smitten kitchen There are recipes on my Cook This list that I’ve been plotting for years but take forever to jump from that place where they’re a rough idea of how I think something might taste good and how I’ll make that happen. There are items on the list which are just the names of dishes I haven’t tried yet and want to learn more about. And there are recipes that make me kick myself every time I see them because how have we not made a good hearty tortilla soup here yet? And where is that Russian napoleon I’ve been promising you? But this here is none of the above. Exactly one month ago, someone emailed me (hi Angela!) and asked if I had ever made a German Sunken Apple Cake [which sounds even cooler in its native language: Versunkener Apfelkuchen] and I had barely finished reading the email before I had a new tab open because I had to immediately know what it was. What it was is adorable. Seriously, it’s relentlessly cute. Small apples are peeled, halved, cored and then scored and arranged rump-up on a buttery cake base and in the oven, the cake begins to creep up around them and the apples fan out like accordions and the whole thing is so golden, dimpled and lovely that I abandoned all hopes, plans to do anything else until I could make this happen. (Perhaps predictably, this still took three weeks.) I realize that for some people “relentlessly cute,” i.e. the cake version of a viral video of a kitten scared of a skittering ball of yarn, is not the primary thing they’re looking for in a cake. I mean, I’m not friends with anyone that cold-hearted, but I realize that things like crumb/texture/flavor are also important when talking about cake. Fear not, this cake has that in droves. It’s actually not terribly different from last year’s Purple Plum Torte, but it has an extra egg and more leavener for lift, which is to say that it’s awesome, especially on days two and beyond. As promised, this site would remains a pumpkin-spice free zone until the first day of fall (you know, tomorrow), meaning that this cake has neither cinnamon nor nutmeg, ginger, allspice or cloves in it. There’s no pumpkin in it, but if your diction is as poor as mine apparently is, you too can disappoint all dozen people you tell about this cake before you make it who hear instead “pumpkin apple cake.” However, I couldn’t resist giving it a honeyed tilt, replacing just about half the sugar with honey and brushing the cooled cake with a salted honey glaze. It’s not traditional, but I now cannot imagine this cake any other way. Thank you: To everyone who came out Word on the Street in Toronto yesterday. It was such a fun event, and never a bad time to be around such friendly, warm people.