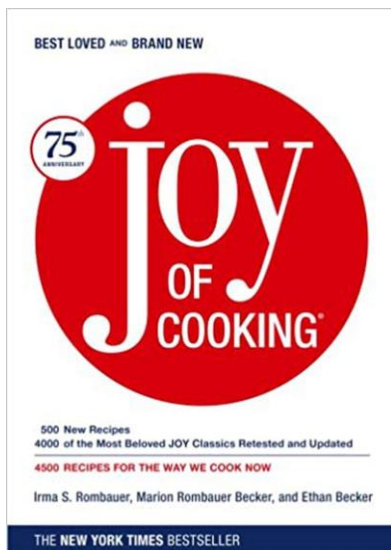


Wedding Gifts

Usually, weddings are no problem for us beyond the initial problem of what to give. When my oldest nephew, Will, astounded his parents with the news that he and his Baylor University sweetheart, Wanda, were married, I remembered that Wanda and I had discussed the joys of cooking. She had told me that although she knew how to boil water and could make fudge, she really didn't feel confident about cooking but was eager to learn. A good cookbook seemed the ideal wedding gift for them. My favorite cookbook, *The Joy of Cooking*, had just been reissued in an updated deluxe edition. It cost somewhat more than Paul and I would ordinarily have spent, but it seemed such an ideal solution that we bought it for them.

We gave it a festive wrapping and packed it carefully so that it would not be damaged in the mail. The young couple was staying with my brother and his family until Will was scheduled to enter medical school in the fall, so we sent the book to Houston, in care of my brother. Fortunately, I mentioned to Peggy, my sister-in-law, that we had mailed a gift, because after a couple of weeks Peggy told me that the gift had never arrived. I immediately asked the post office to trace the package, which had been adequately insured.



After a long time, we could only decide that many cookbooks must have been mailed to the Houston area without proper wrapping, for the ensuing mix-up turned into a long story of the wrong cookbook being delivered to Will and Wanda. First, the post office presented them with a tattered Betty Crocker Cookbook for Children. A child's cookbook was hardly what a young bride with aspirations of becoming a gourmet cook needed. We hastily urged the continuation of the search. Then came a succession of other wrong books, all the worse for wear. Finally, the post office gave up and refunded our money for the book and its postage. Again, we bought *The Joy of Cooking*, wrapped it with even more care than before, and sent it off to Houston. Just before Will started his medical school career and he and Wanda moved into their apartment in Houston, the proper,

undamaged *Joy of Cooking* arrived. To my surprise after all that fuss, it was the only cookbook they received.

Wanda had lost an entire summer of potential practice on her culinary skills, but she started reading and cooking, practicing on her medical student husband. They prospered through medical school, and Will interned at a hospital in Roanoke, where we visited them their first Christmas there. Wanda prepared a tasty meal for Will's parents, their four children, and Paul and me with our two boys. She was still using *The Joy of Cooking*. All that confusion at last seemed worth the effort.

Wanda is indeed a superb cook today after Will's medical degree and four children of their own. Today she delights in cooking for their growing number of grandchildren. For her, *The Joy of Cooking* helped her attain the joy of cooking.

