

The Gourmet Prescription: High Flavor Cooking for Lower Carbohydrate Diets

Deborah Friedson Chud

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Followers of the high protein, low carbohydrate Zone and Atkins diets will rejoice at this new cookbook. The Zone diet, created by Dr. Barry Sears, and the Atkins diet consist of protein, carbohydrate and fat balanced meals that regulate insulin supply and keep the diner in the Zone or at an optimum fat-burning and high energy level. This balancing act is not an easy feat to accomplish in most Americans' full and fast-moving lives. Chud, a M.D. and avid homecook, succeeds with clear, graceful and lively recipes in a cookbook headed for dog-eared use in diet-conscious kitchens.

Chud cheerfully lets go of what Zone dieters can't have: high fat foods and high glycemic foods like grains, potatoes, pasta, bread, rice and most sweets. These foods convert into sugars and enter the bloodstream quickly to spike insulin levels—and create carbohydrate craving. She optimistically focuses on what dieters can have: various lean animal proteins, small amounts of good fats and low glycemic foods (they raise the insulin level more slowly) like grapefruit, eggplant, mushrooms and blueberries.

Although this is a cookbook about limits, *The Gourmet Prescription* illustrates the adage that limits can heighten creativity. Along with smoked vegetables like leeks, mushrooms and bell peppers, Chud relies on a few key condiments like Smoked Allium Paste (which consists of smoked pureed onions, shallots and garlic) and Smoked Tomato Ketchup to deepen flavor in many of her dishes. And she roasts, marinates, broils, grills and leans heavily on stove-top smoking to build complex flavor.

Chud's flavors are sophisticated and appetizing. If the photos don't pull the reader in the recipe titles will. Chud draws from the Mediterranean, Latin America, North Africa and the Far East with Five Spice Flank Steak, Smoked Shrimp Fajitas and Porcini-Laced Veal Roast. Her vegetable and fruit dishes are every bit as inviting: Hot and Sweet Asian Slaw, Spinach Salad with Smoked Portobellos and Roquefort Dressing, Channa Dal (lentils) with Smoked Tomatoes and Cauliflower and Roasted Pears with Gorgonzola.

Chud's book may do as much or more for the Zone and Atkins diets than the original books whose recipes are quite pedestrian. *The Gourmet Prescription* is a lovely, seductive cookbook that just happens to be a diet book. It is suitable for gourmet homecooks or for anyone interested in tasteful, high quality food. James Beard and Julia Child would approve.

NANCY K. ALLEN (September / October 1999)

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