

# Cooking With Sauce

THE ART OF EATING. By M. F. K. Fisher. 749 pp. Cleveland: World Publishing Company. \$6.

By REX STOUT

**S**OMEONE has said of Casanova's Memoirs that it is a wonderful book about life with the accent on love and sex. M. F. K. Fisher's "The Art of Eating" is a wonderful book about life with the accent on food and cooking. Casanova could certainly love, but his book is wonderful because he could write; and Mrs. Fisher can certainly cook, but her book is wonderful because she too can write. It is an omnibus volume containing her "Serve It Forth," "Consider the Oyster," "How to Cook a Wolf," "The Gastronomical Me" and "Alphabet for Gourmets."

It has scores of recipes, from gentle and creamy scrambled eggs to *Riz à l'Impératrice* and pheasant with sauerkraut. It has hundreds of hints and comments on cuisine and gastronomy—historical, practical, wayward, sound, imaginative, provocative, mad. Anyone who reads it will forever after be a better cook and a better host (or hostess)—and a more dangerous guest.

There is your money's worth, but there is much more. A recipe to cure bruised withers for ladies who ride straddle. How to wash dishes and get them clean, without an electric dish washer and without getting your hands wet. How to keep the fumes from permeating your hair when you fry onions. How a woman can eat alone and like it, in public, and get away with it.

**M**RS. FISHER can be utterly cuckoo, as when she says beer is better from a bottle than from a tap. She can be irresponsible, as when she says you should save the caps of beer bottles and adds in parentheses that she has forgotten why. She can be too cryptic to live, as when she suggests, "If you want to feel like a character from one of the James brothers' looser romantic moments you can float a few drops of oil of lavender in a silver bowl filled with hot water." Jesse and Frank? Or William and Henry? In either case, what on earth! If I am being thick and she is merely taking a playful sideswipe at the stories of the last-named, I apologize, for he gives me a pain, too.

Even when Mrs. Fisher is writing specifically of food her remarks may often be more widely applied with no strain. She closes a chapter on feeding a family in wartime with the admonition, "Use as many fresh things as you can, always, and then trust to luck \* \* \* and what you have decided, inside yourself, about 'the dignity of man.'"

Certainly good advice, even for those who have never coddled an egg and never will.

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*Mr. Stout is the creator of the gourmet-detective, Nero Wolfe.*

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