

Book review

Karla Stoltzfus

Simply in Season: A World Community Cookbook, compiled and edited by Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert. Waterloo, ON, and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005.

During a 2006 conference on *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, theologian Malinda Berry heralded *Simply in Season* and its predecessors in the Mennonite World Community Cookbook trilogy as a true, organic—if unofficial—confession of faith. Berry was pointing to a profound truth: that our attitudes and practices related to food express our faith. The ways we cook and eat speak volumes about our core beliefs about God, creation, and our relationship to both. Correspondingly, our cookbooks express in poetic, accessible form the theology and ethics of those who create and use them.

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Extending the Table. And surely stories will abound of transformation through reading and cooking from this newest confession of faith, *Simply in Season*. Sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee, *Simply in Season* represents a glorious revival of the series.

Like its predecessors, *Simply in Season* gathers recipes and stories from Mennonite cooks across North America and beyond, but the emphasis in this collection is on seasonal, local foods. In our petroleum-powered technological age, grocery stores offer pro-

duce from many parts of the world throughout the year. The concept of cooking and eating seasonally seems foreign and burdensome to many North Americans. Limiting our diets largely

to locally produced foods may seem to entail undue deprivation and an excess of effort. Cooking and eating seasonally does require discipline and skill. But as the wise cooks and storytellers represented in *Simply in Season* testify, the discipline yields pleasure and peace—shalom—for people and the environment. A more just, peace-loving economy grows when eaters choose to buy food from local growers. And our tastebuds and the earth rejoice with the farmers and gardeners we support.

Organized according to the seasons of North America's temperate climate, *Simply in Season* unpacks this truth about pleasure and peace through recipes featuring seasonal produce, vignettes about growing and eating local foods, and invitations to action. In the section on "Spring," we are invited to consider the environmental impact of conventional agriculture as we savor tender new lettuce and the first ripe strawberries. "Summer" calls us to gratefully tend the gift of health as we celebrate the bounty of summer gardens. "Autumn" invites contemplation on the pace of life as we shift our eating from the fast-growing fruits of summer to the slow foods of fall. "Winter" bids us entrust our stomachs and our money to God, who provides enough: enough local root vegetables, apples, and grains to feed us when fresh produce can be purchased only at the cost of gallons of petroleum, carbon emissions, and exploitive corporate economic structures; enough money and generosity to pay the higher price for a local farmer's potato rather than the cheaper one in the store. The final section, "All Seasons," explores stories that lie behind our food: of celebration and devastation, of hope and despair, for people and creation.

Some users of *Simply in Season* express frustration with the index at the back and the lists of recipes at the beginning of each section, which lack page references—shortcomings that reinforce the call to slow down our approach to eating and cooking!

While it cannot take the place of *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, *Simply in Season* is a resource that testifies powerfully to—and enables us to embody—our faith in the Creator who provides abundantly for all people and all of creation.

About the reviewer

Karla Stoltzfus is a bivocational pastor, serving part time as minister of church community life at First Mennonite Church of Iowa City, Iowa, and part time as a market gardener. She is a 2007 graduate of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.