



## Cooking With Booze

by Ryan Jennings and David Steele

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# In the Spirit of Things

Reviewed by Linda L. Richards

Imagine: a little butter, a little garlic, equal glugs of maple syrup and rye whiskey. A little lemon juice. You melt it. You simmer it. You stir it. You set it aside. Next, you get your mitts on some nice salmon fillet, you replace the salmon skin with bacon then you let it sit in the cooled sauce you made just before. After three hours, you sauté each fillet for three minutes per side. Then, if you've a mind to, you mix yourself a Manhattan -- rye, vermouth, Angostura bitters -- then kick back to enjoy the Canadian Club and Maple-Glazed Salmon you just made.

Imagine something else: maybe lunch the following day. Bacon, onions, a nice Bordeaux. Onion soup. Topped with toasted bits of baguette and grated Gruyère cheese. Popped under the broiler until the cheese melts and the whole mess becomes irresistible. But, while it's doing that, shake cognac and citrus juices, strain into an old-fashioned glass and sip it while your classic French Onion Soup turns golden and starts to bubble.

Imagine: a book filled not just with recipes, but with ideas and inspirations. At least, that's the message that *Cooking With Booze* sent me. The recipes here are solid, easy to follow and surprisingly good and varied. And though you'll find more pedestrian versions of most of these recipes elsewhere, that little something extra in each one can cause you to reexamine dishes you thought you knew and entertain introducing a new element. Vodka Salmon Nests. Coddled Eggs with Jägermeister and Brie. Buttermilk Pancakes with Boozy Bananas. Beer-Poached Sausage Jambalaya. Rémy Martin Risotto. *Cooking With Booze* stands the kitchen on end. In a world where you can add tequila to fajitas or prepare Cognac Ketchup, you

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realize very quickly that just about anything is possible.

"*Cooking with Booze* is about two things," write authors Ryan Jennings and David Steele in their introduction, "eating and drinking. It applies the chutzpah of frat antics and open-bar weddings to one of the last bastions of cold sobriety -- the kitchen."

And while they bring a sort of frat boy exuberance to much of the prose that accompanies the recipes, those recipes are themselves carefully conceived and described. In the same introduction, they offer advice for approaching the book's subject:

*Think of your liquor cabinet as an extension of your spice rack. Each bottle contains unique flavors and aromas that can't be replicated by herbs, extracts or other ingredients. These flavors add depth to dishes and work in virtually any type of cooking.*

And on this sober recommendation, they add one... well... less sober (back to the frat boy mystique, I guess):

*Every recipe includes a drink recommendation. We implore you to try these -- each one has been carefully selected and repeatedly tested to ensure it complements the preparation of the dish.*

I like *Cooking with Booze*. The authors have hit just the right notes, combining a breezy tone with recipes created and shared carefully. The design of the book is very good, as well, though it loses marks for photography and food styling, both of which are probably the worst I've seen in a book this good. Some of both are very, very good, but a small amount of it is just terrible. For instance, Lemon and Fennel Risotto shouldn't look like potato salad or rice pudding and I'm pretty sure Scotch-Smoked Salmon Penne shouldn't look unappetizing. It's a bit odd because some of the photography and styling here -- actually, the larger portion -- are just gorgeous.

Spotty styling aside, *Cooking with Booze* is, quite simply, an excellent book. I anticipate it'll be helping out in my kitchen for quite some time. | *October 2006*

[Linda L. Richards](#) is the editor of *January Magazine*. Her latest novel, *Calculated Loss*, is set in

Vancouver, where Madeline Carter sets out to investigate the suspicious death of a professional chef.



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