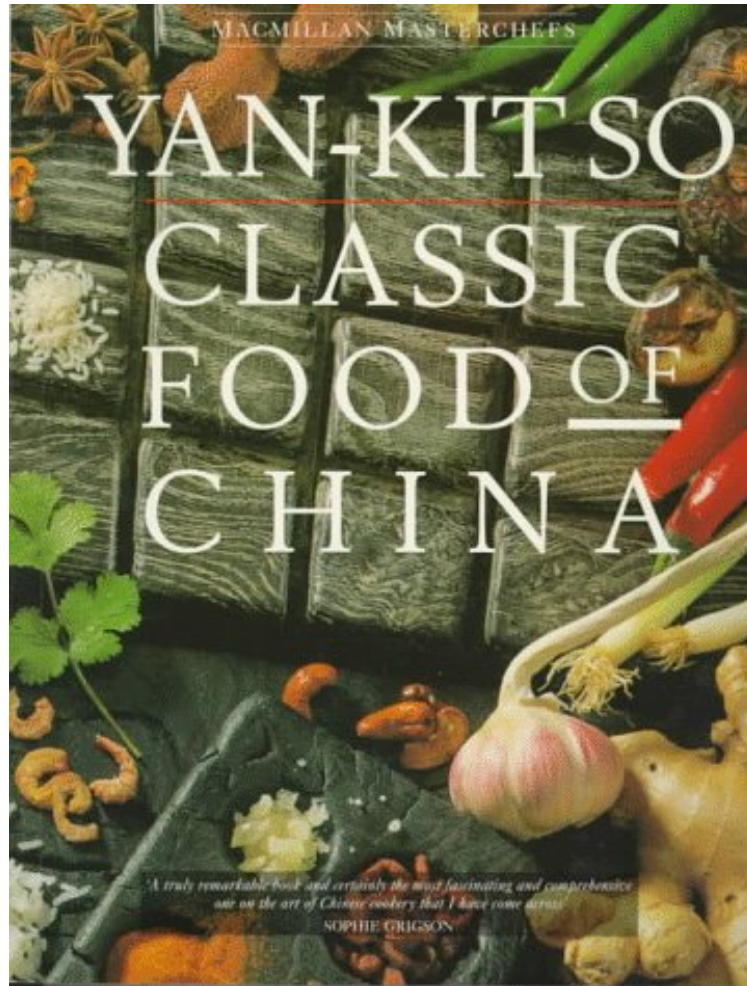


Classic Food of China

Yan-Kit So

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Yan-Kit So : Classic Food of China before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Classic Food of China:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. but on first assessment it seems to be pretty good. This book appears to be quite highly ...By officemonkey Not very many photos. This is a very text rich book. I haven't gone through it completely yet, but on first assessment it seems to be pretty good. This book appears to be quite highly regarded and as it is out of print, pretty hard to get a hold of a new copy. 16 of 16 people found the following review helpful. A work of love about Chinese cuisine By Daniel Cole It's a shame that this book seems to be out of print. It is one of the most comprehensive overviews of Chinese cuisine that not only provides a wealth of recipes, but also puts Chinese cuisine in an historical and cultural perspective. My experience eating Chinese cuisine has come by way of several years' experience living in China and eating at homes of Chinese people, then in Chinese restaurants in southern California, and the Chinatowns of Manhattan and Queens in New York City. My experience cooking Chinese cuisine comes by

the way of Fuchsia Dunlop's *Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking*, and *Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook: Recipes from Hunan Province*, as well as several other regional cuisines in the Wei Chuan series of cookbooks (e.g., *Chinese Cuisine: Shanghai Styles* and *Chinese Cuisine Beijing Style (Chinese Edition)*). While Wei Chuan has provided a no-nonsense repertoire of excellent recipes of dishes through its cookbooks, the cookbooks tend to have little or no information about the history or context of those dishes in Chinese cuisine. Dunlop, by contrast has imbued her cookbooks with tidbits of history and stories related to the dishes of the two regions that she writes about. Yan-Kit So's *Classic Food of China* provides something different from the above. Interestingly, in the text on the back cover, and in So's own introduction, the book is treated as little more than a Chinese cookbook. However, the recipes start only after 119 pages of introduction with meticulously researched chapters that cover Chinese culinary traditions, important cookbooks in Chinese history, Chinese festivals, and regional diversities in Chinese cuisine. In that introduction, one finds the story of the pork-loving scholar Su Dongpo, whose name is borne by the well-known dish, Dongpo Pork (a.k.a., Dongpo Rou). One learns about the careful planning that ensured the number of dishes at imperial banquets was in concordance with Chinese numerology. One also finds descriptions of the alcohols and teas that are found in different regions in China. The material is presented with the careful organization of a scholar, but with the clarity of a skilled storyteller. By comparison, to the books mentioned above, Yan-Kit So seems to attack an almost impossible task: to discuss several regional Chinese cuisines and provide an historical and cultural context for the more than 200 pages of recipes presented in her book. *Classic Food of China* is a guide for a journey through Chinese cuisine with recipes for food to taste along the way, and the recipes are excellent. Her standards are high: ordinary stock is not made by itself, but rather only with the leftovers of prime stock made with chicken, pork, ham, and dried abalone (if you have it). Additionally, the reader finds a wide range of classic Chinese banquet dishes. That doesn't mean that her standards are impossibly high or the recipes are overly complex. There is plenty to choose from for daily cooking. Indeed, she mentions simplifying some recipes so as to make them accessible to the home cook. There are also plenty of quick home-style recipes to choose from. One of my favorites is a simple soup of salty egg and mustard greens. What emerges from this book, when looked at in its entirety is a well-rounded work that will not only expand any reader's repertoire of Chinese dishes, but will make almost any reader feel more connected to Chinese cuisine through its history. For one just starting on Chinese cuisine, this might all be a little daunting. A glossary, including names in Chinese script, with descriptions of ingredients is provided in the back, but almost no space is dedicated to how one prepares to cook Chinese food--there is little discussion of kitchenware and technique. This is hardly a drawback since this is not an introductory book. Besides, that has been done well elsewhere (see *Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking*, *The Breath of a Wok: Unlocking the Spirit of Chinese Wok Cooking Through Recipes and Lore*, and of course So's own *Classic Chinese Cookbook*). This book will be of interest to anyone--eastern, western, or otherwise--who already cooks Chinese food and would like to have a deeper understanding of the connection between Chinese food, culture, and history.

This is a celebration of one of the world's most glorious cuisines. The more than 150 recipes cross the boundaries from region to region and range from regal court dishes to earthy peasant fare. They include the traditional, the familiar and the unusual, and embrace the whole gamut of Chinese cooking techniques, from steaming to stir-frying, and from pickling to reconstituting. They also encompass the great variety of ingredients, indigenous and foreign, that give Chinese cooking its distinctive flavour.