

Chandler Finds Cookbook Writing 'Simply Successful'

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[Jennifer Chandler](#) cooks in an ordinary galley kitchen with one sink, one Jenn-Air stove and one Sub-Zero refrigerator, which was in the house already.

From this small hub, Chandler not only prepares home-cooked meals every night, but she has tested and modified many of her dishes to write two cookbooks – “Simply Salads” and “Simply Suppers,” published by [Thomas Nelson](#) of Nashville.

“I love food,” Chandler said, “and I am very lucky I get to play with food for a living.”

Chandler will sign copies of “Simply Suppers” on Saturday at the Trolley Stop Market on Madison Avenue. She’ll travel to Nashville on Nov. 13 for another signing, and then, in her capacity as national spokesperson for French’s Mustards, to New York later this month.

Chandler, 40, enjoys what looks like an ordinary life – being the wife of Paul, who owns Resource Entertainment Group, a business that schedules events, and the mother of two young girls, Hannah, 10, and Sarah, 8.

But she lives her life in extraordinary fashion.

Put simply, Chandler mixes the necessities and constraints of her life and blends them with her writing and cooking skills. Her website motto is Good Food Simply.

Chandler, who wrote for Midsouth and Nashville House & Home & Garden magazines, has studied her target audience: other busy people who want to enjoy delicious meals, feed their families healthy food on a budget and not be chained to a stove.

Each of Chandler’s cookbooks is user-friendly from its 7 inch by 7 inch hardback frame to its close-up color shot of each salad or supper dish. Each book contains more than 100 recipes. And each recipe features a personal tip like this for Wild Mushroom, Rosemary, and Hazelnut Dressing: “If you cannot find rosemary bread at your local market, substitute a crusty French bread and add an extra teaspoon of dried rosemary.”

Adrienne Oeding, manager of Babcock Gifts in Memphis, has known Chandler and her mother, Barbara Hanemann, for decades. She appreciates the practical way Chandler approaches cooking.

“All her recipes are very, very usable,” Oeding said. “She even lets us start with bagged salads.”

Chandler, who laughs that she “didn’t have 100 different plates for the pictures” in the book, went to Babcock for help.



Photo: Lance Murphey

“We gave her carte blanche to use anything she wanted – pottery, china, silverware,” Oeding said.

Babcock, which carries both books, is very pleased with the sales. By the third week in October, sales of “Simply Salads” and “Simply Suppers” combined had been “in excess of 600 books,” Oeding said.

Sales at [Davis-Kidd Booksellers Inc.](#) have also been extraordinary.

“We were blown away,” said Carley Cianciolo, the bookstore’s marketing manager.

So far, “Simply Salads,” published in 2007, has sold 944 books and “Simply Suppers,” published this year, has sold 314 books, said Cianciolo, who praised Chandler as “one of the sweetest and most down-to-earth people” she knows and one of the store’s best-selling authors.

Chandler came to a career in professional cooking in a surprising way. She decided after graduating in 1992 in international finance from Washington’s Georgetown University not to pursue a career path at Goldman Sachs or Merrill Lynch akin to that of her classmates.

She told her parents she was going to cooking school.

“My mother almost had a heart attack,” Chandler said. “Although I was always good with numbers, I needed to do something with my hands. I needed to see what I was creating.”

She took a crash immersion course in French, headed to Paris and enrolled as a student at Le Cordon Bleu academy. She graduated a year later (the attrition rate was 50 percent) at the top of her class with Le Grand Diplome and a Mention Tres Bien in Pastry.

She returned to Washington and worked for food businesses and caterers before coming home to Memphis. She and a business partner opened Cheffie’s Market and More in the Sanderlin Center, where they employed 60 people.

During that period from 1999 to 2001, Chandler had a baby and became pregnant with her second child. She simply could not keep up the pace a new business demands, and the partners sold the business.

Through a writing/cooking mentor, Chandler learned that Thomas Nelson wanted to do cookbooks. Proposals flew back and forth, and the end result was “Simply Salads.” Two years later a contract came for “Simply Suppers.”

Chandler beams about a third contract for a book whose ink is barely dry. This one will be called “Simply Grilling.”

Going into the dining room, she pointed to the dining room table corner where all those close-up shots of the salads and supper dishes were shot.

There’s good natural light from the glass doors. Looking out on the backyard, Chandler nodded to her herb garden in a sunny spot far away; but it’s the foreground that captures her interest. The concrete patio already contains three covered grills and a Cajun cooker.

“We’ve been collecting them,” Chandler said with a smile.