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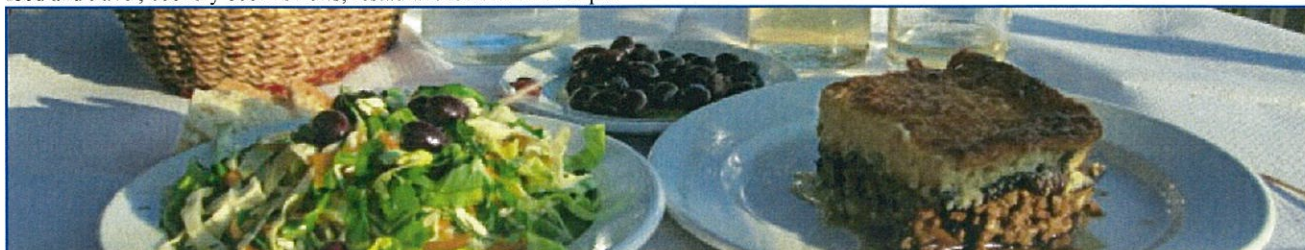
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Top Ten Cookery Books: Mark Mosimann

January 31, 2012



Mark Mosimann

Mark and his brother Philipp are now joint Managing Directors of [Mosimann's](#), one of the most prestigious dining clubs in the world, and opened by their father, the famous chef Anton Mosimann OBE, in 1988. Mark also runs Mosimann's Academy, based in a converted Victorian school in Battersea, which offers a wide range of cookery courses, mainly for corporate events. It was here that Mark agreed to meet me to talk about his Top Ten Cookery Books – an especially suitable location as it houses his father's huge cookery book collection. Anton Mosimann's library contains over 6,000 cookery books and is thought to be the largest collection in the UK. There are about 4,500 books on show and the others are in storage – or kept at a bank, for some date as far back as the 15th century and are very valuable. It's a hugely impressive and exciting collection and has been catalogued by Mark's assistant Lizze so that via a quick computer link, any book can be found instantly. Rather a necessary tool when you've so many books to look through for that elusive recipe!

The library also contains a wealth of interesting things that Anton has collected over the years: there are files containing information about every trip he has ever made, going back years and years, from flight ticket stubs to restaurant bills and brochures. Other files contain copies of all the speeches he has ever given with copies of menus from the events; a row of drawers were labelled with different countries and contained menus from all parts of

the world. Mark remembered how he or his brother would be charged to carry menus out of restaurants when on holiday. It seems that no restaurant Anton has ever visited has escaped him leaving without souvenirs. But what a treasure for the food lover. Mark explained how these were research items and if, for instance, they were doing a themed meal at the club, perhaps food from south-east Asia, they would get out the menus from that place and look at them as they came up with a menu that was authentic. Other deep drawers contained files which were also themed to things like Mother's Day, and other special days and holidays. These were recipes his father had torn out of newspapers and magazines and filed and again, they were wonderful references for the club when preparing meals for special events.



Mark showed me round the cookery school and I saw where the courses were held: a large space wonderfully decorated in the Mosimann colours of black, red and yellow, and state-of-the-art equipment and individual cooking stations for each participant of the course.

The Mosimann Academy, with all its wonderful space and equipment to teach people to cook, and Anton's personal collections, is a glorious record and representation of all that he has achieved – and all that he is still doing; Mark said he was still in the kitchens at the club when in London and travelling the world to discover more about food.



When Mark and I sat down in the library to discuss his book choice, I asked him if he'd always been interested in food and he said, yes, he'd always wanted to work in the industry. From a small child, he'd been taken into nice restaurants and as a family they would talk about food and sit round a table together when they could – most often at breakfast when he was a child, as Anton would be working in the evening.

Mark loved to cook from a young age and learnt most from his mother, who did the cooking at home. After A levels he worked in fine restaurants in France and then went to Lausanne Hotel School where he studied hotel management and from there went on to work in prestigious establishments around the world, including spending four years in China. He said he had to make a choice between becoming a chef and management and although he primarily works as a manager, he does sometimes don his chef's apron and get to work in the kitchens.

Mark's style of cooking reflects the influence of the 'cuisine naturelle' that his father developed and became famous for, especially as he and his wife Jenna now have a ten-month-old daughter, who they want to love food but also to eat well and healthily. He said the Mosimann Club still doesn't possess a deep-fat fryer because of its commitment to healthy cooking. Mark likes simple cuisines and has a particular love of Chinese food from his time in China, preferring the southern Szechwan style which is more spicy and less sweet than that of Shanghai where he lived. And, as we moved on to his book choices, he said the first one reflected his and Jenna's new love of slow cookers, and is a book he bought only two months ago.

1. Ultimate Slow Cooker, Sara Lewis (2008) – Mark said it was full of great simple recipes for things like Moroccan dishes, and beef stews and the slow cooker had the advantage of keeping all the taste and the nutrients in the dish. They often chose something that would also be suitable for the baby and the slow cooker was great if Mark came in late, as the food was hot and ready to eat but not spoiled.

2. The Top One Hundred Thai Dishes, David Thompson (1993) – David Thompson, an Australian chef, opened his Nahm restaurant in London in 2001 and it was the first Thai restaurant to gain a Michelin star. Mark said he manages to create authentic flavours but with his own twist – like an 'amazing rabbit Thai curry' that Mark had enjoyed in his restaurant. Mark said he especially likes Thai cuisine and it's one that can also be light and healthy.

3. Cuisine Naturelle, Anton Mosimann (1985) – Anton's cuisine that focused on the natural flavour of the ingredients and used no dairy or alcohol was revolutionary in its time, back in the 1970s/80s. Mark told me how Anton moved to the Dorchester Hotel in London to become head chef when he was just 28. He was shocked to discover how vegetables would be cooked for hours on end and soon brought his own ideas about cooking to change things in that famous kitchen. Mark showed me some of the pictures in the book and we agreed they were visually, stunningly beautiful, but also timeless. These were dishes that you'd be served in fine restaurants today and Mark said many of the dishes at the Club were old ones, from its beginning, and new chefs had to learn how to master them – otherwise the regular clients would know they weren't right!

4. Eat Up: Food for children of all ages, Mark Hix (2000) – A beautifully presented book of good recipes for kids, which reflects again the influence Mark's small daughter is making on his cooking at home!

5. Larousse Gastronomique (First published 1938 in English) – Simply, 'the bible', according to Mark. It's one of the first books he got when he got into cooking seriously and is one of the must-haves in a kitchen. You can look up any reference to what a food is and how to prepare it, and find the classic recipe for all the classical dishes. Knowing how a dish should be, how it was originally put together, is essential to understanding it.

6. Lehrbuch der Küche, Eugene Pauli (1976) – Mark said this was similar to *Larousse* with lots of references and recipes for all the classics. It's nicely illustrated with, for instance, pictures of different kinds of mushrooms so they can be identified, or the different cuts of meat on different animals. Pauli is a Swiss chef who has worked extensively in Sweden and London. Everyone doing a cooking apprenticeship in Switzerland has to have a copy of this book, Mark told me. It goes beyond *Larousse* because it contains lots of information about how to operate a kitchen from the management level. It has all kinds of tools and information that Mark says he uses regularly in the club: menu engineering – about putting menus together so that textures, tastes etc all complement each other; it gives you the means to work out how to cost each element of a dish, which is invaluable when catering for large numbers.

7. Culinary Art and Traditions of Switzerland, Patrice Dard (1987) – This contains recipes for old Swiss dishes and shows the different cooking in the various cantons of Switzerland. Mark finds it great if friends come round and he wants to cook a traditional Swiss meal. His favourite (the book opened automatically here when I looked at it!), is Sliced Veal Zurich Style with Rosti potatoes. Mark said the cooking from different cantons varied

quite a bit – for instance, he preferred a more German-style fondue from Zurich using Emmenthal than one from a canton near France that used something like Vacherin.

8. A Book of Mediterranean Food, Elizabeth David (1950) – Mark said this was such a good book to go back to for finding out how a recipe should be made and for ingredients like mutton, which are not much used today. He said they had a dinner coming up where mutton was to be the focus of the dishes and this book was a source of great recipes. He told me they are now using Swiss cookers called Holde-omats, which are a kind of large slow cooker that always maintains the same heat. It allows them to cook to perfection all kinds of meat and keep them without spoiling for hours.

9. A Guide to Modern Cookery, Auguste Escoffier (1903) – This was a very old copy and I forgot to ask if it was a first edition. I handled it carefully! This is the source of many classical dishes. Mark said so many of the dishes we know – things ‘a la whatever’ – were created and named by Escoffier. Yet, he too was interested in and influenced by old dishes – like the Aylesbury Duck with Mint in the book, which dates from the 1700s. He created, for instance, Peach Melba while working at The Savoy. It’s a great reference book, Mark said, that he shows to new chefs. The classic recipes haven’t changed much and researching the original recipes is relevant for preparing dishes today.

10. Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management (1861) – Another very old copy! It was so wonderful to look through it. Mark said it’s fascinating and he likes the way it’s written. He read out a passage about the etiquette for a dinner and how ladies should behave when they arrive; how to behave at the table; what to say. He also told me that it was the first cookery book to use diagrams and give explanations of history with the recipes – something we take for granted these days.

When I asked Mark what his No. 1 choice would be, he unhesitatingly told me the Eugene Pauli book.

I had a wonderful time talking to Mark and seeing round the Mosimann Academy and library. There was a lovely sense of family pride and respect for the enormous amount his father, Anton, has contributed to the world of cooking. And it’s something that carries on with even the youngest member of the family being introduced to exciting flavours, good cooking and food with an emphasis on natural and healthy. Mark said that what they are doing in the Club today carries on the traditions: you don’t change something that is excellent and works so well.

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