

Title: *The Paddling Chef*

Subtitle: *A Cookbook for Canoeists, Kayakers, and Rafters*

Author: Dian Weimer

Published: July 2012

Publisher: Fox Chapel Publishing

Contents: 184 pp, b&w photos

Cover: softback 2nd ed

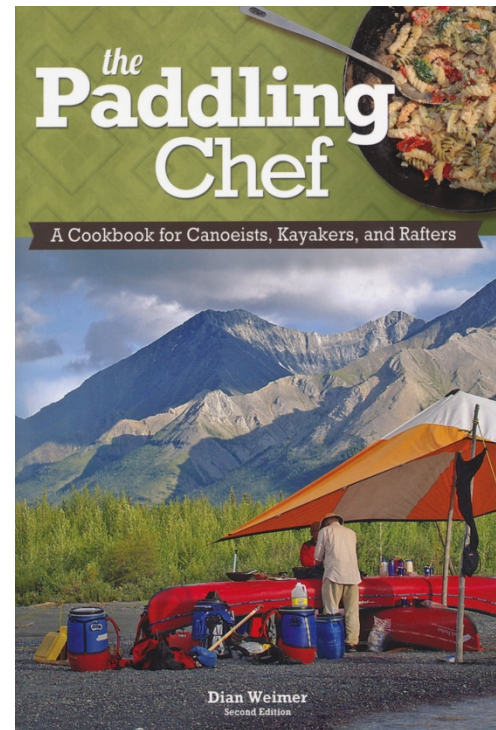
Size: 152 x 228 mm

ISBN: 978 1 56523 714 8

Price: \$23.17 (Fishpond)

Review: Karen Grant

A tad unfortunate but the first recipe I chose to read was 'Ham with Chanterelles in Hunter's Sauce'. Ingredients: tinned cooked ham, oil or butter, chanterelles fresh or dried, or wild mushrooms, and "Hunter's sauce made at home, dried, reconstituted at camp, see page 155". Flipping quickly to this page enlightened me on how to make 'Homemade Mustard Sauce' and 'Tzatziki'. Hunters Sauce was on page 153. Not a good start it seemed but a check of other page references within recipes and of the index showed no other errors.



Logically sectioned into the usual categories such as meat, vegetables and fruits, etc., each section is prefaced with helpful advice or anecdotes from the author's experiences. Interspersed amongst the recipes are diagrams and interesting, well-written accounts of some of the Canadian author, Dian Weimer's paddling trips. If you google 'Bowron Lake Provincial Park – by Dian Weimer' you can read her full journal of that trip.

The recipes sound pretty flash but are mostly straightforward ingredients combined with tasty sauces, spices or herbs. There is a balanced selection of dishes for both carnivores and herbivores. Interestingly there are no recipes for lamb; perhaps too pricey in her locale.

To the right of each recipe is a quick reference showing the preparation time, number of pots required, the difficulty and often the number of serves it will provide. Vegetarian dishes are also indicated.

I found that the meal preparation times could be more helpful. The time required for rehydrating and marinating is not separated from the time for other preparation and cooking; time that other tasks could be done such as setting up camp or preparing other food. Recipes that state they take 60mins to prepare would likely make me look for something quicker after a day of paddling. This is the case with the Ham and Chanterelle dish but in fact 30mins is to reconstitute the dried Hunter's Sauce and the dried chanterelles. Then it's just a quick sauté of the pre-cooked ham and the mushrooms, and throw the ready-made sauce on top to serve four (though apart from the oil, no quantities are given for the other ingredients).

Where quantities are listed they are clear and usually in both spoon or cup measurement and the equivalent in metric weight or volume. Instructions are easy to follow but the font used for the recipes is a much too small at around 9 point. The text used for general information and trip reports is far easier to read in a larger font.

I was hoping to find some clever ways to eat well without carrying too much weight. The Paddling Chef however is not minimalist cooking. The one pot meal of Ham and Chanterelle is to be served with Garlic

mashed potatoes and sautéed cabbage, requiring another two pots and at least one other burner. However, unless facing a pesky portage, kayakers and rafters do have the luxury to pack far more than a weight-conscious trumper. The recipes are varied and stimulating, and encourage you to plan to eat as well at camp as you could with a full kitchen at home.

Some of the American brands and ingredients (chanterelles and Bisquick for instance), won't be readily available in NZ but with prior research could be substituted. Similarly there is a section on supplementing the camp diet by foraging for species found in Canada and the United States. Plenty of helpful tips are given on how to minimize the risk of attracting unwanted dinner guests, such as bears and wasps, but there's no mention of wekas.

Sporting an attractive cover, it's a shame that the content has been printed on low quality off-white paper. The photos, text and diagrams all suffer from poor contrast. Still, this is a most affordable addition to a cookbook collection, and I also look forward to reading more accounts of Weimer paddling.