

Forget 'molecular gastronomy': Microsoft technologist takes cookery to the quantum level in 'the greatest work on food ever'

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Some cooks have described it as 'insane' and 'unusable' - and at 2,468 pages long, it's certainly not your average cookbook.

But its author isn't your average cook - he's a quantum physicist student of Stephen Hawking who has also held a position as Microsoft's Chief Technology officer.

A lifelong inventor, Nathan Myhrvold has 500 patents to his name. What was less well-known - until this year - was his lifelong obsession with food - which has culminated in *The Modernist Cookbook*, a six-volume magnum opus which took a team of 30 three years to create.

Modernist Cuisine analyses cooking at the atomic level - using a team of 30, the six-volume book took three years to create

'This is not a cook book as such, rather a brilliant, beautiful documentation of one man's obsession with the science of food,' says British food writer Tom Parker Bowles, 'It's one of the greatest works on food ever published.' It should be, of course - it costs £395.

'Nathan Myhrvold is the former chief strategist and chief technology officer at Microsoft,' says Bowles 'I'm obsessed with this book. He's had a lifelong obsession with food and cooking, particularly when it comes to the more modernist and avant garde side of the process.'

What really goes into a burger: Dishes are analysed down to the chemical processes that make a perfect burger in a book by an inventor who holds 500 patents

'The book is stunningly ambitious. It attempts to explain the very basics of cooking - what happens to veg when they steam or meat when it browns - as well as more advanced techniques such as cooking in sous vide - the sort of techniques adored by Adria and Blumenthal. And he uses sumptuous, intricate and pin sharp photographs to illustrate these processes.'

But why is it so BIG?

'Many Modernist chefs have written their own books, and these generally do a great job of elucidating aspects of each chef's personal culinary style,' writes Myhrvold. 'Chefs don't usually aspire to write a book that is more comprehensive than their own vision—after all, a chef operating a restaurant probably doesn't have the time. Chefs are too busy running their kitchens and creating new dishes.'

Modernist cuisine also includes a small number of recipes, such as this recipe for Hollandaise - using a 'sous vide' water cooker as favoured by Heston Blumenthal

In addition to his long career with Microsoft, and as an independent inventor, Myhrvold has also helped complete Victorian computing pioneer Charles Babbage's Difference Engine, a pioneering mechanical computer designed by Babbage, and on display at London's Science Museum.

He has also won the World Barbecue Championship.



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