

The 17 Best Cookbooks of Spring 2021

New titles from Nigella Lawson, Julia Turshen, Rodney Scott and more will shape the way you cook this season

by [Eater Staff](#) | Mar 22, 2021, 11:57am EDT

Illustration by [Andrea D'Aquino](#)

If you buy something from an Eater link, Vox Media may earn a commission. See our [ethics policy](#).

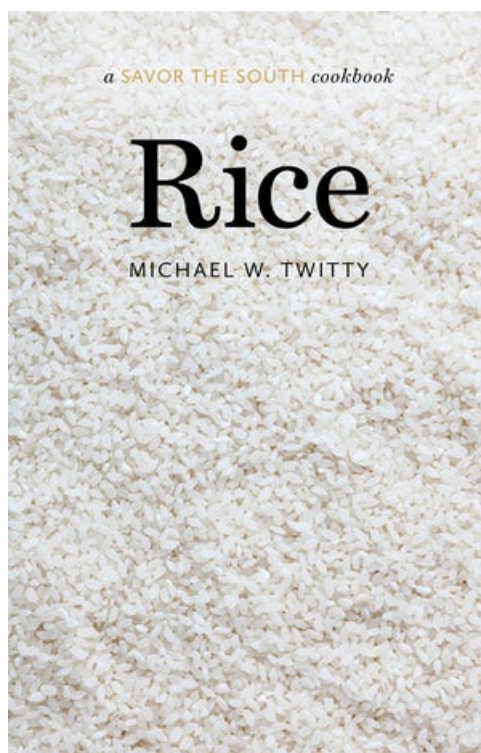
SHARE

There's really, finally an end in sight to pandemic life as we've known it. It seems safe to surmise that soon, Zoom parties will be swept aside for the real thing, and the slog of putting together yet another home-cooked meal will be broken by long-awaited dinners out. But reasons to cook, and cook well, won't disappear completely with a return to (relative) normalcy — and with the volume of beautiful and practical cookbooks out this season, we wouldn't want them to.

Some of this spring's entries into the genre are the kinds of books we wished we had months ago, with strategies for seamless weeknight dinners and weekly meal planning. Others offer road maps for cooking projects that would have made diverting quarantine hobbies. While they'll feel just as valuable in the weeks to come, there are also books among the 17 listed here (selected from a packed slate) that seem to consider what home cooking will look like not only over the next year, but also beyond.

It's almost a cliché to say cooking the food of a place will transport you there. But here you'll find

cookbooks that will, at the very least, fuel some fantasizing about future travels, plus several that go deeper than wanderlust to serve as primers on the people and regional history that have shaped cuisines. Other spring titles speak to more immediate considerations, providing all the inspiration you need to start planning the dinner parties, picnics, and even whole-hog barbecues that have been living in daydreams for the past several months. With the creativity and culinary diversity presented in the books below, those gatherings, when they happen, may be even better than we imagine. — *Monica Burton*



Rice: a Savor the South cookbook

Michael Twitty

UNC Press, out now

In *Rice: a Savor the South cookbook*, Michael Twitty doesn't merely present recipes based around a global staple (though recipes are indeed included). What's more, in this newest addition to UNC Press's **series of cookbooks** on essential Southern foods, the food historian gives rice its own hero's journey, charting its path across continents and various foodways, as well as its place in dishes both simple and complex.

"[Rice] changes outfits well to suit the party," Twitty writes of its versatility, but at the same time, it's a food that invokes deeply personal connections. This holds particularly true for the American South — the book's point of convergence of Asian, African, and Caribbean cuisines — where enslaved people cooked jollof rice and other dishes carried over from their Western and Central African homelands, adapted and passed down for generations. Those dishes appear here in sections divided loosely by their culinary influences, from "Deep Origins" (which features Liberian rice bread and Ghanaian crab stew) to "Southern Classics."

Among the most intriguing recipes in *Rice* are red rice, an adaptable tomato pilau favored by Twitty's grandmother and sourced from cookbook author Damon Lee Fowler; **country captain a la Hazel**, a contribution from that same Alabama-born grandmother; and a collection of rice-based desserts, such as Nancie's historic rice pudding, an update on an 18th-century recipe, and Louisiana calas, a fritter "sold on the streets of antebellum New Orleans by Black Creole ladies," Twitty writes. The recipes, which appear with informative headnotes but sans photos, are largely approachable to beginning and intermediate home cooks. But as Twitty continuously demonstrates through his adept storytelling, no dish — be it effortless or challenging — arrives at the table without a story. — *Madeleine Davies*

\$20 AT AMAZON

\$18 AT BOOKSHOP

SIMPLY JULIA

110 EASY RECIPES FOR HEALTHY COMFORT FOOD

JULIA TURSHEN



Simply Julia: 110 Easy Recipes for Healthy Comfort Food

Julia Turshen

Harper Wave, out now

Julia Turshen, the author of three beloved cookbooks, shares her most personal stories and practical recipes in her fourth, *Simply Julia*. There are a whopping 110 recipes broken down into 10 chapters. Their beauty is that in reading every one of them, you'll think, *I can do that!*

As the book's title suggests, Turshen herself is the only thematic link for the recipes in the collection. This

Reproduced by Gorkana under licence from the NLA (newspapers), CLA (magazines), FT (Financial Times/ft.com) or other copyright owner. No further copying (including printing of digital cuttings), digital reproduction/forwarding of the cutting is permitted except under licence from the copyright owner. All FT content is copyright The Financial Times Ltd.

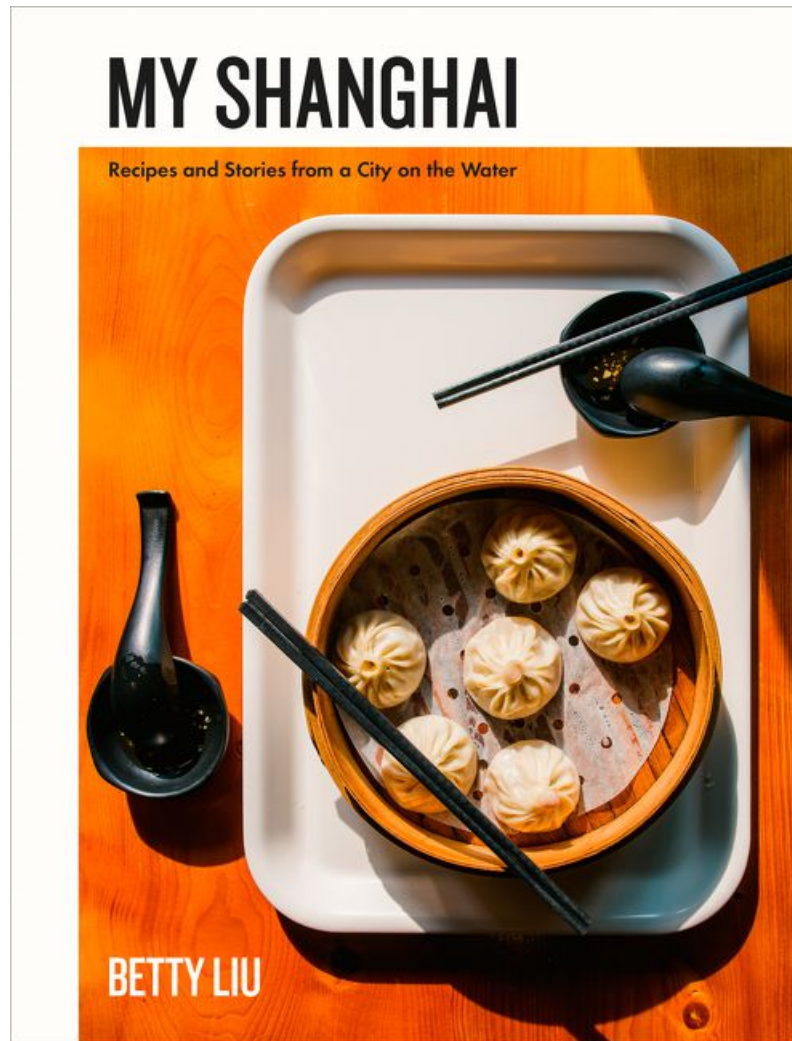
manifests as dishes that make her happy, those with a connection to the people for whom she loves to cook. The honeymoon chicken, for example, is inspired by sopa Azteca, the Mexican chicken soup made with chiles and topped with fried tortillas that Turshen and her wife, Grace, shared during their honeymoon. Beatrice's bubaleh, light pancakes made of whipped eggs and matzoh meal, is Turshen's grandmother's recipe. Each dish is accompanied by photos that feel more like candid snapshots from Turshen's upstate New York home than highly edited studio photo shoots.

Turshen's personal approach, bolstered by separate "thought" chapters on topics such as confidence and anxiety that read like journal entries, is meant to encourage anyone who feels intimidated in the kitchen. There's no laundry list of ingredients readers should buy, but rather suggestions for small, workable plans that will inspire home cooks and reignite their enthusiasm for cooking. Her overall message is this: Just do what works for you. Turshen's book makes it easy to channel that casual yet comforting approach. And once readers flip through each page of heartwarming stories and encouragement, they will feel simply sated.

— *James Park*

\$27 AT AMAZON

\$30 AT BOOKSHOP



My Shanghai: Recipes and Stories from a City on the Water

Betty Liu

Harper Design, out now

There's a magic that happens when you attempt to cook a cuisine you have little personal familiarity with, something you've only ever eaten by someone else's hand, and you take your first bite and realize, *Holy shit, that's it*. That kept happening when I cooked from *My Shanghai: Recipes and Stories from a City on the Water*, the debut cookbook from photographer, blogger, and surgical resident Betty Liu.

Liu's parents grew up in Shanghai during the cultural revolution and moved to Oregon, where Liu was born, for graduate school. Family stories punctuate Liu's comprehensive tome on the home (and street) cooking of Shanghai; she includes memories of foraging spring bamboo on a trip back to China, as well as the traditions surrounding dishes customarily served at festivals.

Organized by season, *My Shanghai* does not let you quick-hack your way into this cuisine. It rewards patience and close reading. Every detail is there, from how to make sure your bao dough achieves the proper shine to how to build a perfect bowl of breakfast noodles and make red-braised pork belly so good, I stood in my kitchen thinking, *Surely it can't be that simple*. The beautiful photography helps guide the reader through techniques that may be trickier for a beginner, such as folding shaomai or twisting scallion

Reproduced by Gorkana under licence from the NLA (newspapers), CLA (magazines), FT (Financial Times/ft.com) or other copyright owner. No further copying (including printing of digital cuttings), digital reproduction/forwarding of the cutting is permitted except under licence from the copyright owner. All FT content is copyright The Financial Times Ltd.

buns.

Frankly, I haven't been able to stop cooking from *My Shanghai* since I got it, starting with bowls of wonton soup in the winter section and progressing to spring with fried pea shoots and "oil-exploded" shrimp. I imagine I'll keep coming back every season. — *Jaya Saxena*

\$29 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT BOOKSHOP

MISTER JIU'S



IN CHINATOWN

Recipes and Stories
from the Birthplace of
Chinese American Food

BRANDON JEW
TIENLON HO

Mister Jiu's in Chinatown: Recipes and Stories from the Birthplace of Chinese American Food

Brandon Jew and Tienlon Ho

Ten Speed Press, out now

If there's one dish that's most emblematic of the Mister Jiu's menu, it's the cheung fun topped with Santa Barbara uni. It succinctly articulates chef Brandon's Jew's point of view, highlighting the bounty of California and the luxury of high-end Bay Area dining, all while nodding to the dim sum carts for which San Francisco is known. I think I ordered it nearly every time I went to Jew's restaurant (and I went a lot).

Its narrow, crowded bar hummed with people drinking tea-spiked cocktails, eating Dutch crunch BBQ

Reproduced by Gorkana under licence from the NLA (newspapers), CLA (magazines), FT (Financial Times/ft.com) or other copyright owner. No further copying (including printing of digital cuttings), digital reproduction/forwarding of the cutting is permitted except under licence from the copyright owner. All FT content is copyright The Financial Times Ltd.

buns, and waiting their turn to feast in the gorgeous dining room, with its postcard views of San Francisco's Chinatown — the oldest Chinatown in the country.

Now, thanks to Jew's first-ever cookbook, the recipes for those barbecue buns and even the cheung fun are available to us home cooks. I'm personally not ambitious enough to tackle either of those, but sprinkled throughout the book are recipes and techniques I look forward to trying, including the Chinese pancakes, the Taiwanese-style eggplant, and the pie-plate-and-steamer approach to sizzling fish. What I'm most excited about, though, is actually right there in the title. This isn't just *Mister Jiu's*, this is *Mister Jiu's in Chinatown*. So while the book offers personal stories and insight into how the restaurant's dishes came to be, it also features dispatches from Jew and his co-author, Tienlon Ho, on drinking good tea, the origins of prawn toast, and the Americanness of pot stickers. The book is an exercise in context, so it's only natural that it opens with a rich dive into the past of the historic building that now houses Mister Jiu's. The words that follow makes it wonderfully clear just how much Jew and his cooking, like the building and the restaurant inside it, **embody the story of Chinatown, its history, and its future**. A night on the town isn't an option right now, but for anyone who's desperately missing restaurants, a night curled up with this cookbook absolutely is. — *Hillary Dixler Canavan*

\$35 AT AMAZON

\$37 AT BOOKSHOP



RODNEY SCOTT'S WORLD OF BBQ

*Recipes &
Perspectives
from the*
LEGENDARY
PITMASTER

RODNEY
SCOTT
&
LOLIS
ERIC ELIE

Rodney Scott's World of Barbecue: Every Day Is a Good Day

Rodney Scott and Lolis Eric Elie

Clarkson Potter, out now

James Beard Award-winning chef Rodney Scott is a legend in the world of whole-hog barbecue, but as a kid growing up in the PeeDee region of South Carolina, he hated how much time he spent tending to the family's barbecue pit — until, that is, it became his calling. In this debut cookbook, Scott does so much more than share recipes or lighthearted anecdotes: He offers an intimate portrait of his life, recounting

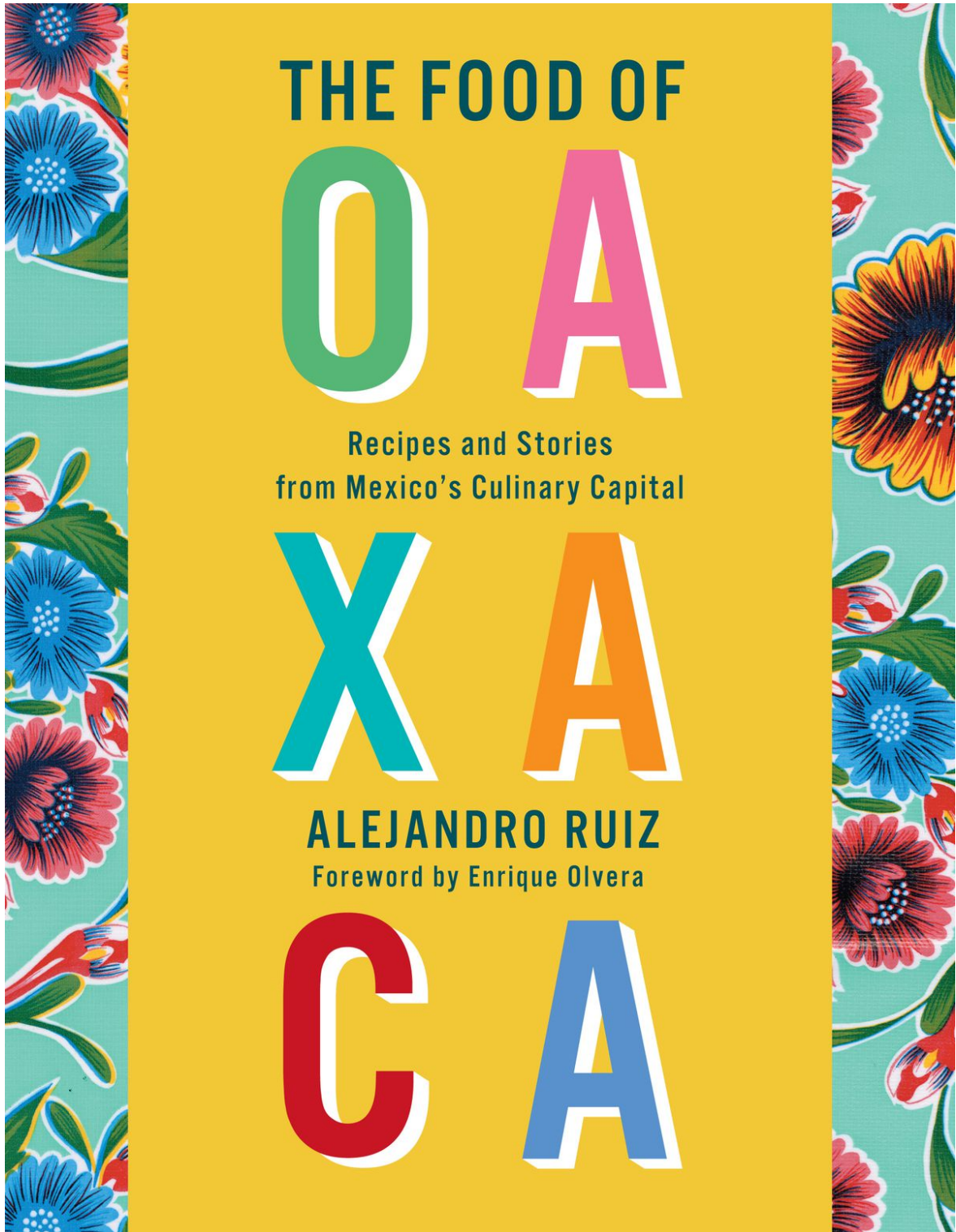
stories of a childhood working on his parents' farmland, his initial reluctance to pursue a career in barbecue, the family fallouts and bitterness that came with his meteoric rise, and, ultimately, his path to becoming the pitmaster he is today. If you don't cook a single recipe, this cookbook is worth opening for these stories alone.

But really, you'll want to cook from this book. Scott invites readers to join what he describes as a "fellowship" of whole-hog cooks, using step-by-step photos and detailed instructions to walk readers through the process of barbecuing an entire pig. To start, he demonstrates how to build a cinder-block barbecue pit and a burn barrel before putting the hog on the fire. And though he's known for this style of barbecue, he also offers plenty of recipes for smaller, but no less impressive, projects you can tackle on a regular-sized grill or in the kitchen: honey-butter fish; smoked chicken; fried catfish; and fresh, zippy sides, such as wedge salad dressed with white barbecue sauce; pork belly succotash; and corn bread with honey butter. For dessert, maybe a big wedge of layer cake, crowned with salty shards of pork skin.

"One of the great things about cooking whole hog," Scott writes, "is that it takes so long to do it, that you just naturally gather around the pit with good friends and fellowship while the meat and wood do their thing." Admittedly, as the pandemic rages on, the idea of convening with friends and loved ones around a feast of pork feels like little more than a dream. But after a year without dinner parties, this kind of ambitious, big-project cooking is the perfect fodder for post-pandemic dreaming — a light at the end of a very long tunnel. — *Elazar Sontag*

\$26 AT AMAZON

\$28 AT BOOKSHOP



The Food of Oaxaca: Recipes and Stories from Mexico's Culinary Capital

Alejandro Ruiz and Carla Altesor

Knopf, out now

When Alejandro Ruiz was 12, his mother died suddenly in a tragic accident. In his introduction to *The Food of Oaxaca*, Ruiz, one of Mexico's most prominent chefs, writes that afterward, he felt unmoored, as if he stopped being part of something larger than himself. He soon left home to live in a different part of the

country, but returned to Oaxaca after more than a decade. There he began to hone his cooking at Casa Oaxaca, the hotel where, over time, the chef established himself as an ambassador of Oaxacan cuisine. With this cookbook, Ruiz proves himself a patient and thorough teacher as well, ensuring the recipes and stories that have meant the most to him can be made and celebrated far from the bustling dining rooms of his restaurants in Oaxaca and Mexico City.

The book's sections are marked by places and moments pivotal to Ruiz's development as a chef. The first shares recipes from Ruiz's childhood in La Raya de Zimatlán, such as rabbit cooked simply with oregano, lime, and garlic, and a mole negro whose ingredient list fills two pages. Ruiz, who takes care to transcribe the traditions of the women who taught him to make this food, writes that the work of translating recipes from verbal instruction to written text "goes against their essence." So he includes all of the olfactory and visual cues he was taught to follow, giving readers the opportunity to learn more than just measurements. When masa, for example, is soft and moist but not yet sticky, the dough is properly hydrated. If it cracks when pressed, add more water. These small lessons build confidence in a home cook and leave less room for error.

The second part of the book follows Ruiz's move to Mexico's coast, with recipes for deep-fried whole fish, mangoes soaked in chiles and warm spices, and buttery prawns with mojo de ajo. The third section is something of a homecoming, its recipes inspired by the chef's restaurants and his return to Oaxaca. These pages hold jicama tacos; delicate ricotta-stuffed squash blossoms; and rich, umber mole. Ruiz's goal is not to show readers how to make one Oaxacan dish so much as it is to teach them how to cook this food with all of their senses, intuition, and a willingness to make some mistakes along the way. — *ES*

\$23 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT BOOKSHOP

MAX'S Picnic BOOK



From the
best-selling
authors of
Max's
Sandwich
Book

Max Halley & Ben Benton

Max's Picnic Book

Max Halley and Ben Benton

Hardie Grant Books, March 23

It is only March, but it seems safe to announce that *Max's Picnic Book* is the most idiosyncratic cookbook of the year. That said, it is not a cookbook precisely — as its authors Max Halley and Ben Benton assert, it

is a book about picnics. Yes, there are recipes, but they are merely one layer of a large, fragrant, and wondrous onion that functions as a sort of *cri de coeur* to (re)consider the picnic, a form of food consumption that, as Halley and Benton write, originally started out as “a good excuse for a few drinks outdoors” but has since “been ripped from its roots, chewed up, spat out and then stamped to death by art, literature, movies and cynical branding.”

Halley, the proprietor of a well-loved London sandwich shop, makes his case for the picnic’s malleability and portability by organizing his book into 16 chapters, each one dedicated to a different fictional picnic: There’s a “raw” picnic, a “Vegas legends” picnic, a “hidden potential” picnic, a “surrealist” picnic, and so on. Every one is assigned a fantasy host and guests, which is how you end up with Hunter S. Thompson and Mary Berry sharing an all-day breakfast quiche and pickled eggs on a park bench, as well as Little Richard and Picasso unpacking a hamper of poached chicken and chicken-stuffed pumpkin in an “urban wasteland.”

But for a book that reads as a pleasing trapeze through a fever dream of unapologetically *louche al fresco* consumption, Halley errs on the side of the achievable: One picnic is anchored by hard-boiled eggs with flavored salts, while another calls for an “infinitely hackable” sausage-and-egg muffin. A surplus of useful picnic hacks includes “wonderful things” to mix into mayonnaise, while a fly swatter and cigarettes are among “eight things to make old-fashioned picnics better.” You’ll also find recipes for a slightly terrifying meat trifle and an entire English breakfast folded into the confines of a sandwich, but throughout the book, Halley is there to reassure you that what really matters is whether you enjoy yourself. “If you can’t be arsed to make a quiche, just buy one,” he writes as a prelude to his all-day breakfast quiche recipe. Is this a good *cookbook*? I have no idea. But with its enthusiastic embrace of absurdity and heartfelt dedication to its cause, it is a book that’s easy to love. — *Rebecca Flint Marx*

\$25 AT AMAZON

\$23 AT BOOKSHOP



COOK REAL HAWAII



SHELDON SIMEON
WITH GARRETT SNYDER

Cook Real Hawai'i

Sheldon Simeon with Garrett Snyder

Clarkson Potter, March 30

I spent an excessive amount of time this year thinking about Hawai'i, and how much I would like to be there instead of at home. But I wasn't daydreaming about the beach. I longed for freshly caught ahi poke served from the second floor of a strip mall; a combination plate of kalua pig and laulau with house-made poi at the world's most picturesque roadside stand; and shave ice in flavors such as lilikoi and coconut,

wrapped around vanilla ice cream. Ever since I edited [Eater's guide to Hawai'i](#) in 2017, I've been smitten with the state's food culture, and thus I am happy to report that Sheldon Simeon's new cookbook, *Cook Real Hawai'i*, delivers on the title's promise. It's an incredible primer on the delights of Hawai'i's food, and a heartfelt portrait of Simeon's own family history there.

Best known for competing in two seasons of *Top Chef*, on which he was a fan favorite, Simeon is the owner of Maui's lauded Tin Roof restaurant. A third-generation local, he grew up in Hilo in a large Filipino family jam-packed with excellent cooks. Throughout his cookbook, he and co-author Garrett Snyder discuss frankly the islands' painful colonial history and exploitative plantation systems, as well as the people — including Simeon's grandparents — who survived both and created Hawai'i's extraordinary food culture.

In recipe headnotes and chapter introductions, Simeon explores the tension he's navigated his entire career between using restaurant techniques and the Hawai'i traditions with which he grew up. Parts of *Cook Real Hawai'i* do resemble a restaurant cookbook; some recipes spawn sub-recipes and use complex techniques best suited to professional kitchens. But there's a great deal of approachable home cooking, too, and tons of inspiration in terms of flavor (breakfast fried rice) and technique (give cauliflower the katsu-curry treatment). There's a poke recipe (and a recipe for stir-frying the leftovers the next day). The grilling section, titled "Hibachi Styling," features perfect summer recipes such as shoyu-sugar steak; the "Simmer" section is packed with hearty stews. Every dish's history and development is captured in the headnotes, resulting in a book that illuminates not just the food of Hawai'i, but also how growing up there shaped Simeon's entire understanding of what to cook and why. — *Meghan McCarron*

\$30 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT BOOKSHOP

Hetty McKinnon

To Asia, With Love



Everyday Asian recipes and stories from the heart

 PRESTEL

To Asia, With Love: Everyday Asian Recipes and Stories From the Heart

Hetty McKinnon

Prestel, April 6

The term “Asian cooking” can be vague, with no clear sense of culinary identity. But in *To Asia, With Love*, it becomes a term of endearment. Cookbook author Hetty McKinnon grew up in a traditional Chinese

household in Australia with a mother who cooked constantly, making use of huge jars of preserved eggs and pickled ginger. Later, McKinnon made frequent trips to Asia and learned how to incorporate a wide range of Asian flavors into her own home cooking. With her fourth cookbook, McKinnon, now “an adult living between disparate cultures” in Brooklyn, presents these flavors in a delicious hodgepodge.

Her book is broken into six chapters based around categories of dishes, from noodles and dumplings to salads and not-too-sweet desserts. With each recipe, McKinnon explains how she fell in love with the dish, but she doesn't label it Korean, Japanese, Thai, or Chinese. Her recipe for cold noodle soup with watermelon, kimchi, and nashi pear, for example, isn't definitively Korean; rather, it's inspired by naengmyeon, the tangy Korean cold noodle soup her husband orders from their favorite Korean restaurant on hot summer days. Asian flavors also lend a spin to dishes that aren't traditionally Asian at all, including cacio e pepe udon noodles, inspired in part by Shin, an udon noodle restaurant in Tokyo; Caesar salad made with grilled napa cabbage and wonton-scallion crackers; and ketchup fried rice arancini.

The book happens to be vegetarian (and mostly vegan), but it doesn't compromise on big flavors. By incorporating flavor-packed pantry items such as fermented black beans and homemade chile oil — which the author calls “everything oil” — McKinnon challenges the idea that Asian cooking is meat-centric and heavy, and invites readers into her vision for modern Asian cooking. With these highly flexible recipes, which are easy enough to make any day of the week, they'll come to approach that once-vague umbrella category with McKinnon's same curiosity and genuine appreciation. —*JP*

\$30 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT BOOKSHOP



It's Always Freezer Season: How to Freeze Like a Chef with 100 Make-Ahead Recipes

Ashley Christensen and Kaitlyn Goalen

Ten Speed Press, April 6

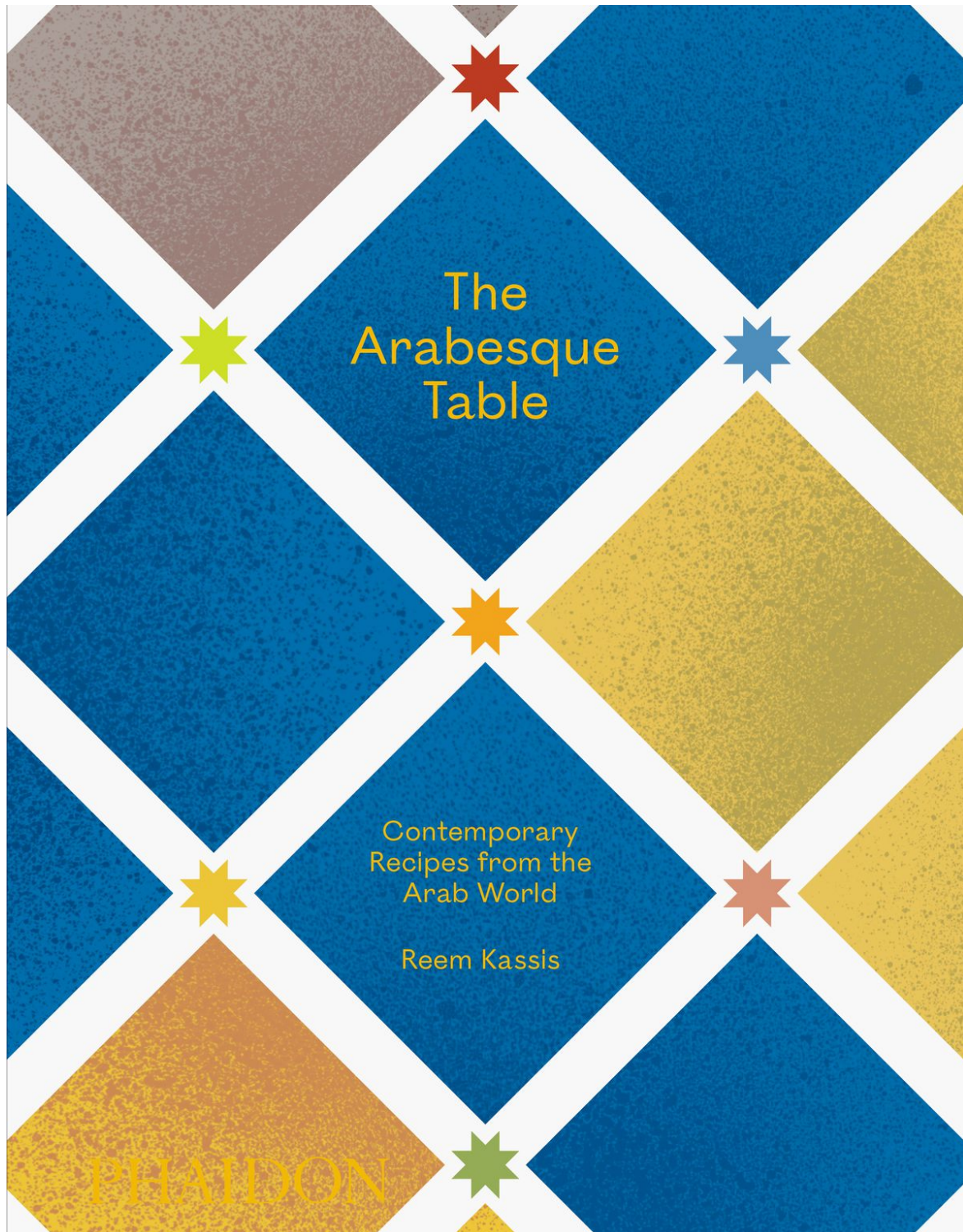
There are people who consistently excel in the art of home cooking, and then there are people who need all the help they can get. *It's Always Freezer Season*, full of practical storage suggestions and shortcuts, appeals to both groups but will be a boon especially for the latter. As restaurateurs, partners and co-writers Ashley Christensen and Kaitlyn Goalen know the value of organization and efficiency in the kitchen. Now, by sharing their methods for proper storage and preparing food in advance, they're spreading their

methodology to home cooks.

As a disorganized person, the book taught me a lot. For example, did you know that to keep fresh eggs, you can crack them into an ice-cube tray first, because freezing them in the shells gives them a weird flavor? Or that pesto freezes better if the herbs are blanched first? The book's 100 recipes — which include hearty dishes such as cornbread panzanella, carnitas tacos, and banana cream profiteroles — all involve some effort and skill. But by advising their readers that some versatile ingredients can be made and stored in advance, Christensen and Goalen remove the intimidation factor... or at least present time management as one way to make complicated recipes less stressful. — *MD*

\$30 AT AMAZON

\$28 AT BOOKSHOP



The Arabesque Table: Contemporary Recipes from the Arab World

Reem Kassis

Phaidon, April 7

Palestinian author Reem Kassis had assumed her first cookbook, *The Palestinian Table*, would be her one and only. Instead, she embarked on two years of research for what would become *The Arabesque Table*, a collection of 130 recipes from across the Arab world. Inspired by Kassis's frustration with a general

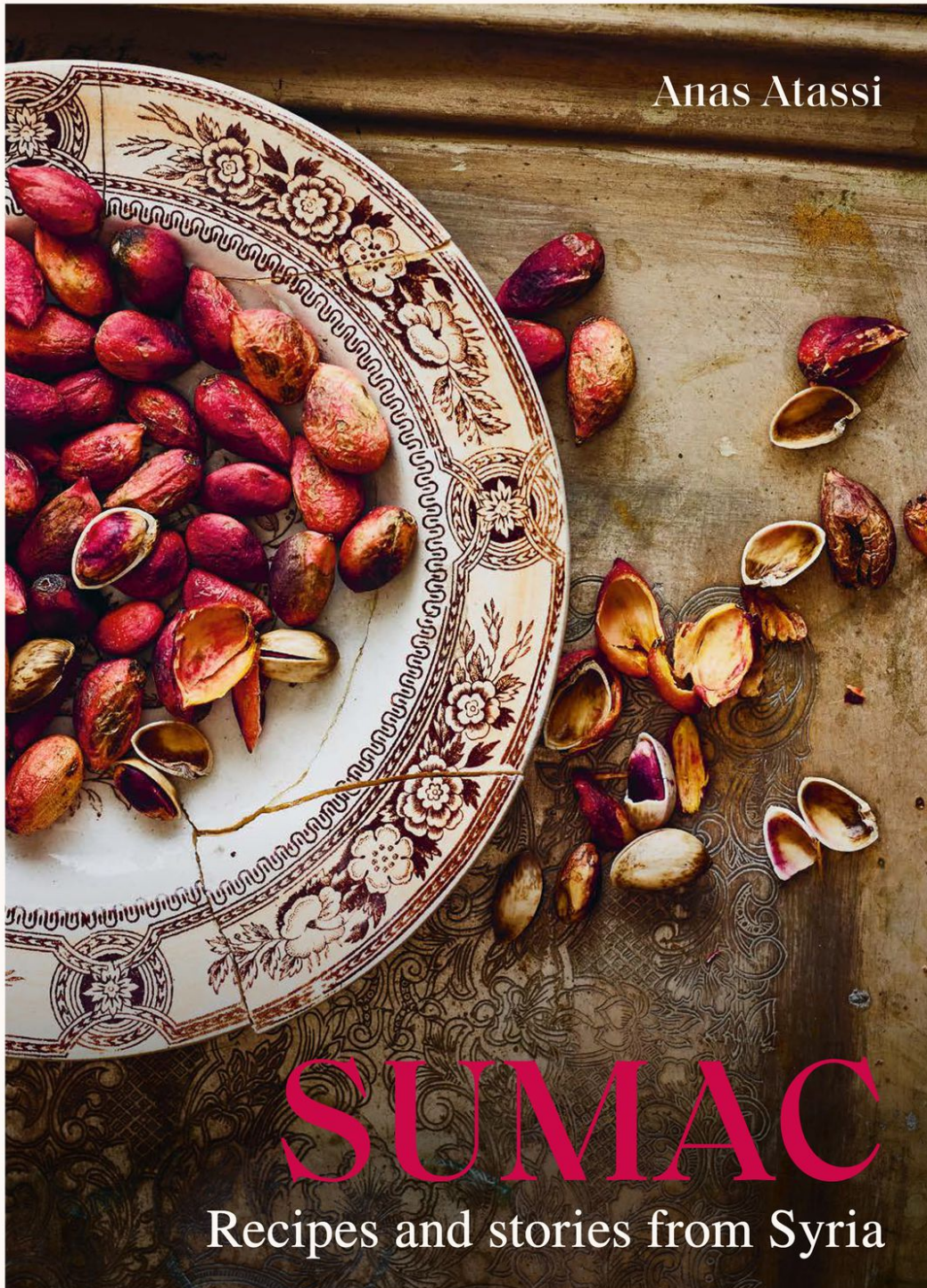
misunderstanding of the origins and history of food, the book is underpinned by a cultural lesson: Just like the arabesque design that inspired its title, the cuisines of the world are all intertwined, fluid, and cross-cultural, even as they remain central to the understanding of a specific place or identity.

The Arabesque Table moves deftly through chapters focused on primary ingredients. The “Roots and Shoots and Leaves” chapter highlights root vegetables native to the Middle East, such as beets and carrots, along with leafy greens that are more than garnishes. Kassis also dedicates a chapter to eggplant and tomatoes, a reminder that ingredients from disparate parts of the world can create harmonious — and ubiquitous — dishes.

Kassis’s voice is deeply personal throughout *The Arabesque Table*, and her vivid anecdotes make for a book that is as much a joy to read as it is to cook from. A story about the lemon tree in Kassis’s parents’ courtyard sets up a “Pomegranates and Lemons” chapter, a collection of recipes whose common thread is a sour flavor profile. I attempted the chapter’s spiced-kebab recipe first; bursting with a spice mix that includes cinnamon sticks and cardamom pods, the kebabs came together with virtually no prep work. And though they were fantastic on their own, the book calls for dousing them with the accompanying Greek-inspired yogurt dressing, which Kassis studs with preserved lemon and dill. It was delicious, and yet another nod to the notion that the food we eat comes from as many places as we do. — *Patty Diez*

\$36 AT AMAZON

\$37 AT BOOKSHOP



Anas Atassi

SUMAC

Recipes and stories from Syria

Sumac: Recipes and Stories from Syria

Anas Atassi

Interlink Publishing, April 8

Sumac is a deep red spice essential to Syrian cooking, and it's the ingredient Anas Atassi uses as an emblem of Syrian cuisine in his first cookbook, *Sumac*.

Reproduced by Gorkana under licence from the NLA (newspapers), CLA (magazines), FT (Financial Times/ft.com) or other copyright owner. No further copying (including printing of digital cuttings), digital reproduction/forwarding of the cutting is permitted except under licence from the copyright owner. All FT content is copyright The Financial Times Ltd.

Atassi is not a professional cook. In fact, the book's 80-plus recipes are his mother's, and her recipes are in large part inherited from *her* mother. Over time, they've been changed slightly by Atassi, who couldn't always find the exact right ingredients when traveling outside of Syria or at his current home in the Netherlands. But taken together, they provide home cooks with a proper introduction to Syrian cooking.

The book begins with a primer on what you'll need in your pantry. There's sumac, of course, but also Aleppo pepper, dried mint, pomegranate molasses, rose water, tahini, and za'atar. This is followed by chapters no Middle Eastern cookbook should ever be without: Breakfast, Mezze, Street Food, Meat Dishes, and sweet, sweet Desserts. While many of the dishes are familiar classics — labneh, kibbeh, lamb kebabs, baklava — there are some, such as yalanji, kibbeh hamoud, and asafiri, that may not be as familiar to U.S. readers. You'll find Attasi's family snapshots and location photography by "Humans of Damascus" photographer Rania Kataf interspersed between the recipes, along with stories of weekend breakfasts in Atassi's grandmother's garden in Homs, Ramadans of years past, midsummer barbecues, and Atassi's life in Amsterdam.

These stories depict a life shared by many Syrians before the war cast them out and dispersed them all over the world, and through *Sumac*, Atassi hopes to give readers what he calls "a positive image" of Syria, despite the ongoing conflict within its borders. "With this book," he writes in the introduction, "I hope to build a bridge between Syrian culture and the rest of the world, with food the common denominator."

— *Esra Erol*

\$35 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT BOOKSHOP

mother



grains

ROXANA JULLAPAT



RECIPES FOR THE GRAIN REVOLUTION

Mother Grains: Recipes for the Grain Revolution

Roxana Jullapat

W.W. Norton & Company, April 20

The trend of knowing where your food comes from has been slower to hit the grain industry: A preference for all-purpose flour from King Arthur or Bob's Red Mill is still considered the stuff of the truly committed. But in *Mother Grains: Recipes for the Grain Revolution*, Roxana Jullapat, owner of LA's Friends & Family bakery, builds a case for paying closer attention to the flours, grains, and seeds in your kitchen,

and making the most of what's already there.

Her book focuses on eight grains (barley, buckwheat, corn, oat, rice, rye, sorghum, and wheat), chosen by Jullapat because they are all considered ancient grains, those that have been around for hundreds of years, shaping cultures and cuisines along the way. They're also all available from local producers across America.

The book's recipes feature them in all their permutations, encouraging the reader to think about grains beyond bread. Yes, you can learn how to make a good rye focaccia, but also kimchi-fried barley, salted sorghum ice cream, and sticky oat donuts. With directives on storage techniques and shelf life, lessons on vocabulary, and even advice on milling your own flour, Jullapat's book seeks to teach home cooks how to treat grains with the same care they might give to produce or meat, as well as how to appreciate their nuanced flavors and qualities. Rather than thinking of grains as the flavorless glue holding your cakes together, *Mother Grains* helps you see them as the celebration itself. —*JS*

\$40 AT AMAZON

\$37 AT BOOKSHOP

Cook, Eat, Repeat

INGREDIENTS,
RECIPES,
AND STORIES

Nigella Lawson



Cook, Eat, Repeat: Ingredients, Recipes, and Stories

Nigella Lawson

Ecco, April 20

Reproduced by Gorkana under licence from the NLA (newspapers), CLA (magazines), FT (Financial Times/ft.com) or other copyright owner. No further copying (including printing of digital cuttings), digital reproduction/forwarding of the cutting is permitted except under licence from the copyright owner. All FT content is copyright The Financial Times Ltd.

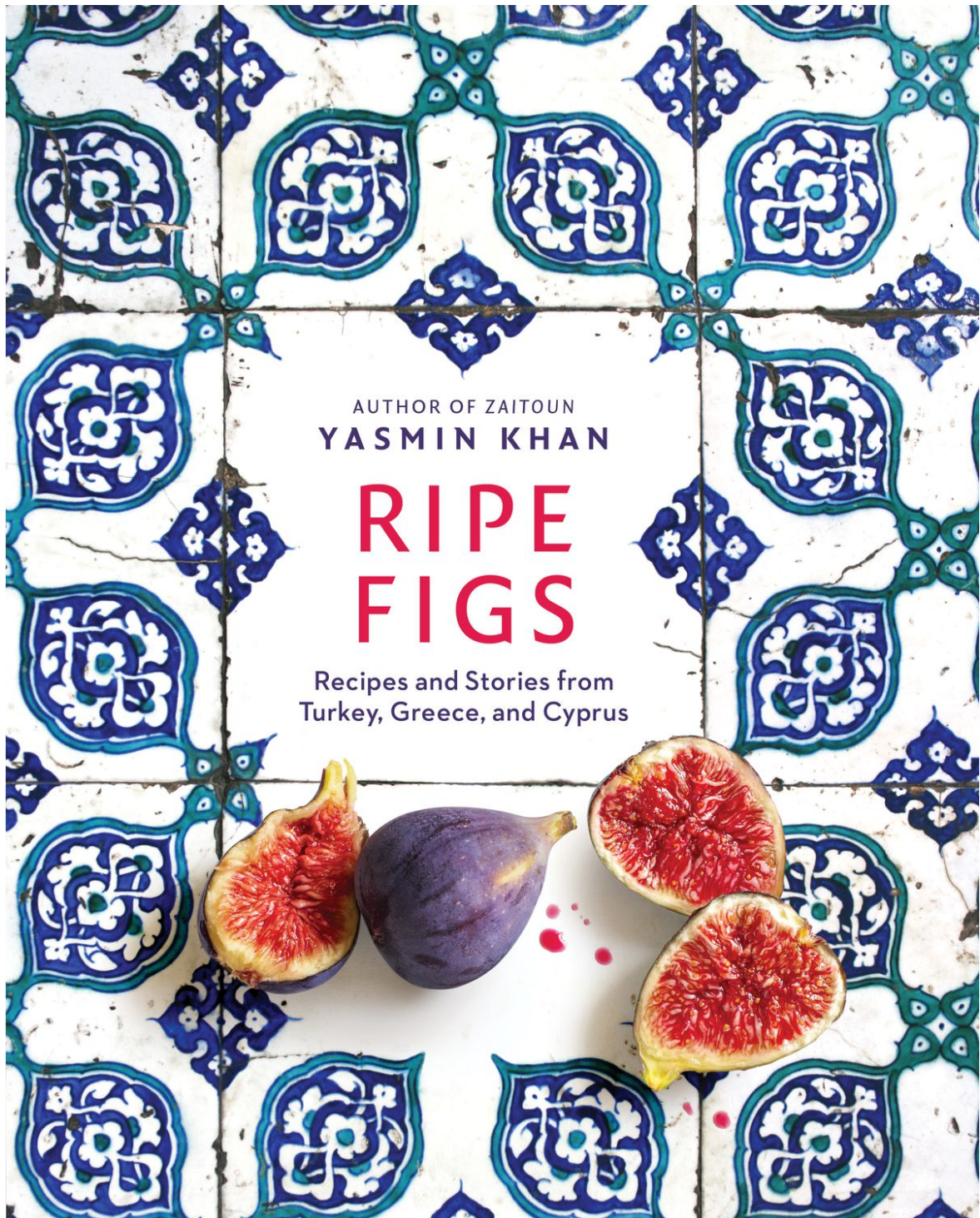
In recent years, it has become something of an internet trend to **complain about recipe headnotes**: the helpful tips, explanations, and “life stories” that make up the context surrounding a dish’s creation. These complaints would have you believe that modern home cooks don’t want all the words; they just want the instructions, stripped of any of the bells and whistles that differentiate one recipe from the next.

Thankfully, Nigella Lawson’s latest cookbook is not for those people. *Cook, Eat, Repeat: Ingredients, Recipes, and Stories* certainly contains recipes, but also essays and copious headnotes, all written in Lawson’s characteristically charming voice, as familiar and effusive as a friend chatting over a cup of tea. Her interest in food writing, as she notes in her first essay, was initially linguistic: “How could I use language to convey a realm that lay so far beyond it?” She accomplishes this in a few different ways: evoking food memories, composing zinging descriptions of the desired texture, taste, or smell that indicates when a dish has been recreated successfully. The recipe instructions, too, are wonderfully enriched by this attention to detail — Lawson writes, for example, of feeling “like an ’80s hairdresser” when “teasing out spikes of marshmallow frosting” for a rhubarb cake — turning what could have been sparse directives into a personal, step-by-step tutorial with everyone’s favorite **domestic goddess**.

The 150 recipes, interspersed by homey photos, are organized into themed chapters such as “A is for Anchovy,” “A Loving Defence of Brown Food,” and “Christmas Comforts.” There’s no particular rhyme or reason to the spectrum of dishes — from Basque burnt cheesecake to gochujang pork noodles to rum-spiked French toast — that appear in this collection, save for a unifying sense of comfort and decadence. These pages are a culmination of Lawson’s tastes and thoughts during the pandemic. Even in a year where there has been much cooking, eating, and above all, repeating, there is more than enough here to satisfy appetites everywhere. — *Jenny G. Zhang*

\$27 AT AMAZON

\$29 AT BOOKSHOP



Ripe Figs: Recipes and Stories from Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus

Yasmin Khan

W.W. Norton & Company, May 4

Reading *Ripe Figs*, Yasmin Khan's moving and beautiful follow-up to her acclaimed cookbook *Zaitoun*, conjures images of clear skies, turquoise seas, and meze-laden tables filled with marinated olives, charred flatbreads, and grilled fish doused in lemon. It also pushes you to think deeper about the ever-diversifying Eastern Mediterranean, specifically Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, where millions of refugees have arrived

since armed conflicts drove them from their homes in 2015.

The recipes in *Ripe Figs* are inspired by Khan's travels within each country, as well as the people she met and shared meals with along the way, many of them migrants and refugees. Those people and experiences are the subjects of essays interspersed throughout the book's sections, which are organized not by country but by dish type — breakfast, breads and grains, meze, mains, and desserts — underscoring Khan's depiction of the Eastern Mediterranean as a borderless region shaped by migration.

Many of the recipes are accessible to the home cook, but for those who aren't familiar with Eastern Mediterranean cuisine, the breakfast and meze chapters are a good place to start. Recipes for cilbir (eggs with yogurt and chile butter), menemen (a spiced tomato scramble), cardamom egg toast, and sweet tahini rolls are straightforward, allowing readers to familiarize themselves with many of the ingredients used throughout these regions. But there are recipes for more ambitious home cooks, too, including one for perde pilav (veiled rice with spiced chicken), which Khan learned how to make at the home of Melda Erdoğan, a schoolteacher in Istanbul. By filtering recipes through the lens of people who live in these regions, including activists and migrants who have been forcibly displaced from their homes, *Ripe Figs* serves as a record of a crisis that continues to unfold, inviting readers to gather at the table and imagine a world without borders. — *EE*

\$30 AT AMAZON

\$32 AT BOOKSHOP

BRESS 'N'



NYAM

Gullah Geechee Recipes from a Sixth-Generation Farmer

MATTHEW RAIFORD
with Amy Paige Condon

Bress 'N' Nyam: Gullah Geechee Recipes from a Sixth-Generation Farmer

Matthew Raiford with Amy Paige Condon

Countryman Press, May 11

Chef and farmer Matthew Raiford opens his first cookbook with some family history. His great-great-great grandfather, descended from the Tikar people, was born into slavery. By 1870, he had acquired 450 acres of land on the Georgia coast. Gilliard Farms, where Raiford spent much of his childhood, has been in the family ever since. Raiford moved away after high school, joined the military, attended Howard University,

dropped out to go to culinary school, and cooked at restaurants across the country. He returned home in 2011 as a trained chef, ready to reclaim the family farm and cook the traditions of his Gullah Geechee heritage.

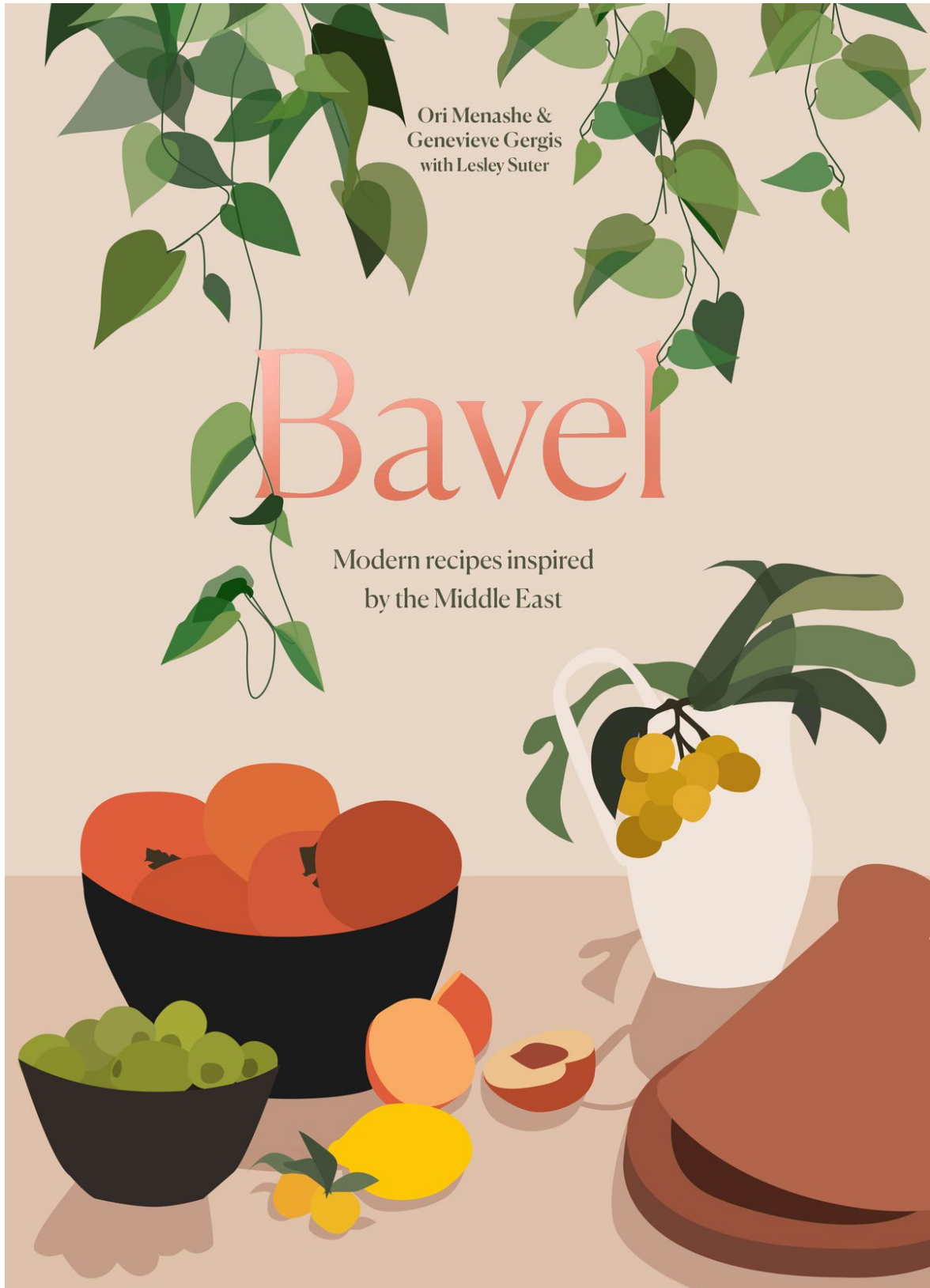
Descendants of enslaved people, the Gullah Geechee were left to die on coastal islands, where they developed their own culture and language. Bress 'n' nyam means “bless and eat” in the Gullah language, and Raiford’s book is both a celebration of his homecoming and an introduction to Gullah Geechee cuisine that digs into the painful history and complex flavors of African foodways in the American South.

The book’s recipes are roughly organized by the elements: earth (grains and produce), water (fish), fire (meat), wind (poultry), nectar (desserts), and spirits (cocktails). Many of them are based on dishes Raiford grew up eating; ingredients pulled directly from the farm and local waters feature heavily, as do spices from Africa and the Caribbean. Raiford’s family raised chickens and pigs but also relied on fish and game, so readers will find recipes for fried fish and devil crab, as well as deer steaks and rabbit fricassee. There’s big, ambitious project cooking, including a whole-hog roast and hot-tin oysters, but there are also everyday recipes, from one-pot fish stews to the Raiford family favorite “mess o’ greens,” seasoned hot and sweet and simmered down just the right amount.

The book’s photography conveys a vivid sense of the farm and surrounding country, with moss-covered trees, old family snapshots, and handwritten recipes. Passed down through more than half a dozen generations, those scraps of paper show just how deep this culinary legacy goes. — *Becky Duffett*

\$26 AT AMAZON

\$28 AT BOOKSHOP



Bavel: Modern Recipes Inspired by the Middle East

Ori Menashe and Genevieve Gergis with Lesley Suter

Ten Speed Press, May 25

The arrival of a cookbook from **Bavel** was always going to be a highly anticipated affair. Opened in Downtown LA by Bestia co-founders Ori Menashe and Genevieve Gergis in 2018, the restaurant was **an immediate hit**, driven by excitement from Bestia fans and the promise of Gergis and Menashe's original takes on beloved Middle Eastern flavors and dishes such as hummus, pita, tagine, za'atar, and sumac. Now, Menashe and Gergis, with help from Lesley Suter (disclosure: Suter is Eater's travel editor), have translated much of Bavel's menu into recipes for home cooks, though not without some quirks: Some of the recipes are complicated, and some yield restaurant-size portions (Bavel's hummus recipe makes six cups, while the falafel recipe makes 60 falafel balls).

But the complexity is the point, as *Bavel's* authors explain in a thoughtful introduction. "Middle Eastern food is, at its core, about the layering of flavors — spices, acids, pickles — to create something powerful out of what are often very simple raw ingredients," they write. Those layered flavors also reflect the complicated history of the region: "Like the land itself," the introduction reads (perhaps anticipating critiques over attribution or appropriation), "these cuisines have, over time, become divided, labeled, and claimed. But at their core, these are the intertwined flavors of a communal past. This is what we aim to celebrate at Bavel, the freedom to cook things that we love without loyalty to any specific country."

Bavel executes this nuanced vision of Middle Eastern cuisine by leaning heavily on foundational flavors — the first 80 pages focus on spice blends, stocks, simple pickles, and spreads and condiments such as baba ghanoush and zugh — and personal storytelling. Anecdotes about Menashe and Gergis's families, childhoods, and experiences at the restaurant accompany dishes that include turmeric chicken with toum, beef cheek tagine, and grilled oyster-mushroom kebabs with lovage puree.

In that sense, *Bavel* isn't too different from many of its Middle Eastern cookbook contemporaries, like Michael Solomonov and Steven Cook's *Zahav* or Adeena Sussman's *Sababa*, both of which function as regional primers with interwoven personal touches. But the benefit of the personal, both in those books and *Bavel*, is that it illustrates how everyone's relationship with food is indeed unique: With references and flavors drawn from family roots in Georgia, Turkey, Israel, Morocco, Egypt, Iran, and, yes, California, many of the recipes in *Bavel* are ones you won't soon find anywhere else — except, of course, at Bavel. —
Ellie Krupnick

\$32 AT AMAZON

\$37 AT BOOKSHOP

Andrea D'Aquino is an illustrator and author based in New York City.

Copy-edited by Kelli Pate

Add to Cart

Shopping intel and product picks for food lovers

Email (required)

By signing up, you agree to our [Privacy Notice](#) and European users agree to the data transfer policy.

SUBSCRIBE

Employees Among 10 Killed in Boulder Grocery Store Shooting

BUY THIS THING

Make Lunchtime Field Trips a Thing With The Table

NEWS

Restaurant Worker Vaccine Eligibility and Dining Room Reopenings by State

We use cookies and other tracking technologies to improve your browsing experience on our site, show personalized content and targeted ads, analyze site traffic, and understand where our audiences come from. To learn more or opt-out, read our [Cookie Policy](#). Please also read our [Privacy Notice](#) and [Terms of Use](#), which became effective December 20, 2019.

By choosing **I Accept**, you consent to our use of cookies and other tracking technologies.

I Accept