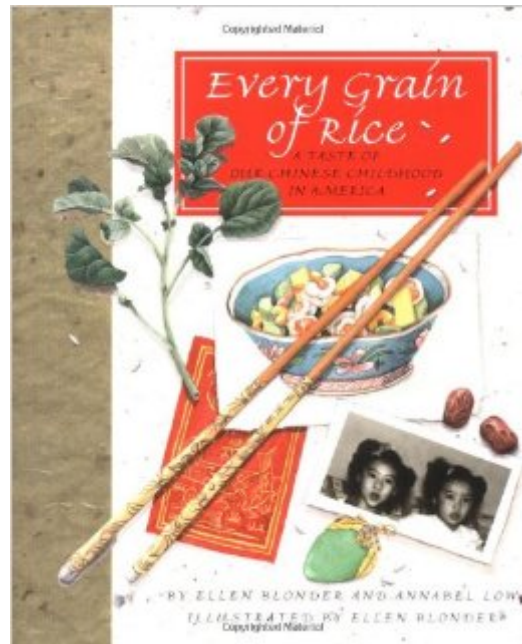


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Every Grain Of Rice: A Taste Of Our Chinese Childhood In America



Synopsis

Fried Green Tomatoes with Flank Steak. Pan-Fried Prawns in Ketchup Sauce. • Stand Back • Chicken. Turkey Jook. Sticky Rice with Sausage and Taro Root. These are the foods that say • family • and • home • to Ellen Blonder and Annabel Low. In *Every Grain of Rice* they have collected more than 120 outstanding recipes for the delicious homestyle and special occasion dishes they remember so vividly from their childhoods but have rarely found in conventional Chinese cookbooks. Studded with recollections from their years as part of an extended Chinese-American family and with Ellen Blonder's exquisite watercolor drawings, it is a remarkable debut from two major new talents on the culinary scene. An aunt and niece who are separated in age by only 16 days, Annabel and Ellen were raised virtually as sisters, dividing their time between Ellen's family farm and the renowned cafe where Annabel's father was chef/proprietor. From him, and from their mothers, aunts, and uncles, Ellen and Annabel learned to make such satisfying everyday fare as Steamed Minced Pork, Wonton Soup, and Uncle Bill's Chow Mein, as well as more elaborate dishes as Sweet-and-Sour Whole Fish and festive bamboo-leaf-wrapped Jeng. Special occasions and family gatherings were marked by steaming trays of dim sum and pork-filled Bao, Low Hop Joe's glistening Soy Sauce Chicken, and the magnificent Boned Stuffed Duck. In chapters ranging from • Comfort in a Bowl • on soups and jooks to • Fish and Seafood • and • Bearing Gifts, • which features foods for holidays and family celebrations, the authors cover the range of traditional Chinese cooking as it was prepared in their childhood homes. The more than 120 recipes and variations offer careful explanations of unfamiliar techniques along with suggestions for replacing hard-to-find ingredients and lowering the fat count of many dishes, and each recipe and story is illustrated with Ellen's delightful watercolor paintings. With a comprehensive glossary of ingredients and detailed listing of equipment and techniques, *Every Grain of Rice* is a perfect introduction to the art of Chinese cooking and a moving celebration of food and family.

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Customer Reviews

As the Caucasian parent of children adopted from Asia, I'm always interested in cookbooks that offer a healthy dose of cultural ed along with the recipes. This one does both things beautifully -- I have enjoyed the stories and the pictures very much. I have also made dozens of the included recipes, always with excellent results. (Living in an urban center with easy access to Chinese ingredients helps, but the difficulty level of many of these dishes is not as high as with some other Asian cookbooks I own, and should not be too scary even for beginning cooks.) The ultimate endorsement has to come from Chinese-American friends at the weekend school I attend with one of my kids. After having some of them over for a Lunar New Year party and serving the soy sauce chicken, steamed whole fish, and several other dishes from the book, I have gained a small reputation at the school as "that white woman who can cook Chinese food." The following year I made the steamed New Year's Cake (nian gao, in Mandarin) and took it to weekend school. Two of the faculty actually asked me for the recipe. I vow that one day soon I'm going to get the bamboo leaves out of my freezer, gird my loins, and cook up a batch of those time-consuming Jeng. Authors Ellen and Annabel have convinced me that the results might just be worth the effort.

I must have thirty or forty books on Chinese cooking, and most are full of the kinds of restaurant dishes and banquet dishes that aren't terribly representative of what Chinese families actually eat when they dine together. This book is different. It's full of what you might call Chinese comfort food--the food the authors grew up eating, and that reminds them of home. A lot of it is the kind of food most Westerners never get to taste unless they're lucky enough to be the guest of Chinese hosts--food like winter melon soup, or humble food like jook. Add to that the beautiful watercolors and the authors' stories of growing up together (and eating together) and you have an absolute treasure of a book. No matter how many Chinese cookbooks you may own, you need this one.

Great stories, wonderful food! This book is not meant to be an all-encompassing guide to Chinese

cooking or a "dazzle the guests" dinner party menu book. It's about comfort food. I own a shelf full of Chinese cooking books, but none contain some of the simple recipes I found in this book. The recipes are for the sort of everyday dishes that Grandmom made during our infrequent visits when I was little. Since she rarely used recipes, the knowledge died with her. What a pleasure it was to find some of her dishes in this book!

Delicious Chinese recipes interwoven with Ellen's and Annabel's stories about their Chinese American life and beautifully illustrated by Ellen's watercolors. I have tried the siu mei, oyster beef and broccoli, pan fried prawns with ketchup sauce, chicken in foil, and the almond cookies. They were all doable and crowd-pleasers.

As an Irish American woman married to a Chinese American man, I found the stories delightful and the recipes helpful. I too have spent time in the kitchen with my in-laws watching them cook, wondering how they arrive at such wonderfully delicious flavors. I am glad to own a book that will help me duplicate such flavors and help my children learn how to cook Chinese food.

This is a joyful, thoughtful, and respectful approach to food as part and parcel of one's family life. The recipes I've found to be not super-easy, but yet very doable -- not fancy restaurant cooking, but delicious at-home Chinese cooking at its best. Try the siu mai (a type of dim sum) recipe -- it's fantastic.

This book is a wonderful gift, to give or to receive. It is not only a cookbook of authentic Chinese flavors, but a story of growing up Chinese-American in California. The recipes are familiar from my own childhood growing up in New York City. The ingredients described are even illustrated in Ellen Blonder's beautiful watercolor miniatures; to the novice, one could walk into a Chinese market, book in hand, and actually find the correct ingredients. These are the recipes for everyday and holiday dishes that were passed on mother to daughter. To have them presented in this fashion makes them available to a whole generation that, like Annabel and Ellen, missed the opportunity to learn from their mothers and grandmothers. They make available to a much wider audience the flavor of "real" Chinese cooking. I recommend this book to anyone who would like to learn good Chinese cooking, and anyone who loves good Chinese food.

After having moved away from home for a number of years, I started to realize and appreciate the

important role of food to Chinese culture, family and traditions. Much to my chagrin, I had learned very little about the Chinese family kitchen while growing up. While I was nourished by the comfort foods my mother and aunts had made for us, I had very little knowledge of the mechanics of producing these offerings of love. Blonder and Low have done an impressive job of bringing back to the memories of my childhood, where food plays such a central role in Chinese family life. I have tried many of the recipes in this book and most of them have turned out just the way I recall my mother making them. And most of all, the stories and anecdotes demonstrate how Every Grain of Rice inextricably links culture and food to Chinese traditions. The authors recall momentous occasions such as Chinese New Year and donning their "best" clothes; the excitement of receiving little red "luy see". This book is all about comfort foods. It's about home cooking in the Chinese family. You will rarely find these dishes in a restaurant. My cousin was looking through this book and disdainfully noted how the recipes were so "chop suey". I don't know if his description is correct, but you will rarely find these dishes in a restaurant. Perhaps he was comparing it to the sometimes over-complicated and sophisticated, "gourmet-style" Chinese cookbooks. It is certainly not that. It is purely about childhood memories of growing up Chinese in North America.

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