

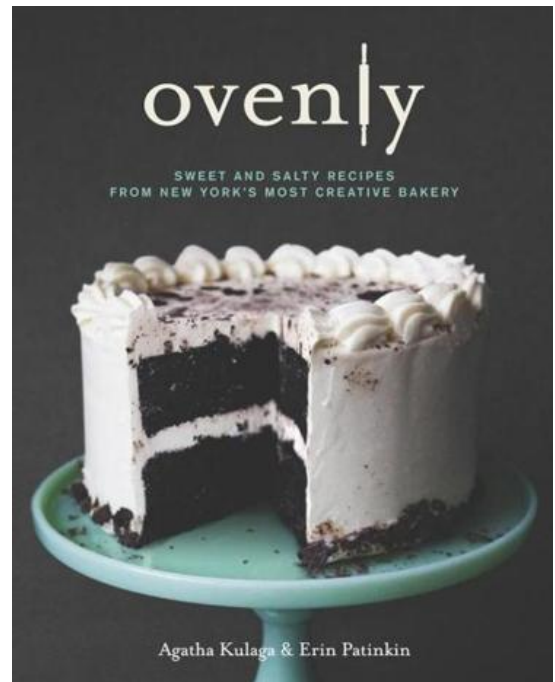
COOKBOOK REVIEW

‘Ovenly’ by Agatha Kulaga and Erin Patinkin

By **T. Susan Chang** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 11, 2015

It seems that a new bakery grows in Brooklyn every few months and on every other block. And it’s a rite of passage for every bakery to release a book after it’s been open for a few years. Amid this grove of New York newcomers, Ovenly is a neighborhood favorite, and almost a veteran at five years old. Its self-titled first cookbook, “Ovenly: Sweet and Salty Recipes From New York’s Most Creative Bakery” is a dead giveaway to what it thinks of itself.

One recipe after another offers familiar treats with slightly unexpected tweaks. Whole-wheat raspberry drop scones are giant and crumbly, heaped and mounded, odd-looking and humpy. Yet the whole-wheat flour produces a texture that’s got some depth but falls apart in the mouth; the raspberries bleed across the crumb, and the surface holds the crunch of turbinado sugar. Buttering them amounts to gilding the lily, yet who can resist?



CONTINUE READING BELOW ▼

A poppy seed, prune, and lemon coffee cake conceals hefty doses of butter, with buttermilk and sour cream for a cool moist texture (at least, moist on the first day; this one dries out quickly, so invite a crowd). Prune and poppy seed filling add a dark, sticky layer of intrigue.

Feta, basil, and scallion muffins hit the spot when you're jonesing for something savory in between breakfast and lunch, or lunch and dinner. The feta contributes to a certain density of texture; the scallions and paprika inevitably make you think of cornbread, and if you split and toast a muffin it develops spots of golden cheese.

Even brownie fanatics who already have a favorite recipe can't help making others once in a while. It's worth giving the one here a try. It's got espresso powder for a dark undertone and dark brown sugar for its molasses, and the Maldon salt you sprinkle on top provides a striking contrast both for the eyes and the palate: a black, loamy interior offsetting crystalline stars of salt.



MARK WEINBERG

Erin Patinkin (left) and Agatha Kulaga call their Brooklyn, N.Y., bakery, Ovenly, New York's most creative.

More coverage

Recipe for whole-wheat raspberry drop scones

Pistachio-cardamom cupcakes with dark-chocolate ganache are possibly the most overtly decadent thing in the book. That may be simply because the authors provide for an overwhelmingly generous portion of ganache, so you end up adding and adding layers of frosting till the cupcake (a light, spongy affair) becomes top-heavy. Just one, dosed as it is with chocolate, is enough caffeine to keep you up for hours, and while you're up you can't help thinking you'd like another.

Should you really make 2 pounds of maple-thyme pecans? I don't think so, unless you want to make yourself sick. These are a sweet, spiced, and herby nut, the kind that's hard to stop eating with wine or cheese. The maple syrup glues some of the clusters into brittle, for chopping for salads or cookies.

Harvest muffins are an offspring of the famous “Morning Glory” muffin, a carrot batter exalted with coconut, dried fruits, and warming spices. Ovenly’s uses spelt and wheat bran for a dense, yet smooth, texture with a tantalizing, elusive nuttiness. Yields in the book can be a little off-target. In this case, 24 generously sized muffins instead of 20, but no one was complaining. More surprisingly high-yielding (41 versus 24!) are the bourbon chocolate-chip cookies with tarragon; the tarragon lends a grassy finish that’s disconcerting at first, till you get used to it, while the bourbon leaves only subtle hints of its decadent presence.

Cherry-almond hot tarts with lemon glaze are the devil to work with. The pate brisee is a crumbly one, and once you’ve rolled it out, it’s thin and brittle, and adding the slushy cherry almond filling is a leaky affair. It’s fiddly work for four tarts, which disappear in under two minutes. They are a happy two minutes, though.

Is “Ovenly” truly, as the title claims, “New York’s Most Creative Bakery”? That’s a tough distinction to make in the city that gave birth to today’s cronut and yesterday’s black-and-white cookie and houses hot spots like Momofuku Milk Bar and much more. Still, this cookbook finds a happy forward edge for the home baker: nontraditional flavors that are attainable without access to rarefied ingredients or equipment. It isn’t the first or last of its kind, but none of that matters when you’re reaching for seconds.

OVENLY: Sweet and Salty Recipes From New York’s Most Creative Bakery

By Agatha Kulaga and Erin Patinkin

Harlequin, 240 pp., \$29.95

T. Susan Chang can be reached at admin@tsusanchang.com.

Get Today's Headlines from the Globe in your inbox:

Enter your email address

SIGN UP

[Privacy Policy](#)

0 COMMENTS

