



Heritage Baking

Author of Love Bake Nourish Shares Her Heart and Heritage Behind the Recipes

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I NEVER WAS THE CHILD GETTING IN TROUBLE when my mother turned her back. Instead, you were sure to find me digging through recipe boxes elbow deep in batter. Baking has always had my heart. I collected recipes like most children collected toys, even when I couldn't read the recipes on my own.

Most of my favorite recipes remain those from the old overflowing recipe boxes that my mother kept. They weren't pretty. The recipes were often faded, torn and covered in flour and stains, but these trusted recipes made my heart flutter in remembrance of all those who made the recipes before me. Sadly, many cookbooks have lost this charm for me. Today cookbooks have lost their souls to marketing rather than the focusing on the soulful heartfelt originality our forebakers intended.

A recipe reveals the soul and personality of a person and is to be cherished.

Then I picked up *Love Bake Nourish* by Amber Rose. Amber's use of seasonal produce, reminiscent of the fruits and vegetables her mother grew right outside her door, and combination of unique flavors made me feel like I could experience just a bit of her story through her recipes. In an industry oversaturated with processed foods, food dyes and pantry products, Amber creates a new path to not just bake, but create something using the beautiful produce at your fingertips.

How did you become interested in your unique style of 'heritage' baking?

When I grew up in New Zealand my mother was very well known over there for being a pioneer in sustainable and organic agriculture. She's been a huge pioneer in heritage seed saving so I grew up in her garden that was filled with more than 800 varieties of heritage fruit trees, vegetables, flowers,

seeds and things. We ate from her garden all year round. It was just basically heritage produce every single day of the year.

So I think the way I bake stems from going into my mother's garden after school. I started baking when I was about seven or eight. I was quite young. Back in those days in the kind of rural New Zealand, kids had a lot of freedom. My mom just let me have free reign of the kitchen letting me experiment as long as I tidied up afterwards. So from a very young age I would be baking pikelets which are like little drops scones.

At my fingertips was always this seasonal produce from heritage fruit trees that my mom had collected from all over New Zealand that had been brought over by the settlers who had come over to New Zealand when they first colonized it. And so, I had to be quite inventive because I had to make things with what I had. I shopped for fresh ingredients out of

our garden instead of selecting ingredients from a supermarket. I just had to say, "Okay the peaches are in season. What can I make with peaches?" Or, the rhubarb was in season, or the plums were in season, or the citrus was in season. And I would create dishes with what I had.

My style was also influenced by my mom's philosophy of gardening and cooking. We lived in the countryside and the ingredients we could not grow we would buy in bulk. My mom would order these huge 40 killo sacks of stone ground beautiful wholeneal spilt flour. So as a kid, I would bake with that. The style in *Love Bake Nourish* very much stems from how and where I was brought up.

It must have been amazing to just walk outside and have that produce!

It was honestly paradise. It was honestly quite wild. At the time, it was quite eccentric in a way. It wasn't always easy in a social sense, but I look back on it now and thank God for my upbringing. We really need to simplify our postmodern world. We need to get back to basics and embrace heritage plants and our knowledge about growing and processing fruits and vegetables. It's a brilliant way to bring families together, both past and present. I think it's becoming in a way quite fashionable. You go to farmer's markets and there are heritage tomatoes and heritage beetroot, and that is all the goodness I was brought up on. It warms my heart to see parents raise their children the way I was raised.

Tell us more about your mom's heritage seeds.

She did not like the quality of produce in New Zealand. Mom had some health issues and wanted to provide better quality food for us so she decided to grow her own garden. She realized at the time that the only seeds that were available in New Zealand were from somewhere in Holland, I believe, which at the time it was sitting under a nuclear cloud. I vaguely remember her stories. So that is what inspired her to start collecting heritage seeds that were local to her in New Zealand instead of buying these rather toxic seeds that came from the other side of the world. That is what started it, but it just snowballed.

She set up this nursery and before long she had hundreds of different varieties of fruits and produce. For example she had about 20 or 30 different varieties of tomatoes. And obviously, it's hard to keep things in their pure lines without things being crossbred. So when the tomatoes would start flowering she would have to put these huge nets over each different variety. But then of course, the bees could not get in because they all had nets over them, so we would have to go in after school. Everyday after school we would work out in the nursery for two hours. We would

have to go in with these little paintbrushes and pollinate all of the little tomato plants so that they would have fruit.

What had started out as her passion, quickly turned into a business where she would grow the fruit trees, vegetables, and flowers and then sell the seeds. It became a mail-order seed business. It really took off and people would send her seed varieties all the time because they knew her as the seed saving lady.

Was there anything in her garden you waited for every year?

I used to get into such trouble as a kid because I like fruit when it's just on the turn, like almost slightly before it's ripe. So I would always be stealing the peaches, nectarines, apricots and things from the fruit trees just before they were about to ripen. It would drive my mother crazy. So I was always getting in trouble for stealing the peaches.

I was also crazy about cucumbers as a kid. I just used to munch on these cucumbers like they were apples. They were these little cucumbers that were round and yellow. They were just the crunchiest sweetest, juiciest cucumbers you ever tried. I used to eat those all the time.

What inspires your baking?

Just cooking meals is a necessity, we all have to do that. Baking, for me, is a combination of feeling particularly inspired or creative about a certain life event. Inspiration can be derived from emotions and desires awakened by the loving memories of baking with gooseberries, plums, or any medium. Baking, like life, has many seasons, I use what is in season marinated with love and affection. Everyday cooking is a requirement for survival. Baking is done to express something extra. I also have a crazy sweet tooth.

Why do you use different flours and less refined sugars?

In England baking has been so huge. There has been such a renaissance for baking, yet the majority of baking books are what I call 'war time' baking where everything comes from the store cupboard. There is really nothing new. It's just rehashing those same old recipes with white sugar and white flour. It's like, come on guys, there's more to baking than what's in the store cupboard.

By using different flours one can achieve different flavor combinations. For example, buckwheat goes very beautifully with pears. You just get these amazing flavor combinations happening with different type of flours and different types of fruits and nuts. So for me, it's a flavor thing. It's a texture thing. I love the texture of different flours and nuts, and even taking that nut going further by roasting it before you grind it you get a another flavor again. It kind of deepens it and it's more nutty and golden.

It's partly about flavors and textures, but it also about health as well. So for example, spelt flour is a lot better for you than ordinary white flour because it has a lot less gluten. It's more of a heritage grain, but it does still contain some gluten and so if I want to bake something that's completely gluten-free you might want to reach for the buckwheat. It can be a health thing but also a combination of things. Flavor, texture and sometimes wanting to be totally gluten-free. Also I love just enjoying the goodness and nutrients that are in those wonderful old heritage grains that we survived on for thousands of years.

For those people who are intimidated by trying these types of products instead of the 'war time' type baking, what is your advice?

I'm not the greatest chef in the world. I'm not the greatest baker in the world by any stretch of the imagination, but I just think that it's about trying to not be afraid of your ingredients and just have a bit of trust and faith in yourself and having fun with it. Also, to understand that a recipe essentially is only a thorough guide. It's not an exact thing because it never could be, because everyone's kitchen is different and everyone's oven is different. Depending on the equipment you're using, depending on what your oven is like, depending on the temperature of your kitchen even if you are rising bread or if you take a cake out of the oven and it goes into a really cold kitchen — there are so many variables and I think people get really caught up in reading a recipe and thinking that they are going to get this perfect thing and if it's not perfect then they have failed somehow. But I think you shouldn't see it like that. You should trust yourself more and use all your senses. Use your sight. Use your touch. Look at the cake. Smell it. To kind of really trust your own instincts and know your oven and own it. Even if it doesn't turn out exactly like the recipe, you haven't failed. You've learned something. Don't see it as a failure but as a learning process.

My rule is I always cook something once and then I adjust it to my kitchen, my oven, my liking, my style. Maybe it needed five extra minutes in my oven or I change the kind of flour. I always cook to the recipe and see how it turns out the first time, but then from there I can fine-tune it, which I think is quite a good thing. Also one thing I think people maybe don't do when they are reading recipes is just read the whole recipe all the way to the end before you start. It's always really helpful. It can give you a bit more confidence going in to the starting to bake the recipe.

Why is it important to you to use seasonal produce?

I think one thing I really wanted to get across with Love Bake Nourish is that everyone thinks baking is this really bad treat. As if it's really bad for you, but it's really good. I really wanted

to show people that it doesn't have to be that way. It also doesn't have to be some extreme dry, crumbly, horrible thing that's really good for you. I kind of wanted to show people that there could be a middle way. That baking, it could be beautiful, nourishing and delicious, and it can also be healthy.

You know if you make something with buckwheat flour, almonds, seasonal pears and honey that it is something that is actually really good for you and it looks beautiful and it taste delicious. So using the seasonal things adds the kind of health side to it. I think baking doesn't have to be extremely indulgent and bad for you or super healthy, but dry and horrible. There is another way. I think to achieve that way it's about using really good quality, natural and seasonal ingredients. So that is partially why I really wanted to bring in those seasonal elements. I really wanted to show people that something can be beautiful, delicious, and also a really good for you.

Is it difficult to find and cook these seasonal products when it's not in your backyard?

I've always loved the process of eating and sharing food at a table where you all sit down and a meal is shared. But I also always loved the process of gathering and collecting and preparing the food because for me that meant skipping off to my mother's garden and filling a basket with beautiful fruit, vegetables, flowers and herbs. That's always been a pleasurable thing for me so even when I lived in London part of the pleasure of creating a beautiful meal was finding the places that were local like the amazing butcher that sold us really amazing grass fed beef or finding the health food shop that sold all the lovely flowers. There was always a pleasure in that for me, whereas I think a lot of people find shopping a real chore. I always try to encourage people to just take their time with it. Find the places to go to that are local and can give you that sense of understanding of where your food comes from. I think when you're cooking something and you know where it came from you really appreciate it a lot more and you can eat it feeling happy, healthy and satisfied. It's kind of a different feeling than just buying something from the supermarket, although I do do that as well. But I tend to shop in different places. So for me that kind of gathering and collecting is part of the enjoyment.

If you go to the farmers market and it's apple season there will be big bags of apples two for the price of what they normally are so you buy those two bags of apples and you would put some in a cake and make a compote with some of the rest of it and maybe make pancakes with the rest. So when it's seasonal it's also cheaper because generally when things are in season the price comes down. Also they taste so much better when they are in season and nutritionally it is much better for you as well. So

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that gathering and collecting is this natural process that happens when you're in sync and cooking and baking with the seasons and you find things that are naturally ripe at that time and you figure out what to bake. It's almost like an extension of how I thought about food as a child. Rather than flipping through the cookbooks and deciding what I wanted to bake and cook as an adult and then decide what to buy. I would always do the shopping first and then figure out what I was going to bake or cook with what I could find.

What do you want to pass on to your son and others?

I've just recently moved from London to the countryside, so I've become more connected to my surroundings again and I've been doing lots of foraging. It's kind of really got me thinking. Also there is been kind of a healthy food revolution happening right now in England which I'm sure some other countries are the same way, or behind, or ahead. But the conclusions that I keep coming back to, for me, it's really about real food, home-cooking, and just using your common sense. There's no one kind of crazy super food that is going to fix all of your problems, but equally all of these kind of manufactured processed foods that the health industry keeps telling us are good for us which clearly aren't, is not great either.

We need to go back to basics and pass on the knowledge that good and simple home-cooking is what's really good for you. You know real butter, good quality seasonal vegetables and just real foods. So what do I want to pass on? I guess it's just to use your own instincts and trust yourself, and to trust nature, and do not listen to people who are all about marketing. I think that is where people get very lost. It's just so easy to get swept up in all the conflicting advice all we need to do is take it back to good honest wholesome food. If I can pass that on and inspire my son, other people and parents then that is amazing.

Are there any herbs you like to bake with?

I love baking with rosemary and thyme. Probably those two are my favorites. I think rosemary goes really well with oranges and citrus things or plums or even chestnuts. Thyme and peaches go really good together. Kind of the more woody herbs go better with baking.

And I love to cook with herbs. When I cook fresh herbs are much more than garnish. I see fresh herbs as one of the main

ingredients. I use a lot of herbs in my dishes. I think that stems from my mom always having copious amounts of beautiful fresh herbs in the garden. Sometimes when I was hungry after school I would go into the garden beds, and she would have these little particular varieties of tomatoes that I really loved. I believe they're actually the tomatoes they use in Italy to make sun-dried tomatoes. They were just so sweet and delicious, and I loved picking them. I would wrap them in a fresh basil leaves and just eat them like a little snack.

Favorite things to bake?

I absolutely love pancakes. I always have made pancakes. It was one of the first things I ever learned how to bake as a kid. In New Zealand you get these great little things called pikelets. In England they are called drop scones. I guess they are what you call American style pancakes but they are slightly smaller. They are like a little fluffy pancake that you can have it with cream and jam. That's one of the first things I made when I was growing up. Just recently I started making sourdough and I've discovered that sourdough pancakes are the best pancakes ever. They are so incredible I couldn't believe it. I love making cakes I love making crumbles. Crumbles are awesome and they are also a great way of using up kind of a glut of seasonal fruit. I tend to like crumbles in autumn and wintertime. I love making meringues and tarts as well. I'm not much of a cookie person I'm more of a cake and pudding person.

Favorite kind of comfort food?

When most people think of comfort food they think of those kind of classic traditional dishes that your mom would make like shepherd's pie or lasagna. But for me, my happiest food comfort moments were, and I know this sounds slightly kind of odd, literally the fresh fruit I picked off my mom's trees. Those old heritage varieties have flavors that you would not believe. I've never come across anything in a farmer's market or supermarket that has even close to the amount of flavor. Or some of her summer salads that she would make from the garden with her delicious cucumbers and fresh herbs and tomatoes. She would have these amazing tomatoes that were just out of this world. So for me that's comfort food. That's what I grew up eating. I remember with happy moments and summertime it was salads. <



FEATURED RECIPE

Raspberry and Rose Frangipane Tartlets with Vanilla Mascarpone Creme

Note from Amber on recipe: These tarts are little parcels of fruity and floral deliciousness. Raspberry and rose go together so beautifully and the frangipane almond filling is gooey and delicious just as a tart should be. Try to find ripe juicy raspberries in the height of summer for extra flavor and sweetness. These little tarts are perfect for picnics or late summer evening dinner parties with friends and loved ones. The spelt flour in the pastry is flour made from a heritage variety of wheat, which has a lot less gluten and many more trace minerals than regular white flour giving the end bake a healthy twist and a delicious nutty golden flavor. This pastry fits a 25cm tart tin or six smaller 10cm tins.

Vanilla Mascarpone Creme

- 200g mascarpone
 - 2 tablespoons of maple syrup or honey, adding more if you like
 - 1 egg yolk
 - ½ teaspoon of vanilla powder or the seeds from ½ a vanilla pod
- Mix all the ingredients together until well combined.
- Set aside while you make the tarts.

Raspberry and Rose Filling

This mix will fill a 25cm tart case. If you're making the six little tarts you will only need about half the mix, so just pop the other half in the freezer for next time you make the tarts, then all you have to do is defrost the mix and make another batch of pastry and your job is done.

- 300g raspberries
- 200g ground almonds
- 200g unsalted butter, softened
- 200g maple syrup
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 teaspoons of rose water

Spelt Pastry Tart Shell

- 250g plain spelt flour
 - a pinch of salt
 - 90g cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
 - 50g icing sugar (or a pinch of stevia powder)
- (sweetening optional)
- 2 large egg yolks
 - A dash of ice cold water if necessary to bind the pastry

Instructions

Place the flour, salt and butter in a food processor and pulse until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Add the sugar (if using) then the egg yolks, pulse again to combine.



The mixture should immediately come together and leave the sides of the bowl.

If it doesn't just add 1 tablespoon of ice-cold water at a time until it does, pulsing in between addition.

Take the ball out of the bowl, shape it into a disk and wrap in cling film and chill in the fridge for at least an hour.

Using a box grater, coarsely grate the pastry into a your tart tin or tins, then press it evenly into the sides and base.

Prick the base of the tart with a fork and then chill again for ten minutes before placing in the preheated oven and baking blind until the pastry is very lightly golden.

This should take about 10 to 12 minutes.

Remove from the oven and allow to cool a little before proceeding with the rest of the tart.

Reduce the oven to 150

Place all the filling ingredients except for the raspberries, into a large bowl with high sides and beat with an electric mixer for a couple of minutes or until well combined.

Place the raspberries into the bottom of each baked and cooled tart shell, a few to each shell.

Spoon the mix on top of the raspberries until it just reaches the top. If your making the small tarts you wont need all the mix, simply use as much as you need to fill the cases then pop the rest of the mix into a bag and freeze for later use.

Bake for about 30 minutes or until lovely and golden on top. The tarts will rise in the oven but sink again as they cool.