



## Various Artists “**One Meat Ball**” Appleseed Recordings

During the last two decades, commencing officially, I believe, with the North Star Records version of “**On A Winter’s Night**,” Christine Lavin has put together a series of themed songwriter compilation albums. Almost seventy minutes in duration, the latest, “**One Meat Ball**,” is subtitled “**The Album / The Cookbook**.” As you might have already guessed, the thrust of this collection is “*Food, glorious food.....*”

“**One Meat Ball**” features twenty-one cuts/nineteen songs some of which appear here for the first time, while others are taken from previously released albums by the artist[s] involved. Accompanying the CD is a glossy, soft back, spiral-bound, ninety-six page Cookbook featuring recipes supplied by each of the contributing musicians, plus almost twenty pages of bonus savoury n’ sweet dishes indulgence in which will ensure your calorie count and resulting body mass attains ‘hazardous to health’ proportions.

Long ago, Lavin established a formula for choosing compilation contributors and like its predecessors “**One Meat Ball**” is a mix of established performers and lesser-known artists. Christine’s coterie of friends and musical collaborators on this disc amount to a quartet of ‘one time’ Four Bitchin’ Babe alumni - Megon ‘the voice’ McDonough delivers the previously unreleased hi-cal recollection “Butter,” Sally Fingerett is accompanied by Jonathan Edwards on her fishy tale of love from the riverbank “Ten Pound Bass,” Julie Gold offers an insight into the yo-yo universe of big/small/bigger than before aka “The Heartbreak Diet,” while, finally, on “Pie” Debi Smith is accompanied by Doc Watson. There are two previously released Appleseed Recordings cuts here. Tao Rodriguez Seeger joins grandpa Pete for a celebration of “Maple Syrup Time,” while towards the close of the collection a 1984 performance of “Bottle of Wine” by Tom Paxton, Anne Hills and Bob Gibson [aka Best Of Friends] segues with a lyrical ‘la Francais’ 2003 reprise on which Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer accompany an almost twenty years older Paxton. Earlier on in this collection, [accompanied by Fink’s banjo] Marxer, in the role of a harassed mother, phones her friend Joanie and vocally relates the recipe for “Orange Cocoa Cake” while coping with a stream of hungry n’ more offspring passing through her kitchen.

Supported by Chip Mergott, piano and acoustic guitar, Annie Bauerlein opens “**One Meat Ball**” by fondly recalling her childhood days when post-mass Sunday mornings were filled with stacks and stacks of “Blueberry Pancakes.” Accompanied vocally by Marcy Heister, Zina Goldrich gushingly sings the praises of Starbucks’ employee “Taylor The Latte Boy,” while – at the outset featuring a familiar James Brown riff - Vance Gilbert’s delivers an energetic ‘get on down’ soul brother reading of his previously unreleased “Root Beer For Breakfast.” Mary Liz McNamara’s “Bacon” is a tribute to “*fried heaven in a pan*” - amen to that. The only instrumental on this disc, performed on acoustic guitar, is Alan Miceli’s “Mocha Java.” With nary a mention of food – until the closing line that is, English born, American based composer [lyricist], and septuagenarian, Ray Jessel accompanies himself on piano on his previously unreleased “I Think About Sex.” Supported by a goodtime ‘rattle them pots and pan’ blues rhythm, movie actor Jeff Daniels [yes, the guy who starred in “**Dumb And Dumber**” and “**Pleasantville**”] sings of the joys of devourin’ “Tomato Puddin’.” Jessel’s lyric and for that matter Daniels’ deliberately embrace double entendre, and, a few cuts later Robin Hopper maintains that subjective thrust with her seductive invitation to indulge in some “Fudge.”

MaryJo Mundy introduces her previously unreleased “Blackberry Winter” with the insight that while not ‘strictly’ a food song – in reality it’s a cabaret style love song - Christine saw validity in including it since one “*can eat blackberries.*” In fact it might be worth interjecting at this juncture with the comment that a

portion of the material featured on **“One Meat Ball”** leans toward cabaret. The late Dave Van Ronk prefaces his performance of the album title track with “The History of ‘One Meat Ball.’” Accompanied vocally by special guests – Jessel, McNamara, Gilbert, McDonough, Daniels and her ‘real life’ heroine Dame Edna Everage - Christine Lavin closes the compilation with the five-minute epic, and previously unreleased, “French Toast Bread Pudding.” As I said earlier, the musical fare on **“One Meat Ball”** is both savoury and sweet, leavened, occasionally, by a healthy portion of libidinous innuendo.....after all, you don’t need me to tell you that eating and courtship are closely linked. In the lyrical spirit of **“One Meat Ball”** many of the words I used in this review were chosen with a sly ;-) in mind!

Folkwax Score 7 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 09/06.