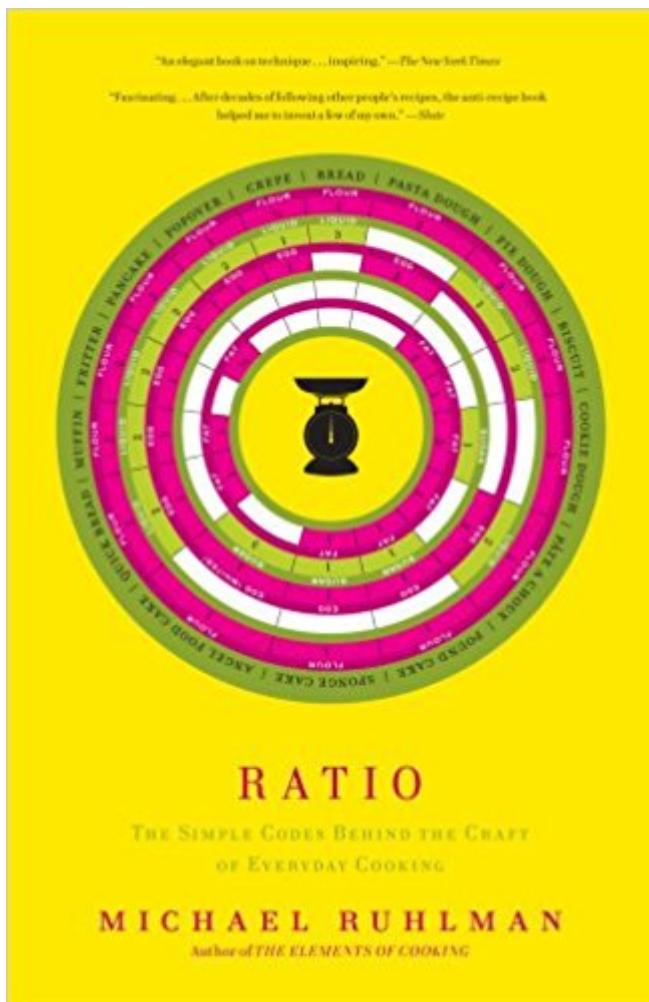


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Ratio: The Simple Codes Behind The Craft Of Everyday Cooking



Synopsis

Michael Ruhlman's groundbreaking bestseller takes us to the very "truth" of cooking: it is not about recipes but rather about basic ratios and fundamental techniques that makes all food come together, simply. When you know a culinary ratio, it's not like knowing a single recipe, it's instantly knowing a thousand. Why spend time sorting through the millions of cookie recipes available in books, magazines, and on the Internet? Isn't it easier just to remember 1-2-3? That's the ratio of ingredients that always make a basic, delicious cookie dough: 1 part sugar, 2 parts fat, and 3 parts flour. From there, add anything you want—chocolate, lemon and orange zest, nuts, poppy seeds, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, almond extract, or peanut butter, to name a few favorite additions. Replace white sugar with brown for a darker, chewier cookie. Add baking powder and/or eggs for a lighter, airier texture. Ratios are the starting point from which a thousand variations begin. Ratios are the simple proportions of one ingredient to another. Biscuit dough is 3:1:2—or 3 parts flour, 1 part fat, and 2 parts liquid. This ratio is the beginning of many variations, and because the biscuit takes sweet and savory flavors with equal grace, you can top it with whipped cream and strawberries or sausage gravy. Vinaigrette is 3:1, or 3 parts oil to 1 part vinegar, and is one of the most useful sauces imaginable, giving everything from grilled meats and fish to steamed vegetables or lettuces intense flavor. Cooking with ratios will unchain you from recipes and set you free. With thirty-three ratios and suggestions for enticing variations, *Ratio* is the truth of cooking: basic preparations that teach us how the fundamental ingredients of the kitchen—water, flour, butter and oils, milk and cream, and eggs—work. Change the ratio and bread dough becomes pasta dough, cakes become muffins become popovers become crepes. As the culinary world fills up with overly complicated recipes and never-ending ingredient lists, Michael Ruhlman blasts through the surplus of information and delivers this innovative, straightforward book that cuts to the core of cooking. *Ratio* provides one of the greatest kitchen lessons there is—and it makes the cooking easier and more satisfying than ever.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ruhlman, who explained the basic ingredients, tools, and cookbooks essential to the home chef in *The Elements of Cooking* (2007), now offers an illuminating read on the magic numbers that lie at the heart of basic cookery. He divides the book into five parts (doughs, stocks, sausages, sauces, and custards). In each section he explains what essential properties make the ratios work and the subtle variations that differentiate, for instance, a bread dough (five parts flour, three parts water) from a biscuit dough (three parts flour, one part fat, two parts liquid). While making his case that "possessing one small bit of crystalline information can open up a world of practical applications" gets a little repetitive, it's certainly a lesson worth taking to heart. This revealing and remarkably accessible read offers indispensable information for those ready to cook by the seat of their pants; with a handy grasp of these ratios (and a dash of technique), willing chefs should have no excuse to remain tethered to recipe cards and cookbooks. --Ian Chipman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Cooking, like so many creative endeavors, is defined by relationships. For instance, knowing exactly how much flour to put into a loaf of bread isn't nearly as useful as understanding the relationship between the flour and the water, or fat, or salt. That relationship is defined by a 'ratio,' and having a ratio in hand is like having a secret decoder ring that frees you from the tyranny of recipes. Professional cooks and bakers guard ratios passionately so it wouldn't surprise me a bit if Michael Ruhlman is forced into hiding like a modern-day Prometheus, who in handing us mortals a power better suited to the gods, has changed the balance of kitchen power forever. I for one am grateful. I suspect you will be too." -- Alton Brown, author of "I'm Just Here for the Food"

After reading through the book, I was left feeling that it should have offered me a lot more. Perhaps Mr. Ruhlman should have given the basic ratio, and then gone on to explain what the results would be. After that, he could have discussed how changing each ingredient in the ratio would change the

results. For example, a cook will get some decent bread by using the 5:3 ratio in the book and a standard breadmaking technique. However, if she reduces the water, the bread will be better for bagels and pretzels. If she increases the water, it will tend toward a ciabatta or pugliese. Changing the salt and yeast will affect the rise time and flavor. That's how knowing a ratio becomes useful. The cook knows altering it little in one direction will change the results in a predictable way. Some of this information was haphazardly indicated in the chapter introductions, but it would have been much more effective if it were thoroughly explained and organized in the context of the recipe ratio. To me, this was the information missing that would have made this book an invaluable resource. It's not just knowing the ratios - it's knowing how to tweak them to get the results I want in each particular instance. I think any mid-level cook knows that adding a few herbs and spices to their homemade biscuits won't break the recipe. But if she wants to be able to tweak her basic biscuit recipe so that just a little more moist and tender to go with fried chicken, or a little more sturdy to stand up to a lot of sausage gravy, this book doesn't offer anything. Many problems with recipes can be solved by altering the ratio slightly: cookies spreading too much, cakes collapsing, biscuits not rising, bread too dense, pie dough overbrowning, etc. (Of course, these problems can also sometimes be solved by technique, but because technique is not the theme of the book, I'm not going to fault Mr. Ruhlman for hardly mentioning it.) If the book explained how slightly altering the standard ratio affects the result, not only could I have improvised the perfect biscuit for each situation, but I could have better used the book to fix unsatisfactory (but promising) recipes. Since the entire book could probably be summed up in a chart (with baking times and temperatures when required), I think the price is way out of line with its value. Since most passionate home cooks probably already have a decent set of recipes that duplicate what the book offers, I can't say it's even worth the recipes. Two stars for a good idea.

Although I liked the book, I find the concept somewhat strange. Ruhlman seems to mock those that need recipes (and claims this book is aimed at a more casual, home cook) yet fails to grasp that unless someone uses these ratios on a daily basis, remembering them is tantamount to remembering any said recipe. The necessity to look up a ratio is still there, meaning any home cook will still need to look up a "recipe", except said recipe will be less precise. I love the concept, and there is some truly great information / technique to glean, but if you are thinking this will free you of recipes, think again.

This is a great resource and inspiring book which makes total sense for a home cook. For a

professional chef and those who is entering as an apprentice will find this book as a quick resource. He just provides basic ratios in cooking and baking, but also provides some common cooking and baking techniques into each of the ratios. He also provides some variations like adding different ingredients and what properties they do on making certain recipes. This book will inspire an intermediate foodie, or a novice use the ratios as a guide and be free to create your own ratios with doughs, etcetera that are not mentioned in the book. I am able to create few baking recipes of my own just like a chef would do. Of course, experimentation with different techniques and tasting your creations is part of the process of making successful and inventive recipes, so you can share your creations with others.

This is a gem of a little book. I am a big fan of Ruhlman. He writes clearly and unpretentiously. Once you understand what is in this book, you will be that much better a cook because it lays out the foundation for any cook to develop their own recipes and stretch their creativity. In the top five of my favorite books about cooking.

This book is fabulous! It gives the reader a thorough understanding of the principles of creating dishes without recipes! WOW! I am very impressed! I also bought "TWENTY" which is another of Michael Ruhlman's books! I can't speak highly enough of both of these! I am a restaurant owner and have learned SO much - page after page - from these!

Someone we know suggested that my son would enjoy this as a cookbook. He was correct. My son enjoys this book. This book provides ratios of cooking. You can take some amount of flour, add some amount of water and you have pie dough. You want more, just increase the ratio. You need less, decrease the ratio. Memorize a few ratios and you have a cookbook in your head. Start experimenting, as any teenager wants to do, and you can soon figure out what happens when you add too much water or too little to your pie dough. You will quickly be able to come up with what you think is the best pie dough for your liking. I enjoy reading cookbooks and I enjoy learning new skills. I think I might not use this book as much as my son who really enjoys the math and can easily memorize. For me what I liked was reading about the ratios and then reading the recipes that were attached to that. So, a chapter in the book might look like this....here is the ratio for cookie dough and here is why it works and how you can change it and here is a sample cookie dough recipe. Enjoyable.

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