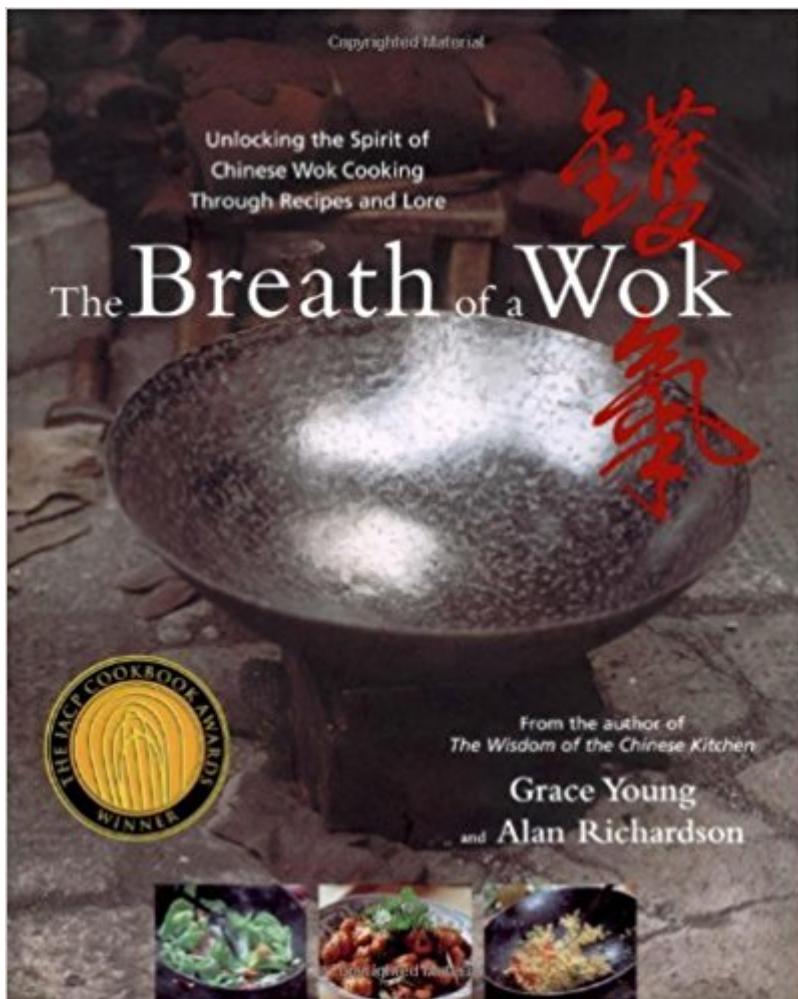


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The Breath Of A Wok



Synopsis

When Grace Young was a child, her father instilled in her a lasting appreciation of wok hay, the highly prized but elusive taste that food achieves when properly stir-fried in a wok. As an adult, Young aspired to create that taste in her own kitchen. Grace Young's quest to master wok cooking led her throughout the United States, Hong Kong, and mainland China. Along with award-winning photographer Alan Richardson, Young sought the advice of home cooks, professional chefs, and esteemed culinary teachers like Cecilia Chiang, Florence Lin, and Ken Hom. Their instructions, stories, and recipes, gathered in this richly designed and illustrated volume, offer not only expert lessons in the art of wok cooking, but also capture a beautiful and timeless way of life. With its emphasis on cooking with all the senses, *The Breath of a Wok* brings the techniques and flavors of old-world wok cooking into today's kitchen, enabling anyone to stir-fry with wok hay. IACP award-winner Young details the fundamentals of selecting, seasoning, and caring for a wok, as well as the range of the wok's uses; this surprisingly inexpensive utensil serves as the ultimate multipurpose kitchen tool. The 125 recipes are a testament to the versatility of the wok, with stir-fried, smoked, pan-fried, braised, boiled, poached, steamed, and deep-fried dishes that include not only the classics of wok cooking, like Kung Pao Chicken and Moo Shoo Pork, but also unusual dishes like Sizzling Pepper and Salt Shrimp, Three Teacup Chicken, and Scallion and Ginger Lo Mein. Young's elegant prose and Richardson's extraordinary photographs create a unique and unforgettable picture of artisan wok makers in mainland China, street markets in Hong Kong, and a "wok-a-thon" in which Young's family of aunties, uncles, and cousins cooks together in a lively exchange of recipes and stories. A visit with author Amy Tan also becomes a family event when Tan and her sisters prepare New Year's dumplings. Additionally, there are menus for family-style meals and for Chinese New Year festivities, an illustrated glossary, and a source guide to purchasing ingredients, woks, and accessories. Written with the intimacy of a memoir and the immediacy of a travelogue, this recipe-rich volume is a celebration of cultural and culinary delights.

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Customer Reviews

Among Chinese cookbooks, this one is unusual. It doesn't strive for comprehensiveness or focus on a regional cuisine. Instead, it analyzes that sacred object of the Chinese kitchen: the wok. The wok's "breath" is the heat rising from the sizzling instrument as a dish is finished, but also much more, according to Young (The Wisdom of the Chinese Kitchen). She offers a profound meditation on the wok's spiritual place, as well as its history and uses. As such, the book may be appreciated as a work of food scholarship as well as a cookbook. Nearly half of it concerns wok arcana, from an assessment of the best wok for a home kitchen to half a dozen "recipes" for seasoning a new wok (like Mr. Wen's Chinese Chive Rub). Naturally, the majority of the recipes are for stir-fries, such as the familiar Kung Pao Chicken. Usually, Young takes great care to attribute her recipes to her sources (e.g., Mary Chau's Shanghai-Style Snow Cabbage and Edamame). Those sources are refreshingly varied, including home cooks, like the author's many female relations, and well-known names like Martin Yan and writer Amy Tan. Although this is by no means a definitive Chinese cookbook, its elegance and meditative outlook make it a welcome gift. Photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

In the 1970s the wok burst into the American consciousness, along with the flurry of interest in all things Chinese inaugurated by Nixon's memorable trip to Beijing. Today, plenty of American kitchens have a wok of some sort, but cooks may not know how to use the implement properly. Young and Richardson set out to remedy that with this comprehensive treatise on wok cookery. More than 50 pages of text cover the manufacture, selection, and the seasoning of a new wok, a process for which Chinese chives turn out to be indispensable. Once technical concerns are overcome, the wok can finally be put to use to create "wok hay," the special, unique flavor achieved by the truly practiced cook. Young's recipes reflect a very personal repertoire that originates from dishes cooked within her extended family. Recipes, sorted into groups by cooking style, use generally available staple Chinese ingredients and a wide spectrum of fresh meats and vegetables. This practical, smart, and savory collection of lore and recipes promises to set off a rebirth of

Chinese cooking in American kitchens. Mark Knoblauch Copyright © American Library Association.

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This book is packed with information about the wok and how it is used in China. Starting from what kind of wok to buy and how to season it. Then over to stir fried dishes. A good selection. Then braising, deep frying and steaming and other things you can do with the wok. This is a definite buy if you've got a wok or intend to buy one. The author has a second book on woking across the world as well. I decided to go for her first book because it would just focus on one cuisine. Structure of the book: 30%. Introduction and naturally we get the life story section including information about the author's aunt. (That this section is compulsory in all books about Asian cooking written by Americans.) Also very useful information about different kinds of woks and how to season them 50%. Stir fry recipes 20%. Other recipes for the wok, e.g. smoking, steaming.

This is a great Chinese cookbook and I highly recommend it but Ⓜ The recipes have been taken from a number of sources and some are a bit Americanized (that is the only reason I didn't give it five stars). I have made many of these recipes and resolve that everyone has been delicious but I substitute authentic ingredients for Americanized ingredients; for example, I use rice wine instead of vodka for a recipe.

This is absolutely without a doubt well worth owning for anyone who takes their wok in the least bit seriously. It is beautiful (the photos are just superb, the quality of the book is magnificent) and it is without a doubt full of interesting information about the wok and the cooking styles related to the implement. If you are going to get a single book for your wok, this should be it.

I and my hubby are beginners at using a wok, and this book was just what we needed. We used it to shop for a wok, season it properly, and shop for ingredients and cook. We did it all with confidence, following the author's advice exactly, and the results were delicious and totally satisfying.

Learning by doing it over gas with real Wok

Triple superb! My wok bible. I have tried for years to become a good 'stir-fryer'. This book gave me the background on woks, history, techniques, and choices of different types of woks. Plus a complete guide and list of essential ingredients for stir-frying. Not to mention wonderful recipes!

Finally I can stir-fry successfully! And all my friends and family agree.A++++++

Review by Chef Bobby Laron - February 6, 2014 culturalpalates.net

The Breath of the Wok by Grace Young and Alan Richardson- Published 2004

I came across this book at the library one day while researching Asian history and exploring for unique and breath-taking recipes. Most of the time I'm submerged for hours before I find the hidden pearls I'm looking for. Every now and then however, it does happen by chance that I'm immediately drawn to an excellent publication; such is what occurred with the breath of the wok.

A Breakdown of the Breath of the Wok

This written work by Grace Young is instructional and spoken in a language that even the amateur cook will appreciate. It promotes 125 well crafted recipes with arousing stories that teach the history of Chinese wok cooking. Some traditions in the book date back 2000 years to the original Cantonese and are still relevant today! The photography is illustrative; we are put right in the middle of the action as masters of the WOK entertain with adroitness. You most certainly will praise the ability of experienced and seasoned veteran Alan Richardson for capturing the details and keeping us entangled in the moments!

What You Will Learn when you Read the Breath...There are some obvious facts about the Chinese. They are held together by social and cultural ties; Chinese are festive! They are considered to be in accord with reality and Spirituality. They have superb cooking skills! We know that wok cooking is widely appreciated in the world and held in high esteem because it is healthy and nutritious? Whatever we haven't learned about their impressive form of artistic cooking can be gleaned by reading The Breath of the wok.

Wok Techniques used in the book

Grace Young shows intelligently how just about every cooking method can be performed with the wok. Study her book to become accustomed to wok methodology. We need to have discipline when using the wok; Grace teaches us how to become disciplined. She shows us the orderly logical arraignments that must take place to help us become proficient in these areas:

Smoking, Pan-frying, Braising, Boiling, Poaching, Steaming, Deep-frying

Question that will be answered when you read the Breath of the Wok:

How does one get started with wok cooking? How do I select the right equipment to use and is caring for it difficult? Which spices should I use and where can they be purchased? Are cooking methods comparable to what I'm accustomed to or should I expect to purchase all new equipment and pantry items? Is wok cooking vegan, vegetarian and gluten friendly? All of these questions and more are answered with delicacy to assure that readers understand the basics and intricacies of Chinese wok cooking.

Recipes, Recipes, and more recipes:

Careful details are poured into each recipe. A few of my favorites are, Kung Pao Chicken, Lee Wan Ching's sizzling pepper and salt shrimp, Bernadette Chan's Stir-fried Beef, Danny Chan's

crab with black bean sauce, Ming Tsai's mandarin fried rice; spicy garlic eggplant. Trust me, there are many more that can be mentioned, but I'm sure you'll get the point once you purchase the book.

This cookbook could also be titled, "Everything you wanted to know about a wok, but were afraid to ask". With astounding accuracy, Chef Grace Young guides you into the world of the Wok, Wok Hey (The Breath Of A Wok), and all of it's nuances. Her recipes are exacting guides that leave nothing to chance. Recipes are detailed, so the dish comes out right the first time, if you follow her instructions. Includes excellent seasoning instructions and tips that turn the mysterious "Wok", into your culinary prized possession!

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