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Fannie's Last Supper: Re-creating One Amazing Meal from Fannie Farmer's 1896 Cookbook, by Chris Kimball, New York: Hyperion, 2010

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Recommended Readings



Fannie's Last Supper: Re-creating One Amazing Meal from Fannie Farmer's 1896 Cookbook

by Chris Kimball, New York: Hyperion, 2010

Reviewed by Jon Porter

Chris Kimball's delightfully over-the-top *Fannie's Last Supper: Re-creating One Amazing Meal from Fannie Farmer's 1896 Cookbook* is an account of his characteristically meticulous, painstakingly tested, and frightfully expensive re-creation of a twelve-course Christmas dinner with eight wines for twelve guests, all prepared without most modern amenities in a Victorian kitchen (complete with a cast iron Cyrus Carpenter No 7 coal cookstove, salvaged from the basement of Boston's exclusive St Botolph Club, converted to burn wood, and installed in the author's 1859 Boston town house). This is one of the finest examples of food pornography I've ever encountered, and Kimball clearly does not expect his readers to recreate parts of his dinner; perhaps not all that surprising when one encounters his recipe for mock turtle soup, which begins: "Split calf's head in half, remove the brains (reserve for Crispy Brain Balls recipe) and eyes (discard), cut out the tongue, and clean well, including the nostrils." (The recipe for Crispy Brain Balls is available on the book's website, www.fannieslastsupper.com). Part history and part investigative food journalism, *Fannie's Last Supper* is a fascinating voyage through the Victorian kitchen and the American table.

- Jon Porter is an Instructor in the interdisciplinary Global and Historical Studies at Butler University.