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Ontario Garlic: The Story From Farm To Festival



Synopsis

The taste of Ontario garlic is as rich and varied as its history. Used mainly for medicinal purposes in the nineteenth century, people turned up their noses at the aromatic bulb as it became associated with new immigrants. The once acceptable ingredient became undesirable in church and school--kids who smelled of garlic were sent home. Pioneering chefs, farmers and a wave of cultural diversity have brought the zesty allium into the mainstream, making it a gourmand's go-to spice, celebrated at nine festivals across the province. Toronto Garlic Festival founder Peter McClusky serves up garlic's long journey from central Asia to its now-revered place in the hearts and dishes of Ontarians. Growing tips and forty recipes bring Ontario garlic from farm to festival to feast.

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Customer Reviews

Fun (and pretty weird) broad history, along with personal vignettes of cooks and eaters. And a fascinating reminder of how perceptions change of what's low/high status. Informative chapters on the science of garlic and practical stuff like how to grow, store and cook. Not totally focused on Ontario garlic in particular, so good for anyone garlic-oriented. Not so sure about the dessert

chapter (garlic brownies! garlic ice cream! What?), but I'll give 'em a try.

When I picked up this book I expected it to be a collection of folksy tales and grandma's recipes, which would have been fine. Upon reading it there is a lot more here, and the author from time to time gets beyond the confines of this genre to make broader comments about social relations and other "big" topics. When reading the interesting introduction about the history of garlic's migration from central asia to dinner tables across the world, I couldn't help think there is a sequel here waiting for the author to write.

What an interesting, well-written and informative read about a world-famous spice shrouded in myth. Author Peter McClusky, a Canadian garlic farmer, entrepreneur and garlic historian, whose ostensible focus is on garlic's impact in his home province of Ontario also covers a lot of foreign ground exploring the exotic route that brought garlic to Ontario. McClusky takes readers on a culinary and socio/historical tour following garlic's origins from the Tien Shan Mountains of Central Asia to the farmers' markets of Toronto making a pit stop in Transylvania to examine garlic's most celebrated properties as a vampire repellent. McClusky, using the methods of a social historian, examines garlic's entry and impact in Canadian ethnic communities. It was fascinating to read about the "garlic divide" between Anglo and Franco Canada and the negative stereotypes associated with so-called garlic eaters who were mainly eastern and southern European immigrants. In addition to being an informative book, McClusky is a likable narrator who describes a mid-life career change where he swapped the office towers of NYC for the flat plains of Ontario garlic fields. After mastering the hard work of growing garlic, McClusky immerses himself in the eccentric world of Ontario garlic obsessives comprised of farmers, chefs and garlicphiles and the book is filled with wonderful and interesting anecdotes from these garlic-loving Canadians. The recipes at the end of the book are worth the price alone. McClusky has a curated selection of garlic recipes and if you read it to the end you will be rewarded with the show stopping recipe for dark chocolate and roasted garlic ice cream.

Intelligent, funny, and useful in one's everyday existence. (What would we do without garlic!) The only folks who won't like this book are the undead...

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