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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ COOKING

Helen Nash's New Kosher Cuisine: Healthy, Simple & Stylish

Helen Nash
The Overlook Press (Sep 1, 2012)
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Kosher cuisine has a reputation for being too heavy, too salty, too meaty, and having too many unhealthy ingredients. While that may have been true in your *bubbe's* (grandmother's) generation, things have taken a turn for the better over the last decade or so. Thanks to new methods and ingredients, foods that were heretofore deemed *traife* (unclean) are now suitable for observant Jews and others who seek a high quality of dining. So rather than most of the traditional recipes you'll find in many Jewish cookbooks, veteran cook and teacher Helen Nash steps outside that box, coming up with surprising combinations in everything from hors d'oeuvres and appetizers to meat, poultry, fish, and desserts.

Each course is divided into meat (beef and poultry), dairy, and pareve categories; the first two, according to strict Jewish dietary law, may never be eaten together; in fact, Orthodox Jews wait several hours before partaking in one after the other. Pareve, on the other hand, may be eaten with anything. So instead of offering a recipe for mushroom soup with cream, Nash employs non-dairy soy milk. In other dishes, she might pair miso with barley in a soup; marinated salmon with mango-kiwi relish; or Arctic Char with honey and wasabi. Several main dishes are suitable for cooks who are strictly vegetarian, and there are dozens of these little switches that make *New Kosher Cuisine* more accessible to those who wish to respect the laws but still enjoy additional options.

Where some cookbooks can be intimidating with their call for hard-to-find ingredients and daunting skills, Nash's instructions are straightforward for both experienced and novice cooks; the ingredients are manageable and easy to obtain.

Although the book lacks nutritional information, the recipes are quite healthy, given the reduced use of dairy products, fatty meats, and salt. The author also provides "helpful tips," suggestions for selecting ingredients and equipment, as well as time-saving cooking techniques.

Of course, it wouldn't be a Jewish cookbook without some old favorites, so there are recipes for such traditional fare as chicken soup with matzoh balls, rugelach, and gefilte fish (probably the most challenging dish in the volume).

Nash created several of the recipes in trying to buoy the spirits of her ailing husband, who, despite his illness, still enjoyed a flavorful meal.

RON KAPLAN (August 30, 2012)

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