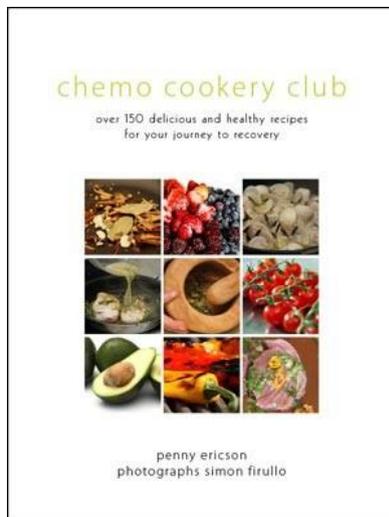


**MACMILLAN  
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# BOOK REVIEWS

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## **Chemo cookery club (2013)**

Ericson P.

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**Average star rating 4.0**

**Macmillan Cancer Support  
89 Albert Embankment  
London SE1 7UQ**

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For anyone who wants to eat well, this is a book to have on the shelf. It is most useful for changing your lifestyle; many people realise too late that they had unhealthy eating habits for too long. Cancer puts a lot into perspective.

As a designer, what I like most about it is the professional layout. It is sleek and neat and makes you feel that life is so much better with it. I love the white spaces. I have a few cookery books and this one stands out. You feel it's healthy and it will take you through the illness. I particularly like the thumbs up scores.

I love experimenting with food and this is perfect. The recipes are by an experienced cook and carer and very easy and affordable (you can cheat with the ingredients). I like the variety and the idea of keeping it all your life. I recommend the zucchini bread (we like it even after the one-year all clear) and the gin and tonic ice lollies (I used rum) for those feeling sick during chemotherapy. I wish it came with a personal cook!

**Carer (primary mediastinal B-cell lymphoma) (36-45) (August 2013)**

This is a great book with some fantastic ideas to tempt taste buds especially if you are going through cancer treatment, when you can lose your appetite and your food never tastes right. I wish I had had this book when I was having chemotherapy as I never knew what I fancied to eat. This has plenty ideas that are delicious and a bit different. I like the introduction, which explains the "thumbs up" nutritional analysis of the recipes and what is in what. This is especially important if you are going through cancer as eating healthily can make you feel better.

It is very well put together, with an enticing cover and good quality paper. The recipes are grouped logically, e.g. Soups, Salads, Pizza, Pasta and Risotto, Vegetables and Side Dishes, Fish, Poultry, Meat and Sweeties! Each recipe has small step-by-step photos and a photo of the finished article, which look very appetising. Some of the salads look fantastic and scream out "Healthy"! There is also a conversion chart, information about cooking basics and a glossary and index.

I found it easy enough to understand but some elderly folk may not have heard of some of the ingredients especially if they are plain eaters. (I hadn't heard of some

ingredients, e.g. sriracha, and couldn't find them in the glossary, so I am still none the wiser.) They may also find some of the recipes too fancy, for example "Roast quail with celeriac and trompette". I now know trompette are mushrooms but I hadn't heard of them before. However, the crispy duck pancakes look delicious! I will have fun trying out lots of tasty ideas.

### **Breast cancer patient (56-65) (July 2013)**

This lovely book would be very useful for someone going through chemo and wanting something else to focus on. It would also be good for carers, family or friends looking after people during chemo (or other treatments that affecting the appetite) to help tempt them to eat something and stay as strong as they can.

It is especially useful when appetite is low and the patient is at risk of becoming too weak to have treatment. It would give carers something practical to do – experimenting with different recipes say after a treatment, and making treats.

The recipes are easy to follow. They are all just about one page long, so not too complicated and the photos are well presented. There is obviously a mix of British and USA recipes due to the different types of measurements, but there is an excellent conversion chart at the back of the book, so they are easy to follow. I also like the fact that it has its own website, which is also very useful and user friendly.

There are a couple of times when the numbering in the index doesn't match the page numbers. For example, the description for 'sriracha' is on a different page to that indicated in the index. Apart from that, I didn't spot any other errors.

The cover design is simple and stylish, the photos inside are useful and beautifully taken. The paper and cover are of a high standard. It is written well and is very easy to follow, to pick up and use as needed without having to wade through loads of text. It also stays open at the page you are using – unlike some other books, which is very frustrating when you are trying to follow a recipe! I really like the thumbs up score for each recipe and the protein and calories breakdown.

It is just a lovely book. I have made several recipes and they have all turned out great. It has given me some useful ideas for meals to take to friends who are going through treatment for them and their families to enjoy.

### **Former breast cancer patient (36-45) (July 2013)**

This is good to look at, informative and easy to read and follow. I like its simplicity, and the advice about nutrition. The ingredients are available in any supermarket. It will be most useful as soon as the patient has their appetite back and I recommend it.

### **Living with lymphoma (56-65) (June 2013)**

This has useful advice for those diagnosed with or living with cancer, carers and friends but the recipes and general nutritional principles are relevant to everyone. It could be most useful when someone is going to have chemotherapy – at a stage when there are so many worries and concerns about what you can and should eat, this book is a great source of information and inspiration.

The delicious, healthy recipes and practical advice will inspire people wondering how best to help their bodies (and taste buds) through chemo and beyond. I especially like the recipe for gin and tonic lollies – I wish I had known about these when I had chemo! The recipes are easy to follow and the ingredients are largely everyday items, although some use pheasant, duck, quail and venison, and I'm not sure how available some ingredients are, e.g. 'Louisiana hot sauce' or 'sriracha'.

It is beautifully illustrated with wonderful photographs that make you want to try the recipes and eat! It is well laid out in sections and the type is very clear. There is a good introduction explaining the author's personal experience and how this led her to write the book, and an expert nutritionist explains how food can help the body fend off and deal with cancer. There are lots of commendations throughout the introduction from notable medics and experts. The 'thumbs-up' nutritional analysis, which has been created by the author and a dietitian, is innovative and helpful.

There aren't many vegetarian recipes (the vegetable recipes are mostly side dishes) so I found this limiting. I would love a similar book for vegetarians or those who don't like quite so much meat. More iron-rich food recipes would be good – I was told it was important to have iron-rich foods to help with the blood count during chemo – and I am surprised that there aren't more recipes addressing the issues of sore mouth or stomach. I was advised that rice pudding or porridge are good (for stomach and mouth) during chemo and I found they did indeed help, especially when my appetite was low.

Although it is called "Chemo cookery club", it is a book that you would turn to well after treatment is over, and to use again and again. It is, however, a book for someone who likes to cook and wants to maintain that interest through treatment.

### **Breast cancer survivor (46-55) (June 2013)**

This is one of the best books of its type; it's most useful during and after chemotherapy and radiotherapy, but also useful for non-cancer patients. The cover makes you want to open it, and once you do, everything is so well photographed and represented you just want to use it. I love the thumbs up score beside each recipe, what a good idea. I also like the simplicity of use, the appetising recipes and the beautiful pictures. Some ingredients are expensive; however, many are not and are easy to find. I did find it funny that it assumes that everyone has a pizza oven!!!

Thank you for letting me review this book. It has made a very good impression, not only on me but also on family members; I am hanging on to it, before one of them takes it away and tries the recipes.

### **Secondary breast cancer patient (56-65) (May 2013)**

This is a first class, close-up of the difficulties that cancer patients have eating. The author knows cancer, its symptoms and, most important, its side-effects.

It is very easy to read, well thought out and superbly presented. However, the quantities are wrong – most cancer patients cook for two not four. There are some errors in the index; look up trout and you get snails. It was a mistake to print white on green, which is a pity because the content is well worth reading; apart from this, the layout, editing and tone are matchless.

I recommend this book to every cancer patient and I hope that it is the start of many more of a similar nature. The author knows cancer from 'metal mouth' to utter exhaustion. She understands and has selected a wonderful way to tell us.

### **Renal cell carcinoma patient (Over 75) (May 2013)**

This is a good all-round cookbook that can be used at any stage of cancer – healthy eating made simple. It is visually attractive; the colour and the photographs make it very appealing. The recipes look mouth-wateringly good and make you want to try out different dishes. It is very easy to follow; the instructions are clear and the recipes are not expensive to make. The glossary is very useful, as is the calorie count per portion, and the breakdown of the different vitamins.

I am going to work my way through this book – a lot of thought has gone into the content and layout and it shows. I also like the language and the humour.

### **Laryngeal cancer survivor (66-75) (May 2013)**

This is a great book, perfect for everyone, patient or carer. It has healthy, versatile recipes for the cancer journey and afterwards. The recipes are easy to follow and the ingredients easy to find. There is a lot of information about cancer at the beginning, which I found most interesting. It also shows you which fruits are best for you, which are free radicals and which help fight cancer. It is an amazing book and I shall be recommending it to everyone.

Brilliant book, highly recommended. The format and general appearance is amazing, the recipe photos are brilliant. I suffer from allergies but there are recipes that I can adapt and they are so, so easy to do.

### **Carer (ovarian, bowel and pancreatic cancer) (56-65) (May 2013)**



This is relevant for anyone affected by cancer. It would be a good idea for carers and family to make and eat some of the recipes to support the patient. The recipes are relevant throughout the cancer journey but it is best used in the early stages as that's when the patient will do anything to beat cancer. In my experience, it may not be appropriate in the last stages of cancer (depending on cancer type – my dad could not eat or drink orally) as it may be too late to make dietary changes.

It's easy to follow and I love how the author explains the nutritional value of each ingredient and its positive impact on health. General books on diet aren't as detailed; I love how this is aimed at fighting cancer, it's a positive encouragement. Most of the ingredients are ok but some may be seasonal and some meats may be pricey – own brands may be more reasonable. The word chemo in the title may put people off (in case they keep chemo private). I love the pictures but the typeface could be a bit brighter and bolder or have a brighter background to make it more eye catching.

### **Carer (head and neck cancer) (26-35) (October 2013)**

This is most useful during treatment, especially if feeling sick and losing weight. The recipes are relatively easy to follow – exact cooking and preparation times would be useful. Some recipes include ingredients I have not heard of or that are hard to find.

The cover is great and there are lovely photos throughout – very appealing. The “thumbs up” nutritional analysis is very useful and there is a helpful glossary, although sriracha is not included; I now know it is a hot chilli sauce.

I love lots of the simple breakfast recipes; the smoothies and frozen fruits would be great any time of the day especially with a sore chemo mouth. I can't wait to try the Christmas turkey smash recipe and Simon's pie is perfect for chemo day. Some of the recipes are not suitable for people having chemo; raw fish and snails would not have appealed to me – everyone is different! It needs more quick and easy meals.

### **Breast cancer patient (46-55) (August 2013)**

This attractive, well illustrated book has plenty of ideas for a varied and interesting diet. The recipes are easy to follow, but not all the ingredients are readily available and some are quite expensive.

### **Oesophageal cancer patient (56-65) (August 2013)**

This book would be most useful for those undergoing treatment, due to undergo treatment, or recovering from treatment. It provides a range of appealing recipes, while encouraging healthy eating and acknowledging the effects of cancer/treatment, and how these recipes can help overcome those difficulties. It also provides a background to the scientific research into certain foods in the introduction, and

nutritional analysis of each recipe in the form of an easy to follow nutritional score. The recipes put an emphasis not only on the taste, but also the texture, aroma and appearance of meals, the importance of overall enjoyment is clearly demonstrated and reassures the reader that healthy eating does not have to be boring.

Overall it is fairly easy to understand and follow – the only things I noticed were a couple of spelling mistakes (Caesar salad, p. 103 and pineapple, p. 291). The author's tone reassures you that she has some background in cancer and its effects, and how healthy eating can be used to overcome this. The introduction, however, may be off-putting to some as it is difficult to understand at times. Although most technical terms in the book, and certainly in the recipes, are explained in the glossary, the introduction is more complex than it need be.

The layout is very simple, making it easy to find types of recipes and information. It makes good use of photographs for the recipes – they look enticing – and to divide the sections clearly within the different categories of recipes. The paper is good quality and the typeface, size, general layout, and tone of the author make the book easy to read. The contents are appealing, but the simple, clean design of the cover is not as appealing and almost has a clinical feel.

The recipes are easy to follow with a familiar layout (i.e. title, introduction, ingredients, method, and nutritional analysis). Most ingredients are readily available; however, I would say it leans towards the high-end of the market with recipes including caviar, truffles, quail eggs, and oysters for instance. Even some basic ingredients may not be found in the average store cupboard. It is also aimed at experienced cooks; although it is easy to follow, it is not for beginners and requires basic cooking skills and access to utensils such as a food processor, waffle iron or pizza stone. It expects a level of effort, whether sourcing the ingredients or meal preparation, which some readers affected by cancer may not be able to give. The book also lacks basic information on healthy eating; although the scientific information and nutritional analysis add great depth to the book, it is assumed the reader already knows about basic healthy eating and skips over any information on this (e.g. why is protein important?).

This book could be considered very useful for the correct reader – someone who is already an established cook who is looking to provide nutritional meals for someone affected by cancer – but for the average reader, the book may lose its appeal slightly. However, overall it is very effective at combining healthy eating with delicious recipes that help to overcome the effects of cancer and its treatment in an appetising way.

**Past carer/relative of someone with anorectal melanoma, and relative of someone with stomach cancer (Under 25) (July 2013)**

Following my wife's diagnosis of myeloma and a month in hospital, I read everything I could about myeloma, its treatment and side effects. I would probably have found this book helpful from the start. It would have dovetailed into the rapid learning curve needed by carers to understand the needs of the patient and how best to meet them.

It is a worthwhile introduction to recipes for cancer patients. The recipes can be modified or changed to suit the taste of the patient in line with their wellness or lack of it. Chemo treatments, from my experience, result in variable needs and tastes of foods. This was very marked at the onset of the cancer and treatment. It is important that food is well presented, nourishing and the taste acceptable.

We have obviously not tried every recipe (we are ovo-lacto vegetarians so exclude meat/fish dishes, although some of these can be prepared using tofu, Quorn etc), but the ones we sampled were as expected from the text so someone has road tested them. They are easy to understand but we have never come across sriracha and others have not either. It is not available from the village shop where we do most of our shopping (we are 13 miles from our nearest town).

What is missing is the preparation time and total time needed and the suitability for freezing – this is important to carers with limited time which even then may be compromised as the patient's health and need for attention varies. Also, occasionally, it is a matter of getting your mind in tune. For instance, 'grazing' is not something we do; one must be aware of weight. On the other hand, when my wife was low in weight and needed 'little and often', the 'grazing' may well have been important. Otherwise, the book follows a logical order and is easy to follow. I wish I had come across the smoothies and milk shakes at the beginning of my wife's treatment when her appetite was compromised and her taste 'confused'.

It is a book that begs to be picked up. The market may be limited; perhaps it is worth adding 'for your journey to recovery' and 'for those in good health' to the title. The book, although a paperback, lays flat on the kitchen work surface and pages do not turn on their own – a good point – and the paper accepts the odd 'wipe' with a damp cloth. The typeface and font is fine but the washed-out printing makes it difficult to read especially under artificial light; take a leaf out of the excellent *Good Housekeeping vegetarian cookery book* (Linda Yewdall, Ebury Press 1994); its only failing is too few recipes and no indication of nutrients.

The author has put her heart in producing delightful recipes to tempt the patient, enhanced by impressive photos, which also encourage the cook/carer to do likewise. Perhaps the writing of the book was therapy for the author, it is therapy for me.

### **Carer (multiple myeloma) (Over 75) (July 2013)**

This book is suitable for any day, not just when having chemotherapy. The recipes are grouped into chapters, making it easy to find what you're looking for: breakfast, soups, salads, mains of various types, vegetables, desserts and "grazing", which contains some interesting snacks. The recipes are very easy to follow; the ingredients are listed at the start and are readily available and economical. The only ingredient I hadn't come across before was sriracha, but this is described in the introductory note as a milder chilli sauce that is widely available. There is also a glossary and a basics section outlining cooking methods.

The well-designed layout includes colour photographs for every recipe, in some cases several photos showing staged preparation. The typeface is clear and easy on

the eye and the book is printed on good quality paper. The cooking method is explained well and without any fuss, so it sounds achievable to the reader and you're not put off by lots of "Chef" terms.

The author has designed a "Thumbs up" score for each of the recipe; this gives a nutritional analysis, which is helpful for those trying to increase their intake of a vitamin or mineral and educational if you want to learn more about diet. There is also a good section in the introduction called "your new best friends – make these a few of your favourite things", which discusses foods that have been found to be beneficial to cancer patients and outlines why you should try to include them in your diet.

Most recipes are for four, six or more; it is better to give quantities for two, which can be scaled up; calculating down is tricky and when you're having chemotherapy simple is best. Singles and couples may be put off by the family-sized portions.

### **Living with breast cancer (46-55) (June 2013)**

I love this book and have made some of the recipes already but I am an experienced cook. A lot of the recipes would be tricky for people with little experience. The recipes are mainly healthy and nutritious but perhaps time consuming if you are fatigued by treatment; there are not many simple, quick recipes for the times when you are too tired to cook. It is great for carers that can cook.

The introduction and basics are well laid out and informative and describe techniques and ingredients well. There is not too much technical information about food and cancer – this can be overwhelming in other cancer nutrition books. The tone in the introduction and the glossary is appealing and not patronising. The section that includes cancer information and ingredients that have been shown to help is well written and a balanced view of the current research, recommending a healthy, balanced and varied diet.

The book is beautifully presented with great photos and easy to read text. (A couple of page numbers in the index are wrong, e.g. sriracha and pastry.) There are some useful step-by-step photographs and the recipes are easy to follow if you have some experience. Most ingredients are available in supermarkets but some are unusual and moderately expensive, so the book may appeal more to well-off readers.

Common concerns about dairy foods are not mentioned. I am lactose intolerant after chemotherapy; quite a few recipes include milk, cream and cheese and the book does not discuss alternatives such as rice milk or soy. This could have been a useful addition to the introduction where other ingredients are discussed fully.

### **Breast cancer patient (36-45) (May 2013)**



There's space for more books about nutrition and cancer and this goes some way to filling that space. I like the idea, but it will be more helpful for someone caring for or supporting someone with cancer than for the patient. During treatment, I wanted others to cook for me and make decisions about what to cook. I didn't have the energy or inclination to think about shopping or preparing food. It might help patients to highlight or suggest recipes that appeal so that their partner or carer could practice or think about substitutes. The soup recipes are particularly useful for those living on their own or alone during the day as they can be frozen and reheated.

The photos are good, the instructions clear, and recipes grouped in sections allowing you to skip to the section you prefer. I cook a lot and found the recipes OK to follow but some ingredients are expensive or difficult to source; I would like to see suggestions for alternatives, e.g. what to use instead of partridge, caviar, or quail. A few tips and techniques are explained at the end but the target audience appears to be those who are confident in a kitchen and happy to try new dishes. I'm not sure how someone used to being cooked for would feel about tackling some of the recipes. A friend said her husband would probably use every pot in the kitchen and leave it looking like a disaster area if he tried some of these dishes.

The recipes are very much based on European culture and cooking. There are not many Asian or West Indian recipes or ingredients, no reference to vegetarians and some of the meat dishes look rich. When I was having treatment, I wanted crunchy, fresh food with a bit of heat and spice because my sense of taste was affected. I like the ready reckoner of the vitamins but many recipes are heavy on dairy/sugar, presumably to help people keep/put on weight. I am now trying to lose weight and would like to see reference to this. There's not much on quantities or how your taste can change. I couldn't stop eating on some days; on others, I had no appetite. And I wanted to add salt to everything (I barely use salt usually) because nothing had flavour or taste. I would also like some reference to dealing with side effects, e.g. difficulty eating or swallowing, and the foods that may help. I was advised that pineapple would be good but that played havoc when I developed mouth ulcers.

How will people living on their own cope? Many recipes seem to be for four and scaling down ingredients can be wasteful. People on a budget may not find many recipes to help them plan a week of meals; maybe there could be a section on store cupboard recipes? I would like to see some menu plans, e.g. around a three-week chemo cycle, a week of family meals, or meals that can be frozen. I would also like to see some reference to how to manage food during a hospital stay when you may have less control over what you eat. And maybe it would be useful to include organisations that can help with food and cooking during/after treatment?

There are some good recipes and I've enjoyed making and eating those I've tried. But I've finished treatment and have the energy and inclination to try. I also have time because I'm not working. I wouldn't have looked at this book during treatment – I wanted someone else to decide what I was going to eat and prepare it for me.

**Non-Hodgkin lymphoma survivor (46-55) (August 2013)**

If you ignore the “Chemo” in the title, this is a good cookery book. However, there are many good recipe books on the market and this does not necessarily stand out just because it has chemo in its title.

Reviewing a cookery book is difficult without trying each recipe and therefore this is only a partial and highly selective review. One recipe for a form of Welsh rarebit is excellent whereas a marinade for pork tenderloin is almost inedible (to my taste!!). I like the layout, the range of recipes and the general approach. The design is perhaps slightly fragile for the kitchen environment for men new to the habit!! The recipes are not easy for an amateur or someone who does not cook often. Some recipes are for eight, which is not appropriate for most people, and some will not divide easily; for example, one recipe for four uses one egg! It is easier to increase the amounts than to reduce them. Some of the marinades are very strong; this may appeal in chemo cases where the taste response has been affected.

The basic concept of the book – shop, prepare and eat on the same day – is ambitious. Mobility, and the desire to shop each day, or for each recipe, is often severely limited by chemotherapy!

### **Living with prostate cancer (Over 75) (July 2013)**

This book has some interesting recipes that might be useful during and after treatment but the focus is on nutritional value, presentation and flavour of food and the connection between the recipes and chemotherapy is not explained! There is emphasis on the importance of eating highly nutritious foods, where possible, when suffering from difficulties with appetite or eating as a result of cancer or its treatment but I couldn't find anything specific to chemotherapy. There is no attempt to present recipes that might be especially suitable for someone with, for instance, nausea and vomiting, painful mouth, or painful swallowing.

There is a quite a long introduction explaining how and why the book was produced, which includes an interesting contribution from a dietician. There is also a useful glossary and conversion tables for measures and oven temperatures. That said, there is an obscure ingredient (limoncello) not in the glossary. And what does “set the oven to broil” mean? Quite a few dishes use ingredients that are not readily available (icheban noodles, crab, venison, escargots, pheasant) or expensive (clams, oysters).

It is an appealing book to look at, nicely presented and illustrated, with little photos showing stages in the preparation of some of the recipes, as well as luscious photos of the finished dishes. My only criticism is that the colour of some of the type (yellow on green background, brown on cream) makes it hard to read in places.

“Coarse” and “coarser” are spelt as “course” and “courser”, which is an amusing mistake. However, more importantly, I am quite sure that not all the protein and kcal values per portion are accurate. For instance, a chocolate pie, for which the only protein ingredient is three eggs, is said to contain 39g protein per portion, which cannot be correct. I had thought that the inclusion of these values was an especially useful aspect of the book, but once I started to find evidence of mistakes it made me doubt the accuracy of the information.

I found it profoundly irritating that the book, written for a British readership, uses American measures in a few of the recipes and occasionally uses American names for ingredients (zucchini, graham biscuits). It also made me wildly envious of the author's husband (and of every other man in his position) having a wife with the time, money and expertise to cook such wonderful-sounding dishes for him when he was undergoing treatment and recovery. My husband is a star, but there is no way that he had the time, money and expertise to follow such a path when I was too ill to cook anything more taxing than my morning porridge.

It is a difficult book to review. Some recipes look genuinely straightforward, delicious and worth trying, while others, such as roast quail with celeriac and trompette or escargot, are ridiculous. I made the chocolate silk pie – it looked tempting, not too fiddly, and I had the ingredients apart from fresh cream. Our 24-year old son loved it, my husband enjoyed it, but commented that the base was a “bit crumbly” (tactful as always – the base fell to pieces), but I would never make it again. It is too sweet; you could barely taste the chocolate and I can't eat dry crumble, due to swallowing problems post treatment. I managed to eat my portion by pouring cream over it, to stick it together and make it more moist. In future, if I'm going to the trouble of making a cold chocolate dessert, I'll stick to plain chocolate mousse. But the real problem with this recipe is that the quantities aren't correct to make the pie shown. I increased the quantity of butter and decreased the quantity of biscuits for the base, because I doubted that it was going to stick together once cooled. Even so, it not only crumbled but there was far too much biscuit in proportion to the filling, while the cream was just a faint smear on top, barely discernible as a layer. Frankly, it did not inspire me to try another recipe and I won't be keeping the book.

### **Survivor of head and neck cancer; family member of breast cancer survivor (56-65) (June 2013)**

This is an attractive book; each recipe is illustrated with a beautiful photograph and it has a variety of recipes. I like the descriptions of vegetables and their benefits and the thumbs up approach showing the nutrient and vitamin content of each meal. The recipes are not difficult to follow but you need to feel well to cook them; when you have treatment, you don't feel like cooking or even eating most days. But on the good days it would be lovely if someone could do it for you. However, I was expecting something different; this is a normal cookery book.

### **Living with breast cancer (46-55) (June 2013)**

The recipes are excellent, if somewhat lavish at times, everything is explained extremely carefully, and the pictures are some of the best cookery images I have seen. However, nothing is aimed specifically at cancer patients. It is just a very pretty recipe book with excellent illustrations.

### **Head and neck cancer (56-65) (June 2013)**

This book can be used at any time, throughout treatment, in recovery, and beyond. We decided to trial it as a family as I was not able to cook during treatment and this task was taken on by my husband and children, who are 21 and 23 with limited cooking experience. Our thoughts are that the recipes are easier to follow if you have some experience of cooking. Some are complicated and time consuming, difficult if you are working and have taken over tasks to support the person with cancer.

Most ingredients are readily available; you may need a good butcher for items such as pheasant. There are also some ingredients that we did not recognise and that were not in the glossary, e.g. pastis. The recipe for enchiladas states that the beer will be used in the marinade but the instructions indicate that it needs to be used in the sauce. The index is not detailed enough, for example there is no indication that any of the recipes require prawns, yet there is a prawn recipe on page 199.

It is an appealing book and we like the fact there is a photo for each recipe and that the recipes are clearly laid out. We also like the breakdown of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in each recipe. The recipes are varied, with something that should appeal to most people; it is made clear if there are strong tastes that would overcome the taste difficulties associated with chemotherapy.

Some recipes could be simplified. For example, in the enchilada recipe, using a pre-cooked tin of beans would save considerable time, or if you did not want to make refried beans you could buy a ready-made version. My daughter felt she would not have had the time to make this recipe if she had been working; it is time consuming if you are lacking energy or appetite following treatment and must cook for yourself.

### **Living with bowel cancer (46-55) (June 2013)**

If I were to use this book during treatment, it would be most useful the week before I was due to have treatment because I would need to be able to focus on the recipes and follow the instructions. Many of the recipes are complicated and I am not sure they are all useful for people having treatment and cooking for themselves. Some ingredients are expensive and not readily available; veal, venison, quail, pheasant, snails, oysters and clams are not basics and we could not have afforded them.

The book reads well and it's easy to follow. It looks great and is inviting – the pictures make it for me. The pages feel nice and I like the fact that there are some ordinary recipes in it. The tone is fine but some of the recipes are just too hard. I might tackle some of them if I were having a dinner party, but not going through cancer treatment.

I like the nutritional values but my friends didn't understand any of it. I would like a scale of how easy or hard the recipes are and how long they take so that you can choose them according to how adventurous you feel or to match your energy levels. I can't believe the calories counts of some of the recipes (for example: Auntie Winona's brownies – 1230 cals per portion; baked apple – 700 cals; Simon's pie – 1080 cals). I know you shouldn't worry about your weight when having treatment, but when you are inactive it's so easy to put on weight.

### **Living with breast cancer (36-45) (June 2013)**

This is a good general cookbook with clear instructions and colour plates. There is useful information at the back about weights and measures and explanations of terms used, so it is good for beginners. It is not too cluttered with information and gives the nutrient content of dishes.

However, I am not sure why it has chemo in the title; it has nothing different from other good cookery books. From experience, someone having chemotherapy will not have the time or energy to buy the food and cook these recipes. In any case, the recipes are not particularly good; they do cover the nutritional quality of the meals, but pizza and spicy food are not appealing for someone who doesn't fancy much and who needs to be tempted. The soup and puree ideas are good nutritionally and easy to prepare, but the more exotic dishes (for example, quails eggs with mushroom duxelle and hollandaise) may not be suitable for someone who is tired and feeling ill. I also have an issue with the amount of dairy in the recipes but this is personal.

I wouldn't recommend this to someone having chemotherapy unless they are coping with the treatment very well, in which case any good cookbook will do the job. I have a feeling the author may be trying to corner a market by referring to chemo diet as the meals are very general.

#### **Breast cancer patient (56-65) (May 2013)**



This is a beautifully produced book with detailed and interesting recipes and excellent nutritional advice, written empathetically by someone whose husband has cancer. It is aimed at people having chemotherapy, but if you cook at this level it's probably useful at any time in your life. I'd say it's aimed at those who enjoy cooking, are good cooks, understand how to follow recipes and have the energy to do so. I am what my mother would have called a "plain cook". I didn't learn to cook at school or from her. Many of the recipes are complicated and time consuming and I've never used or heard of some ingredients. Some may be expensive, but the author does offer down-to-earth alternative ingredients for some recipes. Some readers may take issue with the building-up recipes that use lavish amounts of dairy and sugar, and which may not be considered appropriate for people seeking a change to healthier eating.

There are some very good things: a useful index, glossary, and weights conversion tables; each recipe has the nutrient content and 'thumbs up' score; and the introduction (pp 15-23), especially the bit on the right food to eat, is easily the best thing in the book. It is easy to read and well set out for cooks to follow, every recipe is illustrated. It's also quite beautiful, full of lovely colour photos of succulent looking food! It looks a quality cook book worthy of recommendation by Good Housekeeping.

I don't think it is designed for people like me who don't enjoy cooking, who eat to keep alive/healthy rather than for enjoyment, and who just don't have the energy to shop for the (sometimes exotic sounding) ingredients and cook them. If I had a paid cook/chef to cook some of the recipes for me, I'd be more inclined to say it's a great book – but I don't. So, it is really for carers who cook, if you have one or preferably a

few!! My husband often cooks for us if it's something I will eat but he also has a lot of other things to do and reading/using cookery books except occasionally doesn't really figure. I'd rather we spent time together out walking, occasionally eating out and doing things we both enjoy. Neither cooking nor eating makes my soul sing and I believe people living with cancer should be doing as much of what achieves that as possible. I've given it two stars therefore from this purely personal perspective.

I've made substantial changes to my diet (eating more fresh raw fruit and vegetables, cutting out cakes, biscuits and other sugars, cutting down on dairy, avoiding food with high GI) and feel much healthier, but there's no sign it has helped decrease my lymphoma. What I'd like is a book that starts from the premise that you don't really cook or want to learn at this stage and want to do the minimum food preparation for energy and good health. It would include lots of ways of combining raw food to be more interesting and simpler to prepare, tips on inexpensive things to add to everyday recipes – omelette, spaghetti Bolognese, pasta, rice, baked beans, omega-rich tinned fish – to liven them up and ring the changes. And include Barbara Parry's "Your new best friends" (p. 17) or similar good nutritional advice.

I probably wouldn't recommend it to others affected by cancer unless I knew cooking was one of the things in life that makes their soul sing, I'd suggest taking notes from Barbara Parry's nutritional advice sections.

**Living with non-Hodgkin lymphoma (56-65) (July 2013)**

# 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.

**Being told ‘you have cancer’ can affect so much more than your health – it can also affect your family, your job, even your ability to pay the bills. But you’re still you. We get that. And, after over 100 years of helping people through cancer, we get what’s most important: that you’re treated as a person, not just a patient.**

**It’s why we’ll take the time to understand you and all that matters to you, so we can help you get the support you need to take care of your health, protect your personal relationships and deal with money and work worries.**

**We’re here to help you find your best way through from the moment of diagnosis, so you’re able to live life as fully as you can. For information, support or just someone to talk to, call 0808 808 00 00 or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

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