



Wild Honey and Rye: Modern Polish Recipes

Ren Behan

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Ren Behan's *Wild Honey and Rye* transforms the treasured foods of her Polish forbears into fresher, lighter recipes. While there are still hearty dishes in the mix, Behan's emphasis is on adaptations of classic Polish fare to reflect modern eating habits and recipes inspired by Poland's vibrant restaurant scene.

Clearly written and enhanced with many personal anecdotes, the book starts with an excellent introduction of common Polish ingredients and flavors. As befits the title, the leadoff recipe is for a honey and rye loaf, followed by sections covering many zippy kinds of salads, soups, noodle dishes, meats, fish, and street foods. Each recipe title is in English and Polish, and a folk-art floral motif anchors the pages.

Polish cuisine gives star status to the cabbage, the pierogi (there are seven sweet and savory variations of this crowd pleaser), root vegetables, and comforting soups for long, cold winters, but Behan has many unexpected recipes. There's her twist on Steak Tartare, redolent with homemade lovage oil, millet kaszotto, and Venison with Roasted Pumpkin and Thyme Puree.

The Polish sweet tooth appears in many recipes via fruit and honey. In the chapter entitled "High Tea," Behan describes the cakes and other treats that many Poles enjoy as their daily afternoon snack. Potent potables often feature later in the day, and home brewers will enjoy the fascinating chapter on fruit liqueurs and vodkas flavored with everything from quince to salted caramel.

Underscoring the lightened-up Polish fare, the layout is sleek, airy, and shot through with the author's scintillating photographs of Warsaw markets and street scenes. Recipe photographer Yuki Sugiura gets a special nod for capturing artful images of stodgy foods that are tricky to shoot, like bowls of stew and plain loaf cakes.

Wild Honey and Rye is a colorful, informative tour of Polish food by an author who has deep roots in Poland and is proud to share her cultural inheritance.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (May/June 2018)

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