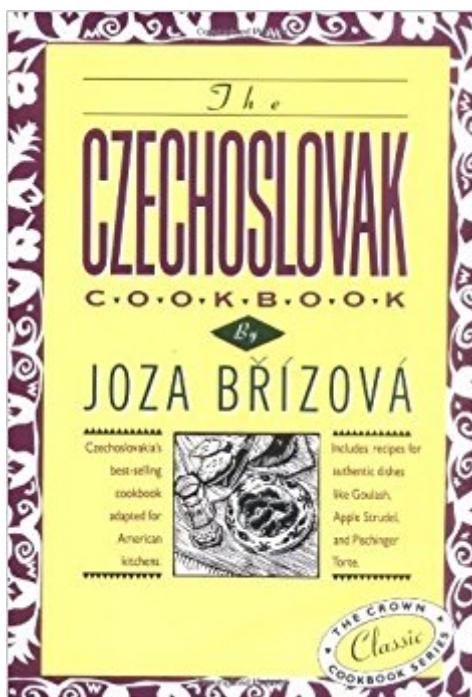


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The Czechoslovak Cookbook: Czechoslovakia's Best-selling Cookbook Adapted For American Kitchens. Includes Recipes For Authentic Dishes Like Goulash, ... Pischinger Torte. (Crown Classic Cookbook)



Book Information

Hardcover: 282 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (59 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

These are the recipies that were usually not written down, at least in english, in my husband's family, because they were handed down from mother to daughter. Everything from the traditional knedlicky (dumplings) and pork roast, to the various Christmas cookies is in here. My copy is so spattered, I'm buying a new copy to save for the next generation.

The original Brizova publication features simple, solid cooking and uses ingredients most kitchens readily have on hand. I haven't seen anything out of the ordinary in the cookbook, save to say if you don't like tongue and tripe and liver and heart, then simply take a pass at the recipes that use it. The real trick to honest Czech cooking is to make a tasty dish out of a few simple ingredients and to prepare it well. As in America, Czechs cook to their own taste (thus the arguments regarding spices) creating personalized specialties from standbys such as dumplings, strudel, kolache and breads, fixing it to suit the tastes of those they cook for. Certain foods are a staple ~ dumplings, potatoes, rye bread; root vegetables such rutabaga, parsnips, celery root, turnips. Kale, cabbage, cauliflower, and celery are also frequently used. Horseradish and vinegar are common condiments, often sweetened to taste with a little sugar. Czechs aren't afraid of butter, lard, chicken fat, goose greese, sausage, cured meats, cheese (farmer's cheese, cottage cheese .. not the hard cheese) and sour cream.

Perhaps not food to eat while on a diet because it will stick to your ribs and fill you up and keep you going and going. All in all, I treasure my taped up, spotted, tattered copy of Ms Brizova's original book and browse it frequently, each time revisiting my childhood. Here's timeless old-country cooking that will never go out of style.

As a Czech I can say that this book is good, if somewhat misleading. There are a great many recipes in the book that most Czechs have probably never heard of, and if they have, have never themselves had. As with people in most of the countries in Europe, Czechs have their tried and true favorites which they cook, by American standards, very frequently. If one only knew as a non-Czech what these best hits were they would not be dissatisfied with this book. However there is much room to go astray. Nevertheless I find some of the recipes in this book to be very good and have had the occasion to cook them for other Czechs who enthusiastically agreed with me. The Time-Life book that covers the cooking of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia is an excellent book with fewer disappointments for the non-native person. But, if you like to experiment, you will eventually stumble upon some very good recipes with this book as well.

I have to disagree with Rita's review - I am Czech (I came here from Prague with my parents when I was very young), and grew up with Czech cooking. I don't remember my family ever using mace & nutmeg in recipes (although we did use a little bit of allspice in our goulash)... Also, as for the flours used in the desserts, I don't find them hard to find. The local grocery store carries the grainier-type flour, Wondra, which works perfectly well in the recipes. I do admit, though, that there are a few recipes in this book that I find strange & wouldn't try them... But overall, the book has some good recipes. As for adapting these for 'today's cook' - I think the recipes lose a LOT if you "Americanize" them. The reason it is Czech food is just that - it's Czech, not American. It may use some different ingredients, but that is what makes it inherently Czech. Otherwise, you'll just get American. And why buy the book? Some things you just can't substitute.

I've used this cookbook for a couple of years now, and have mixed feelings about it. As some have already mentioned, for the uninitiated it's hard to find the "classic" recipes in here, and you may wind up making some oddball thing that a true Czech has never heard of (but is still in this book for some reason). Secondly, I find that a lot of the savory recipes are a little off, and not true to form -- as in they usually feel like they're missing something, either a spice, or key ingredient. It feels like an *almost* authentic recipe, with just one thing missing. For the sweets and pastries though, you can't go wrong with this book. I also have something to add that hasn't been mentioned yet, and that's regarding the actual writing of this book. It reads mostly as an ingredients list, with the instructions of the recipe often only 1 sentence long. While I understand that Czech cooking is usually not that complicated and can often be one-pot cooking, I feel like a lot of steps have been left out that a novice cook wouldn't know to do. Additionally, there is some confusion in the book, with base

recipes presented in multiple forms. For example, there are 2 pound cake recipes, which are then presented with multiple variations to create different end-products. Great in theory, but it's never explained why the 2 base recipes are different, and when you should use one over the other. Instead, the variations always read "begin with pound cake recipe 1 or 2, add xyz...". I find that frustrating. In any case, I think if you're a decent cook and have tasted most of these things before, you can improvise your way to the final product. It's the only resource I have for Czech recipes and as such I treasure it, but I also find it to be the most poorly written cookbook I own.

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