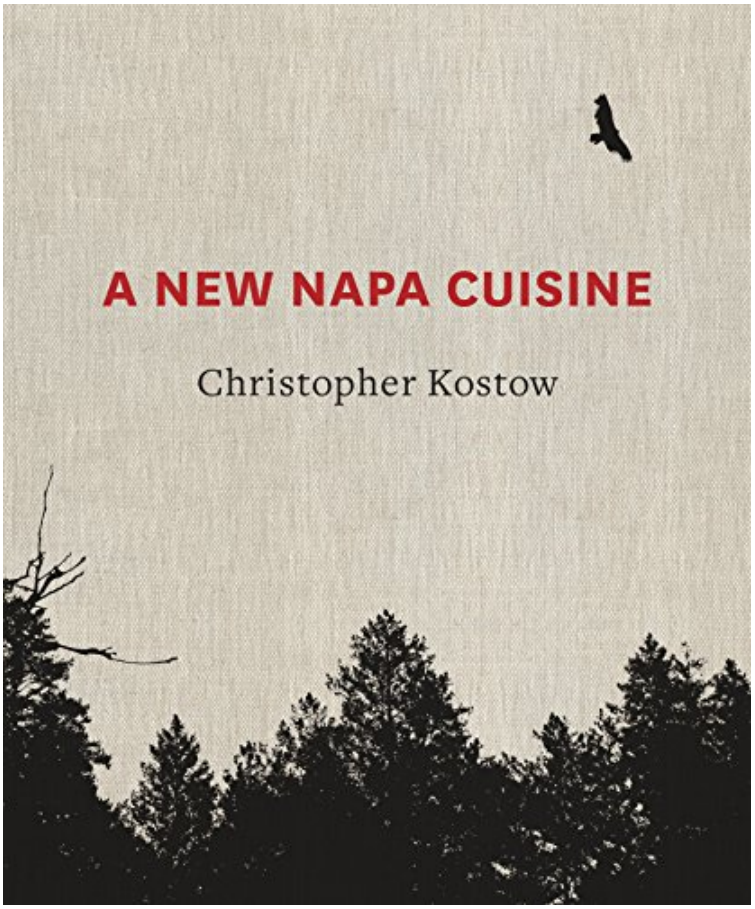
A New Napa Cuisine



Par Christopher Kostow
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[Download ebook] A New Napa Cuisine

Par Christopher Kostow : A New Napa Cuisine before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A New Napa Cuisine:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA New Napa Cuisine follows Christopher Kostows journey from a youngline cook in a seaside town to the storied Restaurant at Meadowood, theNapa Valley mainstay that has earned three Michelin stars and James BeardAwards for best chef and outstanding service under Kostows leadership.Through 100 artfully constructed recipes and stunning photography,Kostow details the transformative effect this small American valley hashad on his life and workintroducing us to the artisans, products, growers,and wild ingredients that inspire his unparalleled food. As he shares storiesof discovering wild plums and radishes growing along the creek behindhis home or of firing pottery with local ceramists, Kostow presents a newNapa cuisineone deeply rooted in a place thats rich in beauty, history,and community.From the Hardcover edition.ExtraitWith consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day. . . . Ralph Waldo Emerson The prospect of writing a book terrifies me. My DNA screams against the idea of creating something permanent. To take a snapshot of my work now, to record something that is physically temporary (food meant to be eaten) and philosophically incomplete (ideas not yet there) seems foreign to me. I have never for a moment believed that I have arrived. Perhaps the only thing that I hope for is to be

better tomorrow than I am today. My approach to the processes of cooking has evolved over time and will continue to change. Its comforting to know that my mistakes, foibles, and all things not quite perfect are being hammered out by the passing of time and gaining of wisdom. Like a river rock whose sharp sides have been smoothed by water, my thoughts and ideas about food lose their jagged edges and grow ever more succinct. I am nothing if not relentless, and Im not sure what I would do without the comfort of knowing that I have another year to perfect an idea or follow an inspiration. Thats probably why Ill do this forever. As time goes by, I meet more people who contribute to what we do at The Restaurant at Meadowood: purveyors who raise a tastier squab or age a better beef, artisans who collaborate on a new plate, growers who successfully raise forgotten heirloom vegetables. New cooks and sous chefs bring the knowledge of their experiences; fresh activities are explored (frogging!). I read more books and meditate a bit more on the place I am in. These efforts are not Sisyphean. We are not pushing the same rock up the same hill each year. I think (hope) that we are getting smarter and better. We need to, for as the hill becomes taller, our climb gets steeper. I have long favored the idea of wizened chefs writing books and sharing recipes in the twilight of their careers. I imagine these tomesthe accumulated knowledge and perspective of that cheffilling the sagging shelves of a great library. When taken together, these retrospectives would make up the whole of culinary history. But thats not how it works. Food is fluid, and our ideas as chefs are like those rocks in the river. What I have come to realize in thinking about this book is that those rocks are beautiful well before they become smooth, and that the smoothness is less interesting when not seen against the jaggedness that preceded it. The journey has its own value. The rivers story ought to be told as well. So Im writing this book not as prematurely released greatest hits but rather as a celebration of where I am now. I dont want to cement my place in one locale or style or perspective. I just want to explore where I have been and share where I am today. When I lived and worked in Provence early in my career, I came across an old edition of Ralph Waldo Emersons writings. I carried that little, bright blue book with me for many years, memorizing the passages that I should have learned in college. If I disappoint anyone by departing from things that I have said or done in the past, I point to the quote that opens this introduction. While not a great mind, I fear that if I create a consistent definition of who I am as a chef, I will cease to be able to absorb new thoughts and ideas. In saying this is who I am, I dont want to unwittingly ensure that I can never be anything else.Background I grew up in Highland Park, Illinois, a suburb about a half hour north of Chicago and a million miles from Napa Valley. Dining out was de rigueur at our house (my father had a penchant for ethnic holes-in-the-wall), and my youth was filled with Italian dishes eaten off red-checkered tablecloths and barely passable Mexican food. We would often journey to the hinterlands of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for the citys German fare and the fair food served at the annual Summerfest. Im not sure why my food memories are sharper than the circumstances during which they were experienced. Perhaps its because those memories are simpler, dont require a filter, and can be seen unencumbered by the weight of hindsight or commentary. When I was fourteen, I got a job at Ravinia, an annual summer music festival in Chicago.Outfitted with a green apron and matching visor, I worked as a cashier at one of several small restaurants circling the concert venue. I quickly noticed that the guys in the kitchenwho got to wear T-shirts and baseball capsseemed to be having all the fun.The head guy, nicknamed Shaky the Clown, made the female employees search for the walk-in keys in his pocket. And there was Ozzie, who wore a plastic batting helmet instead of a toque. They were fun camp-counselor types, and at the time it seemed like the place for me. So I engineered a transfer to the kitchen and spent the next several summers elbow deep in seasoned flour and raw chicken. I relished the environmentthe fast pace and loud music along with the order and control. Although I would not return to cooking for many years, my love of restaurants was born during those summers slaving over a deep fryer and a griddle. While attending Hamilton College in upstate New York, I discovered a passion for philosophy, which I eventually chose as my concentration. As it turns out, I am a more successful raconteur than philosopher. In fact, I am better at most things than I am at philosophy. That includes, apparently, cooking. Studying philosophy did teach me to absorb a lot of information with a critical eye and then use that information in a singular and personal manner. Cooking is similar. I am confronted with different flavor memories and techniquessome created, most borrowedand whether or not I am successful is driven by my ability to retain this information, distill it through my lens, and create (on my best days) something that is uniquely my own. With cooking, as with philosophy, most of the credit is owed to those who came before. Chefs dont rise out of the ashes fully formed. Our entire mtier is based on skill sets that were first developed and perfected by other people. I cannot simply stand on a corner and proclaim myself a chef (although television shows and marketers certainly try). I am a student of a craft that requires more time spent in

pursuit of competence than is possible between commercial breaks. I knew early on that I would not excel at my craft solely through an intellectual understanding of it. I also needed to love the series of actions that make up restaurant cookingthe pace and pressure, the camaraderie and repetition. And then I had to take every opportunity given to me through grace, generosity, and a restaurants needs to embrace the process and invest the time. Every chef needs a first chance, and I got mine when I moved to California after college. At the time, I had a kernel of an idea that I wanted to be a chef, that there was a creative and entrepreneurial side to the profession that I would find appealing. On arriving in the coastal town of La Jolla, I sent my first rsum to Trey Foshee, the new award-winning chef at a restaurant called Georges at the Cove. In the months that followed, I sent several more rsums to Trey.I camped at the hostess stand. I called and called.And then finally, Trey called me back, and I found myself being led into my first professional kitchen. It was hot,small, and cramped, full of hulking cooks and cast-iron pans. To a philosophy student and dilettante, it looked like a blacksmiths foundry. I was eager for knowledge, propelled by the uncertainty of having an expensive liberal arts education and no real career prospects. I was fanatical about learning as much as I could about cooking and sought out every avenue toward that end. I didnt have much money to buy cookbooks, so I bought one, Chez Panisse Caf Cookbook by Alice Waters, photocopied the content, then exchanged the book for another and another and another. (Belated apologies to Warwicks bookstore in La Jolla.) I spent the rest of my free time at the public library reading the works of Jacques Ppin and Julia Child. After a few months of plating desserts and shucking oysters (which still strikes me as an odd combination of tasks), I was given the chance to pick up the restaurants produce from the legendary Chino Farms, about a half hour north of La Jolla in Rancho Santa Fe. Im sure Trey assigned me this task so he would have an extra hour with his kids in the morning, but walking to the back of the farm stand to pick up that days produce made me feel like I had been knighted. I spent three years in Treys kitchen, working my way through the various stations, before I headed to France for the first of two stints. In addition to spending time in Montpellier, Salon-de-Provence, and Paris, I worked under Christian Morisset at La Terrasse in Juan-les-Pins. Chef Morisset is one of the fiercest and most driven people I have ever encountered, ruling over his kitchen with a handlebar mustache and frightening intensity. Our daily schedule was more or less from nine oclock in the morning to midnight, with a break of only a couple hours in betweena schedule that I still follow. Ill never forget one particular encounter at the tail end of the very long summer season. After a Saturday night service we began immediately working on dishes for Nol. Every hour we were kept in the kitchen was one less hour of sleep before the mornings reveille. Despite the late hour and the staffs exhaustion, Morisset began discussing new dishes and playing with different ideas. One of the chefs de partie, a seasoned Grenoblois named Chou-Chou, stood up and said tearfully, I cant, Chef, I cant. You, Chef, are a warrior. Vous tes un guerrier. I cannot be a warrior. Then he left. I remember realizing at that moment that chef Morisset had lost the thing that binds a kitchen together. Without people following you, you cannot lead. Morisset fumed and then dismissed us, and in that moment, I felt a chapter in French cooking closing. In years past, hoards of young commis lined the steps to Morissets kitchen, waiting to be called in when another cook failed. But now, when Chou-Chou and the rest of us left, the stairs were empty and Morisset was alone in his kitchen. I think about this almost every day as I deal with my staffpeople who love what they do are a far more powerful force than people who fear what happens if they dont do it well. Belief is everything when it comes to being a chef. When you are shucking oysters and plating desserts, it is unreasonable to believe that you are going to be a chef one day. It is a long road that presents multiple opportunities to quit, settle, or do something else entirely. And although success in the form of financial recompense and notoriety is far more possible these days than it used to be, it nevertheless requires a steadfastness and resolve that borders on the delusional. I reached a point before traveling to France for the second time when I was ready to leave the kitchen behind. I was working in an environment that I loathed, and wasnt sure if I believed in the path enough to justify the expenditure of time and economic hardships any longer. I took some time away from the kitchen. But after a few months of contemplation, I realized that I was closer to my goal of being a chef than I was to the beginning of my now several-years-old journey. I also came to believe in those months of repose that I possessed the requisite drive and ability to become a decent chef. If given the right opportunity, I thought I could get there. Being hired as a sous chef at Campton Place in San Francisco was that opportunity. I worked under Daniel Humm, then an unknown, young, Swiss-born chef mastering American sensibilities and (which we laugh about now) the English language. Daniel and I shared an almost old-world perspective on many things. He gave me the same creative freedom to make mistakes that I give my sous chefs today. I was offered a chance to be as much a chef as is possible in

a great chefs kitchen, creating dishes, training young cooks, and sourcing ingredients. When Daniel left for New York, I moved on as well, to a small restaurant in Silicon Valley named Chez TJ, where I would become the chef. Every young chef deserves a Chez TJ experience. The restaurant, housed in a four-room Victorian, was situated far enough away from the limelight to allow me to make mistakes, yet close enough to people who care about food to win attention if deserved. It was open five days a week, had a simple menu, and provided me with a double-wide trailer behind the building to call home. I tended a small garden next door and dreamed of the masses of people who would drive from all over the Bay Area to see the work we were doing in Mountain View, California. Although that didnt necessarily happen, I loved that little restaurant. With a ragtag kitchen, a terribly dated dining room, a tiny staff of misanthropes, and one great sous chef (who somehow managed to convince his wife that they needed to move to Mountain View), we did work that I am still proud of. We cultivated the garden, smoked meats in an old Weber out back, and stored things in my home freezer whenever the restaurants old freezer broke down. I drove to all of the purveyors to handpick the product myself because, without an established reputation, I wanted to make sure we were getting the best. In my time there, I learned that if I didnt push for greatness, no one else would. That is what it means to be a chef: to drive in the direction at the speed that you deem correct while trying as best you can to keep everyone around you holding on. My first year at Chez TJ coincided with the introduction of the Michelin restaurant guides in the San Francisco Bay Area. Amazingly, our tiny Victorian, with its sagging floors and fake Tiffany lamps, earned itself a shiny star. We were on the map, though I still had to explain to people where Mountain View was. The owner of the restaurant, George Aviet, was a wonderful supporter, and I am eternally grateful to him. He has helped launch the career of many a chef, all while fixing every leaky pipe and broken stove. Without George and that tiny restaurant, I would not be writing this book today. In my second year at Chez TJ, I recall being convinced that we were going to lose that star, that the previous year was a fluke. Before the release of that years guide, I went so far as to call David Kinch of the famed Manresa restaurant to seek his counsel. He told me not to worry, that he hadnt heard from them either (he was awarded two stars that first year). A couple days later, we were awarded our second Michelin star. And Kinch was the first to text me . . . to call me an asshole. After a couple years at Chez TJ, I began looking for a larger stage in a more beautiful setting. During my time in Mountain View, I had become enamored with the idea of creating a destination restaurant, like Michel Bras in Laguiole, Maison Troisgros in Roanne, or, closest to mind, Thomas Kellers French Laundry in Yountville, California. I thought there was something beautiful in this idea of standing somewhere and drawing people to you through the quality of the work alone. I still love the antiquated aubergiste ideal of sweeping the steps of your own small-town restaurant while saying hello to fellow commerants and guests alike. When I was offered the position of chef at The Restaurant at Meadowood in Napa Valley, I took it. I didnt realize at the time how fortunate an opportunity it would be. Looking back, I still wonder what led me to pursue this profession. I guess I enjoyed, and still enjoy, the feel of a kitchen. These days, many kitchens are more akin to laboratories than pirate ships. There are poets everywhere and not a Shaky the Clown in sight. I love the sound of a knife on a cutting board and the aggressive music blasting through the sound systemjust as I did when frying chicken and drinking Franzia during my summers at Ravinia. Call it arrested development, or a heightened degree of self-awareness, but thenas nowthere is nothing on earth that I would rather do. Although I wasnt aware of it at the time, when I entered that first kitchen, I would never really leave.The Book This book is about what has happened to me since coming to Napa Valley. It details the transformative process of putting down roots, and the incredible relationships and inspirations that resulted when I did. Whatever life holds for me in the future, the people here and this place have forever changed the way that I look at food and the world that surrounds it. I couldnt be more thankful. The stories I describe take place both in and around Napa Valley. I have not spent much time thinking about county lines and political boundaries, so I hope no one begrudges me this liberty. Instead, the place of these tales encompasses the areas within a short distance of my home and kitchen. The farthest point to which it extends is the Pacific coast, an hours drive from Saint Helena. Richard Carters homestead (see page 105) lies on the slope leading into Pope Valley. Phillip Paines squabs (see page 203) are raised in Carneros at the southern tip of the Napa Valley. We go frogging (see page 199) just past the Napa County line to the north, above the old trout farm near the peak of Mount Saint Helena. And Lynn Mahons studio (see page 102) sits atop Mount Veeder, where it straddles the counties of Sonoma and Napa. Apologies to any geographic purists. The recipes in these pages, which were culled and finalized by sous chef Poncho Vasquez, are presented as we write them for use at The Restaurant at Meadowood, which means that some require professional-level tools and at

times cannot be made to yield a standard number of servings without additional waste. That said, all of these dishes can be prepared in a home kitchen provided you have the requisite equipment. Use these recipes as inspiration and starting points for your own ideas about food and cooking. Try not to fixate on the specific ratios (although we have provided both U.S. and metric measurements in each recipe), but do pay attention to the techniques and their results. We cook potatoes in beeswax (see page 235), but why not turnips or rutabagas or carrots? We cook sturgeon in coals (see page 249), but another type of fish or vegetable or meat would be great, too. I view these recipes as part of the larger narrative of the book, in much the same way that I view technique to be the syntax by which a sentence (or theme) is conveyed. I hope that you cook and eat these dishes, and are inspired in your own cooking as a result. More importantly, I hope that you see these words and dishes and recipes as detailing one larger thing that makes up the whole of my thinking and the work of my partners and friends. These recipes are studies in the four main influences on the food served at The Restaurant and in the very specific and personal cuisine we are creating: the gardening operations (see The Growers, page 31), our artisan collaborators (see The Artisans, page 95), our foraging endeavors (see The Wilds, page 161), and the bounty of Napa Valley (see Materia Prima, page 217). Most of the dishes contain more than one of these elements, but for each recipe, I have chosen to focus on what was for me, and for the people with whom I collaborate, the jumping-off point for the dish. I chose to write this book myself because I didnt want someone else to tell my story. Ive always been jealous of writers. I imagine them retiring to quiet surroundings and clacking away the hours (on a typewriter, of course) in the throes of a meditation or a confession. The self-restraint, focus, acumen, and craftsmanship that define true writers amaze me. I am no such writer, but in the hours available to me, I have tried my best to record a sensible and organized account of my time and experiences. I woke up at the crack of dawn, made many pots of coffee, and labored over these words. If this is the only way Ill see my name on the spine of a book, Ill take it. I hope that the writing adequately demonstrates that this story is not mine alone. I am merely holding the thread that binds together the wonderful people discussed hereconnecting generations and trades, mediums and passions. I hope that my stewardship of their perspectives and work will continue.Images I met Taylor Peden and Jen Munkvold in 2012 at a restaurant in downtown Los Angeles. I had flown there to woo them into photographing this book. I was fortunate that a number of amazing photographers had generously offered their services, but I only wanted to work with Peden + Munk. I love their photography. Their images have a heightened sense of reality, with an undercurrent of viscera and unblinking honesty. After viewing their textured images of pit masters and rustic farmland, I felt both engaged and informed. Their photographs reveal without telling and are dramatic without being melodramatic. I hoped that by turning their rustic lens on my very composed food, Taylor and Jen would help strip away any visual preciousness and artifice. I explained to them as best I could who I was and what I wanted this book to be, describing the valley, the people, the collaborations. Thankfully, they bought it. When I began introducing Taylor and Jen to the people and places that would make up the soul of this work, we made a decision that ended up shaping the books character. In a historic homestead in Pope Valley, my friend the famed ceramist Richard Carter operates his wood-fired kilns, which are fueled by felled oak and charged with salt and soda. The removable shelves of these kilns, glazed with the accumulation of numerous firings, are full of texture and character. As we walked the kilns, Jen spotted a shelf and recommended using it as a backdrop for one of the food shots. We took the shelf with us and tried it out the next day. After seeing the arresting image of plated food on that ceramic slab, we decided that we should shoot all of the recipes at Richards. Beyond the kiln shelves, the homestead is replete with textures and hues: old wood and aged glass, decaying barn doors, a collection of deer antlers. Like a band holing up in a specific studio to record an album, we hoped this magical place would impart its singular feel to the images we shot there. Richards place has a spirit that is beyond my words, a timelessness that inspires the art created there and that I try to reflect in my cooking. Theres the long, curvy drive from the floor of the valley up and through the redwoodsa route that seems to transport the traveler to another world. As we walk the property with Richard, he tells tales of the generations of a family that once lived there. I cannot help but feel as though we are also somehow telling their story through our photographs: the glass and wood and bone of their lives, the ceramic shelves of Richards lifes work, my food, the photographers images. We gathered there, in an old barn structure, shooting food and spanning a century, for a few hours at a time. In many ways, this book mirrors the cooking process that drove it. It is a distillation of the challenges, triumphs, and discoveries that keep me running up the steps to the kitchen every day. Im still trying to find my place among the ghosts of Richards ranch and among the tales of Napa Valley. The daily struggle between my own limited knowledge and the limitless beauty that surrounds me

continues to drive me forward. I imagined that the making of this book would be a form of documentation, recording the work done to this point. I was thrilled to learn that, in fact, this process was an educational one, that clarified the way I think about my daily work. Adhering to the organizing principle of these four chapters has helped me better determine whether or not a new idea for a dish makes sense and is relevant to what we are trying to create. The themes of this book have become the tenets around which we are creating a specific Napa cuisine. I know that I am a better chef and that we are closer to that goal because of this book.Revue de presseWithout question, Christopher is one of the greatest chefs of our generation. He is immensely talented and Im fortunate to call him a friend. Working together years back gave me a glimpse of his potential and to see how hes developed in such a short time is amazing. Christopher is thoughtful, deliberate, and respectful in the kitchen, honoring every ingredient he uses; but he also ensures that each and every bite of food is delicious. Thats what I love about him; thats what makes this book so important. The Restaurant at Meadowood is a special place, one of the best restaurants in the world, and this book will forever serve as a beautiful tool and reference foranyonewho enjoys food. Daniel Humm, chef and author of I Love New YorkThis book is a masterpiece. Christopher Kostow is a great chef and an artist, and also a responsible guard of our terroir. How fortunate we are that he chose Napa Valley in which to create his own style of cooking. Bravo, chef! Margrit Mondavi