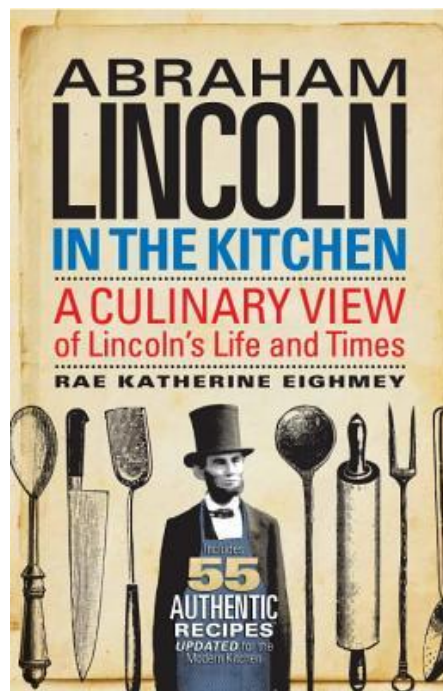




Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen: A Culinary View of Lincoln's Life and Times

Rae Katherine Eighmey

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Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen: A Culinary View of Lincoln's Life and Times Rae Katherine Eighmey
Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen is a culinary biography unlike any before. The very assertion of the title--that Abraham Lincoln cooked--is fascinating and true. It's an insight into the everyday life of one of our nation's favorite and most esteemed presidents and a way to experience flavors and textures of the past. Eighmey solves riddles such as what type of barbecue could be served to thousands at political rallies when paper plates and napkins didn't exist, and what gingerbread recipe could have been Lincoln's childhood favorite when few families owned cookie cutters and he could carry the cookies in his pocket. Through Eighmey's eyes and culinary research and experiments--including sleuthing for Lincoln's grocery bills in Springfield ledgers and turning a backyard grill into a cast-iron stove--the foods that Lincoln enjoyed, cooked, or served are translated into modern recipes so that authentic meals and foods of 1820-1865 are possible for home cooks. Feel free to pull up a chair to Lincoln's table.

Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen: A Culinary View of Lincoln's Life and Times Details

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Eric says

An interesting topic. The modernized recipes and the discussion of nineteenth century techniques is really well done. The biographical information of Lincoln's life and time is equally well done. However I was not a fan of the use of the first person travel log style which took away from the reading enjoyment. But as a resource it is highly useful. I have not checked the sources, but they appear good and credible.

Elizabeth says

I enjoyed this book. I didn't really think I would as much as I did, but it was interesting. The recipes were fascinating. Is this a complete depiction of what Lincoln ate? No. There were a lot of gaps to be filled and I think the author, through her amazing research, did an excellent job of filling them in.

We had an interesting conversation about archeologists digging through our garbage pile, as they did Lincoln's. First, they'd have to find it, since our garbage disappears from a big green can every Monday. Second, I'm pretty sure partially eaten Little Debbies do not disintegrate and I find the fact that I purchase them shameful. We have a teenager and he entertains a lot. They are his snacks, not mine. Perhaps I should start leaving little notes with them. "Dear Future Person Interested in our Garbage because Our Son Created Something Amazing After He Left Home and Started that Company that is Now a Household Name, These half eaten cement like Cosmic Brownies were his. Please don't clone him from the DNA left clinging..."

I'm a from scratch cook. I don't like processed foods and I like to serve simple and delicious meals. So, the recipes were of particular interest to me. I'm not sure many people could cook the way the author described. I'm sure I could, but would I want to take it to the level that Lincoln era cooks did? Absolutely not. Thankfully, the author's recipes are geared towards the savvy 21st century cook. Imagine what it would take to get ham or a bacon on your table if someone handed you a pig. I rest my case.

Anyway, I'm rambling. It's interesting and worth a read.

Scott says

A book that explains what the 16th President ate and how it impacted the life he led. To be honest I think in this day and age we picture our forefathers eating beef and deer and that is it. This book reveals the diverse foods that people ate in the years running up to the Civil War. It also offers some great recipes to be tried.

Wendy says

Denser than I expected, but I will be revisiting this book for rereads and closer reads.

Fran says

Such an interesting concept! Research into Lincoln, the economy and food trends of the period, combined with recipes (updated for modern replication).

Sarah Bierle says

Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen is a light-hearted investigation of 19th Century cooking in Kentucky, Illinois, and Washington D.C. during the mid-19th Century. Ms. Eighmey shares her dedicated research, detailed knowledge of American culinary practices and recipes, and devotion to recreating historic recipes in modern kitchens. It's a unique perspective in an easy-to-read format, and I'm sure it will give you a year's worth of Civil War cookin' inspiration.

Find my complete book review here:
<https://emergingcivilwar.com/2017/11/...>

Janis says

Aspects of Lincoln's life combined with culinary history add up to a great, lively volume that includes recipes while it peers back into the kitchens of the early and mid-19th century. The author's obviously done her research, both in the library and at the stove!

Kyle says

So I expected something more formal, more filled with rich, intimate details of Lincoln's life, more like your typical big-kid biography. I got something more friendly and casual--but I actually like that I was surprised.

Look for lines kind of like this (and I'm making this up here): "I was convinced that Mary Lincoln would never have cooked in those conditions. So I went out to my trusty Weber grill and made this iron box and tried cooking in it based on the snippets of conversation I found in some old diaries and cookbooks--and it turned out great!" In other words, Eighmey's life is as much part of this story as Lincoln's, as she narrates her visits to various Lincoln-ish spots and tells how she felt while reading Springfield food ads in microfilm of 1830s newspapers. If that's not your style, it's not your style.

I haven't made any of the recipes yet--but I will.

Kaara says

3 1/2 stars, actually.

I love the premise of this book--what could be cozier, happier, geekier fun than learning about American history through a history of food, plus hands-on culinary experimentation? The author knows her stuff, has done thorough research, and is delightfully interested in the work. I especially enjoyed the early chapters, of Lincoln's childhood and young adulthood.

I feel the thread started getting lost, though, as Lincoln got more involved in his political career. Ironically, as his historical footprint grew, the details of what he ate seem to get fainter. The author filled in the gaps with thorough research and a lively voice, but at times the thread between these two interests seemed pretty tenuous. There were also some organizational challenges in the book--chunks occasionally repeated in different chapters. It could have stood one more editorial comb-through.

All in all, the book was thoroughly enjoyable and I look forward to trying out the recipes (more accurately, having my husband try them out--he's the cook in the family!).

Rachel says

It's best strength is the clarity of the writer's voice- straightforward yet comfortable with the facts and direct in tone. She also collects recipes from the time period that people would actually make, while presenting Mary Todd without the sensationalism that is often used by historical writers. Lincoln is also portrayed similarly, without all of the hype, in a manner that humanizes the legendary figure.

Becky Loader says

I got to hear the author give a talk about writing this book. She approached her topic from the viewpoint of a cook, rather than a historian. She did a lot of research and obtained a copy of the cookbook most often attributed to being used by Mrs. Lincoln: "Miss Leslie's Directions for Cooking." I especially enjoyed that she tested out recipes by building wood fires in her Weber kettle and cooking on an open hearth. Mr. Lincoln's anecdote about gingerbread men inspired Eighmey to try to come up with a viable recipe based on the only two ingredients he listed: sorghum and ginger. Her experiments resulted in a great dough that she made into long rolls that she could shape into "men." She brought samples to the book talk, and I must admit that the "men" were very good.

Fun book.

Christina Dudley says

(Rounding up from 3.5 stars.)

Author Eighmey examines Lincoln's life through the lens of what he and his contemporaries ate, with emphasis on contemporaries. As other readers have pointed out, the data on what Lincoln ate is fairly sparse, but I think she does a great job researching contemporary cookbooks and historical tidbits from neighbors and family and friends of Lincoln to come up with a plausible picture. Not only did the man save the country in a desperate hour and free millions of slaves, but he also knew how to tie on an apron and help Mary Todd get dinner on the table. I think I'm in love.

On a side note, I was fascinated by the foods native to Illinois, as well as those available to be shipped in as Springfield grew, or grown by residents from seed. Hooray that heritage foods are making a comeback!

Eighmey includes recipes adapted for modern kitchens from period cookbooks, of which I'm eager to try the almond cake (easier version) and harico mutton (although I'll use some other meat).

Worth a read for Lincoln-lovers and historic foodies.

Nikki Wilson says

This wasn't exactly a biography of Lincoln but more a snapshot of the foods the Lincoln's are and enjoyed. The author put in a lot of hard work, time, and expertise to put together what is otherwise a sketchy topic: Lincoln-era food. I enjoyed reading about a more personable Lincoln within the context of the foods he ate and the meals he and his family shared.

Mickie says

This book has great information about the Lincoln's lives and many facts that I didn't know and several of the recipes I am excited to try, but it is still frustrating that we know so little about what the Lincoln's actually ate...So even as exciting as the topic is I still feel unfulfilled. It is worth reading...as anything about Lincoln usually is. We will never know the real man, but he is fascinating from afar.

Michael Lewyn says

This book discusses the sort of dishes common in Lincoln's day - both frontier food from Lincoln's youth and the more luxurious food of his years in Springfield and Washington. His diet probably differed dramatically from both the stereotypical American fast-food diet and the fruits-and-vegetables only conventional wisdom of today's health-conscious middle class. Lincoln-era food apparently included lots of meat and butter, and probably more corn than wheat (especially in the frontier where corn was a major crop).

Along the way, Eighmey discusses issues less directly related to food. For example, Lincoln's boyhood farm included only about 350 square feet (22 x 16) of living space, roughly the size of a Manhattan studio. Why? Because most space was devoted to farming.
