

## Good Eats

If you try a recipe from In Memory's Kitchen and it flops, don't blame yourself; blame the Nazis. Better yet, don't blame anybody. Instead, be humbled and rejoice. You are repeating an error which arose from an outrage. You are ingesting unpalatable history as an incarnation of community. You are engaging in a sacrament where a flaw is not a fault but a tribute.

The book contains recipes compiled by Jewish women torn from the kitchens where they cooked and the families for whom they cooked and composted into the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. In an act of love and defiance, they recalled the recipes they were no longer allowed to make and wrote them in starveling scrawls on scraps of muddy paper. They collected this hagiographa in a single bundle and preserved it until liberation came. Hunger plundered memory: they got measurements wrong, left out ingredients, concocted dishes which they had not, in fact, ever tried. Their very lapses bear witness to the woundedness that birthed their work.

The original manuscript now resides in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. The contents are available in affordable paperback. A modern cook in a comfortable kitchen can span the unimaginable distance between herself and that experience. A family in American suburbia can sit down to fellowship with agony that cannot be understood. This book invites us to do more than enjoy a meal; it blesses us with a dignity we could never earn on our own.

"This is my body." On the threshold of Gethsemane, in the anteroom of Calvary, Jesus read out the recipe for eternal life. Four writers later transcribed the simple instructions, which the church carefully collected and preserved. Though the ingredients were few and the instructions simple, doubts arose early on as to the exact formula involved. Persecution plundered memory and many feared that mistakes had crept into the ancient practice. Certain communities warned that their rivals offered knock-off loaves that could not convey grace.

The point of the Lord's Supper, like the point of concentration camp cookery, is not to get it right, but to get it into us, not to do it correctly, but to do it together. The original participants in that sacred meal misunderstood almost everything Jesus said or did that night. What saved them was his presence and their participation – clueless, careless, but faithful – participation in a shared loaf and cup.

The original manuscript of that meal perished long ago under the hard-handed handling of Palestinian peasants or thumb-fingered Roman slaves. By God's grace, reliable editions survive in leather or paperback. And when believers gather at the table of the Lord, they break a bread which declares their oneness with the One whose body they recall, and all the ones from then until now whose sins were suffered in the sufferings of that Savior. "Is not the bread we break a sharing in the body of Christ?" queries the apostle Paul. "Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Corinthians 10.16-17)

Peter upside down on a cross outside Rome; Tyndale strangled at the stake in Brussels; Jim Eliot slowly digested in the belly of Waodani warriors: unworthy to enter the company of such men, I become one with them as I sit at the Lord's table, where we confess our common unworthiness, overcome by the suffering of Christ.

Dig In!

Doug