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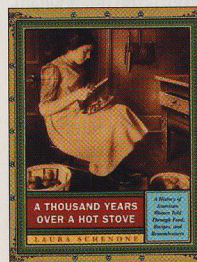
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one approaching her 30th birthday. As the first book to detail the tumultuous impact Saturn presents during his return at this cycle of our lives, *Surviving* fills a much-needed niche. Well-researched and written in a fun, funky style by its expert authors, this is an addicting read for any astrology junkie. I devoured it, and was especially impressed with the companion website (www.saturnreturn.net) where readers can request more in-depth astrological chart information. This extra touch made me (a self-proclaimed natal chart spaz) quite the Saturn-savvy lady.

After turning 30 this year, I was jaded by the many "Don't feel bad about aging (you sad old thing)" books out there, taunting me with their smug-ass platitudes. This unique book, however, could not have fallen into my hands at a better time. With its uplifting central message of self-reliance, coupled with juicy astrological insights, even the most skeptical sister out there will be entertained.

Do yourself a favor. If you're nearing your 30th and feeling a bit lost, march yourself over to the New Age aisle and pick this book up. Once Weiss & Schostak crack open their sweet can of zodiac whoop-ass on your *Cosmo's Bedside Astrologer*, you'll be ever so glad you did. **BRANDY BARBER**



A THOUSAND YEARS OVER A HOT STOVE: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances
By Laura Schenone
(W.W. Norton, 2003)

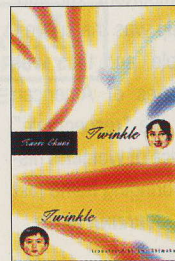
Once you've read *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove*, you'll never look at a bowl of cornflakes the same way again. As author Laura Schenone tells us, corn only became a central part of the colonists' diet once Native Americans introduced them to it, and milk didn't arrive on these shores until Europeans brought cows with them from overseas. Thus, your mundane breakfast represents a uniquely American invention. But this book is more than the history of American eating and cooking; Schenone recognizes that to tell the story of American food is to tell the history of American women, and the result is a truly delicious, satisfying read.

Schenone discovers recipes old and new that are suffused with information about the lives of the women who cooked them. Federal Pan Cake, from a 1796 cookbook, was an attempt at establishing an "American" cuisine separate from that

of the British; Maryland Beat Biscuit required such strenuous kneading it could only be accomplished during a time when slaves could be forced to carry out the miserable labor; and Apple Crisp Pronto, a ludicrous concoction of apples and bread, presented World War II-era working women with a way to get dinner to the table quickly. Schenone is particularly interested in how women who arrived on these shores brought the traditional foods of their homelands to the New World, helping to make American cuisine a literal melting pot. Best of all, each of these recipes is included in its entirety so that ambitious domestic historians can try them out for themselves. (Attempting Maryland Beat Biscuit is not recommended, however.)

Written with a loving touch—it is clear that Schenone has the greatest respect for the women she writes about—*A Thousand Years* is one of several recent works to acknowledge that the ways in which women have historically carried out their domestic duties can tell us just as much about the history of a people as their politicians and wars. In other words, you are what you eat.

DEBBIE STOLLER



TWINKLE TWINKLE
By Kaori Ekuni
(Vertical, 2003)

This book is simple. This book is a pearl. This book is like water, clear and loose and natural and fluid. I'm afraid that if I say too much

about *Twinkle Twinkle*, I'll weigh it down with my overblown explanation, but the basic story goes like this: a man (gay) and a woman (straight and mildly crazy) find each other and marry. The woman sings daily to a Cezanne watercolor of a purple man, and she sometimes pours tea into a houseplant. The man is a doctor, and is madly in love with his childhood sweetheart. Both feel a little lost in the world, and together they forge a family.

The language of the book is quiet, and it has that amazingly flattened quality of translation (which it is, from Japanese). *Twinkle Twinkle* is a brief read, too (like, four hours brief), and yet it has been haunting me since I set it down. Somehow, Ekuni has managed to write an intelligent novel without sounding intentionally clever. She has created characters that are self-aware, yet are still surprised by events that seem truly strange, but never gratuitously wacky. Most impressively, she has made something contemporary, which still manages to retain its soul. *Twinkle Twinkle* is totally earnest, and absolutely surprising. **LAUREL SNYDER**