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Synopsis

When visitors travel to Pennsylvania Dutch Country, they are encouraged to consume the local culture by way of "regional specialties" such as cream-filled whoopie pies and deep-fried fritters of every variety. Yet many of the dishes and confections visitors have come to expect from the region did not emerge from Pennsylvania Dutch culture but from expectations fabricated by local-color novels or the tourist industry. At the same time, other less celebrated (and rather more delicious) dishes, such as sauerkraut and stuffed pork stomach, have been enjoyed in Pennsylvania Dutch homes across various localities and economic strata for decades. Celebrated food historian and cookbook writer William Woys Weaver delves deeply into the history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine to sort fact from fiction in the foodlore of this culture. Through interviews with contemporary Pennsylvania Dutch cooks and extensive research into cookbooks and archives, *As American as Shoofly Pie* offers a comprehensive and counterintuitive cultural history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine, its roots and regional characteristics, its communities and class divisions, and, above all, its evolution into a uniquely American style of cookery. Weaver traces the origins of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine as far back as the first German settlements in America and follows them forward as New Dutch Cuisine continues to evolve and respond to contemporary food concerns. His detailed and affectionate chapters present a rich and diverse portrait of a living culinary practice—widely varied among different religious sects and localized communities, rich and poor, rural and urban—that complicates common notions of authenticity. Because there's no better way to understand food culture than to practice it, *As American as Shoofly Pie*'s cultural history is accompanied by dozens of recipes, drawn from exacting research, kitchen-tested, and adapted to modern cooking conventions. From soup to Schnitz, these dishes lay the table with a multitude of regional tastes and stories. *Hockt eich hie mit uns, un esst eich satt*—Sit down with us and eat yourselves full!

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Customer Reviews

"Weaver's book, written in a straightforward, journalistic style, is an important addition to the work surrounding food studies. He incorporates primary documents, including a compilation of important recipes; literature; personal interviews; and historical cookbooks, to report the history and development of the cuisine. This pioneering research lays the groundwork both for further exploration of Pennsylvania Dutch cookery as well as the identification and study of other regional diets that, as a whole, form an American cuisine." —*Journal of American Culture*

Weaver seems to have had a ripping good time unmasking the fake Pennsylvania Dutch tourist culture, with its hex signs (bogus) and windmills (faux) and buffets designed to fill up busloads of tourists on a budget. . . . At the same time, Weaver has taken seriously his mission to rediscover the foods of his ancestors, interviewing hundreds of people over 30 years." —*NPR's The Salt*

William Woys Weaver is an independent food historian and author of numerous books, including *Culinary Ephemera: An Illustrated History* and *Sauerkraut Yankees: Pennsylvania Dutch Food and Foodways*. He also directs the Keystone Center for the Study of Regional Foods and Food Tourism and maintains the Roughwood Seed Collection for heirloom food plants.

This book is the third book by William Woys Weaver on PA Dutch (German) cooking. It's not just an historical cookbook, nor is it a look at the culinary aspects of Palatine-derived German regional culture that arose in southeastern PA during the 19th century. It's both of these and more. Weaver, a PA based noted food historian and heirloom gardening expert of Mennonite background, gives his take on the foodlore and fakelore associated with the cuisine. Where to begin? The dust jacket is a good place. Pictured are iconic items relating to popularized versions of PA Dutch (German) culture and cuisine. By the time you finish reading the book, you should be able to understand his choice of the items pictured. You will also come away with an appreciation of the diversity of PA Dutch food and the many ways in which it has been falsely or incompletely represented. You will learn of the association in popular culture with the Amish, who are a religious sect, and one that in many ways is

atypical of the broader range of PA Dutch sub-cultures. You will become aware of the various social forces and history that have shaped the views of many to give the ludicrous highly marketed, and frequently inaccurate, image of the PA Dutch cultures and their cuisine(s). As documented by Weaver, the subcultures that gave rise to this regional culture and cuisine were all Germanic (aka High Dutch) in origin, but diverse, arriving in PA over a period of time, and included not just German speakers from the Palatine, but also from Swabia, Hesse, Alsace and Switzerland. One learns not just about Mennonites and the Amish subgroup, but also about the church people (Lutheran, Reformed and Moravians) as well as sectarian groups no longer commonly known to the general public. One meets the rural and urban elites, the sophisticated "Hasenpfeffer Dutch" who dined elegantly and lived well. These were the large farmers, merchants, brewers and professional class, many well educated and well traveled. Weaver also focuses on the solid "burgher" middle class of the towns and smaller cities, and points out that farmers could range from wealthy and middle class in the fertile valleys to the poor, living hand to mouth on marginal land on the hillsides of more remote areas. The book also discusses the image of the "Dutch", as shaped by factors such as anti-German sentiment from the World Wars, excessive pressure and attempts to completely anglicize them, differing religious and folk customs, complex socio-economic factors and pulp fiction novels that were frequently biased and highly inaccurate. The first section of the book ends with an assessment of current trends, such as the new Amish image e.g., green and close to the earth, or as a stamp of authenticity for things not even remotely connected to the Amish subculture. He also writes about authentic features of cuisine and as how they might serve as a basis for something better than the bland greasy fried tourist fare, or a few stereotypical dishes. The book ends with a section of recipes, ranging from simple one-pot "poverty dishes" to more elegant dishes of the wealthy "Hasenpfeffer Dutch". I have not tried any of the recipes, but having made recipes from his other historical cookbooks on the PA Dutch cuisine, I expect good results.

William Woys Weaver turns up the heat under the *melting pot* and demonstrates the cultural assimilation of the Pennsylvania Dutch into American culture. As he leads us through all the ingredients in the pot; what emerges is a far more diverse and flavorful understanding of Pennsylvania Dutch culture than previously presented by scholars. The term melting pot was first used in 1782 by the French American writer J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur (1735-1813) in his book *Letters from an American Farmer*. The melting pot is a metaphor for a heterogeneous society becoming more homogeneous, particularly regarding the assimilation of immigrants to American culture. The traditional definition of Pennsylvania Dutch culture as defined

by fiction writers, journalists, playwrights, movie directors, tourist bureaus/chambers of commerce, reality television show producers, documentarians, photographers, painters, poets, sermonizers/homilists, lyrists, historical societies, genealogist, and indeed Pennsylvania Dutch scholars has been thoroughly researched and boiled down. What emerges is a wonderful clear reduction with all the myths debunked and evaporated. Just as a map has a key to interpret the terrain being examined, Weaver's book is the key to unlocking the mysteries and myths of Pennsylvania Dutch culture through examining foodlore. Historians use cookbooks as primary source documents in much the same way they use any written record of the past. There are ways the historian can read between the lines of recipes, attempting to answer questions not directly related to cooking or material culture but may deal with gender roles, issues of class, ethnicity and race. Even topics such as politics, religion and world view are revealed in the commentary found in cookbooks and sometimes embedded in what appears to be a simple recipe. The most valuable culinary texts reveal what we might call complete food ideologies. Cookbooks are a useful tool to communicate information about culture and foodways. Mary Emma Showalter's 1950 Mennonite Community Cookbook and Julia Child's 1961/1970 two volumes Mastering the Art of French Cooking are two obvious examples. Weaver's impressive study clearly demonstrates how the history and folklore of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine teaches us about more than just food. Weaver's book allows us to connect to the past in order to better understand who we are today. Just as cooking combines theory and practice, reading cookbooks allows critics to see how theories about foodmaking and gender play out in actual kitchens by real people. The nuanced merging of voices within them illustrates how individuals assimilate and transform over time as they come into contact with others. All of Weaver's books, especially this one, proves how studying his scholarship is a thoughtful practice worthy of academic attention. You will need to read this book several times, it must be studied, and indeed it must be digested. Every page of my copy has passages underlined, notes in the margins, stars next to the footnote entries, and highlighted resources in the bibliography. Follow the recipes, make them, enjoy them, share them, and appreciate what you are eating as you now have the historical context to understand what you are experiencing. It is the story of the Pennsylvania Dutch American melting pot with information about the actual pot, the food, and the finished dish. Weaver masterfully takes us from the fields, gardens, and orchards to the hearths, kitchens, and cupboards; finally he gathers us around the table, sharing a meal while indulging us in a rich food folklore tradition, and in the end we are nourished, in more ways than one, and we know something about who we are. This is a

delicious read! -- Jean-Paul Benowitz

This book is an excellent history and background on PA Dutch/German cooking. Recipes appear to be an accurate reflection of traditional local foods. I have been trying for 3 yrs to understand what is Pa Dutch cooking -I've eaten an unbelievable variety here in SW Pa. This well written book answers my search. One cannot simply buy whatever Pa Dutch cook books catches one's eye without first reading this book on the subject. I don't think the local PA Dutch themselves understand the impact of tourism eating that has affected them and their cooking! I can't wait for Fall to seek out the church/fire house dinners to taste the real PA Dutch cooking. The Kutztown Festival next week will be a real eye opener for us.

Being Pennsylvania Dutch, I always like to read new treatises on the subject. This book taught me a lot about my background and made me realize that my grandmother's cooking was pure Pa. Dutch. The recipes are some of the most authentic I have ever seen and I have many cookbooks on this subject.

I am PA Dutch by heritage and there were so many things I didn't know about where the foods originated and all the different variations. Going to Dietrich's Meats in Berks county to get some good homemade smoked meats. Yummy!

Very informative to this PA Dutchwomen. Like the historical background information presented. I bought the e version, should have got a hard copy

Very nice product. I am enjoying.

I can't recommend any of Mr. Weaver's books highly enough. This one was no exception - well researched and well written

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