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# A Maine mapmaker travels the world without ever leaving her kitchen

Penobscot resident Jane Crosen incorporates 350 globe-trotting recipes in her new cookbook, 'Culinary Landscapes.'

Community: **Penobscot**

Posted 4:00 AM Updated at 8:26 AM

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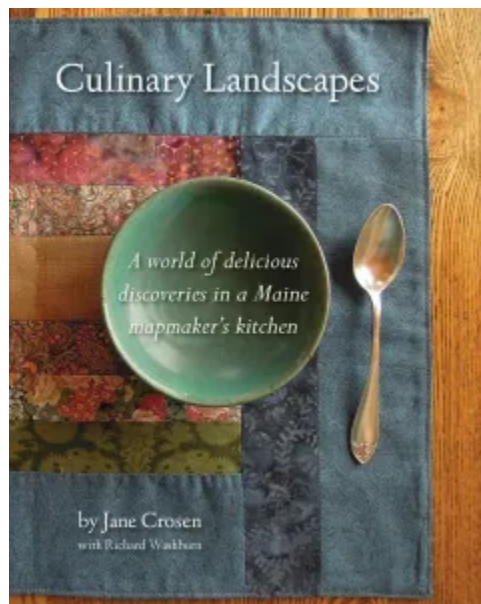
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"Culinary Landscapes" by Jane Crosen.

(Courtesy of Jane Crosen)

*Jane Crosen, 71, a writer, editor and mapmaker of Maine places, returns to the cookbook scene with "Culinary Landscapes," a follow-up to her first cookbook, "Maine Mapmaker's Kitchen." Crosen, who lives in Penobscot, continues to share recipes from around the world. In her new book, roughly*

*15 years in the making, Crosen delivers over 350 recipes, from pork verde quesadillas to shepherd's pie to kefta. Many of the recipes are traditional and involved, best prepared when you have lots of time on hand. But with so many options and variations, no matter which cuisine you want to try, the cookbook doubtless has something for you.*

*The recipes are based on dishes she's cooked over nearly 40 years with her husband, Richard Washburn, at their home in Penobscot and at their off-grid camp in Down East Maine, where they have no electricity or running water. "Culinary Landscapes" balances at-home cooking with tips about camp cooking, such as packing a cooler and using heat diffusers on camp stoves. Crosen also touches on foraging, sewing and how to keep the kitchen organized. Her new cookbook is available online and at booksellers across Maine. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

## **Does being a mapmaker change your perspective when you're in the kitchen?**

When people ask me "Why have I called the cookbook 'Culinary Landscapes,' and what does that have to do with the food?" It's about being adventurous and exploring. For me, it's my way of traveling the world, to have a library of international cookbooks, and say, "Well, let's have something Greek tonight." I enjoy vicariously getting to visit other food cultures by trying their traditional recipes and flavor combinations.



Penobscot resident and mapmaker Jane Crosen has just published her second cookbook, "Culinary Landscapes."  
(Courtesy of Jane Crosen)

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## **Can you walk me through the process of writing a recipe?**

I was just musing about that while I was eating my lunch, so I'm glad you asked. I started doing this back right before I met my husband. I was renting an old Cape farmhouse, and I was single and had a lot of spare evenings to fill, and I enjoyed cooking. When I made something for myself that seemed particularly worth repeating, I'd scribble it down.

I partly cook by intuition. I like letting my intuition tell me how much of each ingredient to put in, especially if I'm baking. If I have the feeling that it's really going to turn out well and (is) something that I'm going to want to make again, or maybe tweak a little bit to make it better, as soon as it's in the oven, I'll start writing down what I remember. "Now how much baking powder did I put in that?" So that's my process. It's a combination of intuition and short-term memory. Let's capture this before we forget what the ingredients and the proportions were.

## **You're an independent author, is that right? You didn't go with an**

## **established publisher?**

With both cookbooks, I decided not to go the route of pitching it to a publishing house. I had seen how things go editing other people's cookbooks. Pardon the saying, but too many cooks spoil the broth. I'd seen what happens when a lot of editors work with the author and the book gets shaped into something that's going to be more marketable, which is smart. But there was so much of my own creativity and love in what I was putting together, and I just didn't want to chance having a publisher reshape it into something that I wasn't sure I'd be happy with.

I decided with both of them, I was just going to publish it myself and sell it through my map business marketing system. And that's why I gave both cookbooks a title that speaks to maps and landscapes because it ties it into how people know me. Most people don't realize I'm an editor and an author, but they know me through my maps.

## **Do you do all the illustrations yourself?**

Oh, yeah, using the same techniques I use when I make my maps. A very fine brush with black ink. With the first cookbook, it would be having the layout mocked up and seeing where I had a space to fill. I'd think 'Oh, this is a crab frittata. I could do a nice illustration of a crab.' So I'd look at some pictures and illustrations of crabs. I would do my own drawing on paper that's sort of dull-coated in pencil and go lightly so that it wouldn't show through. Then I would ink in the lines using what I call contour lines, thick and thin. When I make maps, I do the same thing.



Jane Crosen's fresh fruit sponge cake from "Culinary Landscapes" *Courtesy of Jane Crosen*

The thing about most of the illustrations in the cookbook, just by the nature of cooking, there are a lot of round ones. And boy, that's one of the more challenging things to draw and get the lines fair and even and symmetrical and with the right foreshortening. For example, if you look on page 159, there's a cookie tin, and there's a soup bowl on page 39. Those are not easy to draw.

## **Why did you decide to include poems in your cookbook?**

I say in the introduction to the book that the Muse just started whispering them in my ear. I know I'm going to write something when I start getting these phrases in my ear, in my mind, as I can just hear the poetry of it. Sometimes it's my opening line of a headnote of a recipe, or sometimes it's the title of an essay. But I started getting these little wisps of inspiration about culinary poems.

Usually each poem would take a day or so of fiddling around until I got it right. I thought, 'Well, this is interesting. I know cookbooks don't have poems, but heck, this is my cookbook. I can do what I



want. I'm going to put in a few poems.'

I think there are eight in all. A couple are on the theme of camp cooking, but most of them are about ingredients or the experience of cooking. And the last, and my favorite one, is "Nicely Brownd." That's really a spoof of all the clichés that appear in traditional recipes.



Grilled Chicken with Peach, Shallot and Harissa from "Culinary Landscapes." (Courtesy of Jane Crosen)

## Grilled Chicken with Peach, Shallot and Harissa

This recipe is from Jane Crosen's "Culinary Landscapes." She writes, "The marriage of ripe peach and warm spice is a fine thing. This fruity take on Moroccan grilled chicken can be varied with chili rub in place of the harissa rub."

*Serves 2*

1 split chicken breast, bone-in and skin-on  
1 tablespoon minced fresh peach (1-inch slice)  
1 tablespoon minced shallot  
1/2 teaspoon Harissa Rub

Ideally a couple hours ahead, open the chicken breast to its natural fold and cut a pocket in the larger muscle between the fold and the skin. Combine the minced peach, shallot, and Harissa Rub into a paste. Spread a third of the paste inside each of the two pockets, and the last third under the skin.

Grill the chicken over a moderate fire (16 to 20 charcoal briquettes, enough to see through grilling the whole breast half), beginning bone-side down. Continue, turning the chicken breast about 6 times, until done through and juices run clear.

Serve with couscous, quinoa, or basmati rice, and a salad or sautéed summer vegetables.

## **HARISSA RUB**


2 tablespoons ground cumin  
2 tablespoons ground coriander  
2 tablespoons ground cayenne pepper  
2 tablespoons garlic powder

Combine the ingredients and store in an airtight jar. Use as a seasoning blend, dry or moistened with olive oil (grated onion, roasted red pepper, tomato or citrus juice) to form a paste.

## **CHILI RUB**

1 small dried hot red chile pepper (or 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper)  
1 teaspoon lemon pepper or multicolored pepper  
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano  
1/2 teaspoon dried winter or summer savory  
1/2 teaspoon dried marjoram  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/2 teaspoon dried epazote or sage

Break up the dried chile pepper, removing any stems and tough pieces but leaving seeds as desired (the more seeds, the hotter it will be). Grind the pepper in a mortar and pestle, add the other herbs and spices, and grind/crush into a spice rub. Store in a small airtight jar.

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