

## Annabel Karmel's *My First Cookbook*

**Annabel Karmel**

**Alex Willmore, Illustrator**

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Annabel Karmel's *My First Cookbook* encourages children to learn about cooking and find delight in both food and food preparation.

Karmel is a celebrated United Kingdom children's cookbook author who was awarded an MBE for her achievements in the field of child nutrition. Citing her own early culinary enthusiasms, she recalls donning her "mum's oversized apron" and climbing onto a chair to reach the kitchen counter. Karmel's own children began cooking when they were toddlers; their experiences gave them better appreciation for food, boosted their self-confidence, and led to "mountains of memories."

Visual appeal is an integral part of the cookbook, from the whimsical Animal Porridge and Teddy Bear Pasta to a "cheeky" caterpillar-shaped sandwich. A croissant becomes a crab with googly banana slice-and-blueberry eyes, while spice-rich Gingerbread Friends wear M&M candy buttons. And the Rosemary Tomato Focaccia includes the hands-on fun of kneading dough while demonstrating how yeast and flour rise together to make bread.

Divided between meals, snacks, and desserts, some of these recipes are more challenging than others. All, however, include bright, engaging photographs and illustrations to accompany their simplified, enumerated steps. Further, there are suggested vegetarian and vegan substitutions, such as baking with mashed sweet potatoes instead of eggs or replacing chicken with plant-based seitan.

The colorful guide divides various cooking tasks according to their appropriate age groups. Among the recommended, adult-supervised activities for younger children are pouring, crumbling, using a cookie cutter, and tasting. Older children can advance to measuring, cracking eggs, stir-frying, and rolling pastry. The use of knives, ovens, stove burners, and appliances like food processors are marked with red exclamation points and clear instructions to "Ask A Grown-Up."

*My First Cookbook* is an inspired, educational introduction to cooking.

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