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Review of Cather's Kitchens: Foodways in Literature and Life.

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Plains is undeniable. *Cather's Kitchens* celebrates that admiration with a refreshingly new and useful approach to her work, for the heart of the home so often is the very heart of Cather's fiction.

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Cather's Kitchens: Foodways in Literature and Life. By Roger L. and Linda K. Welsch. Foreword by Susan J. Rosowski. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987. Photographs, recipes, index. xxii + 177 pp. \$16.95.

As a cookbook, *Cather's Kitchens* is unexpectedly delightful. As a commentary on Cather's work, the Welsches could not have selected a more appropriate subject, as domestic art for Cather was art of the highest order. The authors expand upon Cather's domesticity by interpreting foodways as a pervasive motif in her plains fiction. For them, understanding Cather means understanding her food.

With a folklorist's enthusiasm, Roger Welsch examines the cultural and historical context of much of the food in Cather's Nebraska writing, whether it is in the kitchen, outside in the garden or orchard, or stored in an underground cellar. And like Cather's fiction, *Cather's Kitchens* glows with the warm storytelling surrounding the table such as Welsch's recollection of "ambrosial grazing," his attempt to enjoy the freshest asparagus possible by dropping to his hands and knees and biting the tips directly from the stalks. Such stories, along with unusual recipes ("corncob jelly") and vintage photographs, provide a rich source of prairie folklore.

While the authors' image of Cather as a "peasant at heart" invites argument, Cather's admiration for the ethnic diversity on the