

# Gourmet

## 2000s Archive



LESLEY PORCELLI

# BOOK REVIEW: BEYOND THE GREAT WALL

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Everyone here who tested recipes from this book—the second selection for our cookbook club—was captivated by their profound diversity, and we think you will be, too.



[Exclusive menus](#) by the book (*registration required*)

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The sheer heft of *Beyond the Great Wall: Recipes and Travels in the Other China* (Artisan; 376 pages; \$40) conveys as much about the book as its color-saturated photos, its evocative prose, and its glossary, which covers everything from *amaranth* to *yak*. This is a serious accomplishment on the part of husband-and-wife team Jeffrey Alford and Naomi Duguid, though it's not their first; their years of field research and photography have made for deeply textured books. This one—a love letter to some of the most remote tribes in the most far-flung regions of China, including Inner Mongolia, the Silk Road oases of Xinjiang and Qinghai, and the terraced hills of Yunnan and Guizhou—is no exception. But there is a risk inherent in putting out a cookbook like this: People might think it should live on a coffee table rather than on a kitchen counter. That would be a shame, in this case, because the recipes are extremely user-friendly and, much of the time, stunningly simple. And yet even the basic recipes here are a revelation, since the outlying parts of China are just not that familiar to most of us.

The surprises keep coming as you work your way through the book, from the types of foods that appear—flatbreads, kebabs, and salads aren't typically associated with China—to the familiarity of ingredients; tomatoes and bell peppers aren't exotic, yet tossed with nothing but cilantro and salt (the vegetables exude all the dressing they need), they come together in an *entirely novel dish*. You'll have to search out Sichuan peppercorns for the *Lisu spice-rubbed pork*, but that will be the extent of the labor involved; this roast goes into the oven after about 30 seconds of prep time and emerges one hour later with a gorgeous fragrance.

Alford and Duguid are culinary anthropologists, not cooking-show hosts, so there are quite a few esoteric and involved recipes as well. (If you've ever yearned for a recipe for goat broth, look no further.) But the authors carefully guide the reader through the cooking process, and even a beginner can tackle, say, boiled dumplings from scratch. Two different fillings are wisely included, so after all that work, a nice variety of juicy, subtly flavored dumplings bob to the surface of the boiling water to greet you. And even though you might be looking down through beads of perspiration, you'll be very happy to see them.

**Selected recipes: (registration required)**

[Ginger and Carrot Stir-Fry](#)

[Hani Soy Sprout Salad](#)

[Lisu Spice-Rubbed Roast Pork](#)

[Market-Day Omelet](#)

[Silk Road Tomato-Bell Pepper Salad](#)

[Sticky Rice](#)

[Tibetan Bone Broth](#)

[Tibetan Ratatouille](#)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROMULO YANES

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