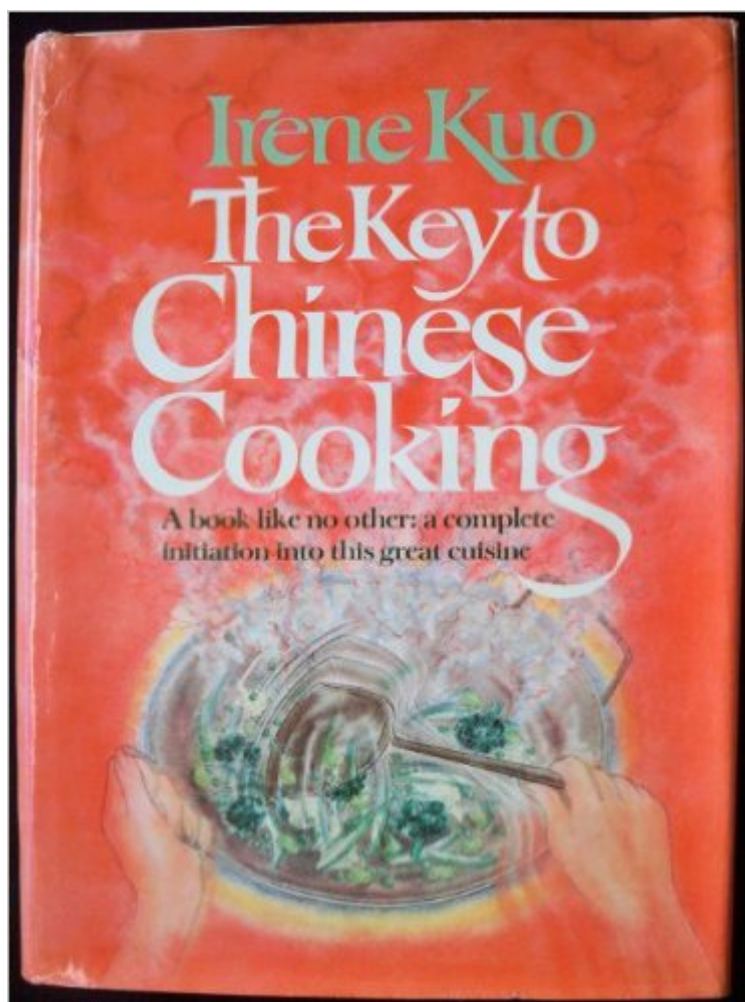


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# The Key To Chinese Cooking



## Synopsis

Illus. throughout. 6 1/8 x 9 1/4. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 532 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (79 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #184,270 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #71 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Asian Cooking > Chinese](#) #2233 in [Books > Cookbooks, Food & Wine > Regional & International](#)

## Customer Reviews

I've had *The Key to Chinese Cooking* for 27 years; it was one of the first 5 cookbooks in my collection. I now own somewhere around 300 cookbooks, but this is still among the best. Kuo got everything right. In an era when no one had heard of dim sum or regional Chinese cuisine, she included long sections about ingredients, techniques (including improvisations when you lack authentic equipment), and cooking styles. Every technique introduced includes introductory recipes, such as steamed lemon chicken in the steaming section. There are also lots and LOTS of recipes for every conceivable category, and it probably goes without saying that they're uniformly excellent. The book falls open to spicy pork with peanuts; hot and sour soup; tangerine peel chicken; shrimp fried rice. But what sets this apart is the writing and instructional style. Kuo has become my touchstone for friendly, technical writing. She knows the reader hasn't deep-fried a duck before, so she gives careful detailed steps that somehow manage to both reassure you and keep you moving. It's never too much information, making you feel as though a task is daunting. I was lucky to find this book when I still a cooking beginner, because I credit the author with making me unafraid to try new recipes and techniques. My only criticism is that her estimates of serving portions are unreliable. Sometimes she'll say that a recipe serves 4, when served with rice, and we get just a meal for two. That's the case for one of our favorites, chicken in black bean sauce. (I must have a dozen such recipes. This is the one I use.) Overall though - this is one of my favorite cookbooks. Highly

recommended.

The eleven other reviews of this remarkable book (as of early June, 2004) all give this book 5 stars, an equally remarkable achievement. As one of those eleven people said, this is truly the Julia Child of Chinese cookbooks. I've been using it now since 1978 and there are still hundreds of recipes I haven't tried because the ones that I \*have\* cooked are so wonderful that I go back to them time after time. Most of the recipes are reasonably simple, with ingredients that can be found in even the most modest Asian market, or even in a Safeway these days, but some of them are a lot easier to make if you live in San Francisco (as I did for a number of years) and can find \*everything\* she calls for without undue trouble. If I were marooned for life on a well-stocked desert island, this would be one of my two cookbooks, Julia being the other one. As wonderful as Italian food is, and as great as Marcella Hazen's Italian cookbook is, Chinese cuisine (with its many regional diversities) is far richer and with far more subtleties -- only French cuisine is its equal. Haunt the used book stores, or on-line sources, and try to get this unparalleled book.

I lived in China eleven years; studied Chinese there and taught English. I love cooking and love Chinese food, but was dismayed that after years of attempting to copy my friends' cooking there, the results were barely remotely the same. (They don't use measuring spoons there, and few of my friends had a gift of teaching.) Finally I remembered this cookbook that my mother fell in love with and had given as a gift to each of her daughters, and on a trip home for the summer, dug mine out of my attic boxes, and brought it back to China so I could learn to cook! Result: I did, and my friends there finally began to enjoy and even compliment my Chinese cooking. And one friend whose mother never taught her to cook learned staying weekends at my apartment, reading the cookbook (she was an English major), and then following the clear directions. I gave her a copy for her wedding present. She is now a good cook, too! The thing of the book is, Irene Kuo is a gifted teacher, and a very good writer to boot. If you like cookbooks, you could read this one just for sheer enjoyment. She presents, then totally demystifies key concepts that I had suspected I was missing but couldn't guess at. She gives you confidence. And yes, the recipes are very authentic, though they don't cover every region's cooking. It's so helpful that she lists the ingredients with their Chinese names, though in China these names can vary a tiny bit regionally, and so I'm thinking they may in the States, too (I still live abroad.)

My husband is from China, he tells me I cook like his mother now. The copy I have is old and

broken I've used it so much. I was hoping to get another copy. It's a great cookbook. Cooking techniques and recipes are explained in depth. There is also a glossary of ingredients so you can figure out what something is and where to buy it.

I bought this book 20 years ago, the year I moved out on my own. I'm disappointed that I can't buy a new copy, plus a copy for each of my daughters (both born in China); it's hard to believe such a fantastic cookbook is out of print. Ms. Kuo not only offers many unusual and authentic recipes I've never seen elsewhere (e.g., Winter Melon Soup cooked and served in the carved Melon, and the best Steamed Pork Buns I've ever had), her directions are exceptionally clear, and she explains each technique and how each dish is traditionally served. And don't miss the explanation of how to cook Peking duck (including using a bike pump to make the skin crispy!)

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