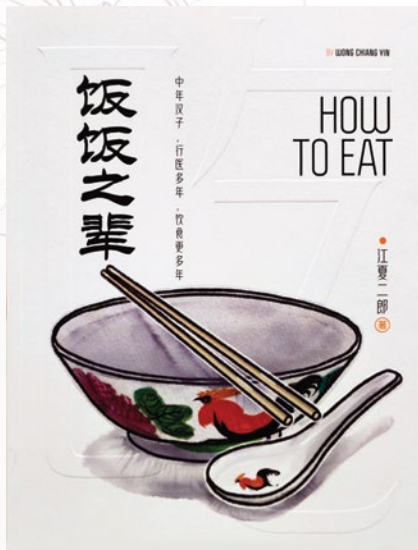


Tucking into Food and Culture

Review by Dr Tina Tan, Editor



Title: *How to Eat*
Author: Wong Chiang Yin
Number of pages: 261
ISBN: 9789811807138
Type of book: Paperback
Publisher: Focus Publishing
Year of publication: 2021

How to Eat is priced at \$25 (inclusive of delivery). For orders of ten books and above, there is a 10% discount. All proceeds go to the SMA Charity Fund which supports living expenses of medical students in need.

Good food must eat. This is a Singaporean motto to be abided by, even for someone like me who leans more towards “eating to live” rather than “living to eat”. So when Dr Wong Chiang Yin began talking about his book *How to Eat*, I knew I had to have a copy.

How to Eat is not a recipe book. You will not learn to cook by reading this, not exactly – though there are some cooking tips provided. Nor is it a recommendation on “where to get the best dish”, though there are certainly mentions of places Dr Wong considers his go-to for certain foods. Rather, what you will learn about is the culture and refinement of a man who has travelled the world, and Singapore’s food scene, with his taste buds.

How to Eat started out as a food-based column written for Chinese daily *Lianhe Zaobao*. Thankfully, Dr Wong has considered folks like me (who can hardly read Chinese, and tend to massacre the Chinese language when spoken) and translated his columns into English. This way, I too can get a taste (pun intended) of his culinary expertise. Naturally, given the original intended readership and Dr Wong’s own background, the foods that he talks about are all Asian, so don’t expect any tributes to Western dishes.

I wouldn’t call myself a foodie, but I grew up in a mixed Teochew and Cantonese household with exacting

standards for food, and I’ve travelled frequently to places like Hong Kong and Bangkok (often, just for the food). I can fully appreciate how Dr Wong has captured the essence of what it means to eat good food, how it should be prepared, the interesting historical tidbits behind certain dishes, and what good Singaporean food means for our local culture. The photos alone are mouth-watering and evoke a lot of strong memories for me, much less for someone belonging to a generation where certain things are now lost.

Thankfully, we have a book like *How to Eat*. I would caution, though, that this book should not be read while hungry. The book will not even come close to supplementing a meal, but it will certainly delight the gustatory senses. ◆

Dr Tan is a psychiatrist with the Better Life Psychological Medicine Clinic, and a visiting consultant at the Institute of Mental Health. She is also an alumnus of Duke-NUS Medical School. Between work and family life, she squeezes time out for her favourite pastimes – reading a good (fiction) book and writing.

