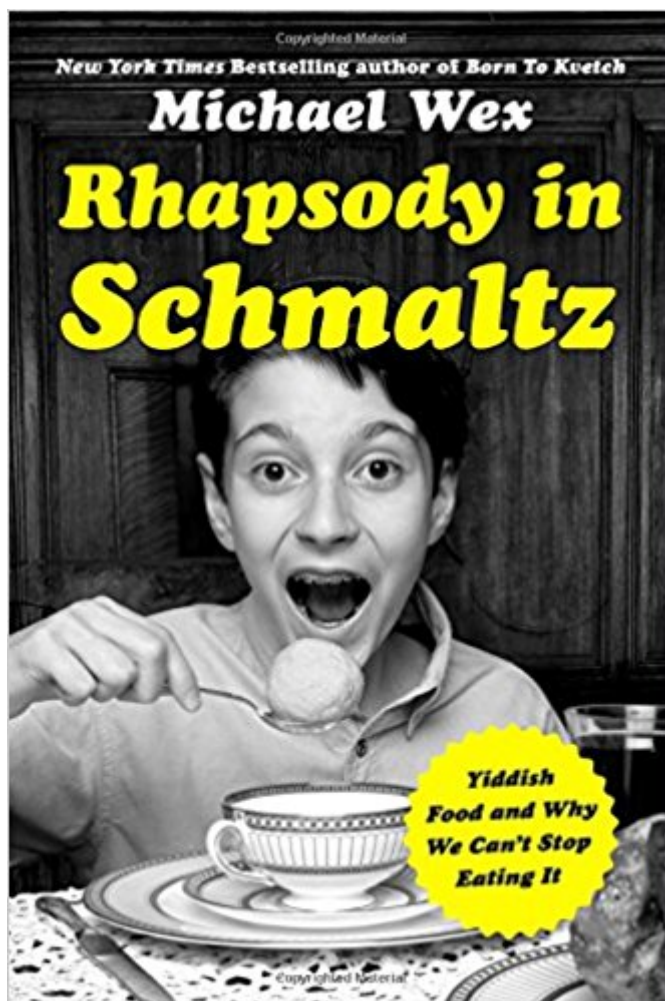


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# Rhapsody In Schmaltz: Yiddish Food And Why We Can't Stop Eating It



## Synopsis

Bagels, deli sandwiches and gefilte fish are only a few of the Jewish foods to have crossed into American culture and onto American plates. *Rhapsody in Schmaltz* traces the history and social impact of the cuisine that Yiddish-speaking Jews from Central and Eastern Europe brought to the U.S. and that their American descendants developed and refined. The book looks at how and where these dishes came to be, how they varied from region to region, the role they played in Jewish culture in Europe, and the role that they play in Jewish and more general American culture and foodways today. *Rhapsody in Schmaltz* traces the pathways of Jewish food from the Bible and Talmud, to Eastern Europe, to its popular landing pads in North America today. With an eye for detail and a healthy dose of humor, Michael Wex also examines how these impact modern culture, from temple to television. He looks at Diane Keaton's pastrami sandwich in *Annie Hall*, Andy Kaufman's stint as Latke on *Taxi* and Larry David's Passover seder on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, shedding light on how Jewish food permeates our modern imaginations. *Rhapsody in Schmaltz* is a journey into the sociology, humor, history, and traditions of food and Judaism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Mouth-watering and eye-opening in equal measure” *Rhapsody in Schmaltz* is essential reading for anyone who has shmeared a bagel, trifled with trayf, or hunted the Afikomen. --Ben Schott, author of *Schott's Original Miscellany* Wex proves once again in *Schmaltz* that he is Yiddish culture's equivalent of his titular fat; a salve, a balm, the heart, soul, and very tam of the edible delicacies and their origins that he chronicles here. Not since the Rascal House menu was

last printed has there been a finer assembly of words on Jewish food upon the page.â • --David Sax, author of *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye, and the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen*

MICHAEL WEX was born in Lethbridge, Alberta and later moved to Toronto. Wex is the also the author of nonfiction books *Born to Kvetch*, *Just Say Nu*, and *How to Be a Mensch (and Not a Shmuck)*, and fiction books *The Adventures of Micah Mushmelon*, *Boy Talmudist*; *The Frumkiss Family Business*; and *Shlepping the Exile*. He is also well known as a speaker on matters relating to Yiddish language and culture and more general aspects of Judaism. He lives in Toronto with his wife and daughter.

Wex (I could write Michael Wex, but that wouldn't really be Wex) bakes (and simmers, boils and fries) so much that defines Yiddishe tam into a work thoroughly digestible. Read, learn, savor, remember. Repeat.

Interesting book about the Yddish food, it's history and traditions. I did not find the book humorous though and it's definitely not a cook book.

Informatively hilarious.

This is NOT a Jewish cookbook. Rather, it is a story of the Jewish people through its foods since the biblical times. It is fascinating how the Jews place so much dietary restrictions on themselves all in the name of religion. I collect cookbooks and this one adds a new dimension to understanding how Jewish foods came about. I learned a lot! Get it if you are interested in ethnic food history.

This is certainly a well-written, thorough discussion of Yiddish food. Wex traces the origins of food items and details the religious rules surrounding each. He includes recipes for some of the dishes. I found the book more academic than I had hoped. I also didn't sense that Wex loved the food he described. If you want a deeply researched, detailed history, then this is the perfect book for you. If you are hoping for a bit more playfulness and maybe some stories from bubbies, this won't be quite what you want.

Although this is not a cookbook, there are little snippiest of recipes here and there if your familiar

with Jewish cooking. Jewish people from close by countries, ate very similar foods, as the traditions / holidays were the same. Btw, Schmaltz is a fat you get from chickens..which can be fried with onions, seasonings , and believe it or not is good on breads, and used in other foods instead of other oils.Is it Healthy ! NO, I don't think so, but tasty, YES..This book brought home memories to me as a child. My father would take us kids to a kids amusement park on Sunday morning then go to the Jewish Deli to buy , Corn beef, pastrami, Cream cheese, an assortment of different types of fish..Lox, White fish, Herring in sour cream etc.Then we went to the Jewish bakeries. That was the fun part. Different types of Bagels, Rye bread, Pastries, cookies etc. We came home with bags of Jewish goodies to eat. ( live in California)Amazing we were thin.Jewish food laws have changed over the years.This book is enjoyable , and interesting book to read whether you are Jewish or not,To me it was good reading about the Jewish holidays and what they ate and why.This book should be taken seriously as it is the history of how the Jewish people ate, and their lives.It centers around food, Humor, and Family, as it still does today.Family is Everything, its where the Heart is.You do not have to be Jewish to enjoy reading this book.

And this book only exacerbates my hunger cravings -- all to the GOOD. Mmmm! I enjoyed reading this book-- it has mouthwatering descriptions of all the foods I knew and loved when growing up in the Bronx (an Italian kid in a Jewish Italian neighborhood), chowing down on a monstrously huge chopped liver sandwich while also feeding my face with Matzoh ball soup in which a huge ball o'Matzoh (yes, just as big as the one on the cover of this book) sat and glared at me ("I DARE you to eat ME TOO!!") in a little mom and pop deli somewhere in Manhattan. Food = Generosity = LOVE = GREAT memories and this happy little book doubles my pleasure.Ah the joys of Yiddish food!! Forgive me Nonna Lucia, my saintly Grandmother who made everything Italian from scratch-- I had a yen, a yearning, an addiction to the food being prepared on the other side of our hallway in my beloved childhood-friend Rita's apartment.Love this book. I thank the author of this joyous book for bringing back so many of my memories of wonderful food and friends,

This book was not what I thought--with the title, I thought this was going to be a humorous look at Jewish food. However, it's more of a dry academic tome, written as a sociological text rather than for the general reader. If you are interested in a more academic look at Jewish food, you'll probably like it, but I found it too dry for my taste.

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