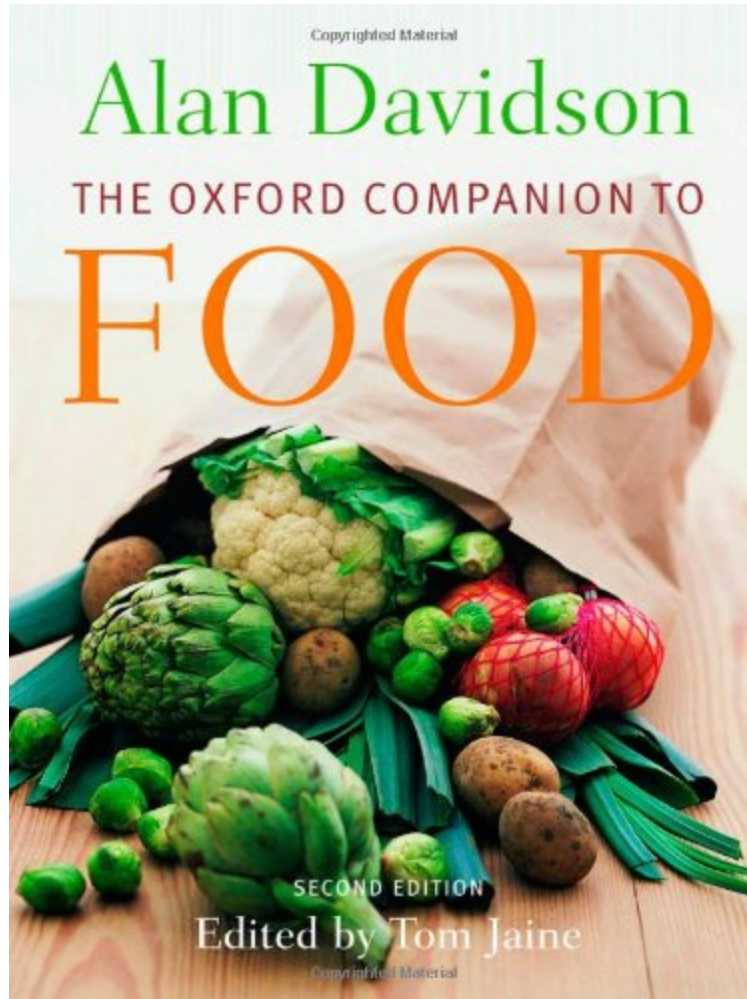


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The Oxford Companion to Food 2nd Ed

Alan Davidson

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Alan Davidson : The Oxford Companion to Food 2nd Ed before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Oxford Companion to Food 2nd Ed:

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article for almost any conceivable food, and even some things I would never think of as food! Sure you can go to Wikipedia and read about anything, but this book provides unique facts, anecdotes, and other interesting tidbits I haven't found elsewhere. For example, the entry for durian contains a delightful limerick.

Twenty years in the making, the first edition of Alan Davidson's magnum opus appeared in 1999 to worldwide acclaim. Its combination of serious food history, culinary expertise, and entertaining serendipity was recognized as utterly unique. Including both an exhaustive catalogue of the foods that nourish humankind—fruit from tropical forests, mosses scraped from adamantine granite in Siberian wastes, or ears, eyeballs and testicles from a menagerie of animals—and a richly allusive commentary on the culture of food, whether expressed in literature and cookbooks, or as dishes peculiar to a country or community, the Oxford Companion to Food immediately found distinction. The study of food and food history was a new discipline at the time, but one that has developed exponentially in the years since. There are now university departments, international societies, and academic journals, in addition to a wide range of popular literature exploring the meaning of food in the daily lives of people around the world. Alan Davidson famously wrote eighty percent of the first edition, which was praised for its wit as well as its wisdom. Tom Jaine, the editor of the second edition, worked closely with Jane Davidson and Helen Saberi to ensure that new contributions continue in the same style. The result is an expanded volume that remains faithful to Davidson's peerless work. The text has been updated where necessary to keep pace with a rapidly changing subject, and Jaine assiduously alerts readers to new avenues in food studies. Agriculture; archaeology; food in art, film, literature, and music; globalization; neuroanatomy; and the Silk Road are covered for the first time, and absorbing new articles on confetti; cutlery; doggy bags; elephant; myrrh; and potluck have also found their way into the Companion.

.com Alan Davidson's Oxford Companion to Food has been over 20 years in the assembling, but here it is; and it is superlatively worth the wait. In fact, superlatives fall silent. A huge and authoritative dictionary of 2,650 entries on just about every conceivable foodstuff, seasoning, cuisine, cooking method, historical survey, significant personage, and explication of myth, it is supplemented by some 40 longer articles on key items. Davidson himself (no relation to this reviewer) contributes approximately 80 percent of the 2,650 entries, thereby guaranteeing high levels of erudition, readability, and deadpan feline wit. Since this is a monument intended to last, nothing so frivolous as a recipe is included. A decision taken early in the development of the project to abjure issues whose significance is largely topical has also ensured an agreeable high-mindedness—nothing on those crucial but essentially dreary topics of BSE and GM foods, for example. If a fault could be found, it would only be that it's often difficult to read to the end of an entry, as the abundant cross-referencing all too easily sends one off to another entry, thence bouncing off to another, and all too soon the original is forgotten. A random alphabet of seductions might include: Aardvark, Botulism, Cup Cake, David (Elizabeth), Enzymes, Fat-Tailed Sheep, Gender/Sex and Food, Hallucinogenic Mushrooms, Ice Cream Sundae, Jewish Dietary Laws, Kangaroos, Lobsouse, Microwave Cooking, Norway, Offal, Puffin, Queen of Puddings, Roti, Scurvy, Termite Heap Mushroom (or Taillevant), Umeboshi, Vegetarianism, Washing up (a very elegant little article), sadly no X, Yin-yang, and Zabaglione. As this might show, Alan Davidson's aim, borrowed from Dumas's great Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine, that his work would appeal not only to persons of "serious character" but also those "of a much lighter disposition," is utterly fulfilled. --Robin Davidson, .co.ukFrom Library JournalThis outstanding culinary reference is destined to become a classic, and Davidson, the book's editor and the author of many of its entries, deserves the eternal gratitude of researchers everywhere. With its 2650 alphabetically arranged entries as well as 39 longer articles on staples such as rice, the range of the work is impressive. Everything from individual ingredients, cooking terms, and prepared dishes to national cuisines and cookbooks and their authors is covered. Each entry is written in a clear, engaging style often seasoned with a dash of wit. The result is a perfect complement to another standard culinary reference work, Larousse Gastronomique (Crown, 1988. reprint), edited by Jennifer H. Lang. While there is some overlap, libraries will need both titles in their reference collections since each has its own strengths. Larousse includes recipes with many of its entries and often provides cooking hints, while Oxford provides more extensive treatment of plants, herbs, and even insects used in cooking and usually has more information on national cuisines. Even when the same topic is featured, such as ancient Greek cooking, there is enough difference in information between these two sources that readers will want to consult both. Highly recommended.AJohn Charles, Scottsdale P.L., AZ Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. "No serious foodie should be without a serious food reference book. Unlike the similar Larousse Gastronomique, the Oxford text is approachable and lacks the sometimes overwhelming French bias of the former. This is great for deciphering the increasingly international American palate."--Associated Press."A valuable addition to the knowledge-seeking epicure's library."--Chicago Tribune"one of the best basic culinary reference books available."--Library Journal"One of the most honored reference works ever about food, expanded and updated in keeping with the boom in food studies."--Philadelphia Inquirer"An erudite companion, to be sure, but one that brims with good cheer...Tom Jaine attacks the subject with brio... Like the best encyclopedias, these Companions lead readers from the commonplace into the great mysteries of their subjects. Whether you like a little Siberian moss with your Dom Perignon, or a meatball with your Muscat,

there's more than enough here to satisfy even the most fastidious tastes."--Kirkus s"A food book for all time... The canon of great food literature just got one fat volume greater... A must-have for any serious food follower"--Gourmet"It is a grand book for anyone who enjoys the lore of food."--Greenwich Times"What Samuel Johnson's 18th-century dictionary was to the English language the late Alan Davidson's Oxford Companion to Food is to present-day gastronomy-- a far-reaching, erudite, and occasionally idiosyncratic guide covering more of its subject than anything published before... It's all here, everything from ancient food history to modern national cuisines."--The Wall Street Journal