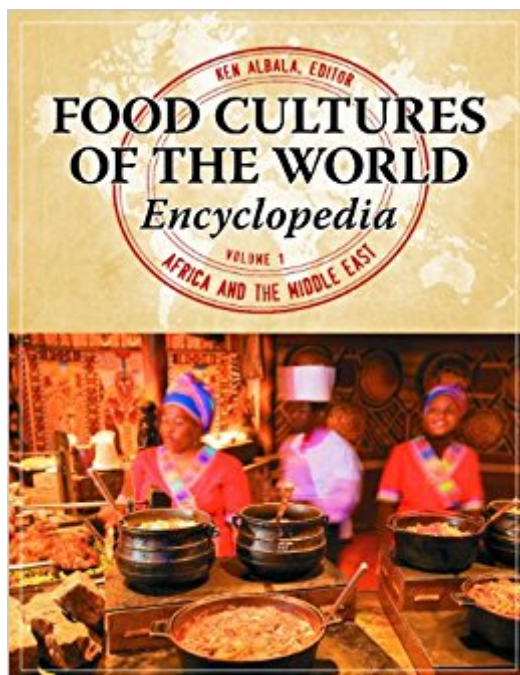


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Food Cultures Of The World Encyclopedia [4 Volumes]



Synopsis

This comprehensive reference work introduces food culture from more than 150 countries and cultures around the world— including some from remote and unexpected peoples and places. — Entries covering over 150 countries and cultures from around the world — An index that facilitates cross-cultural comparison

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Entries are well-written in a concise yet informative language that results in an easy and engaging read. This is aimed at an academic audience but the style would also make this an accessible read to anyone with a general interest in food culture." - Reference Reviews
"Recommended. Lower- and upper-level undergraduates, general readers, and professionals/practitioners." - Choice
"With its geographical structure and consistent formatting, Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia provides a unique perspective on what the world's population eats and why and is recommended for high school, public, and academic libraries." - Booklist, Starred Review
"This is a quality encyclopedia with broad appeal especially for public libraries and undergraduate colleges and universities." - Library Journal

Ken Albala is professor of history at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA.

This is an excellent, thorough set of books about foods around the world. It covers individual

countries that many other similar collections omit. It includes descriptions of eating and cooking habits, dishes and ingredients. Several recipes are included. I enjoy reading the brief profiles of the daily eating habits of average middle-class families for each region. There are brief "Further Reading" bibliographies at the end of each article. The books are textbook-like, printed on matte paper with numerous black and white images from stock photo sources. If some of you remember the old Time-Life Foods of the World series from the 1960s & 70s, this is probably the closest new version of what that set tried to do. I miss the colorful images and creative writing of that set, but at least this one is completely up-to-date. If most people in a particular country are shopping in supermarkets and eating fast food instead of farming and going to small markets like they used to, it says so. This set doesn't go into as much depth as the Culinaria series, and again it lacks the beautiful color images, but makes up for it by including so many regions that are hardly covered anywhere else. Finally, for example, here is detailed, country by country coverage of Africa that doesn't try to lump together all of North Africa or Sub-Saharan Africa. The one area that is still sadly missing is a large part of Oceania, the Pacific Islands. However, there is a special section for Hawaii that could probably also apply to other Polynesian areas. If you've been searching for thorough, well-organized coverage of lesser-known locations like Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Liberia (to name a random few), this is the set for you. I'm happy that it finally goes beyond the obvious usual countries (France, Japan, Italy, and so on).

UPDATE (May 2015) - This is a great book. I initially was very disappointed as expressed below, however the content of this book is just really great. I regret that it is aesthetically underwhelming, but I'm glad I bought the book. How does an encyclopedia on food have NO COLOR PICTURES??? The 'reviews' posted in description above, speak loudly to what the book isn't: Aesthetically pleasing, interesting, something that belongs anywhere other than a school library. You will continually ask yourself, 'Why on earth aren't there any color pictures in a book on CULTURE and FOOD???' 'Why is the layout so bland?' 'Dry?' I've travelled a lot, but if you've travelled at all, I wouldn't encourage you to buy this set. It's just so much that needs improvement, it's not really worth addressing. You'd imagine a book of such a title to include as standard issue: Large, size (YES) Hardcover (YES) GLOSSY pages (NO) COLOR PHOTOS (NO) This is not the sort of book that you have a kid sit around fingering in amazement of the FOODS, PEOPLE, places and backgrounds. Perhaps I was a quirky kid, but my folks would read from encyclopedias like the Time Life and National Geographic series to me. This is not that type of set. Just know that it's not worth what or any of the sellers are asking. (Update July 2014***) The book is definitely

interesting and accurately describes what I also experienced in many of the lands mentioned in this volume. So I gave it another star.

A very informative, well-written collection of articles, mostly by academics and some food writers. Each article is researched and written a bit differently, but all of the articles include an overview of the country or culture, with some historical background, geography and facts about the population. This is followed by a "food culture snapshot" listing food that might be prepared and consumed by an ordinary family during a typical day. Then there are "major foodstuffs", cooking, "typical meals" and "special occasions". Some articles include recipes, but many do not. There is a short bibliography, generally of 5 to 10 sources, after each article. There is often interesting information about a variety of cultural influences, including recent changes and traditional practices influenced by religion although this varies with the article. So, definitely interesting reading overall and worth perusing from the library, if not purchasing for hundreds of dollars oneself. However, as noted by other reviewers, there are no color photos. There are no maps, vocabulary boxes, or charts or other visual stimulants. I would have liked to see more layout. For example, a map showing the location of the country or a big map with all the articles' subjects highlighted. Also, a list of foreign language terms with translations or definitions of the food names for the article would be very helpful. Another comment is that most articles are by country. There are a very few articles on ethnic groups. For example, the section on the Middle East has 10 articles about countries, and one on "Berbers and Tuaregs". Surely there are numerous ethnic minorities, religious sects and tribes with their own customs in the region? The volume on the Americas includes separate articles about the cuisine of numerous small countries, adjacent to one another and with similar food, but only one article on "Native American" food, which includes all of the 200 or so tribes still extant in North America in one overview. So, a bit uneven in this regard, I think. The index is very limited, as it contains mostly place names and food names. So, while there might be a lot of interesting information on a topic like table manners, or religious customs or rules forbidding menstruating women to cook, one would have to read the whole four books to find it.

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