

Introduction

I've always had two careers, one as a cook and the other as a writer. In many ways my cookbooks express who I am at the points when they're written. Not only do they reveal how I prepare food, how I think of food, and how I eat, but in a very essential way provide a map of how I live my life. *A Taste of Julie Jordan* is no exception. Although my original intention was to compile a collection of the best and most popular recipes from my earlier books, I found as the creative process began to work that I was embarking on another autobiographical journey.

So my cooking now comes from my studying macrobiotics and from my traveling around the United States. In Austin, Texas, I cooked the light flexible southern version of macrobiotic food. In Princeton, New Jersey, I learned the art of gourmet vegetarian deli food. In New Mexico I lived and breathed red and green chile, fresh pinto beans, posole. All this is part of who I am now and part of my offering to you.

I find that my cooking style now is much lighter, using less dairy or cutting out dairy altogether. I have reflected this in revising many of the recipes from *Cabbagetown Café Cookbook* and *Wings of Life*. There are dozens of new recipes and almost two hundred variations and options.

Since it seems that everyone has their own version of what “vegetarian” means, I should say that by *vegetarian* in this book I mean ovo-lacto vegetarian; this includes eggs, dairy products, and honey, but not meat, fish, or animal seafood. By *vegan* I mean recipes with no animal products whatsoever, not even honey. My publishers have chosen to identify recipes that are either vegan or have a vegan option with a . Sometimes the difference is as simple as using olive oil instead of butter.

The new recipes like Salsa Fresca, Pad Thai, Vietnamese Pasta Salad, Toasted-Corn Polenta, and New Mexico Red Chile Enchiladas resonate with the “going into the next century” palate. Many of them are loaded with lively, trendy ingredients like fresh cilantro, esoteric chile peppers, rice noodles, peanut sauce, and more.

To me, the freshness of the food and grain is essential. Equally so is a fresh and lively attitude in the person preparing the food. Finally, it is important to go through your kitchen and clean it out. I call this “eliminating stagnation.” Throw out the old spices and dusty pasta; have a yard sale and sell all the pots and pans and dishes you never use; scrub all the shelves. A kitchen should be clean, functional, and streamlined.

Cooking is a wonderful creative adventure and I hope you all enjoy it!