



Bitter Almonds: Recollections and Recipes from a Sicilian Girlhood

Mary Taylor Simeti, Maria Grammatico

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At the age of eleven, the daughter of a Sicilian sharecropper, Maria Grammatico, entered the San Carlo Institute in the mountaintop town of Erice, an orphanage run by nuns who were famous throughout Sicily for their almond pastries, but who were less adept at dealing with young girls. After ten years of hard work and harsh discipline, Maria emerged with the secrets of the nuns' pastries hidden inside her head.

This is the story of her carefree country childhood—her Dickensian life in the orphanage with no heat, no running water, and only wood-burning ovens—and her triumphs as an entrepreneur and a world-famous pastry chef.

Bitter Almonds includes 46 of the recipes that she 'stole' from the nuns, committed to writing for the first time in these pages.

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