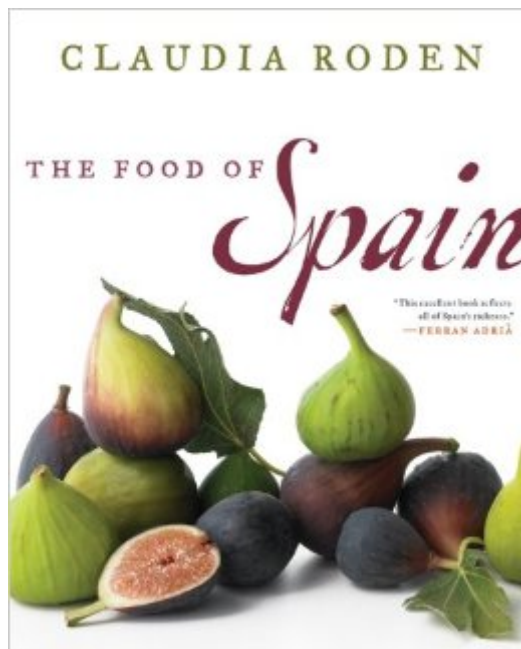


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The Food Of Spain



Synopsis

One of our foremost authorities on Mediterranean, North African, and Italian cooking, Claudia Roden brings her incomparable authenticity, vision, and immense knowledge to bear in *The Food of Spain*. The James Beard Award-winning author of the classic cookbooks *A Book of Middle Eastern Food* and *A Book of Jewish Food* now graces food lovers with the definitive cookbook on the Spanish cuisine, illustrated with dozens of gorgeous full-color photographs that capture the color and essence of this wonderfully vibrant nation and its diverse people, traditions, and culture.

Book Information

Hardcover: 624 pages

Publisher: Ecco; First Edition edition (June 7, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061969621

ISBN-13: 978-0061969621

Product Dimensions: 8.2 x 2.1 x 10.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.5 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (43 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

The hyperbole in the product description calls this book one of the most important books on Spanish cooking during the last 50 years. How does the book measure up? I own a number of Spanish cooking books, so in addition to comments on Roden's book, please also find my recommendations. This is a decent book about traditional Spanish food, but it lacks the passion so apparent in *The New Spanish Table* (or for that matter the author's own *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food*). I think you learn more about Spanish food by reading that book, because its informal and youthful style (i.e. cramped with info, side bars, inserts, loads of smaller less artistic photos). Of course, if you want to learn about the Spanish regions and their specialties, you should pick up *Culinaria Spain*. However, Roden does teach us a bit about the strong early Muslim influence as well as the different regions. Roden's history lesson is largely confined to pre 20th century. Unfortunately, you do not get any understanding of how Spanish cooking has changed during the last 50 years. Another solid book that tries to do pretty much what Roden is trying to do is

Claudia Roden's breakthrough book, 'A Book of Middle Eastern Food' was not only a landmark work on one of my favorite cuisines, it was also a wonderful reminiscence of Roden's family history as Sephardic Jews who settled in Egypt. For Sephardic, read 'Spanish' and her credibility as a writer on this Mediterranean cuisine becomes clear. The first 120 plus pages contain a region-by-region overview of Spain's multi-ethnic food culture, ranging from signature agricultural products to 'bred in the bone' dishes. I very much agree with previous reviewers that the recipes she has selected accord well with what I have eaten and enjoyed during my travels in Spain. I also feel that this is the best overall book for a Spanish family (speaking English fluently) to select for their own cookbook. The great dishes, the expected dishes are here--from a homemade range of stocks through soups...well, to nuts! Famed convent-based recipes for egg and almond pastry 'bites' are here. We all have had them and we all have wished we 'knew how' to recreate them at home. Now we can! We can also share a thumbnail sketch of each region's history, their hopes for independence or autonomy or their roles in creating today's vibrant, modern Spain. Why only four stars? I cook seriously (as does Roden) but I may be a bit 'jaded', a bit more interested in 'knockout' recipe and flavor or texture ideas. This book is wonderfully traditional. Her prose is not as rigorously edited as it used to be and there are some repetitions that pall on the careful reader.

This book is basically everything that makes a Claudia Roden book -- personal stories, history, and much more -- combined with some truly beautiful Phaidonesque food photography. It's a doorstop, no question, but it's worth trying to schlep it around just to be able to browse through it. The recipes are all marked by area of origin, and are chosen to reflect each area's specialties, such as Valencia's rice, seafood from Cantabria, the Basque country, and the Balearic Islands, Asturias' apples, and Madrid's signature boiled dinner, the cocido madrileño. The aesthetics are an important aspect of this book; while the text itself is probably about the same or slightly shorter than Roden's other books, the book as a whole was conceived as a coffee table book, with generous (and obviously Phaidon-influenced) food photography. Roden's friends who helped her with the book also get their own introductions in sidebars, along with ingredients and cultural forces that shaped Spanish food from medieval into modern times. (Roden, being Sephardic Jewish, places special emphasis on the Jewish contributions to the cuisine, and makes a special point to cover how Spain has come to appreciate centuries of contributions by Jews and Conversos.) For a long time -- over twenty-five years now -- Penelope Casas' *The Foods and Wines of Spain* has been possibly the definitive book in English on Spanish food.

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