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The Slanted Door: Modern Vietnamese Food



Synopsis

The long-awaited cookbook from The Slanted Door, a James Beard award-winning chef Charles Phan's beloved San Francisco Vietnamese restaurant. Award-winning chef and restaurateur Charles Phan opened The Slanted Door in San Francisco in 1995, inspired by the food of his native Vietnam. Since then, The Slanted Door has grown into a world-class dining destination, and its accessible, modern take on classic Vietnamese dishes is beloved by diners, chefs, and critics alike. The Slanted Door is a love letter to the restaurant, its people, and its food. Featuring stories in addition to its most iconic recipes, The Slanted Door both celebrates a culinary institution and allows home cooks to recreate its excellence.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press; First Edition edition (October 7, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1607740540

ISBN-13: 978-1607740544

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 1.2 x 11.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (84 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #57,631 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #10 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Vietnamese #30 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Professional Cooking #45 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Beverages & Wine > Cocktails & Mixed Drinks

Customer Reviews

A cross between rustic, familiar, and sophisticated. Be forewarned: I find most of the recipes in this book irresistible. In this review I couldn't help but mention many of them. (So sorry. But, you know, when you've had enough, you can stop reading....) When I heard Charles Phan was writing another book, I could hardly wait to get my hands on it. I love his book "Vietnamese Home Cooking" and use its recipes often. That book was a wealth of information and creative ideas. It's well-written and has great photography. I anticipated that this new book would be even more impressive--in all ways. I am happy to say that it has superseded my expectations! As one would expect from Charles Phan, this cookbook is down to earth and well-enough suited for a home kitchen: Most recipes are approachable. The ingredients are easy to find (if you can get yourself to an Asian market, and have

access to fresh vegetables, greens and fish). In this second book, the finished dishes might look prettier on the plate, and a little less rustic than those in his "Home Cooking" book, and some ingredient lists a bit longer. But, I don't think these recipes are any more complicated. In fact, many are short and sophisticated; pairing fewer ingredients with great success. Yes, it is--what I call--a restaurant cookbook, written by a popular restaurant chef. I usually try to avoid those because they tend to be very "full of themselves". I'm glad my experience with Phan's first book pushed me to give this one a try. Often "restaurant cookbooks" are way too self-serving, boastful and prideful, almost righteous-sounding: Containing complicated recipes using hard-to-find and/or expensive ingredients, needing too many pots and pans, and labor intensive from prep work to clean up. Not this book: Somehow, it comes off as a humble offering of wonderful recipes and helpful information. I like and appreciate that. Pictures in this book are beautiful and plentiful. Page layout is easy on the eyes. Ingredient lists are easier to read than in his first book. Instructions are straightforward and easy to follow and play alongside the ingredient lists. The recipes are divided into unique chapters that incorporate the history of his Slanted Door restaurant as it moved from its humble beginnings to larger quarters. (Check out the "Look Inside" feature on this product page to see the Contents page.) So, besides being crammed with recipes from The Slanted Door, the book also tells the very interesting story of Charles Phan and his evolution into a highly regarded chef with highly regarded and popular restaurants. As he tells his story, he pays special tribute to his family, co-workers, purveyors, and more, without whose help he would not be where he is today. There are very few--maybe just one, actually--repeated recipes from the first book. Pork and Shrimp Spring Rolls is back in this book, but maybe just in honor of this recipe that gave inspiration for Phan's Slanted Door; (In this book there is also a vegetarian spring roll recipe). For instance, the Pork and Shrimp Wonton filling has different ingredients in each book. (The recipe in this book is even easier. After reading the recipe, one can't help but make them right away.) You will find the same main ingredients in many recipes, but prepared with different flavors; the same techniques used with different proteins and vegetables, different sauces. I guess what I'm trying to say is that the recipes in this second book look and sound familiar, but upon second glance, they are totally different. But you can recognize the Charles Phan in every one. Besides stories about the restaurants, there are also essays on other topics like tea and wine. Other cooks may love this book for its wealth of recipes that can be saved up for a slow, leisurely, day-off from work, a trip to several markets, and a day-in the kitchen, building flavor upon flavor until it all comes together as a whole (some of the soups, stews, spring and Imperial rolls fall into this category). But, what I love about his books is discovering "gems" of recipes that are heavy on flavor and light on time spent in the kitchen. (When

Gulf shrimp are in season, I make his Simple Grilled Shrimp once or twice a week. It's in his first book, and if you don't have a copy, you really need to buy it, too.) Here are some recipes in this second book--that I found easy to make and wonderful to eat--and I fully expect them to become worthy "keepers", too:--Clams with Butter-Lime Sauce; with onion, garlic, wine, fish sauce: Hot spicy, tangy, salty, and luscious.--Beef Carpaccio, made with pounded-out top round, instead of filet, and a spicy tuna tartare.--Vietnamese Sausage, made with pork belly, logs wrapped in banana leaves, plastic wrap and foil, then steamed.--Halibut and Scallop Ceviche--Boiled Shrimp with Spicy Cocktail Sauce and Thai Basil Aioli--Vietnamese Chicken Salad, with ginger, scallions, cabbage, rau ram leaves, flavored fish sauce and rice vermicelli. Just the technique of cooking/poaching the whole chicken is a "gem".--The Spicy Lemongrass Soup is a heavenly broth created from shrimp heads and shells, fish carcasses and aromatics, topped off with quickly cooked shrimp and bean sprouts.--An oh-so-good simple Jicama and Grapefruit Salad--I love the Spicy Squid Salad with Chinese Celery, with a tangy, sweet, and salty dressing over briefly boiled squid rings, Thai basil, onion and cucumber.--Fermented Tofu Dipping Sauce and Egg Fish Sauce for steamed veggies.--Worth the price of the book, this recipe: Vietnamese Quiche: Crustless, made with cellophane noodles, mushrooms, ground pork, crab, and more. Steamed. There is more to it, but I'm not going to tell....--I love simple perfectly poached chicken. So I love Hainan Chicken. It, also, is worth the price of the book to me.Do I dare keep going? Braised Ginger Chicken, Roasted Crab, Roasted Lobster, Fried Chicken (yes), Caramelized Chicken Claypot, Steamed Halibut with Ginger Lime Broth, Steamed Black Cod in Banana Leaf, (I love steamed fish and the broth is lovely), Steamed Spare Ribs, Steamed Chicken with Black Bean Sauce.Other interesting recipes:--Crispy Rice Cakes made in a Danish ebelskiver pan.--Shrimp paste formed around sugar cane sticks and grilled.--The whole chapter on cocktails is interesting. (What? Do all restaurant cookbooks have a "spirited" chapter now?) But many do call for some ingredients that would have to be special-ordered in my area. They sure are beautiful to look at, though....--The recipe for The Slanted Door's "Shaking Beef" is in this book.--Wish I could get fresh sardines. I would love to make the Sardine Claypot. It looks soooo good.--What to do with king trumpet mushrooms? Stir-fry with fresh corn.Desserts: They are simple offerings: Strawberry or Coconut-Lime sorbet, No-Bake Cheesecake with a special crust, Coconut Tapioca, The Slanted Door's Chocolate Souffle Cake, Vietnamese Chocolate Tres Leches Cake (a real winner if you have time), and more.**I received a temporary download from the publisher to review this cookbook by Charles Phan--and I am so glad they allowed me to see it ahead of time. I have been working with it for several months while the final copy was prepared for publication. This is a book I will purchase in the near future--can't live

without it! Got to have it, now that it has been released to the public. EDIT: I purchased this book from and you can see the "Verified Purchase" tag at the top of my review.

I think that to hit it out of the park on a big cookbook like this it has to deliver personality and culture and feel authentic. Charles Phan does that. You feel as though you know his climb to success, his family, the family food stories, the professional kitchen stories. And he delivers on point perfect flavors and aesthetics, including fancy touches of presentation. This is a big wonderful cookbook. The pictures are compelling, some black and white, well worn pots and work stations with prep, and landscapes through restaurant windows along with plated dishes and pretty drinks. Where to start... Well I started with chicken stock because I was going to make that. The recipe ingredients are 7# bony chicken parts, onion, 3" ginger, salt and 1 1/2 oz light brown sugar. From that I made the chicken watercress soup with chicken dumplings (which were chicken meatballs). Spectacular. It was one of those dishes that you get in a really great restaurant and wonder why you aren't making it at least once a week at home. Realize that none of the ingredients are expensive and this is exceedingly low in carbohydrates and it just gets that much better. The vegetarian imperial rolls were the other recipe I tried. I've made these many times, especially when the kids were little. I appreciated the four tips he included to make them perfect, like adding honey to the water to dip the rice paper into so that it creates a golden crust, and double frying them. I wouldn't have ever figured that out. My next adventure is the bo la lot recipe which is grilled meat in betel leaves. Now I got to find the leaves at an Asian market but that doesn't seem too daunting. I've made a lot of wrapped meat and done them in sauce (like Hungarian cabbage rolls or Mediterranean grape leaves dolmas). I can imagine that a slightly smokey flavor and grilling them would put it over the top. How great for a party.. something different is so nice to present. If you are wondering if this would be an impressive gift, it is. The cover is part matte fabric; it has a look of luxury and weight. The book gives a sense of being half fabulous pictures so it is spot on for the armchair cook or someone who just loves to cook and everything about it.

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