

Synopsis

Winner of the 2014 James Beard Award in the General Cooking Category A Texan chef shows there is a whole world of flavor beyond just barbecue. Smoke is a primer on the most time-tested culinary technique of all—but one that we have lost touch with. Chef Tim Byres shows how to imbue all kinds of foods—not just meat—with the irresistible flavor of smoke. Here he gives innovative ideas for easy ways to use smoke in your everyday kitchen arsenal of flavors—such as smoking safely on the stovetop with woodchips, putting together relishes and salsas made with smoked peppers and other vegetables, grilling with wood planks, and using smoke-cured meats to add layers of flavor to a dish. For serious cooks, there are how-to sections on building a firepit, smokehouse, and spit roast at home. As a Texan, Byres draws on the regional traditions of Mexico, Louisiana, and the South. He takes down-home foods and gives them brilliant twists. The results are such gutsy recipes as Pork Jowl Bacon with Half Sour Cucumbers, Boudin Balls and Brick Roux Gumbo, Cabrito and Masa Meatpies, and Coffee-Cured Brisket with Rustic Toast. Everything is made from scratch—not just the sausages but also the accompanying sauces, jams, and pickles. This is cooking at its most primal, and delicious.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I own a dizzying number of grilling and barbecue cookbooks, most of which hew closely to established techniques and tropes, with variation mostly in the details - an interesting marinade here, a refinement of technique, a new take on a side, perhaps a bit of gentle encouragement to weekend warriors to try out a new cut or throw that salmon on a plank. And that, truly, is great - too

many grillers limit themselves to steaks and hotdogs every Sunday. Anything that gets people trying new stuff is a great thing by me. But a lot of us have a bunch of grills, know our way around a semit kebab or jerk chicken or a pork shoulder, and we're restless. We're looking for some inspiration, for someone doing a new thing with food and fire. Chef Byres' cookbook is a new thing. What he's done with the flavors and techniques of Mexico, the Southwest, Texas, and the Deep South is more than a cookbook: it unpacks the creative process, inspirations, favorite techniques, and ideas of a uniquely creative open-fire cook. Doing so is no easy thing: the weight and pressure of tradition and "how it's always been done" is hard to get out from under in this genre, and many have tried and failed to bring something new to the table. Whether you work through his recipes or simply use them as launching points for your own innovations and work based on your own "nostalgic food memories," you'll be creating fresh, interesting food that touches what we all love about the foods of the Southern and Southwestern US but which carries a unique imprint. His attention to balancing flavors - hot and smoky with fresh and acidic being the best example - results in lively, punchy, vigorous flavors. There's a lot to learn from Byres, and he's generous with his insights.

If you're looking for a cookbook with simple, straightforward recipes, this is not for you. There are some very simple recipes, such as his red chile vinegar (which just whisks together vinegar, cayenne, salt, lemon, and sorghum). But this appears as part of a spread on how to roast a whole hog. And the red chile vinegar is just one of 36 ingredients you'll need to make his recipe for crispy pork souse with deviled egg (138-9) - five to brine the pork, eleven to cook or "pickle" the head and hocks, six more for assembling the terrine, six each for the deviled eggs and the salad to accompany the souse, and finally two more to complete the presentation. And three of these "ingredients" are actually recipes from elsewhere in the book, one of which combines four other recipes (with ingredients that come from still other recipes, etc), so, all in all, there are 9 recipes to consult, 75 ingredients required, and days of advance preparation, just to assemble this one, deceptively simple dish. Similarly, his Bloody Mary Mix (236) calls for 14 ingredients, 6 of which are recipes elsewhere in the book, so really you need 40+ ingredients and 7 different preparations to make the "mix" that's just one of seven ingredients (several of which - you guessed it! - are recipes from elsewhere in the book) you need to make his Bloody Mary. If you want to serve his Bloody Mary Sunday morning, you better start early in the week. In other words, cooking from this book requires a real commitment to cooking from this book. But in my experience, it's well worth it. His recipe produced the tastiest souse I have ever had. And for my part, I relished (pun intended) the opportunity to see how a gifted chef assembles a satisfying plate from his store of ingredients.

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