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North: The New Nordic Cuisine Of Iceland



Synopsis

An unprecedented look into the food and culture of Iceland, from Iceland's premier chef and the owner of Reykjavík's Restaurant Dill. Iceland is known for being one of the most beautiful and untouched places on earth, and a burgeoning destination for travelers lured by its striking landscapes and vibrant culture. Iceland is also home to an utterly unique and captivating food scene, characterized by its distinctive indigenous ingredients, traditional farmers and artisanal producers, and wildly creative chefs and restaurants. Perhaps no Icelandic restaurant is as well-loved and critically lauded as chef Gunnar Gíslason's Restaurant Dill, which opened in Reykjavík's historic Nordic House in 2009. North is Gíslason's wonderfully personal debut: equal parts recipe book and culinary odyssey, it offers an unparalleled look into a star chef's creative process. But more than just a collection of recipes, North is also a celebration of Iceland itself—the inspiring traditions, stories, and people who make the island nation unlike any other place in the world.

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Customer Reviews

Recipes are way too time consuming and intricate for me! Although I was still intrigued by this book, I would suggest you check this out from your library first. Hey, if you have money to burn and plenty of empty space on your book shelves, go for it. I was so disappointed in the recipes that I was almost angry enough to give it a 2.5-3-star rating! But thinking further, I decided on a 4-star: It did open my eyes to the place, the culture, the attitude of Iceland. It also further developed my interest and quest towards making the most of what grows in my own

yard, on the plains and in the waters near where I live. It is a restaurant cookbook; Gunnar Karl Gislason, prior exec chef at Vox, a most esteemed restaurant in Iceland, is the author. He opened his restaurant Dill in Reykjavik—its landmark Nordic House when the economy was extremely poor. He worked with vendors, and they worked with him, with vendors putting off invoicing for better times. The chef and the purveyors bet on each other, and both came out ahead. It is a satisfying story. According to the book, the restaurant "honors Iceland's culinary heritage by showcasing its pristine products on a contemporary canvas." The way this chef portrays "contemporary" is not really suitable for home cooks, no matter how experienced and sophisticated they are.... You should definitely browse through the "Look Inside" feature on this product page. See the one picture of a finished dish? That is representative of most size portions in this book, main courses included. See the question/answer pages? The book is divided into chapters that highlight the vendors. At the beginning of each chapter, you will read a few pages that give insight into each vendor and their thoughts and lifestyles. There will be a question/answer section for each vendor (somewhat lame questions if you ask me—). Suggestions for substitutions are supposedly provided for most everything. But the subs are so ambiguous, they make the recipes even more difficult than they already are. I don't know any other way to describe to you how these recipes read, except for giving you an example. Bear with me, or not: Of course you can stop reading any time after you get the gist of what I'm trying to convey: Four stars for spurring my interest and for the non-recipe content; two stars for how easy the recipes are to re-create: So here is the first recipe—and it is a good representation for the rest of them; it is "Salted Cod Tartar, Dill Mayonnaise, and Dulse Powder: You form your own opinion, okay? It says prep time is about 2–3 hours (yikes!) (Plus 12 hours to freeze the cod.) But that does not take into consideration the prep for the angelica mustard, the pickled angelica, the sweet-and-sour dill oil. For the dill mayo: You need an egg yolk and white vinegar and salt. You also need angelica mustard (page 139): For the mustard, you need 3 T minced fresh angelica. It says you can sub any herb for the angelica, but no amounts are given for "any" herb. You also need both black and yellow mustard seeds; dry mustard; juniper berries; allspice berries; cider vinegar, brown sugar, sea salt, 1 C pickling juice from pickled angelica ((page 137), on which page I don't see any subs for the angelica stalks and their seeds needed to create the pickle)... Oh, and it needs to sit for a month before using... You also need 1/3 C sweet-and-sour dill oil (page 32): Combine 1 C fresh dill leaves (you know how tiny dill leaves are, don't you?), oil, cider vinegar and sugar in a blender and process until smooth, then strain and transfer to a squeeze bottle. For the Pickled Dill Stalks: You need stalks from 1 bunch

of dill (How big is a bunch of dill??) You also need to refrigerate the dill stalks in their pickling liquid for at least 2 hours. Oh, no! Maybe they should have listed this procedure first. Then the Crispy Cod Skins: Four, (yes, four) inches of oil in a deep, heavy pot. If you have cod skins fry them in the oil for 1 to 2 minutes. If you are not lucky enough to have cod skin, you can use salted cod chips (page 19) or crispy rye bread (page 72). Please let your maid clean up the mess....Cod tartar: Seven ounces cod placed in salted water for 30 minutes, drained, rinsed, wrapped, then frozen for 12 hours, then passed through a ricer while still frozen, then thawed for 30 minutes. Oh, no! Maybe this paragraph should have been first instead of two lines from the end. Oh, and you need powdered seaweed: (See note on page 310, where you learn that you need to dehydrate the seaweed in order to grind it: Place on a baking sheet, put in oven at lowest setting for 4 to 6 hours. Grind it in a spice grinder.) To serve, you place a generous spoonful on each of four plates, dot with mayo, sprinkle with seaweed, garnish with crispy skin. End of recipe. Enjoy your spoonful.....please, I beg you! Other notes and observations:--I am happy to know about sorrel ash (a staple of Iceland) and how to make it, as it is a cool weather constant in my gardens.--I was hoping to learn to make beer vinegar. The directions say I don't need to start with a mother, (but my past experience tells me I should.). The recipe does not explain/tell me the difference between using a mother and not using a mother. I've never had any luck making vinegar without a mother. I was looking forward to trying the cod soup, until I learned it is served as a few teaspoons of foam.--I live in the country and we always keep a bale of hay on hand for our chickens, and when the author explained the technique of smoking with hay, he said to find a bale of hay and store it in your garage, and pull a few handfuls every once in a while to make hay smoke. No, no, no! You do not want to do that! Unless your garage is trashed and filthy already. You just don't realize how messy that really is.--Here is a great recipe: Milk Ice Cream, Rutabaga and Apple Cider Granita and Sweet and Sour Dill Oil: It only takes 4 hours to prepare, but that does not include the 12 hours to make the ice cream. It also does not say how to come up with 3 C rutabaga juice. And I can't figure out how to cut rutabaga cylinders from 1/2 inch diameter cutters. I finally lost interest. This book is a fascinating read and the pictures are pretty, but the servings are sparse, the techniques too involved, and the instructions too time-consuming to wallow through.*I received a temporary download of this book from the publishers. So I had been working with it for a few months prior to writing this review. I will not be purchasing this book. I will try to incorporate a few ideas I learned, and I will look for it at my library at a later date and read through it again sometime"but not too

soon

A few months back I was lamenting to Husband about the lack of Scandinavian cookbooks, at least those available to us English speakers. It seems like a title comes out every few years but does not stay in print for long. A couple of good ones you can find now are *A Kitchen of Light* by Andreas Viestad, and *Scandinavian Christmas* by Trine Hahnemann. If you move away from Scandinavia proper, and include the larger Nordic region, you still do not get much in the way of time honored cookbooks, but there is a brand new one that is a stunner. *North: The New Nordic Cuisine of Iceland* by Gunnar Karl Gíslason and Jody Eddy. Oh my. This is one of the most beautiful cookbooks you will ever find. The photography of the food, people, and landscapes are breathtaking. The recipes are surprising. Many of the recipes and techniques fall under the category of "fine dining", using a multitude of ingredients and steps. But there are others that even a beginning cook could handle. The most surprising addition to many of the dishes are powders. Powders of all sort, dill, rye bread, seaweed, rhubarb...the list goes on and on. Getting cozy with these powders will open up a ton of flavors in the food you cook everyday. My one regret about this book is that there is not a "powder" listing in the index. To find them all you need to look at the recipe listings for each section. The book is also surprising in the way it is broken up. Not by seasons, or courses, but by providers. A story about the local person who provides cod is followed by cod recipes and dishes that are special to the place where the cod is caught. Same goes for the mushroom forager, dairy farmer, sheep farmer, and salt maker. It is really a very cool idea. Not every ingredient used in this book will be readily available where you live. Substitutions are given and Gunner says, "Cook until it tastes good and use what you have." A fine way to work in the kitchen. This is a huge book that I expect will keep me reading and cooking for months to come.

If I thought I wanted to visit badly before, and I did(!) thanks to *New Scandinavian Cooking* on PBS, -now it's imperative. This cookbook is a gorgeous cookbook and travelogue. The photos are stunning, stories gripping and recipes loving. Many of the recipes, however, are too time-consuming, and call for many hours of smoking, brining/pickling, refrigeration, rehydration. So, I doubt I will be making many of the recipes verbatim. But you know what they say, never say never. The chefs do make suggested substitutions for those of us unlucky to live outside of Iceland. Bay leaf for birch, tarragon for angelica, regular thyme for arctic thyme, et al. I love how the cookbooks include interviews with the farmers, the fishermen, the smokers -- Restaurant Dill's providers and suppliers -- it makes you feel even closer to the food. Certainly whets the ole appetite

to know a few of them welcome tourists as well. Some of the artistically plated masterpieces and heartfelt stories make you feel close enough to taste the love, the history and the culture. It's so palpable that you will want to book the next flight so you can eat at Gunnar's table, and tour the country. Damn those active volcanoes. Then again, maybe that's how you'll get to extend your stay in Iceland. Until I can afford to travel to Iceland, I do expect these stories and recipes to inspire me as I push my culinary boundaries and imagine an untouched natural landscape." I received this book from Blogging for Books for this review."

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