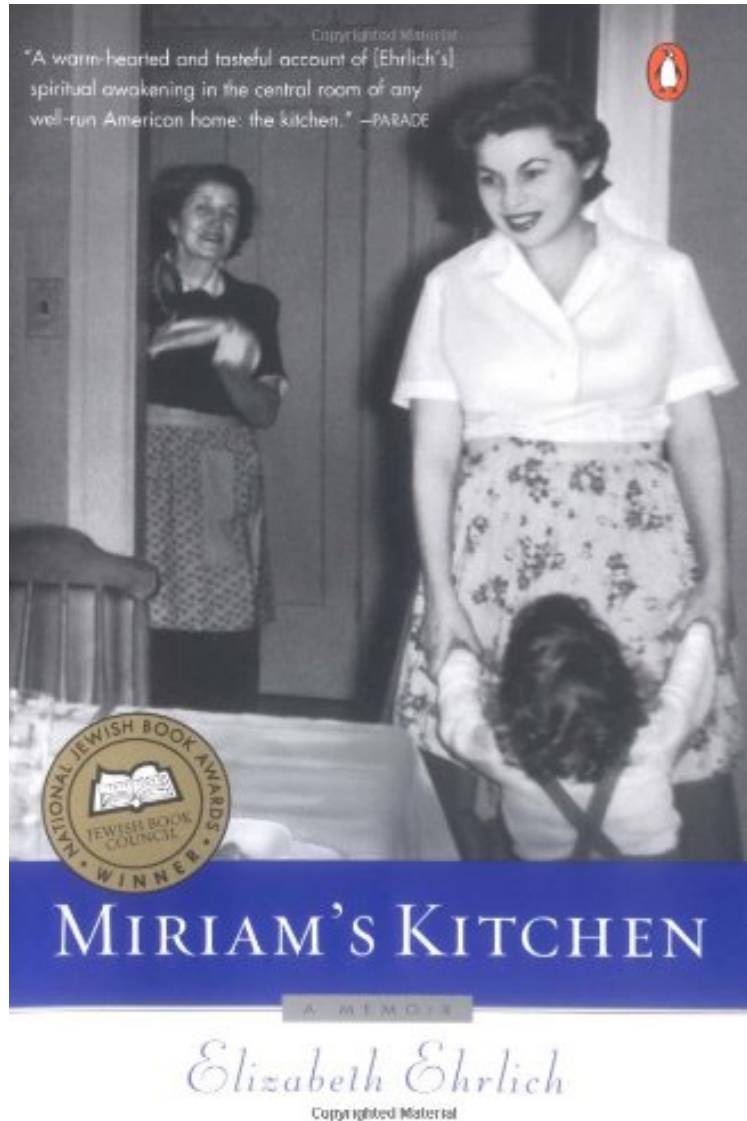


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## Miriam's Kitchen: A Memoir

*Elizabeth Ehrlich*

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**Elizabeth Ehrlich : Miriam's Kitchen: A Memoir** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Miriam's Kitchen: A Memoir:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read For Both Jews Non-Jews By Lisa A beautifully written memoir about Mrs. Ehrlich's mother-in-law, Miriam that is centered around the theme of the Jewish family. After reading it I came away with a better appreciation of why many Jewish people keep Kosher and how it is meaningful to them. I owned this book several years ago and after completing it donated the volume to a used book sale for charity.

This latest copy was purchased a gift for a dear friend who I am sure will enjoy it as much as I did. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Many Opportunities For Discussion By Ithaca Nancy This book was discussed in my book group. I only read about 15% of the book, though since I had a used copy, I was able to read the areas that had been highlighted and commented on by the previous reader (who seems quite thoughtful). The book is almost twenty years old now, and my book group wondered how anyone would manage to keep a kosher household when working full time and living in an isolated nuclear family (as most of us do). Recognizing the value of ritual and tradition, we also questioned the cost (not just financial) of rituals developed in different times. As a foodie and someone who cooks almost every meal from scratch, I can appreciate the work involved! In a community, I can see this could be possible, but the division of labor seems questionable in today's society. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. "They served me emotion and substance on a dairy plate." ~ Elizabeth Ehrlich By Jennifer My words can't do Elizabeth Ehrlich's justice but I will try. This is a great, uplifting read for anyone who yearns for a lost connection, regardless of heritage, and for anyone who values the importance of tradition. In our fast paced, always changing world, this is a beautiful reminder of what it means to really BE someone, to reconnect with the family and traditions that make us unique, and to recognize the importance these traditions hold. With the surge in popularity of discovering one's ancestry, whether through records or DNA, I also think this would make a great gift for those beginning their journey of discovery.

Like many Jewish Americans, Elizabeth Ehrlich was ambivalent about her background. She identified with Jewish cultural attitudes, but not with the institutions; she had fond memories of her Jewish grandmothers, but she found their religious practices irrelevant to her life. It wasn't until she entered the kitchen--and world--of her mother-in-law, Miriam, a Holocaust survivor, that Ehrlich began to understand the importance of preserving the traditions of the past. As Ehrlich looks on, Miriam methodically and lovingly prepares countless kosher meals while relating the often painful stories of her life in Poland and her immigration to America. These stories trigger a kind of religious awakening in Ehrlich, who--as she moves tentatively toward reclaiming the heritage she rejected as a young woman--gains a new appreciation of life's possibilities, choices, and limitations.

.com Food memoirs often delve into the meaning of life. This hardly surprises--memories are as essential to daily life as the food that sustains us. Miriam's Kitchen blends recipes and food reminiscences with family narratives and observations about the author's personal evolution as a Jew. Ehrlich weaves the stories from four generations of family life, punctuated with powerful and often tragic memories. While her mother-in-law, Miriam, is teaching her to make chicken livers with noodles, Ehrlich unexpectedly learns how Miriam, her mother, and husband survived a Nazi labor camp in Poland during the Holocaust. Using vivid and bare yet discreet words, she graphically tells what they suffered and the nightmares that still haunt them. Ehrlich's own story covers her transformation from a child whose family lit Sabbath candles but went boating on Yom Kippur, to an adult who chooses an Orthodox life marked by ambivalence about the rigors of being kosher and pride in what she is passing on to her children. Recipes for Honey Cake, Noodle Pudding, and many others are buried treasures hidden among Ehrlich's intense words. Sadly omitted is a recipe for potato kugel. Her grandmother uses this tempting pudding to good-naturedly test, taunt, and ultimately as the means for accepting her daughter Selina's non-Jewish fianc into the family. Happily for us, 24 other tempting kosher recipes make up for this one missed dish. Miriam's Kitchen is a gripping and gratifying memoir of food, life, tragedy, and family survival. --Dana Jacobi From Library Journal Ehrlich, a former writer for BusinessWeek, writes with humor and passion about her journey from ambivalent Jew to a woman who observes tradition and teaches her children about their ethnic heritage. Her story begins when she meets Miriam, her future mother-in-law, a Polish Holocaust survivor who "guarded culinary specialties in her mind during years when possession and certainties were ripped from her hands." Through Miriam, Ehrlich awakens to dormant memories and traditions in her past and gradually decides that her own family life would have greater meaning if she made her kitchen kosher. The author opens a window on a culture and tradition that her readers may know nothing about, discussing religious and dietary laws and sharing over two dozen recipes for traditional foods. Orthodox readers will likely see themselves in descriptions of the humor and ambivalence involved in trying to incorporate the traditions in today's society. The writing is crisp and smooth. Recommended for public libraries. ?Susan Dearstyne, Hudson Valley Community Coll., Troy, N.Y. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus s An appealing, sensitive account of an assimilated Jewish woman's efforts to embrace the religious traditions of her ancestors. Former Business Week reporter Ehrlich (Nellie Bly, 1989) recounts a childhood where Judaism was merely kosher-style. Like so many other immigrants and children of immigrants, Ehrlich's left-wing parents shunned many of their religion's constraints. While pork didn't make it to their kitchen, shrimp did. And eating corned beef on ``Jewish" rye became their most Jewish experience, ``the taste without the blessing." After Ehrlich married, she hungered for something more, finding that cultural nourishment from her mother-in-law, Miriam, who as a teenager had been sent to a Nazi work camp, but survived the horror with her spiritual pantry intact. From this living link to her grandmothers and their traditions, the author was able to learn the recipes to more than a culinary Judaism. The dietary laws led to Sabbath observance, which enriched her family with

24 hours of ``contemplation, rest, and praise as a gift . . . that punctuates the temporal world." Ehrlich's journey is not without occasional lapses and misgivings. She worries about the parochialism of her children's Jewish day school and prefers to tell professional contacts that she's a vegetarian, so that her dietary restrictions don't ``drive in a wedge." Nor is she completely comfortable with the Orthodox exclusion of women from the traditional prayer quorum, or minyan. ``I hope that a minyan will gather when I die," she writes, ``and that it will have women in it." While Ehrlich is not all that sure whether prayer matters or God plays a personal role in our lives, she is certain that the religious traditions she has adopted have made her life far more meaningful. Replete with family narratives and over two dozen recipes, *Miriam's Kitchen* is much more than one woman's journey to spiritual fulfillment. It is a savory stew made from the social and cultural ingredients of American-Jewish life. (Author tour) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.