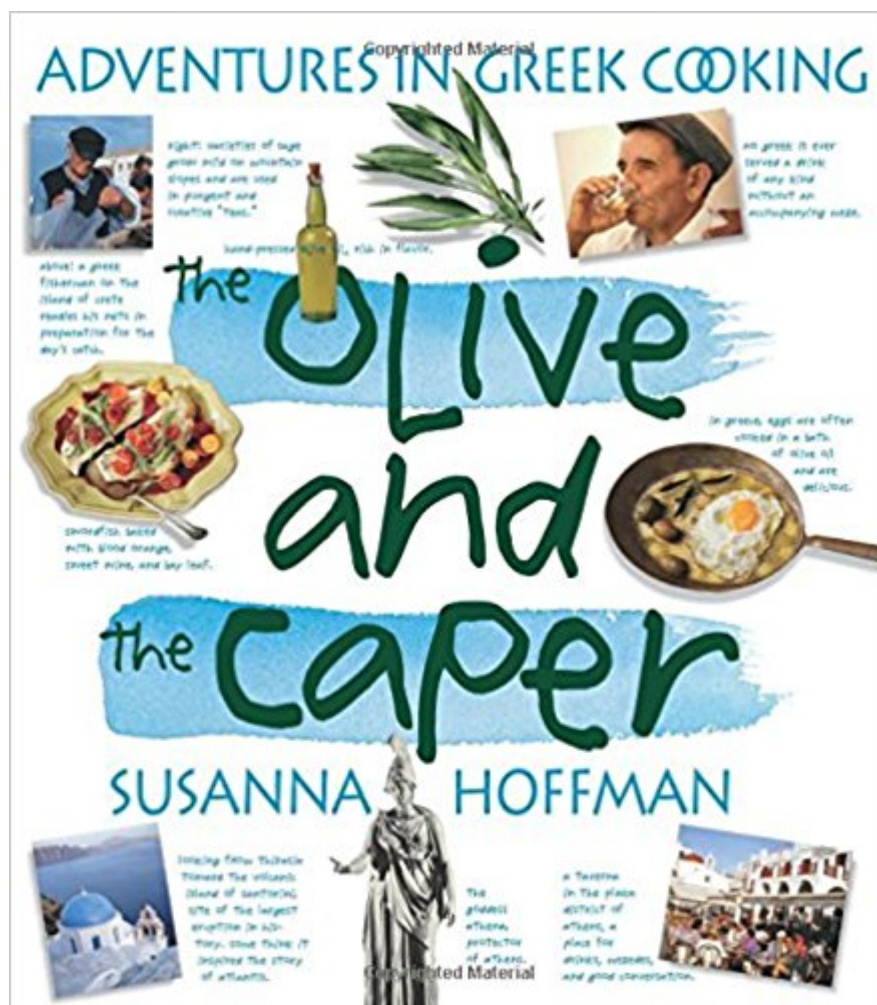


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The Olive And The Caper: Adventures In Greek Cooking



Synopsis

This is the year "It's Greek to me" becomes the happy answer to what's for dinner. My Big Fat Greek Wedding, the upcoming epic Troy, the 2004 Summer Olympics returning to Athens--and now, yet another reason to embrace all things Greek: The Olive and the Caper, Susanna Hoffman's 700-plus-page serendipity of recipes and adventure. In Corfu, Ms. Hoffman and a taverna owner cook shrimp fresh from the trap--and for us she offers the boldly-flavored Shrimp with Fennel, Green Olives, Red Onion, and White Wine. She gathers wild greens and herbs with neighbors, inspiring Big Beans with Thyme and Parsley, and Field Greens and Ouzo Pie. She learns the secret to chewy country bread from the baker on Santorini and translates it for American kitchens. Including 325 recipes developed in collaboration with Victoria Wise (her co-author on The Well-Filled Tortilla Cookbook, with over 258,000 copies in print), The Olive and the Caper celebrates all things Greek: Chicken Neo-Avgolemeno. Fall-off-the-bone Lamb Shanks seasoned with garlic, thyme, cinnamon and coriander. Siren-like sweets, from world-renowned Baklava to uniquely Greek preserves: Rose Petal, Cherry and Grappa, Apricot and Metaxa. In addition, it opens with a sixteen-page full-color section and has dozens of lively essays throughout the book--about the origins of Greek food, about village life, history, language, customs--making this a lively adventure in reading as well as cooking.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Traditional Greek cuisine favors sour tastes: lemons, capers, vinegar, wild herbs. Cooking with these pungent ingredients takes a sure hand or, failing that, a good recipe. Hoffman's book supplies the latter in abundance; it attempts nothing less than to capture the whole of Greek food culture between covers. That includes side notes on language, myth, literature and botany; details of

regional specialties; lists of native greens; and an explanation of why we say "Greek" instead of "Hellenic." Like many warm-weather cuisines, Greek food relies on an abundance of grilled meats and fish and dressed greens. Hoffman presents them in dazzling variety, alongside familiar exports like Dolmadakia (stuffed grape leaves) and Tzatziki. Hoffman, an anthropologist and cook, includes recipes that might be challenging or improbable for American home cooks: Retsina-Pickled Octopus, Thyme-Fed Snails and "Greek-inspired ice creams" made with mastic or olive oil. There are labor-intensive recipes, too, showing how to make filo pastry and homemade sourdough noodles. Desserts—Semolina Custard Pie; Yogurt Cake with Ouzo-Lemon Syrup—go far beyond Baklava. With its fascinating trove of information, this work will please armchair cooks and traveling foodies. For those willing to surrender to its searingly bright palate of flavors, it's a boon to the kitchen, too. Photos, illus. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

THE OLIVE AND THE CAPER is all things Greek: fall-off-the-bone lamb shanks seasoned with garlic, thyme, cinnamon, and coriander. A refreshing new tzatziki made pink with beets, and a dazzling filo pie filled with greens, fennel and ouzo. Dolmadakias—stuffed grape leaves—so succulent with retsina-soaked currants and raisins. Fish grilled with mastic-flavored bread stuffing. A luscious kapama of beef stewed in wine, brandy, and coffee; chicken baked with eggplant and green olives. Inspired by the passionate cooks, bakers, fishermen, and housewives she befriended over thirty years of extended stays in Greece, Susanna Hoffman presents more than 250 recipes based on the original and still best Mediterranean diet, with a resounding—Opa!

I enjoy cooking and eating the recipes from Diane Kochilas' first Greek cookbook and was really looking forward to this book after having read all the glowing reviews. So far I have tried 3 recipes and am not very impressed. I am still hoping that other recipes will prove to be much better. I do enjoy the layout of the book and all the interesting side bars, cultural notes, etc. The dearth of color photos is by no means any reason to downgrade the book--most color photos of food in cookbooks is just "food porn", produced with the aid of food stylists, and adding little of real value to the book other than just jacking up the production costs which are then passed on to the consumer. Below are notes on the 3 recipes I have done so far: Roasted Lamb Shanks p.387 Not happy with this. Recipe intro speaks of "long, slow roasting...glossy meat falling off the bone"...permeated with seasonings

and garlic reduced to a "soft, sweet pulp" Recipe calls for roasting at 375 degrees, hardly what I would call slow roasting. Against my better judgement, I followed the instructions and ended up with tight, hard meat that was anything but "falling off the bone". The garlic was still hard and quite harsh. If I had made this recipe to eat as is, I would have been EXTREMELY disappointed. As it was, I made it as the first step for the lamb pie on page 106 Lamb Pie p.106 Not thrilled with this one either. The orange zest was so overpowering it was basically all we could taste. The trouble and expense of buying and roasting the lamb shanks was entirely wasted--could have saved a lot of money, time and effort simply by making the recipe with ground beef. I would like to try this again--with ground beef and about half the orange zest. Maybe then it could be really good. Winter Vegetable Soup p.167 An OK soup. I found it rather frugal and meager. The recipe called for a small, 12 oz cabbage. The smallest I could find was about 28 oz, so I used half. Honestly, I really should have used the entire cabbage, it would have added more much needed substance to what should IMHO be a hearty winter soup. Same goes for the leek. It calls for a medium leek--what's a medium leek? The leeks I typically see in the market are about 2 inches in diameter with a usable section maybe 6-8 inches long. I found a bunch of 4 small leeks that were about half the usual size, a scant 1" in diameter with maybe a usable length of 4". I used one. Honestly, in retrospect I probably should have used all 4. I used the optional beans--without them the soup really would have been too meager. I bought a small can of tomato paste, used half and threw the rest away--I should have used the whole thing. I made it without the optional salami garnish. The best I can say about this soup is it is a healthful, light meal with a pleasantly different flavor because of the wine. I was pleased with the way the red wine mellowed in the cooking. I would like to do it again, beefing up the vegetable content to give the soup more substance, and definitely adding the salami for some much needed savoriness and depth of flavor. Judging a book on just 3 recipes may not be fair, but OTOH I've had experience with other cookbooks where the first several recipes I tried were all winners. I'm still going to continue using this book in the hope that other recipes will prove to be much better. I like the supplemental information the author incorporated into the book and I respect the time she spent researching the subject in Greece. In short--I want to like this book and have not yet given up hope on it. I will add to this review in several months after trying more recipes.

I'm now at the age at which I feel that if I'd known I was going to live this long I would have taken better care of myself. Purchasing this book, and others like it, is one of the steps I'm taking to do just that. So far the book is a great success. I've only made two of the recipes, but each has been easy and very good. I've got a list of about six more dishes that I'll cook in the next couple of weeks,

which puts "The Olive and the Caper" head and shoulders above the other Mediterranean cookbooks I've recently bought. Aside from the recipes, the book is great fun to read, chock-full of information about Greece and its culture of food. No regrets here. Can't wait for the weekend so I can crack it open again.

As an avid reader of cookbooks, the title of *The Olive and the Caper*, intrigued me enough to purchase it and I am so glad I did. Even if I never cooked a thing from it, I learned so much about Greek culture and cuisine, that it is worth having for the information and insights alone. Ms. Hoffman's personal anecdotes, mythological connections, historical references, and etymological asides, enlighten the reader without sounding pedantic or didactic. However, it is precisely these stories that accompany the recipes that make me want to try them. What a wonderful way to educate and entertain ! I first read it as I would read a travel book of a place I intend to visit then, I went back for the simple, yet elegant recipes Ms. Hoffman includes in the book. I have always enjoyed Greek food, but have been reluctant to try preparing it. The arrangement of the recipes in the book and the format make it easy to read and follow. For each recipe she offers alternative suggestions for ingredient not easily available. The step by step process is not intimidating to a beginner. Ms. Hoffman's respect and love for the Greek people and the food that represent them emboldened me to try making the dishes. I love peasant food, I grew up eating the food from my own ethnic background and have a deep gustatory appreciation for how "lowly" food can be prepared to elevate one's taste buds. She did exactly that in this book. Thank you, Ms. Hoffman, for motivating me to try preparing Greek food at home and for adding so much to my knowledge of Greek culture and cuisine. I even tried some of the Greek words she introduces in the book at a Greek restaurant and impressed the daylights out of the waiter.

I purchased this cookbook nearly a year ago. never requested feedback so I never wrote a review until now. I had been searching for over 20 years for the Greek cookbook that would duplicate the wonderful food tastes I had experienced during my trips to Greece. I asked friends born in Greece for their recipes and yet something was still missing. This book is the one. It ended my search. I have given away all the rest of the Greek cookbooks I had collected thru the years. And, in addition, the book is so well presented. The history provided, the helpful notes, the photos and the easy to follow recipes take me back to those happy times spent in Greece laughing with friends and sharing great food. For someone like me who is not known for their culinary skills, I can turn out a very tasty meal with the use of this book. It is very practical yet a work of art in many way. Highly, highly

recommend.

If you can't get to Greece, let it come to you. This is not just a great cookbook, it's a travelogue and a travel diary! Susanna Hoffman's done a great job of putting together a real sense of the Greece she loves, through her descriptive writing and her delicious recipes. (Another thing I love is that the recipes are simple. Most of the ingredients are readily available at your local supermarket, and they don't take forever to make. Highly recommended is the avgolemono soup.) Kudos to the designer for crafting a layout as wonderful to look at as an art book as it is useful as a cookbook. This is one of those kitchen musts for people who love to cook, or for people who love to read cookbooks.

As I expected

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