

# Alton Brown book appearance report

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Right on schedule, Alton Brown appeared at the Elliot Bay Book Company bookstore in downtown Seattle. One of my friends wondered aloud, “Wait a second, he’s promoting his cookbook. How do you do a reading from a cookbook?” He didn’t read from his cookbook.

To an overflow crowd that probably violated a few fire codes, Alton Brown discussed what inspired him to tackle a book on baking, riffed with the audience (he’s quite funny when interacting with a crowd), then fielded questions. Alton Brown trivia:

- At the New England Culinary Institute, he drove his teachers crazy by constantly asking the sorts of questions that he answers on his show. “What is going on chemically?” “What is the purpose of eggs in this recipe?” “Where does the water go?” They thought they were rid of him when he graduated, but AB got the last laugh: The school now gets applications which say “I want to cook like Alton Brown.”
- Why does he wear Hawaiian shirts on Good Eats? Because the material they’re made from doesn’t rustle against the microphone.
- The wacko camera angles come from his background in directing television commercials. The show was originally up against The West Wing and used its irreverent style as a form of counter-programming.
- AB claims that all the actors on the show are really production crew members brought in front of the camera. How much of this you choose to believe is up to you.
- Each episode takes about three days to film. (Note: This doesn’t count all the writing and research time.) Compare this to traditional cooking shows which film three episodes in one day!
- The Good Eats theme is exactly ten notes long, at AB’s specific request. It was allegedly inspired by the last track on the Get Shorty soundtrack CD.
- On Iron Chef America he does not himself taste any of the dishes. Any more. He learned this lesson the hard way after trying Hiroyuki Sakai’s trout ice cream.
- Before trying any of the recipes in the book, check AB’s web site for corrections. The most notorious misprint is the mysterious “aspirin” substitution on page 238. (You also have to watch out for the spelling mistakes. “Nickle”?)

Afterwards, he signed books for ages and managed to be a good sport about it throughout. Then again, this **is** a book tour, after all. During that time, he's mastered the ability to sign a book and talk at the same time. I, on the other hand, am a rank amateur and couldn't even talk and **watch** him sign my book at the same time.

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