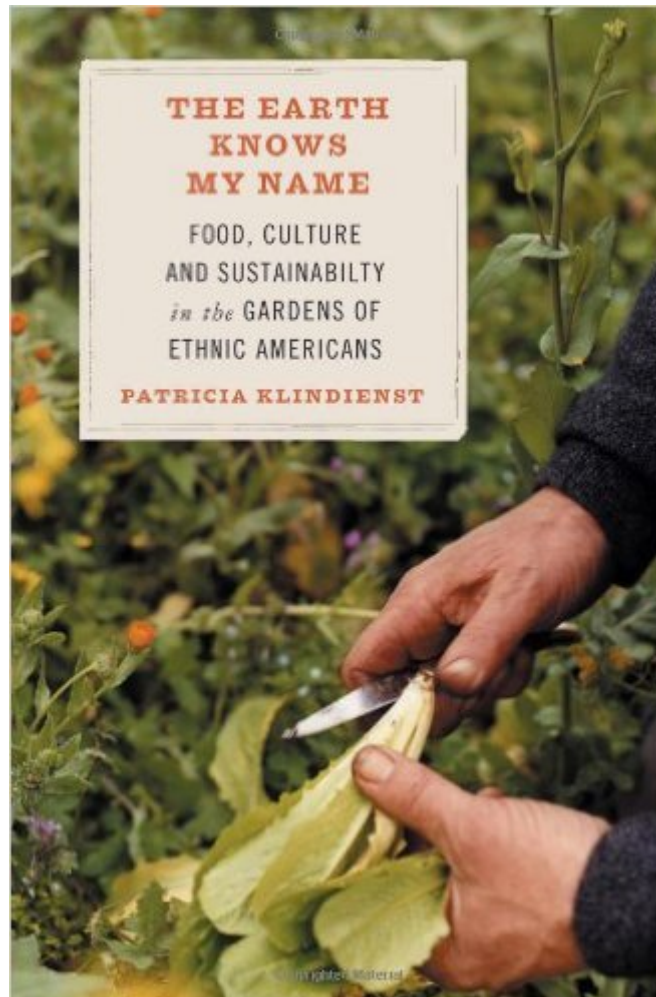


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The Earth Knows My Name: Food, Culture, And Sustainability In The Gardens Of Ethnic Americans



Synopsis

Patricia Klindienst crossed the country to write this book, inspired by a torn and faded photograph that shed new light on the story of her Italian immigrant family's struggle to adapt to America. She gathered the stories of urban, suburban, and rural gardens created by people rarely presented in books about American gardens: Native Americans, immigrants from across Asia and Europe, and ethnic peoples who were here long before our national boundaries were drawn—including Hispanics of the Southwest, whose ancestors followed the Conquistadors into the Rio Grande Valley, and Gullah gardeners of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, descendants of African slaves. As we lose our connection to the soil, we no longer understand the relationship between food and a sense of belonging to a place and a people. In *The Earth Knows My Name*, Klindienst offers a lyrical exploration of how the making of gardens and the growing of food help ethnic and immigrant Americans maintain and transmit their cultural heritage while they put roots down in American soil. Through their work on the land, these gardeners revive cultures in danger of being lost. Through the vegetables, fruits, and flowers they produce, they share their culture with their larger communities. And in their reverent use of natural resources they keep alive a relationship to the land all but lost to mainstream American culture. With eloquence and passion, blending oral history and vivid description, Klindienst has created a book that offers a fresh and original way to understand food, gardening, and ethnic culture in America. In this book, each garden becomes an island of hope and offers us a model, on a sustainable scale, of a truly restorative ecology.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Last summer I received this book as a surprise gift from my son's partner. Its author is a like an aunt to her, and she thought I might enjoy it. I was very touched by this generous gesture and certainly hoped to like it; its vivid cover looked inviting and the topic intriguing, but my expectations were modest at best. Dutifully I delved into it - lo and behold, I didn't just like it. I loved it. The writing is lyrical, the stories are powerful. Its narratives, chronicling the experience of people bringing forth food from the earth, put this book squarely on the shelf with Kingsolver's *Animal Vegetable Miracle* and Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma*. English lacks a word for people who grow their own food while working a day job: hence the book's dissertation-length title, *The Earth Knows My Name: Food, Culture, and Sustainability in the Gardens of Ethnic Americans*. "Gardener" connotes flowers more than edibles; "farmer" and "grower" suggest fulltime professionals, and "subsistence farmer" conjures up hardscrabble sharecropping. Our closest term is kitchen or cottage gardeners. The author highlights eight gardens, each created and nurtured by people whose pleasure in growing things and deep reverence for the earth are powerfully and poetically expressed - especially captivating since few of them would be comfortable writing their observations and experiences. The reader feels privileged to sit in on the dialogue between author and subject - lush descriptions jump off each page, allowing us to see, smell, taste, and feel the bounty of these gardens. Each day's sequence of harvesting, preparing, preserving, and eating, along with endless garden tasks, including saving the best seeds for the next year's planting, come to life.

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