

BOOKS A MILLION
BAREFOOT CONTESSA
MAKE IT AHEAD

Q. Where did the theme for your new cookbook *Make It Ahead* come from?

A. When I started thinking about my next cookbook, I realized that we get asked one question all the time—“Can I make it ahead?” The question is usually something like, “Can I make Christmas cookies when I have time in August and freeze them until Christmas?” (No, you really can’t, but you can make my **Ginger Shortbread** dough, freeze it, and bake it off in December!) After thirty years in the food business, I’ve mastered lots of ways to cook ahead and reduce stress, so I decided to write a book about it.

Q. What’s your favorite recipe in this book?

A. I love the recipes for things you absolutely think cannot be made ahead, but I’ve figured out how to do it—**Make-Ahead Roast Turkey, Make-Ahead Turkey Gravy with Onions & Sage, Make-Ahead Goat Cheese Mashed Potatoes, and Make-Ahead Whipped Cream.**

Q. How are you inspired to make new recipes?

A. I always say that I don’t think of new things sitting at home alone—I have to get out and see what people are doing in restaurants, specialty food stores, farmers’ markets. For example, I saw some kale and Brussels sprouts at a farm stand and I was inspired to make the **Winter Slaw** with shredded kale, Brussels sprouts, lemon juice, and shaved Parmesan. It’s simple and delicious!

Q. What cookbook author has been your biggest influence?

A. When Jeffrey and I were first married, we took a four-month camping trip in Europe, mostly in France. I was so inspired by the extraordinary food markets that I saw, that I came home and bought myself Julia Childs’ two-volume set, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. I cooked my way through those books, and Julia truly taught me how to cook. She still influences me with the make-ahead **Easy Coquille Saint Jacques** in this book.

Q. With all the things you've done, including working in the White House on nuclear energy policy, is there anything you'd like to do that you haven't done?

A. I've been so lucky in my life and there have been so many surprises along the way, such as writing cookbooks and having a television show, that I often say, "If my life could simply stay like this, I'll be very happy!" But then something interesting and fun comes out of left field and I decide to do it.

Q. With the Food Network show and writing cookbooks, how often do you get to kick back and enjoy your own food?

A. Almost every day!! Besides making dinner parties for Jeffrey and our friends on the weekends, on most week days I meet my team—Barbara Libath and Lidey Heuck—in the barn, which is about 100 yards from my house. We cook together in the morning and if it's good, we eat it for lunch! Sometimes it's a delicious healthy salad like **Quinoa Tabbouleh with Feta** but, sadly, sometimes it's something decadent like **Skillet Brownies**. We often joke, "Just another dreadful day working at Barefoot Contessa!"