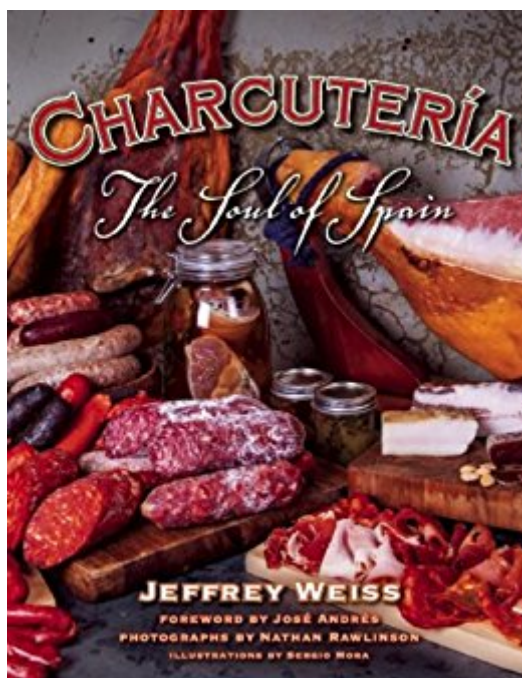


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Charcutería: The Soul Of Spain



Synopsis

CharcuterÃ- a: The Soul of Spain is the first book to introduce authentic Spanish butchering and meat-curing techniques to the American market. Included are more than 100 traditional Spanish recipes, straightforward illustrations providing easy-to-follow steps for amateur and professional butchers, and gorgeous full-color photography of savory dishes, Iberian countrysides, and centuries-old Spanish cityscapes. Author Jeffrey Weiss has written an entertaining, extravagantly detailed guide on Spain's unique cuisine and its history of charcuterÃ- a, which is deservedly becoming more celebrated on the global stage. While Spain stands porky cheek-to-jowl with other great cured-meat-producing nations like Italy and France, the charcuterie traditions of Spain are perhaps the least understood of this trifecta. Americans have most likely never tasted the sheer eye-rolling deliciousness that is cured Spanish meats: chorizo, the garlic-and-pimentÃ- n-spiked ambassador of Spanish cuisine; morcilla, the family of blood sausages flavoring regional cuisine from Barcelona to Badajoz; and jamÃ- n, the acorn-scented, modern-day crown jewel of Spain's charcuterÃ- a legacy. CharcuterÃ- a: The Soul of Spain isÂ a collection of delicious recipes, uproarious anecdotes, and time-honored Spanish culinary traditions. The author has amassed years of experience working with the cured meat traditions of Spain, and this book will surely becomeÂ a standard guide for both professional and home cooks.

Book Information

File Size: 50526 KB

Print Length: 464 pages

Publisher: Agate Surrey (March 17, 2014)

Publication Date: March 17, 2014

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00G1SRAO4

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #413,251 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #37

inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International >

European > Spanish #64 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Professional Cooking > Professional #130 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International > European > Spanish

Customer Reviews

It is the definitive book on Spanish charcuteria, that alone makes this an important book. But, it is so much more than a exhaustive and thorough review of a culinary tradition. It is an amazing book. Few books on food fire the imagination as much as this book did for me. The author did more than document a culture and its charcuteria traditions; he captures your interest by appealing to your heart as much as he appeals to your intellect. It is clear that this author has a love affair with Spanish cuisine and culture and his passion and respect for the traditions comes across in every page. It is totally engrossing and sweeps you into its content; and it is the content that puts the book over the top. First of all it provides you with clearly written and easily accessible instructions. He starts with the pig. The challenges and threats that exist to the preservation of the historically important pig breeds and the husbandry practices that make the pigs so remarkable. Pigs are nature's glorious gift to us. He discusses the butchering traditions of Spain and how they differ from our own and how those differences affect the quality of the products produced. He does this without being screechy, there are no screeds here, just thoughtful commentary. He talks about the techniques of preserving and preparing the parts of the pig. He gives you technical information without overwhelming you; his explanation of the butcher's ratios is excellent as a simple example. He also recognizes that most readers will not have sophisticated equipment available to them and he talks about how to improvise solutions for a home practitioner. The book is about charcuteria, consequently is not just about the pig. He introduces us to seafood and the Spanish methods of preservation. He provides recipes for condiments and accompanying side dishes that complement the charcuteria. He also does an interesting thing; he brings traditional treatments and modern interpretations together and shows us that traditions and innovation can coexist. As much as I enjoyed this book I have to say that it might be a bit overwhelming for a novice charcuterist. Having this said that I would still say buy the book. The reason is simple, it will ignite your imagination and it will make you say; I want to do that or I want to try that. You will love the recipes. The illustrations and photographs enhance the text and help the reader visualize the information provided. This is more than a culinary book, it is a love letter to a culture and its charcuteria traditions. Worth every penny.

This is a book that I foresee using for many years to come. I've been cooking Spanish food for about a decade, and while I'd made many batches of Spanish-style sausage using the books of the late, great Penelope Casas, I had always hoped that there would be a book with a more serious slant on Spanish sausage-making. This is that book. Weiss knows his meat and his sausage-making, where you must be precise and where you can fudge a little. The breadth and depth of recipes for salami and fresh sausages in this book, not to mention instructions for making your own Spanish-style ham (if you are brave and patient) are worth the price alone. But Weiss also has excellent recipes for curing fish - including salt cod - making pickles of all shapes and sizes, as well as recipes for composed dishes and desserts. Iberico lard cookies, anyone? Be forewarned, however: This is not a basic charcuterie book. It is important to have some basic knowledge of how to make sausage before tackling these recipes. Can you do them as a mere novice? Yes, you can make simple chorizo and such, but pay very close attention to Weiss' safety instructions. If you are a newbie, Brian Polcyn and Michael Ruhlman's "Charcuterie" is probably a better place to begin. If you do know how to make sausages, however, you can find yourself getting lost in these recipes -- and I mean that in a good way. So many ways to make blood sausage and chorizo! The only issue I have with this book are his canning instructions. He makes it appear that you can safely can, say, cured anchovies with a boiling-water bath. This is unsafe, and maybe he doesn't mean it, but as I read this book the only place I kept taking issue with Weiss was his canning instructions -- except for his recipes for pickles. His procedures for canning those are perfectly safe. Bottom line: Don't make this your first sausage-making book. But if you a) are into Spanish cooking, b) love making sausage, and/or c) want a great glimpse into the Spanish meat culture, buy this book. You will not be sad.

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