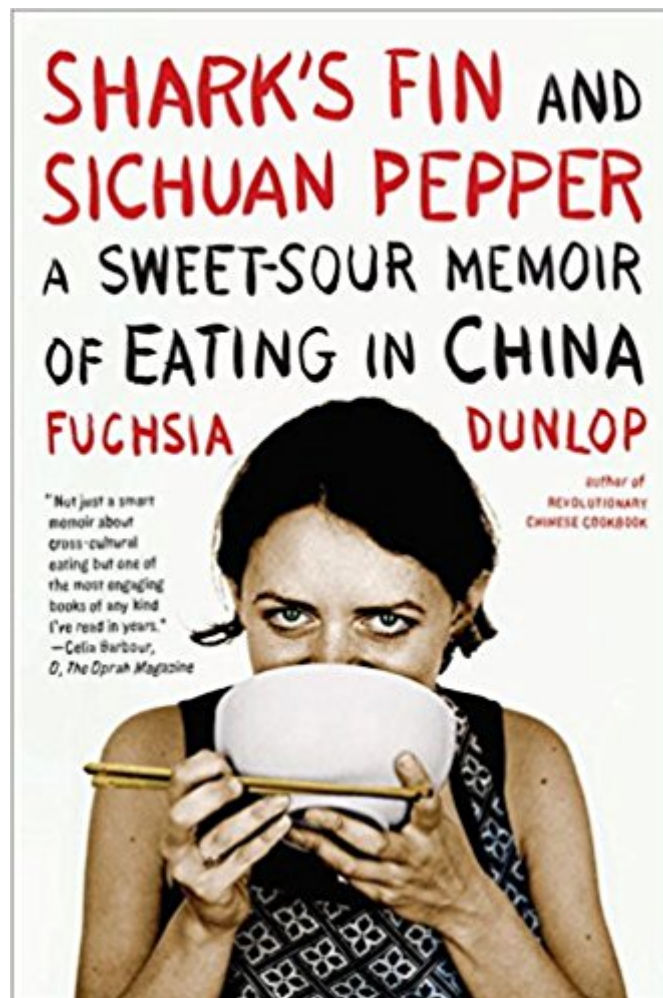




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Shark's Fin And Sichuan Pepper: A Sweet-Sour Memoir Of Eating In China



Synopsis

â œDestined, I think, to become a classic of travel writing.â •â •Paul Levy, The Observer After fifteen years spent exploring China and its food, Fuchsia Dunlop finds herself in an English kitchen, deciding whether to eat a caterpillar she has accidentally cooked in some home-grown vegetables. How can something she has eaten readily in China seem grotesque in England? The question lingers over this â œautobiographical food-and-travel classicâ • (Publishers Weekly).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the relatively few books out there that I can say, without reservation, that I completely enjoyed to the least and last ... even the somewhat whimsical final chapter about the caterpillar. Others have already reviewed the book in considerable detail, so I'll just add a few short tidbits that stood out for me in particular ...* I absolutely adore Ms. Dunlop's adventurous spirit. Theodore Roosevelt's famous "man in the arena" speech comes readily to mind.* I also admire, and heartily agree with, Ms. Dunlop's astute observations regarding certain silly and deeply ingrained western culinary biases ... such as a general dislike or aversion to rubbery textures, bone-in cuts, offal, bitter vegetables, etc. I also share her love for adventurous dining ... and her disapproval of those who conspicuously indulge in endangered species.* I also deeply appreciate her efforts to not just share her culinary travels, but also her insights, immersive personal experiences, and the socio-political context of her travels ... it greatly helps to humanize the book for the reader. Disappointingly few authors succeed in that vein. Some successful examples (of fully immersive travel memoirs) are Peter Mayle's "A Year in Provence", and Joseph Campbell's "Sake and Satori".

Both are highly recommended - the latter in particular, for those who enjoy high-brow reading. My one minor nit with this book are Ms. Dunlop's recipes ... she does a wonderful job in leading up to the recipes themselves in order to give full weight and background to her personal experience and attachment to each (something too few cookbook authors do in their headnotes). However, the recipes themselves are somewhat imprecise in places ...

Shark's Fin and Sichuan Pepper: A Sweet-Sour Memoir of Eating in China Fuchsia Dunlop, 2008 As the title says, this is not a cookbook or precisely a book on or about food, but a memoir of Fuchsia Dunlop's time in China, with the emphasis on her culinary experiences and endeavors. It covers an eventful -- both for Dunlop and for China -- fifteen years, from her first visit in 1992 to one (hopefully not the last) in 2007. Originally a Chinese region specialist for the BBC, she applied for a fellowship to study in China, with an emphasis on minority cultures, was accepted, and in 1994 showed up at Sichuan University in Chengdu. She rapidly became inebriated with the vital dining scene in Chengdu, and (to hear her tell it) largely abandoned the ostensible purpose of her studies. Fortunately for Dunlop and us, Sichuan had both a deserved reputation for being slow and casual (things were possible for a foreigner there that would not have been in more modern cities), and a rich and highly developed style of cookery. Far from being the simple blisteringly hot excess of chilis that it has the reputation for in the West, Sichuan cooking as practiced in Chengdu emphasizes a careful balance of flavors and ingredients, with hundreds of unique flavors and textures; no more a one-note anvil of chilis and the lip-numbing Sichuan peppercorn than Indian food is a single all purpose "curry powder" blend. We have a few chapters devoted to her increasing love affair with Sichuan food and life, and her gradual accommodation to the variety of ingredients, from 'offal' to rabbit heads to insects.

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