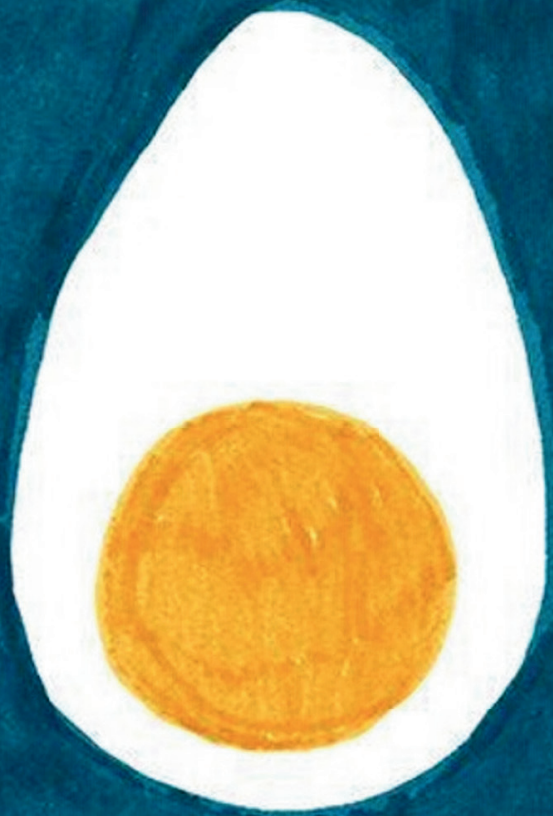


BOOK CLUB KIT

HOW TO SHARE AN EGG

A TRUE STORY OF HUNGER,
LOVE, AND PLENTY



BONNY REICHERT

AUTHOR LETTER

Dear Reader,

One of my earliest memories begins at the table. We had a built-in barbecue at the side of the house, and my mom had grilled lamb chops for dinner, the fat around the meat smoky and charred. She made a salad of cucumbers, tomatoes, and lots of fresh dill, an herb we called “creepy” for the feathery, persistent way it grew.

“Girls, bring in the plates,” Mom said from the kitchen when we’d finished eating. My big sisters started to clear but five-year-old me stayed on my dad’s lap, scooping the oily, vinegary dressing out of the bottom of the salad bowl with a spoon. That was when I noticed something colorful on his skin.

“What’s this?” I said, turning his forearm face up. There was a blue-green letter *B*, like my name, and a bunch of numbers. An *O* or a zero. A six.

“Some bad men put that on me.”

“Take it off.” I started scrubbing him with a napkin.

“It doesn’t come off.”

I looked into his big open face. “Where are the bad men?”

“Don’t worry. They ran away.” He shifted me onto his other knee and said, “Let’s finish the salad.” There were a couple of cucumbers left in the bottom of the bowl, and he spooned them into my mouth.

This was my introduction to his background—our background. And because it was so pivotal, this memory is also a natural way to introduce the book to you, dear reader. Food and the Holocaust; sustenance and survival. For as long as I can remember, these two themes have been intertwined in my heart and mind.

A couple of years after my father sailed to Canada with two dollars in his pocket, he bought his first restaurant. He served lunch-counter classics—hot turkey sandwiches, chili con carne, milkshakes and apple pie. Soon Dad picked up two more restaurants and was planning a fourth, a new take on the delis popular in New York and Los Angeles. Baba Sarah was my mom’s mother, a legendary cook

AUTHOR LETTER

and herself a refugee from Ukraine, and Dad recruited her to help him create a menu that would become almost famous: the French Dip, a sandwich of house-made corned beef, served *au jus*; the Western Dip, featuring hot roast beef, and Baba's renowned desserts: Flapper pie, mile-high lemon meringue, cherry cheesecake and a swirly chocolate version as well.

This was a childhood full of delicious meals, as well as painful conversations. By the time I left for university, I was ready to say goodbye to all of it—the Holocaust and my small Canadian city and family's obsession with food. Of course, these themes were already inside me, and I would ultimately find my way back to them. *How to Share an Egg* is the story of that return.

Dear reader, we are people who've migrated from one place to another, whether by choice or by force. We are children and grandchildren, parents, aunts and uncles. Food stories run through our bloodlines like rivers through forests, always moving forward, flowing toward the future, curving and changing. The story handed down to me was one of survival and strength, and as I worked it through my own hands, it widened to encompass themes of fulfilment and self-discovery. And joy. And love. Ultimately, this story is a celebration of being alive. It is my fervent hope that it enlivens something in you, too.

Big love,

Bonny

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Bonny Reichert's exploration of her culinary lineage in *How to Share an Egg* highlight the interplay between food, memory, and identity? In what ways do these elements shape her understanding of herself and her family history?
2. In what ways does food serve as both an anchor and an identity for the author in the memoir, reflecting themes of sustenance and survival throughout her narrative?
3. How does the author use sensory details, such as taste, smell, and texture, to create a vivid and immersive reading experience? In what ways do these descriptions enhance the storytelling and evoke emotional connections for readers?
4. Throughout the book, the author navigates the complexities of familial relationships and traditions. What insight does she offer about the role of family in shaping one's identity and sense of belonging?
5. How do Bonny's background and cultural heritage influence her storytelling? Are there specific cultural references that stood out to you? Were you inspired to learn more about these references? Do they remind you of any traditions or practices from other cultures?
6. Explore how the contrast between the author's everyday life and her father's experiences as a Holocaust survivor informs her journey of self-discovery and her roles as a writer, chef, mother, and daughter.
7. Discuss the significance of the author's two trips to Poland. What does each trip represent in the context of the overall story? How are the trips different?
8. Throughout the book, the author reflects on the significance of passing down recipes and culinary traditions. How do these shared foods and stories serve as a form of legacy and connection between generations?
9. Discuss the symbolic implications of the title, *How to Share an Egg*, and how this phrase encapsulates the book's themes, messages, and the author's personal journey in the context of food, tradition, and storytelling.
10. The author quits a good job and goes to chef school at forty years old. Why? What is she looking for? Does she find it?
11. Reflect on the themes of creativity and innovation within the memoir. How does Bonny Reichert's journey as a chef and writer inspire fresh perspectives on the art of cooking and storytelling?
12. Were there any life lessons you took away from reading *How to Share an Egg*, or a message you feel the author left you with?
13. Reflect on the significance of the long journey from the initial suggestion of the book by Bonny's father to its eventual publication. How do you think this prolonged process has influenced the authenticity and introspective nature of *How to Share an Egg*, and what unique insights or perspectives do you believe emerged as a result of this extended duration?
14. Right from the beginning of the book, the author tells us she has not been able to give her father exactly what she thought he wanted. Do you see this as an admission of failure or a statement of independence? Many families have faced threats, struggles and sacrifices like the ones we see depicted here. What do the children of these families owe their parents and ancestors, if anything?



CLEAREST, CLEANEST BORSCHT SERVES 4

Some borscht is made with meat or eggs; sometimes the sour cream is blended in to make a pink broth. I prefer the bright simplicity of this vegan version, which I created after I came home from Poland that first time. I like to keep the sour cream and other garnishes on the side, to add as desired. Serve cold.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch beets (usually 4–6, depending on their size) scrubbed, and tops removed
- 1 large leek, white and light green part only, sliced in half lengthwise and carefully washed
- 8 cups water
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 3–4 tbsp. cider vinegar, to taste
- Finishing salt such as Maldon
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

Quarter or halve beets, depending on their size, and place in large saucepan with leek halves and water. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a simmer and cook until beets are fork-tender; about 30 minutes. Turn off heat. Remove leek halves with a slotted spoon and discard. Transfer cooked beets to plate until cool enough to handle.

Slip beets out of their skins and shred on the largest holes of a box grater. Return shredded beets and their juices to saucepan. Add sugar, salt, lemon juice, and 3 tablespoons of the vinegar. Refrigerate the borscht for several hours or overnight.

Taste the cold soup and adjust the seasoning, adding remaining tablespoon of vinegar, if desired. Add more salt and/or sugar to taste. Add a grind of fresh pepper and serve with cooked potato cubes, chopped cucumbers, chopped fresh dill or chives and, of course, sour cream. Serve cold.



AUNTIE REVA'S JELLY SQUARES MAKES 16

I remember eating these warm at my aunt's house when I was a little girl. The combination of sharp cheddar and tangy crab-apple jelly makes them irresistible.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup grated old cheddar cheese
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup crab-apple jelly (homemade or store bought)

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream butter and cheese together in the bowl of an electric mixer. In a separate bowl, combine flour, sugar, and baking powder, and mix gently.

With mixer set to low, add dry ingredients to butter and cheese until just combined. Use a spatula to scrape down sides of bowl and ensure a smooth dough.

Press a little less than half of mixture into the bottom of a greased 8x8-inch Pyrex pan. Spread with jelly. Cover with remaining butter and cheese mixture. (This is the only part of Auntie Reva's recipe where a girl could use a bit more instruction. You can't spread the remaining dough over the top so flatten it between your fingers in pieces and place them on top in a semblance of smoothness. It will be fine. I promise.)

Bake for 30 minutes or until toasty on top and brown around the edges. Cut into squares.



BABA'S PORRIDGE BREAD MAKES 2 LOAVES

I don't make bread often, except this recipe, which is easy, forgiving, and incredibly delicious.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats (not instant oats)
- 4 tsp. butter, plus more for greasing bowl and loaf pans
- 2 tsp. salt
- ½ cup fancy molasses
- 1 large egg at room temperature, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp. sugar
- ½ cup warm water
- 1 pkg. traditional yeast
- 1½ cups whole wheat flour
- 3½–4 cups unbleached or white all-purpose flour

INSTRUCTIONS

Pour boiling water over oats in a large, heatproof bowl and let stand 10 minutes, or until water has mostly absorbed into oatmeal. Mix in 4 tbsp. butter, salt and molasses. When tepid to the touch, mix in beaten egg. Set aside.

Proof the yeast: Dissolve sugar in warm water, then sprinkle in dry yeast. Leave undisturbed for 10 minutes. If mixture bubbles and grows, yeast is active. (If not, repeat with fresher packet of yeast.) Add yeast to oatmeal mixture and stir with a wooden spoon. Mix in whole wheat flour and approximately 2 cups white flour, until mixing with a spoon becomes impossible. Turn craggy dough out onto a well-floured surface.

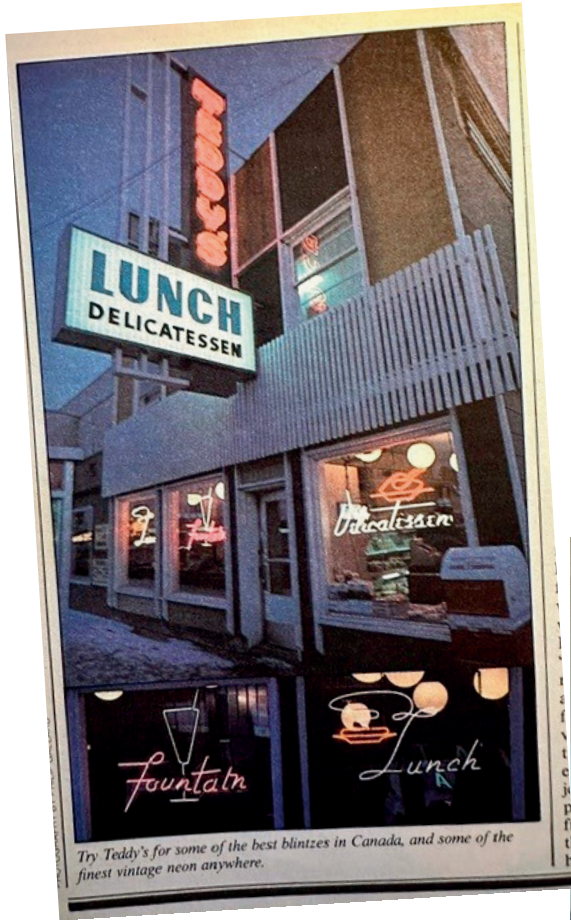
Knead in the remaining white flour by hand, until dough is no longer sticky. You might need a little more or a little less flour. A good trick is to divide the dough in half and knead each half separately to ensure good access before reforming into a single, smooth ball.

Grease a large bowl with butter and turn dough over in bowl until lightly covered. Cover with greased plastic wrap or a tea towel and set aside to rise for 2–3 hours, or until doubled in bulk.

Turn dough onto a floured surface and divide into two equal balls. Using a rolling pin, roll each ball into a rectangle a little bigger than a standard sheet of paper (exact size doesn't matter—this is just a way to shape the dough easily). Roll each dough onto itself in a log and tuck each one into a greased 9x5-inch loaf pan. Cover loaves loosely and set aside to rise again for about an hour.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Slash top of loaves to prevent splitting and bake for 50–55 minutes or until loaf tops look toasty and bread sounds hollow when removed from pan and tapped gently. If you can stand to, allow to cool slightly before devouring with butter.

GLIMPSES BEHIND THE BOOK



Try Teddy's for some of the best blintzes in Canada, and some of the finest vintage neon anywhere.




Granddaughter Bonny watches Baba Taradash make her famous blintzes—people have been known to drive 50 miles for them.



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