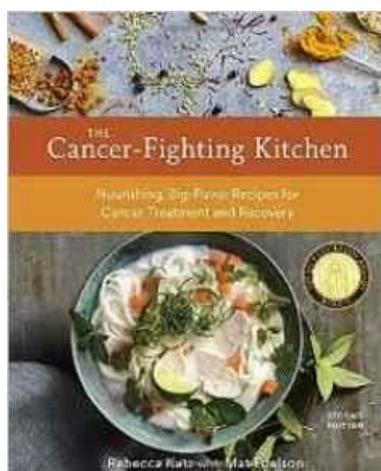


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BOOK REVIEWS

Read what people affected by cancer think about...



**The cancer-fighting kitchen.
Nourishing, big-flavor recipes for
cancer treatment and recovery
(2017)**

Katz R, Edelson M.

Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2017.

2nd edition.

xii, 228pp.

Average star rating 4.3 (out of 5)

Macmillan Cancer Support
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7UQ

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Anyone who is willing to cook from scratch and experiment with exciting flavours will find this book useful. It is ideal for the planning and preparation of food for anyone living with cancer, particularly for post-treatment, daily diet. It has great suggestions for what to eat for tasty, healthy meals and to have in house for nibbling, or to take with you when visiting for treatments and consultancy; the Anytime Bars for example (p. 125) are delicious for everyone, anywhere!

The promising Foreword is followed by an extremely positive Preface, which made me keen to read on. The key chapters and ones that I keep going back to are: The Cancer-fighting tool kit; The power of herbs and spices; and the Global Flavourprints. I intend to explore the Culinary Pharmacy more and to continue to try out the recipes. I've enjoyed trying out different ingredients, such as almond milk instead of milk, maple syrup instead of my favourite honey, kombu in the magic mineral broth, and the different combinations of flavours, such as orange and ginger chicken, and the mango coconut "Sabayon" sauce.

It is easy to understand for the most part, with explanations and examples provided, such as the concert scenario to describe the FASS (Fat, Acid, Salt and Sweet) tool. The wording is often light and amusing to counter the technical parts, e.g. I like the idea of certain groups of spices hanging out together (p. 24). The recipes are straightforward, and most ingredients are part of my usual larder cupboard, although a couple of the ingredients were not so readily available. I didn't recognise a few ingredients, because they were the American names (e.g. cilantro for coriander, arugula for rocket) or unusual; it would be useful to have alternatives. e.g. Kombu, kudzu and arugula. I spotted a couple of errors: on page 42, the last sentence is unfinished; and on page 24 under Mexican Herbs and Spices in the Global Flavorprints Table it states "Chiles", where it should be Chillies I think.

I like the enthusiasm and positive way it describes everything, the benefits of certain ingredients recommended, and particularly the spices and herbs that it favours using as much as possible – ginger, cinnamon, coriander, parsley, basil, and even chilli in rice pudding! They are such interesting and tasty combinations of flavours. I can relate to one of the reasons given to recommend using organic produce, "undergoing treatment means you're already dealing with plenty of toxins in your body; you don't want to introduce more, in the form of pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and other

drugs, in your food". I will be more inclined to check on the source of my fruit and vegetables and buy only from farm shops and markets. Dislike may be a bit strong, but it took me a little while to become familiar with some of the American names and the instructions using cups sometimes and grams at other times, inconsistently. However, the value of the content overrides any criticism!

I am finding this book quite fascinating and it is helping me to develop my cooking ideas. I am trying to use more herbs and spices in my everyday meals and different combinations that make meals so much more interesting. Where I always used to advocate adding a squeeze of lime to dishes to enhance the flavour, I have used the FASS (Fat, Acid, Sweet and Salt) tool to make a more balanced enhancement to some dishes. I have tried three or four recipes from each section and generally had favourable and positive comments from family and friends who have been helpful, enthusiastic and interested guinea pigs. It lives up to its promise in the introduction to provide a plant-based, anti-oxidant rich, anti-inflammatory whole-food diet and it gives me the confidence to use it as an inspiration of anti-cancer everyday cuisine.

I have had liver cancer, requiring liver transplant (56-65) (May 2018)

This book is most useful for anyone preparing and choosing food for a person with dietary needs, especially someone receiving or recovering from cancer treatment. It has general relevance to all stages of cancer from diagnosis, before, during and after treatment or in a palliative care setting.

It is very well structured. The first chapter of forty pages (The cancer-fighting tool kit) is divided into ten mini chapters. It describes side effects, improving appetite, and strategies for encouraging eating, with references to the relevant chapters containing those recipes. It describes the different food types and what is known about them from a nutritional viewpoint. This means that the rest of the book can concentrate on the recipes without too much detail on nutritional or medical aspects.

It is easy to understand and some technical terms are explained in the text. The ingredients are all readily obtainable and should be within everyone's budget. The authors do however recommend buying good quality organic food on the basis it will give better results. Many of the recipes serve 6, so dividing amounts will reduce cost.

The cover has a colourful design of appetising food pictures on front and back. The back cover has four commendations, all justified. The paper is of high quality and the font is easy to read, in red and black colours. Each page of a recipe is carefully formatted into a description, instructions, and a list of ingredients. Throughout, there are full-page colour plates of appetising dishes corresponding to the adjacent recipe. Although the index is large it should not be relied for being complete. An example is sea salt, which has an entry for page 37, but which is also described on page 19.

I like the way the book is structured and the detailed descriptions in the recipes to help any novice prepare an appetising meal. It has a friendly approach, giving many useful hints to be successful. It avoids being too prescriptive and often gives alternatives if an ingredient is not available. Just showing the book to a patient is likely to get a positive response as taste buds are excited.

I would have liked a note of caution that some foods may adversely interact with some chemotherapy treatments and that it is best to check with the patient's medical team. An example is green tea. This is a pity as otherwise the information given in the book is in accord with current medical literature. The author also uses sea salt as an ingredient in many recipes, without anywhere cautioning that excessive salt intake can cause health problems. However, apart from this there is nothing to dislike. It's a US book with Fahrenheit temperatures and US spelling but this isn't significant.

This book will be very helpful in encouraging patients to eat nourishing food, considering their specific needs. I recommend it not only to cancer patients but also to a wider audience of people wanting to eat healthily.

Kidney cancer survivor (66-75) (April 2018)

Anyone could find this book useful for healthy ideas on what to cook. It could be used at any stage of cancer where the patient feels weak or lacks appetite caused by the disease itself or the side effects of treatment, or after surgery when nutrients are needed to recover those that have been lost.

English is not my first language, but I found it very easy and clear to read. There were just some words that I had to check, like "arugula" (rocket). The cover and the paper look very good quality, the layout, typeface and size are correct. I would have liked a photo with each recipe, but it looks very professional.

It can be difficult to find some of the ingredients used if we are not used to them, but most of them are stocked in supermarkets and health food shops. They can be more expensive as the authors recommend using organic food to avoid more chemicals.

When a patient doesn't feel like eating, it is difficult to think what to eat or cook. This book has healthy recipes to give some creativity to the meals and make them more attractive – appearance and aroma play a big role in stimulating appetite.

I had gynaecological cancer four years ago, but am now clear; I am also a dietitian (36-45) (March 2018)

I really recommend this book to anyone caring for someone with cancer because it explains clearly in detail how the simple ingredients in our kitchens can have different impacts on the patient. There is a wide variety of dishes and drinks, even recipes for specific side-effects. I like the detail; the author explains what each ingredient is for.

It is very easy to understand; the explanations are very clear and the tone of the author makes it easy to read. The layout and photos are all very suitable and there are images throughout the whole book, making it even easier to follow.

Medical student (Under 25) (January 2018)

This book has really opened my eyes to the variety of food available, which I would have not even thought to consider. I found it so helpful and highly recommend it. It will be most useful from treatment to recovery and even afterwards to help maintain a healthy diet, especially to get back energy. People living with cancer may not necessarily have the energy to make these meals or find the time to source the ingredients, but I really enjoyed reading it; the recipes look amazing and I learnt a lot about nutrients. The author offers a lot of choices for people with cancer to enjoy but also for their families, meaning that everyone benefits from these healthy meals.

I found it easy to read. I did not understand a few words but the author explains them and goes into detail; the medical information will be especially helpful. The cover draws attention with its picture of a delicious meal, the paper is of good quality, and the photos make the recipes even more appealing.

Most recipes are easy to make with not much prep time, but some are easier than others. The ingredients will be fairly easy to source. Similar ingredients are used in a few recipes, which means you can buy them in bulk and avoid waste. I like the detail about the importance of healthy food, especially when living with cancer. Looking after my mother I've learnt that taste and appetite change daily; this book caters for these changes, showing a lighter meal option. Nausea is another big issue and the author suggest drinks or smoothies; this is great as they provide necessary protein.

My mother has terminal cancer (36-45) (December 2017)

This would be useful at any stage of cancer. The recipes are well set out and logically written. Most of the ingredients are easily sourced, but some are seasonal. The recipes would not cost too much. I like the cover, the size of the book, the clear layout, and the pictures of the food. The language is very straightforward.

The vegetable recipes are really tasty, especially those for dark green vegetables. I especially like the broccoli, ginger and garlic. The information at the beginning of the book is laid out in a good order. I would buy this book.

Endometrial cancer 2014 (66-75) (November 2017)

This is suitable for anyone, for any stage from diagnosis to living with and after cancer. The recipes are excellent, and the nutritional information is reassuring and gives amazing additional knowledge.

I like the recipes, the nutritional information, and the pictures. It is an appealing book printed on good quality paper; the cover is excellent and tempts the reader to prepare all the recipes. It is very easy to understand, and the recipes are easy to follow. Nowadays we can buy any of the ingredients for these delicious meals.

Living with breast cancer (56-65) (November 2017)

This book offers nutritional advice and delicious healthy recipes suitable for everyone. It is an important resource as the nutrients in the meals will enable you to revitalise and nourish your body throughout cancer. The recipes will assist you through each stage of cancer, whether it be protein-building foods or revitalising and energy-packed foods based on scientific research.

The basic ingredients can all be found in the local supermarket with little expense. Many meals come with options that provide “other topping ideas”. Some of these may be more difficult to source, however they are optional extras and offer great variety for the meal you choose to prepare. Each recipe is simple to follow, and everything is set out step-by-step. I had no difficulty following them to prepare the dishes and found that the ingredient portion sizes and cooking times are very accurate in achieving the perfect meal. It is a very appealing book; simply scrolling through the pages will make the mouth water.

I like the variety of foods and have now incorporated some of the recipes in our regular family food shop. I like the layout and the step by step guides. The pictures allow you to take a good look at the dish before deciding which meal to prepare.

Friend and relative of people who have had or currently have cancer (breast, lung, prostate, mouth) (36-45) (October 2017)

I like everything about this book. It has a lot of interesting facts about different herbs and vegetables. It is useful for finding new recipes that are high in nutrients, easy to make, and that may help with side effects such as nausea and tiredness. It will be useful for people with cancer, their family, friends, anyone who prepares their food.

It is in a good order and easy to understand. The author starts with her research into food and how the book can help with nutritious meals that are easy to make and eat. She then gives a breakdown of which foods help specific side effects, how to plan a menu, and how to help your taste buds recover. There’s an explanation of scientific terms, a breakdown of herbs, and tips for food storage and reheating. The recipes that follow are interesting, easy to follow and mostly use ingredients from your store cupboard. The cover is bright and appealing. The typeface is small but clear and the illustrations are good. The index is good.

Former carer (leukaemia and pancreatic cancer patients) (56-65) (October 2017)

As an advisory book on cooking with cancer-fighting ingredients, this would be beneficial for anyone interested in fighting cancer through food, be they a patient, a carer, or just wanting to try to reduce their risk. For those with cancer, it is useful for coming to terms with diagnosis, and provides a practical and useful way to attempt to take some control of the situation and use alongside medical treatments.

Many ingredients are those that we use every day – but we may not be aware of the benefits – and most are readily available at the supermarket. The book explains which foods are beneficial to treat or help to prevent ailments such as lethargy, sickness, and lack of taste during treatment. The recipes use all or mostly vegetables

and therefore amounts are easily explained by how many of each to use; where other ingredients are used, they are measured in cups or spoons for ease of reference.

I found it very easy to understand with an easy to use index where you can search for a recipe or an ingredient you especially like – this will lead you to a recipe or write-up on that item. The cover explains exactly what the book is about and sports a great design showing one of the recipes; on the back, there are several reviews from other authors and oncology medical professionals. The author has helpfully included a couple of chapters on how to use the book and what each part of the book is for. Each recipe has an introduction and story, be it how the author came across it or what is hoped to achieve by the recipe, and most have a wonderful colourful picture of the result, which is helpful if you are not quite sure how it should look. The recipes include the number of servings, preparation time, and cooking time.

I particularly like how the book isn't just a recipe book for people with cancer, but a complementary therapy book that can work very well alongside conventional treatment. The format and layout allow the reader to use all or some of the content, depending on their needs or wants – it can be picked up and used to treat a side effect as and when it arises. The foods and recipes can be used by all the family, so the patient doesn't have to feel more isolated than they possibly already feel.

What a great book and interesting read this is, with a well laid out contents page to lead you through each chapter, including the side effects of cancer treatment and how the recipes can help with each ailment. There are chapters on where to shop for the ingredients and how to store them, how to use vegetables, protein, nutritional snacks, teas, dressings, and desserts. There story around each recipe makes the reader feel that the author believes in each meal produced and the goodness in it. The bibliography and references suggest the author has undertaken a lot of research into the subject from an array of different sources and regarding different cancers.

I would recommend anyone living with cancer or those looking after them to read this book, so they can at least see how the foods they eat affect them even if they don't want to change the way they eat.

Former carer (breast, ovarian and oesophageal cancer) (46-55) (October 2017)



This will be most helpful for someone right after diagnosis, before treatment begins or during treatment once they are experiencing how their body reacts to the treatment.

I really like the first section of the book called “the cancer fighting toolkit”. It is full of wonderful information on ingredients and their nourishing abilities. It contains great information on what to expect during treatment in terms of how your body might react on treatment days. It also has useful information for carers, friends and family on how to best support the nutrition of the cancer patient.

I found the book very easy to use and full of good reference material. The recipes are easy to follow. The ingredient lists are relatively short, and the ingredients are readily available. The photos of the foods are very appetising, but I would like more photos, as there are many recipes without pictures.

Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (April 2018)

This book would be useful for those going through treatment, or who have completed treatment and wants to make improvements to their lifestyle. Many of the recipes are quite complex and would not be suitable for someone who is suffering from fatigue or other side effects during treatment but could perhaps be made by a friend or relative.

It is very easy to understand and there is little technical language. An index helps you find recipes. The recipes are quite detailed but give clear instructions and are easy to follow. Some ingredients are not commonly available in the UK but could perhaps be found in specialist shops or online. I left these out or substituted similar ingredients.

The cover is very attractive. The paper is high quality with lots of colour photographs. The food looks appetising and it is always helpful to have photographs in a recipe book. The layout is clear, as is the text. The author's tone is relaxed and friendly.

I like the range of recipes and the opportunity to try new ingredients. The instructions are clear, and the recipes turned out as expected. It was interesting to read about the compounds in different vegetables and how they might be beneficial. However, I found many recipes overwhelming, though I suspect they may be easier to prepare than they initially appear. They use a combination of imperial units and American cup measures. It is frustrating to have to look up measurements online before cooking.

I might recommend it. It will depend on their current health (lots of recipes have multiple steps) and budget (it could be expensive using these recipes every day!). I would also like more scientific evidence for the claims about the various ingredients.

Living with metastatic bowel cancer (26-35) (October 2017)



First impressions, a beautiful, glossy book with many photos. The author describes her journey compiling the book and then moves on to The Cancer-Fighting Tool Kit, a useful tool for anyone. It details foods that provide the correct nutrition for someone with cancer, the different foods for nausea caused by chemotherapy, and ideas for menu planning. It is comprehensive and a good book even without the recipes.

There is a wide choice of recipes from soups to smoothies. It uses US measures, but these can be easily converted online. Some ingredients are unusual and may be difficult to find, e.g. tamari and kombu. The recipes also use specific varieties of vegetables, e.g. garnet sweet potatoes and Yukon gold potatoes, that are unfamiliar in the UK. However, they are not essential. My problem is the number of ingredients.

You need a vast array of spices to make many of these dishes! It also promotes organic ingredients, nothing wrong with that, but they are more expensive. Many patients can't work during treatment, so this really will not be for them unless they have a large bank balance. Also, chemotherapy makes you very tired; much as I love cooking and food, I doubt I would be bothered to stand in a kitchen to put some of these recipes together if I had low energy.

Four years clear of cancer (womb) (56-65) (February 2018)

This book is easy to understand and suitable for anyone with cancer in their lives at any stage. The recipes are easy to follow and not too expensive. The cover and design are eye catching and make it attractive to read. It is straightforward, but I don't like some of the recipes as they are mainly meat free apart from a few chicken dishes. I might recommend it to people who eat a predominantly meat-free diet.

Living life post breast cancer (grade 3, aggressive) (36-45) (January 2018)

This has some great recipes and I like the science and facts behind the ingredients and their uses. I like that it can be adapted for the individual and focuses on different cancers so that people can consider which ingredients are likely to be most beneficial for them. It is clear to read and in a good order. It is attractive, and the photographs are professional and of good quality but I prefer a photograph for each dish.

Overall, it has some very good recipes that will be helpful and beneficial for people with cancer, indeed for anyone. I very much like the science and advice about ingredients linked to different cancer types and different symptoms. However, some recipes are complex, with many and specialist ingredients that are not found in all mainstream supermarkets. My experience of working with people with cancer is that they would not have the energy to make these recipes, so I do not think it is suitable for people with cancer, especially when undergoing treatment and feeling unwell.

Caring for someone with stomach cancer (26-35) (December 2017)

This would be useful for someone going through treatment or who has completed treatment and wants to make improvements to their lifestyle. Many of the recipes are complex so these would not be suitable for someone who is suffering from fatigue or other side effects during treatment but could perhaps be made by a friend or relative.

The hardback looks attractive but, disappointingly, some recipe photos depict only the ingredients; others show the finished dish, which helps in selecting these recipes as they look appetising. It is easy to read and anyone with a basic knowledge of preparing food can probably follow the recipes. However, it is written for an American readership and so contains many ingredients that are known by a different name in the UK. In addition, measurements are given in cups and cooking temperatures in Fahrenheit that require converting. The list of ingredients is long and an extensive and expensive shop would be needed to stock up before attempting these recipes.

The premise of the book is that some foods help to fight cancer and deal with the side-effects of cancer treatments. There is an extensive bibliography for anyone who wants to find out more about the scientific research into these claims. The titles of some, however, seem to show that the evidence for the efficacy of some ingredients is by no means proven. I am somewhat sceptical of these claims. I tested a handful of recipes and although I enjoy many types of foods from around the world I found some flavour combinations unusual. This is not in itself a bad thing but may require some adjustment, which may not help when the intention is to stimulate appetite.

I might recommend it. It is an interesting book to read, especially chapter 1 (The cancer fighting tool kit), which deals, amongst other topics, with enhancing flavour when the taste buds are jaded. However, any book that has healthy recipes using wholefoods and addresses a patient's food loves will probably be just as useful.

Carer (colon cancer/melanoma) (56-65) (October 2016)

This book can provide guidance to anyone, be they a cancer patient or anyone offering practical support to a patient. Food is a good commonality that can bring people together at a difficult time, breaking down barriers to communication and improving understanding. It is most useful during treatment and in continuing to maintain strong immunity as well as a healthy lifestyle.

It is a good-looking book with colourful pictures as a guide to what the dish should look like. It is simple to understand. There is no glossary and it does contain American terminology, but you soon get used to it. I like the fact that each recipe has been allocated a full page with relevant information such as prep and cooking time, storage, calories and nutritious value per serving. The different fonts and colour code make it easier to read. The recipes are straightforward if you are used to cooking. Most of the ingredients can be found in supermarkets, though in the first instance it can prove expensive. If I had difficulty finding an ingredient, I adapted the recipe.

There are many things to like about this book, from menu guidance to support individual appetite to lists of foods and their benefits. It takes side effects seriously and provides recipe guidance specific to each side effect. The concept of balanced flavour using the FASS tool is interesting as is the guidance on using herbs and spices to enhance flavouring. Eating well and using the right ingredients are all good in theory, however if it does not accommodate individual palate then it's a waste of effort and energy. I also like the fact that it encourages making several portions at a time; these can be frozen and allow a break from cooking every day, particularly if it's a new concept – it takes time to adjust to every change.

However, the ingredients are very different from what many people in the UK will be familiar with. In terms of time and energy, friends and family can assist, but moving to a totally new palate can prove challenging for some and can leave individuals already in a difficult place feeling a "failure". This book needs to be used wisely as a gradual introduction allowing space for old favourites to ensure and accommodate balance of "wants and must"; if not it could end up being a short-term fad.

Living with the consequences of breast cancer (46-55) (October 2017)

Further information

Why does Macmillan Cancer Support review books?

We use reviews to help us compile a list of suggested cancer books, the [Macmillan Core Book List](#). Cancer information centres and public libraries can use this list to select appropriate and relevant books for people affected by cancer.

We add reviews to the [Directory of information materials for people affected by cancer](#) so that people affected by cancer can see what others in a similar situation think about a book. You can also see details of all the books reviewed in the [Book reviews listing](#), which also has links to all the reviews.

We recruit most of our reviewers through the [Volunteering Village](#) and the [Cancer Voices Network](#), people affected by cancer who have signed up to help Macmillan Cancer Support in a number of ways. Volunteers are a vital part of our book review process; since 2007, over 1,500 Macmillan volunteers have written more than 6,000 reviews of over 500 different books.

If you are a health professional who would like to review books for us, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

Information and support for people affected by cancer

If you are looking for support to help you live life with cancer, you may wish to contact one of [Macmillan's cancer information and support services](#). Or you can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (Mon-Fri 9am–8pm). We have an interpreting service in over 200 languages. Just state, in English, the language you wish to use. If you are deaf or hard of hearing you can use textphone no 0808 808 0121 or Text Relay.

You can also email us using the [website enquiry form](#). Alternatively, [visit our website](#).

Feedback

If you have any comments, please [email Sue Hawkins](#), Information Materials Researcher, Macmillan Cancer Support.

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit macmillan.org.uk

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