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Lumiere



Synopsis

In French, lumi re means 'light'; in its purest, most transcendent form. In Vancouver, Lumiere is synonymous with Rob Feenie's almost electric food. With its brilliant combination of European sophistication, Asian simplicity, and North American resourcefulness, the cuisine of Lumiere has captured the attention of food lovers all over the world, who rank Lumi re among the pioneering restaurants of North America. As inventive as it is approachable, Feenie's food ranges from Herb-Crusted Beef Tenderloin with Chanterelles and a Shallot and Caper Jus to Mascarpone Risotto and Walnut Cake with Maple Ice Cream. Illustrated with over 100 luminous photographs, this chef's resplendent debut showcases all the luster that has earned Lumi re its name.

Book Information

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: Ten Speed Press (2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1580083765

ISBN-13: 978-1580083768

Product Dimensions: 12.2 x 8.2 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,552,604 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #114 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International > Canadian #1987 in Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Cooking Education & Reference > History #7755 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Nutrition

Customer Reviews

A native of Vancouver, British Columbia, Rob Feenie has cooked across North America with chefs such as Charlie Trotter, Daniel Boulud, and Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Settling back in Vancouver, Feenie opened Lumiere to critical acclaim. Between shifts at the restaurant, he stars in the Food Network's New Classics with Chef Rob Feenie.

'Lumiere', written by Rob Feenie on the recipes of his British Columbian restaurant of the same name is a competent write-up of the restaurant's great recipes, mostly invented by chef Feenie. This means that in spite of the great recipes, it is a mediocre cookbook for the rest of us. The book is very

good if you happen to share the same seasons and produce of Vancouver and you happen to be a dedicated foodie who enjoys reproducing the dishes of great restaurants. Unfortunately, that is a relatively small population. The book should also appeal to those who are especially fond of seasonal eating, as the chapters of recipes are organized by season and by tasting menu. In some ways, this book is very similar to 'The Arrows Cookbook' covering the cuisine of a seasonally oriented restaurant in Maine; however the Maine restaurateur / authors transcend their Restaurant cookbook genre by adding great material on their personal truck garden which produces most of the seasonal vegetables for the restaurant. While I am certain chef Feenie invented most of the savory recipes in the book, the Acknowledgments give us the sense that he had little to do with the writing of the book. As usual, there is the battalion of editors, book designers, and recipe testers, but there is also Marnie Coldham who assembled the recipes and adapted them for home preparation. There is also Nathan Fong who 'whipped the manuscript into shape'. In addition to inventing most of the recipes, I suspect Feenie did little writing aside from the brief headnotes to each major recipe. Lumiere is very much of a 'haute cuisine' restaurant, similar to Chicago's Tru and Charlie Trotter's and to Napa Valley's French Laundry. It seems to concentrate on fixed price tasting menus, of which there are three for each of the four seasons. All recipes in the book (except for the pantry items in the 'Basics' chapter) are on one of these twelve tasting menus. One result is that the portion sizes for these recipes are relatively small. And, it strikes me that these are the perfect sort of recipes to use on 'Iron Chef', as they give the judges just two or three bites so that at least four portions can be made from the materials usually needed for two conventional portions. And, lo and behold, Chef Feenie recently won his competition on 'Iron Chef America' against the very formidable Masaharu Morimoto. When I saw that the Foreword to this book was written by Charlie Trotter, I suspected this would be an 'Advertisement for Myself' kind of book with recipes similar to great 18th century furniture rather than the more immediately useful instructions for bookcases, Adirondacks chairs, and compost boxes. Feenie has learned much from Trotter and both are great chefs, but this is the kind of book which is much nicer to look at and read than to try to cook from, unless you happen to own a high end restaurant and don't mind a little recipe piracy now and then. To be perfectly clear, let me say that that not all recipes in this book are complicated and not all recipes include expensive ingredients or involved stocks, sauces, or glazes, but many do. For starters, many recipes include varieties of cheese of which I have never heard, and I have heard of a lot of cheeses. And, many of these cheeses are specifically made with raw milk. It also manages to use dried pasta shapes I have never heard of. Other unusual or expensive ingredients are ice wine (a Canadian speciality), poussin (very small chicken), feuillantine (Not even in the Larousse

Gastronomique!!!), tobiko (flying fish roe), veal sweetbreads (thymus glands), black truffles (oh my). Certainly I am having just a little fun at Chef Feenie's expense, but I still find this book merely a 'good' expensive restaurant cookbook and not a great one such as Thomas Keller's two weighty volumes. 'The French Laundry Cookbook' went off the top of the scale for providing the aesthetic rationale behind tasting menus and the culinary rationale behind supporting local artisanal suppliers. At best, Feenie is saying 'I can do that too'. Similarly, 'Bouchon' ranks high as a reference on recipes for high-end bistro cuisine dishes. Feenie doesn't seem to have any such terroir anchor, as he uses ingredients from around the world. He avoids olive oils (which carry hints of their birthplace) by replacing them with the very bland grapeseed oils, but he calls for things such as fresh Roquefort cheeses, which must come from France. Not exactly in the Vancouver terroir. It is almost funny to see Yukon Gold potatoes crop up in every other recipe as the starch of choice. Certainly a strong advertisement for the gourmet cachet of these Canadian spuds. The use of grapeseed oil is certainly an interesting change, after having read hundreds of books on Mediterranean cooking sopping with olive oil, it's almost refreshing to find an oil based cuisine which does not use olive oil. He also uses lots of butter, as befitting his northern French influences. At \$35, you will not feel cheated if you buy this book and you know what to expect. The recipes are interesting, the section on Basics has lots of good recipes for glazes and infused oils, and the dishes have plenty of 'Wow' factor if you use them to entertain. It just does not have a lot of value outside the world of professional chefs and foodies. Recommended with reservations.

I gave myself this cookbook for Christmas....I couldn't resist. The book is sheer poetry with wonderful full colour photos of dishes. Feenie divides the book up into the following sections: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, and Basics. Under each he provides you with three different menus to choose from: Vegetarian, Seafood, and Signature. The recipes are broken up as follows: about the recipe, to prepare, to assemble, and wine. He offers many tips throughout and his various musings on food which are a delight to read. You just have to read Feenie's introduction to get a feel for this amazing book. He starts off saying, "Five years ago I opened Lumiere because I had something to say. For me, food is conversation. Why and what I cook are my passions and beliefs, shared with anyone who cares to listen. Growing up, I listened to my mother's food and heard it tell me how much she cared. It was a language I wanted to speak...." and he continues to speak to us throughout this wonderful book. This is now my favorite cookbook of all time and makes me proud to be Canadian!

Having eaten at Rob Feenie's restaurant several times and having cooked from this cookbook, I can say that while you probably don't want to cook from this on a daily basis, a three or four course menu is very doable on a Sunday if you are well organized and a decent home cook. However, quite a number of recipes can be made by themselves on most nights. It's a beautifully put together cookbook with gorgeous pictures and cute anecdotes, Feenie's easygoing personality comes through nicely. I took away one star for the poorly organized index (why beef shortribs is under M for meat and not B for Beef is beyond me) and the occasional typo within the recipes themselves.

If you're looking for recipes created by a chef instead of those cookie-cutter recipe books, this is the book for you. No matter where you are you'll find that the seasonal produce follows you (for example, berry fruits come before stone fruits, which come before the apple family (apples, pears etc.). It's not rocket science, berry fruits come before stone fruits no matter where you are in the world. If you are fond of seasonal eating, and you should be, buy this book. If you enjoy reproducing the dishes of the great restaurants, buy this book. If you liked The French Laundry or Bouchon, you'll like this!

Lumiere is a beautiful book with some interesting recipes ... BUT like many cookbooks published by aspiring celebrity chefs many small, yet critical details have been overlooked or omitted such as number of baking pans needed, sizes of pans, etc.. Read, learn from this book ... but be forewarned graphic perfection does not always translate into culinary perfection unless you are an experienced cook who can recognize the books shortcomings.

This book is one of many I could describe the same way. Great recipes, great cooking, great presentation. Not practical. Yes, I can cook this way, but not in real life. If I want a book for only 6 times a year when I want to spend excessive amounts of time on, I can do it. I can do Charlie Trotter. I just don't want to. Better to look at than use on a regular basis.

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