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Wolpin, Marilyn. Bring Back the Babka! Illustrated by Madison Safer. Barefoot Books, 2023. 32 pp. \$17.99 (9798888590089) HC. Preschool–Gr 2.

It's Friday afternoon and Mama's freshly baked babka has disappeared. When Sammy and Sol return from school, they set out to solve the mystery with Mazel, their dog, in tow. From here the story veers into a folk tale-like pattern. The boys visit three neighbors, and while none of them has seen the missing cake, they each serve the children a special dish and send them on their way with a replacement dessert. Ashkenazi, Sephardic, and Mizrahi dishes are represented with cholent, gefilte fish, stuffed grape leaves, and bourekas among the delicacies (back matter provides descriptions of all foods included plus a recipe for the titular babka). The caring neighbors are invited to Shabbat dinner, and when everyone, including Mazel, is gathered around the festive table, all eyes turn to the obvious babka thief !

Characters dressed in styles that range from old fashioned to hipster add a bit of confusion as to the intended time period. However, in a story that celebrates Jewish food traditions that span the ages, this is not critical. The bright illustrations are executed in a cheerful primitive style, and the text is well suited for both lap reading and for story time. This sweet tale has universal appeal and can be enjoyed by readers of all backgrounds. A likely choice for Jewish schools and institutions, it is recommended for public schools and public libraries as well.

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