



Creating a Common Table in Twentieth-Century Argentina: Doña Petrona, Women, and Food

Rebekah E. Pite

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Dona Petrona C. de Gandulfo (c. 1896-1992) reigned as Argentina's preeminent domestic and culinary expert from the 1930s through the 1980s. An enduring culinary icon thanks to her magazine columns, radio programs, and television shows, she was likely second only to Eva Peron in terms of the fame she enjoyed and the adulation she received. Her cookbook garnered tremendous popularity, becoming one of the three best-selling books in Argentina. Dona Petrona capitalized on and contributed to the growing appreciation for women's domestic roles as the Argentine economy expanded and fell into periodic crises. Drawing on a wide range of materials, including her own interviews with Dona Petrona's inner circle and with everyday women and men, Rebekah E. Pite provides a lively social history of twentieth-century Argentina, as exemplified through the fascinating story of Dona Petrona and the homemakers to whom she dedicated her career. Pite's narrative illuminates the important role of food--its consumption, preparation, and production--in daily life, class formation, and national identity. By connecting issues of gender, domestic work, and economic development, Pite brings into focus the critical importance of women's roles as consumers, cooks, and community builders.

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