will resemble a tough bread ball, not a tender buttery cookie.



### freeze-dried sweetcorn

Look for regular freeze-dried sweetcorn online. There is an organic version, but it's not the same in flavor or color. We grind the sweetcorn down to a powder in the blender before we use it, so do the same in your kitchen. Make sure you store it in an airtight container, because otherwise moisture will get to it, and it will make you very sad.

### fruit purees and juices

You can purchase fruit purees or you can buy whole seasonal fresh fruit and make a puree at home. I don't consider purchasing already pureed fruit cheating, especially if you want to make White Peach Sorbet (page 131) in the dead of winter. Passion fruit puree in particular is definitely worth sourcing; trying to make it at home will test your endurance and nerves. It is also cheaper to buy it already processed.

There are several options when it comes to sourcing purees; my favorite, as always, is online. We use Boiron and Capfrui brands. Figure out what brand of puree you like best and go for it.

If you choose to make fruit purees at home, it is essential that you use the ripest fruit possible; if you don't, there is no way the final result will taste good. There are a few things, though, that you will have to make from scratch. Grape juice, for the PB & J Pie (page 63), is one of them. Buying the sugary commercial stuff is not an option; you can't make that concession.

Never use fruit juice or fruit nectar in place of a puree. The solids and water contents are different and the recipe will not come out the same.



### gelatin

I was taught to use leaf gelatin in culinary school because it's easier to store, measure, bloom (or soften), and melt, so that's what we use in our kitchen. Gelita Silver Strength gelatin leaves are the common currency in pastry and savory kitchens in NYC (each 2.5g leaf will set 240ml liquid to a firm gel). However, powdered gelatin can be substituted for leaves in every case, and every recipe in this book that calls for gelatin includes the conversion. You will by no means sacrifice quality if you use powdered gelatin. Whatever you use, though, you must bloom the gelatin correctly, or your results will definitely suffer. Follow the instructions on page 29.



### glucose

Glucose is an invert sugar that we use in many recipes. We use it in liquids to add body and reduce the chance of crystallization. We use it in ice creams to keep them soft and smooth, even after they've been in the freezer for a while. We use it to give our cookies their signature fudgy centers and crispy edges, and it also increases their shelf life. We use it in ganache to keep it smooth, adding viscosity and fullness and helping to bond the ingredients. So many glorious things happen through the wonder and beauty of glucose.

### graham crumbs

Graham crumbs are a brilliant invention of the graham cracker manufacturers. They took all of their broken graham cracker bits that they couldn't sell whole and made their own market for them, which I think is genius. I often wonder whether they were also the geniuses behind the whole cheesecake-must-have-a-graham-crust phenomenon. Finely crushed digestive biscuits are an acceptable substitute.

### marshmallows

We use Kraft mini marshmallows. We use mini marshmallows for the same reason we use mini chocolate chips: to get a little bit in every bite. If you only have large marshmallows, you can cut them up, but that's a really big pain in the butt.

### milk

Milk Bar. Clearly, a lot of our stuff is dairy-based. I was raised on skimmed milk by a mother who was very concerned about my cholesterol level. That is probably why I rarely drank milk growing up. In fact, I only had it when it was dousing Lucky Charms. As an adult, I refuse to use skimmed milk in any of my recipes and I scoff at the idea of semi-skimmed. All of our recipes are designed around whole milk. If you cut out the fat, you are going to cut out the flavor.

We love supporting our favorite local organic farmer, Dante Hess at Milk Thistle farms in Ghent, New York (page 46). If you can't find a local dairy, it's OK to use store-bought milk—just make sure it's whole.

### milk powder

Do not use milk powder to make milk. I repeat: do not add water and stir; it's gross. Trust me, my dad used to try to make me drink milk made from milk powder when I was little.

Instead, think of milk powder as MSG for bakers. MSG doesn't taste like anything; it just makes everything taste better. Milk powder works in the same way. We use it in recipes because it has an amazing way of adding a terrific baseline flavor. We also use it to increase the milk solid content in ice creams, which results in a milkier, denser, and silkier ice cream. I also like what it does in certain baking recipes. For example, it adds chewiness when you put it in a cookie.

We do use milk powder for its stand-alone flavor in our milk crumbs (page 74). We use white chocolate in the recipe to give it a sweeter, milkier taste, but the milk powder is what really determines the flavor.

### miscellaneous dairy

We call for a lot of different dairy products in this cookbook—things like yogurt, sour cream, and goat’s cheese. But we don’t get too fancy in our kitchen with these, because we spend so much money on expensive butter and whole milk. You can certainly use an artisanal sour cream or yogurt to support your local economy. Whatever you buy, just make sure to get the full-fat option.

I really love sour cream. Sour cream with brown sugar was one of my favorite snacks as a kid. Its fat content is similar to that of single cream, so you can paddle it, and it will come to soft or heavy peaks. I like Friendship sour cream just fine.

### nonstick cooking spray

There are lots of approaches to greasing pans. My grandmother and mother save butter papers and use the residual butter on them to grease pans. In our kitchen, we use Pam brand spray for everything, because it is easy and convenient.

### nuts

My mom never puts nuts in anything, but somehow she magically has these creepy bags of nuts that sit in her cupboard for God knows how long. They’re usually stale and sometimes rancid. Make sure the nuts in your kitchen have not gone the same way! A rancid nut probably won’t kill you, but it will make a huge difference in the quality of your food. You should always store nuts in the fridge if you don’t think you are going to use them right away, and you should definitely taste them before you make anything with them.

We use Bazzini brand nuts. If you can get pieces instead of whole, they’re usually cheaper, and if you’re going to use them for a brittle (see page 167), you’re going to break them down,

anyway. We get our nuts skinned and blanched, so there isn’t any of that weird brown skin on them.

### nut pastes and butters

Nut pastes and butters aren’t cheap. And the more you spend on them, the better the quality you’ll get. Pistachio and hazelnut pastes typically have a percentage of sugar added to them, which we love. Almond butter does not. Any specialty cooking or baking shop should have a supply, or there’s always the internet. We use Bazzini brand almond butter, Valrhona hazelnut paste, Skippy peanut butter, and Agrimontana pistachio paste.

### oats

We keep it classic with Quaker Porridge Oats. They are easy to find in the supermarket; just don’t accidentally buy instant or quick-cooking oats. We go through oats very quickly, but you probably won’t go through the whole container at once. So make sure you store any that you have left over in an airtight container or a zip-top plastic bag to prevent little bugs, like weevils, from trying to crawl in and snack on them.

### oil

We use grapeseed oil in all of our baking. It is a little more viscous than most vegetable oils, it doesn’t impart any flavor, and it has an amazing emulsifying quality. I could watch it emulsify liquid in fat forever. If you have canola oil in-house, though, feel free to use that; just don’t use oil that’s so viscous it barely pours, or oil that is water-thin.

### pectin

We use pectin, specifically pectin NH, a powdered pectin often used in fruit- and water-based pastry glazes; it can be obtained online. Pectin NH gels quickly with liquids and does not impart any flavor, color, or fogginess in the process. It gives a much better

consistency than what you get setting something with gelatin, which makes something jiggly like a fruit jelly. When using pectin, we always mix it with a portion of the sugar and salt from the recipe so it doesn’t clump up when we whisk in the liquid. Pectin must be brought to a boil and simmered for a minimum of 2 minutes to fully hydrate and activate it in the liquid it is gelling.

### pretzels

We use Snyder’s mini pretzels for every recipe that calls for mini pretzels. We use these small ones for the same reason we use mini marshmallows and mini chocolate chips: you get a wider distribution of their flavor and a little bit in every bite, plus it’s super-cute to see a whole pretzel peeking out of a compost cookie.



### salt

We use American kosher salt, which has larger granules than iodized table salt. There is something about iodized salt that I don’t like flavorwise. Plus it is really small and it can be confused with sugar, and that scares me. A high-quality coarse of flaked sea salt

such as Maldon is a good alternative to Kosher salt.

### spices

Treat your spices with love and care. They aren't going to go bad, but don't use a spice that's been sitting around for five years in your kitchen along with some rancid nuts and old rainbow jimmies. As far as the kind of spices we use, I'm a straightforward McCormick girl. If you have a grinder and the time, and you want to freshly grind whole spices, go for it, but if you already have them powdered, there's no shame in that.

### sugar

We use standard granulated sugar and icing sugar. We don't use dark brown sugar very often because I'm not a huge fan of its outright deep, dark molasses flavor.

### vanilla extract

We use two different kinds of vanilla extract, brown Patisse brand and clear McCormick brand. Neither is of any fancy caliber, but we use these specific vanilla extracts on purpose because they are the flavor that most people relate to in their baked goods. Vanilla pods and fancy vanilla paste do not taste like home to me, but commercial vanilla extract does.

We use brown (standard) vanilla extract in 90 percent of our baked goods. It's the extract that flavors nearly every homemade chocolate chip cookie. We use clear McCormick vanilla extract for the Birthday Cake (page 105), Birthday Cake Crumb (page 78), and Birthday Cake Frosting (page 107). It is vanilla in flavor, but not flavored by any actual vanilla beans. It's "vanilla" in more of a guilty tub-of-frosting, box-cake way. The two are not interchangeable in recipes. Both brown extract and clear vanilla are available online.

### vinegar

The main vinegars you will find in this cookbook are sherry, rice wine, and distilled white. Each has its own nuances, and we use each for a reason—kind of like when people pair wine with food. We use vinegars to bump up flavor intensity or add balance to a recipe. I like sherry vinegar with cherries or deep red berries. Distilled white vinegar is perfect in our red velvet cake. And, of course, we use cider vinegar for anything involving apples or pears.

### yeast

Our Mother Dough recipe (page 222) calls for dried yeast. Be sure to keep it in an airtight container and store it in the refrigerator. Dried yeast has an expiration date, and nothing is worse than spending a lot of time making a beautiful bread dough that will never rise because you used dead yeast.



# equipment

The **equipment** in our kitchen is, in part, what sets some of our techniques and final products apart from others. In many instances, we've eliminated the process of tempering eggs (see page 26) or simplified the method of making an ice cream base (see page 29) with the use of a simple appliance such as a hand blender or countertop blender. We're not going to tell you you need keep that blade on your chef's knife sharp (sorry, Dave) or that you need a slab of marble to temper chocolate properly. We've simplified our equipment needs to the necessities and their substitute counterparts.

## acetate

We use sheets of acetate to assemble all of our cakes, building the layers up in a cake ring. We leave the cakes bare on the sides because we spend a ton of time developing the colorful layers and textural nuances, so why in god's name would we want to hide them under a layer of frosting? The acetate gives you clear walls to build within and leaves a really pretty, shiny edge once it's removed. It's important to peel the acetate off while the cake is still frozen, because if it is at room temperature, or even refrigerated, the sides of the cake will stick to the acetate and it won't have that clean smooth edge. You can buy acetate sheets at craft shops, some stationary shops, some office-supply shops, and online.

## baking trays

My mother has really horrible, thin, wobbly baking trays. I was just as guilty in my home kitchen too, until I snuck two home from the bakery one day. Invest in good-quality, heavy, rimmed baking trays: one 25 x 31 cm for cakes, and one or more 31 x 45 cm for cookies and everything else. Treat them with the same integrity and respect that you do for the mixing process of cakes and cookies, because that baking tray is what the success of the final product is based on. Wash and store them with the same esteem.



## blenders

We use a commercial blender, a vital part of our kitchen, all day, every day. But there is no need to buy a blender as expensive as ours. All you need is a dependable blender, and if you already have one, that will do fine.

We use an inexpensive hand blender, sometimes known as an immersion blender, to mix all of our milks and ice cream bases. We also use it to blend ganache to keep it smooth without heating it up or incorporating air into it. If you don't own a hand blender, you are missing out on simplifying tasks and easy cleanup.

## brushes

I always buy cheap pastry brushes. We've bought expensive brushes, and they go missing or deconstruct just as quickly as the cheaper ones. Keep one brush that you use only for pastry. You never want to use the same brush to egg-wash bread dough that you used to brush baby back ribs on the barbecue. Wash the brush in the dishwasher or soak it in hot soapy water for a few minutes. Once it gets really raggedy (which it will), boil it in a pot of water for 10 minutes to bring it back to life. We replace brushes when we notice they are starting to shed their bristles.



### cake rings

Every cake recipe in this book calls for baking the batter in a baking tray, then using a 15 cm cake ring (which you build the cake in) to cut out rounds. A cake ring is basically a cake tin with no bottom. If you already have a 15 cm cake tin, though, you can use that to cut the rounds and to build the cake.

### chinois

The chinois, also known as a China cap or a fine mesh sieve, is a piece of equipment that we live and die by. There is no substitution for one; it is the last line of defense to ensure a supersmooth product with little mess. A chinois is a conical sieve that tapers toward the bottom, so you can strain cereal milk or lemon juice into the smallest of vessels with no spillage. Get the finest-mesh chinois you can.

### cling film

Professional cling film is a necessity. It wraps around anything, and keeps everything inside its force fields fresh. Once you use this stuff, you'll never go back to flimsy supermarket brands.

### containers

We use litre and quarter-litre plastic containers; the ones that are synonymous with take-out Chinese soup. They are clear, airtight, and extraordinarily valuable, because they will increase the shelf life and freshness of whatever they're holding. It's really important that the containers you use to store desserts aren't the same ones that you store raw onions or leftover spicy beef from Taco Tuesday. Nobody wants to eat cornflake crunch that tastes like taco seasonings. And if you don't use an airtight container, after day one, your food is going to taste like your refrigerator—and chances are your refrigerator smells like old cheese and water-packed ham.

### dough scraper

If you buy a good-quality metal dough scraper, then you've just bought yourself a new best friend, especially where the crumb and mother dough chapters are concerned. A dough scraper is all you need to break up crumbs, portion the mother dough, and clean up the work surface in a cinch when you are done.

### food processor

We use an industrial-strength food processor, called a Robot Coupe. By no means do you need to use a Robot Coupe in your home kitchen, but you definitely need a food processor of some sort for grinding down crumbs for pie crusts or grinding nut brittles into almost a powder. If you don't have one, you should get married so you can put one on your wedding list. (In fact, you should probably just convince someone to marry you so you can put all of the equipment listed in this section on your gift list.)

### gloves

We use gloves not only because the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene requires us to do so, but also because we like to keep our hands clean. Molding a chocolate crust into a pie tin with bare hands is a bad idea: you'll be scrubbing chocolate out from under your fingernails for weeks. We like disposable latex gloves for the easiest cleanup.

### ice cream machine

We don't have an ice cream machine. We use soft-serve machines at the Milk Bars and at Noodle Bar, and we use a Pacojet for everything else.

The Pacojet is a marvel that takes a frozen block of sorbet or ice cream and shaves it down into tiny layers, all the while incorporating air into it, so that the final product comes out like it was just spun in an ice cream machine—except it only takes ninety seconds. The only problem with Pacojets is that they cost a small fortune.

So, we did you the honor of re-creating all of our soft-serve and Pacojet recipes so that they work in a home ice cream maker. We used a Donvier ice cream machine to test all of the recipes. If you have the ice cream

attachment for your electric free-standing mixer, that is another good one to use.

#### ice cream scoop

If you want to make cookies that look like our cookies, you need to buy a tough, stainless steel, 70 ml capacity scoop with a spring-loaded ejection button. Scoop ice cream onto plated desserts with the same scoop, or use it to portion out brioche dough (see page 236).

#### knives

The knife of a pastry chef is notoriously dull. Make no mistake, our knives aren't any different, but we only sharpen them when it comes time to break down a chicken for family meal or to dice two cases of apples. I use a paring knife for almost everything, but you will also need a larger chef's knife for a few of the recipes in the book. I recommend a 12.5 cm, 15 cm or 17.5 cm chef's knife; the most important part in choosing one is making sure you feel comfortable with its size.

#### ladle

We use a ladle to help pass things through a chinois, and that's pretty much it. We use a 50 or 75 ml ladle; anything else is too big to fit inside the bottom of the chinois. But, while a ladle makes things easier, if you don't have one, you can use the back of a spoon instead.

#### microwave

We don't have a hob (we have one lowly induction burner), and I am mad for microwave ovens. We use our microwave for everything from melting butter and chocolate to heating liquids before adding bloomed gelatin to them. The microwave is one of man's greatest inventions, and it is the cleanest and easiest way to apply heat to a world of desserts. Make sure you use a microwave-safe bowl.

It's important to note that, depending on the size and age of your microwave, it will heat more quickly, slowly, powerfully, or feebly than ours. Get to know your microwave. When melting anything in a microwave, don't power it up for 3 minutes and walk away. Check on anything you are microwaving at 15- or 30-second intervals, stirring each time to ensure a gently melted or warmed-through ingredient.

#### mixer and attachments

You need a free-standing electric mixer, and you need the paddle or flat beater, hook, and whisk attachments. A handheld electric mixer won't work for this cookbook. A lot of our recipes require mixing dough for an extended amount of time; plus, most of the cookie doughs are way too heavy for a handheld mixer.

#### molds and vessels

Our favorite molds are made of silicone. They make it easy to unmold and to clean. They certainly aren't necessary—our desserts taste the same regardless of what shape they're molded into—but they make plated desserts seem more composed and classy. The Saltine Panna Cotta (page 191), for example, calls for a 50 ml round mold. We tried to change it up for you at home, though; you can set the Cereal Milk Panna Cotta (page 37) in 150 ml juice glasses from your cupboard.

#### parchment paper

We get parchment paper in sheets that perfectly fit our full-sized baking trays. You can get by with using greaseproof paper, or use a silicone baking mat if you have one. Just don't use aluminum foil; it conducts more heat and will burn the bottom of your cookies.

#### peeler

A peeler is not a necessity, but it will make your life a lot easier when it comes to peeling apples, carrots, potatoes, and things of that nature. As with a chef's knife, make sure you choose a peeler you are comfortable holding in your hand.

#### pie tins

We use 25 cm disposable aluminum foil pie tins that are 2.5 cm deep. We use disposable tins because of the insane number of pies we bake off every day. If you already have a 23 cm pie tin, you can totally use it; just keep in mind that when you are molding a crust or filling it you may need to adjust the measurements and bake times (where applicable) slightly. If you're giving away pies left and right, though, you should definitely use disposable ones so you don't have to remember which friend ended up with your cute pie plate.

#### rolling pin

There is a wealth of pie recipes in this book, but not a single one of them involves rolling out pie dough with a rolling pin. I think that's pretty cool. You will only need a rolling pin for the Cinnamon Bun Pie (page 152) and the mother dough chapter (page 218) and to break up pieces of nut brittles (page 167) before you grind them down. That's it.

#### saucepans

We love All-Clad—their pots are the best. They have heavy bottoms that rarely cause anything to burn. To cook from this book, you need three heavy-bottomed saucepans: a small one that holds 1 to 2 litres, a medium one that holds 3 to 4 litres, and a large one that holds 4 to 6 litres.