

Indian Light Cooking: Delicious and Healthy Foods from One of the World's Great Cuisines

Ruth Law

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#2324468 in Books 1994-05-15 1994-05-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 6.46 x 1.22 x 9.54l, #File Name: 1556113897464 pages | File size: 73.Mb

Ruth Law : Indian Light Cooking: Delicious and Healthy Foods from One of the World's Great Cuisines before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Indian Light Cooking: Delicious and Healthy Foods from One of the World's Great Cuisines:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Indian South Beach By Net Admin / Home Chef I have been really pleased which the recipes I have tried from Indian Light Cooking and I don't find the reductions in oil and fat excessive. The recipes do use a little oil, for example to cook spices for some dishes. However in the same recipe she may suggest blanching green peppers in boiling water instead of sauteed with oil in a skillet. I am a loose follower of the South Beach Diet and these recipes are often close to the approach recommended there. Perhaps they don't taste exactly as remembered to someone who is used to them the higher fat way, but I find them very tasty and in most cases fairly easy to make. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Good flavors, but a little TOO lowfat By Darby Whether or not people like this book depends in large part on their attitudes about 'extreme low fat cooking'. I've lived for years on both sides of that particular culinary philosophical fence, and these days my attitudes are decidedly more Ben Franklinesque (re: "Moderation in all things, including moderation"). I consider myself to be firmly in the camp that believes it's perfectly fine to take reasonable steps to reduce unnecessary fats that are present to excess, provided that (a) your definition of what constitutes 'reasonable' is, in fact, reasonable; and (b) your culinary skills and

wisdom are adequate, and balanced enough, to make reasonable {gee, there's that word again} adjustments to the recipes at hand so that the resulting dish(s) won't suffer excessively. Ruth Law, in her somewhat overzealous pursuit of ultra-low-fat cooking, falls a bit short on both counts, and I'll try to briefly overview why: Reasonable Lowfat Techniques:-----* SKINLESS POULTRY: This is perfectly fine, and with the sole exception of doing whole roast chicken, I cook this way myself. There are a plethora of techniques one can use to mitigate the tendency of chicken to dry out, such as light brining (for moisture retention), marinating in yogurt or buttermilk (tenderizing of proteins), gashing/butterflying in order to speed cooking times (less time for moisture loss), braising, etc. The authoress uses some, but not all, of those techniques, with varying success.* TRIMMING EXCESS FAT: This too is perfectly reasonable (esp for stewing braising), providing you don't do it to excess ... particularly for cuts that you intend to grind, grill or roast. Anyone who's ever gotten carried away removing too much fat from, say, pork chicken destined for sausage making, or a deboned and butterflied lamb destined for stuffing, will immediately concede that it's all too easy to get carried away, to the detriment of the finished dish.* REDUCING OIL/GHEE/CREAM: This too, is fine, provided it's done within reason. Unreasonable Ultra-lowfat Techniques:-----* ELIMINATING ALL OIL: Sorry, but like it or not, nearly all dry spices have the flavors they do due to the presence of `volatile oils' and other flavonoids that rapidly dissipate or become rancid with prolonged exposure to air. Because they're naturally oil-based, they're OIL SOLUABLE, rather than water soluble, by definition. In laymans terms, that means in order to adequately release their flavor, you need to lightly toast (enough to make them brittle, but not enough to drive off the essential oils), grind (i.e., increase their surface area), and then briefly saute them in a little oil, in order to extract the essential oils from the spices so that they can, in turn, permeate the dish effectively. It's one thing to reduce the amount of oil you use in the process, but it's a different matter to eliminate the oil entirely and replace it with faux cooking spray or liquid. Sorry, but it jest doesn't work well - as anyone who's ever tried to make a good 4-alarm fat-free chili will reluctantly agree. Like it or not, you still need that minimum 1-2 tbs of oil (or however much is needed to just cover the spices when the pan is tilted), and cooking spray doesn't cut. Oil is only 100 cal per TBS, so 100-200 calories of oil for an ENTIRE dish serving 3-6 people is NOT asking too much. Additionally, not all the oil you add during the initial saute stage survives into the finished dish ... depending on how long you saute things like onions, ginger garlic (key components of making many 'curry bases'), as much as half of the oil or ghee you add will atomize and dissipate into the air ... so even adding a generous 1/4 cup in a recipe that calls for spending 10-20 mins on the initial saute (i.e., browning onions and sweating the curry spices, chilies and garlic/ginger) will probably only have 2 tbs survive into the finished dish (or curry base, if you stop at that point).* ELIMINATING ALL DAIRY FAT COCONUT MILK: It is an inescapable fact that the less milk fat present, the more likely it is that your dairy based sauce will break when exposed to heat. Trying to substitute fat free yogurt in such circumstances will usually result in either an ugly broken sauce, or a soulless dish stripped of texture and culinary joy and the essential characteristic that're supposed to define it as what it is. If you don't want to have (or serve) a yogurt sourcream based mint-cucumber sauce with your curried lamb kebabs, that's fine ... but trying to substitute fat-free yogurt into a curried fish dish (either Southern Indian or Thai) that's supposed to be finished with a modest amount of whole milk yogurt, cream, and/or coconut milk, just doesn't work. Ditto for things like shrimp scampi (Italian) - trying to substitute spray oil is silly. Rather than committing a culinary crime, it'd be better to find something else to make, because fat reductions beyond a reasonable minimum quickly exceed the point of diminishing returns and eventually undermine the dish. I'd rather have a small amount of something delicious than a large amount of something inept, unsatisfying, and more than likely, both. CONCLUSION: Reducing oil and fat in recipes is fine, provided it's within reason, done knowledgeably and skillfully, and without badly degrading the resulting dish. People who try to go beyond that are, IMNSHO, letting their anti-fat obsession brainwash them into groping for miniscule dietary scapegoats instead of looking realistically at their REAL issues with portion control and exercise habits. Ruth Law means well, but she frequently goes more than a little too far, and many of her dishes suffer to varying degrees as a result. Speaking personally, "Give me Rogan Josh, or Give Me Death !" ;-)-Addendum: Ok, all that having been said, I will concede that the authoress DOES have a few low-fat recipes which ARE tasty - primarily because they're inherently lowfat (rather than being stripped down versions of better recipes having modest amounts of fat) ... like her curried apple-chicken broth. Quirky, but recommended ... with reservations. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Great resource By Customer The recipes I've tried so far have been easy to follow and fantastic. For example, her Baingan Bharta was the best I have ever had. Madhur Jaffrey's book used to be my bible, but so far this is every bit as tasty but nowhere near as fatty. She lists a lot of nutritional information for each dish too - including calories, fat, carbs (but not fiber -- you WW people will have to make an educated guess).

For more than a decade, the author of The Southeast Asia Cookbook has traveled throughout Asia, learning about the people, their culture and cuisine. This comprehensive book takes readers step-by-step through more than 200 recipes for delicacies taken from all of India. Illustrations.

From Publishers Weekly Illinois-based cooking teacher Law set herself a Herculean task: to visit all the states of India

and obtain recipes, then refine the favorites to suit the low-fat diets now in vogue in the U.S. She made contact with the executive chef of the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay, and with housewives in Madras who cook "only" for families and friends. And so, the recipes here represent myriad styles and sources, from elaborate lamb biryani to a rustic salad of diced onion, tomato and coriander. To accomplished Indian cooks, they may seem too simple or repetitive. But to American cooks unfamiliar with the genre, the book gives quite detailed information about basic Indian ingredients, culinary techniques, useful gadgets and practical substitutions. Law recommends time-savers, such as prepared mixes, ready-made spice blends such as tandoori paste and other conveniences, though she also includes full recipes for popular spice blends, chutneys and other condiments. Reductions in fat and caloric content are due to the elimination of fresh coconut milk and clarified butter (ghee), the use of nonfat dairy products, replacing deep-fat frying with grilling or broiling, and other common-sense adaptations such as choosing only lean cuts of meat and removing skin from chicken. Many of the recipes are inspired by traditional southern Indian vegetarian cuisine, lacking only the final "tempering," or glaze of spices roasted in scads of ghee. They're usually clear and easy to follow, though introductory chapters and prefaces are gushy. "The marvelous intermingling of ginger and red pepper powder combined with the vivid colors . . . is scrumptious." But consider this book a welcome ethnic variation among the innumerable "cooking light" books--just not as the reference to all cuisines Indian. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Ruth Law is Certified Member of the International Association of Culinary Professionals and the American Institute of Wine and Food. She operates an Asian cooking school in Hinsdale, Illinois.