

# Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation

By Michael Pollan

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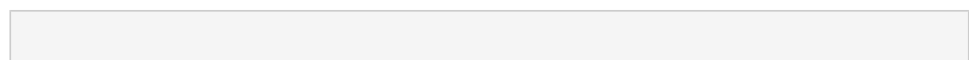
## Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation By Michael Pollan

**\*\*Now a docu-series streaming on Netflix, starring Pollan as he explores how cooking transforms food and shapes our world. Oscar-winning filmmaker Alex Gibney executive produces the four-part series based on Pollan's book, and each episode will focus on a different natural element: fire, water, air, and earth. \*\***

In *Cooked*, Michael Pollan explores the previously uncharted territory of his own kitchen. Here, he discovers the enduring power of the four classical elements—fire, water, air, and earth—to transform the stuff of nature into delicious things to eat and drink. Apprenticing himself to a succession of culinary masters, Pollan learns how to grill with fire, cook with liquid, bake bread, and ferment everything from cheese to beer.

Each section of *Cooked* tracks Pollan's effort to master a single classic recipe using one of the four elements. A North Carolina barbecue pit master tutors him in the primal magic of fire; a Chez Panisse-trained cook schools him in the art of braising; a celebrated baker teaches him how air transforms grain and water into a fragrant loaf of bread; and finally, several mad-genius “fermentos” (a tribe that includes brewers, cheese makers, and all kinds of picklers) reveal how fungi and bacteria can perform the most amazing alchemies of all. The reader learns alongside Pollan, but the lessons move beyond the practical to become an investigation of how cooking involves us in a web of social and ecological relationships. Cooking, above all, connects us.

The effects of not cooking are similarly far reaching. Relying upon corporations to process our food means we consume large quantities of fat, sugar, and salt; disrupt an essential link to the natural world; and weaken our relationships with family and friends. In fact, *Cooked* argues, taking back control of cooking may be the single most important step anyone can take to help make the American food system healthier and more sustainable. Reclaiming cooking as an act of enjoyment and self-reliance, learning to perform the magic of these everyday transformations, opens the door to a more nourishing life.



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## **Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation** By Michael Pollan Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

**An Amazon Best Book of the Month, April 2013:** Who has untangled the nature of modern America's relationship with food more effectively than Michael Pollan? After sharing the experience of growing his own food in *Second Nature*, he illuminated how our appetites drive the evolution of edible plants with *The Botany of Desire*. Then he pondered *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, weighing our precarious food chain and popularizing the pleasures of eating local; *In Defense of Food* and *Food Rules* distilled his conclusions into a manifesto and a manual. With *Cooked*, he closes the seed-to-table loop with a passionate exploration of the satisfying transformation of grilling, braising, baking, and fermenting--and their primal roots. Learning to cook elevated humans from lone animals into increasingly intelligent, civilized groups, and though we spend scant time doing real cooking, we've become obsessed with watching people cook--a paradox that points to longing for a lost experience. Through his own experiences making and enjoying food with pit masters, chefs, bakers, and "fermentos," he retraces our path to connection with real ingredients and health for people and planet. Whether you're sympathetic or skeptical, you can't help but appreciate Pollan's genius for conveying the elemental appeal of making a meal. --Mari Malcolm

From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* Pollan's newest treatise on how food reaches the world's tables delves into the history of how humankind turns raw ingredients into palatable and nutritious food. To bring some sense of order to this vast subject, he resurrects classical categories of fire, water, air, and earth. Pollan visits pit masters to learn what constitutes authentic barbecue. An Italian-trained Iranian American teaches him the subtleties of proper cooking in pots, how to coax maximum flavor from humble vegetables, herbs, meats, and water. Baking trains Pollan to watch, listen, and feel the action of living yeasts in doughs. The harnessing of fungi and molds to ferment sauerkraut and beer and produce cheeses illuminates the fine and ever-shifting boundaries between tastiness and rot and how the human palate can be trained. Four recipes accompany the text, and an extensive bibliography offers much deeper exploration. Pollan's peerless reputation as one of America's most compelling expositors of food and human sustainability will boost demand. --Mark Knoblauch

From Bookforum

Even when he's championing his ethical concerns, Pollan is a researcher, a prodigious gatherer and synthesizer of vast reams of information. Having thoroughly scutinized every other link in the food chain, he finally turns his skills to the one link missing from his repertoire. And in the process, he learned to cook. The chapters and their signature recipes are meant to stand in for the traditional four elements (water, earth, air, and fire). And each of these natural forces, Pollan writes, signifies one of the "great transformations of nature into culture we call cooking." The author's project is, in fact, nearly as all encompassing and essential as the elements themselves, ranging across several disciplines, embracing perspectives both stringently objective and deeply personal, and introducing us to a novel's worth of colorful characters whom he enlists to teach him the cooking method at hand. *Cooked* is a potently seductive invitation to discover—or rediscover—our most primal connection to the natural world, and it will likely induce more than a few readers to dust off their little-used pots and pans and to brush up on some essential knife skills. The only problem with *Cooked* is that, at a lengthy—albeit entrancing—450-some pages, it'll be quite a while before you get back into the kitchen. —Linda Delibero

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Donald Perkins:**

Have you spare time for just a day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open as well as read a book eligible Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You already know beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have other opinion?

**Juan Crowe:**

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**Micah Clark:**

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**Mildred Timm:**

Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Most of us recommend that straight away because this guide has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nevertheless delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to get every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation nevertheless doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource information that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can certainly drawn you into new stage of crucial pondering.

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