



Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking

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The food of the Sichuan region in southwest China is one of the world's great culinary secrets. Many of us know it for its "hot and spicy" reputation or a few of its most famous dishes, most notably Kung Pao chicken, but that is only the beginning. Sichuanese cuisine is legendary in China for its sophistication and astounding diversity: local gourmets claim the region boasts 5000 different dishes.

Fuchsia Dunlop fell in love with Sichuanese food on her first visit to the province ten years ago. The following year she went to live in the Sichuanese capital Chengdu, where she became the first foreigner to study full-time at the province's famous cooking school, the Sichuan Institute of Higher Cuisine. Now she has given us a cookbook gathered on the spot from the kitchens of Sichuan, filled with stories and colorful descriptions of the region itself. Useful for the enthusiastic beginner as well as the experienced cook, *Land of Plenty* teaches you not only how to prepare the Sichuan recipes but also the art of chopping and to appreciate the textures of dishes.

Among this book's unique features: a full glossary of Chinese terms; Chinese characters useful for shopping; a practical introduction to the art of cutting; detailed lists of the 23 recognized flavor combinations and 56 cooking methods used in Sichuanese cuisine; 16 color pictures of the ingredients and finished dishes; double-page maps of the region; and Chinese characters for every recipe

Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking Details

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From Reader Review Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking for online ebook

Cissa says

These recipes are not the last word in cooking Sichuan dishes here in the USA... but they are a pretty good intro to such.

I love Dunlop's writing, and have read all her books. Occasionally, this helps inform the way I interpret her recipes.

My husband and I love Sichuan dishes, and are currently on a Quest to make our ultimate hot and sour soup. Dunlop's recipe is not our ultimate as written, but it does include several elements that the master recipe will need to incorporate!

Also, I am very intrigued by the steamed buns, and the salted duck eggs.

It is bridging a gap, and has both the virtues and the problems associated with that.

Nonetheless, just reading it makes me excited to try new things!

J. says

Emphasis on the "authentic", which can be used with certainty since Ms Dunlop trained in Szechuan Province in China. What the average New Yorker might know as west-side-szechuan takeout manages to be fairly different in its Original form.

Hot, salty, sweet, deep, smoky, multi-layered -- all factors in the palette presented here, and treated in a practical, informative way. Good discussion of tools, prep, ingredients and their properties, and how to cope with cooking Szechuan in a western context. All the classics like *kung-pao*, *mapo-dofu*, tea-smoked-duck, orange beef, and hot & sour soup.

This is modern, healthy Chinese, which skips the Msg and avoids (or at least presents alternates to) the unnecessary cholesterol scenarios.

Currently probably the best comprehensive real Szechuan how-to available, and, as it happens, I have seen nearly everything currently available. Recommended.

Elise N says

Makes Sichuan cooking seem accessible. Enjoyed that the recipes included many basic home dishes. Appreciated that vegetarian versions of some dishes were included, although would have loved to see even more veg-friendly options.

Trish says

Fuchsia Dunlop may be an original. Certainly she has dedication to subject, in this case, Chinese food.

The recipes in this book I can tell are wonderful reproductions of Sichuan classics. Probably the way we can tell authenticity is the simplicity of the recipes. A famous cooking show in China gives contestants oil, soy sauce, and rice wine & determines how many different kinds of dishes each can make. It all has to do with quantities, heat, ratios rather than a wide variety of ingredients. How else could everyone have managed for so long?

Anyway, this seems just fine, if beyond my reach. Love that she made a career from this particular fascination of hers.

Christina says

A friend who taught English with me in China recommended this gem to me. Since I taught English and lived in Sichuan Province for a year, I'm so grateful to have this guide to how to reproduce the amazing food in my kitchen here in the U.S. Dunlop gives some of my favorite recipes (try the Pockmarked Mother Chen's Tofu, the Twice-Cooked Pork, and the Dry-Fried Green Beans) and makes allowances for Western kitchens. It even includes several hotpot recipes, which I'm looking forward to trying out with friends. A great book!

Pauline says

This is a great cookbook. The recipes are authentic and turn out just like they should...as long as you have the right ingredients.

After spending time in China and loving the food, it is great to have this book to rely on when my cravings for China come and they do come often.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Amazing follow-up to Shark's Fin And Sichuan Pepper: A Sweet-Sour Memoir of Eating in China, with even more stories and food history of the Sichuan province. This is far more of a cookbook than the memoir she wrote before this.

Unfortunately for me, most Sichuan dishes involve pork. I don't eat pork. I have a few marked to try - dan dan noodles, fish-fragrant eggplant, and fish-fragrant bean curd. I will need to go to a well-stocked Chinese/Asian market first.

I'd recommend this book to any adventurous carnivorous cook who wants to cook super authentic Sichuan food. She knows what she is talking about and it translates well to the Western kitchen (except perhaps

directions to deep fry a fish in a wok, not sure how many people will do that.)

Schmusepferdchen says

First of all, for me the intention behind reading a cookbook is to learn how to cook.

Land of plenty does NOT teach you that. I've expected that because it is often empathised that Mrs. Dunlop as first westerner made a training as a cook.

Good for her. What she does is giving you recipes and the story how she learned them.

In this respect this book (and the one about Hunan kitchen) is good. If you are looking for recipes there are other books with authentic recipes, too. If you are looking for methods you are better off with Barbara Tropp's "The Modern Art of Chinese Cooking: Techniques and Recipes". Although this book also is not perfect.

The part about the methods of chinese cooking is short compared to the classic of Barbara Tropp.

The recipes are good. The most "Sichuan Classics" are part of the book.

Since I know a very good website by a woman from Sichuan that gives very good recipes most of the stuff was known to me.

But I believe at the time this book was published it was a real revelation.

The recipes come in a very detailed manner. I was a little bored because at the point you've understood chinese cooking there is a lot of information that you already know.

On the other hand if you are not shure about what you are doing this might comes handy.

There are pictures of the dishes. They are of that kind that there are some pages with a collection of dishes. The pictures are memorable but ok. Although I would like to mention that in her latest book "Every grain of rice" you'll get a picture for almost every recepie on the oposite page. I liked that a little more.

With every recipe comes a story who told her about it and how delicious it tastes. If you liked the "Shark Fin and Sichuan Pepper" you may like that. The storys are sometimes as long as the recipes.

Quyen says

I'm a big fan of Sichuan cuisine, but I've never been to the region, and always doubt the "authenticity" quality of ethnic foods in America, so this book was the 1st cookbook on Sichuan foods that I've purchased.

In term of presentation, this is a thick book with a simple and neat format which is very light on pictures, yet the recipes are clear, the instructions are precise and easy to follow. There is no step by step instruction on cutting/chopping or cooking process so it might be hard for those who are new to Asian's cuisine.

I've tried a handful of recipes from the books and very happy with the results.

Irvin Sha says

As a big fan of food from Sichuan, I looked for a while for a decent book that would show me how to actually cook some of the food. For the most part, I kept on running into problems with authenticity/credibility. The recipes that I would see just didn't look right. I mean, they'd have carrots and celery in them, which seems just plain wrong.

This book is totally legit. I realize the author is British, but she apparently spent years in Sichuan learning how to cook. And everything comes out just about right. So long as you can find the ingredients (not super hard these days), most of this stuff is pretty easy. It does come out a bit on the greasy/salty side, but part of that is just the food. Any time I need to cook something vaguely Chinese, this is the book I turn to.

Bookshop says

This is an old book. It was written in 2001 but it is such a treasure on Sichuan culinary art.

The book starts with a hefty discussion on Sichuan culture and its kitchen: from the basic cutting skills to cooking methods. Then comes the recipes divided into types of food. It closes with appendices on the main flavours from Sichuan, 23 basic flavours of Sichuan, and 56 methods of cooking Sichuan dishes.

The section on 23 flavours of Sichuan is interesting. When we hear 'Sichuan food', we think of fiery flavours. Apparently, it is not so simple. There are 23 complex flavours such as hot and numbing flavours which is associated with hearty peasant cooking and use of a lot of chilies and Sichuan pepper for that distinctive taste. Fish fragrant flavour is dominated by salty, sweet, sour and spicy with heavy fragrances from garlic, ginger and spring onion. Pepper and salt? Oh, the heavenly simple dip of ground Sichuan pepper and salt for deep-fried food.

The recipes are quite detailed with a lot of notes on techniques. I like the fact that for each Chinese word, be it for the name of the dish to the method of cutting, there's an accompanying Chinese characters in traditional writings (or Fan Ti Zi). It helps in clarifying matter for those who understand Chinese. These recipes were also tried and tested in her apartment in London. That conveys two important messages: one, it is not complicated and can be safely reproduced in a basic kitchen; two, ingredients are not as exotic as they can be obtained in London (OK, London is great compared to my town).

All the above are reassuring proof of how knowledgeable the writer is and how thorough she is in her research. I think she does well by focusing her book on just one of the many aspects of Chinese cooking. She doesn't try to tackle a whole lot of cuisines from North to South, each of which has its own distinct character. She focuses on what she knows best, Sichuan cuisines. After all, during her two years in Chengdu for British Council Scholarship, she learned the art in Sichuan Institute of Higher Cuisine in Chengdu.

I initially penalized this book for the lack of pictures accompanying each dish which is an important criterion in selecting cookbooks for me. However, the writing is so detailed, and despite its sheer size of information, this book is a fascinating read. Each page is tantalizing and motivating. She patiently ensures that an English equivalent or a description of an item is correctly done. Take this for example: "Cui... refers to a certain quality of crispness, a texture that offers resistance to the teeth, but finally yields, cleanly, with a pleasant snappy feeling. This is a quality of kidneys, cut finely, cooked swiftly over a fierce flame; of goose

intestines, scalded briefly in a Sichuan hotpot; of fresh celery and raw mangetout."

Isn't it delicious?

<http://bookshop.multiply.com/reviews/...>

Beverly says

I haven't cooked anything from this yet, but the explanations of techniques, customs, and unusual ingredients are great. And the recipes are definitely NOT westernized for comfort. I look forward to many good meals from this book.

Kayanna says

A fantastic English-language book for Sichuanese dishes. It covers many of the major Sichuanese dishes in an authentic way (she went to culinary school in Chengdu). In addition, it makes recommendations for adaptations to recipes based on what you'd find in Asian grocery stores in the West.

It translates Sichuanese cooking not only into English but into Western cooking terminology, complete with a description of ingredients in the front. It even tells you how to make your own Sichuanese stock.

Simply the best book if you want to cook Sichuanese.

David says

I've been attempting to self-teach myself to cook Chinese cuisine at home over the past couple of years. I have fumbled my way through an endless variety of stir fries, recipe'd or improvised. In the process, I've picked up some passable wok skills and basic knowledge of the components that make Chinese food work.

This book is impressively and lyrically written by a British white woman who lived and studied in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. She accompanies her recipes with historical or personal anecdotes that help establish context for the cuisine.

But what really makes this book work for me (3 of the 4 recipes I have cooked thus far have come out most deliciously) is her approach. Beyond the contextual information, Dunlop happens to be awfully good at presenting the process, using consistent terminology, describing the ingredients clearly and with enough information to enable a non-Asian Asian grocery store shopper to find the right goods, and laying down recipes in a clear, orderly step-by-step manner. Describing a recipe in an articulate and useful fashion is a damn hard thing to do (I can say that because most people seem to get it wrong) but I have had an easy time making these dishes proper-like. I wish there were more pictures, but that's about as much of a complaint as I have so far.

Authenticity is important in cookbooks but doesn't necessarily trump all other values. This book presents its cuisine with respect and care, but isn't afraid to balance that with a respect for its audience. I am very much

enjoying my exploration of this book and look forward to picking up her subsequent book on the cooking of Hunanese food, which I expect might be even more to my liking than the interesting and complex tastes of Sichuan.

Angellar says

I pretty much want to marry Fuschia Dunlop. She's fluent in Mandarin (plus regional dialects!), writes fantastically appetizing, clear recipes (complete with buckets of cultural context), and even includes Chinese characters and Pinyin for each recipe's name (and each ingredient, each cooking method, &c.). Vegetarian recipes, while still a minority, are plentiful and don't seem like the weakling little brothers of the meat recipes, as so often is the case in cookbooks written by omnivores.

There's an entire chapter on xiao chi, the Sichuan equivalent of dim sum. Street food is well-represented, too -- this book isn't comprised solely of stuffy banquet food, but instead gives you a good idea of everyday dishes.

This book is a glorious introduction to real live Chinese cooking, a big, delicious step away from the Chinese-American fare you find in the fast majority of restaurants in the States. It will show you how to enjoy eating your vegetables (or, if you already do, enjoy them even more).
