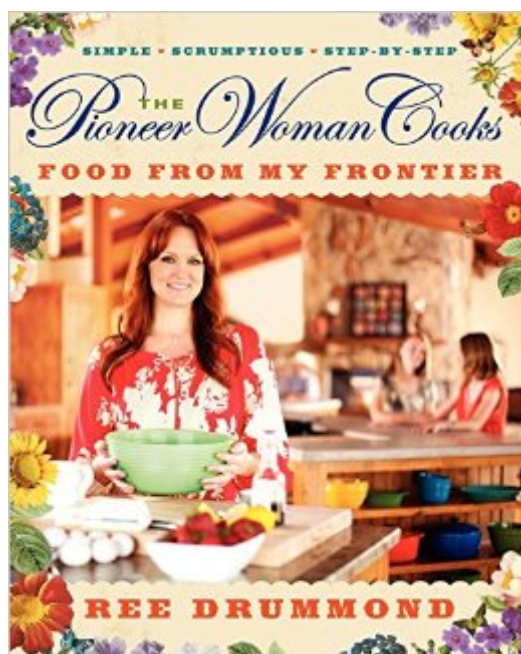


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# The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Food From My Frontier



## Synopsis

#1 New York Times Bestselling author of *The Pioneer Woman Cooks*, Ree Drummond invites fans into her world with irresistible recipes and photos. "People's Choice" Blogger Award-winning blogger, and #1 New York Times bestselling author of *The Pioneer Woman Cooks*, Ree Drummond is back with a second helping of irresistible recipes, down home wit, and warm remembrances. With *The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Food from My Frontier*, Ree serves up a feast of delicious, soul-satisfying, cowboy-approved comfort food that the whole family will enjoy—from glazed doughnuts to restaurant-style salsa to spicy Dr. Pepper pulled pork to the best grilled cheese ever!

## Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: William Morrow Cookbooks; 1 edition (March 13, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061997188

ISBN-13: 978-0061997181

Product Dimensions: 8 x 1 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (1,733 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,960 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International > U.S. Regional > Southwest

## Customer Reviews

Ree Drummond, who uses the nom de plume "Pioneer Woman" for her eponymous show on the Food Network, is following on the success of her 2009 debut *The Pioneer Woman Cooks: Recipes from an Accidental Country Girl* with a new cookbook designed to bring the taste and culture of her family-style cooking to the rest of the world. I've never seen an episode of *Pioneer Woman*, and had never heard of Ree Drummond up until a month ago. My familiarity with her grew quickly only a few pages into it. "Food from my Frontier" is filled with pictures and stories of her family and children, and if you don't know the names of everyone by the time you've reached the soup section, then it's likely several pages have gotten stuck together. At first glance, I started to groan. I know all about the emotional aspect of cooking, and I'm used to chefs playing up the "family angle" in their books, but for the most part, I gloss right over it. I would gladly give up pictures of Gordon Ramsay's children picking strawberries or Paula Deen's niece cutting herbs for a crusty, bubbling mac and cheese or even a nice dark roux. I can fully appreciate the market for "coffee table cookbooks," but

mine will spend most of their lives on the counter, with hand-cracked spines to ensure they lay flat and pages covered in grease and olive oil. At first appearance, "Food from my Frontier" follows the same formula, but it quickly becomes clear that Drummond has hit a magical balance between form and function and created a cookbook that retains the down-homey family aspect that will make this book appeal to those that like to "read" cookbooks and those that use them to cook.

**CONTENT**

I started out my research into Drummond with the food blog that started her success, and on first glance, it is easy to see where that success came from. The strength of her food blog comes from the stunningly beautiful pictures that accompany each recipe. Food photography can be a difficult skill to master, but it's clear that Drummond could have easily picked it up professionally. Almost every aspect of her cooking, from mise en place, to preparation, to finished product, is documented in vibrant full color photos that are sure to work the salivary glands into overtime. The same format follows in this book. Each recipe (yes, even the one for iced tea) has an average of 10 accompanying photographs (all taken by Drummond herself). The pictures are fairly small, but large enough to show technique and give you an idea of what you should be doing. There are still numerous non-food photos of Drummond's family, pets, and various farm animals, but the layout is so well-managed that there is more than enough room for them and they serve to add character to the book without taking away from the actual cooking.

**RECIPES**

There are 119 recipes in all. Normally for a cookbook of this size I would expect at least 150, but given how much space is devoted to each recipe, this is a very respectable number. If you are a devotee to the blog, most of these recipes are going to feel very familiar to you. I went through all of the recipes and came up with 30 that appeared to be truly original to the book. All the rest can be found on her blog. Some of the recipes were "reworked," which mostly just means that they had better pictures taken, and possibly small ingredient changes. But I can't fault Drummond because she likes to give away free recipes. I will however say that if you're having trouble with a particular recipe, look it up on the blog, because she has many more pictures and the steps are described in greater detail. I have had no problem following the recipes I have tried from the book though. The book follows the traditional format of most cookbooks, but adds a "Canning" section at the end. The recipe breakdown (followed by number of recipes) is as follows:

|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Breakfast                        | (13) |
| Lunch                            | (14) |
| Soups                            | (7)  |
| Starters, Party Food, and Drinks | (15) |
| Pasta and Pizza                  | (10) |
| Supper                           | (21) |
| Sides                            | (10) |
| Sweets                           | (17) |
| Canning                          | (12) |

I tried recipes from each section (except the canning), and I think the strength of this book comes from the Starters/Party Food, and the Sweets. You'll find there are several classics, such as caprese salad, guacamole, and quiche, but almost all of the recipes have something original about the preparation or an added ingredient that gives them new life. I've seen a dozen recipes for caprese salad, and

they are pretty much exactly the same (which is to be expected for this dish), but I had never thought to heat the balsamic before, which reduces it and concentrates the flavor, to give a much nicer presentation and richer taste. While trying Pioneer Woman's recipe for sliders, I was surprised by how much flavor was added to the burgers by adding heavy cream to the ground beef and lathering the buns with fry sauce (ketchup mixed with mayonnaise). Usually I'll be lucky if even half of the recipes in a cookbook appeal to me, but I could see myself eventually making almost all (with the exception of some of the drinks) of the recipes in "Food from my Frontier." All of the recipes I've tried have been very easy to recreate and although my presentation is not yet on par with Drummond's, I would be surprised if the taste of my dishes were much different. The recipes are all easy to follow and do not require advanced techniques or weird ingredients that you're going to have to get at a specialty store. These are quality southern recipes that I think will appeal to kids and parents alike. Although be warned - they are not for those who are concerned with counting calories.

**CRITICISM-** Lack of preparation/cooking time. It's not too difficult to figure this out from reading the recipes, but I think every cookbook should have an estimated cooking time below the serving size to give you a general idea of how long you're going to be in the kitchen.- The book also contains a lot of the previously-mentioned camp - dozens of family pictures, life on the farm, and photos of animals with captions above them. But as I said, it's easy enough to skim over if you're not into it and I don't feel like it takes away from the content of the food portion of the book. Even though I usually hate this kind of thing, I felt that it even added to the book in this case.- These recipes are about as far away from "healthy" as you can get. I don't fault the book at all for this (and this isn't really a criticism), since it's not advertised as a healthy cookbook, but the ingredients in these dishes would make Paula Deen blush. Make sure you have your kitchen well stocked with lots of eggs, sugar, fats, and red meat. The Drummond family can get away with it since they're working on a farm for 12 hours a day, but if the average American eats this stuff every day they will have a heart attack before they make it to the desserts section.

**CONCLUSION** I have grown up in an age where cooks are spoiled by beautiful cookbooks. I can no longer pick up my mother's 30 year old Junior League cookbooks, filled with hundreds of recipes in a spiral bound book. While I am sure that Susie Greenleaf's recipe for crawfish pie is delicious, I will likely never try it because it lacks the visual accompaniment to get me excited about making it. I fear that "Food from my Frontier" is setting a dangerous precedent. How will other chefs be able to compete with their own Coffee Cream Cake recipe without a full page photo of a moist and rich bundle of calories like we're given on page 253? Maybe Ms. Drummond should consider a side job doing food photography full time? Until then, Pioneer Woman's "Food from my Frontier" will retain its place of prominence behind my

grease-stained cookbook stand. UPDATE March 16, 2012: I've gone through all the recipes and below is a list of the new and reworked recipes that I could not find already on her blog: BREAKFAST Orange Sweet Rolls Eggs Florentine Breakfast Bread Pudding (Very similar to the Sausage-Kale Breakfast Strata from her blog) Breakfast Pizza Cowboy and Cowgirl Quiche LUNCH Spicy Caesar Salad Cornbread Croutons Best Grilled Cheese Ever Basic Chicken Salad (reworked from 2008 recipe) Spicy Grilled Vegetable Panini Chicken Apricot Panini (reworked from 2010 recipe) Perfect Spinach Salad (reworked from 2009) SOUPS Gazpacho (reworked and modified from a 2009 recipe - I prefer the blog version) French Onion Soup (Only different in the cheese/crouton preparation) STARTERS, PARTY FOODS AND DRINKS Brie-Stuffed Mushrooms Classic Hot Wings / Asian Hot Wings (Modified version of the "Wings" recipe from her blog) Whiskey-Mustard Meatballs Cherry Limeade Mango Margaritas Bloody Mary PASTA AND PIZZA Rigatoni and Meatballs Pizza Dough (although you can find this from the "My Favorite Pizza" blog recipe) Thai Chicken Pizza Carnitas Pizza SUPPER Barbecue Chicken and Pineapple Quesadillas His/Her Burgers Fried Chicken Tacos Shepherd's Pie Tequila Lime Chicken Tangy Tomato Brisket Apricot Shrimp Skewers Osso Buco Honey-Plum Soy Chicken SIDE SWEETS Twice-Baked New Potatoes (reworked from 2009 recipe) Panfried Kale Panfried Spinach (almost the exact same as the Kale recipe) SWEETS Apple Brown Betty (reworked from 2008 recipe) Coffee Cream Cake (reworked from "Coffee Cake" blog recipe) Blackberry Chip Ice Cream (reworked from 2009 blog recipe) Coffee Ice Cream Malted Milk Coffee Ice Cream Sandwiches CANNING Sweet lime Pickles DISCLOSURE: I was provided a free copy of this book from the publisher to review. Since I did not receive it until after my review was written, I also purchased my own copy at retail to write the review. I was never instructed or asked by the publisher to provide a positive rating.

I like cookbooks. I don't care if an author has a blog and every recipe can already be found online for free. If I like the author enough I will spend the money so I can have the book, with all the recipes in one place, to enjoy at my convenience. I don't think it's fair to judge a book solely on whether the recipes can be had elsewhere for free. That being said, I just don't like this book as much as the first one. The first one grabbed me because it was fun and flirty, written in a tone that drew me in, with lighthearted photos and simple, delicious recipes. I didn't mind the extensive detail or the photos of the process that went into making each and every dish. This time, though, and I can't quite put my finger on it, I'm bored. The recipes aren't grabbing me; her down-home charm is wearing a bit thin. The recipes are more "exotic" (for her) this time around and a big departure from what she claims her family will eat. Her tone also seems more forced, as if she's trying desperately to hang on to

who she was the first time around. And I personally cannot handle one more photo of a hand with a spoonful of paprika in its palm. There's detail and there's too much detail and these types of photos seem more filler than necessary. I have no real desire to cook from this book. This is not to say it's a bad book, rather, I just wish it drew me in as much as the first.

I think this is really such a great, well planned cookbook with so many wonderful recipes. The photography is fabulous and makes for an easy read. This is one cookbook I keep coming back to.

I have her first cookbook and lots of recipes looked familiar as if derived from my Mom and Grandma. The 2nd one is even more yummy and the pictures are really beautiful, makes your mouth water for sure. This is not a low fat cookbook and if you go in thinking it is, you'll be disappointed. I've tried 2 recipes so far and lets just say my husband has signed up for a few more years with me. The Tres Leche cake was a hit at our house and I have marked pages in order to try them one by one and now carry it with me to the grocery store just to make sure I have all the goodies. I love her blog and I gain 3 lbs. just reading it and this cookbook does not disappoint. Now when I read the recipes, I 'hear' her give me the little quips of humor she dishes up on the TV version of her life as a foodanista!

I have loved Ree and read her blog for years now, and though I hate to say it, I was not thrilled with this cookbook. I feel that now that she has begun her tv show and spreading her "brand," her unique perspective and personality are becoming lost somehow. You know, the things that made her original readers love her are falling to the wayside to make her more appealing to the general masses. I turn to the Pioneer Woman for fool proof classic comfort food, but when you look through this cookbook, that's not what you find. These aren't southern classics, cowboy food, or comfort food. Recipes do sound lovely still, but they aren't the kind of recipes that I came to look for from the Pioneer Woman. I don't mean to say it's a bad cookbook -- it's just a generic cookbook that lacks the original charm of Mrs. Drummond.

There aren't as many recipes as expected (yes, I did "look inside" before I bought it). It's filled with nice photos but each step has a photo which makes it difficult to follow a recipe without flipping several pages. Fortunately, I use the mise en place method of cooking so didn't need to flip pages that often, but when I did it bothered me because it's obvious the ingredients and instructions could have been put on a single page with room for some of the photos. Also, if you are a believer in the

ranch (faux) story of Ree's daily life you'll enjoy the book as nearly every page has either a cute photo or a story of some kind. All in all, this plus the bazillion photos make it a thick cookbook with more non-recipe stuff than actual recipes. I'd suggest grabbing the recipes from her blog since most of them are there. The few recipes I've tried thus far have been very good.

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