



Gary Paul Nabhan, *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans: A Spice Odyssey*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014. 332 pp. Hardcover \$29.95. Epub \$29.95.

In his latest book, Gary Paul Nabhan guides the reader on a tour of ancient trade routes – the Frankincense Trail, the Spice Route, the Silk Road, and the Camino Real. It is an historical and cultural tour of the people, both ancient and modern, that make up these routes. The book is a complex weaving together of history, travel writing, recipes, and the author’s personal connection to this spice trade world through family roots.

This is a fascinating medley that for Nabhan serves a broader argument about our globalized world. From these seemingly disparate sources, Nabhan seeks to reveal the first stirrings of the cultural and economic structures that make up and continue to affect our globalized world of today. Although the subject of globalization is contentious and complex, mired in as many arguments as there are scholars in the field, Nabhan’s book never gets bogged down in the overly academic. As packed as the book is with historical facts and information and argument (and Nabhan is intimidatingly knowledgeable), its driving force is descriptive and corporeal. In the middle of the epilogue, as Nabhan is building up to his final argument for “a more virtuous form of globalization,” he interrupts himself with an ancient recipe for mansaf (a kid and lamb stew with yogurt, root crops, and herbs) that will have any reader putting down the book and seeking out the smells of spices (local and exotic) and cooking meat.

Aaron Howland