

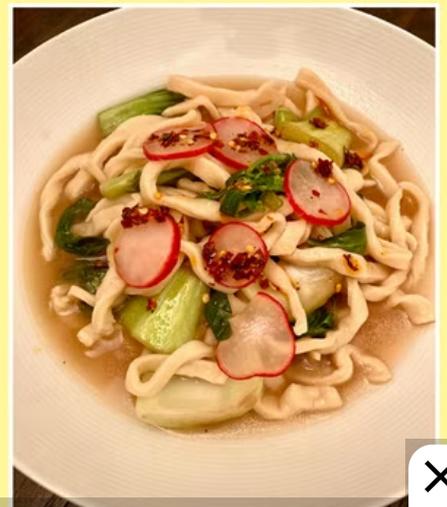
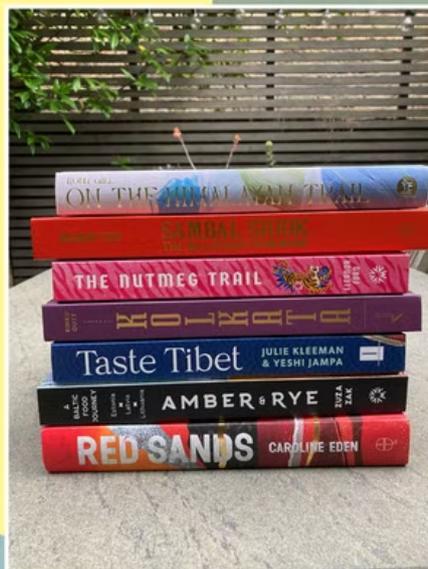
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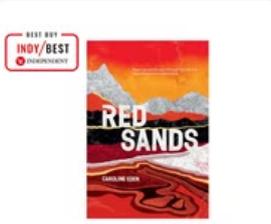
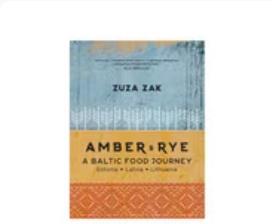
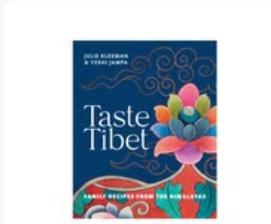
# 8 best world food writing books: Discover new destinations and dishes from your kitchen table

The pages are filled with tastes and tales from the heights of the Himalayas to the Baltic states

**Susan Low** • Monday 24 October 2022 17:14



We rated these on their ability to introduce us to less-familiar food culture  
(*The Independent*)

 <p><b>Best overall</b></p> <p>★★★★★</p> <p><b>‘Red Sands’ by Caroline Eden, published b...</b></p> <p>Eden’s two previous books, <i>Samarkand</i> and <i>Black Sea</i>, have established this born storyteller as one o...</p> <p><a href="#">Read Review</a></p> <p><b>£18.55</b></p> <p><a href="#">BUY NOW</a> ↗</p>	 <p><b>Best for fermentation</b></p> <p>★★★★☆</p> <p><b>‘Amber &amp; Rye: A Baltic Food Journey’ by...</b></p> <p>Born in Communist-era Poland, Zuzza Zak spent her early childhood in Warsaw and moved to the U...</p> <p><a href="#">Read Review</a></p> <p><b>£18.55</b></p> <p><a href="#">BUY NOW</a> ↗</p>	 <p><b>Best for spice lovers</b></p> <p>★★★★☆</p> <p><b>‘The Nutmeg Trail’ by Eleanor For...</b></p> <p>Open the cover of <i>The Nutmeg Trail</i>, and a spice-led journey around the globe awaits... Ford, wh...</p> <p><a href="#">Read Review</a></p> <p><b>£20.66</b></p> <p><a href="#">BUY NOW</a> ↗</p>	 <p><b>Best for new discoveries</b></p> <p>★★★★☆</p> <p><b>‘Taste Tibet’ by Julie Kleeman, published b...</b></p> <p>The debut book from Kleeman and Jampa is an unbeatable introduction to Tibetan cuisine an...</p> <p><a href="#">Read Review</a></p> <p><b>£20</b></p> <p><a href="#">BUY NOW</a> ↗</p>	 <p><b>Best for...</b></p> <p>★★★</p> <p><b>‘Kolikatta’ by Rishi</b></p> <p>London’s best restaurant, Kolikatta, is a cart...</p> <p><a href="#">Read Review</a></p> <p><b>BUY NOW</b> ↗</p>
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Post-Covid, **travel** is back on the agenda. The latest figures from the IATA show that **global air traffic had recovered to 73 per cent of pre-crisis levels** – but for anyone who sought to sate their wanderlust by taking to the skies this summer, the experience may have been a painful one...

Airport chaos, mile-long queues (that’s if your flight wasn’t cancelled), the Russian roulette of lost baggage, it’s understandable why not everyone is



way to get a taste of far-flung places without having to leave the warmth of your **kitchen**.

During the pandemic, the kitchen was a place of safety and sustenance, away from the doom loop of the pandemic. The great stay-at-home encouraged people to get creative with the contents of their kitchen, to venture beyond the microwave and the “ready in 15 minutes” recipes; to slow down and enjoy spending more time cooking.

So as people sought escapism and inspiration, sales of novels and cookbooks **soared during the pandemic**. As a result, a new **cookbook** trend has emerged – a book that can whisk you away from it all and immerse you in an entirely different (and possibly new) food culture.

These cookbooks, written or published during or since the pandemic are far more than collections of recipes. They take you away from it all and deliver you, metaphorically, to the Himalayas, the Baltic states, from Malaysia to Romania. They will tell leave you better informed about the world – and they will teach you some new delicious kitchen tricks, too.

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## How we tested

We rated the books on their ability to take readers on an edible journey and to introduce them to less-familiar food culture and cuisine. We also considered the quality of the prose (we were after books that were a good, solid read), the level of research undertaken and the quality of the photography, as well as the recipes: their “interestingness”, how well they worked and how much we enjoyed eating them.



- **Best overall culinary escape book** – ‘Red Sands’ by Caroline Eden, published by Quadrille: £18.55, [Hive.co.uk](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for fermentation fans** – ‘Amber & Rye: A Baltic Food Journey’ by Zuza Zak, published by Murdoch: £18.55, [Hive.co.uk](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for spice lovers** – ‘The Nutmeg Trail’ by Eleanor Ford, published by Murdoch: £20.66, [Wordery.com](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for new discoveries** – ‘Taste Tibet’ by Julie Kleeman, published by Murdoch: £20, [Blackwells.co.uk](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for Indian food lovers** – ‘Kolkata The Cookbook’ by Rinku Dutt, published by Smith Street Books: £21, [Amazon.co.uk](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for Laksa lovers** – ‘Sambal Shiok’ by Mandy Yin, published by Quadrille: £20, [Blackwells.co.uk](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for baking fans** – ‘Tava: Eastern European Baking and Desserts from Romania and Beyond’ by Irina Georgescu, published by Hardie Grant: £17.59, [Hive.co.uk](#)
- **Best culinary escape book for travel trailblazers** – ‘On the Himalayan Trail: Recipes and Stories from Kashmir to Ladakh’ by Romy Gill, published by Hardie Grant: £20.65, [Wordery.com](#)

## ‘Red Sands’ by Caroline Eden, published by Quadrille



**Best:** Overall

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**Format:** Hardback

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**Pages:** 320

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[BUY FOR £18.55](#) 

Eden's two previous books, *Samarkand* and *Black Sea*, have established this born storyteller as one of the UK's foremost food and travel writers. Part travelogue, part recipe books, and all based on solid reportage, Eden's books are armchair journeys that deliver the taste of a place, culturally and gastronomically. Published in 2020, *Red Sands* explores the cuisine and culture of Central Asia, from the shores of the Caspian Sea to the Chinese and Russian borderlands. Even though the dark days of lockdown are over, this is still a go-to.

Recipes such as Georgian mushroom khinkali, plump little dumplings served with a spicy tomato chilli sauce, demand a bit of time and patience. [Continue reading...](#)

#### Recommended retailer

£18.55 Hive.co.uk

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**'Amber & Rye: A Baltic Food Journey' by**





**Best:** For fermentation fans

**Format:** Hardback

**Pages:** 256

BUY FOR £18.55 [↗](#)

Born in Communist-era Poland, Zuza Zak spent her early childhood in Warsaw and moved to the UK with her family at the age of eight and *Amber & Rye* is the second of her three cookbooks. Her first, *Polska*, helped rewrite the narrative on Polish cuisine, putting paid to the myth that it's all about "cabbage and dumplings".

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## ‘The Nutmeg Trail’ by Eleanor Ford, published by Murdoch



**Best:** For spice lovers

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**Format:** Hardback

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**Pages:** 256

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[BUY FOR £20.66](#)

Open the cover of *The Nutmeg Trail*, and a spice-led journey around the



about the ways in which the spice trade changed cuisines (and cultures) the world over, forever. “It is a story,” she writes, “that is as bittersweet as nutmeg,” noting that the lust for exotic, expensive spices ushered in the Age of Discovery and its attendant monopolies, exploitation, colonialism and war.

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**Recommended retailer**

£20.66 Wordery.com

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## ‘Taste Tibet’ by Julie Kleeman, published by Murdoch



**Best:** For new discoveries

**Format:** Hardback

**Pages:** 256

[BUY FOR £20](#) 

The debut book from Kleeman and Jampa is an unbeatable introduction to Tibetan cuisine and culture. The pair met in the Indian Himalayas back in 2009, when both were passing through on their travels. Jampa was born and brought up in Tibet and learned to cook in a yak-hair tent; British-born Kleeman studied Chinese at Oxford and has been travelling in Asia for decades. They now live in Oxford and run Taste Tibet restaurant, which they opened during lockdown in November 2020.

In 2019, Julie won a scholarship, the Yan-Kit So Memorial Award for writers on Asia, which enabled her to undertake the research for this book. [Continue reading...](#)

**Recommended retailer**

**£20** Blackwells.co.uk

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## ‘Kolkata The Cookbook’ by Rinku Dutt, published by Smith Street Books

★★★★☆



**Best:** For Indian food lovers

**Format:** Hardcover

**Pages:** 224

[BUY FOR £21](#)

Londoner Rinku Dutt comes from a restaurateur family in Kolkata and she is carrying on the family's legacy with her north Indian street food business, Raastawala. And her debut book gets right under the skin of this food-obsessed city.

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#### Recommended retailer

£21 Amazon.co.uk

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**‘Sambal Shiok’ by Mandy Yin, published by Quadrille**



**Best:** For Laksa lovers

**Format:** Hardback

**Pages:** 256

BUY FOR £20 [↗](#)

When Mandy Yin moved from Kuala Lumpur to London aged 11, one of the first things she learned was that “food wasn’t as important to the British as it was back home”. The move meant the end of hawker stalls, kopi tiams (coffee shops) serving noodle soups and night markets selling an abundance of street food.

*Yin, owner of Sambal Shik, Laksa Dapur in London's Islington, is one of those*  
[Continue reading...](#)

**Recommended retailer**

£20 Blackwells.co.uk

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# ‘Tava: Eastern European Baking and Desserts from Romania and Beyond’ by Irina Georgescu, published by Hardie Grant



**Best:** For baking fans

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**Format:** Hardback

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**Pages:** 272

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[BUY FOR £17.59](#)



Irina Georgescu's first book, *Carpathia*, opened readers' eyes to the complexities and pleasures of the food of her native Romania. Her new book, released later this month, delves into the baking traditions of the country. Romania, she says, is "a constellation of cultures" and in this book she focuses on the baking and cultural traditions of just six cultural communities (there are many more, she says).

For anyone who loves food, reading the history of a nation – and, more widely of Europe – through recipes for gingerbread, rumalik, strudel  
[Continue reading...](#)

#### Recommended retailer

£17.59 Hive.co.uk

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## ‘On the Himalayan Trail: Recipes and Stories from Kashmir to Ladakh’ by Romy Gill, published by Hardie Grant



**Best:** For travel trailblazers

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**Format:** Hardback

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**Pages:** 272

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[BUY FOR £20.65](#) 

Given the region’s political instability and geographical remoteness, it’s no great surprise that Kashmir and Ladakh don’t feature highly on many travel itineraries – nor in many recipe books, for that matter. But Romy Gill, who grew up in West Bengal and is now a chef with MBE honours, had a childhood fascination for the place and a longstanding interest in the region’s cuisine and culture. Amid the disruptions of Covid, she managed to travel to Srinagar, Wular Lake, the hill station of Pahalgam, the Aru and Betaab Valleys and east to the city of Leh in Ladakh.

With a chef’s eye and palate, she decodes the cooking styles, spice blends, techniques and flavours that are unique to this region – ground ginger, [ground cardamom, cinnamon and mustard oil](#) – these [175 recipes](#) [Continue reading...](#)

#### Recommended retailer

**£20.65** [Wordery.com](#)

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**The verdict: World food writing books**



*Sands* is a brilliant example. *Tava* is a book of unexpected depth, as well as great baking recipes. *Taste Tibet* and *On The Himalayan Trail* are likely to introduce you to unfamiliar tastes, and *Kolkata The Cookbook* will make you yearn to visit the city of the title.

All eight books will spark (or reignite) the urge to travel to parts unknown. But if you're not quite ready, you can get a taste for the far-flung in your home kitchen, and all are recommended for achievable recipes.

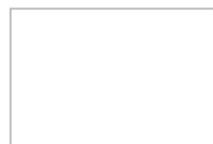
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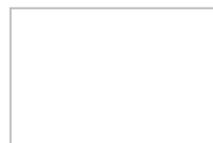
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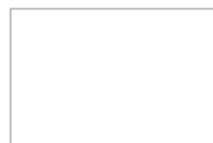
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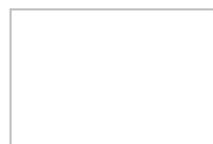
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