

**Bio:**

Eliot Stein is a journalist and editor at the BBC. His forthcoming book for St. Martin's Press, *Custodians of Wonder*, is inspired by a column he created for the BBC called *Custom Made* in which he profiles remarkable people upholding ancient traditions around the world. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Wired*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *National Geographic*, *The Independent*, and elsewhere. He currently lives in Brooklyn with his wife and young son.

**Synopsis:**

**Named one of the best travel books of the year by National Geographic, Smithsonian, and Afar**

"Eliot Stein's quietly powerful new book celebrates the kind of singular, site-specific expertise that's endangered by globalization and technology...smart, genial and occasionally astonishing...it's a country mile from the news cycle, a winning collection of thoroughly un-current events." -SF Chronicle

**A vivid look at 10 astonishing people who are maintaining some of the world's oldest and rarest cultural traditions.**

Eliot Stein has traveled the globe in search of remarkable people who are preserving some of our most extraordinary cultural rites. In *Custodians of Wonder: Ancient Customs, Profound Traditions, and the Last People Keeping Them Alive*, Stein introduces readers to a man saving the secret ingredient in Japan's 700-year-old original soy sauce recipe. In Italy, he learns how to make the world's rarest pasta from one of the only women alive who knows how to make it. And in India, he discovers a family rumored to make a mysterious metal mirror believed to reveal your truest self. From shadowing Scandinavia's last night watchman to meeting a 27th-generation West African griot to tracking down Cuba's last official cigar factory "readers" more than a century after they spearheaded the fight for Cuban independence, Stein uncovers an almost lost world.

Climbing through Peru's southern highlands, he encounters the last Inca bridge master who rebuilds a grass-woven bridge every year from the fabled Inca Road System. He befriends a British beekeeper who maintains a touching custom of "telling the bees" important news of the day. And he crunches through a German forest to find the official mailman of the only tree in the world with its own address – to which countless people from across the world have written in hopes of finding love. These are just some of the last custodians preserving age-old rites on the brink of disappearance against all odds. Let Eliot Stein introduce you to all of them.