

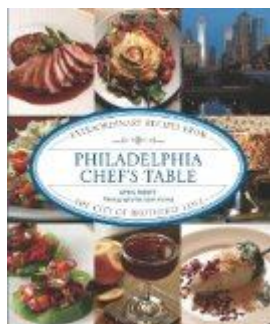
A Traveler's Library

Books, Movies, and other Travel Inspirations

A Foodie Journey Through Philadelphia

🕒 May 3, 2013 📁 Books, Cookbook, Destinations, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, United States 📌 Brette Sember, cookbook review, guest post, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Philadelphia restaurants, recipe 👤 Brette Sember

Tasty Travel



Destination: Philadelphia, PA

Food Book: *Philadelphia Chef's Table : Extraordinary Recipes from the City of Brotherly Love* (2012) by April White

By Brette Sember

Philadelphia conjures notions of freedom and American spirit. I visited Philadelphia once years ago and have a few memories of the city that are rather different. The hotel fire alarm malfunctioned in the middle of the night, which did not create a restful trip. The Liberty Bell was extremely underwhelming (MUCH smaller than you might expect) and the famous “Rocky” stairs (at the Philadelphia Museum of Art) were indeed daunting. The cheesesteak was pretty good. The best memory I have is of a meal we had at the restaurant school. So, Philadelphia and food are wedded in my mind.

Philadelphia Chef's Table (Lyons Press, 2012), by April White, has just solidified this connection for me. This little gem is a collection of recipes from more than 50 of the city's best restaurants. If you cook from the book, you can visit the city without leaving home. The book is organized by course, and within each it is organized by restaurant. First you get a great introduction to the restaurant and the chef (with a photo also): why it's hot or well-known, their history, their specialties, and how they think about food there. Then you get at least one of their best recipes – often more (with photos!).

I find that a big part of the character of a city is determined by its restaurants, and this book hands you Philadelphia on a plate. Unlike most of the books I review for this column, this one does not combine text or photos about the city with the recipes, so you're not going to see cityscapes (other than the two on the front and back pages!) or descriptions of its deep and wonderful history. The focus here is just on the restaurants and their food, but it is an excellent way to virtually travel to and taste the flavors of this remarkable city.



Philadelphia Skyline from Philadelphia Chef's Table. Photo courtesy of Globe Pequot.

No, there's no recipe for cheesesteak (although there is a page devoted to discussing its history and popularity) and you won't find any recipes using Philadelphia cream cheese. What you will find are creative, inspiring recipes, such as Grilled Veal Tongue with Pepper Mostarda, Spaghetti with Green Tomatoes and Razor Clams, Chicken Freekeh, Pumpkin Pancakes, Roasted Maitake Mushroom with Celery Root Puree and Glazed Carrots, Chicken Tikka Kabob with Chickpea Curry, and Squash Blossom Cupcakes. You'll also find more standard recipes, which are done well, including Oyster Stew, Fish and Chips, Chicken Pot Pie, and Lasagna. And there are a few pages discussing the best places to get pizza in the city too.

If you're tuned into the foodie world, you will recognize the names of many of the restaurants featured in this book: **Morimoto**, **Buddakan**, **Parc**, **Vedge** (rated as the third best restaurant in the city by Philadelphia Magazine), **Sbraga**, **Osteria** (considered by some to be one of the top Italian restaurants in the country), **Zahav**, and more. It's a star-studded collection. It's a bit thrilling to find recipes for wonderful restaurant dishes at your fingertips, such as this inventive dish from Morimoto.



Soba Carbonara, Morimoto Restaurant, Philadelphia. Photo courtesy of Globe Pequot

Soba Carbonara

Serves 4

- ½ pound dry soba noodles
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 slices bacon, chopped
- 1/2 cup boiled edamame, shelled
- 24 bay scallops
- 2 tablespoons white wine
- ¼ cup water
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 1/4 cups heavy cream
- 3 large egg yolks, beaten
- Dash of truffle oil
- Kosher salt and white pepper, as needed
- Parmesan cheese, as needed

In a large saucepan of boiling salted water, cook soba noodles for 1 minute less than the package directions. Drain well. Toss with olive oil and set aside.

In a large sauté pan over medium heat, cook bacon until fat renders. Remove bacon and drain on paper towels. In the same sauté pan over medium heat, cook edamame and scallops until heated, 2 to 3 minutes. Add bacon. Turn off heat.

In a saucepan over medium heat, cook white wine to evaporate alcohol. Add water, soy sauce, and cream and heat to 155 degrees. Add egg yolks and truffle oil. Season with salt and white pepper. Turn the heat to low and whisk until smooth, being careful not to let the egg yolks cook through. Add reserved bacon, edamame, and scallops and stir. Add soba and stir quickly.

Divide between four pasta bowls and sprinkle with cheese.



Brette writes often about travel, food, and home arts and is the author of more than 40 books about food, law, health, family issues, business, finance and textbooks. She blogs at [Putting It All on the Table](#) and her personal web site is [Brette Sember](#).

[Brette Sember](#) - who has written 27 posts on [A Traveler's Library](#).



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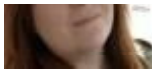
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6 thoughts on “A Foodie Journey Through Philadelphia”



June 11, 2013 at 4:48 pm



Jane
Boursaw June 11,
2013 at
8:40 pm



Vera Marie
Badertscher

I don't think I've ever been to Philadelphia. My mom's family lived around Norfolk, VA and Washington, D.C., so we did all those historical things, but I'll have to put Philly on my list to see!

That's funny that the Liberty Bell was underwhelming. I always imagined it being some huge stately structure.

Jane: I think you just bring your own expectations and feelings about history with you to something like the Liberty Bell. It is small, but I just thought of how the people of Philadelphia felt when they heard it ring. The symbolism is electric.



pen4hire

May 4, 2013 at 10:18 am

Although I have a hard time thinking of Philadelphia as anything except a setting for 1776—I'll admit that next to the cheesesteak, our favorite meal in Philly was in a Cuban restaurant that recreated the bright but tacky atmosphere of Cuba so well, you felt like you had taken a quick trip. Plus the food was delish.



Pamela

May 3, 2013 at 7:44 am

Philly is a quirky town with a lot of addy-tood. but you can't beat it for a great meal.

Definitely intrigued by the soba carbonara.

However, if you ever go back, I'd suggest you try some of the cheap dives that offer great food: the South Philly Italian restaurants with no signs where grandma serves homemade pasta family style, the West Philly Laotian families who set up grills in front of their houses, and the fabulous Ethiopian places.



May 3, 2013 at 8:09 am



Thanks for the suggestions! They sound great.

★ Brette
Sember



May 3, 2013 at 6:46 am

yum! my best friend lives in Philly and always talks about the great food! i'll definitely find this book.

wandering+
educators

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