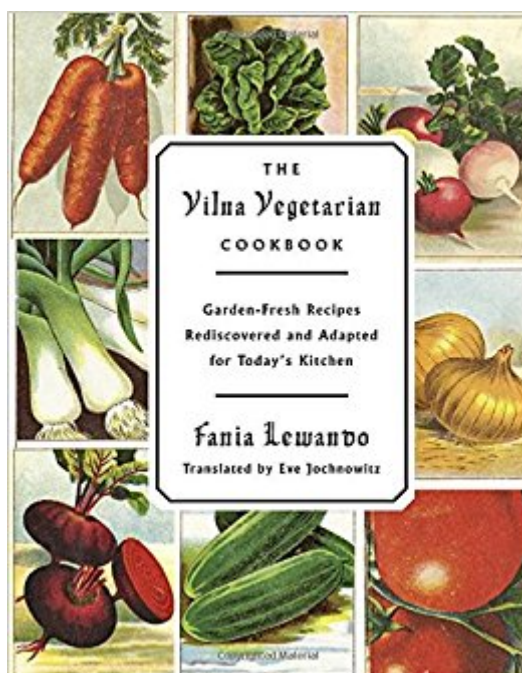


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The Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook: Garden-Fresh Recipes Rediscovered And Adapted For Today's Kitchen



Synopsis

Beautifully translated for a new generation of devotees of delicious and healthy eating: A groundbreaking, mouthwatering vegetarian cookbook originally published in Yiddish in pre-World War II Vilna and miraculously rediscovered more than half a century later. In 1938, Fania Lewando, the proprietor of a popular vegetarian restaurant in Vilna, Lithuania, published a Yiddish vegetarian cookbook unlike any that had come before. Its 400 recipes ranged from traditional Jewish dishes (kugel, blintzes, fruit compote, borscht) to vegetarian versions of Jewish holiday staples (cholent, kishke, schnitzel) to appetizers, soups, main courses, and desserts that introduced vegetables and fruits that had not traditionally been part of the repertoire of the Jewish homemaker (Chickpea Cutlets, Jerusalem Artichoke Soup; Leek Frittata; Apple Charlotte with Whole Wheat Breadcrumbs). Also included were impassioned essays by Lewando and by a physician about the benefits of vegetarianism. Accompanying the recipes were lush full-color drawings of vegetables and fruit that had originally appeared on bilingual (Yiddish and English) seed packets. Lewando's cookbook was sold throughout Europe. Lewando and her husband died during World War II, and it was assumed that all but a few family-owned and archival copies of her cookbook vanished along with most of European Jewry. But in 1995 a couple attending an antiquarian book fair in England came upon a copy of Lewando's cookbook. Recognizing its historical value, they purchased it and donated it to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City, the premier repository for books and artifacts relating to prewar European Jewry. Enchanted by the book's contents and by its backstory, YIVO commissioned a translation of the book that will make Lewando's charming, delicious, and practical recipes available to an audience beyond the wildest dreams of the visionary woman who created them. With a foreword by Joan Nathan. Full-color illustrations throughout. Translated from the Yiddish by Eve Jochnowitz.

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Customer Reviews

An NPR Best Book of 2015 "Lewando's goal was to make vegetarian food celebratory; the recipes were to be cooked regardless of whether meat was available" radical thinking for the time. The result is an astonishing range of dishes that make our modern day "farm-to-table" assertions seem silly. Its 400 recipes span the hyper-seasonal to hyper-economical, a mixture of making due and relishing every inch of the produce. These recipes are unique, thrifty, and curious in all the right ways, ready for modern hands to make good use of them. "Tastebook.com "Restaurant owner, cookbook author, and culinary instructor" all the while remaining a vegetarian "Lewando is the picture of today's involved and dedicated foodie. . . . Flipping through the book is informative, education, and amusing. Cooking from it would be the greatest honor to Lewando's work. "Jerusalem Post Magazine "This book gives a second life to the work of a woman who could be considered the Mollie Katzen of her time. "Forward "Like a Yiddish Alice Waters, Fania Lewando ran a popular dining destination, taught cooking techniques, and published a cookbook that advocates for the health and ethical advantages of a meatless diet. The recipes are at once modern and historic; some are vegetarian variations of traditional dishes, others seem decades ahead of their time. Lewando's instructions remind me of Mark Bittman's straightforward, improvisational method. "New York Observer "Lewando's book has historical value, of course, evoking a time between the World Wars when Vilna was called the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" for its thriving Jewish community and culture. But this English-language edition is also meant to be used by modern home cooks. It evokes a bygone era with appealing recipes. "Chicago Tribune "This old-school Jewish vegetarian cookbook is totally on trend. It is a fascinating, rather forward-thinking approach to cooking vegetables. Lewando's legacy lives on as she elevates roots, fruit, and leafy greens from lowly ingredients of hardship and mourning to refreshing, innovative building blocks to more nutritional cooking. It's all so whimsical and modern. [The recipes] read like the vegetable main courses that are gracing many a restaurant menu today. "Tasting Table "Gives the reader a sense of the life that was, the life that was lost, and the life we should all live. . . . Fascinating. . . . Beautifully translated by Eve Jochowitz. "Jewlicious "

LeWando's approach to cookery was innovative and pioneering, and is quite suited to our day. "Haaretz" "A milchig Bible for a new generation. . . . The book is lively, and in reading it one comes to learn about not just the dishes but also about Lewando herself. The guestbook offers a glimpse into Vilna's vibrant, cosmopolitan cultural life" and how Lewando's restaurant was at the center of it. "Tablet" "LeWando's time was short, but she was ahead of it. . . . The book's scope evokes Deborah Madison's Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone [and] heralds the earnest vegetarianism of The Moosewood Cookbook. "The Jewish Week" "LeWando's recipes could tempt even the heartiest of meat eaters to taste and, perhaps, to convert to a partial vegetarian diet. Excerpts from a treatise on why fruits and vegetables are so important, as well as the translator's preface, underscore the health benefits of vegetables decades ahead of today's movements. Compliments from celebrities such as Marc Chagall tell us of a talent lost way too soon. "Booklist" "I was very moved by The Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook, both by the simplicity and goodness of its recipes and the warm, generous heart of Fania Lewando, who opened her vegetarian restaurant in Lithuania just prior to World War II. What a courageous woman, such truly lovely dishes, and what a gift to have this book brought back to life. "Deborah Madison, author of The New Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone and Vegetable Literacy

FANIA LEWANDO (c. 1887-1941?) was the proprietor of a popular vegetarian restaurant in pre-World War II Vilna, Lithuania. She was also a noted nutrition advocate and founded a "dietary school" that taught Jewish women healthy cooking techniques. Fleeing the Nazi invasion of Vilna in the fall of 1941, she and her husband were captured by Soviet soldiers and died sometime thereafter.

This is a beautiful hardcover book, with several nice forwards with some history about the author. The illustrations are of seed packets and not the food. The recipes are very much "a little bit of this and a little bit of that." To the reviewer who complained that there were no metric measurements, you don't need them. The amounts are more flexible. Although it would have been nice to have had both metric and regular measurements. So far, I've made the first salad recipe. It says to make the first mayonnaise recipe with 2 cups of oil. Well, what it doesn't say, is that you don't need ALL 2+ cups of mayonnaise for the salad. You really just need a blurb of mayo. By the way, the salad was very good. A nice refreshing summer salad. I'm looking forward to trying some of the other recipes. The translator does warn you when a recipe may be more for historical interest than for you

to actually make. The preserves are not up to current FDA standards. And the cauliflower schnitzel just sounds a bit too weird for my palate. But who knows? I might give it a try.

What I expected to find: those recipes which I enjoyed at Grandma's, but which she never wrote down. Those dishes may be buried in here, but YIVO has translated and adapted (for modern measures) a book which was ahead of its time, proclaiming the benefits of a vegetarian diet and then providing a wide variety of soups, salads, "cutlets", and cooked fruits. For non-vegans there are also kugels, latkes, and omelets. This is a great choice for the experienced cook and also for those just starting out. So glad YIVO took this project on!

In 1938, Fania Lewando, the proprietor of a popular vegetarian restaurant in Vilna, Lithuania, where all the hip Yiddish speaking intellectuals ate and conversed, published a Yiddish vegetarian cookbook unlike any that had come before. Her establishment was the Elaine's of Vilnius, and not for those without some coins. Marc Chagall dined there (although he was not feeling well the night he signed the guest book), as did Itzik Manger (he said it was "heavenly"), Dr. Halevi, Zalmen Maynzer, Yudl Mark, Lazar Kahan, and other (male) luminaries. In 2011, The Forward referred to the pre-War, revolutionary cookbook as Vilna's Moosewood cookbook. And yes, it was revolutionary, since meat was the aspirational food of the Jewish community and vegetarianism and vegetables were not popular. Reading the book reminded me of how much I enjoyed the closed dairy restaurants of the Garden Cafeteria, Ratner's and that swank dairy place on HaYarkon in Tel Aviv. Sadly, and tragically, Fania, her husband, and so many of her friends, customers, and readers did not survive WWII and Nazi and Soviet occupations. It was assumed that all but a few copies of the cookbook survived. In 1995, a couple attending an antiquarian book fair in England came upon a copy of the cookbook, bought it, and donated it to YIVO, the premier repository for books and artifacts relating to prewar European Jewry. Barbara Mazur and Wendy K. Waxman were participating in a YIVO book group when they saw the 1938 book. Mazur and Waxman wanted to publish a reprint of it. They spied famed cookbook author and food journalist, Joan Nathan, at Stone Barn in New York State and showed her their manuscript, which they just happened to have on them. She set them up with a publisher and agreed to write the Foreword. THE VILNA VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK is beautifully translated by Eve Jochnowitz. It was a challenge. Fania's Yiddish is filled with Vilna-Yiddish dialect. Eve explains that a reader might expect that *schvartse yagdes* are black berries. But Lithuanian Jews knew that this is the word for blue berries. The original cookbook also had separate sections for puddings,

kugels with cholents, and substantial puddings (taygekhtsn). But many of the recipes are interchangeable, as, Eve explains, are the recipes in the Omelettes section and the Frittatas section. So wat if some are slight repeats. I found it fascinating. The recipes are written plainly, directly, and clearly. It is in short paragraph style, with several recipes per page. The well constructed hardcover is illustrated with old Yiddish vegetable seed packets. The 400 recipes range from traditional Jewish dishes (kugels, blintzes, fruit compotes, borschts) to vegetarian versions of Jewish holiday staples (cholent, kishke, schnitzel) to appetizers, soups, main courses, and desserts. The "taxonomy" of the cookbook is dizzying, and reminds one of a menu from Shopsin's Manhattan diner. There are SALADS (Mayonnaise Provencal, Tomato, Eggplant Appetizer, Apple with Horseradish Salad, Fresh Cucumber Salad); SOUPS (mandlen soup nuts, carrot, beer, lentil, almond, apricot, cold cherry, semolina, oatmeal, mushroom, sago, potato, farina with milk, farina with water, rice, farfel, beet, cabbage, borscht, bran borscht, sorrel, ukrainian, kapusniak soups); VEGETARIAN CUTLETS (celeriac, bean, nut, egg, cauliflower, lisitschkes, potato stuffed with mushroom, oat, lima bean); STEWED DISHES (TSIMES) (stewed prunes, sauerkraut with peas, potato with sour cream, stewed cabbage, stuffed cabbage, cucumbers with tomatoes, lentils, pears, kohlrabi); MISCELLANEOUS DISHES (mock meatloaf, kishke, mock caviar, various creamed vegetables, noodles with prunes, leeks with butter, pierogies of various types, cherry varenikes, bigos, carrot schnitzel, raspberry mousse, stuffed zucchini, rolls with jam fried in butter, cauliflower wiener schnitzel, potato Zrazy, baked eggs with peppers); BLINTZES; OMELETS; PORRIDGES; FRITTATAS; eleven KUGELS WITH CHOLENTS; nine PUDDINGS; ten types of LATKES; eight items for PASSOVER; SUBSTANTIAL PUDDINGS (such as rice, noodle pudding with milk, buckwheat pudding, potato pudding); eight SAUCES AND CREAMS; sixteen STUFFED FOODS (kreplakhs, stuffed eggs, dumplings, stuffed peppers); BAKED GOODS (about thirty baked items including Challah Charlotte, sponge cake, cabbage pie, apple cake, poppy, oil, rye flour with honey cookies and cakes); JAMS AND PRESERVES; a dozen TURNOVERS; two dozen COMPOTES AND DESSERTS (kissles, ices, jellies, creams); GLAZES FOR CAKES; COFFEE BUTTERMILK AND YOGURT (move over Greek style, try Armenian Matsoni); MARINATED FOODS; ICES; WINES MEAD AND LIQUEURS; and VITAMIN DRINKS AND MIXES. WHEW!!!! One of the funniest recipes is for bread for those with a stomachache. It requires 55 cups of flour. 55! The editor asks readers that if anyone makes it, please let them know if it worked as a cure. Another Yiddish recipe could find no English translation, but sounds exactly like French Toast, SO.. it is "French Toast" with an Editor's Note. Eve Jochnowitz, a New York City-based culinary ethnographer who translated and annotated the book, said, "the

recipes are really good and [readers] are going to want to cook and eat them. They are not the least bit dated. There are a couple of things that are labor intensive but there are plenty that are very easy. The recipes are vivid, flavorful, (and) surprising. Also, the book closes with some of the messages from the restaurant's guest book from some of the greatest Yiddish luminaries of pre-War Vilna, Riga, Kovno, and points elsewhere.

Excellent Book. Beautiful recipes. Gorgeous drawings and heartbreaking story. Best revenge against the Evil people who did this to her for this book to be rediscovered and published. I love to cook and intend to try every recipe in this book. A treasure!

What a wonderful vegetarian cookbook! Contains vegetarian versions of all your favorite Jewish foods. Some recipes contain milk/eggs but because the recipes are all simple with very few ingredients it would be easy to convert to strictly vegetarian (as opposed to ovo-lacto). The illustrations are wonderful, too, complete with the Yiddish names for many vegetables.

the dialogue and the recipes are very interesting. loved reading the history of this movement. very pleased that I bought copies of the book for my self and my daughter. can't wait to try some of the recipes.

This is such a jewel of a find! This book was first published decades ago - and it's always nice to find a plant-based-diet affirming text/cookbook from so long ago - it's not like being vegetarian or vegan is a new thing, and the health benefits have been known for centuries. I also like a cookbook that just gives there recipes in brief narrative paragraphs, rather than a list of ingredients, and then a list of instructions - it's more conversational, and less clinical. :-) Three thumbs up! :-)

This beautiful book brought tears to my eyes! What a pioneer Fania was. She was so ahead of her time. Her receipes are beautifully illustrated. The directions are simple. In fact they are brilliant. It breaks my heart that she and her husband dissappeared without a trace. Had they lived, she would have been one of the first to successfully publish, teach, write and manage a vegetarian restaurant. Quite a feat for a woman, let alone a vegetarian one at that. This book holds a special place in my heart. It reminds me of so much that was lost in talent during WW II.

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