

Home Baked: Nordic Recipes and Techniques for Organic Bread and Pastry

Hanne Risgaard

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Nordic baking may not be part of the household cookbook section, but it ought to be. In this new book, Hanne Risgaard introduces American bakers to the joys and intricacies of baking with organic grains. Taking a cue from an Old Danish proverb quoted in the book, “If only it had been a grain of barley, sighed the hungry hen, when she found a diamond in the dung-pile,” this book is about nurturing that which sustains the body *and* soul. Readers learn about baking, grain, and Danish culture in this warm and inviting book.

Co-owner and operator of Skærtoft Mølle, a working stone mill, Risgaard is intimately familiar with multiple grains, their properties, and the ways in which those properties translate into different tastes, textures, and color in baked goods. She began her career in media but after forty years in that business, she turned her attention to farming, and eventually organic farming. The Skærtoft Stable Kitchen at Skærtoft started offering bread baking classes in 2008, and in 2011, *Home Baked* was nominated for Best Bread Book of the Year at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards.

The book begins with a foreword by Jeffrey Hamelman, the director of the Baking and Education Center at the King Arthur Flour Company in Norwich, Vermont. He reveals an initial apprehension about making an outstanding baking book for the home baker, but is soon relieved by Risgaard’s “clear and abiding concern and commitment for human health.” In addition to her discussion of the benefits of organic grains, she also gives the reader an appreciation for the Nordic landscape and palette.

American bakers will find lovely photographs and unique ingredients throughout the book, such as lavender, spelt, cardamom, elderflower, and more. They will also find that all of the measurements are given in grams. This may initially be off-putting for those accustomed to measuring cups and spoons, but Risgaard defends her choice, noting that baking, like chemistry, requires very specific measurement and a scale gives the necessary specificity for at-home success. She also gives very specific, well-illustrated instruction on kneading techniques

After the foreword, the author gives her own introduction of her life and work at Skærtoft Mølle, then she launches into an introduction to the equipment, ingredients, and basic tenets of bread baking. She offers recipes with yeast, sourdoughs, and other starters before expanding into other baking with baking powder and without a rising agent. Recipes include Pear and Sourdough Bread, Buns for Tilters, Fredericksgård Lunch Bread as well as Hanne’s Lemon Pie, Fritters with Herbs, Chou with Cheese, and Elderflower Muffins with Mascarpone. The final section of the book features leftovers, a thoughtful addition for families trying to stretch a dollar or be attentive to their environmental impact.

This is an easy to follow, surprising, and inspiring baking book. Risgaard’s joy in sharing her craft is contagious and home cooks will find themselves headed to the kitchen for the both warmth this book promises and that the recipes deliver.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (October 26, 2012)

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