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COOKBOOK REVIEW

With ‘Broad Fork,’ chef offers recipes with a Southern accent

By **T. Susan Chang** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT NOVEMBER 10, 2015

Achef and partner at several Athens, Ga., restaurants, Hugh Acheson is pursuing a familiar course for the modern-day food personality: entrepreneurship, judging on food shows, and a handful of cookbooks, of which “The Broad Fork” is the most recent. It’s a seasonal book from a Southern viewpoint (which explains why there are tomatoes in the “Spring” section), slightly on the cheffy side, but filled with some good ideas.

Acheson thinks nothing of throwing curry seasonings together before dinner, for example, though his definition of curry is very loose. In lamb meatballs it’s nothing more than toasted and ground cumin, fennel, coriander, mustard, which amounts to a kofta-like treatment that pops into prominence against a backdrop of yogurt, greens, and rice. The meat quantities are off — I got more like 32, rather than 16 — but I’m hardly complaining. The garnishes of pine nuts, mint, and preserved lemon make the dish.



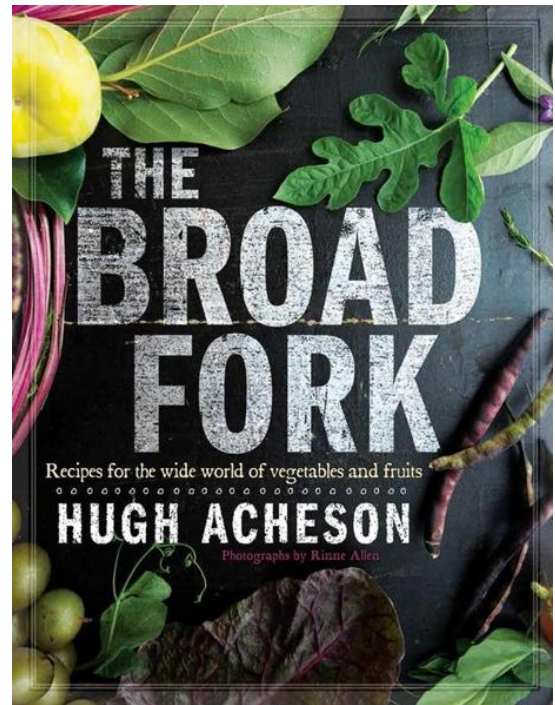
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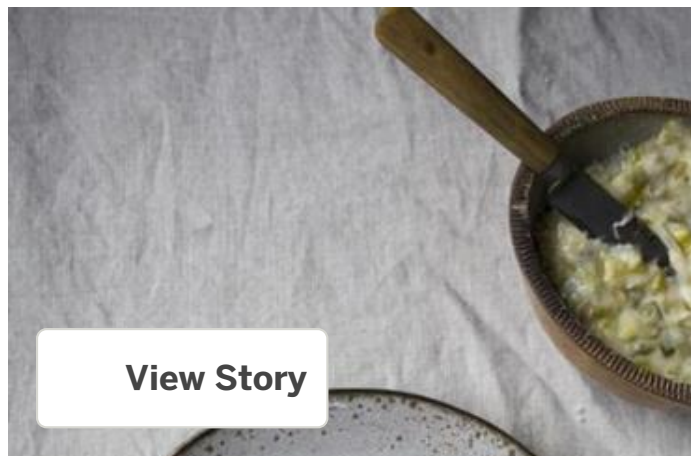
Hugh Acheson is a chef and partner at several Athens, Ga., restaurants.

Six spices go into a DIY curry powder suspended in butter and tomatoes, making a luscious backdrop for small, fresh okra. Cooked quickly, the okra retains a tender crunch, nicely echoed by a flourish of roasted peanuts (though it won't make converts of okra haters).

Curry has yet another meaning in curried tomatoes, which bring a roast pork tenderloin to life. The tomatoes are seasoned with cumin and mustard, soured with lime and cider vinegar, and sweetened with brown sugar and mint. The pork, on the other hand, is merely salted before roasting, but the much-adorned tomatoes make a perfect foil for its austerity.

A few techniques are rarely seen outside of restaurants. "Parisian Gnocchi" are startlingly like pate a choux, the cream puff dough used by many pastry chefs. It's fiddly squeezing the paste (which is more like batter than dough) out of a piping bag and cutting pieces into the boiling water. But they make a fitting vehicle for basil transformed into an emerald pistou.





Recipe for leek fonduta

Hugh Acheson suggests serving this mixture of creamy leeks on toasted baguette slices, but it also makes a superb sauce for pasta.

If you've never cooked chicken breasts the way they do in restaurants, a quick sear followed by a short hot roast, you'll be thrilled to see how evenly they turn out. Creamed corn with lemongrass comes together in a matter of minutes once you've scraped the cobs; it's subtly fragrant and tender against the (hopefully) crisp skin of your chicken.

And if you don't mind a little fuss in a composed salad, butter lettuce with roasted cauliflower and Brussels sprouts makes a gorgeous still life. You have to pick the leaves off the sprouts and blanch them, sliver radishes, and roast the cauliflower, however. A tart reduced-cider vinaigrette goes well with radish heat and brassica bitterness.

You might hesitate to boil and deep-fry farro for a tomato-arugula salad, but it does make a wonderful and unexpected texture, like toothy Rice Krispies. A tomato-miso vinaigrette, thick with umami from soy and tomato, tastes uncannily like Parmesan.

Not every dish demands extra steps. Mussels with shiitakes (a substitute for porcini) take a scant half hour, and like all mussel dishes, offer a second course of mustardy, creamy sauce for drenching chunks of baguette. Leek fonduta, sweet melted leeks foundering in cheese and creme fraiche, will be entering my regular rotation; even on a weekday it's fast to pull off, and irresistible on bread or with pasta. And while you might never think to saute cucumbers, if you're quick about it, it's not unlike eating them sun-warmed off the vine, their neutrality sweetened by butter, shallots, and mint.

Deep-fried whole grains, cooked cucumbers, and curried tomatoes are slightly unconventional, yet rewarding, moves. Will you find the time and inclination to make a whole succession of those on a weeknight? Perhaps it's enough for Acheson to point us, as home cooks, in a few new, delicious directions.

The Broad Fork: Recipes for the Wide World of Vegetables and Fruits

By Hugh Acheson

Clarkson Potter, 336 pp., \$35

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