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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★★ COOKING

The Crow Farm Cookbook: A Manual of Food and Hospitality with Stories and Other Entertainment

Catherine Smith
John Smith
CreateSpace (Apr 28, 2010)
Unknown $20.00 (350pp)
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It took a trek to Nepal to bring Californian Catherine Manz and Kentucky native John Smith together, but the pair wed and began a life together on a small farm in rural Oregon. *The Crow Farm Cookbook* is an expanded second edition of their compendium of recipes, poems, farm and household advice, tales of adventure, and philosophical asides. It is a highly personal and idiosyncratic narrative of two lives lived fully and well. The style and content will delight even the most discerning cookbook readers.

There are over two hundred recipes contained in the book's pages, and they lure in the reader with their offbeat titles: Beat-the-Bears Buckwheat Cakes, Alexandra's Earthquake Borscht, Emily's Maverick Rice, and the arresting Barbara's Meaty Thighs Gingerbread Cookies. Many of the Smiths' recipes are quite unusual and reflect the influence of friends and family members from Belgium, Germany, Spain, Russia, Guatemala, and other parts of the world. Each recipe is preceded by an interesting and often humorous anecdote, as when the young Catherine finished her first meal with her Australian host family as a foreign exchange student and announced that she was really "stuffed" (in Aussie slang, this means "pregnant").

Special chapters are devoted to paella, chocolate, afternoon tea, and camp cooking. A useful index at the rear of the book—amending the fancy recipe titles down to the basic information about ingredients and preparation—makes it easy for readers to go back and find a particular dish.

The volume is creatively designed, with plenty of balance between the text and white space to allow for the insertion of informative bits of kitchen wisdom and interesting quotations, such as learning how to easily chop raisins, Ethiopian proverbs, quotes from Inspector Clouseau, and the authors' opinions on amending a recipe: "Fat-free brownies are a contradiction in terms. If you want fat-free, eat an orange." All of these amusing asides spice up an already beguiling book and will leave readers feeling very well satisfied (but not stuffed!).
RACHEL JAGARESKI (September 24, 2012)

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