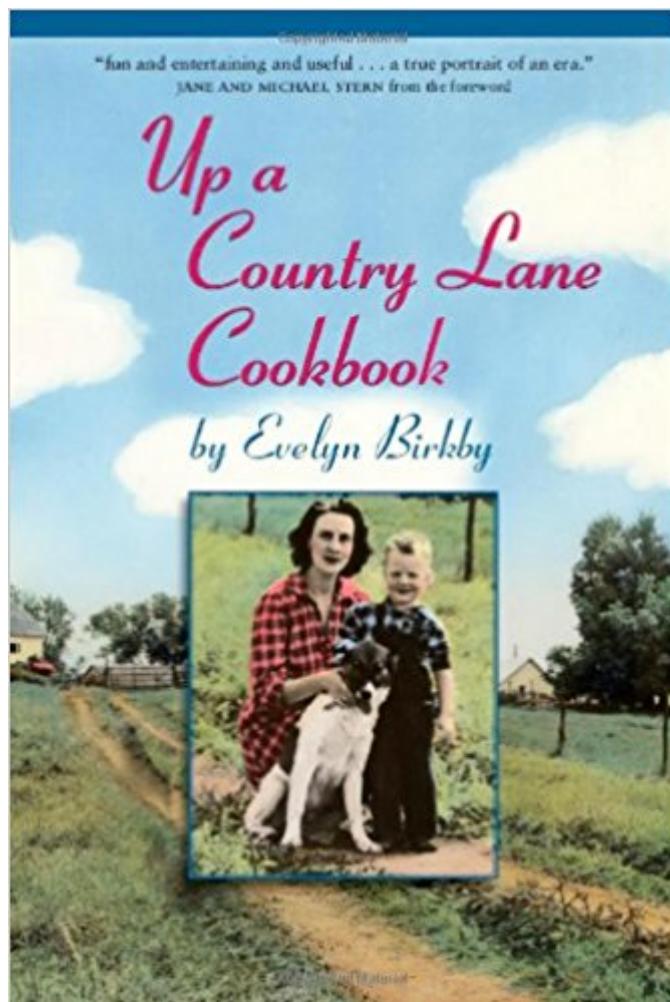


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# Up A Country Lane Cookbook (A Bur Oak Original)



## Synopsis

What can Evelyn Birkby possibly do to follow up the success of *Neighboring on the Air: Cooking with the KMA Radio Homemakers*? She can do what she has done in writing *Up a Country Lane Cookbook*. For forty-three years she has written a column entitled "Up a Country Lane" for the *Shenandoah Evening Sentinel*. Now she has chosen the best recipes from her column and interspersed them with a wealth of stories of rural life in the 1940s and 1950s, supplemented by a generous offering of vintage photographs. She has created a book that encompasses a lost time. With chapters on "The Garden, " "Grocery Stores and Lockers, " "Planting, " and "Saturday Night in Town, " to name a few, *Up a Country Lane Cookbook* recalls the noble simplicity of a life that has all but vanished. This is not to say that farm life in the forties and fifties was idyllic. As Birkby writes, "Underneath the pastoral exterior were threats of storms, droughts, ruined crops, low prices, sickness, and accidents." Following the Second World War, many soldiers returned to mid-America and a life of farming. From her vantage point as a farm wife living in Mill Creek Valley in southwestern Iowa, Birkby observed the changes that accompanied improved roads, telephone service, and the easy availability of electricity. Her observations have been carefully recorded in her newspaper column, read by thousands of rural Iowans. *Up a Country Lane Cookbook* is, then, much more than a cookbook. It is an evocation of a time in all its wonder and complexity which should be read by everyone from Evelyn Birkby's nearest neighbor in Mill Creek Valley to the city slicker seeking an education. Cook a meal of Plum-Glazed Baked Chicken, Elegant Peas, Creamed Cabbage, and Seven-Grain Bread, then finish it off with Frosted Ginger Creams with Fluffy Frosting. While the chicken is baking, read Evelyn's stories and think about the world the way it was.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Birkby, a Shenandoah Evening Sentinel columnist and onetime radio show host in Iowa, draws together her favorite recipes and offers us a context for them: the 1940s and '50s. For her the context is best characterized by what she knew home to be: "a barn, hog shed, corn crib, equipment shed," other outbuildings, "a small, white, single-story house" much like others once scattered across the Midwest, and her neighbors. In plain prose that tells us just what it needs to, she considers various country "heritages"--her own and her friends'--and trots out the food that figures in them: "White Fluffy Frosting," fried chicken, homemade noodles, blueberry salad, oatmeal pancakes. The author takes her backward look straightforwardly, and explains what was involved in raising a clover crop, and in baling hay. Also discussed, methodically: the labor of laundry (including a wringer), the advent of storms, the work of auctions, and what happened on Sundays ("the children would tumble in the soft grass"). Though not sentimental, hers is an affectionate record of living simply. It has a commonplace integrity that can seem, in our era, like fantasy. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Birkby, an Iowa homemaker, has written a weekly newspaper column called "Up a Country Lane" for more than 40 years; she also had a long-running radio program, that she chronicled in *Neighboring on the Air: Cooking with the KMA Radio Homemakers* (Univ. of Iowa Pr., 1991). Now she has collected the best recipes from her column, grouped into chapters in which she describes her family's life on an Iowa farm in the years following World War II. There are lots of good simple recipes from the heartland here, but Birkby's mesmerizing text is the real center of the book; she comes across as savvier but no less engaging than the "Pioneer Lady," Jane Watson Hopping ( *The Many Blessings Cookbook* , LJ 9/15/93). Writing in understated terms about the realities of rural life in the 1940s and 1950s, she gives a wryly humorous description of sharing a 14-family party line, a memorable cataloging of laundry day, vivid depictions of harvesting and haying, and a wrenching account of a child's death. Highly recommended. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I read this book after reading Mrs. Birkby's book, "Neighboring on the Air", which was a great pleasure to read and cook from. Once again, Mrs. Birkby has hit a home run! Mrs. Birkby was one of the 'radio homemakers' who broadcast recipes, tips and news to Iowa's rural housewives as well as

writing a long-lived newspaper column. Needless to say, after decades she had a very rich collection of recipes and local history to share. This she has done in a book that is very well organized, easy to read, and involves the reader. Having never read her column, I can assume this style is what endeared the author to generations of Iowans. This book focuses mainly on the years Mrs. Birkby spent with her husband starting and maintaining an Iowa farm for 10 years following WW II. It is broken up into chapters on topics such as 'Grocery', 'Milking', 'Stoves', etc. Recipes in each chapter follow the narration. I prefer this format for historical cookbooks, as it makes it much easier to leaf through and locate recipes. I've tried several of the recipes, and all have worked well for me. This book would have rated five stars for me, even if it hadn't had any recipes. Mrs. Birkby's struggles to make a success of a small farm with her family make a valuable documentation of postwar rural life. Reading her accounts, particularly of laundry, illustrates how far we have come as a nation with housekeeping. Thank you again, Mrs. Birkby, for sharing your personal and professional history with us!

What a fun book this is with its slice of history and great recipes

This book is better than I expected. A real gem.

As advertised.

great book, thanks

\*\*NOTE: I have a hardback copy - buy a hardback copy - do not buy a paperback\*\* The author is an absolutely delightful writer. The book is a collection of the author's re-telling of rural life where food and community are brought together, creating nurturing traditions. Example: the dreaded farm auction. Mrs. Birkby's recipe for raised doughnuts must have reassured all, while they saw their neighbor's life on public display and for sale to the highest bidder, that each would have their neighbors' support if ever a sad day came to them. You can even imagine the farmer himself chuckle that the only good thing about the day were doughnuts! (And yes, the doughnut recipe is the best) The story of their beef club was fascinating. It answered the question of why our local meat processor is called City Locker. More interesting, it tells of women with less modern conveniences, but more personal interaction with their community and neighbors. Try to locate a hardback copy, not a paperback.

"Up A Country Lane" by wife, mother, homemaker, newspaper columnist, author, and one-time radio personality Evelyn Birkby is more than just another country cookbook. It is a compendium of anecdotal stories of friends and family, useful household tips, tales of rural farm life in Mill Creek Valley, Iowa during the 1940s and 50s, and Evelyn's own philosophy - all liberally sprinkled with recipes for the kinds of dishes so familiar to Midwestern American farm wives ranging from Stockyard Stew; Shepherd's Pie; and Pudding Mix Sweet Rolls; to Fried Apples; Tuna Crunch Salad; and Snickerdoodles. Highly recommended and rewarding reading, "Up A Country Lane" is as entertaining and thoughtful as it is homespun and 'kitchen cook friend'.

I loved this book! It was chock-full of recipes for the kinds of dishes my grandmothers and aunts prepared. It also gave great stories and details on rural Midwestern life during the 1940's and 50's - the kind of details you won't find in history books. Homey and comforting.

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