

[Review of] Cooking for Halflings and Monsters [by] Astrid Tuttle Winegar

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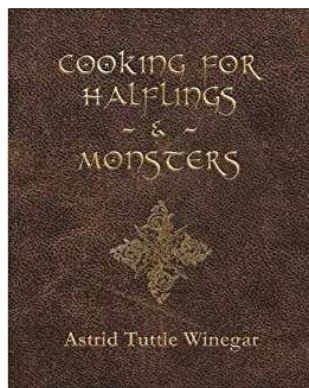
Article begins on next page

dess, fairies whose king rides on the Wild Hunt, dwarves, goblins, kobolds, wood-sprites, Mayan Aluxob, Andean *muki* and *unki*, talking dragons, and unicorns, in addition to creatures of his own imagining. The protagonist and his friends (on the other hand) are relentlessly creatures of contemporary pop culture, if perhaps denizens of its geekier or more goth corners. Given Dan's immersion from birth in the world of Tolkien, it's not surprising that he makes (and the narrator makes from his point of view) frequent references to Middle-earth, but characters also regularly allude to *World of Warcraft*, Harry Potter, and *The Amazing Spider-Man*. (I might wonder, in passing, whether this feature will turn out to be something of a liability in the long term, should there come a time in which YA readers will no longer immediately recognize such references.) Fairy-tale customs also play a major role—I've already mentioned the idea of the changeling, and the importance of groups of three is another example. Characters can move between the worlds through magical gates (though this is becoming more difficult) and, in some instances, can also instantaneously "kintravel" through the Shadowlands to the location of a relative or close friend. In Rosegrant's well-thought-out vision, Inland and Outland are two sides of the same coin, as are fairies and human beings (nor can the wise discern whether the separation of the peoples led to the split of worlds, or vice-versa), and each world nourishes the other, the people of Inland being eager for physical food from Outland (the canned tuna being only one example), and those of Outland seeking (if they are wise) food for the soul in Inland.

Marrowland begins as Dan and his friends, Josh and Alice, arrive through a gate from Outland in the Inland version of Peru (earlier sites in the series include Manhattan's Metropolitan Museum of Art, Stonehenge and Palenque). They are pursuing, and hope to neutralize, a powerful witch known as "Sister"; in the longer term, their goal is to reconnect with Dan's girlfriend, Maggie, in Fairyland, and to complete Dan's search for the First Changing Beast—the task for which he was brought into Inland in the first place. Along the way, they meet up two other Outlanders, Sonco

and Illary, Quechua who are engaged on a quest of their own—the first people Dan has encountered whose stories are independent of his. Captured, the five escape only with the somewhat short-tempered help of one of the Gatekeepers. Dan makes a gate to return the Quechua to the Outworld, and then kintravels with his friends to Maggie. It turns out, however, that Fairyland is protected against kintravel, so the three only come close to their destination, and the second section of the novel deals with their efforts to reach Fairyland, locate Maggie, and help her find her parents. Accomplishing that requires a confrontation with Sister, and a desperate magical defense; but, having survived that, and with two of the fairy army as escort, Dan and his friends resume the quest for First Changing Beast.

The series in general, and this volume, seem to me well-suited to a YA audience (though, obviously, also attractive to adults). Rosegrant's style is appealing and accessible, and while there is some talk of the teen-aged characters "hooking up," there's nothing so graphic as to be problematic for the intended readers. These are books I have enthusiastically recommended to others, and I look forward to volume five.



Astrid Tuttle Winegar.

Cooking for Halflings and Monsters: 111 Comfy, Cozy Recipes for Fantasy-Loving Souls. With Illustrations by Geneve Harstine. Oloris Publishing, 2016. 433pp. \$30.00. Kindle 2nd edition, 2017, \$8.99 Reviewed by Janet Brennan Croft.

Astrid Winegar's project of a cookbook based on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien has been simmering away for a number of years, and it is good to finally see it in print—though much transformed, as her introduction details, by the necessity of revising to meet the requirements of the Tolkien Estate on the verge of publication, when "the guardians of the original author's world swooped down upon the naïve lady, shouting 'You shall not publish!'" (i). As she explains later, they were actually extremely polite, but her original plan to tie

the recipes to specific events, characters, and foods from the books had to be scrapped. “The Land of Copyright is a dangerous place and few should venture there,” she advises (ix).

Winegar therefore reorganized the recipes around the concept of different eating venues and/or cultures one might find in a typical fantasy world, a structure that works quite well. It is not the familiar structure of, for example, all poultry dishes in one chapter and all desserts in another, but each individual chapter follows this traditional arrangement. We first visit a “Halfling Hideaway,” a pub along the lines of the Green Dragon; then “The Inn of the Doughy Hero,” closer akin to the Prancing Pony. “Council Catering” struck me as food you might find at Beorn’s house, in the buttery in Gondor, or perhaps at Henneth Annûn, while “Quest Depot” collects more portable “road food” recipes suitable for being on the road with dwarves. “The Epic-Urean” chapter is a bit more exotic or challenging, with food for “wizards, witches, mages, and alchemists,” while “Glitnir’s Hall” has “hearty food for dwarves.” “Monstrous Morsels” is a fun chapter with dish titles like “Cold Dead Livid Bread” and “Meat on Metal Stick,” while “Nympha Nemorosa” has more delicate recipes for elves and sprites, the sort of food you’d find at Rivendell or Lórien, including an attempt at *lembas* (“*Crustula Vitae*”). The book concludes with menu suggestions and cooking tips, and at the beginning is a selection of basic recipes for seasoning mixes and dressings.

The recipes tend to be of British or north-western European derivation, for the most part, and medieval more than modern, but not obsessively so. The techniques and tools are modern, though the ingredients include little that would not have been found in Middle-earth/medieval Europe—no bananas, avocados, or peanuts, for ex-

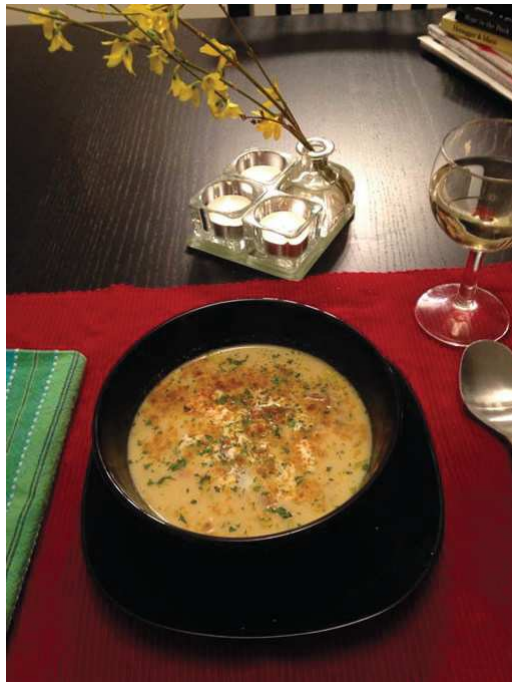


Photo by Janet Brennan Croft. One of my favorite recipes from this cookbook, “The Exquisite Soup of Master Mage Stormgut,” p. 107.

ample. The author’s New Mexico roots are, however, evident in the frequent suggestion to add chopped green chiles to the recipes—a vegetable far from native to Middle-earth, but one that adds a welcome kick to many dishes, as she explains (vi). Her New Mexico location also accounts for the relative dearth of fish recipes, though there are a few. The recipes are not vegan or gluten-free or low-carb, for the most part, but hearty, real, comfort food.

I’ve tried a number of the 111 recipes, and have several bookmarked to try later. Some are fairly standard, and if you cook regularly they may not replace the versions already in your repertoire, but may offer some welcome possibilities for variation. I can

recommend “Savory Seasoning,” a very nice all-purpose blend that’s tasty on eggs or sandwiches, and “Herby Cabbage Sauté” is a tasty quick side dish with the unusual addition of *herbes de Provence*. “The Exquisite Soup of Master Mage Stormgut” has become one of my favorites—a savory, creamy potato and salmon soup with a tasty *mirepoix* base, seasoned with hot curry powder. In the “Monstrous Morsels” section, “Fungus Liquid” turns out to be a mushroom bacon bisque with spinach, and “Claxiga’s Crunchable Salmon” is crusted with cornmeal, poppy, and sesame seeds and pepped up with Sriracha sauce (make two – refrigerate one to top a lettuce or pasta salad later!). Other reviewers have commended “Marcella’s Cherries,” a classic and adaptable crisp, and I’m looking forward to trying “Marvelous Mushroom Pie,” a hobbit-y quiche filled with mushrooms and Gouda cheese, and “Hild’s Mushroom Bacon Dish of Might,” of which Winegar’s husband said “This is the kind of food that makes me sad when I’m done eating it” because there’s none left.

As Winegar admits, she is not a professional food photographer, and some of the recipes do suffer from bland, unappetizing photos. The line

drawings by Geneva Harstein are, however, very attractive. And the second Kindle edition, just out in September 2017, boasts additional or updated photographs and art; in the sample I viewed, the photographs were more appealing than in the first print edition. My overall assessment is that this is an eminently gift-worthy item for fantasy-loving cooks. And if you are the kind of person who enjoys simply reading cookbooks, this is a good one to add to your collection!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Nominations! Reader's Choice: The Best of *Mythlore's* First Fifty Years

IN 2018 WE CELEBRATE THE FOUNDING OF *MYTHLORE*, the scholarly journal of the Mythopoeic Society, which published its first issue in January 1969. *Reader's Choice: The Best of Mythlore's First Fifty Years* will collect and reprint the very best articles, artwork, reviews, letters, and creative work, all nominated by readers, along with commentary about the journal's founding and history, and will be published in time for Mythcon 49.

HAVE YOU READ AN ARTICLE that changed your thinking about an author? Influenced your own scholarship? Inspired you to read something new, or re-read an old favorite with a fresh perspective? Is there a brilliant article you think has been neglected by current scholarship and deserves more attention? Nominate your favorite and tell us why you think it should be included in this volume.

IS THERE A PICTURE you still have pinned to your bulletin board after all these years? A poem you copied and saved? Nominate your favorite and tell us why it's meaningful to you.

DID YOU READ A REVIEW that made you rush right out to buy a new book? A letter that offered special insight or started a friendship with the author? An editorial you thought was especially insightful or inspirational? Nominate your favorite and tell us why it was so special.

DO YOU HAVE ARCHIVAL MATERIAL relating to the early years of the journal? Perhaps minutes from the early Council of Stewards meetings where the idea first came up, or a copy of the first call for papers? We'd love to be able to reproduce this material and add it to our archives.

NOMINATIONS for any type of material should include a citation to the *Mythlore* issue in which it originally appeared, a paragraph about why you chose it (up

to 250 words), and a brief paragraph about yourself (up to 100 words). If your nomination is chosen, you will receive a free copy of the electronic version of the book and a discount code for the print-on-demand version.

Deadline for nominations: Nov 30, 2017.

Beyond Bree is happy to announce its 2018 Calendar

Hey come, derry dol, merry dol, my darling! We are delighted to celebrate the poetry of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth in the 2018 calendar! It is time to go from The Shire to Mordor and sing with elves, men, hobbits and even trolls as the beloved poetry of Tolkien's works is interpreted by an international range of artists from across the globe.

The color and black and white calendar will be 11 x 8 ½ inches, opening to 11 x 17 inches. It will have both Middle-earth and real world holidays so you can follow the travels and adventures of your favorite characters.

Pricing: \$20 plus shipping - USA \$2.00, the rest of the world \$5.00. For large orders, please inquire for details. For PayPal orders please add \$1.00. When using PayPal, log onto your account and enter your payment amount by using the "Pay or Send Money" button. Make payments in US Dollars by entering the Beyond Bree e-mail address beyondbree@yahoo.com and \$21 plus your shipping fee of either \$2 or \$5. Send check or postal money order (in USD drawn on a US bank) to:

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You may send US currency, at your own risk, in a sturdy envelope. For more information please e-mail: beyondbree@yahoo.com.

C. S. Lewis Festival in Petoskey, MI

The 15th Annual C. S. Lewis Festival is underway September 11-November 7, 2017 in Petoskey, MI.

More information on the events can be found at cslewisfestival.org.

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