

THE SWAP OUT

I'm standing in the middle of the Food Network kitchen as steam rises from pasta pots. The whir of a blender making pesto releases the scent of basil on a warm summer's day. The clanking of dishes and pots being washed sound almost syncopated adding to the rhythm that seems to flow in one big choreographed culinary dance.



It was my first day on the job as executive producer of *Emeril Live*. Quite frankly, all my experience had been in television, not food, so I had to get up to speed quickly to understand how the food got produced. It's the kitchen staff's job to prep the food for this show and every show, and there's a system that is streamlined, efficient, and practical.

Let's say you're making a turkey. Well, in the real world, it takes about four hours, right? Well, in TV land, you can't

wait around with your crew while a bird roasts, so you've got to do things in stages. And that means, you need three to four turkeys to get the job done so you can shoot it quickly. They are called 'swap outs.' The first one is raw, so that the chef can show you how to prep and season it. The second one might be cooked halfway so you can show how to baste or turn the bird, if you want. The third is a completed bird the chef pulls from the oven, ready to slice to show the moisture content of the bird or even the technique of how to carve the bird. And the fourth and final bird is placed on a dressed platter, pristine and ready for its close-up or what we like to call its "beauty shot."

The entire process is documented in a recipe breakdown before it even gets near the set. The chefs provide a standard recipe and send it to the culinary producers who break it down on paper, step-by-step for television, so that the kitchen team knows what to shop for, how far to cook things, and in how many stages. There are shoppers that buy all of the ingredients, allowing for enough time if things need to be prepped a day or two before. On shoot days, the team preps a cart with all of the pre-chopped ingredients broken out per commercial break. If you notice, there are often a series of ramekins or small bowls filled with vegetables or spices placed in a line on the counter. They are placed in the order in which the chef will need them. Before the director calls "action," the kitchen team reviews the recipe with the chef and then the cameras are ready to roll.

I have to admit, I was a little overwhelmed by the whole kitchen process and it took a while to get up to speed. Working at Food Network made me feel as if I just enrolled in a crash course at the Culinary Institute. After a few weeks, I started to get a handle on how to manage the beast. The kitchen staff was more than eager to help me because it made their job that much easier if I knew what I was doing.

—Excerpted from *GETTING SAUCED—How I Learned Everything I Know*

HOW DO YOU DO THAT?

My husband is the baker in the family and whether we're making dinner or going to someone else's house, everyone always wants to know what he's making. He is the Yoda of chocolate and has quite a few rich and delectable treats in his repertoire. One of his biggest hits is his chocolate ganache torte. Everyone always *oohs* and *aahs* over his web-like design, thinking he's taken some type of decorating class. But in truth, this design is one of the easiest to do.□

Having a few simple design tricks up your sleeve will always help elevate a dish and you can use this simple one on any dessert topped with ganache. Just make sure to pour it out evenly on top of your cake, allowing it to pour down the sides. Melt some white chocolate. Using a ziplock bag as a pastry bag, fill the bag with the white chocolate, clipping a corner to allow a thin stream to pipe out. Starting from the middle of your torte, pipe thin circles, getting larger and larger as you get towards the edge, separating each by 3/4 inch. Using a toothpick, start from the center and drag out towards the edge 4 lines, each at 90 degrees, basically dividing the cake in quarters. Using the same technique, go in the same direction in the middle of each quarter so that you now have 8 sections. Now, we're going to finish by moving the toothpick in the opposite direction, from the outside to the center. Starting in the middle of each of the 8 sections, drag the toothpick towards the center. That's the whole trick. Really.

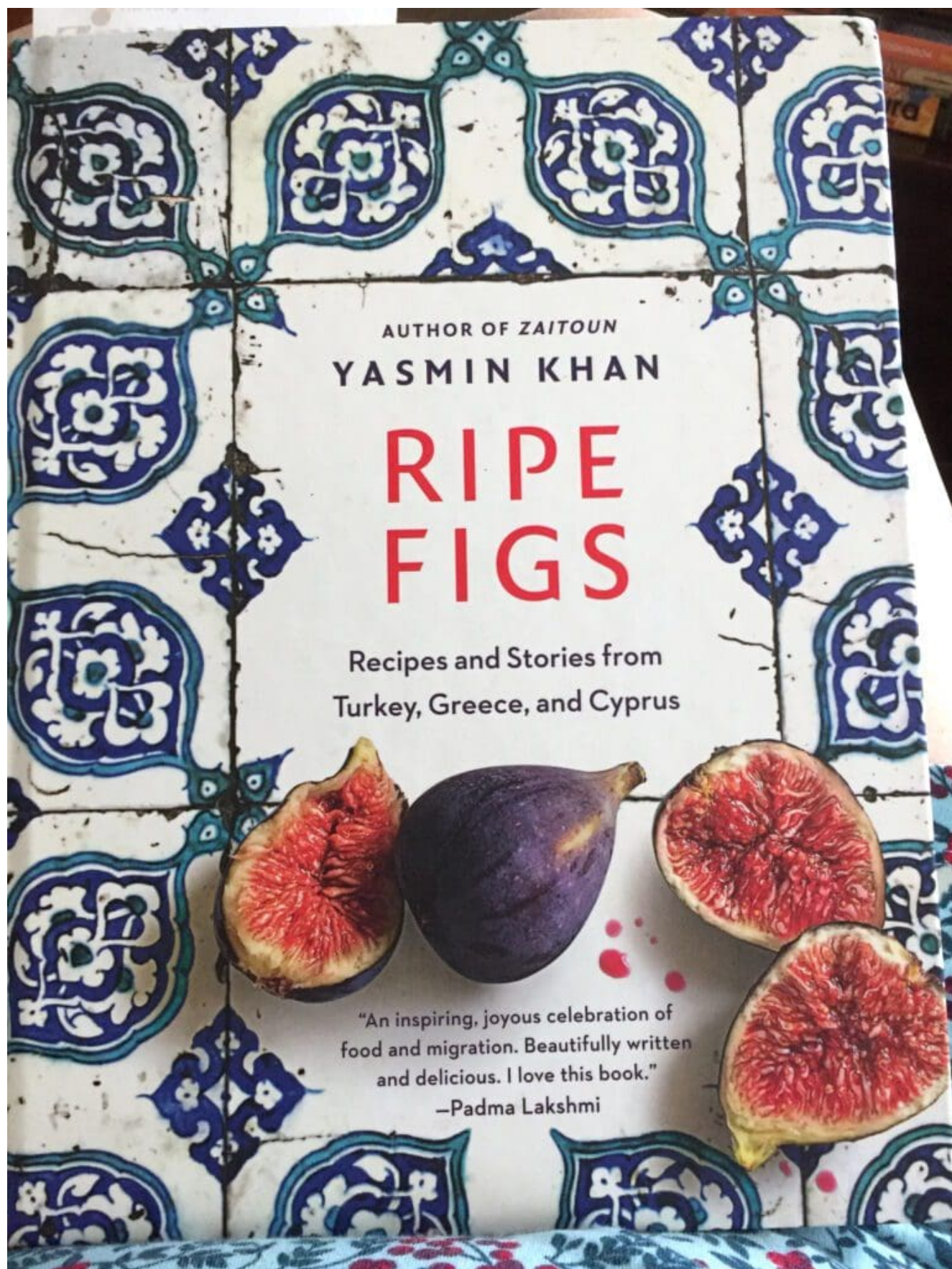
I LOVE IT WHEN IT WORKS

Usually when I make a recipe for the first time, I never quite get it right. It rarely looks like the pictures in the book, yet that doesn't stop me from trying. But every now and then I come across a cookbook that makes me look good. I've been on a Mediterranean kick lately, and my cousin introduced me to Yasmin Khan's *Ripe Figs**. I've dog-eared almost every page. Of course, rather than starting with something simple like *Tzatziki*, (a cucumber, mint and yogurt appetizer), I go for the big Turkish wedding dish, *Perde Pilavi*, a spiced chicken and rice dish hidden inside a "veil" of pastry. It looks like one of those huge *Great British Bake Off* pies, but without that heavy water crust. This crust is actually so thin, I'm not sure how it will hold all the mixture in without an implosion.

It's a bit of an *ungepatchka*, as my grandmother would say—something overly busy and fussy—but in this context, I just mean there are a lot of steps. None are difficult, but this is no 30-minute meal. The only step that gives me a bit of trouble is the crust itself. It seems to have come together nicely, but for the life of me, I just can't roll it out thin enough. I'm afraid if I try to roll it out any thinner, the dough may rip. I know I have enough to cover the bottom of the pan and come up the sides, but if my math is right, it won't completely cover the whole bottom, leaving some of the mixture exposed. But since this dish flips over to serve, you'll never see that flaw—I hope. Rather than taking the chance of ripping the dough, I decide to leave the bottom as is and hope for the best.

This is one of those dishes that you have no idea if it works until you are ready to plate it. That's an awful lot of work

and finger crossing. But I am a risk taker in the kitchen and the moment of truth is coming as soon as my timer goes off.



AUTHOR OF ZAITOUN
YASMIN KHAN

RIPE FIGS

Recipes and Stories from
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"An inspiring, joyous celebration of
food and migration. Beautifully written
and delicious. I love this book."

—Padma Lakshmi

I make sure I've left enough time for the dish to cool before attempting the flip. I clear the counter, leaving myself enough room for this epic feat. I gingerly place the serving plate on top of the baking pan, steady my feet, place my right hand on top, my left hand on bottom, and pray. In one deft move, I flip the dish over and place it down on the counter. I hear an unambiguous thump, giving me hope that at least the bulk has come loose. I hold my breath, slowly lifting the pie pan. The moment of truth has arrived. I can't believe it.

□“Yes!” I shout, raising my arms in the air as if I'm crossing the line after a marathon. First time out and it looks just like the picture! I slice into it and miraculously everything has held together. And even more importantly, it's absolutely delicious.

*You can find this recipe in YASMIN KHAN's book *Ripe Figs*.

MEET HERMIONE'S FIRST BORN

That beautiful bubbling source of nourishment is my beloved sourdough starter, affectionately known as Hermione. Her name comes from her father Herman who sadly died years ago when I neglected feeding him for over a month. I plan to take no chances with Hermione. She is well fed, well rested and ready to get to work. I've spent hours watching and re-watching Apollonia Poilâne's bread making Masterclass, and I think I'm ready to make her sourdough wheat loaf.

I would like to say that I created Hermione totally from scratch, but I have to admit, I did use King Arthur's sourdough starter to get things going. I meticulously followed

the instructions and fed Hermione twice a day for five days. I even bought her a nice home—a 1.5 liter Weck Jar from Amazon. It has a nice wide opening so that it's easy to stick a spatula inside and mix the flour and water around without half of it ending up on my shirt.

□It is day six, so Hermione should be more than ready for Apollonia's recipe. Everything seems to be going along fine. As I mix the ingredients together, I notice the dough seems a bit tough, but what do I know? Eventually I put it aside to rise after ten minutes of arm aching kneading.



On the video, after the first rise, Apollonia lovingly lifts the dough out of the bowl as it gently stretches out towards the table so that she can fold it upon itself. When I lift

mine, it doesn't move, locked in its own glutinous mass. What did I do wrong? Was Hermione too young to use? Did I not knead it enough? Did I knead it too much? Did the weather affect my flour to water ratio? Did I leave out a cup of water inadvertently? At this point, according to Apollonia, I should trash the whole thing. But, not wanting to be wasteful, I persevere.

□The second rise seems to have done the dough some good. It's gone from a hard mass to a slightly lighter hard mass. It's time to get it ready to bake, but not before my favorite part—scoring the loaf. I'm addicted to YouTube videos of people slicing all sorts of beautiful designs into bread. I have a traditional lame and I make a nice deep cut going down the center. According to Apollonia, if my bread hasn't risen quite enough, a deep cut will help. I then make some light cuts on either side with hopes a nice leaf-like design will emerge.

□After fifty-five minutes, I realize I probably should have kept a better eye on it. The top has burnt a bit, but it doesn't look too bad. I'm sure Apollonia would drop kick it out of the window, but after schmearing a few slices with some French butter, no one in my house seems to be complaining.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

What's in a Name?

I realize I'm late to the Karen bashing party, but I was too reluctant to engage in the debate for fear of being labeled as one. You see, my name IS Karen and I've spent the last few

years apologizing for it. I've gotten in the habit of introducing myself as, "Karen, but one of the nice ones." It's a quick way to deflect any immediate profiling. But why Karen? How did that particular name become the pejorative term for an obnoxious white woman that flaunts her privilege with unreasonable demands? I know plenty of Lindas, and Susans, and one particular Debbie that can cause you to stick a needle in your eye as soon as their shrill voices hit the air. Their names could serve just the same purpose.

I know, I know—people love labels. They may be mean, but they're easy and get the point across quickly. But it made me start to think about names, how they shape us and how others judge us. I'm no angel in this respect either. For example, do you know any Ira's that are quarterbacks? Or have you met a Seymour that isn't an accountant? I'm sure there are thousands of Iras and Seymours that rightfully cringe at these presumptions. Names do bring along their own preconceived connotations, whether they are deserved or not.

Of course, there's more to a name than just our first names. How they fit with our last names really fleshes out a fuller picture. Mine is Katz, like the deli, not the Broadway musical. I share the same name with the recently retired CEO of Neiman Marcus, a successful children's book author, a book cover illustrator, and seventy-four other women living in Manhattan. I've toyed with the idea of starting a *Karen Katz Club* or making a documentary about people with the same name. How many Julia Roberts or Anne Hathaways are out there and how do their lives compare? Karen Katz might not be as ubiquitous as John Smith, but if you live in New York, you probably know one of us.

But I don't mind sharing my name. I like it. I like it a lot. It has a nice cadence to it. The crisp, hard sounds of the two "K's" back to back are strong and self-assured. Many people actually call me *KK*, as if I'm an agent from the forties

negotiating a deal with Louis B. Mayer. Or they call me *Double K* or *Katzala*. It's the kind of name that's just made for nicknames.

I can thank my mother for my first name, although I don't think she put a ton of thought into it. In the Jewish tradition, you're supposed to be named after a family member who has passed on. I was the third of three, so by the time I came along the only dead person's name left was my mom's grandfather Sam, *Schmuel* in Hebrew. He was a brusque, emotionless man from the old country and my mom had little affection for him. She didn't want to be constantly reminded of him, so she feminized Sam into Sue and that became my middle name. My Hebrew name was also feminized into *Schmuela*, causing some of my friends to tease me with the nickname, *Schmoo*, an unfortunate Yiddish word that means fool or jerk. Fortunately, it didn't stick.

My mother says she loved the name Carol, but that had been the name of my father's ex-girlfriend and she didn't want to be reminded of her either, so she felt the name Karen was close enough. My mom has a very thick Brooklyn accent seasoned with a touch of Long Island, so when she shortens my name in haste, it becomes *Kah*, the *a* drawn out nasally as in the word *gnat*. And if you shorten my last name too, the nickname becomes *KahKah*, not to be confused with *Caca*, the Spanish name for a certain body waste.

So I remain a founding member of the *Karen Katz Club*. My name is as much a part of me as my arm or leg or slightly chubby midsection. You can hear it easily over the loud speaker when you're getting called for your colonoscopy. People don't mangle it at the DMV. You can even convince people that you're related to the famous deli owner and that there's a sandwich named after you. It's called the *Katzala* and it's full of baloney.

My name is Karen Katz and I'm proud of it. But you can call me

KK because we're friends now.

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