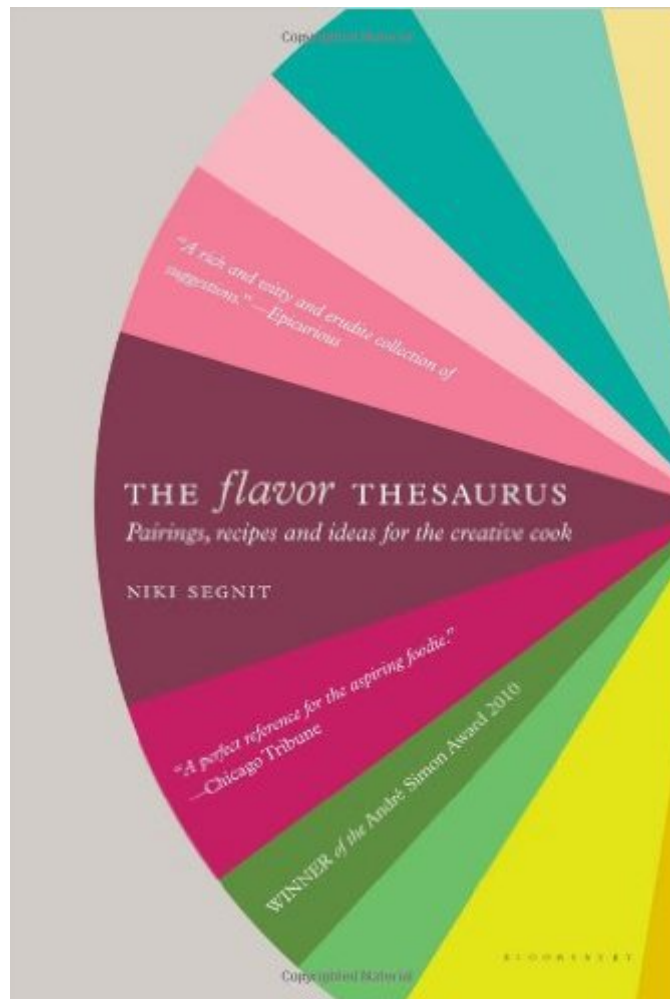


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The Flavor Thesaurus: A Compendium Of Pairings, Recipes And Ideas For The Creative Cook



Synopsis

Niki Segnit's essential culinary reference book is now available with an award-winning, internationally acclaimed design. As appealing to the novice cook as to the experienced professional, it will immeasurably improve your cooking-and it's the sort of book that might keep you up at night reading. Beautiful, entertaining, and exhaustively researched, this is a globetrotting collection of flavor pairings as told by a writer with a discerning palette and an entertaining, original voice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book wasn't at all what I expected, but after I accepted it for what it is I really began to enjoy it. What I Didn't Like Another reviewer found it to be like a dictionary in its definitions and details. I found it not at all like that. In fact, it is entirely subjective even by the author's own attestation. The "color wheel" of flavors I found to be useless. The copy without a seam from the binding is not even in color. Furthermore, the typeface on that copy is so small as to be unreadable for me without a magnifying glass. Aesthetics aside, the flavor wheel seems primarily presented to demonstrate that the author can cleverly devise a circular table of food flavors. There is nothing stemming from the wheel that will help you determine which flavors go together. It's not anything like an artist's color wheel, with those associated concepts. What I Came To Enjoy The author's rather creative idea was to compile a list of 99 foods and/or food types. The and/or is because some of the 99 are extremely well defined, such as "Lemon", while others are very general, such as "Hard Cheese". Regardless, those are how the author sees the universe of food, and as she says, it is her point of view from

which she is writing. Having defined the 99 foods, she set about to locate examples of each one occurring with the other 98. To this end she seems to have spent a rather inordinate amount of time in London pubs, but there are examples from other places and even from other countries. She wasn't able to locate an example for every pair, which is not surprising, although I suppose pubs are where you might find people who would try anything once so that particular bias is explained.

I was keen to get my hands on this book as I was fed up with the idea that the hobby cook's role is one of 'follower of recipes'. The primary stated aim of the book was what you might imagine - to examine pairings of certain flavours. An admirable aim tackling a poorly represented segment of the market, and although I feel Ms. Segnit has made a fair start in this area, I'm not convinced she has achieved what she set out to do. I will start with an example, because I can see from the number of people who have found the non-5-star reviews helpful that there are either a lot of fans of this book (itself worth bearing in mind - mine is only one opinion) or a lot of friends of Segnit. This first example, a full entry (i.e. not a snippet of one), is one that I picked out at random: 'Pea & Oily Fish: According to New England tradition, gardeners make sure to plant their peas by Patriot's Day (19 April), in the hope that they'll be ready for the traditional Independence Day feast of poached salmon, fresh green peas and new potatoes. Strawberry shortcake is served for dessert.' Now, this is vaguely interesting. It tells me about a culinary tradition in a part of the world I have never visited. What it doesn't tell me is why that combination might be good, how good it is, what kinds of oily fish might go better with peas, what it is about the flavour of peas that might complement, offset, balance, overpower, augment or improve the flavour of the fish, etc. The book is full of this kind of entry. However, for the sake of balance I would also like to mention that the book does occasionally present some very interesting information on certain ingredients and flavours: their history, what separates them from similar ingredients, etc.

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