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Stella's Sephardic Table: Jewish Family Recipes From The Mediterranean Island Of Rhodes



Synopsis

To be seated at a Sephardic table is to bare witness to centuries of a mesmerizingly rich cultural heritage overflowing with traditions and festivities, symbols and superstitions, stories and insights, fragrances, tastes and culinary secrets – all handed down from generation to generation around the ever-present Sephardic feast. Following the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, Sephardic Jewish communities spread to new shores bringing with them their rich gastronomic heritage from Moorish Spain which naturally evolved into a wonderfully complex fusion of flavours incorporating Ottoman Turkish, Greek, Hispanic, African and other influences. Deeply inspired by her roots and constantly immersed in its traditions, author, artist and Sephardic cuisine expert Stella Cohen has set out to record the legacy of this vibrant, fascinating yet vanishing world for posterity and tell the story of her own familyâ€™s cultural journey from Rodos (where her great-grandfather Haham Yaacov Capouya, was the esteemed sage and Rabbi of Rhodes) to Rhodesia (today known as Zimbabwe) where she has raised her family to continue the traditions as passed on to her. In 1986, “Sephardic Cuisineâ€• by Stella Cohen, a humble spiral bound cookbook, was independently published under the auspices of the Sephardic community of Zimbabwe and quickly became an international success, being reprinted many times over. For more than ten years, Stella has worked at revising and extending the original to include a more thorough exploration of the age-old subject and the techniques and traditions around it. Stellaâ€™s Sephardic Table is a treasure trove of inspiration for the soul, filled with over 250 sumptuous easy-to-follow recipes, all lavishly illustrated and garnished with anecdotes, Ladino sayings, essays and rare insights into family-cherished tips and tricks traditionally passed from mother to daughter.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Oh. My. Goodness! What a beautiful cookbook... what a beautiful book! Stella Cohen has produced a masterpiece! Her bio in the back of the book bills her as a Sephardic cuisine expert. That much is obvious immediately. If she has written any other books, I can't find them. If she has not, this one book is worth a lifetime of others; if she has, certainly this is her Magnum Opus! Truly a work of Art. Stunning in execution and content both. A priceless legacy of family for her descendents, of history for Sephardic Jews and for the rest of us... for all of us who believe the study of history to be necessary for civilization and who know that food and food traditions nourish the body, mind and spirit equally. 303 heavy-weight paper pages with gilt edges, a fabric covered spine and two ribbons, one gold and one blue. Heavy boards with gold foil inset printing on the front and blue foil inset printing on the back and on the spine, the endpapers, front and back, are slightly different views of an antique-style of map of the world showing the entire Atlantic ocean, and surrounding continents. Inside, first a dedication in Stella's own hand (I love that!) Then, an introduction to Stella's current life, her childhood, and the history of her family both the difficult and the sublime, followed by a general history of the Jews of Rhodes from 1492 up to the present. Many don't realize how important the typeface is to the whole of a book. The typeface chosen for this book is perfect, uniquely accented with artistic calligraphy. Oh and such gorgeous photography by Marc Hoberman. Photography is such an integral part of modern cookbooks, and never more than in this one. It would not be the breathtaking book it is without the fabulous photography. (I just purchased another cookbook photographed by him solely on the weight of his involvement.) 183 food photographs, by my quick count, of finished dishes or dishes in progress with plenty more photographs of gorgeous scenery both Rhodes and Africa, as well as many family photos both old and current; both heartbreaking and life-affirming. Of course, my favorite current photo is the one with the lion cub. Seems there might be a few hazards unique to an African kitchen. 147 recipes, again by my quick count, grouped into nine sections: Meze & Salads Soups, Stews & Braises Fish Gratins, Fritters & Egg Dishes Stuffed Vegetables Meat & Poultry Rice Pilafs & Noodles Savoury Pastries & Breads Sweet Treats & Beverages Not all recipes have photos. Some photographs, usually those of finished dishes, take up entire pages; other pages are montages of three or more photos of various steps and stages in the recipe process. Many show the author's own hands deeply engaged in The Great Work, transforming raw ingredients into edible works of art and history (I love that!) I am not

Sephardic, I'm not even Jewish, but I am well-versed in Mediterranean cooking. It was my good fortune to be taught Greek cooking in my late teens by the matriarch and other members of an old, Greek, island family. From there, I branched out in my interest to all shores of the Mediterranean and then on to the rest of the world, but the Mediterranean remains my "go-to" genre for most of my cooking yet today, so I feel well qualified to comment on the recipes themselves and not just the wonderful presentation. I recognize these recipes as sometimes the same as what I was taught, sometimes kissing cousins to what I was taught and always authentic. As I read, I can taste the food, smell the cooking aromas and hear the murmurs of conversation punctuated by gales of laughter as Stella and her family cook these age old dishes. This book is a sacred text transmitting the heart essence of the lineage of the art of family nourishment; we should all pay attention and absorb its deep teachings and blessings. Given the quality and the content, it seems unbelievably inexpensive even at the full retail price of \$50.00; if you have even the slightest interest in great cookbooks, in Jewish or Mediterranean history or foods please don't miss this book.

I am not Sephardic, but I spent 10 years as a member of a Rhodesli synagogue in Seattle. Over that decade I found myself incorporating more and more Balkan (that is from the Ladino-speaking Jews from Rhodes and Turkey) Sephardic foods into my culinary repertoire. I have Balkan Sephardic cookbooks from the Balkan synagogues in Seattle and Atlanta, and there are some interesting recipes in some pan-Sephardic cookbooks. However, none of these come close to the gorgeous cookbook that Stella Cohen has produced. This is a combination coffee table book and cookbook. There is a fascinating section on the Jews of Rhodes (Stella's great-grandfather was chief rabbi), including some rare and interesting photographs. The recipes include a full range of recipes from Rhodes and Turkey (they are very similar, but slightly different - and they never let you forget it!; Stella has ancestry from both). Stella lives in Zimbabwe (the former Rhodesia) and the African influence comes through, from the inclusion of African dishes that were never seen in Rhodes or Turkey (e.g., spicy piri-piri baby chicken) to African backdrops. This makes the cookbook even more interesting. Stella writes an introduction to each recipe. There are lovely photographs throughout. Kudos to the Baltimore County Public Library for having this book in their collection! This book was originally listed on at \$50, the full price. I see that the book is now down to around \$30. It is expensive, but, at \$30, it is a good price for what you get. It is on my wish list. Warning: some Sephardic recipes are very hard to make, especially the baked goods. There are some that I would have loved to attempt, but have been too terrified to try. I think that, with Stella's help, I may now be up to the task! Note: all recipes conform to kashrut.

A beautiful book full of the genuine Jewish experience. As an Ashkenazi, I love to expand my horizons on Jewish cooking. Shhhh... I think Sephardic cooking is healthier. Shhhh again.... much healthier. G-d bless.

I love this cookbook. I've purchased other Sephardic cookbooks before, but this one is outstanding and for once everything looks like the food my grandmother used to make - the Rhodesli way! The recipes are easy to follow, and the photos take me back in time. I was so excited about the recipes that I spent two days cooking everything I could for Rosh Hashana to give the entire family that wonderful trip back in time to our Sephardic roots. My wonderful 82 year old uncle who I doubt has ever cooked a meal in his life spent hours reminiscing and looking through the book. He tried to order the cookbook by phone from (hey he's 82 he doesn't have a computer!), but alas, he could not - so I'm ordering one for him right now! I particularly loved the family tree. Stella - it looks like we might be related! No wonder all the food looked like my grandmother's! What fun.

Being of Sephardic heritage-family from Salonika, Greece-descended from the Jews that left Spain during the Inquisition in the 15th century- I have collected cook books of the foods from this culture-Greek, Turkish, Middle Eastern and even Spanish from many years ago. I hate to cook but loved my mother's and Aunts cooking, but now that they are gone, I no longer have them to sit down with and copy down their recipes. This book made me wish I had! This book is magnificent! It is worth three times the price. When it arrived today, I could barely lift it as it is printed on the best quality paper and binding and the photography is spectacular. This book is like an Art "Coffee Table" book. Bravo to Stella and the publishers. I plan to alert what is left of my family to buy this book and give it to their children and grandchildren to carry on the tradition of "Food is Love"!!

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