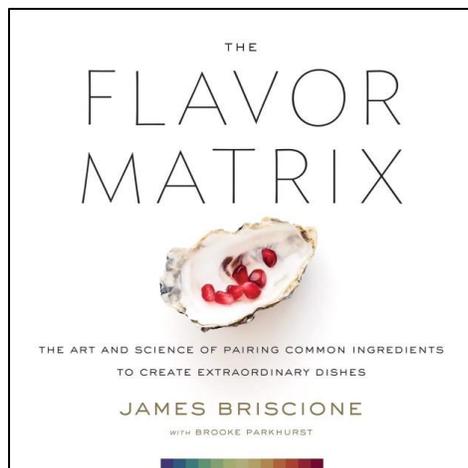


SPOTLIGHT ON BOOKS



It was just this spring that I discovered the flavourful joy that is feta and pickled beets on hamburgers. It's not a flavour combination that had occurred to me before but wound up to be delicious.

It was just shortly after that I discovered James Briscione's *The Flavor Matrix*.

A culinary school instructor, a two-time *Chopped* champion, and renowned cookbook author, Briscione was still nonetheless like many of us amateur chefs; skeptical that we hadn't already discovered all the great flavour pairings. So, he teamed up with Watson, the supercomputer that you may have seen beating Ken Jennings on *Jeopardy*, with hopes to discover more.

The beauty of using a computer for this process was the diminished bias. Briscione admitted that he sometimes had creative blocks based on cultural or geographical expectations of food. The computer, however, scientifically looked at known good food pairings, analyzed why they went well together, and spit out a list of other potentially great, sometimes quite surprising, food pairings: Clams and melons? Coffee and carrots? Olives and chocolate?

Briscione then took such pairings and built a cookbook around them, complete with gorgeous photos. I tried 3 recipes, all of which were a hit, easy to follow, and most had ingredients readily found here in Yellowknife. I especially enjoyed the raspberry rice pudding and I can also vouch that carrots and coffee do well together.

Flavour wheels are also provided and work similar to colour wheels in that nearby foods (similarly toned) or opposite (complementary) foods offer some of the best pairings. I also tried my hand using these wheels but to slightly less success. It is at this point the chef's human touch and skill comes in. Certainly Briscione was better than Watson or I in considering other appeal factors (textures, colours, and so on). Still, the book encourages creativity and experimentation, and therefore a lot of fun.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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