

'Vaiden' portrays unusual 'hero'-ine

When Kate Vaiden was 11 years old, she traveled with her mother to stay with relatives, leaving her father behind. On the train ride, Kate pretended she was a boy named Marcus: "He owned a gray pony, wanted no friends but was envied by all for eyes so blue they barely appeared. Nobody on earth had ever hurt his feelings, though many had tried. And he often took long thirsty hikes in the hills with only dry rations, never writing to his parents who were forced to wait and pray."

Oddly enough, Kate Vaiden, the protagonist of *Kate Vaiden* by Reynolds Price, becomes this kind of a woman. When her parents are found dead, Kate stays with relatives

Kathleen Pories
Books

until she feels the need to move on. From thereon, she keeps going, staying with a variety of people and leaving without warning, with a trail of unfinished conversations and unsettled situations behind her.

Kate never makes excuses for herself, and this is what distinguishes her from the usual heroine in literature — she feels no great guilt or responsibility for those she deserts (this includes her son) — only a few regrets. She explains, "When they

made me, they left out the mothering part . . . the tending, rearing, permanent patience and the willingness to take such slim reward as most mothers get — they left that out of my soul completely." This missing piece affects her approach to her whole life, making her feel beholden to no one but herself. It is an unnerving perspective.

This lack of "permanent patience" is evident in her relationships with men. Kate takes on a variety of lovers, although only the first can be thought of as a true love; and she never develops feelings of need or duty to any of the others. As opposed to enduring miserable or static situations, Kate abandons each lover

in search of something better. This is not to say she's self-serving; rather, she's honest, giving no more than she wants and never settling for a "slim reward."

Kate Vaiden is an unusual book, because it characterizes an uncharacteristic woman and, more importantly, because it gives us a likeable heroine, despite all her unfinished business.

Reynolds Price writes easily in a lyrical style that is rich with fresh images. Describing her aunt, Kate says, "She was as loyal as your skin and faithful as the floor." But those who have read Price's earlier works will miss his sense of humor and the array of character voices he so easily

creates — aspects that give a sad or long story room to breathe.

Sometimes in *Kate Vaiden*, you want to know what other people think of Kate aside from their weighty exchanges rife with meaning. Sometimes you just want a break from Kate, the only narrator. Even so, much is to be appreciated here, such as Price's strong poetic prose, and Kate's head-on attitude. She says, "The miracle is, you can last through time. You pray to die when you pass a calendar — all those separate days stacked before you, each one the same length and built from steel. But then you butt through them somehow, or they through you."

Mexican recipes score touchdown in taste

Football season is here, and football means tailgate parties and long hours in front of the tube with your favorite beverage and something good to eat.

Two weeks ago a local tabloid published some recommendations for tailgate parties that included, among other things, artichokes Provençal and raspberry tarts. Can you picture any redblooded football fanatic settling down before the TV, popping open a Bud and asking, "Could you pass the raspberry tarts, please?" Away with this yuppie stuff!

Greg Moores
Captain Cook

Give me some real food — things like authentic, homemade, refried bean dip, guacamole and corn chips.

A Mexican friend of mine taught me how to make these refried beans, which are standard fare at his family's table. The guacamole is my own party-tested recipe. Try 'em; you'll

like 'em.

Refried beans

1 pound pinto beans
1 small onion, chopped fine
3 strips crisp bacon, crumbled
chili powder, cumin, cayenne pepper, black pepper, salt, garlic powder, oregano

Soak beans overnight; then boil until soft, adding 1-2 tablespoons of chili powder and the onion. Fry bacon until crisp; leave the fat in the pan. Put beans, crumbled bacon and the

other spices to taste in the pan and mash until almost smooth over low heat. Add water if it gets too dry. Simmer and stir for about 20 minutes. It makes a good filling for burritos or enchiladas, or chill it for a bean dip.

Guacamole

2 or more avocados
1 lemon
mayonnaise, taco sauce, chili powder, cayenne pepper

Peel and chop avocados. Mash well.

Add 2-3 tablespoons mayonnaise, ½ cup taco sauce, 1 tablespoon chili powder and a pinch of cayenne. Squeeze lemon into mixture and stir well. Chill, covered tightly, for at least one hour. Use as chip dip or place on bed of lettuce for salad, adding green onions, tomatoes and celery. This is a good accompaniment to the refried beans no matter how you use them.

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