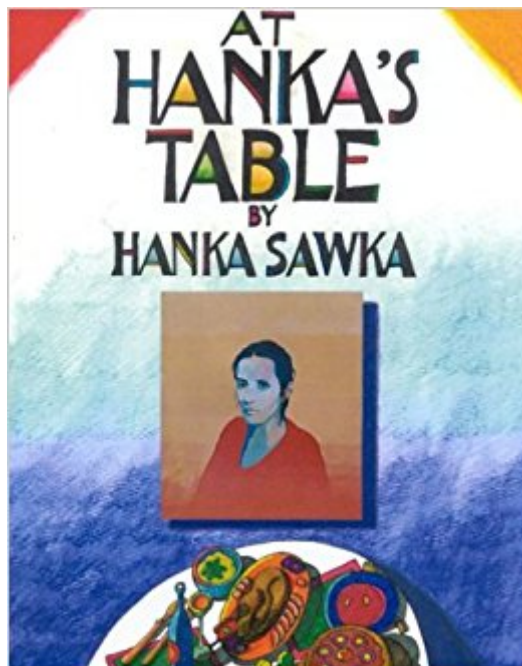


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# At Hanka's Table



## Synopsis

A touching culinary autobiography by an expert home cook whose table has offered succor and warmth to friends around the world for 30 years. Over 100 recipes featuring Polish specialties, including those for Christmas and Easter, and other internationally inspired dishes for appetizers, soups, and main and side dishes, and dessert.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Very interesting tale of the Polish experience. Most of this happened in the 70's. Being of Polish descent, I knew of the troubles they had faced during the "big" wars. And I knew of the Solidarity Movement as a young adult, but reading the inside story of what folks were going through when I was busy raising a family was an eye opener. I found out about the book when I ran into one of Hanka's cousins at a Church function. We discovered our shared Polish roots and began talking about how/why she had fled her country. It is an interesting tale and the recipes and traditions were so very familiar. It is a nice combination of history and cooking. An unusual mix to be sure but it works here.

The story of Polish artist Jan Sawka's family's journey, lovingly told by his wife Hanka, with marvelous photographs and recipes. A book you will definitely want to own. Also, one nice feature, if you use it as a cookbook (though it is much more!) it has a tough, washable cover -- smart!!

nice variety of recipes

I enjoyed reading the story of this Polish cook and reading (and trying the recipes). The love shines through each dish's recipe.

I have always loved to cook and read. Through the years, I have accumulated a large number of books - many of which are cookbooks. I cannot tell you how very thrilled I was to discover your book, *At Hanka's Table*. My own heritage is half Polish on my father's side. Though I have fond memories of Grandma and Grandpa, I have longed to learn more about my Polish roots. I cannot thank you enough for writing your wonderful book! Your and Jan's story is amazing. It truly shows how strong people can be with love and determination. You are an inspiration, a brightly shining light upon this planet we call Earth. Food, people, and their culture are so intertwined and I love how your story is woven with your recipes. And, I so very much appreciate your inclusion of Polish history in your writings! I love that you have made it possible for me to learn of Poland...to learn not only about the darker times, but to know how beautiful and rich Poland's history is. I was so very drawn to your husband, Jan's artwork which so enhanced your book. My first impression upon finding your book was how lovely the jacket is with its colorful presentation! I was happy to enjoy Jan's work throughout *At Hanka's Table*. I look forward to trying many of your recipes and adding them to my table regularly. The only problem is deciding which to try first! Thank you so much again for sharing your recipes and your story. *At Hanka's Table* is a wonderful treasure! Robin L (Romash)

*At Hanka's Table* introduces a new genre of cookbook and a deeper understanding of how we think about food. In this wonderful autobiographical chronicle of a family, the writer/mother/nurturer expands the lexicon of gourmet cooking to include words such as destiny, courage, rebellion, patriotism, humanizing, poverty and dignity. In the true symbolism of the Polish Mother, Hanka Sawka is woman, wife, mother, and strength to her family. Young and beautiful in the communist Poland of her birth then marriage to an artist, she scours the markets daily for ingredients and fresh scraps of food and adapts traditional recipes to what she is able to find. Then in a nomadic existence as ex-patriots after the little artist family of three is expelled from its homeland, Hanka learns new traditions and combines them in new ways with the French, Italian, and Turkish base of Polish cooking. Finally, when life and art bring the family to settle in the United States, Hanka entertains her theatre, literary, music, and art world guests with new additions from the American palette. Throughout their life of survival, Hanka's table is the thread of serenity holding it all together.

The delightful scents, colors, and tastes, the care and love in the preparation, the dignity of the presentation, and the pure joy of each meal no matter the circumstances, attest to a philosophy of life that is sustained At Hanka's Table.

The book is not only about the struggles of the artist and the family, but one of passion and great heart in its depiction of the ideas and historical references of that family. A cross between a great cookbook and an impassioned personal history, first for her mother and in-laws under the Nazis, then under the Russians and Communism, Hanka Sawka gives us the modern-day Polish diaspora in blunt terms. We reel hearing of Sawka's mother being murdered in Warsaw, her father-in-law spending ten years in prison for being a Polish patriot, her husband banned from making a living - these incidents giving great weight to the unsettling notion that art and beauty (and depth of character) can only come from great struggle. Though this book is infused with recipes and the claim that food is at the center of its existence, it is the passion of the writer in telling of her love for her family, artistic expression and Poland itself that truly inspires. It is like no other "cookbook" I have ever seen.

This book is an uplifting tapestry woven from food, hope, creativity, and art, against a backdrop of the fight for Polish freedom. Diverse themes are successfully combined in this book, just as the fresh ingredients are in the authors recipes. I smiled when I read that a young Polish man must stop his courtship if served the black soup. I whipped up a tasty pot of her winter Bigos (hunters stew) while reading about Jan, Hankas renowned artist husband, and the Grateful Dead! The location of Poland on the old historic trade routes have helped give Poland a broadly based cuisine that includes French, Italian, and Turkish methods and spicing making the book's easily prepared dishes seem a little more exotic. North America has welcomed the Polish here since the 1600's, and remember, without the help of Polish Generals Kosciuszko and Pulaski the American Revolution might have turned out a bit differently. At Hanka's Table is a beautifully illustrated book and inspiring family story that crosses many borders to honor us with a recipe for living and a bit of love.

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