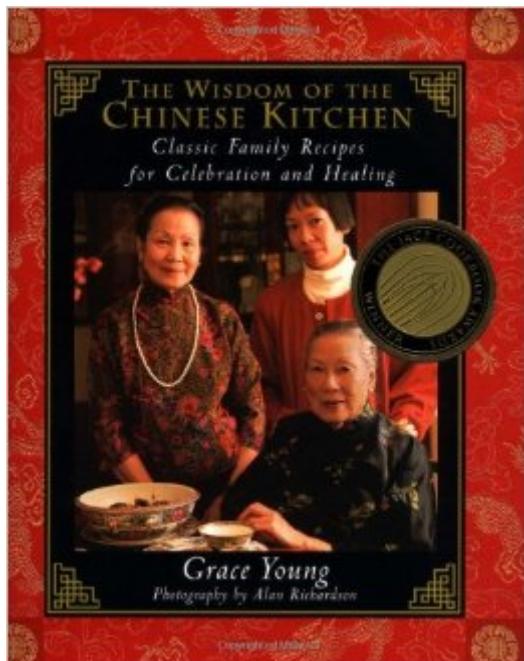


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The Wisdom Of The Chinese Kitchen



Synopsis

The *Wisdom of the Chinese Kitchen*, with its 150 recipes culled from a lifetime of family meals and culinary instruction, is much more than a cookbook. *The Wisdom of the Chinese Kitchen* is a daughter's tribute—“a collection of personal memories of the philosophy and superstitions behind culinary traditions that have been passed down through her Cantonese family, in which each ingredient has its own singular importance, the preparation of a meal is part of the joy of life, and the proper creation of a dish can have a favorable influence on health and good fortune. Each chapter begins with its own engaging story, offering insight into the Chinese beliefs that surround life-enhancing and spiritually calming meals. In addition, personal family photographs illustrate these stories and capture the spirit of China before the Revolution, when Young's family lived in Canton, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. The first part, “Mastering the Fundamentals,” provides instruction on the arts of steaming and stir-frying; the preparation of rice, panfried, and braised dishes; the proper selection of produce; and the fine arts of chopping and slicing. Part Two, “The Art of Celebration,” concentrates on the more elaborate, complex, and meaningful dishes—“such as Shark's Fin Soup and West Lake Duck”—that are usually made with rare ingredients, and sweets such as Water Chestnut Cake and Sesame Balls. The final part, “Achieving Yin-Yang Harmony,” explores the many Chinese beliefs about the healing properties of ginseng, gingko nuts, soybeans, dong quai, and the many vegetable and fruit soup preparations that balance and nourish the body. The stories and recipes combine to demonstrate the range of Cantonese cooking, from rich flavors and honored combinations to an overall appreciation of health, well-being, and prosperity. In addition to the recipes, Young provides a complete glossary of dried herbs, spices, and fresh produce, accompanied by identifying photos and tips on where to purchase them. Unique traditional dishes, such as Savory Rice Tamales and Shrimp Dumplings, are also illustrated step by step, making the book easy to use. The central full-color photo section captures details of New Year's dishes and the Chinese home decorated in celebration, reminding one that these time-honored traditions live on, and the meals and their creation are connections to the past.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster (May 5, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684847396

ISBN-13: 978-0684847399

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 1.2 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (100 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #96,932 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Chinese #177 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking

Education & Reference > Essays #1229 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International

Customer Reviews

As an American Born Chinese, finding this book was a huge relief. Like so many ABCs, I love the food of my culture but certainly didn't know how to prepare it. This is an authentic down home Chinese cookbook. No fancy dishes here - only comfort food need apply. The book is divided into the following: 1) rice from steamed, fried, dumplings and porridge 2) stir fry - including tomato beef and beef chow fun 3) steamed cooking- egg custard, sponge cake, spareribs with black bean sauce 4) cooking with ginger - drunken chicken, cabbage noodle soup 5) seasonal market dishes - braised taro and chinese bacon, stir fried bitter melon with beef 6) celebratory dishes - stir fried clams with black bean sauce, pepper and salt shrimp, sweet and sour pork 7) New Year's dishes - turnip cake, sesame balls 8) authentic recipes from the homeland - savory rice tamales, pork dumplings, stuffed noodle rolls 9) Chinatown favorites - soy sauce chicken, roast duck, barbecued pork and salt roasted chicken 10) a slew of healing soups and dishes. Reading it was a trip down memory lane for me. The dishes are truly authentic to the Chinese family experience and or those who seek authenticity, Young has presented it here. She also includes a handy guide to shopping and mail order resources!

Having been born in Hong Kong and having lived there and in Taiwan for the first 15 years of my life, this cookbook brought back vast memories. I love cooking, and have a wide range of cookbooks. But until now, I have never come across a Chinese cookbook that captures so much of the "essence" of Chinese cooking as in Ms. Young's "The Wisdom of the Chinese Kitchen." Reading this cookbook is like looking back into my childhood and how I grew up. I am astounded at how accurate Ms. Young described all the traditions the Chinese attach to food. The section on Chinese New Year is especially meaningful to me; all the dishes are ones that I ate as a child during Chinese New Year. It was indeed a nostalgic moment for me as I read it. I have tried several of the recipes, and the results have been excellent. What I find most helpful is the glossary and the pictures of the

food items that are more unique to Chinese cooking. With this aid, I can now go shopping at an Asian supermarkets with much more confidence. In all, this is a terrific tome that takes away some of the "mysteries" of Chinese cooking, and in turn, allows everyday cooks like myself to be able to enjoy Chinese home cooking.

I bought this cookbook about 6 months ago. When I finished reading the book, I immediately sent an e-mail to the author thanking her for her work in this book. I also watched the CBS Sunday Morning Special about this cookbook. I, too, was a Chinese immigrant and learning cooking from watching my dad and mom without any measurement of the "stuff" you put in a dish. Often as I cook, I do not measure the ingredients. Many of my American friends want the recipes of the dishes I cook and too often I am too lazy to write them down. Now, I have Ms. Young to thank you for writing this cookbook. Many of the fine recipes in this cookbook I shared with my American friends. They too have read and said they enjoy the history and the philosophy of the Chinese cooking. I would recommend this book for anybody who is learning about Chinese cooking. This cookbook by far are on my number one list of the Chinese cookbook of this decade. Oh, by other way (Ms. Young), the most frequent recipes that I shared with American friends is "Tomato Beef." Your brother was right! (You should not omit this recipe.)

My parents are from Hong Kong and I was born in Canada. I grew up with the foods Ms. Young describes in her book, but because of my limited ability to read Chinese, I have never been able to follow any Chinese recipe books written in Chinese. When I first bought this book, my aunts thought it was pretty funny. They said "how can a book that is written in English be authentic?" - and considering my spoken Cantonese is accompanied with a fairly strong "Canadian" accent, they were sure the book was full of "westernized" Chinese foods. Well, after looking through the book themselves, they were sold and bought their own copies. The recipes are good. But what I find most helpful is the inclusion of the Chinese name for the dishes and some ingredients - written in Chinese characters and translated phonetically into "English" (between the combination, I can usually figure out the dish or ingredient and relate it back to what my Mom used to prepare).

I own over 300 cookbooks and this one has vaulted into my "top 10 of all time" due to Ms. Young's lovely balance of well-written memoir, in-depth cultural, technique & ingredient information, and wonderful, no-compromise recipes. The Wisdom of the Chinese Kitchen ranks with the best works by Wolfert, Field, Kaspar, Thorne, etc. - books that are more than mere "cookbooks" but

reveal some of the soul of the cuisine/culture in question. And did I mention that the recipes actually *work*? ;-) Thank you Ms. Young!

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