

from the "Introduction" in *The Quick Gourmet*:

When I was a kid, dawdling my way to school, I was absolutely certain that a year took a lifetime to live, and tomorrow was always an entire galaxy away. Moments of sheer joy on my horse were stretched out into eternity, and rough-and-tumble arguments with my brothers jostled their way into forever. A few decades, two sons, numerous cats, a husband and a restaurant later, the world seems to be rushing and hurtling on to some unknown galactic appointment – best not be late! – and carrying us along, tangled in its trailing cloak of "HURRY!" Listen to the curling skips as they throw their hoarse voices after their granite rocks down the length of the ice rink, "HURRY!" The rallying cry of our time as we hustle our children out to school, rush to soccer, chase to afternoon meetings, dash to evening rehearsals. "HURRY!"

Fortunately for dinner, that paean, the ode to success in late-twentieth-century business culture, is applicable to cooking. In your "HURRY!" days, turn to the quick-fix style of the best short-order cooks...

Before we get on with the cooking, just a small pat on the back to the cook in the crowd. For committing yourself to cooking, even though you are already busy enough, congratulations. The gain, aside from better food that you can trust and afford, is the joy and peace that can come from time spent at the stove, at the counter, at the cutting board. There is a Zenlike aspect to cooking that can be more potent than three martinis and a nap. It can be a restorative on more than one level, this business of food. If you let it. It's the sense of being harried that will rob you. Relax. Breathe. Reclaim your day. Admire the colors on the apple peel. Marvel over the intricately simple design of the onion. Inhale the scents. Take tactile pleasure in your crusty bread. Ride the rhythm of a rocking French knife as it minces a carrot. Remember that cooking can feed your soul, and the souls and bodies of those you love, even if you are hasty.