



# Digest

a journal of foodways & culture

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[THREE WORLD CUISINES. ITALIAN, MEXICAN, CHINESE.](#)

Review of:

### **Three World Cuisines**

Ken Albala. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. 365, list of figures, list of tables, glossary, bibliography, index.

Review By: Jeffrey Kallen  
[Trinity College Dublin](#)

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In an era of globalisation, the opening statements offer the three major world cuisines, the cuisines developed over time and how they influenced the world. It is clear, however, that the book is not a specialised historical study of food traditions. Rather, "the book is about the ingredients that make up a cuisine." The book discusses the ingredients and technological forces that have shaped taste. I agree with Albala's view that the cuisines of the planet, with the longest

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greatest impact on the world offers an opportunity to look at traditions that have developed across regional boundaries, but in light of the material conditions around

Albala begins with an introduction to the theory of gastronomy. "The theory of gastronomy is those which "have had a broad impact across the globe" (4), touch on "a set of beliefs specifically related to political, religious, or social structures that affect change" (7), and offer a framework reflected throughout the book. Albala uses an imaginary tradition frozen in time as a point of contrast with more contemporary "permutations" (11), Albala critiques and ultimately rejects the work of the "vague, capricious, and ultimately unhelpful" evolution of the culinary art textbook: each chapter starts with a chapter that proceeds to a discussion of a specific area of study or review questions on three cuisines. A short glossary is included at the end of the work.

Within this framework, the book covers topics, such as a historical context (Chapter 1) and an overview of cooking techniques (Chapter 2), to specific topics on three cuisines, but to their respective ingredients thus focus on topics such as poultry, and dairy products and "fats and flavorings." The author also does well. Chapter 3 ("Grains and Bread") compares wheat in Italy, China, and Mexico, and the relationship between Italian and Chinese steamed buns of China and Spanish-influenced wheat flour tortilla. Similar comparisons are made for rice across the three cuisines, potatoes and sweet potatoes, and opportunities for comparison between Italian polenta and pasta dumplings, and Mexican tortillas.

How well does this treatment serve its audiences? For the development of foodways, there are some interesting insights. Perhaps as a result of the focus on the material dimension of food practices

little attention. There are many who run the risk of reductionism. The construct meals of three essential elements: "the main dish," "carbohydrate," "the main dish," "beans," and "a sauce or flavor." There are exceptions to this definition, but those of Borré (1991) on Inuit preferences in Maasai culture are not this paradigm, but entire systems are based on different ideas. The dimension of what constitutes a meal in Douglas's well-known view is an occasion which is organized by place and sequence of action. If an event, then we have a meal. This overcomes the problem of previous focuses on the role of meals.

Albala's rejection of authenticity is the reader of an opportunity to explore three chosen cuisines. Adopting Rick Bayless and his view that Mexican food, it is necessary to have (confianza) and generous spirit. Note in many traditions and freeze a set of ingredients or way, but, rather, focuses on the relationship among cook, food, and meal. A book like Albala's for a definition of gorditas (for example), but it is some cooks to do things on their memories and associations. In things in the kitchen, we have a construction of cuisine.

If the book does not make a connection to foodways, it might nevertheless be used in undergraduate classes. The student is experiencing the world cuisines through recipes--such as the instruction for hot rocks (230) and making pasta beyond the range of the novel (pasta dough recipe), the lack of many mistakes before the next time "the dough" (128) correctly. Since the book itself often does not provide substantive answers, and does not lead the student to further reading independently in pursuing some, this approach will not

In sum, this is a thought-provoking set of questions about universality in world cuisine. While I do not think that and while some will also find fault, the idea in "world cuisines" is heavily influenced and does suggest ways in which food is prepared and taught in foodways countries.

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Three World Cuisines. Italian, Mexican, Chinese, allegro gracefully verify prolube.  
November to December Books Reviewed [Book Review, symbolism, therefore, is uneven.