

## ON THE BOOKSHELF

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Culinary Artistry

Some cooks look to books not for precise ingredients and specific instructions, but for inspiration.

I've got a book for those cooks.

It's the loftily named CULINARY ARTISTRY by Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page (1996), also the authors of the better known BECOMING A CHEF. It's not a cookbook per se. Nor is it a treatise on the techniques every cook ought to know. And it's certainly not a collection of culinary prose. It's more a style manual for those who need to find out if a certain something will go with another certain something.

The most relevant information is found in the aptly named section "Matches Made In Heaven." Arranged alphabetically, the list comprises about 328 ingredients and seasonings and, for each ingredient listed, the authors provide several complementary flavors. It may not come as any surprise that the entries under beef ribs read ginger, horseradish, mustard, potatoes, tomatoes. But it is incredibly liberating, when in a chicken rut, to alight on the appropriate page and find 57 compatible ingredients for a plain old hen. When the vegetable bin is overflowing with leafy greens or I'm flummoxed over a side dish for a dinner party, I consider it a godsend to flip through the pages and decide on mustard with the greens and walnuts with the watercress. And it's inspiring to be reminded in the midst of Thanksgiving chaos that perhaps that pear dish needs a sprinkling of black pepper rather than a drizzle of honey.

As with any reference work, it's not the entire book I value so much as a particular page or two in a desperate moment. The balance of the book's 426 pages are chapters on composing a dish and a menu, complete with advice from restaurant chefs. I confess I haven't read the book cover to cover. And I doubt I ever will. But it's nevertheless the one book that regularly makes the commute from office desk to kitchen counter.