

Sifting Through the Cookbooks for Our Female Ancestors

THE HISTORY OF HOME COOKING

The Significance of the Family Table

The family table plays a major role with respect to the development of one's sense of self – especially at holidays and special family events.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Notable Resource</u>	<u>Notes</u>
1796	<u>American Cookery</u> by Amelia Simmons	The first cookbook written and printed in America <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election Cake: Formerly known in the colonies as “Muster Day Cake”
1824	<u>The Virginia Housewife</u> by Mary Randolph	The first American regional cookbook Statistically, up to 1900, most (60%) of the regional cookbooks were published in the northeast with publishers in Philadelphia and Boston. About 24% were published/sold in the Midwest, 6% in the South and the remaining in the West. In addition to recipes, cookbooks included topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home management & organization• Economics & frugality• Nutrition & diet• Caring for the sick• Temperance• Butchering techniques• Food preservation• Cooking & baking instructions
1864	<u>A Poetical Cook Book</u> by Maria J. Moss	The first ‘charity’ or ‘community’ or ‘fundraiser’ cookbook. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sold at Philadelphia’s “Sanitary Fair” By the 1880s – 28 states had published community cookbooks

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		By WWI there were more than 3000 of such books.
1865-1900		Cooking School cookbooks Recipe booklets issued by the growing number of national food and home equipment companies. National magazines and almanacs providing recipes and advice to the homemaker. 'Women's pages' in local newspapers. In the early 1900s, newspapers ran recipe contests to boost readership
1880-1920		Immigration & cultural homogenization <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to cook "American Style"• Bilingual cookbooks Recipes began appearing in newspapers featuring sponsored products
1920-1950		Radio programs geared towards the Homemaker
WWII-1960		1949: The Grand National Recipe and Baking Contest

How to Use Cookbooks for Genealogy

Women are notoriously one of the hardest people to find in historical documents, but they can often be traced to anything related to the kitchen. Look for your female ancestors in the inherited cookbooks and cookbooks related to the communities that they were in.

What can cookbooks and recipes provide to find women?

- Recipes
- Historical context
- Names of contributors
- Scribblings in the margins
- Advertisements

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Spring 2023

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When looking at a cookbook...

- Why was your ancestor in there?
- What recipe(s) did they submit?
- Were there any accompanying stories that went with the recipes?
- Any FAN club members (Friends, Associates, and Neighbors) or additional relatives?



Where to look for cookbooks, recipes, and resources?

- Antique stores, bookstores, thrift stores, eBay
- Newspapers
 - Newspapers.com (www.newspapers.com)
 - Library of Congress' Chronicling America
 - Wisconsin Historical Society (on-site)
- Inherited cookbooks and recipe boxes
- Ancestral religious communities, local communities, and organizations
- Internet Archive (www.archive.org)
- Library of Congress (www.loc.gov) → search "cookbook"
- UW Libraries Research Guide on Cookbooks, Culinary Arts, Culinary History: Cookbook Collections (<https://researchguides.library.wisc.edu/cookbooks/collections>)
- Kitchen Historic Blogspot (<http://kitchenhistoric.blogspot.com/p/digitized-cookbooks.html>)

Make your own family cookbook for family and descendants!

- Recipe box
- Three-ringed binder scrapbook
- Commercial printing (**always look for the deals**)
 - Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com)
 - Mixbook (www.mixbook.com)
- What to consider:
 - Favorite recipes
 - Stories behind how you got the recipe, times you made the recipe, special events where the recipe was served
 - Pictures of the food, of people making it, of people eating it, of events



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Community Cookbooks and what they tell us about foodways (Sacramento CA) – Masters Thesis
(https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4548&context=uop_etds)

Cooking for Cash
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Cooking in Old Time Radio (<https://www.otrcat.com/p/cooking-in-old-time-radio>)

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