In Tapas, a collection of 100-plus recipes for Spain's savory small dishes, chef José Andrés writes of journeying during his military service to Cádiz, in southern Spain, where he was able to see the wonders of frying first hand. The passion that would lead an on-leave soldier to investigate a cooking technique infuses the book, which is something new under the sun. In chapters based on characteristic ingredients, such as fish, rice, and eggs, readers are introduced to authentic yet reproducible tapas of great and flavorful immediacy; these simple dishes, which include the likes of Tomato Toast with Spanish Ham, Pan-Fried Angel Hair Pasta with Shrimp, Slow-Roasted Beef Tenderloin with Cabrales Cheese, and Spring Leeks with Mushrooms, are instantly inviting. They'll also fit into a wide range of menu slots, as hors d'oeuvres, brunch and supper fare, or as side dishes. In well-written notes, Andrés provides context and something more—a sense of a living culinary tradition, which he loves, deftly presented to best advantage. Writing, for example, of the poor quality of most stuffed olives,
a favorite tapa, he exhorts readers to make their own. Simple ingredients prepared in a simple way—that's the best way to take your everyday cooking to a higher level, he says. Amen, and an invitation to cook—and understand—wonderful food. --Arthur Boehm

**Personal Review: Tapas: A Taste of Spain in America by Richard Wolffe**

This is a great cookbook for people who want to dine sensibly but to dine "fine." My wife and I have been enjoying its recipes about once a week. For us the small portions inherent in the "tapas" idea and their healthy Mediterranean ingredients have opened up a new way to cook and to eat. Recipes typically defy characterization by course since many of the dishes presented include not only (smaller) amounts of meats, poultry or seafood but also vegetables, fruits or legumes, nuts and so on. That quality of combining wide-ranging sources of nutrition makes each dish suitable to become the center of a sensible meal. In fact, we recently returned to Barcelona and found that Spaniards are increasingly doing just that in their tapas restaurants, combining different tapas into a "tasting menu" approach to dining.

The recipes in this book have winning features: ingredients are simple and are increasingly available in mainstream markets as well as in Latino food stores, dishes are quick to prepare and to cook, little or no special equipment is needed and the results are as tasty as you make them by purchasing quality fresh or processed ingredients. Online sources are given for those persons wishing to do "authentic" versions of each recipe or people who don't have Hispanic sections in their food markets. After all, Jose Andres does most of his cooking in his three Washington, D.C. restaurants with ingredients he can find in America.

I can not recommend this cookbook highly enough. Spanish food is neither greasy nor spicy and has little in common with the folkloric foods of Texas, Mexico or the Caribbean cultures. Jose Andres is a pied piper when it comes to leading an American audience to appreciate the culture and the foods of his Spanish homeland.

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