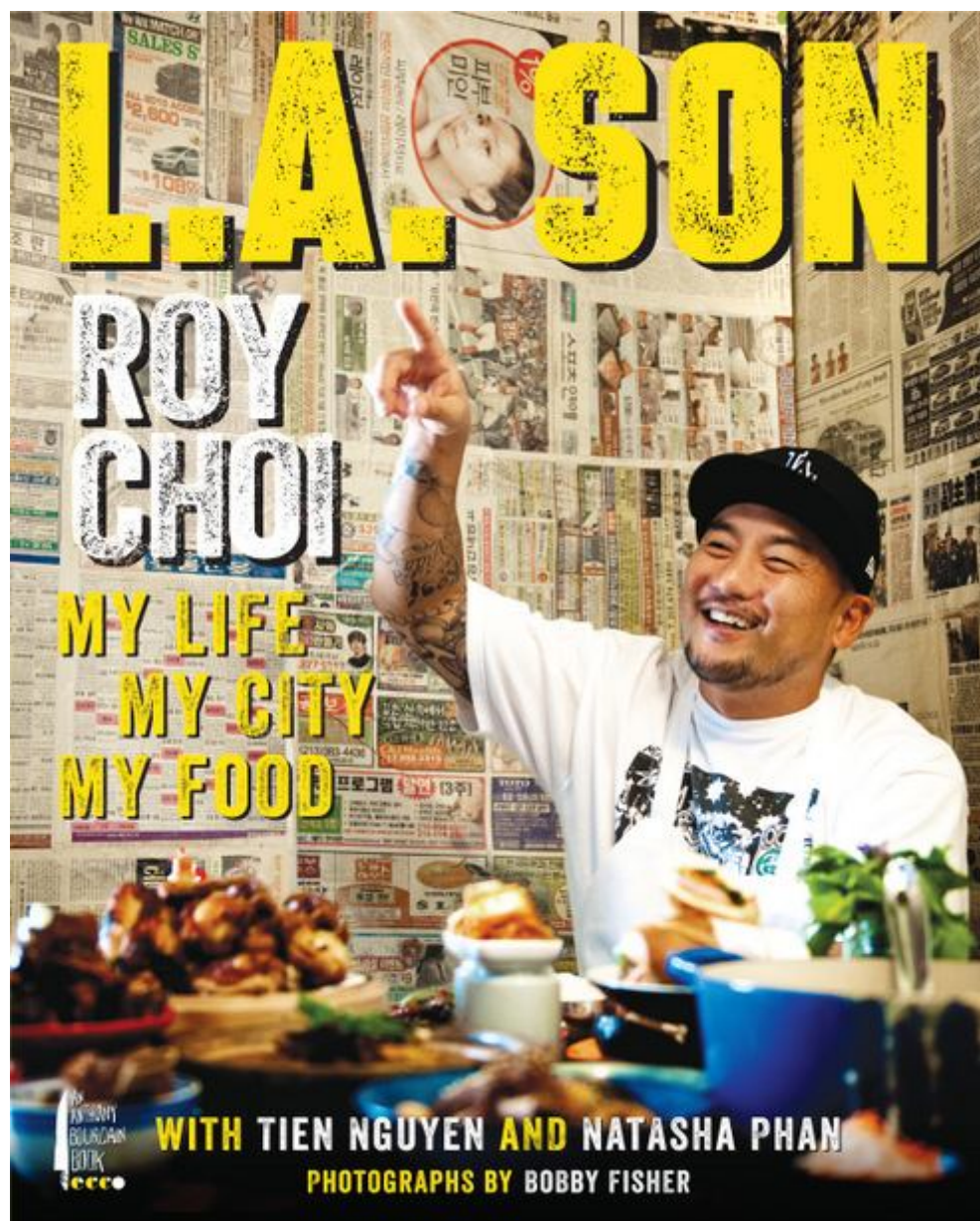


Cook the Book: Roy Choi's 'L.A. Son'

KATE WILLIAMS



If you open **Roy Choi**'s new cookbook/memoir, *L.A. Son*, looking for *Kogi* taco recipes or stories about starting a food truck revolution, you'll be fresh out of luck. This future of his hums in the background of his writing; as readers, we are aware of Choi's later success, and can see the building blocks of the Korean-Mexican-American fusion for which he has come to be known. But Choi barely mentions it. It isn't until the last few pages of the book that the words "food truck" appear, and the reference is brief.

If not *Kogi*, then, what is *L.A. Son* about? What kinds of recipes grace its pages? Choi takes us on a fast-paced, f-bomb-filled ride through his upbringing, from his days as a pint-sized host at his parents' Korean restaurant through his time riding the streets of suburban L.A., his fierce gambling addiction and recovery through his mother's cooking, and his salvation by way of *The Essence of Emeril*. Choi punctuates each short, conversational chapter with a series of recipes that embody his energy at each of these points in his life. Some are family-style Korean (kimchi, short-rib

stew, fried chicken), others are gnarly late-night food (ramen with American cheese, ketchup-fried rice, deep fried pillsbury biscuits). Elements of Choi's later adoption of bold, multifaceted fusion cuisine appear in bits and pieces, like in his kimchi pupusas and stir-fried Brussels sprouts with kimchi.

In [L.A. Son](#), the emphasis seems to be placed more on telling a story than on providing a definitive Roy Choi cookbook. Cooking this food does, however, paint a detailed picture of Choi's palate as well as the city of Los Angeles itself. The mix of recipes—some come from his mother, some are his own—provides a fun glimpse into Choi's background, and his brash, expletive-laced writing style is woven throughout the directions. [Anthony Bourdain](#) (who is a [co-publisher of the book](#)) is a clear influence.

We're going to have a fun time cooking from the book this week. First, we'll try Choi's version of **marinara sauce**, spiked with garlic confit and mushroom broth. Next, we'll grill **carne asada** for a party's worth of tacos, and then stir-fry a seasonal mix of **kimchi and Brussels sprouts**.

Win 'L.A. Son'

Thanks to our friends at Ecco, we have five (5) copies of [L.A. Son](#) to give away this week. All you need to do for a chance to win is tell us about **an important meal or dish you've had with your family** in the comments section below.