

# Time Out Chicago

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## **Chefs'** **Secret Recipes**



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# Mind & body

## Light reading

Whether you're a kitchen rookie or an Iron Chef, you'll learn something new from these weight loss-focused cookbooks.

By **The Get staff**  
Photograph by  
**Nicole Radja**

Duplicating rich recipes from your favorite restaurants at home is a special treat—but for healthier dishes the rest of the week, we perused the latest crop of light cookbooks. Here's how they stacked up.

*Flat Belly Diet!* (Rodale, \$26)

★★★★★

**The pitch** The editors of *Prevention* magazine claim that monounsaturated fatty acids (peculiarly tagged "MUFAs" by the authors) make weight loss easier and also help target belly fat.

**The recipes** Just two out of the book's 11 chapters feature actual food preparations. Chapter seven is all about quick and easy meals, while eight focuses on simple recipes that require a little more time. The rest of the book includes information on MUFAs, a four-day antibloat jump start and workout tips.

**Sounds delicious** Summery-dishes such as chilled strawberry soup, chicken with citrus-avocado salsa and sizzled shrimp with heirloom tomatoes make our mouths water while we dream of swimsuit season.

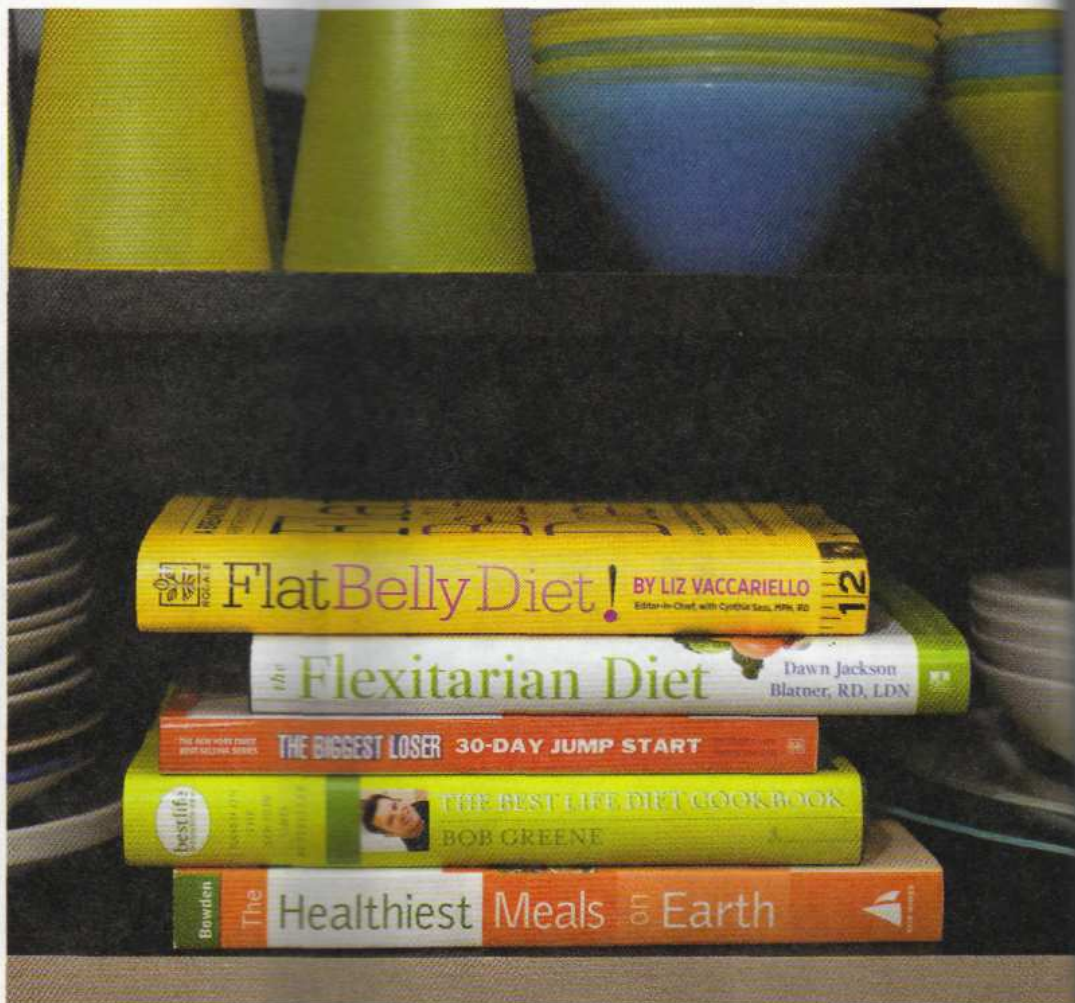
**Healthy extras** Flat Belly success stories scattered throughout the book offer inspiration, and a write-in journal at the end will help keep you on track.

*The Flexitarian Diet* (McGraw Hill, \$25)

★★★★★

**The pitch** "Flexitarianism" is a new health movement that allows you to follow a mostly vegetarian nutrition plan, with a small focus on meat (translation: Include more plants in your diet).

**The recipes** Author, registered dietitian and occasional *TOC* nutrition expert Dawn Jackson Blatner, breaks up foods into five "flex" groups and features five weeks worth of recipes. She even includes shopping checklists, so you don't have to consult each recipe before stocking up at the supermarket.



**Sounds delicious** Blatner has developed creative techniques to make indulgences such as the all-American burger, pasta dishes and waffles with maple-berry compote (hint: Add only a drizzle of maple syrup) healthy without sacrificing flavor.

**Healthy extras** Each recipe includes information on calories, fat, cholesterol, protein and other food-label stats.

*The Biggest Loser 30-Day Jump Start* (Rodale, \$22)

★★★★★

**The pitch** Nix unhealthy eating habits and embrace lighter ingredients and portion sizes with a month's worth of daily recipes—from breakfast to snacks to lunch and dinner.

**The recipes** Most dishes are simple, straightforward reduces of recognizable favorites—like chili (made with lean ground turkey and beans) and pizza (on a whole-wheat English muffin). The difference? *The Biggest Loser* dietitian has slashed caloric extras such as sugar, butter and oil so most recipes come in under 300 calories per serving.

**Sounds delicious** The breakfast recipes are especially creative—we can't wait to try the banana nuts oats hot cereal. With walnuts and vanilla? Yes, please. On the other hand, even food styling couldn't make Andrea's turkey wrap—ground turkey breast,

cucumber and sprouts folded into a large piece of lettuce—look like something we'd ever eat for lunch.

**Healthy extras** Workouts and tips from trainers Bob and Jillian, plus words of wisdom courtesy of current contestants and the winners from previous seasons of the popular TV show, round out the recipes.

*Bob Greene's The Best Life Diet Cookbook* (Simon & Schuster, \$25)

★★★★★

**The pitch** Bob Greene, the man who helped Oprah drop serious pounds (before she gained some back), proves that you can trim down and titillate your taste buds simultaneously.

**The recipes** From ginger waffles to steak and kohlrabi salad, Greene gets creative with his ingredients while keeping the prep time and calorie count to a minimum.

**Sounds delicious** Forget the "no pain, no gain" attitude. We'd eat these dishes even if we weren't watching our weight. For starters, we'll try the pecan-crusted trout with peaches.

**Healthy extras** World-renowned chefs such as Charlie Trotter and Nobu Matsuhisa rise to the occasion with designed-for-*Best Life* recipes. Turn to the final section of the book for three types of two-week meal plans based on Greene's 175-strong recipe selection.

*The Healthiest Meals on Earth* (Fair Winds Press, \$25)

★★★★★

**The pitch** Ditch the pill popping and get your fill of heart-healthy ingredients on the plate with nutritious, delicious and easy-to-prepare "polymeals."

**The recipes** Each of the ten chapters features a four-course meal, catering to every breed of consumer—from veggie freak (see dandelion greens with warm sesame dressing) to hard-core carnivore (see venison stew). While you won't find a single calorie count, nutritionist Jonny Bowden offers easy-to-understand explanations of why your body will love every bite.

**Sounds delicious** Simple sides like grilled pineapple and roasted rutabaga chips sound tasty (albeit a tad boring), but we're salivating at the promise of more exotic options, like Persian-style chicken with walnut, onion and pomegranate sauce.

**Healthy extras** In addition to offering helpful shopping lists at the end of every recipe, the 368-page food bible comes jam-packed with useful info, such as the benefits of using cacao versus cocoa, and a chart that illustrates when, how and why to use various types of cooking oils.