

## PREFACE

In the past few decades, the world of food in North America has been infused with a new vitality. American foods have always been marked by some variety, owing to the distinct ethnic origins of its native, European, African, Hispanic, and Asian ancestors. But the recent (and sometimes sudden) arrival of people born in other parts of the world has brought a proliferation of “new” ethnic foods to the major urban areas where such newcomers have settled. Thanks to the people of many cultures who have made this country their home, America is now host to the most wildly diverse kitchen in the world.

For many of us, there was little in our upbringing that prepared us to take advantage of the enormous variety of cuisines and dishes available to us. Presumably well-rounded people of otherwise bold disposition may, like the author, feel that they are in foreign territory when first encountering such foods. Who hasn't had the experience of sitting down in a new, unfamiliar restaurant and of being presented with a menu that is in a foreign language or mostly unintelligible? You may have hesitated to try to pronounce the name of some exotic item, let alone to put it in your mouth! You wondered, is it served hot or cold? Spicy or bland? Do you eat it with your hands, or a fork, or chopsticks? And most importantly, are there any frog's