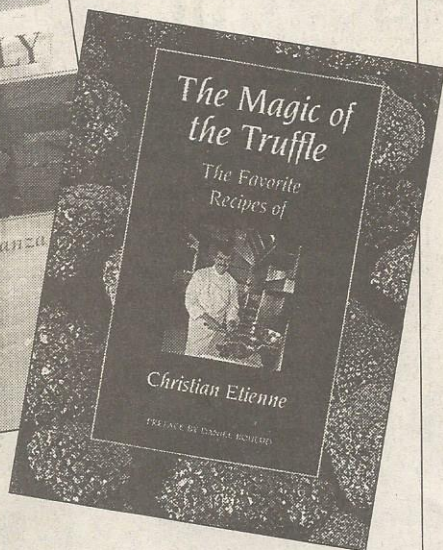
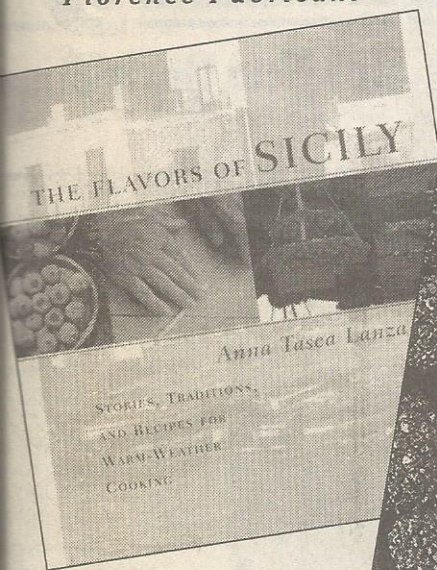


FOOD STUFF

Florence Fabricant



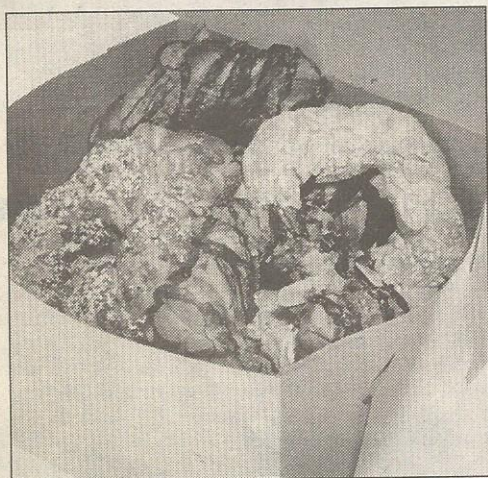
European Cookbooks, American Accents

For American cooks who crave food with a certain European style, a new effort is under way to bring European cookbooks to American kitchens. Bernard Jarrier-Cabernet and Carole Peck, who own Food News Cafe in Woodbury, Conn., and Dennis Pistone, a type-setter, have founded Ici La Press, which has just published "The Magic of the Truffle" by Christian Etienne (\$24), the translation of a book by a chef who is a truffle expert and has a restaurant in Avi-

gnon. It gives recipes for the black truffle and mentions summer truffles, but ignores Italian white truffles, which are not found in France. The company also publishes out-of-print American cookbooks. The first of these is "The Flavors of Sicily" by Anna Tasca Lanza (\$38). Ici La Press plans to publish books by Michel Bras and Alain Ducasse, both Michelin three-star chefs. The books are expected on the Web site www.icilapress.com and in stores in the coming weeks.

Too Much of This Cookie Isn't Enough

At first glance, the ciambella pastries made daily at Agata & Valentina, 1505 First Avenue (79th Street), look as if they're too big for one person. But the risk of single-handedly polishing off the entire flaky yet moist, twisted and knotted ring, about six inches in diameter, is very real. And before you know it, the nut-rich, buttery thing is gone, with only a few crumbs to show for it. Originally a Sicilian treat, ciambellas are now sold all over Italy. The ones at Agata & Valentina are made with almond paste and sliced almonds or, for a somewhat lighter result, with Sicilian pistachio paste and studded with pistachios. Either way, they're \$1.50 each. Drizzled with bittersweet chocolate, an embellishment they hardly need — but who's complaining? — they're \$1.75 each.



Who Says Tuna Has to Give Up Its Taste When It Goes in the Can?



Canned tuna is a fine convenience food, but most of the time it's hardly a food worth celebrating. There are some exceptions, though: the imported tunas packed in olive oil, with thick, rosy chunks that come apart in meaty layers, not gritty shreds. This is the best tuna for a salade niçoise, or, to make things simpler, a Provençal pan bagnat. I drain the tuna, but not too thoroughly, gently break it up, add a quick splash of good red wine vinegar and perhaps some capers, and pile it on a roll with a slice of red onion or tomato.

Food shops around the city sell a number of good tunas. Flott, from Sicily (about \$6.50 for a 6.75-ounce jar), is cut in solid spears that have a rich texture and a nice, slightly briny flavor. Tonnotta, also from Sicily (\$3 for 5.5 ounces), is less uniform but good. As do Mar from Genoa (\$5 for 5.5 ounces) is crumbly and relatively bland. But none compare with my favorite, L'Antico Sappore Trancio di Tonno, from Sicily, available in 10.5-ounce cans from www.esperya.com for \$18 plus shipping. It's made from bluefin tuna and has thick, pink chunks seasoned with sea salt. I love it straight from the can.