FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Cooking

The Christmas Eve Cookbook: With Tales of Nochebuena and Chanukah
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If you were to visit Ybor City in Tampa, Florida, during the winter holiday season, you would probably be more likely to witness the celebration of Nochebuena, Epiphany or Chanukah, than the “All-American Christmas.” In The Christmas Eve Cookbook, the Pachecos? tackle the daunting task of documenting not only holiday recipes and traditions from this cultural stew, but the holiday experiences of the people and the community of Ybor City. Their success in the task is due in no small measure to the delightful vignettes that introduce each chapter of recipes.

The body of the book is segmented into chapters of Appetizers, Soups, Meats, Sauces, Fish, Pasta, Rice and Beans, Tamales and Chili, Vegetables, Jellies, Desserts and Drinks. Each chapter contains traditional holiday recipes of Jewish, Mexican, Cuban, Spanish, Italian and traditional American cuisine. Suggested holiday menus are included.

But the heart of the book is in the stories. Stories that capture holiday magic in the small moments as well as the expansive gestures. Here we have the story of how a small boy’s courage is rewarded by an unexpected sack of oranges paving the ground for strength to later sit in the nose of a B-17 and survive as a POW. Or the story of how one man’s holiday generosity created a community from hardship.

The 19 vignettes of the people of Ybor City bring truth to the holiday season, not always pleasant or pretty, but real. As real as the food that centers around each holiday. And oh, the food - simple holiday recipes to inspire the most cynical cook: catalan rice with raisins and pine nuts, stacked enchiladas, zabaglione (egg custard) with strawberries, Italian red snapper, apricot stuffed breast of veal, and white sangria. As with many ethnic recipes, the recipes turn simple low cost food into holiday magic with just a little gift of time: Time to honor the holiday, our friends and families, and to honor the special magic that lives in the holidays, no matter how they are celebrated. A thoroughly enjoyable and practical exploration of Christmas ethnic

cooking and customs.

Joyce Wardwell