

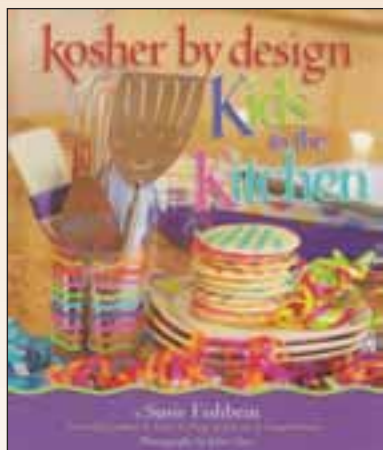
Kosher by Design: Kids in the Kitchen

By Susie Fishbein

Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

Brooklyn, 2005

192 pages



A Taste of Nostalgia: Tales and Recipes to Nourish Body and Soul

By Abraham J. Twerski, MD,
and Judi Dick

Shaar Press

Brooklyn, 2006

304 pages

Reviewed by Dassi Zeidel

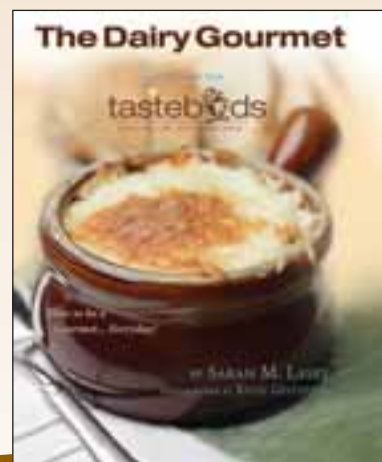
The Dairy Gourmet: Secret Recipes from Tastebuds

By Sarah M. Lasry

Israel Book Shop

New Jersey, 2006

224 pages



Nowadays, cooking, baking and all things related to food are quite en vogue. An entire television network is devoted to food and cooking. The food/cooking section at most bookstores has become a popular mainstay, and magazines devoted to food and to all manner of cooking have a prominent spot at the newsstand.

Cooking is no longer for only the experienced chefs among us. An expanding genre, the cookbook/food scene now includes cookbooks devoted to kids' recipes (they are, after all, the next generation of cooks), cookbooks that are written by restaurant owners and feature customers' favorite dishes and cookbooks with stories that provide background into a particular style of food, culture or religion.

Dassi Zeidel is assistant editor of Jewish Action.

Taking her expertise in kosher haute cuisine one step further, Susie Fishbein, author of *The Kosher Palette* and the *Kosher by Design* series, brings elegant and tasty dishes to a new generation with one of her latest books. Beautifully illustrated with eighty mouth-watering photographs, *Kosher by Design: Kids in the Kitchen* caters specifically to children's palates. Fishbein offers new takes on old standards including her recipes for "Saucy Franks," "Tuna Melts" and "Sloppy Joes"—but the dishes are appealing to adults as well.

The recipes are laid out in a clear manner; each one includes lists of equipment and ingredients. The directions are numbered, breaking down each recipe in a way that makes the process as simple as possible. Fishbein's directions may seem oversimplified for the seasoned chef (the directions really

don't take anything for granted—advising the cook to open a can with a can opener), nevertheless the book is a marvelous introduction to cooking for children as well as for novice cooks. Parents should note, however, that adult supervision is necessary, as most of the dishes require using fire as well as knives or other kitchen utensils that should not be used by children who are alone.

Recipes are categorized into Breakfast, Snacks, Dairy Mains, Meat Mains, et cetera, and the book includes photographs of kitchen equipment, which is a wonderful way to familiarize children with the items found in a kitchen. There are also safety rules as well as a brief overview of the laws of keeping kosher. While some of the recipes are remarkably simple to make and require very few ingredients ("Unreal Oatmeal," "Half Sour

Pickles”), others are more complicated, and, as is the case with Fishbein’s other cookbooks, require ingredients that may not be found in the typical kitchen. (“Vegetable Dumplings” calls for wonton wrappers and “Beef and Broccoli Lo Mein” for hoisin sauce.) These nouveau cuisine-type foods may be unfamiliar to the typical mac-and-cheese-loving kid, but they are fun to make and the flavors will appeal to those kids willing to try something new. (Don’t worry, Fishbein includes a recipe for mac-and-cheese, too!)

While kids tend to like foods that are rich in calories and sugar, and Fishbein offers several such dishes, many of the recipes include fruits and vegetables. The recipes for “Tortilla Fruit Cups” and “Alphabet Soup” are quite healthful. There is even a recipe called “Healthy Banana Splits.” Each recipe is labeled meat, dairy or parve, with either one, two or three chef’s hats indicating the degree of difficulty.

This cookbook will delight just about anyone who likes to cook foods

that are fun and tasty.

In his introduction to *A Taste of Nostalgia: Tales and Recipes to Nourish Body and Soul*, noted psychiatrist and author Abraham Twerski, who co-authored the book with Judi Dick, an editor at ArtScroll, is quick to point out that this is “not a cookbook. It’s a *storybook* with some great recipes.” Dr. Twerski relates many types of stories to the reader: stories from the Baal Shem Tov, the Vilna Gaon and the Gemara; stories from the Torah; stories from his own childhood. The anecdotes are meaningful and don’t necessarily relate to food but to the “pleasant experiences” of *yom tov* that we should recall and pass down to our children.

The book is organized according to the Jewish calendar: Shabbos, Melaveh Malkah, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Chanukah, Shabbos Shirah, et cetera. Each section begins with several pages of text followed by several pages of recipes.

While the recipes in Fishbein’s cookbook call for gourmet and mostly healthful ingredients, many of the ingredients used in this book are either high in fat or calories or both—schmaltz is, for example, listed as an ingredient in more than one recipe, and “Health Salad” calls for 3/4 cup mayonnaise and 1/4 cup oil. However, the recipes in this book are so much more than mere menu ideas—in many ways they are mementos from the past. They reflect the days of our grandparents; they recall the foods of the *shetl*. In those days, states the book, “People had large families and small incomes. Nevertheless, the ingredients they did use were of good quality.” Most are Dick’s family recipes, and it’s evident how important these foods are to her.

Many of these dishes require few ingredients and are quite easy to make (“No-Fail Potato Kugel,” “Nuant,” “Easy-As-Pie Apple/Fruit Cake”). Unlike Fishbein’s book, the recipes here are not innovative—who doesn’t have some kind of recipe for *lokshen kugel*, cholent and stuffed cabbage?—rather they are old classics, now beautifully

presented for the modern cook. These are your grandmother’s recipes simplified, with clear measurements and instructions. (I distinctly remember watching my own grandmother measure out flour and sugar using a *yahrtzeit* glass in lieu of a measuring cup.) And while the cooks of yesteryear may have spent hours in the kitchen preparing these dishes, the instructions for these recipes include many modern inventions (microwave, food processor, store-bought ingredients, et cetera) and other timesavers.

Perhaps the parts of the book that invoke the most nostalgia are the photographs. Taken in pre-World War II Europe, the grainy black-and-white photos feature townspeople carrying cholent to the baker’s oven on Friday afternoon and saying Tashlich at the riverbanks.

Unfortunately, the book does not include an index, which is a real disadvantage.

A Taste of Nostalgia is not so much a traditional cookbook with page after page of recipes, but a book of stories, the history behind the foods we eat, with recipes interspersed. This book is about the types of foods we eat, the ways we celebrate with food.

Taking a cue from popular chefs like Emeril Lagasse and Paula Dean, Sarah M. Lasry has written a cookbook offering readers a chance to make some of the delicious dishes from Tastebuds, her wildly successful restaurant in Lakewood, New Jersey. Like its title suggests, *The Dairy Gourmet* offers *milchig* dishes that are sophisticated and beautifully presented.

The cookbook is divided into several sections: Breakfast, Soups, Salads, Paninis & Wraps, Dessert, et cetera. Lasry inherited her love for and ideas about cooking from her mother, and it’s clear how passionate she is about her creations. Each recipe is accompanied by a mouthwatering photograph and is preceded by a blurb about how the recipe came to be. Lasry is not afraid to give credit where it is due—she’s received recipe ideas from her chef, her

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manager, ever her fish vendor. Reading each of these brief stories gives the reader a sense of how Tastebuds' menu has developed and been perfected.

Lasry stresses the importance of using real, fresh ingredients (no mixes or unnecessary additives), and with this in mind, it's easy to see why dishes like "Asian Fusion Salad" and "Walnut Encrusted Salmon" are restaurant favorites. In addition, *The Dairy Gourmet* boasts its own recipes for "Croutons & Breadcrumbs" and "Tastebuds' House Marinara."

Most of the dishes are rather simple to make; for those that are a little more complicated, detailed instructions help simplify the process. Some of the longer recipes are somewhat text heavy and may need to be read more than once.

Perhaps one of the most informative sections in the book is the chapter on sushi. Since sushi has become so popular in the kosher world, people have begun making it at home. Making sushi looks easy, but without a guide it can be quite tricky. (I speak from experience.) *The Dairy Gourmet* offers a step-by-step guide to making sushi rice as well as the actual rolls. It also offers tips on how to cut commonly used sushi ingredients.

Cooking fish can be tricky for many, but Lasry's ideas for tilapia, tuna, salmon and sea bass (under Fish Dishes) will make these recipes household favorites. She focuses on wonderful herbs and other simple, yet tasty ingredients. One only wishes there were more than five recipes in this section.

Lasry's passion for food and for making her customers happy is evident in these pages. And while the recipes are not specifically low fat, there are many healthy selections. For example, "Tofu Stir Fry" is a tasty and relatively healthful way to try a food many are not sure they would like and have no idea how to prepare. And her "Diet Vegetable Soup" is a flavorful alternative to the cream-based soups often found on dairy menus.

As good as the appetizers and

entrees are the desserts are equally appealing. Instead of using the substitutes needed to make pareve desserts, these recipes offer you a chance to make apple pie crust with butter ("Apple Pie") and coffee cake with sour cream ("Sour Cream Coffee Cake.") Some of the other ingredients in the desserts are quite interesting—the recipe for Three Layer Carrot Muffins calls for pineapple and coconut; that for Blueberry Harvest Muffins calls for ginger and hazelnuts.

The book opens with a two-page spread of photos, showing the many faces of Tastebuds. There are no captions so it's impossible to match the faces with the names mentioned in the book, but these photos give one a great sense of the restaurant's energy.

Each of these cookbooks has a different focus and presents unique types of foods to be enjoyed by all. These are recipes to make with and for children, friends and relatives. *Betayavon.* **JA**

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