New England clam, Manhattan red, and corn--that's the chowder story, right? Wrong. In 50 Chowders, award-winning chef Jasper White explores a surprisingly wide range of these savory one-pot meals while also offering chowder history and folklore, in-depth ingredient profiles, cooking tips, and technique instruction. (Did you know that chowder is best cured for one hour to three days after its made to allow flavors to meld?) Probably the last word on the subject, the book delivers the kind of comprehensive culinary profile that enlightens even seasoned cooks. Everyone will find its recipes tempting and approachable. Beginning with a history of chowder--White sets its birth in the 18th century, citing among its possible inventors Native Americans, French or English fishermen, or settlers in Canada and Massachusetts--the book then explores typical chowder ingredients such as the all-important salt pork. Recipes follow for classic seafood chowders and for farmhouse brews such as Spring-Dug Parsnip, Shaker Fresh Cranberry Bean, and Nantucket Veal. Other chowder newcomers include Digby Bay Scallop Chowder with Cabbage and Bacon, Lightly Curried Mussel Chowder, and Bermuda Fish Chowder, which is served, deliciously, with a pitcher of rum. White also provides a chapter on chowder companions such as common crackers and includes recipes for Cheddar Cheese Biscuits and Skillet Corn Bread, among other go-withs. With eight pages of color photos and numerous technique illustrations, the book gives a humble but essential American dish its full due at last. --Arthur Boehm

My Personal Review:
This is a great (understatement) book beyond just the recipes. I grew up in a coastal area in the Northeast, yet despised the common clam chowder that ended up on our dinner table from time to time. The thought of salty milk flavored broth and rubberized clams that I could never bite all the way through gave me a tremendous aversion to the canned stuff. As I grew older and developed a love for good food and fresh ingredients, I stumbled back onto homemade chowder and soups. This book is a must have for
anyone who makes any kind of soup at home and has at least a passing taste for seafood. As a former Rhode Islander who lived on the east bay, White's references and stories that lead up to most of the recipes serve up some great nostalgia. White's stories are colorful in their subtle detail and provide an appreciation for the casual and organic nature of chowders and seafood based stews. All the recipes I've tried so far, about 8 of them, have been excellent. My all around favorite has been the New England Fish Chowder (pg. 79). There are also great basics like several ways to create different stocks which can be used in a variety of rice dishes, like risotto for example. My wife and I have dozens of cookbooks, and this is by far my favorite and second most frequently used behind Betty Crocker's Cookbook (believe it or not). It's also a generally interesting read.

One side note, over the years I've tried to use salt pork, which White, like other chowder recipe authors recommends for several dishes. I use a cast iron Dutch oven which cooks well and evenly, but I've always found that salt pork didn't cook well for me and the taste, almost metallic, undermined the flavor of any chowder. I try to use good quality smoked bacon for the best results. I only mention it because if I felt that salt pork was a necessity for chowder, I would probably never make it again.

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50 Chowders: One Pot Meals - Clam, Corn, & Beyond by Jasper White - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!