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# The Kitchen Counter Cooking School: How A Few Simple Lessons Transformed Nine Culinary Novices Into Fearless Home Cooks



## Synopsis

After graduating from Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, writer Kathleen Flinn returned with no idea what to do next, until one day at a supermarket she watched a woman loading her cart with ultraprocessed foods. Flinn's "chefternal" instinct kicked in: she persuaded the stranger to reload with fresh foods, offering her simple recipes for healthy, easy meals. The Kitchen Counter Cooking School includes practical, healthy tips that boost listeners' culinary self-confidence, strategies to get the most from their grocery dollars, and simple recipes that get listeners cooking.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I read Flinn's previous book, *The Sharper Your Knife, The Less You Cry* and I didn't fall in love with it, but thought it was interesting. This book came highly recommended to me by several people and so I was looking forward to reading it and maybe learning a little, and hearing about the cooking school Flinn developed. And then...I don't know. There's something about this book I just don't like. Parts of the book seemed, for the lack of a better word, infomercial-ish. Like, she's using all this "sales language" to sell the cooking school attendees (and the readers) on why they should be doing something, and it's supposed to be really heartfelt and authentic, but all I can hear in my head is Ron Popeil saying "But WAIT, THERE'S MORE!!" It's hard for me to pin down exactly why I felt this way, but that's how I felt. Maybe it's because 99% of what Flinn talks about in the book is old news to me? I cook at home a lot - we only eat out, in our house, once a week, and I cook dinner from scratch at least four or five nights a week. I am not a "foodie" but I am aware of things like

preservatives, why you should eat grassfed beef, buying organic, food waste, etc. I think maybe if you had no awareness of these things, the book would be very interesting and it would teach you things you didn't know. For me, I felt like she went on and on about things that have been very well-covered in other books and in the media and so parts of the book dragged on, while in the meantime I am hearing that chipper Ron Popeil voice in my head. At one point I got this flash vision of Flinn standing in the cooking-school kitchen, clutching a cookbook, with the same bright eyes and sincere, elated spirit of a religious missionary, evangelically preaching the cook-at-home gospel to the masses.

I'm a closet foodie and I love to cook and bake, but after working all day I don't have the energy. After reading this book I realized I'm far from alone. For The Kitchen Counter Cooking School project, author Kathleen Flinn recruited nine volunteers who needed help. Each had something that needed improvement - they were cooking unhealthy food, buying take-out and resorting to what they thought would be the fastest and most convenient method of food preparation. All the volunteers were women and I could relate to all of them to some degree. At the start of the book, the author introduces each volunteer by describing a visit to their homes and in particular their kitchens. There were issues with outdated food, too much food as well as content. Food labels were looked at, cooking methods discussed and even storage issues confronted. Each woman was surprised when a spotlight was pointed at their fridge and cupboards. Sometimes it takes an outsider to say, yep, storing 15 boxes of pre-made pasta dinners at this cost doesn't make sense when you can make something yourself for a fraction of the price, is much healthier and doesn't take nearly as much time as you'd think if you know what you're doing. The author rented a kitchen and once a week the volunteers learned how to do exactly that. The book is divided into parts and each describes a food product or group and how best to prepare it. The volunteers were given the tools and instructions and were encouraged to experiment. Their delight in discovering that they could produce healthy and attractive dishes was evident. I like how the self-esteem of a person can be raised just by learning a method of cooking they previously thought had been impossible to master.

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