

Chinese-Ish: Home Cooking Not Quite Authentic, 100% Delicious

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Joanna Hu

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Chinese-ish is a vibrant collaborative cookbook created by Asian Australian friends Rosheen Kaul and Joanna Hu. The pair share a passion for food and the experience of growing up in millennial Melbourne as the children of immigrants.

Born in Singapore, Kaul is Kashmiri, Peranakan Chinese, and Filipino. Hu was born in Hunan, China and spoke Mandarin at home while learning English at school. “Chinese-ish” is the term both women often use to describe themselves and their complex backgrounds; rather than an ethnic simplification, it reflects a sense of emergence, fusion, and how “multiple heritages can settle in harmony.”

Kaul is head chef at Melbourne’s acclaimed Etta restaurant, and Hu also has years of restaurant experience. Though Kaul notes that *Chinese-ish* isn’t an introductory or regional cookbook, basic techniques and pantry ingredient lists are included, along with a captivating variety of recipes for stocks, condiments, rice, noodles, wontons, and dumplings, alongside the wry, heartfelt advice that true stir-fries shouldn’t involve bags of “haphazard vegetables” smothered in gloppy sauce.

Here, a “golden cloud” Chiffon Omelet can be filled with Cantonese barbecued pork, ham, shrimp, crab, mushrooms, or bean sprouts, while Three Earthly Treasures combines crispy potatoes, eggplant, and bell peppers. Beijing Hot Chicken expands upon the Nashville fried chicken method, and the Fiery Sichuan Fondue adds garlic, chili oil, lager beer, and chopped herbs to the standard melted cheese pot. The classic yet Very Inauthentic Prawn Toast is enhanced by pancetta or guanciale, dill, and lemon. And among the enticing assortment of desserts are Lychee Plum Wine Shaved Ice, Mango Pudding, and a distinctive Wonton-Skin Cannoli with Sweet Potato Custard.

Chinese-ish is illustrated by Hu’s quirky, delightful artwork. Crafted out of a desire to share family and personal experiences, new tastes, and a legacy of adapted recipes, *Chinese-ish* is a cultural and culinary testament.

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