



Alan Wong's New Wave Luau: Recipes from Honolulu's Award-Winning Chef

Alan Wong

John Harrison

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One might call a book covering both Hawaiian and Hawaiian fusion cuisine a niche book, but Wong's New Wave Luau is much more than an ethnic cookbook. It is a book for cooks and cookbook collectors, for lovers of beautiful food and for readers who simply like enlightening, clear prose. Free of any trace of didacticism, Wong writes with a grace born of passion for his subject and strengthened by his vast knowledge of ingredients, method and culinary history.

Generously sized and illustrated by Danna Martel's exceptional color photographs, New Wave Luau is full of recipes for delicacies from the raw bar and salads to entrees, desserts and drinks. Wong and Harrison also include small apt articles on subjects like the Luau of the title (especially the mandatory Kalua Pig), an engrossing account of Wong's development as a chef, observations on the restaurant as family and other relevant topics. A chapter on "basics" provides recipes for ingredients used in more complex recipes. Thus the reader not only learns about chile pepper water or tomato water (also infused tomato water), etc., but how to make them. Finally, to make the whole package easy to use, the book has an index and a good Hawaiian culinary glossary from Amaranth Leaves (edible for garnish and salad) to Yuza (Japanese lime juice).

Readers will enjoy this recipe book immensely; and, if they cannot easily take two days to pit-cook a Kalua Pig, Wong graciously supplies alternative directions using the reader's local pork and home oven.

While most recipes have exotic names, e. g. Kalua Duck in Taro Pancakes, Wong cooks (and writes) as his mentor, New York's Lutece's legendary Chef Andre Soltner, phrases it "with both feet on the ground." There is no silliness in Wong's work, no unnatural combinations whether his recipes are pure Hawaiian or rich with Chinese or Japanese undertones.

New Wave Luau records true culinary ingenuity (Consider savory ice shave under oysters.). It is a showcase for the talents of Wong, a James Beard Foundation Chef of the Year-Pacific Northwest. In a macadamia nutshell, Wong gives readers a treasure with his melting pot background and his splendid culinary experience. (June)

SALLY KETCHUM (July / August 1999)

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