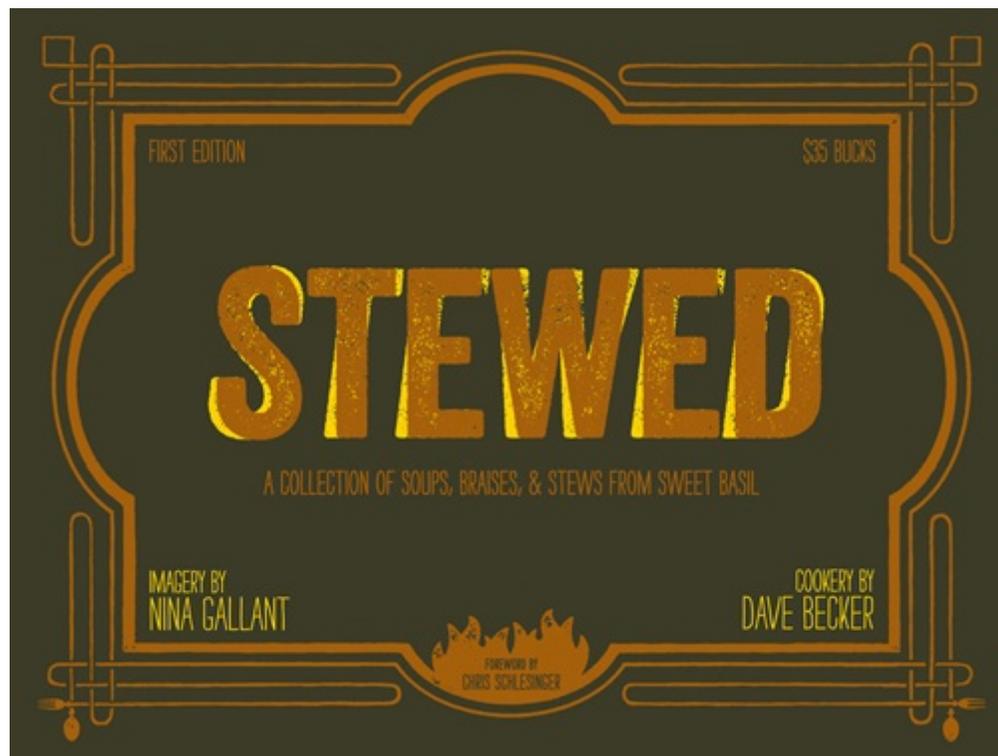


Cook the Book: 'Stewed'

KATE WILLIAMS



Let's face it. It's close to the end of January and the days are starting to grow longer, but we've still got at least a couple more months left of winter before we can toss those heavy coats back into storage. And while drinking copious hot toddies is a guaranteed way to beat the winter blues, a bowl of hot soup can do just as well (and leave you alert enough to shovel the sidewalk).

Stewed by Boston's Dave Becker is thus a welcome companion when cooking winter dinners. Not only is the book drop-dead gorgeous with wide, glossy pages, vibrantly lit still-life ingredient photographs, and elegantly set recipes, but it also offers a striking variety of recipes for just about anything simmered in a pot.

The stews run the gamut from simple Harvest Vegetable to complex Thai Coconut with Candied Peanuts, yet each recipe contains a slight twist to keep them interesting. Take, for instance, the Cheddar Ale Soup (recipe coming on Thursday): the soup made from a base of beer and beef stock is simmered with a fairly predictable array of root vegetables, onions, and bacon. But the surprise comes when you toss in a teaspoon of minced ginger and a piece of vanilla bean, adding spice, sweetness, and complexity to an otherwise average mix of flavors.

Becker's recipes are clearly derived from his restaurant recipes at his restaurant Sweet Basil. Almost every ingredient is called for in cup amounts. This method is easy to follow when working from a vast mise en place in a restaurant, but is a bit tedious when working from scratch at home (How many carrots equal 2 cups of 1/4-inch dice, for instance?). With a few recipes under your belt, however, it is easy to adapt to his style.

This week, we'll be filling our bellies with warming soups and stews. We'll start with hearty **Mushroom Stew**, and then awaken our palates with **Hot and Sour Soup**. Next we'll simmer a quick **Red Minestrone**, and then cook a comforting bowl of the aforementioned **Cheddar Ale Soup with Pumpernickel Toast**. Finally, we'll round out the week with a rich **Lamb Stew**.

Win 'Stewed'

Thanks to the kind folks at Garden Variety Publishing, we have five (5) copies of Stewed to give away this week. All you need to do is tell us about your favorite wintertime soup or stew in the comments section below.