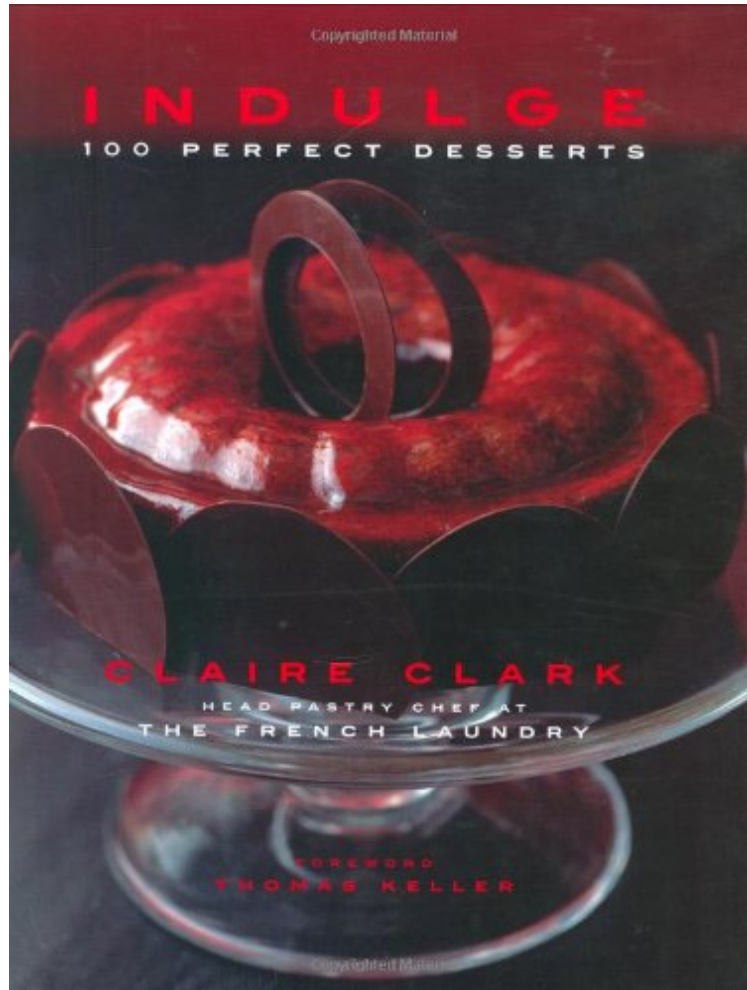


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## Indulge: 100 Perfect Desserts

*Claire Clark Head Pastry Chef at The French Laundry*  
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**Claire Clark Head Pastry Chef at The French Laundry : Indulge: 100 Perfect Desserts** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Indulge: 100 Perfect Desserts:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Sophisticated flavorsBy ToniClaire Clark was living in the U.K. and dazzling the British crowds with her amazing pastry talents until she was lured by Thomas Keller to come and work at his own restaurant in the U.S. From 2005-2008 she filled her impressive resume as the head pastry chef at "The French Laundry" restaurant in California. A definite upscale clientele with sophisticated tastes.Having "been there, done that" for so many notable gastronomic places, she decided strike out on her own and head back to the U.K. for her own chance at ownership and even harder work by wearing one more hat as proprietor.But during her employ at "The French Laundry", Ms. Clark produced this voluminous book of sweet tastes and temptations, in 2007. It has been worth the wait, to be sure. This is such a full book of information, that I have used it as a reference guide for baking details, hints, and directions; she seems to have left nothing to chance to spoil your efforts.In my opinion, I have found

that pastry books fall into two marvelous categories: "Average Joe" or "Fancy Pants"; I didn't think I could find one that fell in between, a "marriage" of sorts. This effort has, and it has done so beautifully. At the same time, I have to admit that for me, some of the desserts were a bit too sophisticated, though not a negative thing. The physical appearance and presentation style of the book was impressive for me. Heavy and voluminous, she spared nothing in giving 100 beautiful and beckoning desserts. The pages are a dark cream-colored paired with mostly cranberry partners. A recipe ribbon is included (don't ask me why but that is such a draw for me; it seems to shout out "fancy" and I shout right back "thank you!"). As an added note, on the information page prior to the "Contents" section, there is a descriptive note about the text and its typeface; another "fancy" shout out. The photography is pristine, clear, and styled without too many of the usual food styling props that you might see in magazines and such. You get the dessert. Period. I like that very much in my "fancy pants" books, thank you. Though I am one for as many photo's as possible in a cookbook, not all the recipes are accompanied by photos. But in defense of that, for those who enjoy this type of baking, you need to be pretty comfortable in the kitchen already. I do not feel that this is a beginners level book, but I wouldn't discourage someone if they enjoy this venue. Which brings me to the next point: the book gives both metric and Imperial weights (U.K. measures). I have learned that scaling your ingredients makes them become far better and trusted friends when it comes to desserts. Therefore any book that gives you both, also gives you far better chances of success. Example: US = 1 teas/UK = 5ml. Though they might seem that they should be the same, when you weight them out, there can be just the slightest difference in the amounts that can produce a different taste or different texture. Ms. Clark also includes "Claire's Notes" in most recipes which are little hints and suggestions that can add or subtract actions, alter flavors, or change steps dependent on an altered outcome, or just give generic information. Rather than give all 100 recipes, I would like to present scattered recipes from each section, some of which I have already tried with great success. Many of the categories are short with just a handful of recipes. Each section begins with "The Secrets of Success" which is a mini-tutorial of sorts for that area.

**FOREWARD:** by "The French Laundry" owner/chef Thomas Keller

**INTRODUCTION:** This was a thoroughly enjoyable, brief autobiography of sorts detailing some of the lessons learned during her growing years in the pastry field. I particularly like her sentence. "if you're going to cry, do it in private"; basically if you're going to play with the big dogs, you gotta work on that thick skin as you become a team player.

**NOTES for AMERICAN READERS:** This speaks of the need for scales when baking, and a glossary of American/British terms that are used in the book; it is printed on a mustard-colored page for quick visual access.

**BISCUITS and COOKIES:** Oatmeal, Pecan, and Raisin Cookies (pretend that they're totally healthy while you drink these with a glass of cold milk), Frascati Biscuits (almost like Biscotti). French Macarons (of course!), Amaretti (a great gluten-free cookie: I added pinenuts/pignoli).

**CAKES:** Carrot Cake (this was outstanding in that it has a very, very sophisticated, adult/grown-up taste to it, not like the usual sugar-laden carrot cakes. I noted in another review regarding the amount of baking powder used and yes, it does measure out to a scant 2 tablespoons). Frosted Banana Cake, Sachertorte, Lemon Cake, Battenburg Cake (very beautiful when served as there are 4 alternating squares of 2-color batter), Chocolate Fudge Brownies.

**PASTRY:** Puff Pastry, Warm Chocolate and Raspberry Tarts, Tart Tatin, Lemon Tart, Old-Fashioned Eccles Cakes, Apple/Cinnamon/Sultana Strudel (this was incredible; the raisins/sultana's were so plump and juicy and the apple just the right texture enveloped in a perfect dough), Cream Puffs, and Eclairs (I used a yellow custard and not the chocolate pastry cream; for me, eclairs HAVE to have custard).

**MERINGUES:** Lemon Meringue (different in presentation from the typical American version).

**CUSTARDS and CREAMS:** Creme Caramel, Creme Brulee (outstanding).

**DESSERTS, MOUSSES, and JELLIES:** Baked Vanilla Cheesecake, Baked Chocolate Mousse, Opera Cake (my next cake when I have a lot of time; an exquisite presentation).

**PUDDINGS:** Hot Chocolate Souffles, Apple Cinnamon Charlotte.

**ICES:** Vanilla Ice Cream, Strawberry Ice Cream.

**PETIT FOURS:** Langues de Chat, Honey Madeleines, Verjus-Plumped Raisin Financiers, Almond Roches, Coffee Walnut Fudge, Marshmallows Hot Chocolate.

**SUPPLIERS INDEX ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** If you enjoy a challenge, as well as some upscale desserts, you will thoroughly enjoy this book. She placed much effort into explaining details of baking in which a solid baking foundation must be built upon. Using that knowledge will help you in presenting the same delicious offerings that are within these pages. Peace.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. **Luxury!** By Carmen Adorno Just the wine and chocolate cake that embellish the book cover is reason enough to buy this gorgeous book. Claire Clark explains every little step of the way in order you can get a great result! Wonderful book, fantastic recipes - a selection of the best desserts you can imagine - and before each chapter the "secrets of the trade", so you can do it right!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. **Five Stars** By Customer Amazing book with easy to follow recipes that taste delicious

Learn to craft desserts from a master patissier. Claire Clark is the pastry chef at The French Laundry (Napa Valley in California), one of America's most renowned restaurants. Its innovative and creative menus always deliver the highest standards of quality and great taste. Its celebrated desserts, made by Clark, are nothing short of remarkable. Indulge is a collection of Claire Clark's favorites dishes that any home chef can re-create. Perfectly decadent, the recipes in this new cookbook range from the deceptively simple to the more exotic. Included are cookies, cakes, pastries, mousses,

ices, meringues, custards and creams, and more. Clark's down-to-earth writing style demystifies such sumptuous sweets as: Red wine and chocolate cake Bitter chocolate, praline and espresso torte Orange and pistachio semolina cake Fig and blueberry and creme fraiche tart Rich chocolate ganache tart with salted caramel and candied peanuts Tropical fruit Pavlova Mango, ginger and lime sorbet. Along with the recipes there are valuable tips and techniques learned during Claire Clark's 20 years as a pastry chef in world famous restaurants.

Claire's Notes ... give the book a voice and a sense of the pastry chef's many years of experience. Irresistible .... [has] enticed me to start measuring ingredients with a scale in the true pastry-chef fashion. -- Bonnie Stern "The National Post" (12/01/2007) About the Author Claire Clark is the executive pastry chef at The French Laundry, the renowned Napa Valley restaurant. Thomas Keller is the celebrated chef, writer and restaurateur behind The French Laundry and the author of the award-winning The French Laundry Cookbook. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introduction I love to bake. I find baking immensely rewarding and comforting: it is an indulgent pleasure that brings a warmth and coziness and a sense of peace and contentment. I have wonderfully fond memories of baking with my mother as a child. I would sit, or sometimes stand precariously, on a rickety wooden chair at our large wooden kitchen table which was positioned right in the middle of the room. We would mix and roll, spoon and chop in a gentle and meandering way. Food was never hurried or hastily prepared; baking was a labour of love, something to be enjoyed and savoured. I grew up in a large old Victorian Vicarage that cost too much to heat and the only room that was warm was the kitchen, the heat provided by a solid fuel stove -- an ancient cast-iron Aga. The kitchen was the heart and hub of our home. I would rush through the long draughty uncarpeted corridors, arriving at the kitchen with a crash and on flinging open the door would be met with cries of, 'Close the door Claire, you'll let the heat out!'. Once the door was open, aromas of vanilla and spice or caramel and chocolate would slap you in the face, along with a rush of welcome warmth. Cooling wires were placed in the centre of the kitchen table laden with baking trays full of the sweet temptations of the day. The table was often multifunctional; on school nights my mother would bake at one end of the table and my brother and I would sit at the other doing our homework, the trays of baked goodies looking like trophies enticing us to hurry up and finish our studies while they were still warm. Perhaps at this point I should tell briefly the story of how someone so immersed in the quintessential English way of life should come to find herself cooking in one of the world's top three restaurants, just outside San Francisco in the American state of California. How does a woman get into and survive the environment of a Michelin-starred restaurant, an environment that is so often saturated with male egotism? Well, more often than not it starts as a baptism of fire. As a female you are always going to be one of the few girls in the brigade. Many female chefs have a fantastic career when they are young, they then marry and have families and the demanding world of the restaurant kitchen is a thing of the past, left far behind. My first job was as a grill chef, and at just 17 and straight out of college it was a severe shock to the system of this impressionable young girl. My father was a country parson and so the guys were quick to nickname me 'Vicar's Knickers'. It seemed that, regardless of your sex, everyone slapped each other on the bottom and on the back and generally got friendly in a physical way. I was left wondering if this was something that males did to bond, or was it just the way of crazy chefs? In most other professions you would have been sent straight to Human Resources if you called the new girl Vicar's Knickers and slapped her on the bum in her first week. On one occasion, upon meeting a new chef for the first time, he took his knife and slashed all the buttons off my chef's coat. A handshake would have done -- but then chefs do those sorts of things! Once the initial shock of the swear words contained within almost every sentence, and the slaps on the bottom and back had worn off, I was left wondering if catering was really going to be the right profession for me. I thought long and hard, took a deep breath, looked deep inside, and decided it was, and that to properly fit in I would need to adapt quickly to my surroundings. I would have to do as the men did I would have to work extremely hard and expect no special treatment just because I was a woman, and, most importantly, 'give as good as I got'. When I thought I was right, I stood up for myself and made myself heard. I proved myself by showing that I could cook as well as them and showed that I wanted to be one of them. Life is stressful in the kitchen, tempers are lost, names are called, but at the end of a very long day it is all forgotten and we are still 'the Team' -- all striving for the same thing: excellence. Of course, there were times in those early days when it all seemed too much and I ended up in the changing rooms having a good cry. I always tell the girls I work with now that if you are going to cry, go do it in private, wash your face and come back with a clear positive perspective on why and what you want from your work and why you are where you are. Develop a defiant attitude and get on with being part of the kitchen. My career has spanned three incredible decades, through positions at The Ritz Hotel, The Intercontinental at Hyde Park Corner; a teaching job at Le Cordon Bleu, Head Pastry Chef at Sir Terence Conran's Bluebird Restaurant on the Kings Road, then on to Claridges and a brief spell planning and setting up the Pastry Department at The House of Commons (with other stops in between). Prior to moving to California I helped open the Wolseley, the famous and impossibly glamorous restaurant on Piccadilly, with Chris Galvin, now of the Michelin-starred Galvin's Bistrot de Luxe in Baker Street. It was at the Wolseley that I first met Thomas Keller, the most amazing and incredible chef I have ever come across. His passion and personality just blew me away and I knew immediately that I had to work for him in his restaurant in California. I quickly learnt that he expects nothing less than excellence 24/7 in everything you

do: he is the most exceptional chef, a creative genius and a true inspiration, quite simply one of the most wonderful and amazing people I know. In order to succeed and then excel as a woman you have to really want to be in the kitchen with the boys, sometimes suffering, sometimes elated, but always driven by the desire to be the best and to be exceptional in all that you do. That is very much the philosophy of the 'The French Laundry' -- every person there, from the dish washer to the gardener to the food runner to myself, is driven by the same desire and passion. And we are all at The French Laundry because we are the best. It is the best family in the world. As much as I love The French Laundry, nothing will come between me and my first love baking. For me, baking is a way to relax and to have fun. It does not have to be difficult or a trial; with a little forward planning it can be delightful and rewarding. Just treat it like a day at the Spa and it will reward you many times over. Pamper yourself, allow yourself the whole day to bake the most sumptuous, decadent, rich, luxurious cake you have ever made, and then invite your friends over to marvel at your magnificent masterpiece. Even better, cook with your friends or family and make it fun. Successful baking is easier than you think -- really, it is. Break your recipe down into steps and treat each step like a building block with which to construct your masterpiece. Take your time over each individual step. Pay attention to small detail. Weighing ingredients correctly is vital to success. Precision and accuracy in all that you do will ensure good results. Don't cut corners or rush tasks - there are no compromises in baking. Baking is essentially about a few core ingredients -- butter, sugar; flour, eggs, cream, milk, nuts, chocolate, fruit and vanilla -- so be sure to select the best. The quality of the ingredients will inevitably affect the overall taste and flavour of the finished dessert. How your ingredients are amalgamated to form various cakes, doughs, biscuits, pastes and petit fours is, of course, a skill, but one that can be learnt if you have the right information to hand. The Secrets of Success sections in this book provide some key information to help you with any pastry wizardry that might have previously put you off baking. Some recipes have as little as three or four ingredients and the results are still mouthwatering. The recipes in Indulge are my favourites, taken from my last 25 years as a pastry cook, some from my childhood passed down from family, some from 5-star hotels and one-, two- and three-star Michelin restaurants. Some recipes are as simple as the shortbread, which we make on a daily basis at The French Laundry. Others are rather more complicated but absolutely possible and completely wonderful when cooked correctly. All of them are easily achieved if you follow the guidelines and allow yourself enough time. Even if the finished result does not look quite as exquisite as the photograph that accompanies the recipe, just remember that practice makes perfect, and it is still going to taste better than a commercially-made, E-numberladen offering from your local supermarket. Dessert is to be enjoyed. Everyone loves to be a little naughty once in a while, and allow themselves a little taste of heaven in eating and enjoying a calorie-laden frivolity. So go on: live a little and enjoy baking. Indulge yourself. Claire Clark The French Laundry, Yountville July 2007