

Home/Garden

Reading Between the Recipes: A book review



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Between The Rows

Next to gardening, I like cooking. There is nothing about cooking that I don't like. Even the cleaning up is usually done while I inhale whatever is quietly baking, braising, roasting or stewing. And when I can't be cooking I like reading cookbooks, especially when I come across one like Leslie Land's new *Reading Between the Recipes* (Yankee Books, \$15.95).

When Leslie Land leaves her Maine kitchen she writes about food for newspapers across the country from *The New York Times* to the *San Francisco Examiner*.

In the chapter *My Hymn to Home Cooking*, she mourns what is lost when you eat at a fast food joint. She says "Good food is central to daily well being, why keep it at such a distance?" Why stop at just eating it? Fold the raspberry puree into the whipped cream and watch the spreading of that incredible pink, like a wave in a Japanese print. Drop the dark chard in the golden broth and watch the heat intensify its greenness till it glows like grass after a storm. If she ever has to eat her words she won't suffer at all.

Land appreciates that good cooking begins with good ingredients and recognizes that the gardener is in the best position to be a great cook. Her book is arranged by the months of the year providing a yearful of good eating and good reading seasoned with good humor and wit.

As you browse through chapters entitled *The*

Salmon in the Bathtub, the *Pear Perplex* and *Hating Rutabagas*, you'll learn about her adventures in and out of the kitchen. Be advised that she has some very strong opinions, ones with which I don't always agree.

As the owner of some healthy blueberry bushes, I began with *Blueberries*, but found that she considers only wild low bush blueberries worthy of the name. I suppose she would feel that I cheated by using my own big blueberries, but no matter — her *Maple-Blueberry Corncake* (a cross between a muffin and coffee cake) was delicious.

Cookbooks without a good index are worthless and Land is doubly careful. First there is a regular alphabetical index, then a second one arranged by type of recipe: appetizers, desserts, main dishes/meat and poultry, relishes, sauces, etc.

Since it's apple time in New England here is Land's recipe for a bag apple cake.

Intense double apple cake

- 1 c. raisins
- 1/2 c. dark rum
- 2 c. sifted cake flour
- 1 t. baking soda
- 1 t. cinnamon
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 1/4 t. ground cloves
- 1/4 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. granulated sugar
- 1/2 c. butter, plus butter for the pan
- 1 egg
- 1-1/2 c. thick, lightly sweetened applesauce

- 1/2 c. coarsely chopped pecans
- 1/2 c. coarsely chopped walnuts
- Topping:
- 3 medium sized cooking apples, peeled, cored, cut in eighths
- 2 T. dark rum
- 1/2 c. flour
- 3 T. brown sugar
- 2 T. butter

Combine the raisins with the 1/4 c. rum in small, lidded saucepan and simmer, cover, over medium low heat until the liquid is all absorbed — about 5 minutes. Let cool. Combine the topping apple wedges with the 2 T. rum and set aside. Mix the topping flour and brown sugar thoroughly, then cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.

Set aside. Generously butter an 8 by 12 inch baking pan and preheat oven to 350 degrees. Sift together all dry ingredients for the cake except the sugars and set aside. Cream the butter with the sugars, then beat in the egg. Stir in the dry mixture which will take some doing. You'll end up with a sort of soft dough.

Working quickly now, beat in the applesauce, then stir in the raisins and nuts. Spread in prepared pan. Arrange the topping apples, rounded side up in three rows, pressing them lightly into the batter as you go. They can be close, but they shouldn't touch. Sprinkle the topping mixture over the apples and set to bake. The cake will be done in 45 to 60 minutes, when a toothpick inserted in the cake part comes out clean. Serve warm. It's also perfectly tasty cold.

Garden calendar

Here's the answer

