

to see what life, and especially trans life, was like in the 2020s. Read it posthaste.

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S. L. Klassen, *Menno-Nightcaps: Cocktails Inspired by that Odd Ethno-Religious Group You Keep Mistaking for the Amish, Quakers or Mormons*. Victoria, BC: Touchwood Editions, 2021. Pp. 176. Hardcover, \$26.

“Mom, have you heard of Michter’s Distillery?” my thirty-something son asked me after a recent trip to Louisville, Kentucky. “It was founded by Mennonites.”

Michter didn’t sound like a familiar Mennonite name, but a little research turned traced the business back to founder John Shenk, who started a distillery in Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania, in 1753. Shenk’s whiskey reportedly warmed George Washington’s troops during the Revolutionary War. In the mid-1800s it was purchased by an Abraham Bomberger and thrived until prohibition curbed its profits. In the 1950s, owner Lou Forman combined the names of his two sons—Michael and Peter—to name the current Michter’s brand. After the company’s bankruptcy in 1989, during a lull in American whiskey sales, the brand was revived by its current owners in Louisville, Kentucky.

My own Mennonite parents grew up during prohibition, which put a damper on alcohol production of the legal kind, and profoundly changed Mennonites’ relationship to their distilling heritage as they rushed to join other evangelical groups in eschewing the evils of alcohol. This transformation was so thorough that I just assumed teetotaling was one of the teachings of Menno Simons. Not true. A few generations later, Mennonites have returned to their roots—imbibing cocktails in private, while most still serve unfermented grape juice in their communion services.

Little do many “worldly” drinking Mennonites realize that their foray into alcoholic beverages is actually a return to their roots. S. L. Klassen’s *Menno-Nightcaps* is the perfect hybrid genre book to help contemporary imbibing Mennonites connect to their past. Or, in my case, a great way to distill some Mennonite lore into one’s thirty-something offspring, while trying out cocktail recipes together.

Everything about this attractive, sturdy book is first-rate. It includes a witty and self-aware introduction, covering everything from “Mennonite Cocktail Basics” to “Mennonite Drinking Etiquette,” which could be especially handy to those non-Mennonites attempting to navigate the perplexing practices around alcohol in more worldly Mennonite institutions. The heart of the book consists of four thematically titled sections of recipes for cleverly named cocktails, each accompanied by a historical anecdote related to the cocktail’s name. These include such delights as “Pilgram Marpunch,” “Bloody Martyr,” and “Mutual (Lemon) Aid.” There is also “Pennsylvania Cups,” dedicated to Mennonites of Swiss descent who have forgotten their distilling heritage, and one of my favourites, the “Plainoma,” because I could actually make it with ingredients I had on hand, and because, as Klassen notes, there is to be “no fancy grapefruit soda pop in this cocktail” (57). As for the historical anecdotes, while tongue-in-cheek, they are both clever and accurate. Klassen, author of the popular blog *The Drunken Mennonite*, has a PhD in history, and there are no made-up stories here to confuse casual readers. Instead, there is sharply informed satire of the Mennonite tendency to justify everything through their own particular history.

The recipes in this book, while purportedly simple, do require some preparation. “As a people known to like hard work, Mennonites cannot endorse shortcuts,” Klassen instructs. “I expect you to squeeze your lemons and limes yourself and, ideally, use herbs grown in your own garden” (4). Lemon and lime squeezing are not a problem for me, being a hard-working Mennonite myself, but my liquor cabinet is frugally stocked, and I did not receive a liquor buying stipend to spend for my review. Exotic liquors—such as cassis, Chartreuse, kirsch, and Pernod—need to be acquired over time so as not to break the budget. Some ingredients, such as orgeat, you can make yourself with the help of the collection’s syrup section, but you need to make it a day ahead of time. In fact, one of the delights of this book is its section of recipes for creating the syrups—such as molasses simple syrup, rhubarb simple syrup, mint brown sugar syrup—contained in some of the cocktails. There is even a recipe for a delicious grenadine based on pomegranate juice and free of corn syrup and Red Dye No. 40. The recipes are based on natural ingredients and flavours. Those containing rhubarb syrup and chokecherries, for example, are seasonal or regional.

Thus, the recipes are best viewed as projects, and most require a planning guide. But with a little preparation, they can provide fun activities to do with adult children. My son and I enjoyed making the molasses simple syrup for “Old Freundschaft” and savoured the

depth of flavour it added to this four-ingredient recipe inspired by a traditional Old Fashioned.

Finally, I appreciate Klassen's section on "Sunday School Sippers," or recipes for mocktails. As a peace and justice loving group, Mennonites should be aware that some people simply cannot drink alcohol. There was a time when worldly Mennonites were so bent on making up for their teetotalling past that they might forget to offer non-alcoholic alternatives at a gathering, which my parents reported was the case when they attended a faculty cocktail party hosted by former Mennonite missionaries in the 1970s. Drinking among Mennonites has been going on long enough now that some of us are trying to drink less, and mocktails have become a trendy business. Except for the section on "Large-Quantity Cocktails," each recipe makes exactly one drink, which encourages its creation to be an experiment in moderation. Thus, this book focuses on the craft of mingling flavours in a glass and sipping responsibly as one maintains enough clarity to read and ponder a refreshingly entertaining anecdote. The combination is a heady one.

I expect that I will keep this book around for the long haul as I slowly acquire my shelf of exotic ingredients and pull it out for special occasions when a libation is appropriate. Did I mention its sturdy binding, built to withstand frequent use? Or the playful illustrations and beautiful design, combining a bit of tourist kitsch with hipster refinement? A beautiful package, *Menno-Nightcaps* would make an excellent gift.

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