

From 'Farm Anatomy' to 'Art of the Menu,' the Best Food Books of 2011

After the year's best [children's books](#), [art and design books](#), [photography books](#), [science books](#), and [history books](#), the 2011 [best-of](#) series continues with a taste of the year's most delectable food books, a literary lobster course of the finest variety.

5. ART OF THE MENU

[Menu Design in America: 1850-1985](#) by design writer extraordinaire Steven Heller ([previously](#)), *Esquire* food columnist John Mariani, cultural anthropologist and graphic design historian Jim Heimann, and high-end publisher Taschen ([previously](#)) is a delicious history of menu creativity, featuring nearly 800 vibrant illustrated examples of menu ephemera, alongside photographs of restaurants, that together tell the rich and fascinating story of eating out in America. Besides the fascinating design history, the book doubles as a curious tracker of American inflation, both economic (who's in for a \$1.50 fine-dining lunch?) and of culinary claims (how did we go from simple and to-the-point food descriptions to foofy foodie-speak?).



1901 Karl L. Caroll, Hollywood, Calif.
Backed by a stone wall and lit by a single candle, the portrait of the Hollywood actor Karl L. Caroll is the centerpiece of the menu for Romproffs. The menu is a simple, elegant affair, with the actor's name and the word "ROMPROFFS" printed in a classic, serif font.



1950s Futurotel, Hollywood, California
The Futurotel menu is a classic example of mid-century modern design, featuring a stylized globe and the word "CAFE" in a bold, sans-serif font.



1950s Al Carroll, Hollywood, California
The Al Carroll menu is a classic example of Hollywood glamour, featuring a woman in a long, flowing dress and the name "AL CARROLL" in a stylized font.



1950s Mocambo, Hollywood, California
The Mocambo menu is a classic example of Hollywood glamour, featuring a colorful striped background and the name "Mocambo" in a decorative, cursive font.