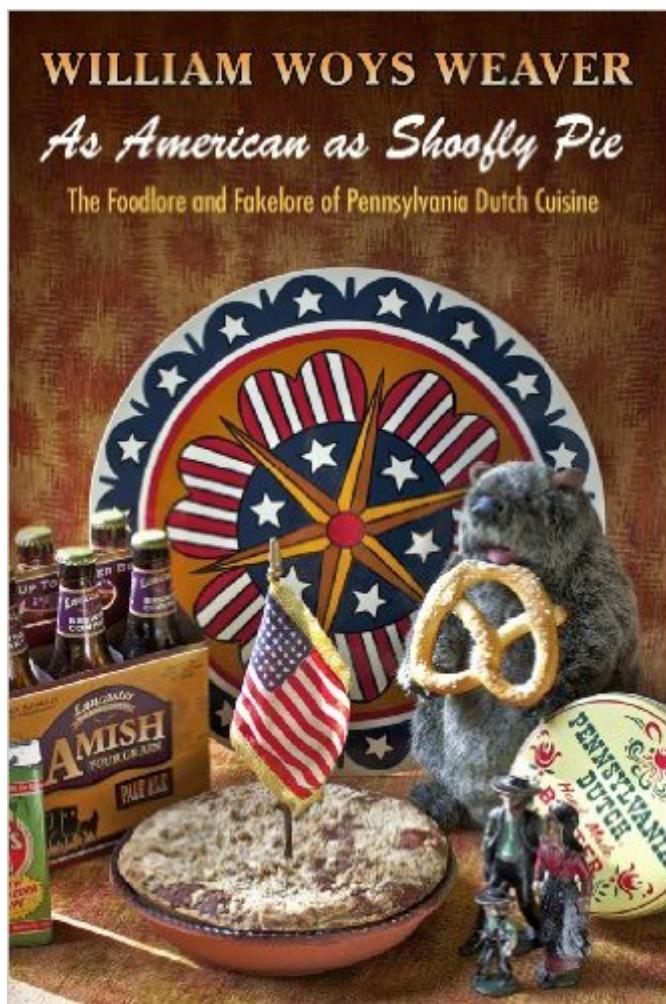


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As American As Shoofly Pie: The Foodlore And Fakelore Of Pennsylvania Dutch Cuisine



Synopsis

When visitors travel to Pennsylvania Dutch Country, they are encouraged to consume the local culture by way of "regional specialties" such as cream-filled whoopie pies and deep-fried fritters of every variety. Yet many of the dishes and confections visitors have come to expect from the region did not emerge from Pennsylvania Dutch culture but from expectations fabricated by local-color novels or the tourist industry. At the same time, other less celebrated (and rather more delicious) dishes, such as sauerkraut and stuffed pork stomach, have been enjoyed in Pennsylvania Dutch homes across various localities and economic strata for decades. Celebrated food historian and cookbook writer William Woys Weaver delves deeply into the history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine to sort fact from fiction in the foodlore of this culture. Through interviews with contemporary Pennsylvania Dutch cooks and extensive research into cookbooks and archives, *As American as Shoofly Pie* offers a comprehensive and counterintuitive cultural history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine, its roots and regional characteristics, its communities and class divisions, and, above all, its evolution into a uniquely American style of cookery. Weaver traces the origins of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine as far back as the first German settlements in America and follows them forward as New Dutch Cuisine continues to evolve and respond to contemporary food concerns. His detailed and affectionate chapters present a rich and diverse portrait of a living culinary practice "widely varied among different religious sects and localized communities, rich and poor, rural and urban" that complicates common notions of authenticity. Because there's no better way to understand food culture than to practice it, *As American as Shoofly Pie*'s cultural history is accompanied by dozens of recipes, drawn from exacting research, kitchen-tested, and adapted to modern cooking conventions. From soup to Schnitz, these dishes lay the table with a multitude of regional tastes and stories. Hockt eich hie mit uns, un esst eich satt! "Sit down with us and eat yourselves full!

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Customer Reviews

This book is the third book by William Woys Weaver on PA Dutch (German) cooking. It's not just an historical cookbook, nor is it a look at the culinary aspects of Palatine-derived German regional culture that arose in southeastern PA during the 19th century. It's both of these and more. Weaver, a PA based noted food historian and heirloom gardening expert of Mennonite background, gives his take on the foodlore and fakelore associated with the cuisine. Where to begin? The dust jacket is a good place. Pictured are iconic items relating to popularized versions of PA Dutch (German) culture and cuisine. By the time you finish reading the book, you should be able to understand his choice of the items pictured. You will also come away with an appreciation of the diversity of PA Dutch food and the many ways in which it has been falsely or incompletely represented. You will learn of the association in popular culture with the Amish, who are a religious sect, and one that in many ways is atypical of the broader range of PA Dutch sub-cultures. You will become aware of the various social forces and history that have shaped the views of many to give the ludicrous highly marketed, and frequently inaccurate, image of the PA Dutch cultures and their cuisine(s). As documented by Weaver, the subcultures that gave rise to this regional culture and cuisine were all Germanic (aka High Dutch) in origin, but diverse, arriving in PA over a period of time, and included not just German speakers from the Palatine, but also from Swabia, Hesse, Alsace and Switzerland. One learns not just about Mennonites and the Amish subgroup, but also about the church people (Lutheran, Reformed and Moravians) as well as sectarian groups no longer commonly known to the general public.

When I hear the phrase "Pennsylvania Dutch", I think of the Amish. I think most people do. So when I received a review copy of William Woys Weaver's latest book on the culinary history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine, *As American as Shoofly Pie*, I have to admit I wasn't too excited. What's there to learn about pickled beans and shoofly pie really? Well, as it turns out, the Amish are only a subgroup of the Pennsylvania Dutch (PD). Weaver explains that the PD include all German speaking (Dutch in the context of PD is a bastardization of Deutsch, the name for German

language) peoples that immigrated to Pennsylvania during the 17th and 18th centuries. From Wikipedia: "The majority of these immigrants originated in what is today southwestern Germany, i.e., Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Württemberg; other prominent groups were Alsatians, Swiss, and Huguenots (French Protestants)". Weaver goes on to explain that about a third were the Palatinates, a third were Swiss (and this includes the Amish), and a third were the immigrants from Württemberg (known as Swabians - and these folks gave us the pretzel). Weaver spends a lot of his pages describing in detail the cultural and culinary differences between these three major groups of PD and it's quite interesting. Among other things, we learn about the lost or forgotten PD recipes (like hairy dumplings), we learn how PD sauerkraut is made differently than the German variety, and we learn how the Amish culinary table (or what we think of as their culinary table) came to dominate the entire image of PD cuisine. And it's on this last point that Weaver seems quite bitter.

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