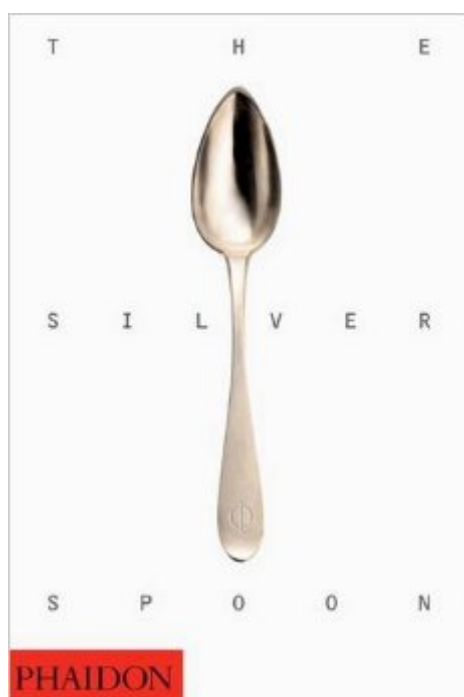


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The Silver Spoon



Synopsis

The Silver Spoon is the first international edition of the most influential Italian cookbook of the last fifty years. With over 2,000 traditional and modern recipes, its simple style and traditional authenticity will appeal to both the gourmet and the occasional cook. With a new layout, specially commissioned photography and artwork it is destined to become a classic in the Italian cooking booklist for the international market.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like almost anyone with a passion for food living in Italy, I've got a copy of Il Cucchino d'Argento on my bookshelf -- it's the Bible of Italian cuisine. Sadly, this first English-language edition of the book won't be achieving the same status among Anglophile lovers of Italian table fare. It's not the fault of the Italian publishers -- the book is still a one-stop resource for everything from antipasti to ziti, with great illustrations, and all bound very handsomely -- but lazy translators and unambitious editors ruin this English-language edition, which is titled The Silver Spoon. Just to give a few examples: metric measurements are awkwardly translated (one recipe suggests adding 11.35 ounces of cheese to a dish, another says the cook should add "1 to 4 portions" of salt -- without saying how large the portions should be), vocabulary is inexact (the words "pot," "pan," and "skillet" seem to be used interchangeably, as do "glass" and "cup"), no suggestions are made for meat and vegetable ingredients difficult to find away from Italy's shores, and basic information such as how many people a certain dish will serve and how long it will take to prepare (all of which is in the original) are just left

out. There are typographical errors and misspellings galore, several of them comical. But my favorite mistakes include some that just left me scratching my head: one marinade must be "stirred frequently and infrequently for 5 to 12 hours" (the Italian says it must be "stirred regularly but not often for 5 to 6 hours") and there's a cake that upon completion must be "carefully cooled, or not" when in Italian it must be "cooled until warm to the touch." All this is all a real shame, because this book really should be a staple of anyone's cookbook library.

The Silver Spoon was originally published in Italy in 1950 by the Italian architectural and design magazine Domus. (Italian Title "Il Cucchiaino d'argento." The eighth edition came out in 1997.) The publishers at Phaidon, the British publishing house, have done a remarkable job of translating and designing The Silver Spoon for American and British cooks. The cookbook combines both traditional Italian recipes, and more contemporary Italian recipes influenced by other cuisines. If I had to make a comparison, I would say that it's much like a Italian version of "The Joy of Cooking," though not nearly as comprehensive. I have three or four "classical" Italian cookbooks, and many of the recipes in those books are repeated here. I think that I'll hang on to them - but more for the extra information relating to Italian cuisine (which this book lacks) than for the recipes. The food: The Silver Spoon is divided into 14 chapters (with a preface): Eating is a Serious Matter (preface) Cooking Terms - This chapter is a comprehensive glossary of all of the cooking terms used in the book. It covers terms for ingredients, cookware, and cooking techniques. I especially liked how the authors delineated exactly what they mean for specific terms related to technique; for example, "Brown in a Pan: To cook vegetables over low heat in butter or oil until they go a light golden color. This is particularly common with thinly slice onion or garlic cloves. Meat or vegetables may also be cooked in oil or butter in a skillet over high heat until a rich, even brown in color during the first or final stage of cooking." Equally detailed descriptions are given for everything from "Aceto Balsamico" to "Whisk/Beat".

'The Silver Spoon', the very first translation of an Italian cookbook in its eighth edition, published since 1950. This 2005 translation is based on the 1997 Italian edition published by Editoriale Domus. While there are credits for drawings, photography, and provisions of props, there is no credit for either author or editor in clear sight. The blurbs on the book's cover tout the volume as 'the bible of authentic Italian cooking'. I believe this can mislead some buyers in thinking that the book is devoted exclusively to Italian techniques or that the book has the very best and most definitive demonstrations of Italian cooking techniques. It would be much more accurate to compare this to

either 'The Joy of Cooking' or 'James Beard's American Cookery' in that its emphasis is more on completeness rather than depth or excellence in pedagogical presentation. At 2000 recipes, this volume easily trumps some recent big Italian cookbooks, such as Michele Scicolone's '1000 Italian Recipes' or Mario Batali's 'Molto Italiano'. If broad range is what you want, this is exactly the book for you. What it does not have is any but the slimmest anecdotal information on regionality of dishes or exceptionally well explained techniques for such mysteries as fresh pasta making, bread baking, sausage making, or homemade mozzarella. You may also be surprised to find a large selection of terms and recipes from French, Spanish, Middle Eastern, Russian, and Japanese cuisines. This is all in keeping with a book devoted to be a reference for Italian home cooking. Italian bourgeois amateur cooks, it seems, are just as likely to use the French name for many dishes such as soufflé or crepe as the Italian name.

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