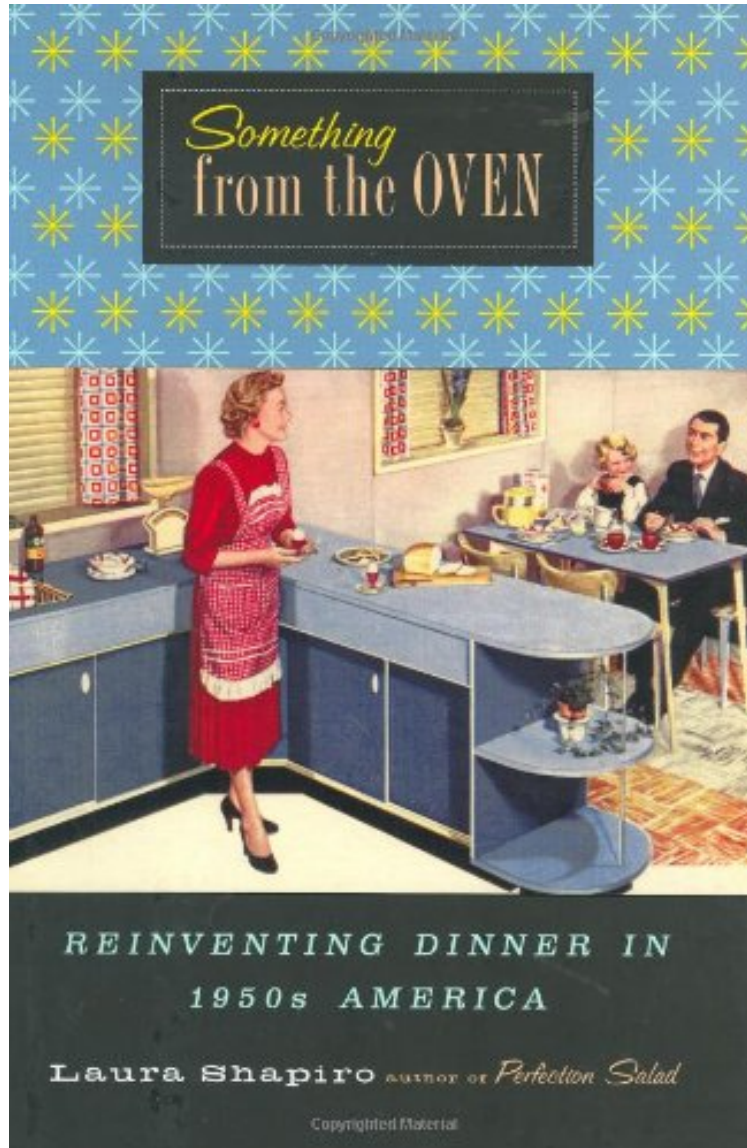


Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America

Laura Shapiro

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Laura Shapiro : Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very Interesting History BookBy K. MillerFor serious history lovers, especially those interested in social history, this book is excellent. Very detailed, and for me it explained why my mother cooked the way she did. (All convenience foods!).0 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

FUN!By L. MuirIf you like RETRO, come along back to the time when we were young, happy, and the Folks did all the work and worrying!Linda Muir7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Not what I thought it was going to be.By Nathaniel C. WomackI felt guilty giving any less than 3 stars, tho I can't say I enjoyed the book (it is an easy/quick read). It's not really about what I thought it would be about, that's not the fault of the book being advertised. Thought it would be mostly about food trends and how people ate in America through the decades. It's far less about that (tho that is in there, to a lesser degree). It's more of a social treatise on women's "place in the kitchen" through the years, and how it evolved by the food industry, and the introduction of convenience foods, to social pioneers like Julia Child and Poppy Cannon. It almost at times reads like a college doctorate on women's social issues and how they were reflected in the home and kitchen..

In this delightfully surprising history, Laura Shapiroauthor of the classic *Perfection Salad* recounts the prepackaged dreams that bombarded American kitchens during the fifties. Faced with convincing homemakers that foxhole food could make it in the dining room, the food industry put forth the marketing notion that cooking was hard; opening cans, on the other hand, wasn't. But women weren't so easily convinced by the canned and plastic-wrapped concoctions and a battle for both the kitchen and the true definition of homemaker ensued. Beautifully written and full of wry observation, this is a fun, illuminating, and definitely easy-to-digest look back at a crossroads in American cooking.

From *The New Yorker*In the fifties, we're always told, the food industry barged into the American kitchen, waving TV dinners, and destroyed home cooking. Not so fast, Shapiro says. As she reveals, women refused many of the new convenience foods. Fish sticks they accepted, but not ham sticks. Canned peaches, yes; canned hamburgers, no. The industry people hired psychologists to help them combat such resistance; the women's magazines, fond of their advertisers, told readers how, by splashing some sherry over the frozen peas, they could still make dinner look as though they had cooked it. The book is very funny, and also subtle. The most interesting character is Poppy Cannon, the foremost food columnist of the period, who, though she started her mint-jelly recipe with lime jello, was a serious feminist and had a long affair with and eventually married the head of the N.A.A.C.P. After American cooking passed her by, Cannon threw herself off the balcony of her apartment. This chapter reads like a Russian novel. Copyright 2005 *The New Yorker*From *Booklist*When World War II ended, American industry was left with overcapacity in food manufacture and preservation. Before this could be transferred to domestic use, food manufacturers had to distinguish between what a soldier needed to eat and what a family wanted to eat. Canned and frozen foods appeared in groceries, but American housewives initially rejected most of them. Marketing and modern food science soon overcame objections, television advertising spread the gospel of efficiency, and the 1950s American kitchen and diet were transformed. Shapiro delves into this period of rapid change and comes up with absorbing stories of the era's women. In addition to the familiar tales of the fictional Betty Crocker and cultural icon Julia Child, Shapiro relates the astounding stories of other mid-century foodies such as Poppy Cannon, who publicized convenience foods while falling in love with Walter White, influential NAACP leader, in a time still suspicious of interracial marriage. She also tells of Freda De Knight at *Ebony*, who studied at the same Parisian cooking school as Julia Child and then brought French haute cuisine into the middle-class African American kitchen. Shapiro's graceful, flowing prose makes this history of both cooking and women utterly compelling. Mark KnoblauchCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Shapiro's graceful, flowing prose makes this history of both cooking and women utterly compelling." -- starred, *Booklist* (*Booklist*)