



## **Cherries in Winter: My Family's Recipe for Hope in Hard Times**

*Suzan Colon*

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What is the secret to finding hope in hard times?

When Suzan Colón was laid off from her dream job at a magazine during the economic downturn of 2008, she needed to cut her budget way, way back, and that meant home cooking. Her mother suggested, “Why don’t you look in Nana’s recipe folder?” In the basement, Suzan found the tattered treasure, full of handwritten and meticulously typed recipes, peppered with her grandmother Matilda’s commentary in the margins. Reading it, Suzan realized she had found something more than a collection of recipes—she had found the key to her family’s survival through hard times.

Suzan began re-creating Matilda’s “sturdy food” recipes for baked pork chops and beef stew, and Aunt Nettie’s clam chowder made with clams dug up by Suzan’s grandfather Charlie in Long Island Sound. And she began uncovering the stories of her resilient family’s past. Taking inspiration from stylish, indomitable Matilda, who was the sole support of her family as a teenager during the Great Depression (and who always answered “How are you?” with “Fabulous, never better!”), and from dashing, twice-widowed Charlie, Suzan starts to approach her own crisis with a sense of wonder and gratitude. It turns out that the gift to survive and thrive through hard times had been bred in her bones all along.

*Cherries in Winter* is an irresistible gem of a book. It makes you want to cook, it makes you want to know your own family’s stories, and, above all, it makes you feel rich no matter what.

## Cherries in Winter: My Family's Recipe for Hope in Hard Times Details

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## **From Reader Review Cherries in Winter: My Family's Recipe for Hope in Hard Times for online ebook**

### **Sherri Rifkin says**

I loved this book! Suzan Colon reaches deep into her heart--and her family's history--to find comfort after being laid off from her magazine job last year. It's touching, funny (laugh out loud in many places, truly), wise, upbeat and genuine without a hint of schmaltz. It's a great read before bed or by the (virtual) fireplace: each chapter is almost like a standalone essay, the perfect bite size morsel. I haven't tackled any of the recipes yet but I hear the butter cookies (p. 95) are delicious!

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### **Cheryl says**

During the economic downturn in 2008, Suzan Colon lost her dream job at a magazine. She began to think of ways to economize at home. Eating out became a luxury. Determined to cook at home, Suzan looked through boxes in her basement and retrieved her grandmother's old recipe folder. Not only did she discover delicious recipes, she also found essays, written by her grandmother, which revealed her family's history and their secrets for surviving in hard times. This memoir skillfully moves from the present to the past and back again as Suzan comes to realize that wealth does not always mean having money in the bank.

The author shares many of the recipes handed down by her grandmother--an added bonus!

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### **Lynne Perednia says**

Among those hit hardest by the current recession are not the ones suffering the most economically. Sure, some have lost their jobs but their spouse remains employed and has health insurance. They are pursuing freelance opportunities. And even though some, such as magazine writer Suzan Colon, acknowledge that they don't have it as bad as some other Americans who are in genuine dire straits, this recession has just about blown their young yuppie minds.

Gracious. While still working at her former magazine job, Colon had to economize. No more buying lunch when she could make do with leftovers and sandwiches. After she loses her job and writes from home, she has to choose between a cooler room where the modem is located or going upstairs to the warmth and broadband. That these choices are treated as revelations of character shows how much people forget within the space of time that still exists in the memory of some living folks. (Just ask anyone older than, say 70, about the Great Depression. Or read *The Grapes of Wrath*. Or for more contemporary times, download *Christmas in Appalachia*) <http://www.archive.org/details/Cheryl...>

Still, these forced economies send Colon to her late grandmother's recipe file and readers benefit from the stories about that remarkable lady. Cherries in Winter refers to how important it is to feed one's spirit by occasionally buying a treat. There was a time when fresh fruit, such as cherries, out of season were prohibitively expensive for all but the very rich. But a time when the author's mother bought them remains an episode that nourishes Colon's soul to this day. An earlier ancestor spent a week's worth of grocery money on a pair of vases that the author's mother still has.

Although the author's family is filled with women who put this kind of nourishment above constant penny-pinching, it is her grandmother Matilda who best embodies the spirit of feeding the soul. A can-do woman regardless of the circumstances life throws at her, Matilda never grumbles and always keeps on the sunny side. At one point her husband decides to uproot them from New York City to become farmers. Matilda befriends the ladies of the Grange by promising that, if they teach her how to cook, she'll do their hair and makeup. It's a happy arrangement and many of the recipes Colon finds in Nana's file are from those ladies.

*Cherries in Winter* is slim, even with stories from her family's past and recipes. But this is Colon's magazine background showing as much as anything. Instead of going on in greater detail, Colon keeps things as breezy as her grandmother's standard reply of "Fabulous, never better" to the question, "How are you?" Colon's volume is the kitchen equivalent of spending the afternoon at the day spa or a coffeehouse with girlfriends. *Cherries in Winter* is a forthy entertainment that demonstrates there are worse things than not having money. There are other kinds of poor, and money isn't the solution.

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### **KrisT says**

This is short little gem of a book. I found the author Suzan Colon engaging and easy to get to know. I love the history of her family that was shared through the 5 generations. Most of the recipes and thoughts of the older generations of women I could relate to coming from my own ancestors. I really liked the homey recipes and the fact that we could learn from our history. Maybe we should economize in ways that bring us together around the table and more open with our hearts instead of things.

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### **Angie says**

I keep getting the characters confused because the author uses a proper name in one sentence and then refers to the person by their family relationship in the next. It's a bit confusing. I like the story idea of this book and the treasures of old family recipes as history.

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### **Jay says**

When a writer is laid off from her magazine job, she remembers the hard times her family dealt with in the past. This I believe is a good practice, and can be humbling, since often your current hardships don't match up to your ancestors' troubles, like during wars, depressions, and being new immigrants. Colon's ancestor stories are of this kind. But she also includes her own semi-employed hardships, such as having to cut dryer sheets in two, or actually cooking a meal instead of always going to restaurants. If Colon played these modern inconveniences as some kind of humor or satire in comparison to what appears to be more real issues, that might have worked. But she comes across as serious. It seems that she believes that by thinking about whether her and her husband should throw away an uneaten half of a banana that she is dealing with a similar situation her grandparents experienced when eating bread and applesauce for a week, because that's all they had money for. Sorry, no comparison. When you lose your job, but have unemployment and part time freelance writing assignments (and time to write a book!) and your husband still has his job, and you haven't lost the condo, the car, or the little perks of life like French raisins, it is not so much "hard times" as

inconvenient. I guess that doesn't make as good a subtitle.

I did like Colon's anecdotes of her family's past, through good and bad times, and this was a bulk of the book. Her current life stories really left a negative impression of her, it was an implied "woe is me" for someone falling from near the top down one rung of a long ladder.

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### **Helen says**

When the going gets tough, the tough make soup.

I really enjoyed this short book. It was inspirational to read about the depression and how Suzan's family handled it. Some lines and ideas spoke to me. When she wrote that being poor did not mean you had to act poor, I thought of my grandparents. They too survived the depression but you would never know it. The idea of being poor in pocket rather than poor in spirit appeals to me.

Some lines in the book made me laugh (eg. referring to Whole Foods as "whole paycheck"), some made me think, and some just inspired me.

Some of the reviewers could not relate to her because they felt she truly had not hit bottom, that she was not a realistic depiction of the unemployed. I felt the opposite - she was a writer at a top-notch magazine in New York. She sacrificed a lot in her life for her career - remember she did not marry until 40s and has fertility issues. I felt sympathy for her losing her job and applauded her fortitude.

I would like to try some of the recipes (not pasta of the unemployed) in the book.

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### **Cheryl says**

Suzan Colon went from having take out food whenever she wanted to being laid off and having to pinch every penny she could. Suzan comes upon her grandmother's old recipe book, filled with tons of delicious foods. Most of the recipes were written by hand. The cook book features recipes like Suzan's Great-Great-Grandmother Matilde's Baked Pork Chops with Sauerkraut, Chicken Pie a la Mississippi, Butter Cookies, and Nana's Lemon Meringue Pie to name a few.

Suzan decides that it is time to take a few tips from her grandmother and mother and start learning to cook her own meals. Suzan and her mother journey back in time to 1913. Back to New York; where Suzan's mother and her family were living. Suzan's grandmother loved to cook. She even submitted some of her recipes to magazines. Some of them got published. After reminiscing with her mother, Suzan realizes that she is going to be fine.

Cherries in Winter is as good as a warm homemade meal. This book fills you up and makes you want more. The real star of the book was Suzan's grandmother, Matilda. She was the glue that held everyone together during the Great Depression. So glad that Suzan Colon wrote this book and let us readers get a peep into her family. They are the kind of people that you want to know and be around. Also, all the recipes in this book

sounded so delicious and mouth watering, that it was a shock that I didn't drool. I am going to try out some of the recipes. Pick up a copy of Cherries in Winter today.

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### **Molly says**

Premise is good: suffering from the current recession, author refers to grandmother's recipes and accounts of the Great Depression. Lesson learned: it will get better.

Here's my issue, however. I couldn't relate to this author in any way. Her "suffering" is that she loses her job where she was making 6 figures. She refers to not being able to shop at Whole Foods as much, or being able to buy \$600 jackets. She met her husband at a Costa Rican yoga retreat for crying out loud. That is actually the moment I had to put this book down. Good premise, but totally unrelated.

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### **Paula says**

I was lucky enough to win this book on Goodreads. It is a gem of a book. It is written in an easy to read style and takes you through the family stories of the author. Strong women and hard times with a message we should all adhere to.

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### **Kelly says**

Cherries in Winter has as its subtitle, My family's recipe for hope in hard times. That should tell you everything you need to know about this wonderful book. As heartwarming a book as can be, reading this will make you feel like you can get through anything life throws at you. I began reading it going from Lewes, DE to Cape May, NJ on the ferry and finished it the same day on the ride back.

Colon has written a memoir from the heart. Beginning with her layoff, which has become all too familiar in this day and age, Colon intersperses stories about herself with stories about her beloved Nana. In between, the reader is treated to recipes from her grandmother's kitchen...from meatloaf to potato salad. It is amusing how Colon at times tries to "lighten up" the recipe from using butter and lard back then to nonfat yogurt today. The message of the book is that family and food go together, they always will, and rely on both to get you through the hard times.

You will probably read this in one or two sittings. Treasure it, and know that sometimes you just have to use butter to get it right!

MY RATING - 5

See this review on 1776books...  
<http://1776books.blogspot.com/2010/10...>

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### **Holly says**

At first I really hated this book. It's about the author who was laid off from her magazine job. She and her husband seriously pared down their expenses by eating in more. I started to hate her when she talked about the fact that they can still pay all of their bills by eating at home--then why the hell is she whining?! But the more she talked about her grandmother who lived during the depression, then her mother's life as a single mother, I learned to care about the author and stopped hating her because she had more than myself (and she also stopped whining which helped considerably). It's a quick read and ended up being a good one, too.

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### **Tattered Cover Book Store says**

Jackie says:

This reads a little like sitting in the attic with your best friend going through a box of your great grandma's old recipes, filling her in on the stories that went along with the memories of those dishes. Puzzling over faded hand-writing and laughing at some of the ingredients that haven't seen a store shelf in years. That's the kind of chatty intimacy this slim book has--as well as fabulous recipes. Colon's family has always used the comfort of good, but practical, food to get them through hard times, and that wisdom is no less useful now than it was 50, 75 or 100 years ago. This book leaves you feeling like you just got a big hug from your Grandma right after she's dried your tears and slid a piece of warm cherry pie in front of you. Don't miss out on that!

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### **Alicia Leppert says**

Eh. This book was okay, that's the best I can say about it. Kinda boring. I had to force myself to keep picking it up to finish it. There were some cute parts, and if you want a read that's super easy breezy and in no way intense or emotional, this is the book for you. Not my cup of tea though. I need more meat.

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### **Donna says**

This is nonfiction. A woman who makes a lot of money suddenly loses her job. So things change for her family. So even the rich can suffer. But she handles the challenges well and tackles them as if they were opportunities. She found joy in her successes.

She found an old cookbook of her grandmother's and learns of her Grandmother's own trials when trying to survive the Depression. I thought this was kind of sweet. She found strength from the stories about her family. That is what family is for.

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### **Ziaria says**

This review will be just like the book, short and to the point. This book was simplistic and yet radiated so much warmth from the pages. The recipes and how they were tied into her family's story were so heartfelt. It made you want to cry in some spot and laugh out loud in others. When I finished this book I was left feeling uplifted and inspired. I may even try out a recipe or two on my family. If you're looking for a simple, sweet, heartfelt story this would be a great choice. I received this bound galley from Doubleday.

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### **Marcia says**

When times get tough, Suzan Colon's family puts up soup. This reminder from her mother sent Suzan to the basement to look for her grandmother's treasure trove of recipes. What she found was "something more than a collection of recipes--she had found the key to her family's survival through hard times."

Many of the thoughts and fears expressed by Ms. Colon rang true. I didn't put up soup, but there was a pot of beef stew to lend comfort of my first day of imposed leisure.

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### **Rebecca says**

I received this book through Goodreads Firstreads, but I've just barely gotten around to reading it. Although I'm a sucker for memoirs, I just couldn't give this more than two stars. The biggest thing that bugged me was how she kept talking about how expensive health insurance is. Now I know that health premiums are probably higher for people in their 40s living in New York than they are for people in their 20s living in Utah, but really? I kind of quit feeling sympathy for how much you were paying when you mentioned that you only had a \$10 copay for a biopsy. You could definitely cut back on how much coverage you have and save a TON of money.

Ironically the other thing that drove me away from the book was the thing that originally attracted me to the book--the recipes. After awhile I found myself wishing that she had just included a photocopy of the recipe that was large enough for me to read instead of including a cute little picture of the recipe with print too small to read and then also typing out a copy of the recipe in normal print as the first part of the chapter. I ended up just getting annoyed because the recipes kept me from getting to the actual stories (and yes, I did

notice that there is dialogue between her and her mom in the recipe sometimes... I just don't care that much).

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### **Colette Murphy says**

I found this book by mistake. I was at B&N searching through the biography/memoir section. I had found a book called "Lunch in Paris" or something similar. The reviews on the cover touted that if you adored *Eat, Pray, Love* (which I've never read) and *Julie & Julia* (which I've only seen the movie), you would like this book. I found myself hemming and hawing about it until, out of the corner of my eye, I saw *Cherries in Winter*.

Having just finished graduate school and somewhat desperate for an ounce of hope which is not currently provided by two part-time contract jobs that expire at the end of May, I decided to take a leap of faith on this little book I'd never heard of. I'm glad I did.

Colon's writing style nods to her experience working in magazines. It's quick, to the point, full of just enough color, and then moves on. There are no long laboring paragraphs or chapters that weigh down the overall narrative.

I find it hard to label this a "food book." Yes, there are recipes in each chapter and, yes, most of the stories surround food preparation and/or consumption, but that's really just the background - the pretty set pieces that would be noticeable if gone, but aren't the star of the show. This is a "family history book," and a delightful one at that. I think the member of Suzan's family tree I love the most is her grandmother, Matilda. Matilda's strength of spirit radiates from every page -- she is the hope Suzan describes in the title, and the hope I was looking for when I picked up this book.

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