



Saveur Cooks Authentic American

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From the editors of the popular Saveur magazine, this big book of comfortable ideas and keen sense of nostalgia delights with a 4th of July sense of verve. Comfortable because ultra-chez culinary babble was avoided at all costs; nostalgic because the line-up of foods would appear on anyone's list of American favorites.

Recipes are interspersed with beautiful color photographs and interesting profiles of not-too-flashy chefs and regional foods. Even pedestrian items like iceberg lettuce are given uplifting due. The writers are generous with preparation and instructional tips without being offensive. Ingredients for nearly all recipes can be easily acquired in a decent grocery. Indeed, there is nothing cutting edge here; recipes like Polenta Pie With Gorgonzola or Warm Chanterelle and Pancetta Salad are the trendy exceptions in this book most concerned with down home, authentic food.

The recipe for poached salmon offers a simple, efficient way to cook fish over vegetables, peppercorns, lemons and bay leaves -creating a stock in the process to stake an Egg-Caper Sauce. Corn Risotto (rice-less), makes use of Shiite, parmigiano-reggiano and fresh peas along with fresh corn from the cob. At times an exuberance to promote the exclusivity of regional fare caused the writers to err on the side of overstatement. The conditions necessary to produce maple syrup were said to be found only in the upper reaches of the Northeast when Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan all rank in the nation's top seven producers. But such transgressions are few.

Any cook (though especially an infrequent one) would be well served with the collection of recipes chosen by Saveur's editors, even if this beautiful and grand production might spend more time on the coffee table.

SETH MCEVOY (September / October 1998)

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