Vegetable Harvest: Vegetables at the Center of the Plate by Patricia Wells

What A Great Find!

To dispense with a puzzlement right away--though named Vegetable Harvest, Patricia Wellss marvelous 190-plus recipe collection doesnt center on those edibles exclusively. Rather, it offers a well-rounded dish selection that puts them to brilliant use, often as supporting players (except, of course, in chapters titled Vegetables and Potatoes). This bit of culinary license shouldnt discourage anyone from buying the book, whose recipes, such as Baby Squid Salad with Garlic, Olives, Tomatoes and Parsley; Penne with Fava Beans, Basil Puree, and Parmesan; and Lamb Couscous with Chickpeas and Zucchini, exemplify all thats remarkable about Wellss approach to modern French cooking. Emphasizing simplicity, ingredient freshness and, yes, ease of preparation, the dishes--including breads and desserts like Lemon and Rosemary Flatbread and Almond Buttermilk Sorbet--will delight any cook who prizes direct yet brilliantly orchestrated flavor. In addition to wine advice, Wells also offers a pantry chapter including sauce and vinaigrette recipes--Creamy Lemon-Chive Dressing is one--nearly worth owning the book for. In works including The Provence Cookbook and Bistro Cooking, Wells brought French cooking to the American kitchen in a way both authentic and relaxed. Vegetable Harvest furthers that approach spectacularly. --Arthur Boehm

After reading some of the negative reviews I almost didn't buy this book. Since I have Patricia Wells' other books, I thought I would bite the bullet and try this one. I'm so happy I did! I read the introductions to each recipe in one sitting and imagined I was in France again. Yes, some of the recipes are simple, but others are more complex. You can choose what you're in the mood for. There are recipes for winter vegetables and summer vegetables. I made the simple pepper soup (with orange peppers) and it was great. The special ingredient to add at the end is definitely walnut oil. Since everyone is starting 2009 on a diet, this book is perfect inspiration to cut back on heavy dishes with lots of calories and to eat healthfully.
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