Hawaiian chef Sam Choy is sassy and sweet. So are the flavors of his food. Choy's cooking is hapu, a hybrid of Polynesian, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and European influences, combined in what he calls local-style cooking. In Wok-Seared Shrimp with Pepper-Papaya-Pineapple Chutney, a typical example, Choy marinates the main ingredient, then stir-fries it, and serves it with a colorful accompaniment. Fish or seafood stars in many dishes. Choy's marinades are generally a blend of garlic, ginger, soy sauce, and sugar, with varying accents of scallion, sesame oil, and hot peppers. Both the preparation of ingredients and the cooking method are quick for most dishes. The accompaniment, often a salsa or chutney, is usually a toss-together of chopped fresh fruits and vegetables that can be made ahead of time. Choy takes pride in his Hawaiian heritage. He talks about his family and local goings-on. His Catfish in Sweet and Sour Sauce supports local farming of this freshwater fish. Enticing, succulent Hibachi Pineapple Spears were invented one day at the beach to please the kids. A fish-lovers' delight, this book also offers appealing chicken recipes: Quick and Easy Shoyu Chicken, made with teriyaki sauce, will please just about everyone. Sixteen color pages help you present dishes as nicely as Choy does at his restaurants. If you can chop, stir-fry, and grill, Sam Choy's Island Cooking provides a fast, fun taste trip to the tropics. Don't miss the desserts and exotic drinks, like Lava Flow and Kona MacFreeze.

--Dana Jacobi

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With an UKU here and an OPAKA PAKA there, a touch of mango and crushed lemon grass, coconut hull fires and roasted HAPU UPU U, new ways to whisk a mother hollandaise, and flavors that jump right up off the page. That is Sam Choy's Island Flavors.
When exploring new techniques and language in cooking it really is irrelevant if the recipes are complicated, compound, simple or sublime, what matters is if they work. The recipes in Island Flavors work. Too often the reader/cook is duped into buying a cookbook by the way it looks and the food displayed, or by the hype and narrative of paid critics and TV shows. Thankfully there is no illusion to this cookbook. I have found the recipes to be both true to the pan, and true to the palate.

This is a highly recommended cookbook for the novice as well as the more experienced cook. It is full of great information, and you can feel Sam Choy's love of food throughout the book. Food is love so why not read and cook with those who love the craft, and leave the dilletantes of cuisine to gather dust on the backshelves, or in the late night hours of Emeril hell. Sam Choy cooks great food, is a great chef, and is a great food writer. Cook along with him as you read and you will understand why so many of the great chefs are smiling all the time. Food this lively can only make you happy.

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