



# **Olive Trees and Honey: A Treasury of Vegetarian Recipes from Jewish Communities Around the World**

*Gil Marks*

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"A land of wheat and barley, of grape vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey . . . you shall eat and be satisfied."—Deut. 8:8-10

A Celebration of Classic Jewish Vegetarian Cooking from Around the World

Traditions of Jewish vegetarian cooking span three millennia and the extraordinary geographical breadth of the Jewish diaspora—from Persia to Ethiopia, Romania to France. Acclaimed Judaic cooking expert, chef, and rabbi Gil Marks uncovers this vibrant culinary heritage for home cooks. *Olive Trees and Honey* is a magnificent treasury shedding light on the truly international palette of Jewish vegetarian cooking, with 300 recipes for soups, salads, grains, pastas, legumes, vegetable stews, egg dishes, savory pastries, and more.

From Sephardic Bean Stew (Hamin) to Ashkenazic Mushroom Knishes, Italian Fried Artichokes to Hungarian Asparagus Soup, these dishes are suitable for any occasion on the Jewish calendar—festival and everyday meal alike. Marks's insights into the origins and evolution of the recipes, suggestions for holiday menus from Yom Kippur to Passover, and culture-rich discussion of key ingredients enhance this enchanting portrait of the Jewish diaspora's global legacy of vegetarian cooking.

## **Olive Trees and Honey: A Treasury of Vegetarian Recipes from Jewish Communities Around the World Details**

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# From Reader Review *Olive Trees and Honey: A Treasury of Vegetarian Recipes from Jewish Communities Around the World* for online ebook

## Stephenie says

The only thing that would improve this book would be a selection of photos to go along with some of the recipes, other than that this book is awesome :)

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## Korri says

*Olive Trees and Honey* is a delicious cookbook and an amazing resource. Featuring information on worldwide Jewish cultures and cuisines, etymology and detailed histories of ingredients and processes like pickling, and building block basics (how to make ghee, panir, dough), it truly is a treasury.

From meze to main meals, Marks recounts popular dishes and offers several regional variations with different spices or vegetables, which makes this book adaptable to every taste. There are no photos but that does not detract value from the text at all.

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## Amanda says

Vegans beware. When this says it's a vegetarian cookbook, it really means it! Almost every recipe is drenched in animal products, primarily dairy and eggs.

The Introduction explains the various food cultures that have sprung up in Jewish communities around the world, complete with maps and such. This part was fascinating, although I felt that it was a bit too Old World focused. I know for instance that there are strong Jewish cultures in Argentina and Brooklyn, but they are not included in the book.

After the Introduction is an explanation of vegetarian foods incorporated into Jewish holidays. I found this part rather averagely done and skimmed over it.

The recipes are oddly divided up. The chapters are: cheese and dairy spreads; pickles, marinated vegetables, and relishes; salads; soups; savory pastries; cooked vegetable dishes; vegetable stews; legumes; grains; dumplings and pasta; eggs; sauces and seasonings. As you can tell, some of the recipes are put together based on the type of dish (salad, soup) and others based on the ingredients (eggs, legumes). This makes the book appear disorganized. Also the complete lack of dessert is sad.

Beyond the maps in the Introduction, there are no pictures. Additionally, the recipes are mostly designed to serve 6 to 8. I'm not sure what planet the author is from, but that is not a typical family sized meal in America.

Essentially, then, this book is a good introduction to Old World style Jewish food but ignores the healthier

options that I know from experience exist in Jewish communities in the Americas. It is difficult to enjoy the cookbook since there are no pictures or colors. Additionally, all of the recipes are designed for 6 to 8 servings, which is a bit large for the typical American household. Overall, then, I would recommend this book to those with a vested interest in Jewish culture and cuisine who can see past the dull layout and design of the cookbook.

Check out my full review. (Link will be live on June 12, 2012).

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## **Lynda says**

Highly recommend.

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## **jeanie says**

I came across this cookbook on Amazon and thought it sounded interesting, but as I have had little experience with Jewish cuisine or culture, I wasn't sure what to expect from it. Fortunately, my local library had a copy and I checked it out. I did not read the book from cover to cover, as it is over 400 pages long. I did, however, find myself wanting my own personal copy of this book.

The beginning of the book briefly covers some history of Jewish communities in many countries, and the food traditions in those areas. The next section explains seasonings and flavors important to Jewish cuisines. Then there is a section about Jewish holidays and suggested menus for those holidays. Then we get into the recipes (39 pages in. Not too bad.)

One Goodreads reviewer complained about the way this book is organized, but it makes sense to me. I like to have a balanced meal and would choose items from the different categories to accomplish my goal of varied flavors, textures, and nutrients. (I am guessing the categories also probably have some specific meaning/purpose to Jewish people because it seems like there are rules about what is to be eaten when.) The sections are: Cheese and dairy spreads; Pickles, marinated vegetables, and relishes; Salads; Soups; Savory pastries; Cooked vegetable dishes; Vegetable stews; Legumes; Grains; Dumplings and Pasta; Eggs; Sauces and seasonings.

Many of the sections have interesting maps to illustrate regional cuisine preferences. For example, there is a map that shows which countries primarily use green lentils and which countries tend to prefer red lentils. There is another map that shows how stuffed cabbage started in Iran and spread to many other countries.

There are a lot of recipes in this book. There are dishes from Morocco, Russia, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Ethiopia, Hungary, Georgia, Romania, Tunisia... The list goes on. The thing I like most about this book is the fact that the author recognizes that a lot of times, dishes from different places can be very similar, but differentiated by a few minor tweaks. He presents these different dishes not as entirely different recipes, but rather as variations on the theme, all grouped together. For example, in the marinated vegetables section, there's a recipe for Sephardic Cucumber Salad. In the right-hand column of the page, he lists 6 variations on the cucumber salad. For Ashkenazic Cucumber Salad, you add 1/4 cup chopped fresh dill, but if instead you want Romanian Cucumber Salad, you add 1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon. (I have seen cookbooks where these would be written out as 7 completely separate recipes. I find those books irritating.) There is a

useful index in the back of the book.

Finally, I like the fact that as I flip through, I see recipes that are new and intriguing to me, but with very manageable ingredient lists. I suspect I will be trying Syrian Eggs with Rhubarb as soon as I get rhubarb in my CSA box this year. The ingredient list is: rhubarb, vegetable oil, garlic, sugar, eggs, salt, ground black pepper or ground allspice, and dried mint. This could be amazing or it could be terrible. Either way, I kind of have to find out now.

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### **Rebekah Lewis says**

Tasty "old world" recipes. If you're into more Mediterranean Kosher food this is the book for you. The recipes are easy, come with great background and provide options you may not have considered before.

NOTE: These are vegetarian recipes - not vegan. I suppose you could play around with ingredients if you're vegan though I'm not certain of the taste...

Get this book if...

- \* You like/want to make Kosher meals
- \* You like/are VEGETARIAN
- \* You like Mediterranean foods

Yummy.

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### **Beth Lequeuvre says**

Great history section on Jewish communities around the world, Jewish holidays and foods typically served at each one, and a large number of vegetarian (not vegan) recipes with multiple variations by region. I would have liked to see some pictures of the food. Not many hard to find ingredients in the recipes and I liked how when there was, a more easily found item was suggested as a replacement.

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### **J L's Bibliomania says**

We recently discovered the word "flexitarian" which does a good job of describing how we eat. So I'm always looking for new vegetarian recipes. Olive Trees and Honey has become my new "Go To" Cookbook. I actually bought my own copy after enjoying it in the library so much.

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### **Lara says**

Excellent recipe and history book looking at the Sephardi cooking traditions. A treasure trove of vegetarian

and even vegan recipes.

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### **Jesse Edsell-vetter says**

This book is well organized with fantastic recipes. Perfect for feeding everyone at ever holiday - a must own fir Jews who cook

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### **Lynne says**

There is great history in this book, but I'll never make any of the recipes.

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### **Bear says**

Pretty tasty stuff in this one.

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### **Molly says**

One of the most exciting cookbooks I've come across in a long time. Tons of classic staple recipes, complete with numerous regional variations (7 variations of Red Lentil Soup alone!), as well as unique and obscure foodstuffs from regions not often portrayed in American cookery. I checked it out from the library, but will be buying a copy and advised many of my family to do the same.

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### **Margaret says**

My household uses this book so much that its binding has started to crack (not its fault, we're hard on our cookbooks). It has so many amazing recipes – most are quite simple and don't rely on particularly exotic or expensive ingredients, but on interesting cooking techniques and flavor combinations. When "exotic" ingredients are in the recipe, there are almost always several alternatives offered that are still authentic and delicious. For example, the Syrian spinach soup suggests pomegranate concentrate OR lemon juice OR yogurt as flavorings. We tried it with lemon juice and then with yogurt, and we liked both so much we eventually tracked down some pomegranate concentrate. Now we make it with whatever we feel like that day, because they're different but equally delicious.

That kind of variation is the unique strength of this book, and it's the result of both Mr. Marks' broad geographic spread (Ethiopia to Uzbekistan and further) and his own skill as a chef. His curation for a Western/mostly American audience is excellent, and he manages to convey both the diversity and the unifying ingredients and flavors of his chosen cuisine. I have to thank him for that – I would probably never even pick up a cookbook about e.g. Uzbek Jewish cuisine, but thanks to his curation I've got a pretty great recipe for samsa (like samosa but with squash filling).

I've never raved like this about a cookbook before. I won't even go into the interesting anecdotes and cultural history. But if you want to make unusual and tasty things without meat, be sure to take a look at this.

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### **Margaret says**

Some interesting recipes, but they were all for large servings making working out smaller adaptations a little difficult.

Best thing about the book, however, was the pieces of the history of many of the dishes and the vegetables involved.

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