

*The Kitchen Front* by Jennifer Ryan

Another lesser-known aspect of WW II is featured in this novel: the details of food rationing and how cooks managed to do their best in spite of privations. Based on a real BBC radio series called *The Kitchen Front*, about making the most of rations, the program and its host decide to run a three-month series of programs highlighting contestants in a cooking competition. The winner will become a regular presenter on the radio program. The four contestants represent very different social backgrounds, but each faces a personal crisis. The lady of the manor hides a loveless, abusive marriage, her scullery maid longs to escape servitude, the young widow needs to pay her husband's debts and keep a roof over her sons, and a trained chef from London is determined to escape factory work and challenge the men at the top of the profession.

The author skillfully presents the situation and cooking of each woman, as well as including actual recipes of the period. I found myself rooting for each cook in turn, as well as very, very impressed by their achievements in the kitchen. This a mouthwatering book – though I am not likely to try any of the recipes in the near future because they sound like a LOT of work, I would have loved to judge the contest and sample each dish in person!