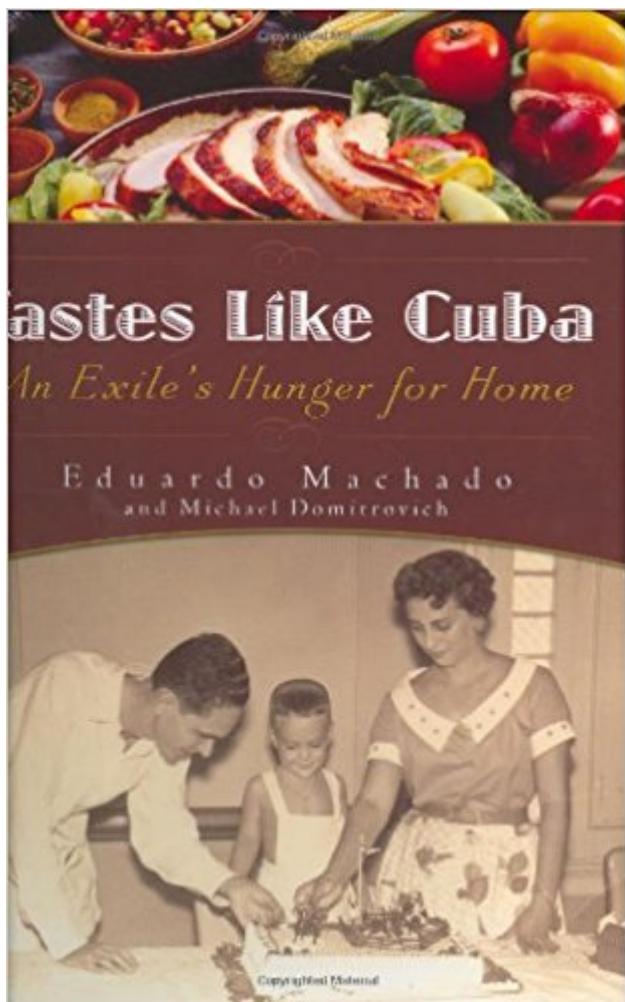


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Tastes Like Cuba: An Exile's Hunger For Home



Synopsis

Tastes Like Cuba is the moving account of an exile searching for the identity he's lost and becoming someone else in the process.". An internationally acclaimed playwright, Eduardo Machado has grappled with questions of identity, loss and resistance throughout his life and work. He has more than any other playwright been able to convey the experiences of both the Cubans who chose to stay in Cuba and those who chose to leave. His fearless style and unabashed politicism in the face of dissent have made him a controversial figure to the Cubans and Americans on opposite sides of an intense conflict. In his memories and in his more recent travels to Cuba, he has found that the most natural means of connecting with today's Cuban experience is through food. Machado says, "When I taste something I haven't tasted in twenty years, I can't resist that connection to the past, to the conflict, to the identity that is mine. I know the feeling as I taste the flavor. There are no arguments, no political controversies, just the real sensation. If it's that complex, it must be Cuban." To any exile, food represents not only the lost comfort of home, but the best chance to reclaim it. The stories of Machado's life; from child of privilege in pre-Revolutionary Cuba; to exile in Los Angeles; to actor, director, playwright and professor in New York; are interleaved with recipes for the meals that have enriched him. Every recipe has been updated for the modern home cook, enabling us to recreate the flavors of traditional Cuban dishes such as Machado's favorite roast pork and his grandfather's arroz con pollo, as well as the "cuisine" of necessity he encountered in 1960's suburban America: Velveeta, SPAM, and other processed wonders. What emerges is a larger picture of what it means to be a Latino in America today. For anyone who has ever longed for a home, real or imagined, Tastes Like Cuba delivers a fascinating story of two worlds; and one delectable life. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

In this memoir, playwright and professor Machado (Kissing Fidel) tells the story of his family's escape from Cuba and their assimilation into the U.S. Although his tale features a familiar triumph-over-adversity storyline, it distinguishes itself in descriptions of Cuban delicacies, complete with recipes. Recalling a hasty dinner of swordfish escabeche enjoyed in the midst of the Revolution, he writes, "Something about looking down at a golden slab, cutting into the thick flesh... made the meal feel like a luxury." To better share the tastes of home, the author studded the book with recipes for favorites like Roast Pork, heady with garlic and citrus, and Biztec Empanizado, a tropical country-fried steak that's surprisingly light. Though the vivid food writing captivates, the memoir can drag in long reporterly passages, and rankles with a few too many glib assessments: "The shock of dad's departure was that it changed how we understood the very concept of family." Nevertheless, the luxuriant descriptions of family meals, and the obvious joy Machado takes in recounting them, make this memoir a tasty read. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Extraordinary, moving, a great read whether you come from Cuba or Greece. -- Olympia Dukakis

I bought the book as a cookbook, not realizing what a wonderful story the book contained. The story told of the Cuban influx to America is an untold story. I found the human interest part of the history the greatest lesson learned. I have lived in Florida since 1960, but I was born in 1959 so I was not old enough to appreciate what was going on at the time of the fall of Old Cuba. The book's original purchase purpose as a book on Cuban cooking instead started a desire to learn more about my neighbors and where they came from. It is a history that deserves to be told and this book does an outstanding job of presenting it. I am so glad I found and purchased the book, the lessons learned will stay with me for a lifetime. And as a side, I did try a few of the recipes in the book, the recipe with the family story behind it made of a very enriching meal for both the mind and the soul as well as the stomach.

This is one bitter man with a bitter story. I did still find him and his story fascinating. And his description Cuba were vivid. The newspaper soup recipe was quite delicious.

The writing is so vivid and honest I could taste the recipes, bask in the warmth and colorful beauty of the tropics, and feel the defiant fear of a refugee consumed by childhood memories while ferociously trying to build new ones. What set this book apart from other tales of exile is the writing style, more like music than journalism.

The first half of the book is worth reading -- his memories of his childhood in Cuba, and the family's experiences when they first arrive in America. Unfortunately, the book disappoints in the second half. The author (Eduardo Machado) comes across as unappreciative and annoying when he complains about his family and the fact that his parents sent him and his brother to Miami on their own through Operation Peter Pan (Pedro Pan) -- he should be thankful that his parents did what they had to do to get them out of a Communist country so that they could have a better life. It is quite obvious toward the end of the book that he himself is a communist sympathizer. In addition, he writes about his family at the beginning, but towards the end he leaves the reader wondering what happened to his brother, or his cousins -- that may have been a bit more interesting than what the second half of the book became. I recommend it for the first half of the book and the recipes, but you can quit reading half way through.

Eduardo Machado wrote a wonderful memoir of his early life in Cuba, to his young adult life in Miami and then Los Angeles, and then in his later years in New York and back in California. His food recollections of his early days of Newspaper Soup, Bistec Empanizado, Arroz con Pollo, etc., he describes in such delicious detail. His journey from Cuba to Hialeah and then to Miami pulled at my heart-strings. When him and his family got to Los Angeles, he wrote about many incidents. One in particular affected me very much. Him and his family went shopping at the Central Market in the valley. They were trying to find the foods they had grown up with in Cuba. I could go on with this review, but in short, this book was one of the best memoirs in the food/immigration subjects. Eduardo, thank you very much for a wonderful, tasty, and can't put it down read. Bravo!

Eduardo Machado is an excellent story teller. His skill is descriptive like a tapestry. It has given me a great insight into what life in Cuba was before, during, and after Castro. Machado's personal

account of his family's survival in the face of tragedy is extraordinary.

This is a well written book not just about recipes but about the why and how of each of the famously Cuban recipes featured here. You get a recipe book and a history of the Cuban diaspora in one.

A QUAINT, AND TOUCHING MEMOIR, WITH RECIPES THAT CHARM ANY TABLE.

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