
Exploring China: a personal perspective



**Ken Hom,
with Donald Sloan**

Ken learnt to cook from the age of eleven when he started working in his uncle's Chinese restaurant in Chicago after school and at weekends. In order to help pay his university fees he gave cooking lessons which proved so popular that he was recommended to the Culinary Academy. In 1984, when the BBC was looking for a Chinese chef to produce a new series he was recommended by Madhur Jaffrey who had seen him giving lessons in California. Ken Hom's Chinese Cookery was the start of his UK TV career. Ken is now regarded as the world's leading authority on Chinese cookery.

While I genuinely welcome the public's apparently insatiable appetite for food-related television shows, I am not sure that the continuous diet of light entertainment and culinary competitions does much to extend our collective knowledge. I've had a long-standing ambition to write and present a series that achieves something different – that reveals the complex cultures of China through the universal language of food. With *Exploring China: a Culinary Adventure*, broadcast by the BBC in 2012, I hope that's what Ching He-Huang and I managed to achieve.

Having not been on a substantial trip to China since 1989, this was the perfect time to return. The real China still exists, thank goodness, even although westernisation and relentless progress are nibbling away at traditional ways of life – of cooking food, of eating together, of family life and community ties. We