

MODERNIST CUISINE GALLERY

by NATHAN MYHRVOLD

Nathan Myhrvold, founder of Modernist Cuisine and lead author of *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking*, *Modernist Cuisine at Home*, *The Photography of Modernist Cuisine*, *Modernist Bread*, *Modernist Pizza*, *Food & Drink: Modernist Cuisine Photography*, and his newest release, [*Modernist Bread at Home*](#) has had a passion for science, cooking, and photography since he was a boy. At the age of nine, Myhrvold cooked Thanksgiving dinner for his family, working out of cookbooks from the local library. A plastic camera was also his constant companion at that time. By 11, he had purchased his first real camera—a Zeiss Contax II, which he found at a thrift store.

Unlike many childhood hobbies, his fascination in food and photography did not fade—it intensified. He consumed cooking books and invested in new cameras and lenses even while doing postdoctoral cosmology work with Stephen Hawking. While working as the chief technology officer of Microsoft, he took a leave of absence to earn his culinary diploma from École de Cuisine La Varenne in France.

Nathan retired from Microsoft in 1999 to found Intellectual Ventures and pursue several interests, including his lifelong interest in photography, cooking, and food science. During this time, some of his photographs were published in *America 24/7* (DK Publishing, Inc., 2003) and *Washington 24/7* (DK Publishing, Inc., 2004). Unable to find practical information about sous vide cooking, he decided to write a book that provided a scientific explanation of the cooking process, the history of cooking, and the techniques, equipment, and recipes involved in Modernist cuisine.

Nathan founded Modernist Cuisine and hired an interdisciplinary team that included scientists, research chefs, and writers. He and the team published the much acclaimed five-volume 2,438-page [*Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking* \(2011\)](#). Myhrvold decided that photography should be an important part of the book, hoping that captivating images would draw readers in and make the content come to life. Myhrvold and his team developed innovative photography techniques and custom-built equipment to capture food in new, unexpected ways, such as cutaway views of cooking equipment and stacked-focus supermacro close-ups.

In 2012, the groundbreaking cookbook won two James Beard Awards, three International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) Cookbook Awards (including top honors for visual design), an induction into the Gourmand Cookbook Hall of Fame, and was included in *The New Yorker's* list of “The Best Cookbooks of the Century so Far” (2019). Photography of the book has been exhibited worldwide including the Smithsonian Institution, Museum of Science in Boston, and the Museum of Natural History in Le Havre, France.

Encouraged by the ongoing positive feedback on the photography, Myhrvold wrote and published [*The Photography of Modernist Cuisine*](#) in 2013. It received the Gourmand Award for best cookbook photography in the United States, a bronze PubWest Book Design Award for best photography book, and the gold IndieFab Award for photography.

In 2014 the Photography of Modernist Cuisine: The Exhibition was created. The traveling exhibit illuminates the fascinating, accessible science at work every day in kitchens with over 75 photos taken over the last seven years, kitchen equipment cut in half, and high speed video of food in motion. The exhibit has traveled to the country's leading science and culinary museums in Seattle, Boston, Silicon Valley, and New Orleans.

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Continued requests to buy the art paved the way for Myhrvold's next venture: Modernist Cuisine Gallery by Nathan Myhrvold in 2017. It now has locations in New Orleans and La Jolla. The gallery features large-scale, limited-edition prints of Myhrvold's art and is the first gallery in the world to focus solely on food photography by a single artist.

His books continue to garner acclaim and awards. [*Modernist Cuisine at Home*](#) (2012), which applies the insights of the original book in a format designed for home cooks, earned an IACP Cookbook Award in 2013. [*Modernist Bread*](#) (2017) won multiple awards in 2018 including a James Beard Award, the IACP Jane Grigson Award, and two Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in the categories of Best Food Book and Best Cookbook Publisher. [*Modernist Pizza*](#) (2021) has won a Gourmand World Cookbook Award for the Best Italian Cuisine Cookbook 2021.