

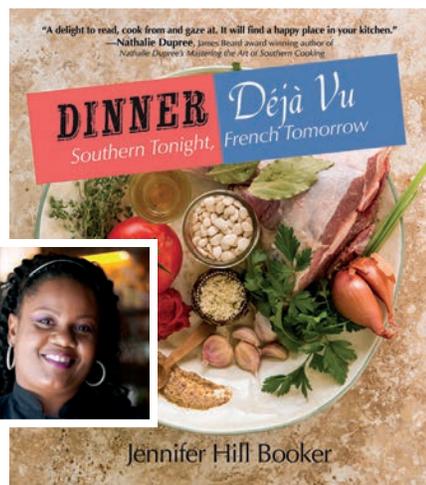
Tips and Tricks for Publishing that First Cookbook

How to avoid common missteps that could foil your first cookbook

By Jody Shee

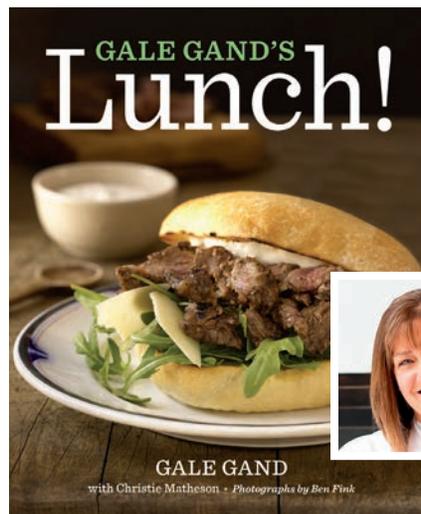
As chefs in a media-focused world, you might have felt driven to publish your recipes in a cookbook. We asked a few authors to share the mistakes they made and advise others how to avoid similar blunders.

Don't assume readers know how to cook. Lilburn, Ga.-based Jennifer Hill Booker, CEC, culinary educator and author of two Southern cuisine-themed cookbooks, admits she assumed too much of the reader at first. "You have to spell everything out, like the size of the bowl, how much water to put in the stock pot and how long to boil it," she says.



Jennifer Hill Booker

Don't make your recipes too unapproachable. Gale Gand, Chicago-based pastry chef, cooking teacher, TV personality and author of nine cookbooks, admits that the ingredient lists of the recipes in her first cookbook were too long. "Each recipe included every ingredient as a chef would use in



a restaurant, but it wasn't how someone at home wants to cook," she says. She advises first-timers to keep recipes to eight ingredients or less.

Don't take a shotgun approach with your recipes. Pick a theme or a hook for your cookbook. It's not good enough to simply fill a book with recipes, says Michael Ruhlman, author and co-author of 25 books. His first solo book was *Ruhlman's Twenty: 20 Techniques, 100 Recipes, A Cook's Manifesto*. Due out in October, Ruhlman's next book also has a captivating theme, *From Scratch: 10 Meals, 175 Recipes and Dozens of Techniques You'll Use Over and Over*.

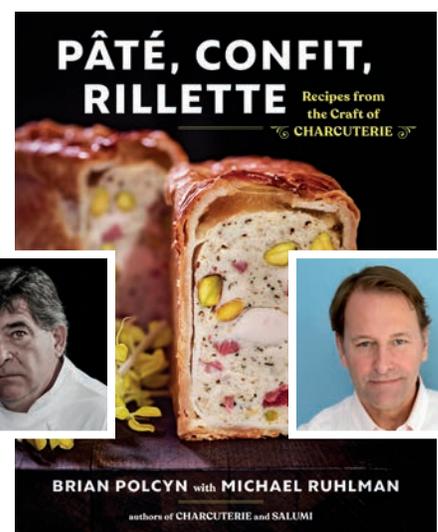
Don't slack on professionalism. Whatever your cookbook theme or concept, don't assume you already have all the knowledge. Delve into aspects with which you are unfamiliar and do

the research, says Brian Polcyn, CEC, culinary instructor at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Mich., and co-author of three charcuterie-themed cookbooks. "Validate everything you say. Once you put it in words, it better be right."

Professionalism also means getting others to test the recipes and potentially hire a professional writer. To find one, contact local newspaper food writers. "Chefs are cooks and usually are not great writers, and they are busy,"

Ruhlman says.

Don't expect publishers to be interested in your cookbook. They are inundated with book proposals. "Be able to answer why this cookbook needs to happen," says Ruhlman. "What does it add to an already overcrowded field of cookbooks? Find a book agent to help you with your proposal and pitch it to publishers."



Jody Shee, a Kauai, Hawaii-based freelance writer and editor, previously was editor of a foodservice magazine. She has more than 20 years of food-writing experience and writes the blog www.sheefood.com.



Acts of Congress

By Heather Henderson

Ten years after the founding of the American Culinary Federation, as war raged just on the other side of the ocean, chefs gathered in New York City to celebrate cooking and camaraderie. It was the first Culinary Congress, held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on November 6-9, 1939.

At that time, the ACF was structured differently. Rather than a single organization with local chapters all flying the ACF banner, the organization was an umbrella institution over a number of groups, including the Chefs de Cuisine Association of America, Société Culinaire Philanthropique, the Vatel Club and others.

The Culinary Congress was the precursor to today's ACF National Convention. But it was quite different from the events we know today. At the National Convention in Orlando this year, a diverse crowd of more than 1,300 chefs took part in exciting demonstrations and workshops, enjoyed delicious food, enjoyed live music and generally had a lot of fun.

The first Culinary Congress was a somewhat stuffier affair: a few hundred men gathered to discuss matters of business. In 1939, the role of chef was still considered a part of the

service class, and hadn't yet been elevated to "professional" status by the Department of Labor. The chefs who made up the ACF and its subsidiaries at that time felt underrepresented and forgotten. The goal of the Congress was to unite all of America's chefs to give them a strong voice. Joseph Frederique, then President of the Chefs de Cuisine Association of America, spoke at the event, saying, "We are out to make our profession greater and better known. We want to do our share in the activities of this great and busy nation which takes good food for granted."

During the three-day conference, the chefs discussed problems facing their profession, and voted on new ways to move things forward. They debated over whether the ACF should begin sponsoring apprenticeships, whether menus should be written in English rather than French to allow the American public to understand what they were ordering, and discussed how sanitation standards could be improved. Eventually, they agreed to form an apprenticeship committee, use standardized English culinary terms, and create a committee to appoint some chefs as sanitation inspectors. They also established steps to expand the ACF and invite in more culinarians, including bakers, butchers and pastry chefs, to strengthen the organization.

Though the event was light on celebrity speakers, competitions and parties, the First Culinary Congress clearly laid the foundation for today's ACF and the culinary profession in America as we now know it.

Above: Attendees of the First Culinary Congress at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on November 6, 1939