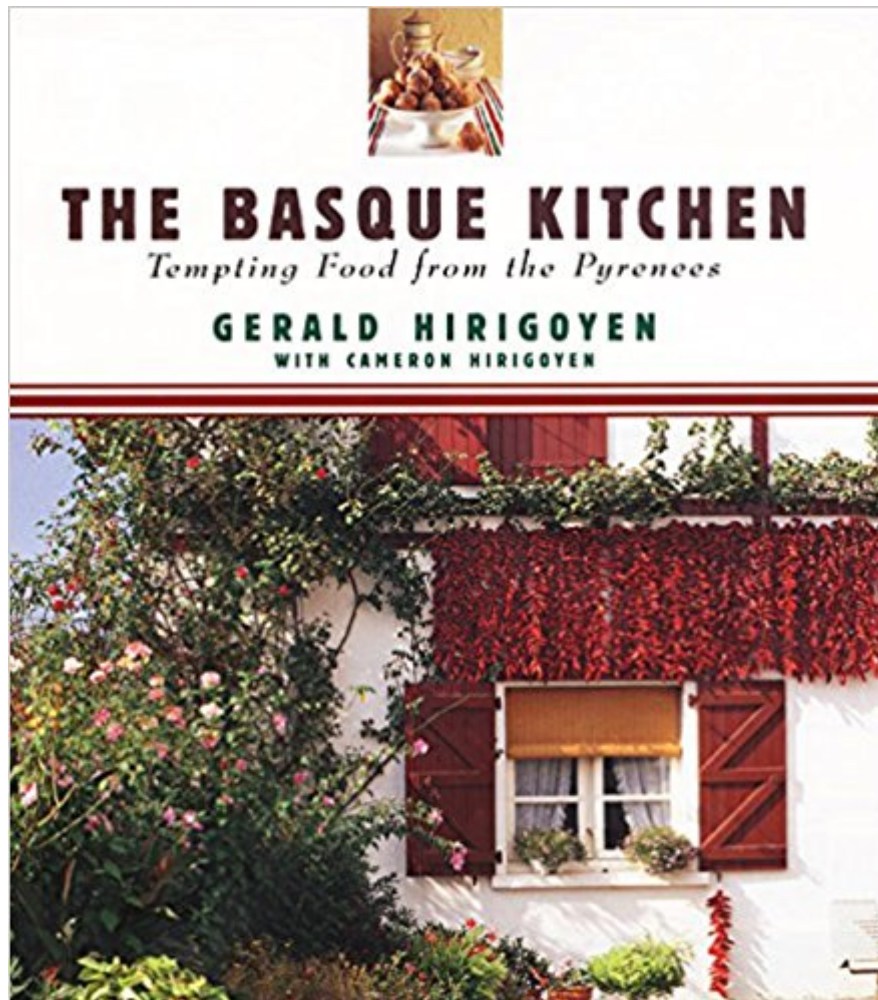




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The Basque Kitchen: Tempting Food From The Pyrenees



Synopsis

"To know how to eat is to know enough."-- Old Basque Saying Nestled among the Pyrenees, on both sides of the French-Spanish border, the Basque country is renowned as much for its fine culinary traditions as for its rugged terrain and the independent spirit of its people. Basque cooks are widely considered among the best in Europe, combining their love of fresh, simple ingredients with time-honored techniques. The joy of cooking and eating are central to Basque culture. In San Sebastián and throughout the region, men belong to cooking clubs, dedicated to the preservation of their outstanding cultural and culinary heritage. Outside the cooking societies, simple family meals turn into feasts of mammoth proportions, and everywhere conversation invariably turns to good food and the pursuit of it. The Basque Kitchen, lusciously illustrated with photographs of the Basque region as well as its famous dishes, is the first major cookbook to explore Basque cooking on both sides of the border. Basque native Gerald Hirigoyen, named one of America's best chefs by Food & Wine magazine, celebrates the food and memories of his beloved homeland. He shares recipes for his favorite Basque specialties, from traditional renditions of Salt Cod "al Pil-Pil" and Pipirriade to sumptuous soups, salads, meat, poultry, game, and of course, more seafood, all built on a bounty of fresh ingredients and carefully presented for the home cook. Hirigoyen's splendid interpretations have made his two San Francisco restaurants, Fringale and Pastis, critical favorites.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sometimes, when you are Basque, you speak English with a French accent. Sometimes, that accent will sound a little more Spanish than not, and yet you are still Basque. Such are the

complications of one of the more peculiar pockets of humanity to be found. For the country occupied by the Basque people is in both France and Spain while remaining unique unto itself. The Basque language is like no other, and no one knows where it comes from. Even Basque DNA is different than the DNA of other Europeans. Food--the taking of meals--is central to the culture. In some places it's a little more French than Spanish; in other places in Basque country, just the opposite is likely to be true. Chef and restaurant owner Gerald Hirigoyen invites the reader into The Basque Kitchen. In page after delicious-looking page, Hirigoyen presents what he most loves about the cuisine. And rather than suggest that what he so loves remain frozen in a museum of cuisine, he embraces the foods and cooking techniques he has encountered in Paris and California. His Seared Ahi Tuna Steaks with Onion Marmalade honors his uncle's tuna and onion casserole. But instead of covering a tuna steak with onions and olive oil in a casserole and cooking a long time, Hirigoyen prepares an onion marmalade, then pan sears thick ahi steaks until they are hot and rare, and serves it all on a bed of lentils. He's saying that you have to be Basque to get there, but now that we have all arrived, we're somewhere else, yet connected. And what a marvelous connection. The vast majority of the foods to be encountered between the covers of The Basque Kitchen are simple in nature, yet complex in the flavors they deliver. Potato and chorizo tortilla, an omelet of onion, potato, chorizo, salt, pepper, and parsley, gains added radiance with a little piment d'Espelette, powdered small, dried red peppers with a distinct flavor. Steamed mussels are prepared with tomatoes, crusty bread cubes, white wine, parsley, and chives. It's a dish from St.-Jean-de-Luz, over which the author proposed to his wife. Gerald Hirigoyen brings to life the foods of his youth and family, as well as foods he has created from experience and whimsy. Refusing to be confined by tradition, Hirigoyen takes inspiration from Basque tradition and demonstrates the timelessness of the Basque kitchen. The benefits for one and all are right there, page after page after page. --Schuyler Ingle

"To know how to eat is to know enough." -- Old Basque Saying

great gift

Through genetic mapping I discovered I was 100 percent basque. But what does that mean? For someone nearly half a century old, who never knew his biological lineage, there are few places to start. This book gave me sights, background info and most of all taste - and the experience of creating something unique to the culture - a kind of participation in forming a missing part of my identity. Lastly, it gave my family a priceless opportunity to share something fun and memorable. A

lifetime of discovery is potentially within these pages - not just another cookbook.

I'm a tough customer for cookbooks, but this one is a winner on many fronts for me. The recipes are exciting and different from the many other European regional cookbooks, the history is interesting, the photos are beautiful, and best of all for me, the recipes are nearly fool-proof. I delighted my friends one night recently with the lamb stew - fabulous - and my husband has made the haricots verts salad a staple in our home. The gateau basque and chocolate "rocks" are both unforgettably wonderful. I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in adding some wonderful new flavors to their kitchen.

Three years ago my son gave me a copy of *The Basque Kitchen*, written by his good friend Gerald Hirogoyen. The book has sat on my coffee table ever since, and whenever I am in the mood for something challenging and different, I have been trying out some of its recipes. Then, a few days ago, my son treated me to a memorable dinner at Gerald's restaurant in San Francisco, "Piperade," which features many of the delectable dishes described in his book, and I had a chance not only to meet this kind and gentle chef but to sample firsthand his culinary skill with genuine Basque cuisine. The restaurant itself is a delightful place, its decor simple and rustic yet warm and friendly -- like the Basque people and countryside itself. We were treated like royalty and feasted on various Basque specialties: lamb chops with roasted Macheco cheese and potatoes, steak with mushrooms, fish with asparagus, and white wine from Gerald's own vineyards in Penedes, Catalunya. Because my son and I lived in Spain for 13 years, we have visited all four of the Basque provinces, enjoying the beautiful Pyrenees mountains, the local culture, and their native foods. Lamb barbequed over an open hearth oven and bacalao (codfish) were special favorites. Having worked my way through college as a part-time cook, I thoroughly relished reading about and then experimenting with many of the recipes. I found the directions easy to follow and, while my results may not have reached the perfection of Gerald's restaurant offerings, everything I prepared was tantalizingly tasty. A true gourmet delight! My personal favorites are stuffed squid in its ink, lamb chops, steak, steamed red snapper, and honey-glazed spare ribs, to mention only a few. Anyone who has been fortunate enough to visit the Basque region will enjoy recreating some of its culinary specialties, and anyone willing to experiment with new tastes and techniques will consider *The Basque Kitchen* a real find.

I've had "The Basque Kitchen" in my small kitchen for a few weeks now. While it (book) fits perfectly, the recipes and ingredients have become second nature to me and my family. I've had a

chance to attempt a few meals and all have turned out excellent. I actually thought of never retuning to Fringale or Pastis, but my kitchen cannot compare to the service and ambience. And my wife would be a little upset not being able to taste her favorite Basque wine from Irouleguy. Having been in the Basque area a year ago, I found myself salivating over the beautiful pictures and well written stories. They have brought back the incredible memories of my trip. I just had to pull out my photo album from my trip. Pictures of Biarritz, Bayonne, St. Jean de Luz as well as the smell of the wonderfully fresh fish markets and coastal fishing villages have me calling for a return trip. Although I might skip the painful running with the bulls in Pamplona. Ouch! Enough said, I feel the book, stories, recipes, photos are excellent. A non-cooking friend of mine has been enthralled with the stories in the book and is looking forward to a trip to Pastis and Fringale. 5 STARS

A pretty book with some nice pictures, but it does little to portray veritable Basque cuisine. I am a Spaniard from Catalunya who loves good food and knows the kitchen. I was bothered by many things in this book -- his overuse of butter, for instance... Gazpacho is a dish from southern and central Spain, not the Basque country. Gazpacho does not need an "earthy" flavor as Mr. Hirigoyen suggests by adding red beets (What an aberration!). The dish "Hake San Sebastian" is unheard of anywhere in the Basque country, unless he means his own version of the traditional "Merluza en Salsa Verde". "Bacalao al Pil Pil" is one of the most ancient and sophisticated dishes of the Basque country (possibly of Europe) and is taken for granted without giving it due respect... In sum, quite a disappointing and misleading view of Basque food.

The Basque Kitchen is a beautiful book. From cover to cover, photographs offer the reader vast exposure to the Basque country and its unique cuisine. A carefully crafted introduction orients the reader to the culture in which Hirigoyen developed his talents. For years, San Franciscans have been fortunate to enjoy Hirigoyen's exceptional talents for at Fringale and Pastis. Now those who wish to can experiment with his recipes at home. I particularly like the manner in which recipes bring Basque customs to American tables by using ingredients most folks can easily gather in local markets. We can all learn from Gerald Hirigoyen and his wife how to enjoy fine food (and good wine!), not only in their restaurants, but in our own homes. This book has become my favorite gift for friends!

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