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Foreword Review COOKING

Secrets of the Red Lantern: Stories and Vietnamese Recipes from the Heart

Pauline Nguyen
Andrews McMeel (August 2008)
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"'What is Vietnamese food? How is it different from other cuisines?' The first thing I always say," Pauline Nguyen writes in the introduction to *Secrets of the Red Lantern: Stories and Vietnamese Recipes from the Heart*, "is that Vietnamese food is easy—there is no mystery to it. It is simple to pre-pare; the execution is mostly quick; and the cooking methods are straightforward….What most distinguishes Vietnamese food, however, is its em-phasis on freshness. We do not use fresh herbs sparingly to flavor or garnish a dish—instead, they play a major role in the food."

So if Vietnamese food is easy, quick, fresh, and routinely uses ample amounts of aromatic herbs and other explosively flavored ingredi-ents—scallion oil, crisp-fried onion, and garlic, pickled vegetables, peppers, and fish sauce—why then is it not the world's most popu-lar cuisine? With projects like Paula Nguyen's becoming available, dishes from this beautiful, enigmatic Southeast Asian country will certainly gain acceptance in countless kitchens here in the U.S. and abroad. Including more than 275 recipes, superb color photography, and the Nguyen fam-ily's riveting tale of escape from their war-torn country, *Secrets of the Red Lantern* satisfies on a multitude of levels.

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