

A Platter of Figs: and Other Recipes

David Tanis

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A culinary tour of the west coast wouldn't be complete without visiting Chez Panisse in Berkeley. Therein we discover *A Platter of Figs and Other Recipes: A Year of Menus For a Table of Friends* (Artisan, 978-1-57965-346-0), the newly penned cookbook by David Tanis, current chef at the restaurant and a twenty-five year associate of Alice Waters. In fact, Tanis has assisted Waters on some of her acclaimed cookbooks, so the expectations are high. *A Platter of Figs* delivers on every promise. Culinary historians will cite it as one of the game-changers, a genuine peek into the mind of one of this era's celestial talents. But if you're looking for recipes full of fireworks and fanfare, this is not your guy. The number of ingredients used in Tanis's recipes usually number in the single digits, most often just three or four. He asks readers to buy in philosophically, as evidenced by his aptly titled introduction: *A Way to Eat*. The book is organized into four sections based on the seasons, with esoteric chapter heads along the lines of "How to Cook a Rabbit," "Salmon on My Mind," "Hot Day, Cold Chicken," "Peasant Fare from a Parisian Kitchen," and "North African Comfort Food," to name a few.

Of zucchini, he writes: "This is a book of recipes and menus, but I hope what it is, too, is a book about cooking by instinct—improvisational, the sort of cooking that doesn't need a recipe. Take zucchini. Take it, please. I know, it's the summer garden's little joke: too much, too big, not funny. Or is it?"

MATT SUTHERLAND (November 14, 2008)

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