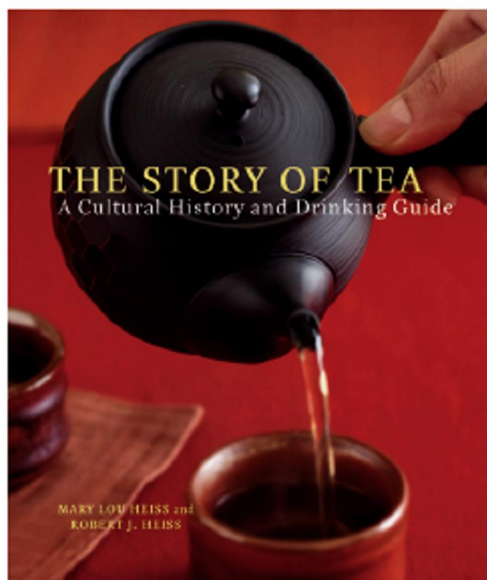


Husband-and-wife team pen history of tea

BY ANNA WOLFE

NORTHAMPTON, Mass.— Bob and Mary Lou Heiss, owners of Cook Shop Here, have written their first book together—*The Story of Tea*—that will be available Oct. 1.

Published by Ten Speed Press, Oakland, Calif., the book is 419 pages and includes more than a



The Heisses spent two years writing their first book together.

hundred location shots—most of them taken by the Heisses while touring the tea trail.

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Retailers pen ‘Story of Tea’

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While the Heisses originally started as coffee vendors almost 40 years ago, their passion is now tea. In their book, they chronicle tea’s influence across the globe and provide a complete reference for choosing, drinking and enjoying *Camellia Sinensis*.

They profile more than 30 tea varietals, provide an in-depth guide to tasting and brewing, and survey the customs and crafts associated with tea. The book also touches on health benefits and developments in organic production and fair trade practices. Also included are 10 sweet and savory recipes, including Savory Chinese Marbled Eggs and Green Tea Pot de Crème, and resources for purchasing fine tea.

“We played to our strengths,” said Bob Heiss. The husband-and-wife team divided up the writing. Bob focused on the technical aspects of brewing and manufacturing while Mary Lou’s efforts were dedicated to the esthetics and narrative. In the end, Mary Lou wrote about 60 percent while Bob turned in 40 percent—which he described as “a split in a traditional marriage of husband and wife.”

The original plan wasn’t for a weighty tome on tea. The project was supposed to be a small book slated to be a part of the Ten Speed’s *Great Book* series.

“They wanted this nice, little pocket book on tea. I started writing and couldn’t do

it,” said Mary Lou Heiss about picking and choosing from the abundance of information she and Bob wanted to document. So, they went back to Ten Speed and pitched another idea. “We said, ‘we can give you this phenomenal, big book on tea,’ and to their credit, they were interested in it.”

The published book exceeded Heisses expectations. “It’s a dream come true to have a book filled with our photographs,” said Mary Lou Heiss. Last year, an area museum exhibited their photography of the tea trade.

Now that the big book is done, the Heisses may do a pocket guide that could serve as a companion book to *The Story of Tea*. In related news, the Heisses are also launching a dedicated Web site on tea—www.teatrekker.com. The couple already has a Web site, www.cooksshophere.com, for their store. A second site will give them more virtual space to focus exclusively on tea without overwhelming other segments of their gourmet retail business. “We have so much info we want to share and the site, www.teatrekker.com, will be a great platform. I love the idea of educating people,” said Mary Lou Heiss.

Once the site is up, the Heisses plan to bring in other parts of the tea world, including tea writers from other countries, information about nonprofits that work in tea growing areas, and artisan tea and teawares will be for sale. ■