

## Cool Tools - Love Story

Judith van Praag

For more than four decades Kodansha International has been publishing books with an emphasis on Japanese culture, exposing the English reading world to every subject, from "Lullie the Iceberg", and "Pop Bonsai", to "Plastic Culture". This summer the venerable publishing house added a rather prosaic title to their list: "Cool Tools: Cooking Utensils from the Japanese Kitchen".

There is however nothing prosaic about the writing, the photography or styling of this lovely book. Author Kate Klippensteen, her partner, photographer Yasuo Konishi, stylist Ori Koyama and their art director Kazuhiko Miki transformed kitchenware to "objets d'art" before daring to propose that you take a book on kitchen utensils to your coffee table.

Author Kate Klippensteen's latest is really a memoir and a love story. The romance started years before her birth, with her parents' two-year stay in Japan. Later on, they instilled their appreciation for the esthetics and food of the Land of the Rising Sun in their children as if by osmosis.

Raised in America, but surrounded by Japanese life-style elements, Kate Klippensteen acquired a taste for everything Japanese. It may not have come as a surprise when one of her majors in college turned out to be Japanese (the other was German).

After graduating in 1986, Klippensteen left for Japan, where she became a food and restaurant critic for Japanese editions of magazines such as "Playboy", "Esquire" and "Marie Claire".

A collector of cool tools herself (she remembers enjoying visits to the hardware store with her father) she showed some

favorites –among which a crane and a turtle shaped, and a sharkskin wasabi grater– during a demonstration at Kobo at Higo this summer.

She did however not use any of the utensils in her collection.

"As a critic I always ate out in the world's most tasty city," she says.

It wasn't until she was writing an article for "Elle" eight years ago, that she became interested in cooking Japanese dishes herself. This personal involvement colors Klippensteen's perception, she testifies wholeheartedly for the use of natural material, handcrafted utensils; for cooking rice in a pan rather than an electric cooker.

In the chapter on presentation Klippensteen states: "Japanese cuisine is meant to appeal to the five senses."

The author deftly succeeds in re-creating the sensory experience she wishes to share with her readers.

Where she lets chefs speak for themselves, you can "hear" the passion in their "voices".

The representation of Klippensteen's neighbors' favorite kitchenware adds a mundane and humoristic touch to the pages.

While not a cookbook per definition "Cool Tools" is clearly geared toward sharing fascinating and helpful information on preparation, cooking, presentation and cleaning up, with cooks of all levels –from the bashful beginner to the professional chef.

Klippensteen is generous to a fault in sharing the muses and suppliers who were indispensable in the making of this book. You'll find names and addresses in chapters on "Stocking your

Kitchen", and "Restaurants and Shops". All photographed Items are listed clearly as well, a good way to learn the jargon.

You may find "Cool Tools: Cooking Utensils from the Japanese Kitchen" ISBN: 978-4-7700-3016-0/ 4-7700-3016-9 Price: \$28.00 at Kobo at Higo, Elliot Bay Books, or any other bookstore.

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