



Made from Scratch: Reclaiming the Pleasures of the American Hearth

Jean Zimmerman

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In this stunning celebration and reappraisal of the importance of "women's work," acclaimed journalist Jean Zimmerman poignantly addresses the tug that many Americans of the twenty-first century feel between our professional and private lives. With sharp wit and intelligence, she offers evidence that in the current domestic vacuum, we still long for a richer home life -- a paradox visible in the Martha Stewart phenomenon, in the continuing popularity of women's service magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Family Circle*, and *Ladies' Home Journal* -- whose combined circulation of over 17 million is nearly twice the combined circulation of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* -- and the booming business of restorations, where onlookers get a hands-on view of domestic life as it flourished in past centuries. This book is about the ways home traditions passed from one generation to the next -- baking a birthday cake from scratch, cherishing family heirlooms, or discovering the satisfaction of piecing a quilt -- sustain our souls, especially in our ever more processed, synthetic world, where we buy "homemade" goods and fail to see the irony in that.

Made from Scratch tells the story of the unsung heroines of the hearth, investigating the history of female domesticity and charting its cultural changes over centuries. Zimmerman traces the lives of her own family's homemakers -- from her tiny but indomitable grandmother, who managed a farm, strangled chickens with her bare hands, and sewed all the family clothing, to her mother, who rejected her country upbringing yet kept a fastidious suburban home where the gender divide stayed firmly in place, to her own experiences as a wife and mother weaned on the Women's Movement of the 1970s, with its emphatic view that housework was a dirty word and that the domestic sphere was to be fled rather than cherished. In this book Zimmerman questions the unexamined trade-off we have made in a shockingly brief time span, as we've "progressed" from home-raised chickens to frozen TV dinners to McNuggets from the food court at the mall. What is lost when we no longer engage, as individuals and as a community, in the ancient rituals of food, craft, and shelter?

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