

joshua weissman

A promotional image for the TV show 'Joshua Weissman'. The host, Joshua Weissman, is in the center, wearing a brown t-shirt and black apron, holding a large knife and a fork. He is sitting at a marble table with a large plate of french fries and a small bowl of ketchup. The background is a busy kitchen with two other chefs working. The air is filled with flying food items like french fries, vegetables, and a piece of meat. The text 'joshua weissman' is overlaid in large, dark blue, lowercase letters at the top.

texture over taste

**joshua
weissman**
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to my parents

I've dedicated every book I've written (and just about every success I've had) to my parents. Not because they did the work for me but because they taught me to be myself. My parents gave me what most parents never give their children: free rein to go and do the things I wanted. Without their unbelievable, unending support, I simply wouldn't be writing this book. I see friends who've been forced into doing things they don't like because of their parents, and I thank my lucky stars I've had people who've genuinely cared about my happiness and supported my vision—no matter how crazy it's sounded. I don't know who I would've been without you two. Thank you, Mom and Dad.

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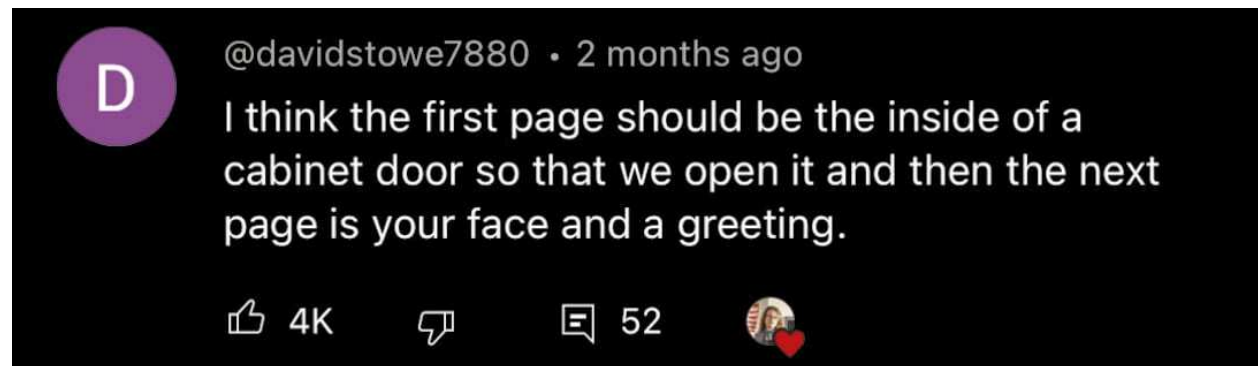


what you see...



So you made it to the next book. If you bought the first book, or were gifted it, and now you are here, thank you. I think I love you. Heck, even if this is the first book of mine you've picked up, thank you too. I may also love you. (Okay, let's take this seriously, Josh.) I just want to take a very important moment to mention a couple things. For starters, this cabinet shot is an incredible homage to the hundreds and hundreds of times I've opened the cabinet to speak to you, and more specifically, this was an idea taken directly from the comments when I asked everyone on my YouTube channel community tab if they wanted an Easter egg in this book. (I

plucked this idea right from the top comments, so shout-out to David Stowe.)



As fun as it was to make this Easter egg, I have something more important to say: thank you. I want to write these words 300,000,000 times but it would take up too much page space, so please feel free to read the words *thank you* that many times if you want. Every single time I come to the moment when I want to say how grateful I am for what you all have done to help turn my dreams into reality, nothing feels quite adequate enough. I just want you to know how much I appreciate you. Yes, *you*, the person reading this. So to try to give you some additional value here, I'd like to pass along these things: always remember that whatever you want out of life, you can have it; there will always be someone out there who cares about you and what you have to say. Also, it's worth the extra effort to go find the thing that makes you happy. Because if you keep going, you will find it.

—JW

what is texture?

I'll be honest: it was hard for me to even write those words because it feels like a dumb question. And I'm a big believer that dumb questions do exist. It's very nice to say things like, "Don't worry, buddy, there are no dumb questions," but you're fooling them if you say that, because there absolutely are dumb questions. That being said, there's something massively worse than asking a dumb question—and that's making the choice to never ask it at all. Sometimes, dumb questions lead you to thinking about something you might normally gloss over. Like texture. So let's explore that thought.

In the realm of food, *texture* usually refers to the sensory perception of the physical properties of an eating experience. There are all sorts of terms used to describe texture, and to be honest, this process can get a little too deep into semantics. There are a lot of words that describe a single texture but in different ways. There are main types of texture and then subtypes of texture. For example, crunchy would be a main texture, but a subtype to crunchy would be crispy. Something can be crunchy without being crispy, but something can't be crispy without being at least a little crunchy. To me, *crispy* would define something of a lighter, almost more aerated crunch rather than a harsh snap and crackle. Do you see what I mean? It's semantics. It could get to the point where you could argue there are hundreds of main textures and subtype textural experiences. So how do we narrow that down?

In this book, I've essentially broken down texture into six main textures that together encapsulate a whole eating experience. Within each of these six main textures are dozens of subtextures. There's rarely ever a single texture in any eating experience. Instead, each recipe in the chapters that follow is associated with its respective main texture. Texture is the first reason you have desire for a food. It's the main attraction to its experience, so to speak. The beauty is that each recipe in this book shares similar textures with the other recipes, which shows that even a primary texture can also be the bass in the orchestra of your eating experience.

Funnily enough, the eating experience actually begins long before we ever put something into our mouths. (That's not an innuendo.) If you've ever used the phrase "We eat with our eyes," I'd argue that refers to the visual representation of texture. Simply put, the appearance and shape of a food imply the experience you're about to have. Flavors can vary based on visual perception, but when you see a knife running through a smoked brisket, the steaming juices oozing out onto the counter, the moistness of the meat glistening in the light, and, best of all, the whole slab of beef shaking and jiggling like a big, round, voluptuous...let me stop myself there. You're almost imagining the tenderness of the meat—the juiciness and the fattiness of each bite. Of course, you're also imagining the flavor, but that visual experience tells you more about the texture than it does about the flavor.

The *true* experience of texture fully begins when you're actually eating something. I think we can all agree that the experience of texture when eating is pretty straightforward. I'm not going to write about chewing food, but, I'd like to

encourage you to really think about what you're experiencing the next time you sit down for a meal. Is it crunchy? What kind of crunch is it? And how does the crunch transform as you eat it? Are there other textures you can throw on top of it to make the experience even better? Just like you'd pair a nice wine with a meal, there are also ways to pair textures.

what about flavor?

Let me start with a quick rant. Too many people think they're right about food and cooking. You might be thinking: *Oh, how devious coming from the mouth of someone who also thinks they're right about food and cooking.* For sure, I'm in the crowd of thinking I'm right—and don't get me wrong, there are a lot of people who *are* right. Part of being right about anything is knowing you understand a broad spectrum of something and can still explain it simply. And one right answer could actually be one of 50 right answers. I addressed this in my last book a bit, so I won't bore you with too much about it here, but there are just too many people who will talk about what they think is correct in cuisine and food, but 99 percent of those people have never worked in restaurants or spent time being deeply immersed in restaurant cooking culture. Yes, I'm calling out your asses right now. Okay. I'm kidding (slightly). I'm happy people are excited by food in the ways they are today.

are we just going to give flavor the finger?

I think the mere thought of ignoring flavor is a culinary sin. There's a sort of alchemy behind cooking and eating that can only be gained through endless repetition and refinement, and by being around a group of people who are doing the same thing every single day. That's the missing link that isn't written about in a lot of cookbooks—if at all. It's an understanding you can usually only acquire through experience. If you can harness that understanding, every moment you have in the world of food can be special. But there's one massive problem: just about every cookbook I've ever read (yes, even the specialized ones) only talks about *half* of what makes food great when there's this counterpart that has never really had the light shone on it in the way it deserves—and that counterpart is texture.

Almost every cookbook talks mostly about the flavor of a dish or the flavors represented in the book; there are entire cookbooks dedicated just to flavor. Don't get me wrong. I happen to own some of these books, and they're some of my favorites. And the reason so many cookbook authors turn to flavor as a primary discussion point is because it's one of the most important elements of food. Right? Oftentimes, when we think about food, we think about how good something tastes. But what we neglect in that process is this crucial counterpart that's easily and equally just as important—and arguably maybe even more important. It can be relatively easy to develop great flavors with minimal effort, but texture requires technique. Texture requires intentionality to really make something fantastic. Sure, we all know a potato chip is great because of the crunch. I think most of us can understand that. (Notice how I said "most.") But mastering the element of flavor

without mastering the element of texture is like leaving a stunning painting on the floor. Sure, the painting is still beautiful when you look at it, but it just doesn't quite feel right sitting on the floor, does it? It needs to be hung on the wall to be fully appreciated.

In this book, I'd like to give you a bit of a pass to the front of the line, so to speak. I'm literally distilling more than a decade of my professional experience into this book—the ups and downs of being a line cook, the relationships I've messed up and broken because of my undying commitment to the craft of cooking, the tens of thousands of hours I've put into understanding the formula for making things that don't just taste good but that make life worth living. Granted, a f—ing corn dog can make someone think life is worth living, so let's not get overly philosophical here. I'm whittling everything down into one of the most singularly important elements I can imagine that most people never emphasize: texture. My hope is that by writing this book, I'm able to give you one of the biggest secrets to making and eating the best food of your life. After all, everyone needs to eat, and eating consumes a notable portion of our lives. So in a way, this isn't just about making you a better cook. My hope is that it will help you enjoy eating food more than you ever have before.

In short, because texture is half the experience and texture affects flavor, in a way, texture is equal to—if not greater than—flavor. And that's the point of this book.



texture + flavor

texture is everything
the missing piece
an unintentional human experiment
texture led me
secret restaurant knowledge
“build the house”
the texture breakthrough

texture is everything

I remember a time before we were married when I was at a coffee shop with my wife. (Ah jeez, Josh, we're starting off all mushy-gushy—here we f—ing go. I have a point I'm trying to make here, so bear with me.) So we're at this coffee shop, which we go to almost every morning. I work a lot because I love what I do, so my days are usually a constant go go go, with endless streams of thoughts and ideas, and I find a lot of peace in spending some time in the morning getting my classic: a 16-ounce latte with four shots of espresso and, typically, oat milk. I have no issue with dairy—I just think oat milk complements a strong latte quite well. And before you ask, yes, it's always four shots of espresso. Every morning. I mean, I really like to raw-dog my morning with a proper dose of caffeine and flavor.

Anyway, my wife always gives me the crispy ends of the croissant she often likes to order. She knows those ends are my favorite. She also knows that I like to eat specific foods in very specific ways—especially a good croissant. There's something about the ridiculously airy and crispy crunch that you almost feel vibrating in your skull when you eat those end pieces. It's something special to me. Then again, I know there are people who pick out only the insides of the croissants, like some sort of sadistic Neanderthal. Or maybe that's just their version of the crispy ends.

It doesn't end with the crispy ends of a croissant for me, though. This is a fascination I only understand now, after going through the ropes of self-reflection, studying food and cuisine for most of my life—I have well over a decade of professional experience working independently and in fine-dining restaurants—and thankfully developing my frontal lobe. Maybe I got it from my mom or dad, both of whom love to eat and cook. The collection of unbelievably unique experiences I've had throughout my life and career have driven me to care about an element of food that, frankly, isn't really talked about as much as you would think—and that element is texture. Duh, yes, people think about it and of course chefs talk about it, but there's simply not enough conversation singularly discussing it. So let's start off by rewinding this story a little bit.



the missing piece

Although this next part might seem like an irrelevant piece of the puzzle, it's one of the most important stories of my life and it led me to understand everything that makes food great, and how texture is arguably one of the most important—if not *the* most important component of that process. Now let me forewarn you: I'm going to talk about some unexpected topics, like dieting and weight loss, but I also want to clarify that this book has nothing to do with any sort of diet. In fact, it's the opposite. If you're trying to lose weight, this isn't the book for you. This story is to make an overarching point, and I feel many people will relate to some of it.

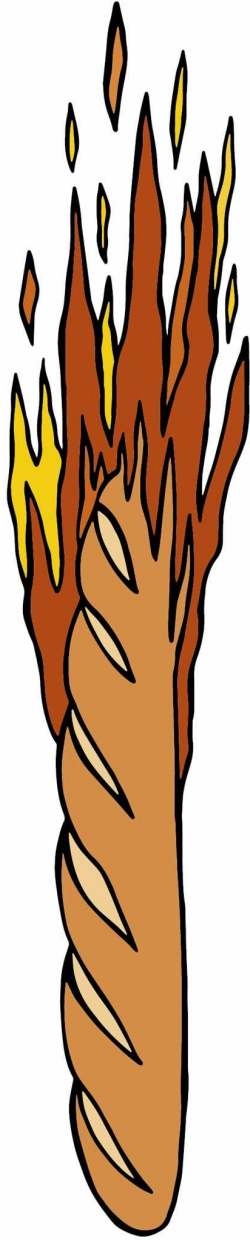
When I was in my early teens, I was very involved (for lack of a better word) in dieting and exploring all sorts of fancy, newfangled ways of being as “healthy” as possible. It was a massive obsession fueled by a traumatic childhood of being bullied for being overweight, blah blah blah. I'll spare you the sob story because, frankly, it's irrelevant, and trust me, I'm over it. That being said, I tried just about every diet in the book. I tried consulting with a dietitian. Then I tried various online sources. I tried some books that were low carb and then paleo came along. And although I did lose a ton of weight in the process, I was also depriving myself of several foods I loved in an extreme way which, as a kid, I honestly didn't realize was leaning toward being problematic. Each level of restriction led to the next. First, it was about eliminating sugary fruits; then it was eliminating low-fiber, high-starch items; then it was eliminating grains entirely; and then finally, I focused on eliminating nearly all high-starch, high-carbohydrate foods. Strawberries and broccoli were about the highest-carbohydrate items I'd eat. I was dedicated to a goal, so it wasn't as miserable as it sounds. As a matter of fact, I became surprisingly acclimated to this daily lifestyle and I don't recall ever feeling unhappy about these decisions.

Now why the hell am I telling you all this? Who gives a shit, right? This is where it becomes sort of an unintentional human experiment for the point I'm about to make. I want you to imagine eating only low-sugar berries, absolutely *zero* complex carbohydrates, and not even the most ubiquitous dietary item of the decade: the sweet potato. It was pretty much about eating low-sugar vegetables, any protein, and sometimes an occasional berry. Every single day, month, and year—for nearly three years.

This was all happening around 2010 to 2012. Looking back, that was kind of a cringy and awkward era for food, especially in the worlds of dieting and, worst of all, food blogging. I hope we all look back with a little bit of shame there. Not that there weren't some incredible food blogs, but most of them were terrible. Something I was viscerally guilty of at the time. But hey, I was 16 and simultaneously still just so passionate about food and cooking. But although I was very dedicated to this restrictive diet, I was also dedicated to developing my skill in the craft of cooking. Becoming as great as I can be in food and cooking has been my number-one priority for as long as I can remember—and it still is. Even during my extraordinarily

rigid dietary restriction era, I was, at heart, still focused on building on my technique, fine-tuning my recipe writing skills, and so on. It was like this weird and awkward perfect storm.

Like I said, I had a relatively easy time living with these restrictions, considering I had normalized them for myself, but that's not to say I didn't have the desire to eat a crunchy potato chip or a beautifully chewy slice of sourdough bread. What gave me peace when these moments would strike was the fact that I knew I could figure out a way to *make* the things I desired to eat fit my dietary restrictions. I could use the years spent during my adolescence studying food science, my understanding of molecular gastronomy, and various old-school cooking techniques to finagle my way to these foods in some shape or some way. This whole process was circulated around the questions I'd always ask myself: *Why did I miss these foods? What was it about these foods or meals that made them so different from what I was eating on a day-to-day basis?* It wasn't flavor. You could mimic the flavors of toasted bread or a carbonara without using any bread or pasta. That's not what made the desire to eat those things such a cloying thought. It was the *texture* of those foods I missed more than anything. This is something I think nobody in the world can ever understand unless they've completely eliminated foods like pizza, french fries, or burgers (with actual bread buns) from their life for long enough to almost forget what it's like to experience eating them.

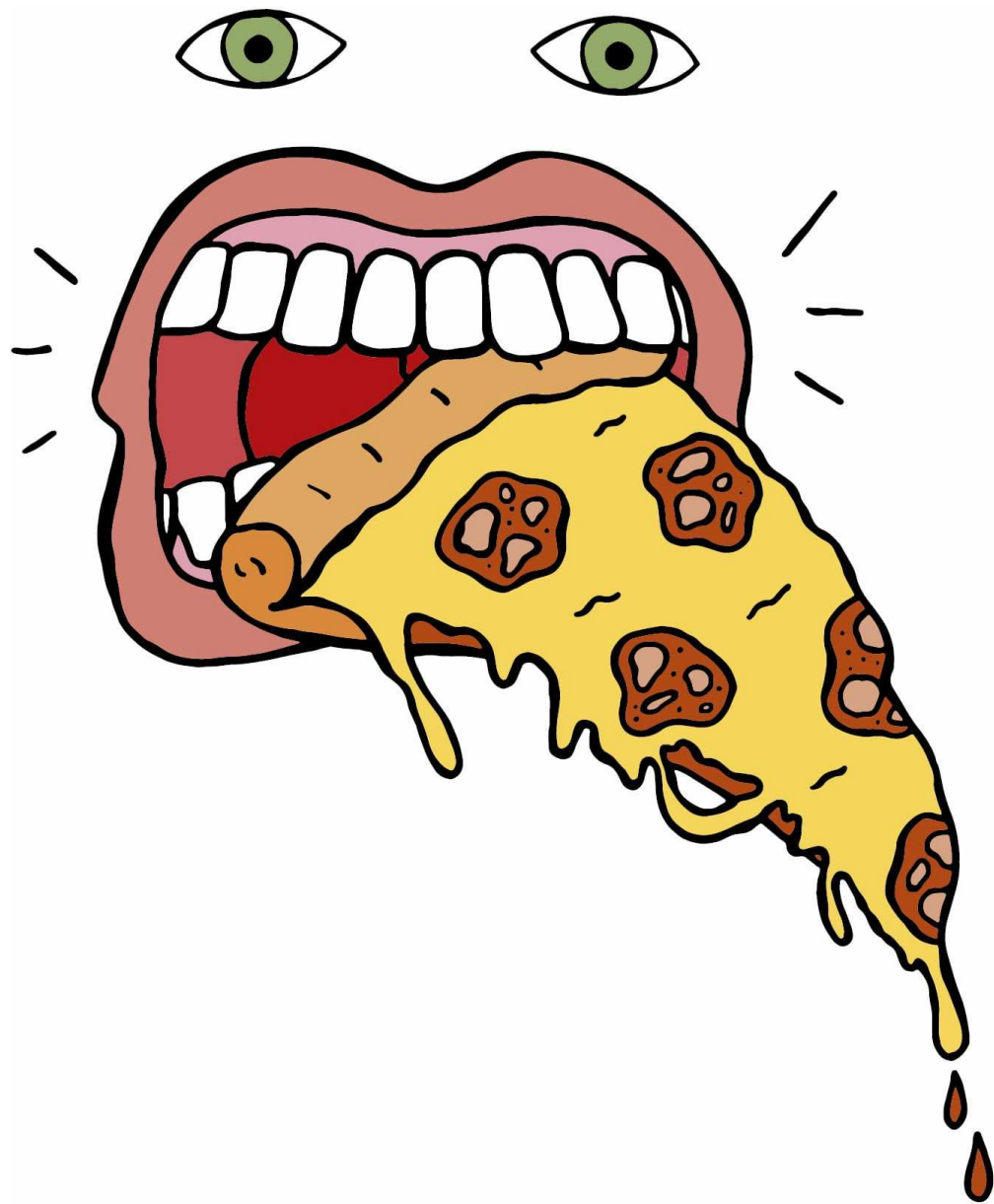


an unintentional human experiment

My life during this time was dedicated to finding texture, not flavor—except I didn't fully realize it. I already knew how to make flavor go above and beyond—the real challenge was constantly trying to make things have the same “feeling” as their real counterparts. That being said, the foods I was making were always about 50 to 70 percent of what I was hoping for. Let's face it: most gluten-free breads taste like shit. I get it. We can get them close to the real thing—and I'm an optimist—but gluten-free breads are simply nothing like the breads made with real flour and gluten. (Genuinely, for those allergic to gluten, my love goes out to you.) Without gluten, the pastas never had that nice chewy and starchy mouthfeel, pizza never had that beautiful stretch and tear when I'd take a bite, and forget french fries. Sure, frying vegetables is really, really nice, but they were *not* french fries.

I spent years getting closer and closer to the textures I wanted until, one day, I just sort of outgrew the idea of not eating these foods I loved. I decided to start eating a balanced diet and began reintroducing the foods I had previously eliminated. It was incredibly empowering to come back into that and be able to control myself. There was one thing I did notice immediately. The first bites of a perfect croissant or a plump, chewy bagel after years of shunning these foods instantly changed my life. I remember going to Italy after high school and spending everything I'd saved up to that point to make the most of the experience. The first bite of pizza I had after three years of eating no pizza at all was at L'antica Pizzeria da Michele in Naples. They served pizza marinara, pizza margherita, water, and beer. That's it. I took one bite and closed my eyes as I chewed. Of course, the texture was so good, it almost pissed me off—the way the charred underside of the pizza cracked upon the clenching of my teeth; the dough resisted my pull ever so slightly, followed by a gentle but slow tear; and the chewiness. God, the chewiness in my mouth was borderline spiritual—like some sort of midlife crisis ayahuasca trip. The perfect, not-too-chewy, not-too-fragile dough made the experience so wonderfully whole.

I was on the verge of tears. Not because it felt so good to have it back in my life but because it reminded of me why cooking is something I'd break my back over just to make something delicious. It made me appreciate something we all take a little bit for granted every single day. It made me think of why I care so deeply that people get to experience food and enjoy it the same way I do. You can mimic the flavor of pizza with a nice sauce and some good-quality mozzarella cheese, but nothing will ever create the symphony that is a perfect pizza without tipo 00 flour, water, salt, and yeast. That's texture, not flavor.



A MOMENT OF BLISS