

The Taste of Egypt: Home Cooking from the Middle East

Dyna Eldaief

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Adventurous cooks looking to broaden their repertoires will want to get a copy of Dyna Eldaief's *The Taste of Egypt: Home Cooking from the Middle East*.

Author Eldaief, born after her parents immigrated to Australia from Egypt, is a perfect guide to the cuisine of the Nile delta region. Having grown up in a Western culture, in a home environment whose traditions and family meals were largely Egyptian, gives her both an insider's and outsider's perspective. She anticipates questions likely to arise and answers them in a casual and friendly introduction, assuring readers that no special equipment is needed and suggesting workarounds for ingredients not found in most grocery stores.

As the subtitle makes clear, Egyptian cuisine is Middle Eastern rather than African. The roughly one hundred recipes included are divided into four sections: Basics, Snacks and Starters, Main Courses, and Sweets. Chapters on side dishes, common in Western cookbooks, are unnecessary because most meals incorporate grains and vegetables into the main dish. Rice and a rainbow assortment of legumes are the foundations of many meals, and meat is rarely presented on its own.

Recipes are listed by both their Egyptian names and their English translations, so while *Firakh bi-l-tom wi-l-limun* may sound intimidating, Roast Chicken with Garlic and Lemon sounds tempting and doable. Headnotes provide a good overview of each dish, and recipe variations are suggested where appropriate. The bulleted directions are clear, concise, and easy to follow.

Beyond recipes, the book imparts something of the spirit of Egypt itself. Numerous color photographs show not only the food but the markets, the people, and the daily life of the place. Sturdy construction and high-quality paper make it possible to lay the book flat on a counter and it open to the desired page, without it snapping closed.

The Taste of Egypt is an inviting glimpse into the life and culture of a far-away country, and a good introduction to many fresh, flavorful, and healthy dishes.

SUSAN WAGGONER (Winter 2017)

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