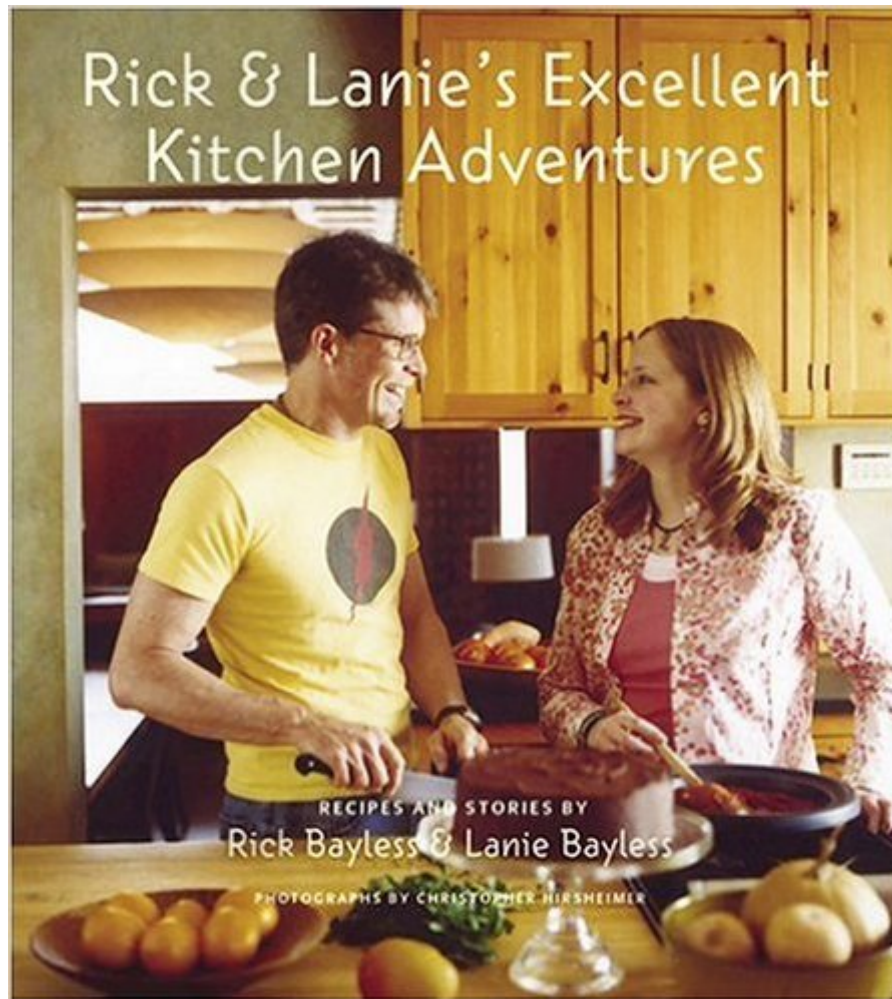


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Rick And Lanie's Excellent Kitchen Adventures: Recipes And Stories



Synopsis

Renowned chef, author, and television personality Rick Bayless has prepared gourmet meals for his share of celebrities. But when asked about his most memorable cooking experiences, he immediately answers, with my family and friends

Book Information

Age Range: 12 and up

Hardcover: 232 pages

Publisher: Stewart, Tabori and Chang; First Edition edition (October 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1584793317

ISBN-13: 978-1584793311

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 1 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.3 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #890,904 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 inÂ Books > Teens > Hobbies & Games > Cooking #262 inÂ Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International > Mexican #571 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Children's Cookbooks

Customer Reviews

Mix family dynamics, personality, food, and travel, and dish up an entertaining, humorous and, yes, useful father/daughter cookbook venture. Rick, chef/owner of the Mexican restaurant, Frontero, and his daughter, Lanie, 13 (younger when they began the project), eat and cook their way from Mexico to Thailand, by way of Oklahoma, France and Morocco, with side trips to Spain, Japan and Hong Kong. The occasions are family vacations or celebrations and the cooking is done in relaxed settings with friends. Each chapter begins with essays by each of them describing the travel and food experience, from shopping and cooking to bad roads and old memories. Rick's tend to be more rhapsodic and reminiscent; Lanie's are sassy, direct, and funny. Each chapter also includes "five cool CDs" to play while cooking, like Johnny Cash for barbeque and Kahled for Moroccan food. Each attractively designed, well-organized recipe starts with a brief intro from both authors. Rick's include cultural background and cooking tips; Lanie's are conversational and opinionated. For example, Rick describes choosing exactly the right peppers and accompaniments to a tapas of Spanish Ham Salad. And Lanie says: "This tastes exactly like an Italian sub without the bread." It's a teaching book with "do this first" boxes included in each recipe and thorough step-by-step directions. Lanie (who

likes steak tartare but isn't crazy about raw tomatoes) often describes the experience of cooking, the taste sensations, and her personal ratings. The dishes, from breakfast to dessert, are mostly simple classics: Huevos Rancheros; Bangkok-Style Chicken Satay; Moroccan Meatballs (cumin) in Tomato Sauce; Tartiflette (French potato and cheese supper); Hickory House (his parents' barbecue restaurant) Deviled Eggs; Pad Thai; Potato-Leek Soup with Bacon; Profiteroles; Chocolate Truffles. There are a few more complex, or at least time-consuming dishes too, like Crispy Meringue Shells with Ice Cream and Fruit Salsa (France), an Oaxacan Red Mole, and Chinese Pot Sticker Dumplings. Color photographs throughout accent the recipes, the ingredients and the people. This is a book for anyone who'd like to cook with their kid (Lanie has cooked all of these recipes) or enjoys a wide variety of thoughtful classic recipes, or just likes to laugh while reading about food, families and travel.

'Rick & Lanie's Excellent Kitchen Adventures' by Rick Bayless and his daughter is the third kids oriented cookbook I have reviewed and I am very pleased that I gave the earlier two books by Emeril Lagasse and Rachael Ray only four stars, as this volume by Bayless and daughter has really shown us how such a book should be done. To be sure, Bayless and daughter have done the book where the child is a mid-teenaged daughter who has been around the cooking all her life of a world-class teaching chef. Therefore, the book does not address all the important safety issues involved when you put kids into the most dangerous room in the house. But, this is definitely a book with which a cooking minded teenager could connect. That is, if the kid is a good reader, this is the book you want to give them. The book is made doubly interesting in that the Bayless family are great travelers and have a long and interesting history of family in the food service industry. This sets up one of the two main themes of the book by setting each chapter in a different location around the world, some of which are very familiar to the Bayless clan and some of which are being seen for the first time. The five venues are a combination of the obvious and the unexpected. The first is (big surprise) a trip to the southern highlands of Mexico and the Oaxaca valley which is one of Bayless' favorite parts of his favorite country. This chapter is spiced up by a side trip to Peru and an essay in ceviche recipes. The second location, small town Oklahoma may be a big surprise to most of us until Bayless tells us the story of his parents who ran a very successful barbecue restaurant in Capitol Hill, Oklahoma. The highlight of this chapter is Bayless' attempt to write out his parents' recipes from the 'Hickory House' restaurant with very mixed results when his family gathered together to make the recipes from paper rather than from memory. The third destination is France, almost as predictable as the trip to Mexico. This chapter is spiced up with culinary side trips to Italy

and Ireland. The fourth venue, Morocco and southern Spain is not to surprising to foodies, as the Moroccan cuisine is one of the most distinctive centers of Mediterranean cuisine next to Italy and Provence, especially after the attention paid to it by Paula Wolfert's books. The fifth venue, Thailand, with side trips to Japan and Hong Kong are only a surprise in that Thai cuisine is about as different from Mexico as you can get. There is not even the distant connection in play between Japan and the West Coast of Latin America that fertilized the development of ceviche. The main format of each chapter is that Rick introduces each locale with a relatively long narrative of why this venue was chosen and the family's general reaction to both the familiar and the unfamiliar. This is followed by a similarly long take on the same location and events by Lanie. And, Lanie provides a very clear counterpoint to her father's take on things. She clearly did not show the same enthusiasm for raw fish and goat barbacoa, a classic dish of southern Mexico. Both speakers do a great favor to the reader in picturing all the ups AND downs of their travels. One of the most surprising events was the failure of a world class chef and his food experienced family to recreate his parents' recipes from Bayless interpretations of these dishes. On the other hand, one of the most gratifying experiences is when Lanie makes a very difficult mole with no help from dad, and the result is very successful. Each recipe is also presented with a headnote from Rick, followed by Lanie's take on the same recipe. An important aspect of all these recipes is that, on the one hand, none of the recipes are simplified for the adolescent amateur. On the other hand, the recipes are not pictured as the very best exemplar of the dish. The 'Hickory House' cole slaw recipes are a perfect case in point. The recipes are not important because they are the greatest cole slaw recipes around, they are important to a family which produced a great chef who writes about them as part of his legacy. Therefore, this is a cookbook that is meant as much or more for reading as for cooking. But that doesn't mean the recipes here are not worth your effort. There are a lot of recipes for classic comfort food here. In addition to the cole slaws, there are great recipes for biscuits, chocolate cake, guacamole, pasta with both marinara sauce and pasta with a pesto sauce, crepes, truffles, gazpacho, paella, potstickers, poached salmon, and potato leek soup. This is by far my first choice for a first cookbook to be given to a teenager or near teenager with an interest and a talent for cooking. Bayless and clan are far more successful in conveying a passion for cooking than most of the cute moves by other writers. I think Lagasse and Ray are just a little less successful in that they are writing with a voice for very young readers, except that this material will be interpreted by adults for the youngsters. Thus, the material will not hold the adult's interest long enough to involve the kids. Ray and Lagasse have done good books, but Bayless has done something better. Highly recommended for all foodies, teenage and above.

How many kids get to grow up, travel and publish a cookbook? We the purchasers get to enjoy this achievement. Famous Mexican chef Rick Bayless teams up with his teenage daughter Lanie to provide a 230 page beauty filled with their trips to Peru, Oklahoma, Mexico, Morocco, Thailand and France. In each destination they each relate their highlights and lowlights of the trip. Lanie's are so cool, e.g. "Eating in Peru basically means eating potatoes ... my dad bought two of EACH One, 'Research,' he kinda barked at me--I mean all I did was ask politely WHAT he was doing. He didn't even seem to care that it took an hour." This is getting some great cooking basics, plus intro to this family's favorite recipes, and exposure to other culture's culinary creations. Both Rick and Lanie comment on each, so you get both perspectives: gourmet chef and teenage daughter. There are sidebars which provide great tips and even suggests for CD listening as well as what to buy when in a Mexican grocery, how to grow three popular herbs indoors. Great, unique, well thought out fun stuff to read and cook with. There is also a limited mail-order source listing for ingredients, music and cooking supplies. Some great recipes which most family will dig into include: Lime Zest Ice Cream with Mexican Caramel; Vegetarian [or not] Soft Tacos with Guacamole; The World's Greatest Chili; Grilled Pizza with Goat Cheese, Green Salsa and Bacon; Chinese Potsticker Dumplings; Moroccan Meatballs in Tomato Sauce. All this done beautifully with prose and great photos and layout. Fine addition to one's own collection and/or for giving.

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