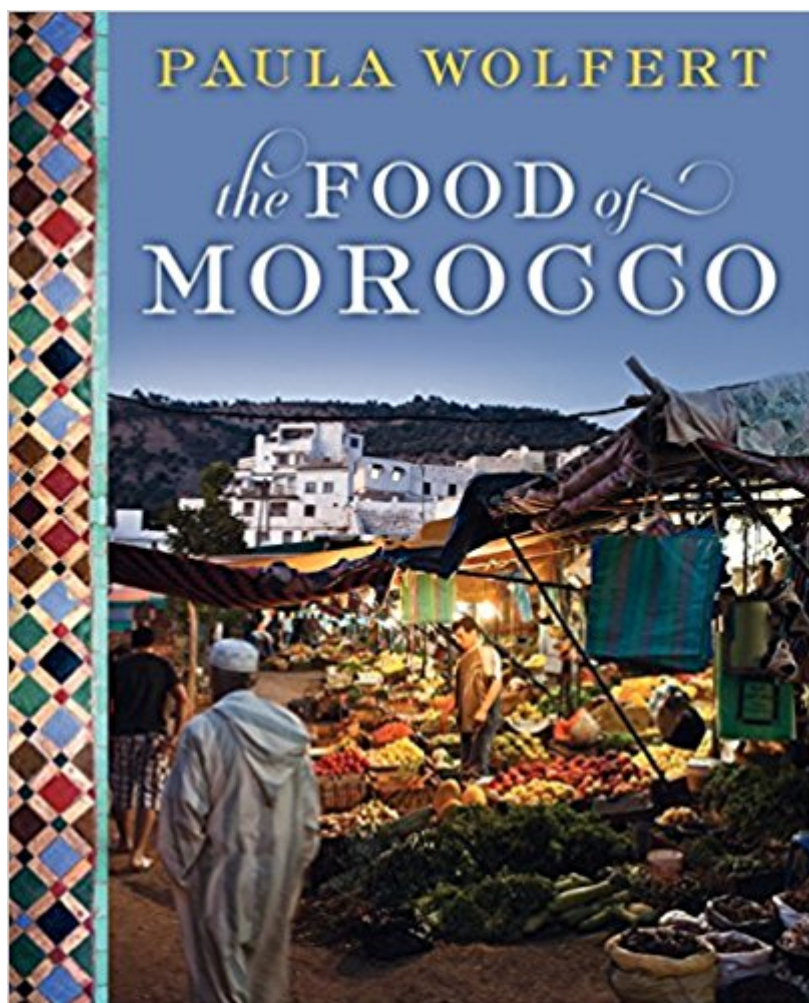


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The Food Of Morocco



Synopsis

“A cookbook by Paula Wolfert is cause for celebration. Ms. Wolfert may be America’s most knowledgeable food person and her books are full of insight, passion and brilliance.” —Anthony Dias Blue, CBS Radio, NY “I think she’s one of the finest and most influential food writers in this country — one of the leading lights in contemporary gastronomy.” —Craig Claiborne Paula Wolfert, the undisputed queen of Mediterranean cooking, provides food lovers with the definitive guide to The Food of Morocco. Lavishly photographed and packed with tantalizing recipes to please the modern palate, The Food of Morocco provides helpful preparation techniques for chefs, home cooks, and any serious student of the culinary arts and culture. This is the perfect companion to Wolfert’s classic, Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco — a 2008 inductee into the James Beard Cookbook Hall of Fame — and fans of Claudia Roden, Elizabeth David, Martha Rose Schulman, and Poopa Dweck will be delighted by this extraordinary culinary journey across this colorful and exhilarating land.

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Customer Reviews

Paula Wolfert’s name is synonymous with revealing the riches of authentic Mediterranean cooking, especially the cuisine of Morocco. In The Food of Morocco, she brings to bear more than forty years of experience of, love of, and original research on the traditional foodways of that country. The result is the definitive book on Moroccan cuisine, from tender Berber skillet bread to

spiced harira (the classic soup made with lentils and chickpeas), from chicken with tangy preserved lemon and olives to steamed sweet and savory breast of lamb stuffed with couscous and dates. The recipes are clear and inviting and infused with the author's unparalleled knowledge of this delicious food. Essays illuminate the essential elements of Moroccan flavor and emphasize the accessibility of once hard-to-find ingredients such as saffron, argan oil, and Moroccan cumin seed. Lavishly photographed in full color, *The Food of Morocco* not only showcases Wolfert's tantalizing recipes but also evokes Morocco in all its timeless splendor and mystery: its markets with their lush produce, its dazzling textiles and intricate mosaic tiles, its communal ovens and ancient souks, and of course its people, from Marrakech to Tangier. A labor of love four decades in the making, *The Food of Morocco* is a once-in-a-lifetime book of uncommon scope and authenticity, an essential work for every serious cook, anyone interested in Moroccan cuisine, and discerning armchair travelers alike.

Paula Wolfert is an expert on Mediterranean food and the author of nine cookbooks, including *The Food of Morocco*, *Mediterranean Clay Pot Cooking*, *The Slow Mediterranean Kitchen*, and *The Cooking of Southwest France*. Wolfert has won the James Beard Award, the Julia Child Award, the M. F. K. Fisher Award, and the Tastemaker Award, and was a finalist for the André Simon Award. A regular columnist for *Food & Wine*, Wolfert lives in Sonoma, California.

This book gives the ambitious American home cook all the info needed to create stunningly delicious Moroccan meals. Of the nine recipes I've made in the month I've owned it, eight--the almond milk drink, the cucumber and orange water salad, the crushed spiced carrot salad, the basic couscous recipe, the chicken tagine with apricots and pine nuts, the chicken smothered in tomato jam, the lamb tagine with toasted almonds and hard-cooked eggs and the tangier-style chickpea-lentil soup called harira--were lick your chops 'can we make this again tomorrow' amazing. The last one, a carrot salad with cumin, cinnamon and sweet paprika, was pretty good but given all the other amazing recipes in this book I probably won't make it again. To use this book you need to be ready to start the day before, if needed--as many recipes have a few do-ahead steps such as soaking chickpeas or fermenting flour with lemon juice overnight. You can buy much of what you need at a regular supermarket, but the recipes are better if you follow the advice on ingredients at the beginning of the book. For example, for many dishes, Ms. Wolfert recommends Ceylon cinnamon, a milder-tasting version of the spice than the standard American version; I bought some on and it is delicious. If you are really ambitious, you can make your own preserved lemons...which

marinate a month before they are ready. For the most part, the instructions are detailed and clear. The book could have benefited from user testing in some parts. Occasionally there are unclear spots--for example, is the tagine supposed to be covered or not? One confusing spot in the Tangier-Style Harira recipe, for example, is the instruction to put beef marrow bones and diced lamb in a deep pot "without any added fat, cover and steam over medium-low heat." The use of the word "steam" here puzzled me at first...was I supposed to use a steamer? Add liquid? I puzzled over it with a friend who is a professionally trained chef; at first she, too, was confused and then she finally told me to just cook it on medium-low and let it steam in its own juices. That worked great. But if this recipe had been user tested this sentence would likely have been clearer. This is a minor quibble and I only care because this book is SO good I want to make all the recipes. But for those considering the pros and cons of this book carefully, here are a few other criticisms--and collectively the main reason I knocked off a star. My actual rating is about 4.5!

1. ****Too Rich and Meat Heavy:**** The recipes are skewed towards those with a LOT of meat--at the expense of equally authentic and delicious "poorer" dishes. It is true that Moroccans love meat, and on feast days and in fancy restaurants, the dishes will be giant hunks of meat with sauce or veggies as garnish. But in the home cooking I ate at friends' homes, and in working-class restaurants, a tagine is often a small hunk of meat smothered in vegetables. Some of my favorites have been big mounds of veggies and potatoes with a poor little piece of meat underneath. My friends taught me that, when sharing a tagine with others at the table, you eat the veggies first, exposing the meat---and then the small piece is divided into equal parts so everyone gets a bite. I love this "poorer" style, and I also think it is healthier. I would have loved to see at least several of these veggie-rich tagine recipes included. The book has a few veggie-only tagines but none where meat is present in a cameo role.

2. ****Too few practical photos/Too many fun photos**** This 500+ page book is full of gorgeous color photos, making it you know, heavy enough to use for bicep curls in a pinch. But paradoxically many of the recipes don't have pics of the finished product. For example, in the poultry chapter, only ten of the 29 recipes have photos that show what the dish looks like when it is finished. This was a good artistic choice, allowing the author to showcase gorgeous National Geographic-style spreads of Morocco which I must admit make it a better coffee-table book than photos of chicken style A, chicken style B etc. But I'm greedy gourmand in this just for the visuals--and I want to see every recipe so I can decide if I want to make it.

3. ****Fresh tomatoes? Please. Let's be realistic here.**** A very large number of recipes call for fresh tomatoes. But unless it is summer and you have your own garden or access to a farmer's market, the tomatoes you will get will be tasteless plasticity industrialized orbs that were picked green and gassed to make them look red before they put them

on supermarket shelves. If you don't believe me, read the book *TomatoLand*. Anyway, given this sad reality, Ms. Wolfert should have acknowledged that canned tomatoes actually may be better and told us how much to use. In some recipes the author gives cups of tomatoes cut which makes it possible to substitute but in other recipes she uses pounds of fresh tomatoes as the measure, making it hard to know how many canned tomatoes to use. I substituted canned San Marzano plum tomatoes in the chicken with tomato jam recipe with excellent results but I had a lot of anxiety about how much to use and ended up making another pot of jam later. (Note: At least one recipe, the tomato and caper salad, clearly needs to be made with amazing tomatoes in season. I'm talking about the cooked dishes only.)

4. ** Short cuts. What short cuts? ** One of the things I love about this book is that it gives the long way to do everything if it is the best way. And much of the time I'm happy to start the day before or spend four hours cooking dinner. But on days when I'm not, can you give me a shortcut please...like the lesser of evils? For example, for the Harira, Ms. Wolfert has you soak chickpeas at least ten hours, then peel them (by running over them with a rolling pin). Results were spectacular. But if I'm just planning Tuesday a.m. for what I'm eating Tuesday evening, can we get a shortcut--like tips on inserting canned chickpeas in the recipe? And if I can't marinate the chicken overnight, will four or five hours do the trick?

5. ** No Harissa recipe. Really? ** Granted that Harissa, this spicy chili-garlic paste, is actually from neighboring countries and has gained popularity in Morocco. And it's also true that no Moroccan I know actually makes it, as it is cheap and fresh and delicious at your corner souk. But I don't have a corner souk and while yes, I can find it in Boston or order it mail-order from one of the sources helpfully listed in her book, it's faster to make it than schlepping all over town--and given the quality available here, likely better and fresher. So why does Ms. Wolfert (who gives us the long way around for everything else) simply tell you to use pre-made Harissa paste? She does have a recipe for Harissa, available on the 'net, but chose not to include it in this book. Pffff.

And after all this criticism, I'll add one more thing I love. Ms. Wolfert gives a recipe for homemade tomato paste she calls "Tomato Magic." You take sundried tomatoes and put them in the food processor with a good-quality jar of tomatoes, then cook for a half hour until color and flavor deepens. Honestly, I thought it would be more of a pain than it's worth but in fact it is absolutely delicious. And I LOVE her idea of freezing leftovers in tablespoonfuls on a cookie sheet then scraping them off and freezing them in a ziploc. It's better than commercial tomato paste and it solves the irritating problem of opening a can of tomato paste every time I need a tablespoonful and having the rest go to waste!

Overall, this is an amazing book and I can't wait to make everything in it. As I try other recipes I'll add to this post.

EDITED WITH UPDATES on August 31, 2014: Nearly 1.5 years after buying this book, I still use it regularly, and I have now made more

than 30 of its recipes. My skill level has increased, and I'm in the habit of always pre-making basic ingredients--such as tomato magic, kama spice mix etc, and as a result I now find many of the recipes fairly easy. Compared with other cookbooks which can be hit or miss, this one has a great track record with me: Everything I made has been at minimum very very good, and at least half of the recipes in here are exceptional to my palate at least. A dozen of the recipes in this have become regular favorites in my household, including the amazing Eggplant Zaalouk cold salad, the cucumber-oregano salad with olives, the orange-romaine walnut salad, the dessert couscous (with golden raisins and almonds), fish charmoula, the baked red snapper or sea bass with almond paste and lamb kefta tagine with tomatoes and eggs. The chicken-apricot tagine, mentioned at the top of the review, has become a regular on my dinner table, and I often make several of the easy flatbreads in the book as well, my favorite being the Bread with Sesame and Anise seeds. It's refreshing to work with a book where I know in advance that the results will be good, even if it is the first time I'm making a recipe. I have had some issues (mainly cosmetic stuff) with a small number of recipes. An example is the baked fish with almond paste. You are supposed to decorate a whole fish with a pretty design of almond paste before baking. In theory this is supposed to be done with a spatula. No way does this work for me...maybe I'm a klutz, but I end up with such an ugly, unappetizing design I just smooth it out to make a layer of almond paste. And also, serving a whole fish to several people when it is covered with almond paste in my hands still ends up as a mess. But it is a delicious mess and so far I've made it twice. Maybe by the fourth or fifth time I'll figure out how to make it not a mess. But in summary, all the recipes in this book are at least delicious...a few are just a tiny bit difficult so you do have to enjoy a bit of adventure! Also, I want to note that, while I complain above that there are no "poor" tagines with a small amount of meat above, I did discover that the book has three veggie dishes (not strictly tagines) which have a small amount of meat confit in them. I just made the first one, lentils with swiss chard, butternut squash and meat confit. It is absolutely STUNNING and will probably make the short list of stuff I make again and again.

Paula Wolfort's "Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco" is one of my all-time favorite cookbooks, so I eagerly purchased this new book sight unseen. Unfortunately it seems to be a retread of the first book, albeit with beautiful pictures and some additional recipes.

I am a big fan of ethnic cuisine and cooking. I first saw this book at a local bookstore and really wanted to have it as a part of my cookbook library. I was so please with the price. But better than that for a cook, the recipes are delicious and the author shares the authentic techniques required to

prepare the dishes. In addition, the photography is gorgeous. This is an ancient cuisine and the ingredients are not so exotic that one would have difficulty in finding them in order to prepare the dishes. Take the plunge and learn how to make preserved lemons to begin your journey into Moroccan cooking. It will be quite an adventure.

I purchased the hardcover version of this book so many years ago, and I used it so much that I had to have a kindle version as well. While I have not cooked all the recipes in this cookbook, the ones I have are absolutely delicious! The author has done an excellent job with providing tips and tricks on making your own spices that you can make with most ingredients you most likely have in your spice cabinet! For those who want to try something new, but don't wish to spend a lot of money on special spices, this book is a must! I have been using her recipe for "tomato magic" aka tomato paste for years!!! I find that this little tip provides so much richness to all stews, soups, sauces....

This is a cook book for inspiration. The pictures are stunning, and Ms. Wolfert describes the dishes, how she came to find them, and the cooking process so beautifully, you want to try all of them (well, maybe not the ones with organ meat). I have my preserved lemons curing in the fridge, and am collecting the spices she mentions. Not sure how the other members of my household are going to like Moroccan cuisine, but they're going to have the opportunity to find out. The reason I took off a star is because some of the ingredients are difficult to find. Not a deal breaker, most of the time substitutions are offered.

If you're not just looking for a few choice recipes, but rather a full course in the why and how of Moroccan cuisine, this book is ideal. Beautifully put together and incredibly informative, as well as encompassing an extensive and diverse range of Moroccan recipes. I actually haven't tried any of the recipes yet as I just received it earlier this week, but the recipes and methods seem to be authentic as well as reasonable to adapt in a western kitchen.

The Food of Morocco is such an exceptional cookbook. I collect cookbooks to learn different cuisines of the world and this is by far my favorite. Paula Wolfert takes you by the hand and opens up the delicious world of Moroccan food and you can almost imagine you are there. This book is very comprehensive and will give you a long time of discovery adventure in the kitchen. My family has been pretty amazed at the new flavors, aromas and textures coming out of the kitchen.

A beautiful book of recipes and information about Morocco. Photos show gorgeous food!

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