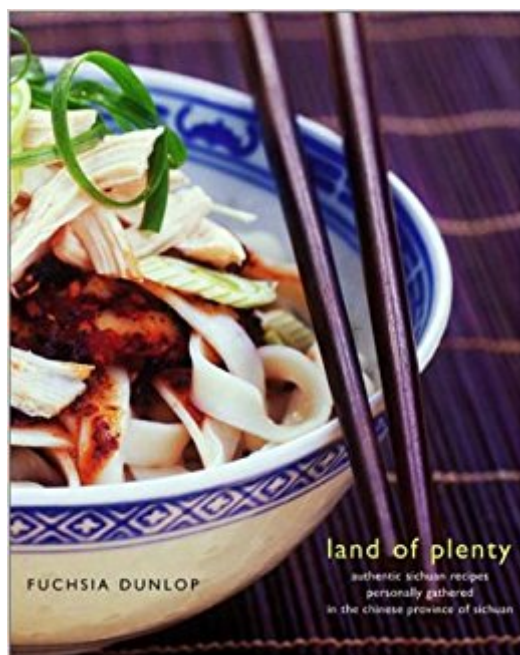


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Land Of Plenty: A Treasury Of Authentic Sichuan Cooking



Synopsis

"It is a very long time since I saw a book which is so patently an absolute 'must.'" — Alan Davidson, author of *The Oxford Companion to Food* 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

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Customer Reviews

Elizabeth David had it easy. All she had to do was eat her way through France and Italy and

translate the essence of the encountered cuisines for a ravenous, literate, English-speaking public. Fuschia Dunlop, on the other hand, went to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan in China, where she ended up the first foreign student enrolled at the Sichuan Institute of Higher Cuisine. That was nearly 10 years ago. After annual return visits and endless research she has produced, in English, a magnificent introduction to the food and foodways of Sichuan. She is in every way the dharma inheritor of Elizabeth David. You too may start to salivate halfway through the introduction to Dunlop's magnificent *Land of Plenty: A Treasury of Authentic Sichuan Cooking*. Perhaps it begins when she explains *xian*, "one of the most beautiful words in the Chinese culinary language." It describes an entire range of flavor and sensation, "the indefinable, delicious taste of fresh meat, poultry, and seafood, the scrumptious flavors of a pure chicken soup..." Before you know it you are running headlong into a world of 23 distinct flavors and 56 cooking methods (they are all listed at the end of the book). Sichuan is the place where "barbarian peppers" met up with a natural cornucopia and a literary cooking tradition stretching back to the fifth century A.D. Innovation with cooking technique and new and challenging ingredients remains a hallmark of Sichuan. After describing basic cutting skills and cooking techniques, Dunlop presents her recipes in chapters that include "Noodles, Dumplings, and Other Street Treats

Sichuan cuisine, renowned for its spicy notes and hot flavors, is famous in Chinese history and lore for its variety and richness of tastes and layers. Dunlop, who writes about Chinese food and culture for the *Economist*, has produced a volume that is sure to take its place among the classics of Chinese cuisine. Drawing on her experience as a student at the Sichuan Institute of Higher Cuisine in Chengdu, China and on many Chinese sources, she conveys the history and geography that make this cuisine so different from the other regions and so varied-the region boasts 5,000 different dishes. After discussing the tastes and textures that form Chinese cuisine in general, Dunlop describes cooking methods, equipment and the pantry before diving into the recipes. From such traditional dishes as Strange-Flavor Chicken (aka Bang Bang Chicken) to Hot-and-Sour Soup that have made the region famous, to the simple Zucchini Slivers with Garlic to the appealing Spicy Cucumber Salad, she engagingly describes dishes and their context, much in the style of Elizabeth David and Claudia Roden. Ending with sections entitled "The 23 Flavors of Sichuan" and "The 56 Cooking Methods of Sichuan," the book is a pleasure-both to cook from and to read. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

After cooking every single recipe in this book, I can confidently say that this is probably the best

cook book every written. Fuchsia's commitment to tradition and authenticity is evident and her instructions are clear and concise. Even more challenging recipes such as tea-smoked duck are remarkably simple if you plan ahead accordingly.

This is my absolute favorite Chinese cookbook, and I have now owned it for about 5 years. I was born in China, grew up eating delicious home cooked dishes my mom made, who learned her cooking skills from my grandma. However, I was never very good about learning from my mom how to cook, and it wasn't until we are living far apart when I got sick of the same old things I made and decided to venture further. And that's when Land of Plenty and Revolutionary Chinese Cookbook came in. Firstly, I no longer remember how to read Chinese, so Fuschia Dunlop's version is fantastic. Secondly, she provides easy substitute suggestions for those of us living in the western world. Because despite my easy access to abundant Chinese grocery stores, there are some things that hard to find. And last but not least, the dishes made from this book are simple and authentic. I've made dishes from this book for exchange students from Chengdu who remarked that they feel like they are back home with the meal. And whether bad or good, I've become pickier about what we eat in Chinese restaurants BECAUSE I know I can make so many of the dishes, and do it well. Still, it's a testament to how good this book is. The book itself is sturdy and now has much crinkles and some splatter, marks of a well-used book. The one con about this book would be the lack of pictures. For me at least, I love using the pictures as a guide of what I want to make, and sometimes as a guide of what my food should look like at the end. And sometimes, recipes get looked over because there is no picture. Still, this should not be a deterrent from getting the book because there are just SO much wonderful recipes here. Happy cooking and eating!

Personally dislike the plastic cover that comes with books so I just took it off - pleasantly surprised with the cute lime green cover underneath. This book is VERY SCANT on pictures but so full of knowledge and great recipes. I have so many bookmarked to try out and I'm super excited! They all seem pretty accessible to the average home cook with a good chinese mart nearby, so I'm very happy with the book. Truly a classic. Edit: After trying out a couple recipes, I can officially say that this is a keeper. I have friends who begged me for the recipes because they tasted just like things you could get back in Szechuan! Definitely try the Strange Flavor chicken and the dan dan noodles - classics and completely delicious.

This book has to be the encyclopedia of Sichuan specialty foods. Lots and lots of valuable

information that meets the appetite of every Sichuan food lover. The author gives a comprehensive background of the Sichuan cuisine. Each recipe in the book is illustrated in depth. The author could have included more colored pictures for recipes. The colored pictures are bundled up together so you have to go back and forth for the recipes and pictures. Hopefully in the next edition this is rectified. I love to cook Chinese food at home and this book is a great expansion to my knowledge and experience in the Sichuan Food arena.

I absolutely love sichuan food, but there aren't that many authentic cookbooks. Enter Fuchsia Dunlop's *Land of Plenty* - this book is **AMAZING!** I've cooked probably 10-15 dishes from here already, and every single one has come out wonderfully. Each recipe has a brief description of where it comes from and how it's traditionally served, followed by very easy to follow instructions. Most of the recipes are actually very easy to make, and you'll be surprised how good it turns out with such simple, basic ingredients. There are even a few recipes to use up leftovers, such as a shredded chicken recipe that uses leftover rotisserie chicken. Also, don't be afraid of the heat - there are typically tips on how to make a dish less hot, and there are many dishes in the book that are not spicy at all.

I absolutely love this cookbook! When my boyfriend requested I expand my love of cooking to include, specifically, Sichuan cuisine I was a bit nervous. After researching A LOT of books I stumbled upon, and decided to purchase, *Land of Plenty*. Fuchsia Dunlop does a terrific job of describing the area from where the recipes originate. She also provides detailed lists of all items necessary to fully utilize this cookbook. In an effort to impress that cute boy of mine I went all in. I spent over an hour in a large Asian market searching for all of the items mentioned in the book. This is where I completely agree with another review which stated having the Chinese names would be very helpful. The main reason I am raving about this book is the fact you can follow a recipe exactly and the dish is amazing! My plan is to always follow a recipe the first time I make it then adjust if I chose after that. I so appreciate the work which went into these recipes to ensure the original recipe is worth making over and over again. I've had the book for a few months now and made, at least, 10+ recipes. Suggestions: 1) Commit to getting all ingredients necessary for these recipes. It is virtually impossible to make this food delicious without the proper ingredients. 2) Be willing to try new things. There will certainly be ingredients in this book many Americans have not tried. Ms. Dunlop does a fantastic job of walking you through exactly what you need to do to make everything work. Be adventurous!

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