

A Traveler's Library

Books, Movies, and other Travel Inspirations

Great American Road Trip in a Cookbook

🕒 August 9, 2012 📁 Books, Cookbook, Destinations, Food, Travel, United States 🔖 blueberry cobbler recipe, cookbook, culinary road trip, food travel, Martha Stewart, Martha's American Food, recipe book, regional cooking, United States 👤 Brette Sember

Tasty Travels

Destination: American Road Trip

Book: *Martha's American Food: A Celebration of Our Nation's Most Treasured Dishes, from Coast to Coast* by Martha Stewart (NEW April 2012.)

Article by Brette Sember



Old Buick

My kids claim they hate road trips, but my husband and I just love them. We each grew up looking forward to the annual family summer road trip vacation. I had it down to an art form. As an only child, I had the entire big cushy backseat of our Buick to myself, which I filled with a pillow, blanket, toys, snacks, puzzles, books, and notebooks. Since seatbelts weren't used, I usually slept most of the way as we drove across four states to get to Maine, stretched out across the seat, the white noise of the engine allowing me to sleep deeply and arrive rested. Even as an adult strapped in upright in the front seat, I still love road trips. I adore the relaxed nature of them – no deadlines, stopping where you want, and the unexpected things you find along the way, including the culinary treasures we stumble upon.

For me, an essential part of the travel experience is the food. I want not only to see the sights, buy authentic handcrafted items from the region, and drink in the scenery (and take lots and lots of photos), but I want to

taste what the people really eat and what people go there to sample. What do they grow? How do they cook? What dishes are a way of life? What flavors are important in that area? The flavors of the food are a tremendous part of what makes a region special and I believe that by understanding the food, you come to better know the culture of the area you're visiting, even if it is only two states away from where you live. I invariably come home from a trip with a few key dishes I must work on replicating because once I nail it, I can relive the trip through the food.

I picked up *Martha's American Food* by Martha Stewart, thinking it was just a cookbook. As I started to page through it though, it hit me that this was more than just a collection of recipes from around the country – it is a road trip in a book. And I sat down and devoured every page.



Martha Stewart: Mrs. Kostyra's Meatloaf, as made by Brette Sember. Photo courtesy of Brette Sember.

The book is broken into six regions. The first is all-American, which includes recipes anyone across the country will recognize, like **tuna noodle casserole**, lasagna, apple pie, and **meatloaf**.

These might not sound exciting or innovative, but as somewhat of an expert when it comes to Martha Stewart (I wrote a blog where I cooked her recipes every day for an entire year), I can tell you that her team researches and tests the recipes so carefully that you are guaranteed the best possible versions. These are keepers, even if you already have your own family favorite.

into the recipes, you'll find sidebars that talk about specific ingredients that are important in the region with descriptions of where they are found and how they are harvested or caught. There are also full-page spotlights called "Regional Flavor" which delve into ingredients and preparations in a specific area of each region (Cape Cod clams, Gulf of Mexico shrimp, Texas pecans, and more). These spotlights are engrossing and talk about how the ingredients used to be gathered, how they are gathered today, why they are so specific to just one part of the region, and the best ways to enjoy the food.

The road trip gets started next, with sections on the Northeast, South, Midwest, Southwest, and West. Each section starts out with a description of the region, its food, and its influences. As you dive



Oyster Po' Boy from New Orleans, LA

As you travel through each region, you will get such a complete taste of the area that you will feel as though you have been there. After reading recipes for *Fried Catfish Sandwiches*, *Oyster Po' Boys*, *Pickled Okra*, *Pimiento Cheese*, *Mint Julep*, *Hush Puppies*, and *Sweet Potato Pie*, I felt as if I had driven clear across the south with stops at roadside joints along the way. Each section progresses from drinks to appetizers, sandwiches, entrees, sides, and finally desserts, although these are not specifically separated. The progression feels natural, as though you're enjoying a huge buffet, from soup to

nuts.

I'm most familiar with the food of the Northeast and South and I found myself marking a lot of pages in these sections because I want to try Martha's versions of my favorites, but also because there are interesting variations. For example, I've eaten a lot of blueberry pies in my time, but never a blueberry cobbler. I thoroughly enjoyed the sections for the regions I am not as familiar with and items like *Pike Place Fish and Chips*, *Date Shake*, *Plum and Piñon Streusel Cake*, *Tamale Pie*, and *Hoosier Pie* are now on my list to make.

Even though the dishes of some regions were not as familiar to me, I found recipes in each section that spoke to me. My great-grandmother was from Kansas and my grandmother (her daughter) regularly made several of the midwest dishes in this book and these recipes were like banners of welcome to me. I've heard of huckleberries, but have never seen a recipe for muffins using them. Everyone's had a Cobb salad, but this book talks about its origin and the keys to making it authentically. I know what a tamale pie is, but now I can use Martha's recipe which is tested to be authentic and delicious.

Each recipe has a photo, which definitely made me dog-ear more pages than I normally would have. Aside from the food though, the other photos in this book are like a tourism guide to the regions. Cornfields and trout fishing in the Midwest, horses and mountains in the southwest, crab traps in the south, lobster boats in the northeast, and vineyards in the west place you physically in each region as you explore its flavors.

This book is getting a permanent spot on my bookcase and I anticipate that I will be returning to it over and over again when I want to find a solid recipe for a particular American specialty. Whether or not you'll be hitting the road this August, this book will make you appreciate the flavors and places to found from coast to coast.

Here's a taste of the northeast to get your American road trip started:



Blueberry Cobbler, photo courtesy of Brette Sember

Blueberry Crisp

For the filling:

6 cups fresh blueberries (3 pints)
1/2 cup sugar
1 tbsp cornstarch
1 tsp lemon juice
1/4 tsp coarse salt

For the topping:

3/4 cup flour
1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional – I did not use this)
1/2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp coarse salt
6 tbsp unsalted butter, softened
1/3 cup sugar

Preheat oven to 375. Make the filling: Mix blueberries, sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice and salt. Transfer to an 8 inch square baking dish.

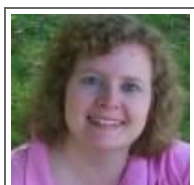
Make the topping: In a medium bowl stir together flour, oats, nuts, baking powder and salt. With an electric mixer on medium, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Stir flour mixture into butter. Using your hands, squeeze topping pieces together to form clumps.

Sprinkle topping evenly over filling. Bake until filling is bubbling in center and topping is golden brown, about 1 hour. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool 30 minutes before serving. Serves 8.

Brette Sember brings her expertise on food to **A Traveler's Library** once a month with a sampling of food that takes you there. You can see all of the articles Brette has written by typing her name (first name will do it) into the search box at the top of the far right column. Read more about Brette on the **Contributor's Page**, and be sure to check out her brand new website, **Putting It All on The Table** where you can learn about the cookbooks she has written and read her blog about food, travel, decorating, collecting, gardening, books, and more.

We want to be clear, the illustrations here are NOT from the Martha Stewart book. Except for the blueberry cobbler and meatloaf photos which belong to Brette Sember, the photos here are from Flickr, used with a Creative Commons license. You can click on the picture to learn more about the photographers and their work.

A Traveler's Library has a policy of disclosing affiliate links. If you click on the cookbook cover or title of the book, you will be taken directly to Amazon. If you buy through that link, A Traveler's Library or the contributor will make a few cents on each purchase. Thanks.



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**.

**Like It? Share!***About Brette Sember*

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. [View all posts by Brette Sember](#) →

3 thoughts on “Great American Road Trip in a Cookbook”



August 10, 2012 at 4:47 pm

I love the idea of a road trip in a cookbook. I'll be checking out Martha's new book.

Donna Hull



August 9, 2012 at 5:40 pm

What a wonderful concept for a book (and for a road trip:-)

Irene



August 9, 2012 at 8:11 am

SUPER YUM!! i love her recipes – they always work. i'll definitely have to find this book – thank you, brette!

wandering

educators

Comments are closed.