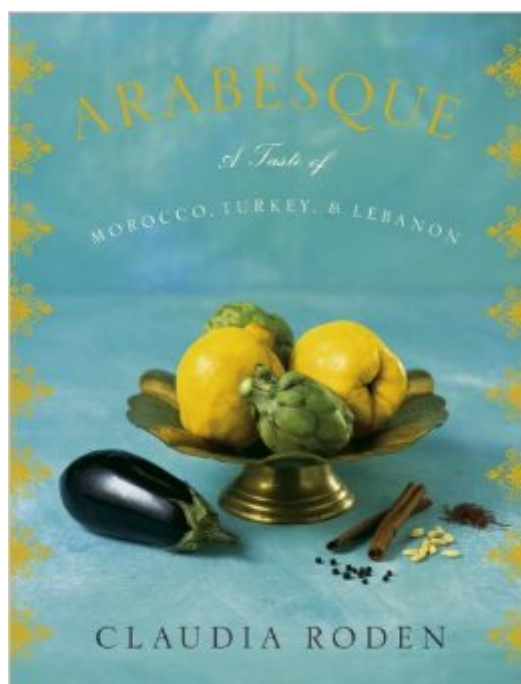


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Arabesque: A Taste Of Morocco, Turkey, And Lebanon



Synopsis

In the 1960s Claudia Roden introduced Americans to a new world of tastes in her classic *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*. Now, in her enchanting new book, *Arabesque*, she revisits the three countries with the most exciting cuisines today—Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon. Interweaving history, stories, and her own observations, she gives us 150 of the most delectable recipes: some of them new discoveries, some reworkings of classic dishes—all of them made even more accessible and delicious for today's home cook. From Morocco, the most exquisite and refined cuisine of North Africa: couscous dishes; multilayered pies; delicately flavored tagines; ways of marrying meat, poultry, or fish with fruit to create extraordinary combinations of spicy, savory, and sweet. From Turkey, a highly sophisticated cuisine that dates back to the Ottoman Empire yet reflects many new influences today: a delicious array of kebabs, fillo pies, eggplant dishes in many guises, bulgur and chickpea salads, stuffed grape leaves and peppers, and sweet puddings. From Lebanon, a cuisine of great diversity: a wide variety of mezze (those tempting appetizers that can make a meal all on their own); dishes featuring sun-drenched Middle Eastern vegetables and dried legumes; and national specialties such as kibbeh, meatballs with pine nuts, and lamb shanks with yogurt. Claudia Roden knows this part of the world so intimately that we delight in being in such good hands as she translates the subtle play of flavors and simple cooking techniques to our own home kitchens.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'Arabesque' by the distinguished Egypto-English culinary journalist, Claudia Roden is a culinary travelogue that, according to the subtitle, gives us 'A Taste of Morocco, Turkey, & Lebanon'. Ms.

Roden states that the choice of these three cuisines was based on the fact that in each of the three countries, there has been something of a Renaissance of ancient culinary traditions and techniques, backed up by the fact that the culinary traditions of all three centers of Arab culture were outstanding to begin with, going back to the eighth century for Morocco and Lebanon and to the even more distinguished background of the Ottoman Turkish cuisines, both original and borrowed from the earlier Persian traditions. There is no question that these three geographical centers are tied together by their Moslem heritage; however it may be just a bit of a stretch to consider them all to be based on Arab traditions, as Morocco had a strong native Berber influence, as well as more recent French influences and the Turks were, I believe not really Arab. But I will not quibble, as Arab influences, especially in their traditions of hospitality show up in all three culinary histories. It is important to take Ms. Roden's subtitle seriously in that this book is more of a taste than it is a 'full course meal'. This book is much more like the 'culinary travelogue' books 'Hot Sour Salty Sweet' and 'Mangoes and Curry Leaves' of Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid than it is like Roden's earlier works, 'The Food of Italy' and 'The New Book of Middle Eastern Food'. It is also certainly not like Paula Wolfert's excellent books of culinary anthropology such as 'Couscous' and 'The Cooking of the Eastern Mediterranean'. And, this is not a book for the amateur tourist.

One expects the best from Claudia Roden, and this book does not disappoint. Some of us remember how her "Book of Middle Eastern Food" burst like a great white light on the culinary scene, way back in 1968. (There is now an even better second edition, 2000.) The present book recycles some recipes from earlier works, but focuses on three particularly good areas, and has absolutely top-flight recipes from them, sparing you the problem of wading through a vast mass of text. Just a couple of quick supplemental comments from some experience: First, there is one bad thing about this book: Ms. Roden's tolerance for bouillon cubes. Their metallic, rancid-grease taste ruins Middle Eastern food. Use homemade stock or just omit. Second, Turkish food isn't "Arab," it really does depend heavily on Turkic roots, plus Greek and Persian influences--only a few Arab ones. And the publishers have badly served the Turkish section by using dotted i's for undotted ones. These write different sounds: the dotted i is the "ee" sound, the undotted is approximately the "uh" sound. This could cause confusion if you ask for ingredients or dishes. One more note on Turkey: For Turkish food, especially the salads, you have to use not just extra virgin olive oil, but Turkish extra virgin oil, or something very similar (Lebanese or the finest Kalamata or Italian). Yep, it costs, so much so that one dish is named "The Imam Fainted" because--according to one story--he found out the cost of the oil in the dish (p. 168)! Finally, Ms. Roden notes that argan oil, a wonderful

if obscure oil from southern Morocco, is regarded as "aphrodisiac." Actually, a mixture of argan oil, honey, and ground almonds is called "Moroccan Viagra" in that part of the world.

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