



The Spice Necklace: A Food-Lover's Caribbean Adventure

Ann Vanderhoof

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A follow-up to the national bestseller *An Embarrassment of Mangoes*, Ann Vanderhoof and her husband navigate the Caribbean on a sailboat, discovering local culture in each tiny port, and collecting sumptuous original recipes along the way.

Spices and herbs are the heart and soul of Caribbean cooking, adding more to the pleasures of the table here than perhaps anywhere else. In **The Spice Necklace**, award-winning food and travel writer Ann Vanderhoof embarks on a voyage of culinary discovery, as she follows her nose (and her tastebuds) into tiny kitchens and fragrant markets, through rainforest gardens and to family cookups on the beach, linking each food to its traditions, folklore and history.

Meandering from island to island by sailboat, Vanderhoof takes readers along as she gathers nutmeg in Grenada, hunts crabs and freshwater crayfish in the mountains of Dominica, and obsesses about oregano-eating goats in the Dominican Republic. Along the way, she is befriended by a collection of unforgettable island characters who share with her their own delicious recipes, making this truly a book to savour.

The Spice Necklace: A Food-Lover's Caribbean Adventure Details

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From Reader Review The Spice Necklace: A Food-Lover's Caribbean Adventure for online ebook

Crystal says

I loved this book. I think I loved it more than the first book, An Embarrassment of Mangoes. I love Ann and Steve, and think they sound like great fun people, someone with whom I'd want to share dinner and a bottle of wine. And it's their charm that leads them into so many new friendships and adventures, and secures old friendships, in this return to the Caribbean in the good ship Receta.

I was so happy to hear about Dingis again, and to make acquaintance with new friendly faces--to get to know Dwight and Stevie better, meet Miss Pat and Martin and Jamie and Seacat and Moses Jr & Sr. Aside from Guadalupe, everywhere they visited sounded wonderful, and very much worth visiting. Many of the recipes sounded delicious, and are going to be added into my collection. I appreciate that in this book the recipes are often listed with possible North American ingredient substitutions, or ideas on where to find items that can't be substituted. I have no plan to start cooking conch/ lambi any time soon, but it's still interesting to hear about.

I found it slightly humorous that Ann, due to her Jewish heritage, doesn't eat pork, but absolutely scarfs down any seafood offered...but neither ingredient is kosher. I guess we all internalize our heritages in different ways. Steve, meanwhile, sounds like a human vacuum cleaner. It's always nice to have an appreciative audience when cooking.

The other thing I really appreciated about this book was how much I learned. I read most travel books to not only hear about new areas, and vicariously experience them, but also to learn, about culture and history and geography and such. And I was just surprised by the end of this book how MUCH I'd learned. So much information about nuts and spices especially. I now know why cashews always come shelled and roasted at the store (their shells are toxic.), that allspice is just one spice (although it smells like a combination), that cocoa and vanilla both need to be fermented before they get the taste we love, etc.

I really do recommend this book--have done so already with several friends. It's fun, interesting, educational, and sounds delicious!

Nisha says

The Spice Necklace

A Food-Lover's Caribbean Adventure

By Ann Vanderhoof

Doubleday Canada, 459 pages, \$33

FOR most of us, our knowledge of spices is confined to little glass bottles sitting in rows in the grocery store.

But Toronto writer Ann Vanderhoof's newest tale of sailing the Caribbean islands brings readers into the world of nutmeg, vanilla, cinnamon and the ground it comes from.

Part travel book, part cookbook, The Spice Necklace continues from Vanderhoof's previous effort, 2004's An Embarrassment of Mangoes, a tale of workaholic 40-somethings casting off the shackles of regular life and

taking to the seas.

Ultimately, it's a quick and entertaining jaunt through a world of exotic treats that belongs in the kitchen rather than the literary shelf.

Vanderhoof and her husband explored the Caribbean in the 1990s, losing themselves in the people, landscapes and food. They have returned to the Caribbean in Spice Necklace after a 10-year hiatus and are ready to continue their adventure.

What follows is an ode to the cuisine and native ingredients of Trinidad, Grenada and a host of other islands. Vanderhoof visits cocoa plantations and watches locals as they go seaweed fishing.

She samples goat fattened on oregano leaves and shellfish plucked straight from the ocean. She picks up the secrets to making perfect breadfruit stews and crisp lobster fritters from the local island women (and sometimes men).

Vanderhoof's tale is incredibly airy and bright, but in a world where the politics of food has become about much more than just what's on our plate, it also seems flippant.

Touring through some of the poorest parts of the world, Vanderhoof skates at the edges of the issues that plague farmers on these islands, for example the swaths of valuable agriculture lost to Hurricane Dean in 2007 and the divide between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

As a result, her exploration feels hollow and lacking any real insight into the culture she purports to cherish.

The same lack of depth is found in her connection to the people. She claims lifelong friendships with some of the islanders, and yet we never learn anything about them aside from their names and which spices they tip into the stockpot.

She haphazardly pieces together information with no connection from one idea to the next. We might start out hunting for cloves and find ourselves learning about guava berry liquor with no transition in between. The only indication she's changed topics are the numerous section breaks in each chapter.

Vanderhoof's writing style is accessible and mostly engaging. But it's her native island recipes, many developed in the small kitchen aboard her boat, which are the book's highlight.

Twice-fried plantains, coconut drops, pepper shrimp and mango chow -- many sound good enough to induce hunger pangs just by reading their names. Although some of the ingredients are likely only found in a market in St. Kitts, Vanderhoof does an admirable job of making them accessible to any North American kitchen.

Nisha Tuli is a Winnipeg writer and an avid foodie.

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Beth says

This would be more fun and beneficial if a person had Caribbean experience. I have none, yet I enjoyed the

travels of this Canadian couple who ditched Toronto for life on their sailboat to learn all they could about food in "the islands". Lots of interesting recipes, although I'll pass on the roasted goat, thank you very much. I learned a lot about spices in general, though and the recipes are very unusual in their native capacity!

Wendy Greenberg says

I loved Ann Vanderhoof's first book, *An Embarrassment of Mangoes*. This is in a similar vein - more recipes, more Caribbean customs, people, markets and life in the very different islands from St Vincent down to Trinidad. Beautifully atmospheric and a joy for any lover of the Caribbean and any foodie...so that's me then!

Lex says

This is a perfect summertime read. The author has a real gift for capturing the feel of tropical places, and made me long for the food and sights of Grenada and Trinidad (places I knew very little about until reading this book). I did skim over some of the bits about rum and drinking-- the book should really called the Food AND Drink Lover's Caribbean Adventure-- but food lovers can't miss this book for her loving and reverential representation of the cuisine of the "Spice Necklace" islands. Sometimes travel memoirs can seem condescending depending on the tone of the author, but there's not of that here.

Amy L. Campbell says

Note: Free review copy received from vendor's booth at ALA 2010.

I wasn't expecting to be so enraptured by this travelogue/recipe book, but Vanderhoof added enough of her interactions with the local people, history, the food and where it came from to keep me from getting bored with one thing or the other. However, like her boat Receta, Vanderhoof knows exactly when her writing needs to change tack and bring it around to a new topic. Readers will be thrilled, but not overwhelmed, with descriptions of scenery, humorous anecdotes about cooking or eating failures, and brief tidbits about the various spices and dishes of the Caribbean.

While some of the recipes will be out of reach for the majority of the US population (particularly the ones that call for conch), there are still many out of the 71 included recipes that will be both palatable and easy for even the less adventurous to cook up.

This may also be an excellent guide for people interested in a Caribbean trip a bit off the beaten path, and offers excellent advice about traveling pretty much anywhere: eat the food, and ask questions about it. You will learn more about the culture that way and be more satisfied with both your meal and your experience.

*The reviewer is the author of the blog *A Librarian's Life in Books*.*

Sky Thibedeau says

The 'Spice Necklace' is part travelogue, part cookbook, and a joy to read. Anne Vanderhoof and her husband Steve took two years off from the real world to explore the Caribbean on their sailboat the 'Receta' (Spanish for 'recipe'). Along the way we meet the diverse people, customs, and tastes (especially the tastes) of the Islands from the Dominican Republic south to Trinidad.

The people we meet through Anne's eyes are very friendly and generous. They share their lives, their communities and their kitchens. People like Miss Dingis and her family in Grenada who live in a lush forest surrounded by spice and Cocoa trees. She welcomes Anne into her home and over the course of their friendship teaches her to cook like a born Grenadian.

There's also Dwight and Stevie, two local fishermen who trade the bounty from the Waters off Grenada for Anne's Home baked cookies and pastries. Stevie and Dwight have a very delicate palate and advise Anne on her cooking of local dishes. They let her know when she is fixing the dish just right.

Over in the Dominican Republic we can almost taste the sweet tender meat of the self spicing goats of Chef Julian Tatiz's 'La Madonna restaurant which is an adventure in itself to get to. The goats graze on wild oregano in the mountains and their meat has the taste of oregano already infused.

Down in Trinidad we meet Miss Pat Jones and are introduced to the Trini tradition of 'Liming' that is relaxing and having fun with your friends. In addition to Miss Pat's hot and spicy recipes we also get a glimpse of Carnival and how West Indian Curries are made.

There are so many peoples to meet, tastes to discover, and places to see it would take several pages to relate them all. I really enjoyed this book and probably gain 10 pounds just reading it.

The book comes with 71 recipes of which I tried several. The Ginger Spice Cookies (page 19) were terrific and a kid pleaser. The Grenadian Banana Bread (Page 21) was very good and differs in flavor and texture from my normal recipe. I liked the Spicy Peanut Cream (Page 361) but my Kids not so much. The Ginger Peanuts (page 449) are the favorite and we've made 4 batches. I tried the Chivo Guisado (page 46) with Lamb instead of goat. I loved it but it's not a kid pleaser. Give'em Hotdogs.

The Spice Necklace is a wonderful book which will make you hunger for the Island Life. You'll have a hard deciding to keep it in the library or the kitchen.

Beth says

The book is about a couple who use their boat to live various months at different Caribbean islands. They explore the islands to find out what spices are used with different recipes and how these have come to the islands. Interestingly enough although the use of hot spices are very common there, these spices are not grown there. They often come from India. The practice of using them was brought with those who emigrated from India. But originally, these spices came to India from South America in the first place.

This is a good book to dip into. You read little stories about the author Ann Vanderhoof and her husband's

stay in tracking down local food, inviting people to eat with them as they try cooking on their boat at one Caribbean island after another. The book is full of different stories of native people they meet as they rent cars to go around each island.

Most interesting is description of how things grow and are processed. Coffee is grown and after it has been through bidding, it is processed. A new way of dealing with chocolate is not only to have cocoa grow on the islands but also to have the locals involved in making it into chocolate right there instead of sending it elsewhere to be made into bars and pieces. I'd love to try to Grenadian chocolate that they're importing to the US.

Debbie Boucher says

A parent at school recommended this book to me. I enjoyed the cultural parts about Trinidad and the recipes. In fact, I actually feel inspired to make the trek to the Green Market in Santa Cruz tomorrow (a 40 minute car ride through the windy Northern Range) to find fresher produce than what is available at my neighborhood grocery store. So why didn't I rate this book higher? It glamorizes Trinidad and its food. The reality is most fruit and vegetables sold here have been imported, and that's even true at the central market, a place the author raves about. There's also way too much sugar and starch in Trini cooking, something the author chooses to ignore as well. Give me Colombia, Argentina, or even Bolivia for fresh, tasty dishes. It's sad that Trinidad has abandoned agriculture in pursuit of petrodollars, and at some point in the future it could backfire.

D says

Now I wish I'd read this before my vacation to St. Lucia and Grenada (among a handful of other islands) back in January. Despite that, it was nice to be able to return to these places through the pages of a book and relive the short time I spent on those islands. Even though my Caribbean exposure has so far been limited to spending a few hours on each island, thanks to having been on cruise ships, I've fallen for the islands hard and just reading about them left a smile on my face every time I had to put this book down.

This was a surprisingly informative and interesting book on all kinds of topics including politics, culture and food. I don't know how many times I thought to myself, "huh, I did not know that" or would mention them out loud to someone. I preferred that so little was mentioned of sailing itself and the emphasis on the food, since that's what I bought the book for. I can't wait to try some of the recipes and it's great that such a generous amount are included.

The only slightly negative thing was that I felt somewhat left out of the loop as she mentioned all these friends of theirs, be they fellow sailors or islanders. Probably would've helped considerably if I had read her previous book first...

Cathy says

I loved An Embarrassment of Mangoes: A Caribbean Interlude by the same author, and I loved this book as

well. The reason it took me almost two years to finish the book is that I wanted to savor each chapter as I would the dishes Ann Vanderhoof details in them: slowly, and at my leisure. I found this book best read one chapter (or section) at a time, with plenty of time to devote to what I read. Vanderhoof centers this book firmly on food yet still manages to work in scraps of local color. In this book, she progressed from curious visitor to something more — island culture food anthropologist, perhaps?

I will keep this book around to try my hand at some of the recipes, and I appreciate the offering of practical substitutions.

If I had one complaint it would be that I wished she included more environmental and historical perspectives on the islands, as she does hint at these things from time to time and I would have welcomed more insight.

I anticipate another book soon, I hope!

PorshaJo says

I enjoyed this one so much. I waited to read this one while on a trip to the Grenadines and Grenada and it was the perfect read. I love to read anything about food and this was perfect. Perhaps it was reading about the food of the area that I was in at that time, or reading it while sailing and sunning myself, but I loved this one. It was nice to get a history of some food, such as this history of cocoa on Trinidad and Grenada and how it goes from bean form to actual chocolate. I read both books by this author and have to say this one is my favorite. Though it was a tough decision.

jb Byrkit says

This book is full of travel, adventure and food. All things I love especially in a book. It's full of local recipes as well as the history of some of the ingredients.

There's even a recipe for the common cold involving rum.

Not to mention the cover is beautiful.

Riley Vermilya says

What a GREAT summer on your hammock read! I loved how this is a travelogue/memoir/cookbook written about a Canadian couple's adventure sailing, hiking through the Caribbean, meeting the natives, eating and cooking their food...added BONUS. The food actually was a conversation starter and helped them form great bonds with the people of the land. I totally dug that.

After cruising through the book and seeing the recipes at the end of each chapter, I found myself wanting to make an attempt at trying to cook, too! In fact, the lemon bar recipe is similar to my Irish mother's and mine is not too shabby either.

I always LOVE it when a book takes me away to a place I've never been and stimulates all of my senses with

a smile. This book achieves that and now I need to have an American mid life crisis and sail to the Caribbean! First I need a boat! ;)

Katrina Callender says

I laughed out loud several time as Ahhnnnn recounted stories about several of the wonderful persons who taught her and her husband about the islands.

She truly captured the spirit of the people, their generosity, living life on island time and navigating small, bad roads.

She and her husband eagerly sampled many foods, dishes and beverages that some persons who live in the Caribbean would not touch.... I am personally not a fan of seamoss....even if farmed by a hunk in St Lucia ?

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is a part of the Caribbean Diaspora and who may be feeling a little homesick; be warned it may also make you very hungry for your grandmother's cooking, but she had included recipes as well!

Also recommended to anyone who plans to visit the Caribbean. I hope it inspires you to get out of the all-inclusive resorts and really see the islands and experience their warmth.

And if I could ask the author one question, I would ask: "Have you ever visited Barbados and what was your experience like?"
