

Chef Stef's "Greek Cooking My Way" is an Instant Classic.

Review by Angeli Menta

Stefania Luxenberg is a Greek chef who took her world travels, family recipes, and passion for cooking and created a work of art with her first cookbook, "Greek Cooking My Way." Seeing as her grandmother, mother, aunts and other relatives were avid cooks, it was inevitable that Stefania one day would be handed her first apron and join her family in generations of passionate chefs. This vigor for the skill is exhibited in the carefully crafted dishes, with step-by-step recipes and guides to each entrée, as if Stefania was in your kitchen guiding you through the process.

While Chef Stefania's clientele include some of the most demanding entrepreneurs in Greece and the United States, her cuisine still hits home, making each meal seem like it was cooked by our own parents. Her simple to follow recipe pages are accompanied by beautiful photos of each dish, giving the reader not only a guide to how the dish should turn out, but all the more reason(s) for you to make the entrée before your hunger takes over and you rip out the pages to eat the photos for looking so scrumptious.

Homemade recipes usually have stories behind them, and chef Stefania uses a clever take in her storytelling. Before each chapter, a "story", written in a screenplay format is told, tying the chapter's theme into it. These stories are inspired by true events in Stefania's life, showing how she came up with such unique recipes, while at the same time being quite entertaining. This nice touch makes you appreciate her recipes a bit more, knowing how close to heart these unique dishes are to her.

Many people tend to stay away from cooking something with more than 5 ingredients because of the time and effort put into it. I myself used to fear cooking because I did not understand one bit of it. Chef Stefania encourages even the most amateur cook to pick up their whisks and whip up their first dish by providing a well thought out glossary of terms, and bonus resources such as useful culinary web sites ("The Food Scout"), a helpful search phrase guide for online recipe browsing ("The Culinary Search Phrase Fest") and a Q & A section where Stefania helps you to better understand her techniques.

My favorite recipes are ones which she emphasizes fresh herbs and vegetables, and especially those recipes she named after people who inspired the dishes. I cannot wait to try Eirini's Lobster Linguini, Stefania's Roasted Potatoes, Granny's Beef Rolls, and Olga's Moroccan Chicken.

Chef Stefania's recipes honor the name "home cooking." As you will come to find, not many of her recipes are quick to make and some have quite a few ingredients needed. Good cooking takes time, and her dishes are worth the wait. Take a bite of her home cooking, and you'll agree that her dishes will become an instant classic in your recipe collection.