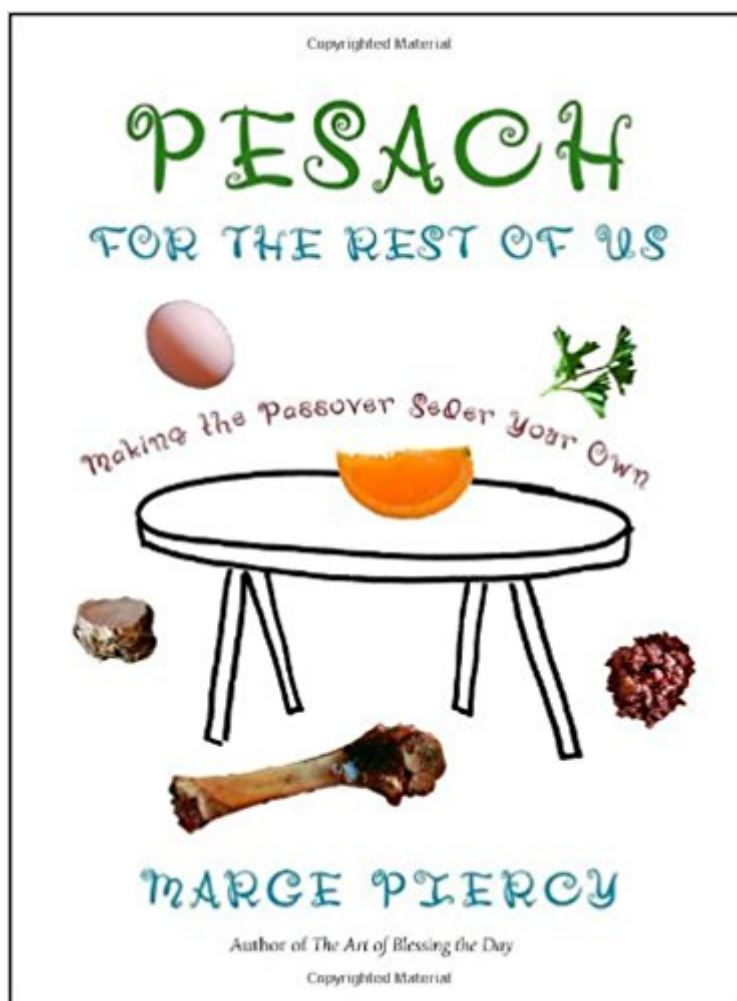


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Pesach For The Rest Of Us: Making The Passover Seder Your Own



Synopsis

Every year, poet and novelist Marge Piercy creates her own Passover seder with a group of family and friends. Babies have been born and grown up, friends have moved or divorced, but the principals continue to gather in her rustic Cape Cod home to participate in a seder that Piercy takes joy in tweaking each spring to make it more meaningful. In this journey through the ritual, Piercy coaxes us toward a significant contemporary interpretation, rather than an emphasis on what is strictly "correct" or traditional. She reminisces about her grandmother, who thought herself unworthy to lead a seder because of her limited Hebrew but presided morally at the table; she urges adding an orange to the seder plate; she even describes her heroic efforts to make her own gefilte fish (an experiment not to be repeated). Piercy offers her distinct slant on each element of the feast and provides dozens of her own wonderful recipes, which she delivers in the same warm, commanding voice as is heard in her poems and prose: "When I told Ira that I was going to explain how to cook matzoh brei, he thought I was crazy. Everybody knows how to make matzoh brei, he said. But I am of the opinion that there is no longer anything that everybody knows how to cook." It is in that spirit "no question too simple" that Piercy welcomes readers to her kind of seder: a homemade and personal affair, the kind we all wish we could attend. This charming and instructive book of Passover wisdom, brimming with favorite dishes and Marge Piercy's own moving Passover poems and blessings, invites us to look at an important Jewish ritual in a whole new way.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The traditional Passover seder is dissected, reinterpreted and given a contemporary and feminist bent in Piercy's guidebook to making the haggadah more readable and meaningful to today's unaffiliated Jews. Novelist Piercy confesses that her own Passover preparations are "heavy on the convenient"; for example, she will use the prohibited sunflower oil to make her dishes tasty. She wants to focus instead on what brings resonance to her observance of the holiday, like adding the Cup of Miriam to her seder table and including a Fifth Child in remembrance of those murdered during the Holocaust. Nearly every page reminds readers to change parts of the seder as they see fit, though traditionalists may feel that this approach belittles the traditional seder. Throughout are Piercy's poems recognizing many aspects of the seder; her own slightly sloppy rendition of traditional blessings into the feminine Hebrew; and ideas on how to create one's own English prayers. Memories of her Grandmother Hannah's Pesach segue into old-time recipes of the holiday's traditional foods, and an entire chapter is dedicated to mouthwatering recipes that can be used for the main meal. Some tangents in this conversational guide seem gratuitous, while others— "including histories of the origins of wine, horseradish and other seder foods"—are fascinating. (Feb. 20) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Pesach (Passover in English) is the eight-day festival that commemorates the exodus of the Israelite people from their enslavement to the pharaoh in Egypt. The seder is the meal on the first two nights of Pesach in which the Haggadah--the telling--of the Passover story is read. Piercy writes that the book is not intended for Orthodox Jews but, rather, for secular and religious Jews, "with a modern slant into a more satisfying and meaningful way to celebrate the holiday." She offers recipes, poems, and blessings as she delves into all the rituals and practices, and she reminisces about the seders spent with her grandmother when she was a child. Piercy, the author of 17 novels, 17 volumes of poetry, and a memoir, has written an engaging account of this important holiday. George Cohen Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Marge Piercy writes wonderful, wonderful poetry. Here is a book in which she uses her awareness of detail and spirituality to help us notice the rituals, recipes, and stories from our Passover experiences that make the holiday most meaningful. She includes personal recollections that trigger recollections of our own. I have used the poetry from this book for services I create for the congregation I belong to, where we do not have a rabbi but draw meaning from our hearts. I love listening to Ms. Piercy's prose voice. I highly recommend this volume!

Just loved this book! Loved the style of poetry, interspersed with story telling, interspersed with recipes! We incorporated many of her suggestions and poetry into our own family seder this year.

Jewish tradition and feminism collide in this book. I found the tension fascinating. There are a lot of personal stories, a lot of recipes done the way I cook ("add a little of this, or, if you don't like it, add a little of that.") There were a few new poems, but the ones I liked best are already in *The Art of Blessing the Day*. I didn't always agree with her, but she always provided food for thought. At my seder, I found myself citing this book several times. Plus I cooked a tsimmes from one of her recipes, and it was quite good. This is far from being a haggadah; just commentary on the various sections of the seder and a lot of interesting stories and recipes.

As a fan of Marge Piercy's writings, I was curious about this new endeavor. I was pleasantly surprised at how much fun it was and the memories it evoked for me. Our Passover seders always include new poetry (many of them from her previous poetry books) and readings, and my attitude about Pesach mirrors hers, "whatever works, do it". I was so impressed that I sent a copy to my niece. Her recipes were an added feature and the macaroons came out great.

I really appreciate this book. It is respectful of tradition but it also helps to infuse the holiday with personal relevance, which is what it's all about anyway. I love the poems, the prayers, the recipes and wonderful stories that add such richness. Pick and choose what's meaningful to you and "pass over" the rest!

A must-read before Pesach for the traditionalist or modern Jew alike. A very easy book to read packed with information and advice. The recipes look great too!

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