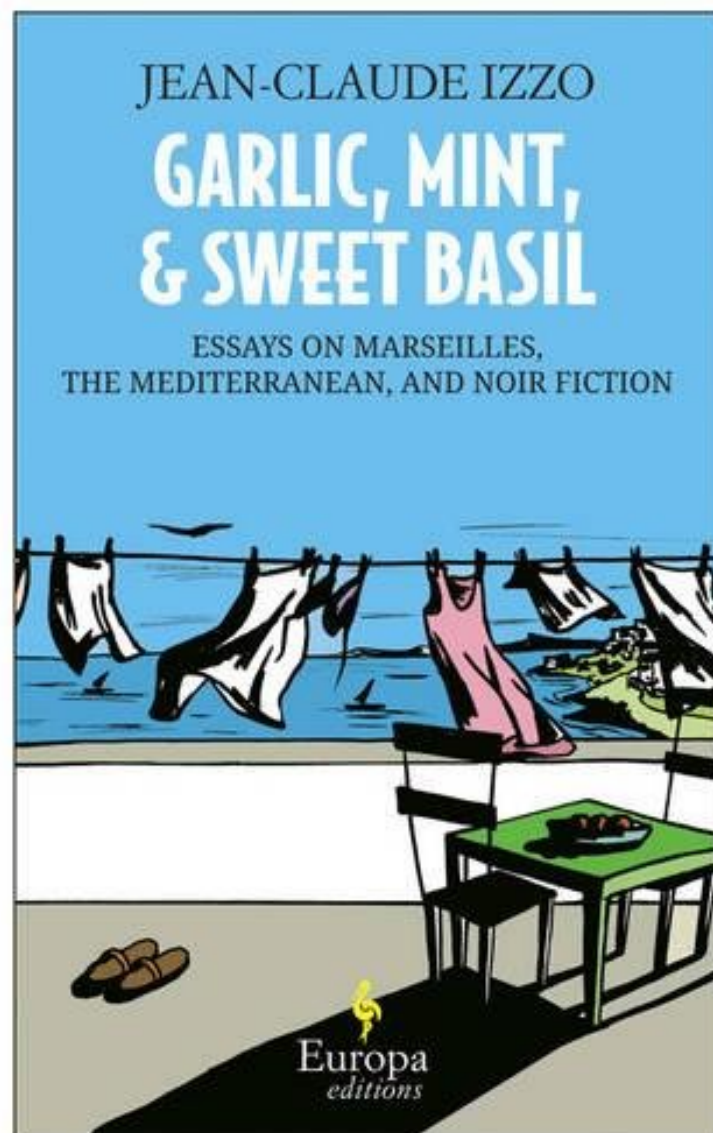


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## Garlic, Mint, and Sweet Basil: Essays on Marseilles, Mediterranean Cuisine, and Noir Fiction

*Jean-Claude Izzo*

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**Jean-Claude Izzo : Garlic, Mint, and Sweet Basil: Essays on Marseilles, Mediterranean Cuisine, and Noir Fiction** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Garlic, Mint, and Sweet Basil: Essays on Marseilles, Mediterranean Cuisine, and Noir Fiction:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Izzo's love letters to hometown MarseilleBy Merrily Baird"Garlic, Mint Sweet Basil: Essays on Marseilles, Mediterranean Cuisine, and Noir Fiction" brings together 16 brief meditations written by the late Jean-Claude Izzo, a celebrated mystery writer and an expert regarding the cuisine of his Marseille hometown. Two themes dominate the collection. In the first instance, Izzo is at pains to drive home the Mediterranean character of his hometown. Marseille, the second largest city in France, may indeed be the capital of the region known as Provence-Alpes, Cote d'Azur, but Izzo insists that the city, its cuisine, and its very identity should not be confused with those of Provence or France more generally. Instead, it should be understood as a city largely composed of residents, like Izzo himself, who are of mixed cultural heritage and have something of a sense of otherness even in their hometown. At the same time, he passionately argues, the character of Marseille is uniquely shaped by the many nations in Europe and Africa that rim the Mediterranean Sea to both the north and south. The secondary theme that weaves its way through the essays, especially when Izzo writes of either culinary matters or the pleasures of experiencing the sea, is what he terms "the intoxication of living." This, he says in the essay titled "Here, My Darling, Taste This," was invented in Marseille. In his book "God in Search of Man," the late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that "our goal should be to live life in radical amazement...Everything is phenomenal...To be spiritual is to be amazed." By this standard, the Marseille-loving Izzo was indeed spiritual and herein lies the charm of this slim volume of essays. And, of course, a portion of this volume is devoted to discussing the literary movement--Mediterranean noir--that Izzo is credited with developing. One essay provides a sweeping view of the "noir" ("dark") current in Mediterranean literature, while the concluding section of the book reprints a four-page piece of fiction concerning Fabio Montale, the fictional detective of Izzo's "Marseille Trilogy." Finally, Izzo assesses Montale and lists the detective's favorite places, music, and books. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. WonderfulBy Howard I am really surprised to find I am the first reviewer. This is a terrific book. I bought it because Izzo is a wonderful writer; his trilogy is a great story and his other works are also very worthwhile. Note however, that his books all show great affection for Marseilles and the Mediterranean coast. This book is an homage to that same area, and it resonates, also, in its recognition that the south coast of Europe and the north coast of Africa are closely related. After I -- a noir mystery and police procedural reader -- gave the book with a recommendation to my 28 year old son -- a world traveler and broad topic and style reader -- he was unusually enthusiastic about it. I whole heartedly recommend this book, but I don't fit it into any one category of interest. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Smell and Taste in the second largest city of FranceBy Luccia Takes you to Marseilles and gives you the smell taste feel and history of the place. It's like taking a vacation without leaving the house, and also brings you right into a time when cafe culture formed neighborhood solidarity among many different cultures.

From the father of the Mediterranean Noir genre. A short sublime book on the three things dearest to Jean-Claude Izzo's heart: his native Marseilles, the sea in all its splendor, and Mediterranean noir the literary genre his books helped to found. This collection of writings shows Izzo, author of the acclaimed Marseilles trilogy, at his most contemplative and insightful. His native city, with its food, its flavors, its passionate inhabitants, and its long, long history of commerce and conviviality, constitute the lifeblood that runs through all of Izzo's work. Reminiscent of Henry Miller's *The Colossus of Maroussi* and the lyrical essays of Antoine de Saint-Exupry and Albert Camus, as uplifting and touching as Daniel Klein's *Travels with Epicurus*, this slender volume will appeal equally to gourmets who delight in the strong flavors of Mediterranean cuisine, to those travelling on the Riviera (or arm-chair travelers who wish they could), and, naturally, to aficionados of noir fiction.

Praise for Jean-Claude Izzo "A real delight." Andrea Camilleri, author of the bestselling Inspector Montalbano series "[Izzo's] essays...reveal a man of deep feeling and humanity." *The Guardian* What makes Izzo's work haunting is his extraordinary ability to convey the tastes and smells of Marseilles. *The New Yorker* "Mr. Izzo was a marvelous food writer...His books are filled with winning descriptions of Provencal meals run through with the flavors of north Africa, Italy, Greece." Sam Sifton, *The New York Times* Just as Raymond Chandler and James Ellroy made Los Angeles their very own, so Mr. Izzo has made Marseilles so much more than just another geographical setting. *The Economist* "In Izzo's books...Marseilles is a 'ville selon nos coeurs,' a city in tune with our heart...A cosmopolitan, maritime city, greedy, sensual and warm." Michel Samson, *Slow Food* Our last true romantic, Jean-Claude Izzo transmits warmth to his readers, as if granting them a mouthful of pure love. *Le Point* (France) About the Author Jean-Claude Izzo was born in Marseilles, France, in 1945. He achieved astounding success with his Marseilles Trilogy (*Total Chaos*, *Chourmo*, *Solea*). In addition to the books in this trilogy, his two novels (*The Lost Sailors*, and *A Sun for the Dying*) and one collection of short stories (*Vivre fatigue*) also enjoy great success with both critics and the public. Izzo died in 2000 at the age of fifty-five.