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Cooking

An American Family Cooks: From a Chocolate Cake You Will Never Forget to a Thanksgiving Everyone Can Master

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Charming vignettes, cute recipe titles, and photos of the family cooking add a traditional appeal to this versatile cookbook.

Think back to childhood, and it's quite likely that many fond family memories are intertwined with food. And that is precisely the effect that *An American Family Cooks* will have on the reader—transporting them back in time to their own family meals.

The recipes contained within this marvelous cookbook, compiled by the family matriarch, Judith Choate, have been perfected after years of cooking meals with and for her family. Choate knows what she's talking about: she was the owner of MOM, a New York-based bakery and catering company, and she is the author of many other successful cookbooks.

As a secret ingredient acts to enhance a recipe, a short tidbit of family lore accompanies many of the recipes, enhancing their value to the reader. For example, Choate says that the Scotch Griddle Scones is her oldest family recipe, brought by her grandmother from Scotland. Choate also waxes poetic about her charmingly entitled recipe "The Chicken Potpie That Nana Made and We All Still Make" and says that the gougeres (cheese puffs made with Gruyere or any other sharp cheese) are a staple on the Christmas menu. Some recipes are accompanied by longer stories, such as the feast Choate prepared in honor of her son Mickey's fiftieth birthday celebration and the family's Easter and Thanksgiving celebrations.

Many of the recipes have an international flair, with a noticeable emphasis on French cooking, though Choate points out that much of this type of ethnic cooking has been woven into American kitchens. "The kitchen has become the true melting pot of our nation," she says. In the

Italian recipe chapter, she jokes that she must have been Italian in a past life.

The artfully arranged recipes are as elegant as Salmon with Curried Carrot Couscous and Green Puree and as down-home as Really, Really Good Grilled Cheese Sandwiches and Easy Cinnamon Rolls. Pictures of the finished results, as well as some photos of the ingredients and step-by-step preparations, are always appreciated in a cookbook. The photos of family members engaged in testing out the recipes add to the book's appeal.

As a bonus, her son, Chris, an expert in wine, suggests a wine pairing with select recipes, like an Etna rosso from Sicily to drink with Pasta with Ramps, Pancetta, Mushrooms, and Fava Beans.

And what's a cookbook without a sweet ending? Recipes for poached pears with bittersweet chocolate sauce, strawberry rhubarb pie, and chocolate chess pie/cake are just a few mouthwatering examples.

Some recipes within the cookbook may seem daunting to less experienced cooks, though there are certainly recipes for any level chef. For most readers, the cookbook is versatile enough to use as a reference guide for making family meals, for entertaining, or for settling back and browsing through one family's history of food traditions and meal sharing.

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