



[Marbled, Swirled, and Layered: 150 Recipes and Variations for Artful Bars, Cookies, Pies, Cakes](#), by Irvin Lin, copyright © 2016 by Irvin Lin. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Photography copyright © 2016 by Linda Xiao.

Our Summary:

Baking picture-perfect desserts is like a quest for the holy-grail. Most don't even attempt it; those that do often fall perilously short. When you talk about home-bakers, there are those who have a knack for baking and just need a little nudge and a few ideas to achieve beautiful results. Then there are those that need the fool-proof, no-nonsense precision of a clear recipe to achieve okay results. With [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#), if you've got a knack for baking this may be

the road to your holy grail. If you don't, you'll certainly have some fun and learn a thing or two, even if that road is a bit bumpy along the way.

What you need to know:

Get It: [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered: 150 Recipes and Variations for Artful Bars, Cookies, Pies, Cakes](#), by Irvin Lin, copyright © 2016 by Irvin Lin. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, November 1, 2016 Paper over board \$30.00 ([Amazon \\$13.27](#); [Kindle \\$14.99](#))

See It: 352 pages with color photos of most of the primary recipes. 6 chapters broken down by type of baking, e.g., *cookies, cakes, pies, muffins*, etc., ending with a chapter called *A Little Bit More*, which is actually more of the same just with some interesting flavor combos.

Make It: 79 recipes plus alternatives (sometimes several) for each recipe that change up the flavor profiles and, often, the recipe.

Our Review:

If you want to learn to bake the first 30 pages of [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#) may quash your dreams. With its detailed introductory materials including equipment requirements, pantry ingredients, and a troubleshooting page, you're well on your way to intimidation and you haven't even gone into the kitchen. Continue to flip through the pages and your eyes are treated to the picture perfect desserts and in-process photos that might have you believing that – as a beginner – these are doable. But if you actually read a favored recipe, you'll realize this is not Baking 101. This is hard-core, full-on, if-you-want-picture-perfect-results-then-you're-gonna-have-to-work-for-them baking!

And work you will. In [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#) each recipe is filled with a variety of steps for a variety of components that do come together in the end to make the recipe. The recipes are delicious and the flavor combinations are unusual – even the tried and true classics,



like slice-and-bake cookies, are given a flavor update! There's plays on other classics as well, such as *Coconut Jam Alfajores* and *Pumpkin S'mores with Maple-Brown Sugar Marshmallows and Dark Chocolate*. And that's just the chapter on cookies! To Lin's credit, for all the work, each recipe in [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#) comes with at least one variation – just in case that tasty looking s'more catches you eye sometime when pumpkin and maple sugar aren't what you're craving. Then, you can choose from *Classic S'mores with Apple Cinnamon Marshmallows*, or *Red Velvet Graham S'mores with Cream Cheese Marshmallows*. The variations aren't exactly the same recipe, but with a little (or a lot of) back and forth to the original you can muddle your way through.

It is fair to say, however, that Lin's thorough approach to recipe writing is helpful for those who aren't sophisticated in the baking genre. Throughout [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#) you'll have a fairly good idea of what to expect as you work through the recipe. And, with plenty of side-bars you'll also understand the finer points of these sometimes peculiar ingredients and how to work with them. If you're looking for interesting or unusual combinations that will catch everyone's attention, you'll find them here. *Carrot and Parsnip Layer Cake with Honey-Cream Cheese Frosting*, for example is a playful riff on carrot cake, only with a far more complex flavor than your typical spice-laden boxed mix special.

And then there's the intensity of working with delicate ingredients, like white chocolate. In [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#) you'll learn to roast it and incorporate it into *Roasted White Chocolate Brownies with Strawberry-Balsamic Swirl*. The cocoa butter burns quickly, almost too quickly. But, if you get it right you'll enjoy a deep, sweet flavor that's unlike anything you've tasted before. So it's worth trying? You'll have to decide for yourself.

There's a lot to like about [Marbled, Swirled, and Layered](#), like the crazy, tempting, unusual flavor combinations. What's not tempting about *Dried Cherry-Almond Scones with Earl Grey Glaze*, *Smoky Butterscotch and Vanilla Cake*, *Lemon Ginger Bars with Tequila Meringue Topping*? But, there's a lot to frustrate you, too. Lin's 79 recipes could easily have been 200 and you would be saved the hassle of having to flip back and forth to figure out what you're omitting and what you're not. Still, if you approach the book with curiosity and a dedication to studying the recipes, or the variation you choose, take some careful notes and then focus as you work, you too can likely achieve these picture-perfect results. And, you'll certainly learn a thing or two about baking along the way.

Recipes to cook from [Marbled, Swirled and Layered](#): © 2016 by Irvin Lin. Reproduced by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved.

[Carrot and Parsnip Layer Cake with Honey-Cream Cheese Frosting](#)

[Chocolate-Cinnamon Babka with Crumb Topping](#)

[Roasted White Chocolate Brownies with Strawberry-Balsamic Swirl](#)