

****Lavash is the foundation of every meal in Armenia. This is the story. From 2015 to 2018, John Lee, Ara Zada, and Kate Leahy traveled through Armenia and Artsakh gathering recipes and stories of these historic places. Recently, they revisited their trip with a limited-edition release of Artsakh, a collection of photography and recipes from the region before the war.***

KATE LEAHY: The first piece of writing that Kate published was called "Feeding Nostalgia: Cookbooks and Armenian-American Identity," which ran in Explorations, a UC Davis research journal. It involved a year's worth of research, including visits to the California State Library archives, reading every Armenian American community cookbook available through



interlibrary loans, and driving to Fresno to eat lahmajoun and bring a stack home with her. Once the research was done, she put the subject of Armenian food aside for years and began to learn how to cook while working in restaurants in Boston, San Francisco, and Napa before later attending Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. Since then, she has written or contributed to more than eight books including A16 Food + Wine, winner of the IACP Cookbook of the Year award, Cookie Love with pastry chef Mindy Segal, and Burma Superstar: Addictive Recipes from the Crossroads of Southeast Asia, a cookbook about a California-Burmese restaurant in San Francisco. Yet she never quite forgot about the ties between Armenia, its history, and

its food traditions that drove her to spend a year researching a country that was both very far away but felt strangely familiar. Returning to the subject of Armenian food for Lavash feels as though she picking up where I left off.

JOHN LEE: Got an invitation to teach photography in Armenia, when already established in San Francisco as a photographer working primarily in food and portraiture. His roots are in photojournalism. He was a staff photographer for the Chicago Tribune from 1996 to 2005, which included covering presidential campaigns, the rise of China, civil unrest in Haiti, Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan and Indonesia, and the war in Iraq. He was also part of the team of journalists at the Tribune who won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for its profile of the chaotic American air traffic system. Since leaving the Chicago Tribune in 2005, he had photographed more than two dozen cookbooks. He likes to approach food photography from a cultural perspective, as seen in his previous project, Burma Superstar: Addictive Recipes from the Crossroads of Southeast Asia (2017). He is currently based in both Singapore and San Francisco.

ARA ZADA: Grew up in an Armenian-Egyptian household in Southern California, which meant spending a lot of time in the kitchen cooking and eating. He did eventually (sort of) grow up, graduating from Le Cordon Bleu and working for Jaime Oliver on the television show Food Revolution. Since then, he worked for ABC, CBS, NBC, and Food Network as a food stylist and participated in Jamie Oliver's Food Foundation as a culinary instructor in the foundation's mobile teaching kitchen. He had also led cooking workshops elsewhere, including Armenia. Today, he is an executive chef for Fresh Gourmet Cuisine, where he develops recipes for Las Vegas hotels and supermarkets nationwide. When I was a kid, the only Armenian cookbook I ever saw was The Complete Armenian Cookbook, Including Favorite International Recipes. He wants Lavash to raise the bar on Armenian cookbooks, giving cooks a window into the real, and really old, world of Armenian.

Lavash(chook book) is available wherever you buy books: [Bookshop](#) (independent shops in US), [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), [Indiebound](#), Chck for *signed* copies at [Abril Books](#), [Now Serving](#), [Omnivore Books](#), a n d [Book Larder](#)