



The Best Polish Restaurant in Buffalo

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A masterful blend of historical and modern fiction by a best-selling, award-winning author, THE BEST POLISH RESTAURANT IN BUFFALO chronicles a century of life in America for one humble Polish farm girl and three generations of her descendants in Buffalo, New York.

The Best Polish Restaurant in Buffalo Details

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Ann says

I loved this book. The characters were real, their struggles and cares were truthful. The Buffalo that Aniela and her family emigrate to from Poland reminds me of growing up in Bridgeport Connecticut, with my mom's predominantly German family. I want to go back and re-read Eddie's Bastard, the book that introduced me to this author many years ago....it was beautifully written as well.

louisemakarewicz says

Immigrants

Being a first generation I am so proud of my immigrant parents my pa a millwork for thirty years. So I related to Aniela and her unbelievable journey both coming over to America and her perseverance to keep going and the wonderful life her family now endures.

Ejs says

My family is Polish and this story begins with the dreadful voyage across the Atlantic that a mother and her 3 daughters took to escape a hellish life. They come with next to nothing and survive the hardships living in a strange land where you know nothing. The best part was living in Buffalo where other Poles live and work - so there is a support system. The story jumps back and forth from the story of Aniela and sisters to modern day when the restaurant is folding. Aniela says "and we must pray all the time and ask God to watch out for us and keep us safe"...because life is constantly in danger and everything good is always hanging by a thread, while the bad things in the world circle around the house endlessly, live a troop of wolves." Many of the things the old woman says explains my Grandmother's thoughts and actions.

Taylor says

What a delightful book! It begins with 16-year old Aniela leaving her native Poland to sail to America and continues with her story of adjusting to her new home of Buffalo and making a life there for herself. Her tale is told in alternating chapters with that of her great-great-grandson Iggy who is managing the family business begun by Aniela all those years ago. Although the book was quite short at 200 pages, the author did a great job of really conveying what the immigrant experience might have been like at the turn of the last century, exploring the meaning and pursuit of the American Dream, and demonstrating the importance of family and legacy. The book is fiction but is based on the story of the author's own great-great-grandmother. My only complaint is that the book was so short. I could have happily continued reading for another few hundred pages.

Thanks so much to Goodreads Giveaways and the publishers for providing me this copy.

Yousexylibrarian says

What I really liked about the book is that the author was not afraid to draw from his Polish family's history, the country's background, and the language. Although the main characters lack full development, readers still get to know them well enough to cheer for them to succeed in life. What I did not like about the book was the back and forth from the 1900s to the 2000s. For me, this took away some of the magic of not knowing a book's ending, which I saw coming from a mile away with this book.

Jane Rutherford says

This is not great literature, but it was an enjoyable and short read, especially for me. As a person of 100% Polish ancestry, it was special because it described many situations and attitudes of Polish immigrants that I witnessed generations after the immigration. While my grandparents (not sure about the great's) were born in the United States, they still lived a very peasant (not a typo - not pleasant), Polish life. Polish was spoken in their homes (though not exclusively) and seeing some of the Polish words in the book, and Googling the pronunciation and definitions of them, reminded me of my childhood.

Aniela reminded me so much of my maternal grandmother, Anna:

- her work ethic (Anna cleaned house for two wealthy families in town, walking across town most times to and from those homes);
- feeding her family including the families of her children every Sunday noon with chicken soup and meat, tons of sides, delicious baked goods;
- by baking dozens of loaves of bread and rolls and cookies almost every weekend of my childhood. Aniela and her sisters made "paczki—the stuffed yeast cakes that were so popular" before Lent - we called them "punchkas" pronounced poonchkas - my Grandma Anna was famous for hers (well, at least to my siblings and me).

The older generations of my family did not talk much about the past, and this quote from the book kind of explains that to me: "There was a lesson implicit in her [Aniela's] refusal to discuss the past: live in the moment, and don't dwell on ancient history. You survive only by moving forward."

Anntonette says

This pithy little book recounts the tale of Aniela, a Polish immigrant, and her hard fought American Dream. Although based loosely on his own great-grandmother's story, Kowalski tells the story without too much sentimentality. The novel alternates between Buffalo, NY through the years of Aniela's life, as she builds the family business, and present day Buffalo, as her descendants are selling the business. The story could have been very cliche, but Kowalski manages to shake things up with a stark modern day side plot. The book is a well-written quick read. I enjoyed the subject matter and that the author did not sugarcoat any aspect of the story. Unfortunately, I did not connect to the characters as much as I would have liked, which is what kept me from giving this book 4 stars. I definitely recommend this book, especially to people with Polish-American heritage. A big plus is that this is the only book I have read where sourdough starter is a character.

Carol says

As a granddaughter of immigrant Polish grandparents, I felt like I was getting a glimpse into their world. What a brave adventure they took in coming to the "land of promise;" their "work ethic" was just natural!

Characters portrayed a beautiful insight into our grandparents world & ours.

The "last supper" was very effective.

Laurie says

This was a very quick read and quite enjoyable. When I turned the page to go to the next chapter and discovered I was at the end of the story, I was stunned. So many times I have remarked that certain books could have been a lot shorter, this one could have been another 100-200 pages longer for me! The story is of immigrants from Poland to Buffalo NY and how they made their impact here. Story of love and struggle and determination. The author writes quite lovingly of the characters but with honesty! Now that said, I cannot give an unbiased review of this book. My Polish grandparents immigrated from Poznan, Poland to Buffalo just as this family did. In this book the story goes between 1 town and a Polish/German section of Buffalo. I resided in the one most of my life and spent a lot of time in the other. I dated a Polish man from one of them as well. These neighborhoods were mine also. I know the streets mentioned and enjoyed shopping at the little grocery stores in them. My grandparents and grandmother are buried in the same cemetery mentioned in the book. So this book paralleled my ancestors lives in so many ways and touched my memories as well. I won't give away anything. But if you have Polish roots in Buffalo, NY you MUST read this book. If you have Polish roots in general, you will learn of the struggles of your ancestors wherever they settled. If you have Buffalo roots at all, this is also a must read. Kowalski captures the way of life in these neighborhoods! This book was a reminder of the sacrifice they all gave so the future generations could have a better life. I am grateful for that. This book will be proudly placed on my "hometown" book shelf! Buffalo's Polonia is being preserved and traditions carried on, but the current Polonia is just another generation away from the original ancestors, just as its descendants are.

Nancy Wrona says

A partial story of my Mother's family

Not great literature, but I am grateful to the author for explaining the attitude of my Grandmother and Mother toward men, and many other cultural issues. Her generation is gone now, but now I finally found some understanding of the of the issues that they faced. Thanks!

Steven Buechler says

While Kowalski may have borrowed story lines from his family and his Polish-American background, he has

honestly documented many occurrences that are common for many descendants of European stock in America and brought them to the public domain. He has given certainly many of his fans some thoughts and discussions because of his plot about their own lives. This book is not only a great addition to literature but a glowing tribute to his family.

<http://tinyurl.com/y9jlb48n>

Rebecca Woods says

Sweet story, though short

I enjoyed this as it reflected my own family's history - my great-grandmother was named Aniela and arrived in America in 1912. The end seemed abrupt and I would have liked to have continued the characters journey, but all in all I enjoyed the read.

Sue says

Thank you to the author for the chance to read this through a giveaway. It is a fairly short easy to read book, realistic and moving, the more so as it was rooted in the authors own past. Coming from the UK I learned a little more about the immigrant experience of building a new life in America, I admired Aniela and Iggy. I loved the way the story came full circle with the past gifting a new hope for the future.
It may sound a trivial point, but as a vegetarian I would never normally have read a book with a plate of sausages(kielbasa) on the cover, it would be a shame for others like me to be put off.

Merry Miller moon says

Thank you to Goodreads for the free book. ***POSSIBLE SPOILERS AHEAD*** Aniela, her two sisters and her mother all escape Poland in 1933 for the United States. The father and two brothers stay behind in Poland. Aniela's mother brings along a stoneware pot that has their homemade sourdough in it. Even when they are starving on the ship in the cargo hold, she somehow manages to find something to feed the sourdough so that it can continue to grow. Aniela's mother dies shortly after they arrive in America. The sisters must learn to survive on their own. Aniela marries a nice man named Jan, and they have a daughter together before tragedy strikes. Just when Aniela is pregnant with their second child, a son. Now she must raise her children on her own in this unknown land. Along with Aniela's story, their is the modern age story of her great-grandson, Iggy, who is barely hanging on to the restaurant that his great grandmother, Aniela or Angela, as she is called founded with her sisters, which started out as a bakery. A very famous, sourdough from the homeland-Poland bakery. Iggy has his own set of troubles, but trying to keep the floundering restaurant is priority number one. I really enjoyed this book and how although it is a novel, a lot of the same circumstances actually happened to the author's ancestors. Very good read. Plus it was not a very long book.

Marleen says

Having great-grandparents of Polish decent myself, who settled in Flanders, my home country, I was curious about this story. Admittedly, this was a mixed bag for me. On the one hand, the background and history of what happened to the Polish people for centuries; being oppressed by the Prussians, Germans, Russians; was quite compelling and educational; no wonder that most of them wanted to flee the country. Then there's the story of Aniela and her sisters and mother, seeking a better life, boarding a ship, in 1908, to go live in America, leaving father and brothers behind, because in their eyes, the women were no more than slaves. It was unusual for women to travel alone, but they did it. Once settled in Buffalo, they lead hard-working, simple lives, continually saving money to give a better life to the next generation. Honestly, these women worked themselves to death for their families. Then, there's the other story-line about the great-grandson, Iggy, struggling to keep Aniela's restaurant open. That part was rather depressing - of course this book is not really a work of fiction and I had to keep this at the forefront, so as to be able to better appreciate this read.
