

Living Within the Wild: Personal Stories & Beloved Recipes from Alaska

Kirsten Dixon

Mandy Dixon

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Mother–daughter pair Kirsten and Mandy Dixon manages a set of family businesses in Alaska, including two lodges, a café, and a cooking school. Their cookbook, *Living Within the Wild*, collects rustic yet elegant recipes that serve as “snapshots in time and place,” highlighting local ingredients and the melting pot of cultures.

When the Dixon family first moved to Alaska in 1983, it was with the determination “to seek a life lived close to nature.” They started a river rafting company and added on other ventures. Mandy went to culinary school, returning after to help in the lodge kitchens. Their menus range from hearty feasts to simple meals that can be cooked while camping. Wherever possible, the Dixons use homegrown foods or ones they have foraged and caught.

This humble, organic book takes a stand against single-use plastics and food waste. A “stalks and stems sauce” for pasta is one of its recommendations for using up leftovers. The women are also committed to upholding local food culture. In Alaska: seafood is abundant, and salmon is a star ingredient. Various contributing ethnicities are evident in the book: lentil “caviar” served on blini evokes Russia, Yuzu dumplings and sushi sandwiches reflect Asian influences, and there are Scandinavian and Native American traces in the red currant tart, and the black bean and reindeer sausage chili.

The section introductions include information on the daily running of the lodges, while short preambles discuss the recipes’ inspiration, or give tips and serving suggestions. Vegetarian fare is in somewhat short supply, although there are appealing side dishes like a potato and smoked cherry salad. The outside comes inside through desserts infused with spruce sugar, or topped with crystallized cranberries that look frost-kissed. The food and landscape photographs are superb.

The beauty of Alaska and its tempting culinary offerings come through equally in *Living Within the Wild*.

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