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No Mere Culinary Curiosities: Using Historical Cookbooks in the Library Classroom

Cookbooks are neglected as information sources and teaching tools in academic libraries, especially for undergraduate learners. Approachable but complex primary sources, they can be examined as a records of people's food habits, as a window on the authors or their societies and cultures, or as texts with rhetorical aims involving more than just cooking and eating. This study surveys the literature on the use of cookbooks in scholarship and pedagogy, especially in the context of interdisciplinary food studies. It also explains their relevance for the library or archives classroom, both as potential research sources and as tools for teaching primary source literacy skills, and the common barriers to their collection and discovery. Finally, it outlines uses for and approaches to teaching with cookbooks and offers examples of the author's experience doing so in a special collections setting.

Introduction

Cookbooks are rich personal and social texts, giving accounts of the whys and hows of our food traditions and, through them, our histories and cultures. While it is tempting to relegate them to the domain of the public library, catering to the practical information needs of the lifelong learner, they are increasingly prevalent in academic libraries as well, often in special collections. In recent decades, cookbooks have become vital research tools, spurred on by the growth of the interdisciplinary field of food studies. Cookbooks can be evaluated as texts or mined for the information they reveal about their creators and the communities and cultures in which they were created. They provide multiple points of analysis, from their cover art, prefatory material, and organization to the recipes themselves: ingredients, technologies, cooking methods, and instruction format. In addition to their malleability for research, cookbooks are well positioned to introduce students to the evaluation and use of primary sources, in courses grounded in foodways as well as those that are not.

As scholarly information sources, cookbooks are versatile, multifaceted, and approachable. Despite this, student learners, especially undergraduates, might not

think to use them in their academic work, and instructors may fail to incorporate them in research courses at this level. In some cases, neither students nor instructors are even aware such sources are useful to them or that they are part of an academic library's collection. Though studies based on the analysis of cookbooks proliferate in multiple disciplines, including interdisciplinary food studies, they are not well explored in the scholarship of teaching and learning and do not appear in the library and archives literatures. Cookbooks deserve a more prominent place in special collections classrooms: as useful primary sources to suggest to student researchers and as tools to help students develop critical thinking skills and practice source analysis. Based on my research with cookbooks and grounded in a broad review of the literature, I offer insights about how they may be used to enrich the undergraduate learning and research experience. I also reflect on my experience teaching with cookbooks in four specific courses.

Literature Review

Primary Sources and Hands-On Learning

In addition to establishing best practices for training researchers, archives educators have long explored their role in helping instructors meet general education learning objectives. The recent "Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy,"[1] created by a joint task force of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Rare Books and Manuscripts section and the Society of American Archivists, affirmed the usefulness of primary source materials for teaching transferable research and analytic skills. The guidelines described primary sources as inherently "challenging," their unfamiliarity forcing users to actively engage with them through "hypothesis, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, critical thinking, and evaluation."[2] Primary sources are also singularly useful tools for illustrating and interrogating some of the threshold concepts of the ACRL's "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education."[3] Of particular interest are those that address identifying and evaluating sources on their own merits, especially "Authority Is Constructed and Contextual." As Katelyn Angell and Eamon Tewell found in a broad study of student source analysis practices, undergraduates are generally reliant on traditional markers of authority such as peer review but also showed developing opinions about who should be able to publish about a topic and why.[4] This suggests presenting students with more complex—that is, less conventionally

1. "Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy," Association of College and Research Libraries Rare Books and Manuscripts section & Society of American Archivists (2018), https://www2.archivists.org/standards/guidelines-for-primary-source-literacy.

2. "Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy," 1–2.

3. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," American Library Association (2015), www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.

4. Katelyn Angell and Eamon Tewell, "Teaching and Un-teaching Source Evaluation: Questioning Authority in Information Literacy Instruction," *Communications in Information Literacy* 11, no. 1 (2017): 114, https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2017.11.1.37.

situated—sources like historical documents and other primary sources might be especially instructive.

The discourse around primary source and archival literacies bears this out. Merinda Kaye Hensley, Benjamin P. Murphy, and Ellen Swain found that students who had attended an archival orientation had come to understand, at least at a novice level, the importance of considering the argument and perspective of documents.[5] Barbara Rockenbach framed this as a matter of self-efficacy, of students' learning to "trust their own interpretations and not rely on external authority."[6] Teaching with primary sources is especially congenial to constructivist learning techniques. Silvia Vong observed that group encounters with primary sources enabled both exploration of topics via social interaction and contextualization of newly acquired knowledge through meaningful activity.[7] Nora Dimmock discussed the effect of object-based pedagogy, an approach more commonly advocated by museum studies, concluding, "Encounters with objects can be a powerful learning tool in an environment where reflection and interpretation become part of the classroom culture and students are active participants in constructing meaning."[8]

However useful primary sources can be to student learning and research, Kate Theimer has observed that classes outside the history discipline may be especially unprepared for this kind of work,[9] making structured introduction and exploration of such materials even more important for these courses. Part of this acculturation is practical: allowing students to handle the objects themselves. Melissa A. Hubbard and Megan Lotts advocated for interactions with physical items, so they can learn how to literally and intellectually handle these materials in their research.[10] Michelle McCoy pointed out that manuscript idiosyncrasies like censored words, florid cursive, and doodles provide clues about the creator and their context, making the experience unique and not replicable by reading a transcription of the

5. Merinda Kaye Hensley, Benjamin P. Murphy, and Ellen Swain, "Analyzing Archival Intelligence: A Collaboration between Library Instruction and Archives," *Communications in Information Literacy* 8, no. 1 (2014): 96–114.

6. Barbara Rockenbach, "Archives, Undergraduates, and Inquiry-Based Learning: Case Studies from Yale University Library," *American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 307.

7. Silvia Vong, "A Constructivist Approach for Introducing Undergraduate Students to Special Collections and Archival Research," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, & Cultural Heritage* 17, no. 2 (2016): 151, https://doi.org/10.5860/rbm.17.2.9666.

8. Nora Dimmock, "Object-Based Pedagogy: New Opportunities for Collaborations in the Humanities," in *Collaborating for Impact: Special Collections and Liaison Librarian Partnerships*, eds. Kristen Totelben and Lori Birrell (Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), 54.

9. Kate Theimer, *Educational Programs: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), vii.

10. Melissa A. Hubbard and Megan Lotts, "Special Collections, Primary Resources, and Information Literacy Pedagogy," *Communications in Information Literacy* 7, no. 1 (2013): 34.

underlying text.[11] But hands-on primary source pedagogy need not be limited to unique rare books and prized archival collections. Julia Gardner and David Pavelich made a case for teaching with ephemera, "materials that are perhaps less polished, less fine, less well known."[12] Such items help answer students' frequent questions about the lives of ordinary people, but undergraduates in particular would not be likely to stumble upon these materials or recognize their value as sources,[13] making the archives educator's introduction of them crucial. Importantly, Gardner and Pavelich tie examination of individual items to a better comprehension of context and broader cultural concerns, especially marginalized voices.[14]

Cookbooks and Food Studies

According to Steven M. Tobias, cookbooks were long neglected in cultural studies, a product of scholarly inattention to the role of food in history and culture.[15] Deirdre Murphy explains that, in academic research, food was once viewed as "a subject too *base*—too physical, even animalistic and anti-intellectual—to waste much time on."[16] Richard Wilk situates this as part of a wider phenomenon, where academia dismisses "topics that are perceived as mundane, everyday, prosaic, and uninteresting"; he describes them as "devalued," "belittled," "kept at arm's length," or simply "ignored."[17] This horror of the everyday is often at least implicitly tied to gender—in the case of food, the gender of domestic work, set in opposition to the gender of academic systems and academic research.[18] Thankfully, this paradigm of diminishing domestic topics, especially as such details reflect the experiences of women when too often nothing else in the historical record does, is changing for so many aspects of cultural history, including the study of food and its preparation.

One reason for this shift in perspective is the development of the interdisciplinary field of food studies, which emerged in the 1980s and became firmly entrenched in academia by the early 2000s.[19] However, most institutions do not have a stand-

11. Michelle McCoy, "The Manuscript as Question: Teaching Primary Sources in Archives: The China Missions Project," *College & Research Libraries* 71, no. 1 (2010): 49, https://doi.org/10.5860/0710049.

12. Julia Gardner and David Pavelich, "Teaching with Ephemera," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, & Cultural Heritage* 9, no. 1 (2008): 86, https://doi.org/10.5860/rbm.9.1.298.

13. Gardner and Pavelich, "Teaching with Ephemera," 87–88.

14. Gardner and Pavelich, "Teaching with Ephemera," 92.

15. Steven M. Tobias, "Early American Cookbooks as Cultural Artifacts," *Papers on Language and Literature* 34, no. 1 (1998): 4.

16. Deirdre Murphy, "Toward a Pedagogy of Mouthiness: The Essential Interdisciplinarity of Studying Food," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 23, no. 2 (2012/2013): 19–20.

17. Richard Wilk, "The Limits of Discipline: Towards Interdisciplinary Food Studies," *Physiology & Behavior* 107, no. 4 (2012): 474, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.physbeh.2012.04.023.

18. Murphy, "Toward a Pedagogy of Mouthiness," 20; also see Andrew Smith, Jeffrey M. Pilcher, and Darra Goldstein, "Food Scholarship and Food Writing," *Food, Culture & Society* 13, no. 3 (2010), https://doi.org/10.2752/175174410X12699432700827s.

19. Murphy, "Toward a Pedagogy of Mouthiness," 20; Shingo Hamada et al., "The Future of Food Studies," *Food, Culture & Society* 18, no. 1 (2015): 168, https://doi.org/10.2752/175174415X14101814953846.

alone program for food studies, so food-focused scholars and courses are dispersed through the departments across a wide spectrum of disciplines. As Richard Wilk and Candice Lowe Swift describe it, "the traditional academic fields have chopped up the topic of food, so each discipline has a small piece, but none are able to encompass the whole."[20] Food studies was once dominated by the sciences and social sciences,[21] addressing topics like understanding and improving agricultural systems, regulating diet and health, and interpreting historical and archaeological findings. Recently the field has trended toward the more qualitative social sciences and humanities, with an emphasis on food as a window on society, ideology, and identity, discerned through historical, cultural, and rhetorical analysis. The point is not to disentangle these areas of focus but to give an indication of the heterogeneity and complexity inherent in the research and teaching of food.

A commonly stated rationale behind teaching various subjects via food was summed up by Lucy M. Long, who pointed out that, "unlike art or music, which require a certain amount of experience and skill, food is a domain of activity that we all participate in."[22] Brian Stross, a linguistic anthropologist, explained why food as a teaching topic is not just useful but also effective:

> [M]any individuals think they already know a lot about food, and so a class on foodways might be perceived as easy or uninformative. However, the average person's knowledge about eating and other food practices barely scratches the surface of all the exciting things there are to know about the subject, and perhaps surprisingly, one person's knowledge seldom duplicates that of another. The benefits: there is much to know, yet each of us already knows something that can contribute to class discussions.[23]

Kima Cargill also argued that a focus on food was smart pedagogical practice: "Food studies curricula encourage the development of higher-order thinking skills, use multiple lenses to examine complex social problems, and are consistent with the dynamic evolution of the structure of the academy."[24] Cargill posited food studies as a model of interdisciplinary education, being especially useful for undergraduates, allowing them to tie the theoretical concepts they are learning to the familiar, concrete aspects

20. Richard R. Wilk and Candice Lowe Swift, *Teaching Food and Culture* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 9.

21. See Ken Albala et al., "FCS Editors' Roundtable: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Journal," *Food, Culture & Society* 20, no. 1 (2017): 7–9, https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2017.1272193.

22. Lucy M. Long, "Nourishing the Academic Imagination: The Use of Food in Teaching Concepts of Culture," *Food and Foodways* 9, no. 3/4 (2001): 235, https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.2001.9962113.

23. Brian Stross, "Developing Pedagogies for the Anthropology of Food," in *Teaching Food and Culture*, eds. Richard R. Wilk and Candice Lowe Swift (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 170.

24. Kima Cargill, "Food Studies in the Curriculum: A Model for Interdisciplinary Pedagogy," *Food, Culture & Society* 8, no. 1 (2005): 122, https://doi.org/10.2752/155280105778055371.

of everyday life.[25] Penny Van Esterik also argued that food provided an entry point to a range of difficult theoretical concepts within her discipline of anthropology, meeting a persistent challenge in acculturating students to the social sciences.[26]

However, as Wilk and Swift acknowledged, food is a new curricular topic, with no real canon or single solid theoretical tradition to draw on.[27] Wilk argued that something of a dividing line remains in food studies between the sciences and more empiricist social sciences versus the interpretivist social sciences and humanities, given their different foundational theories, methodologies, and goals.[28] This can impact teaching as well as research. Jeremy L. Korr and Christine Broussard, a co-teaching pair from American studies and biology, respectively, found that attempting to usefully bring together science and humanities perspectives was challenging because of methodological differences.[29] Those without a good grounding in food studies may find the chasm even harder to bridge. Betsy L.F. Hall, an English instructor and First Year Experience coordinator, found that her food-related service learning course changed every time she taught it, in part due to her bending toward her collaborators, who hail from different disciplines: political science, sociology, and chemistry.[30] Cookbooks may be of use in transdisciplinary courses like these, as sites to compare, contrast, and synthesize approaches. They can serve as a common canon and provide an entry point for instructors who are not primarily food studies scholars but who are learning as they go, alongside their students.[31]

Discourse on the specific pedagogical role of cookbooks as a genre is less substantial, but what has been produced generally tracks with research practice and illuminates the above discussion on teaching food. Long reflected that food studies activities like text analysis gave students the tools to critique their own cultural assumptions.[32] Along those lines, Cargill touted the ability of cookbooks to introduce more diverse learning materials, meeting higher education's priority in fostering multicultural understanding.[33] Sakina Hughes discussed the power of cookbooks to teach Black history in the undergraduate classroom.[34] In her course, cookbooks also

25. Cargill, "Food Studies in the Curriculum," 122.
26. Penny Van Esterik, "The Last Course: Relating Research with Teaching about Food," in *Teaching Food and Culture*, eds. Richard R. Wilk and Candice Lowe Swift (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 201.
27. Wilk and Swift, *Teaching Food and Culture*, 10.
28. Wilk, "The Limits of Discipline," 474.
29. Jeremy L. Korr and Christine Broussard, "Challenges in the Interdisciplinary Teaching of Food and Foodways," *Food, Culture & Society* 7, no. 2 (2004): 147–59, https://doi.org/10.2752/155280104786577941.
30. Betsy L.F. Hall, "Food for Thought: Crossing Disciplinary Borders with Integrated Pedagogy," *CEA Forum* 42, no. 1 (2013): 274.
31. Hall, "Food for Thought," 273.
32. Long, "Nourishing the Academic Imagination," 254.
33. Cargill, "Food Studies in the Curriculum," 122.
34. Sakina M. Hughes, "Teaching African American History and Culture Through Cookbooks and Etiquette Manuals," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 42, no. 2 (2017): 64–66.

generated discussion—and clarification—about what counts as a primary source.[35] Catarina Passidomo's text-driven approach to teaching Southern U.S. foodways served as a means of complicating the region, with food uncovering people's loves and fears and showing how they make meaning.[36] Kyla Wazana Tompkins taught a cross-listed English and Women's Studies course that approached food in literature historically but also used it to enrich a discussion of issues in contemporary food culture.[37] Jennifer Cognard-Black, co-teaching an undergraduate food literature course, described the general give-and-take between aspects of the cookbook: "In my classroom, I decided, we would ask how these texts create their narrators, express meaning through the language of food, and thereby remake their reader-eaters. From the rhetorical, we would discern the cultural."[38] Finally, Lara Anderson and Meribah Rose argued for the role of food studies in the modern language curriculum, which they saw as vital to students' language major but also to their overall college experience.[39] In their course, students analyzed as well as cooked from historical cookbooks and observed how they were "both reflective and prescriptive of social and cultural norms."[40] The students also learned general and transferable intellectual skills, especially "a sensitivity to the importance of context."[41]

Cookbooks and Research Libraries

Unsurprisingly, there are almost no discussions in the literature of the information needs of food-studies scholars. A study of information sources by Nancy Duran and Kevin MacDonald was preoccupied with identifying useful secondary sources, a complex enough topic given the need to read across disciplines.[42] They mentioned archival material and primary sources generically and newspapers specifically, without going into much detail about what to look for, how, and where, at least beyond a catalog search.[43] This suggests a desire among these scholars to use primary sources, but little attention to how to find them or else an unclear conceptualization of the types of resources this includes, cookbooks among them. Complicating matters is that finding cookbooks in a library catalog is not a straightforward process, and research libraries may not be helping to overcome the challenges inherent

35. Hughes, "Teaching African American History and Culture," 71.
36. Catarina Passidomo, "Southern Foodways in the Classroom and Beyond," *Southern Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2018): 12–13.
37. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "Literary Approaches to Food Studies: Eating the Other," *Food, Culture & Society* 8, no. 2 (2005): 243–58, https://doi.org/10.2752/155280105778055326.
38. Jennifer Cognard-Black and Melissa A. Goldthwaite, "Books That Cook: Teaching Food and Literature in the English Classroom," *College English* 70, no. 4 (2008): 424.
39. Lara Anderson and Meribah Rose, "Cooking Up the Classroom: A Pedagogical Argument for the Place of Food Studies in a University-level Language Major," *Babel* 51, no. 1 (2016): 13.
40. Anderson and Rose, "Cooking Up the Classroom," 17.
41. Anderson and Rose, "Cooking Up the Classroom," 18.
42. Nancy Duran and Karen MacDonald, "Information Sources for Food Studies Research," *Food, Culture & Society* 9, no. 2 (2006): 233–43, https://doi.org/10.2752/155280106778606080.
43. Duran and MacDonald, "Information Sources for Food Studies Research," 238.

in the natural language tied to the genre. Historically, titles rendered "cookbook" as two words (in other words, "cook book" or even "cookery book"), although many examples, past and present, do not have any variation of "cook" in the title at all. Conversely, "cookbook" as a keyword often generates results for metaphorical uses like the *Power Supply Cookbook*, a design book for electrical engineers.[44] The titling of community cookbooks in particular is often so generic[45] as to necessitate disambiguation through the inclusion of alternate or variant titles or subtitles or addition of descriptive notes in one of the MARC 500 fields, which in turn assumes a library has the resources and expertise to devote to this deeper level of cataloging.[46] While community cookbooks do at least have their own subject headings, making them especially easy to locate, subject access is not always this helpful. Gretchen L. Hoffman points out that there has been little written about how cooking-related subject headings developed.[47] The Library of Congress began using the standard term "Cooking" only in 2010; prior to this—and potentially still lurking in catalog records—these subjects used the arcane term "Cookery."[48] The term "Cookbooks" was also introduced in 2010; but, unlike with the straightforward remediation of "Cookery" to "Cooking," it would have to be added to particular records—perhaps manually, as it would not be suitable for every item related to food preparation.[49] On a positive note, Library of Congress subject headings can usefully differentiate regional and ethnic cuisines, mostly through topical and/or geographic subdivisions.

The access problem, of course, runs deeper than metadata. In 2003, Jenna Hartel noted that the library and information studies field did not seem to be interested in discussing the challenges of collecting and providing access to cookbooks, viewing them as only for the hobbyist or leisure reader (that is, a concern of public libraries and thus in general beneath the notice of academic scholarship).[50] This perception appears to be changing slowly, if at all. In 2004, Jim Morris-Knower reported on the

44. Marty Brown, *Power Supply Cookbook* (Boston, MA: Newnes, 2001).

45. For example, the generic title "Recipes" is common enough among a particular collection at my repository that one book has a seven-digit secondary (shelf location) Cutter Number.

46. Harriet E. Wintermute, "The Joy of Cataloging Community Cookbooks," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2017), 204–08, 214, https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2017.1291461.

47. Gretchen L. Hoffman, "How Are Cookbooks Classified in Libraries? An Examination of LCSH and LCC," *NASKO: North American Symposium on Knowledge Organization* 4, no. 1 (213): 2.

48. Hoffman, "How Are Cookbooks Classified in Libraries?" 2–3.

49. In a search of print holdings across my library system, 3,205 items used "Cooking" subjects, 384 still used "Cookery," and 955 used "Cookbooks." Looking at the concurrent use of these three base subjects tells more of the story. Only 109 items had both "Cookery" and "Cooking," indicating that the former was for the most part transformed into the latter, rather than the latter being added. Likewise, "Cookery" overlapped with "Cookbooks" in only 24 cases. Of the 955 records with "Cookbooks," 861 also have "Cooking," suggesting that "Cookbooks" was probably added at or after the transformation of "Cookery" to "Cooking."

50. Jenna Hartel, "The Serious Leisure Frontier in Library and Information Science: Hobby Domains," *Knowledge Organization* 30, no. 3/4 (2003): 228–38.

then-new trend of cookbook collecting among libraries, pointing to a comprehensive list of significant culinary collections as determined by the International Association of Culinary Professionals; half of those were housed in academic libraries, most of them acquired or developed within the past 15 years.[51] He pointed to the rise of food studies as a significant factor, along with growing interest from the public.[52] Another 15 years later, there is still no substantial discussion of how to integrate cookbooks with library collections either regular or special. In research collections, which encompass comparatively recent works, cookbooks may be viewed as largely unnecessary, compared with secondary sources about foodways. In historical collections, the state of cookbook collection is highly variable, evidently dependent more on the intentionality of collection-curating donors than these items' inclusion in general collection development policies.[53] The process is also made difficult by the nature of the materials, ephemeral and hard-used as well as low status, which kept them out of public libraries, where they might have been better preserved.[54] It is worth noting that a reluctance of libraries to collect more recent specimens could be just as problematic to building future historical collections. This would include special collections libraries still clinging to a more elitist model of rare book collecting, one that dismisses informal or ephemera-like published items, from travel pamphlets and music scores to comic books and cookbooks. Melissa McMullan and Joanna Cobley pointed out that caring for cheaply printed materials is just as complex as preserving higher-quality rare books, yet these types of items rarely feature in the literature of conservation and preservation,[55] a sure sign that they are not a priority.

Discussion

Uses

Like other primary sources, cookbooks bear witness to the time in which they were created. "Although cookbooks might not record events in the society as historical facts," Janet Mitchell argued, "nevertheless their contents are often a response to historical events."[56] However, cookbooks can sometimes be met with suspicion as sources because they capture ideal rather than real culture, reflecting potential, not actual, use.[57] For this reason, Jeremy MacClancy characterized cookbooks as "both

51. Jim Morris-Knower, "Cookery Academia: Culinary Collections in Libraries Grow Up, and Out," *College & Research Libraries News* 65, no. 4 (2004): 195.
52. Morris-Knower, "Cookery Academia," 196.
53. Morris-Knower, "Cookery Academia," 197.
54. Henry Notaker, "Printed Cookbooks: Food History, Book History, and Literature," *Food and History* 10, no. 2 (2012): 150, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.FOOD.1.103309.
55. Melissa McMullan and Joanna Cobley, "Lessons in Ephemera: Teaching and Learning through Cultural Heritage Collections," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 18, no. 2 (2017): 102.
56. Janet Mitchell, "Cookbooks as a Social and Historical Document: A Scottish Case Study," *Food Service Technology* 1, no. 1 (2001): 21, https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1471-5740.2001.00002.x.
57. Notaker, "Printed Cookbooks," 132.

essential and potentially profoundly misleading" as research sources, observing that it is generally more useful to determine why a particular book has been written than take its contents at face value.[58] Inasmuch as this question holds relevance for many historical and cultural inquiries, cookbooks can be useful sources for these avenues of research when approached properly. Cookbooks cannot tell us exactly what people cooked and ate, for example, but they can show the range of dishes available to the home cook.[59] They testify to availability of ingredients and technologies, as well as to people's ideas about health and nutrition.[60] They help us understand people's relationship to food, which changes over time, as well as how people learn to cook.[61] Tobias explained that, as cookbooks are "central to the establishment of the socially sanctioned ordering of the private sphere, they present a valuable resource for cultural studies."[62] Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato push this notion further, arguing that cookbooks are not "mere barometers of cultural sensibilities"; they are also capable of influencing or actually creating food culture.[63]

Beyond their obvious use as tools for the hobbyist,[64] characterizing the potential scope of cookbooks as information sources is not straightforward. Within food studies, the invisible line Wilk identified dividing culture-focused approaches to food from the food sciences holds true here, roughly separating the disciplines in which cookbooks can be useful sources from those in which they generally (though far from absolutely) are not. In addition, any number of scholars are approaching food from firmly within their own disciplines, their interest in interfacing with the larger food studies scholarly community contingent or nonexistent. Overall, as observed in the scholarship, cookbooks are used in three distinct but frequently combined and integrated ways. As *record*, cookbooks illuminate food habits, how various peoples procure or produce food and how they cook and eat it, in the present day as well as recent recorded history. As *artifact*, cookbooks illustrate aspects of the broader culture in which the books and recipes were created, serving as a means of understanding people or groups both contemporary and historical. As *text*, cookbooks communicate rhetorical messages (written and visual) involving food—which are generally about much more than just food—and can be studied as models of general rhetoric or style, of particular genres, or of food writing in particular.

58. Jeremy MacClancy, "Food, Identity, Identification," in *Researching Food Habits*, eds. Jeremy MacClancy and Helen Macbeth (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2004), 65.
59. Liora Gvion, "What's Cooking in America? Cookbooks Narrate Ethnicity: 1850–1990," *Food, Culture & Society* 12, no. 1 (2007): 57, https://doi.org/10.2752/155280109X368660.
60. Notaker, "Printed Cookbooks," 132.
61. Gillian Crowther, *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 138.
62. Tobias, "Early American Cookbooks as Cultural Artifacts," 17.
63. Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato, *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 2.
64. See Hartel, "The Serious Leisure Frontier in Library and Information Science," 228–38.

Cookbooks are complex primary sources for research: they can be overt sources of information or offer data more implicitly. Generally, they work on both levels at once, requiring students to negotiate the distinction between the two and the gray areas in between. For example, *The Sewanee Cook Book,*[65] published in 1920, purports to chronicle both the basic recipes every cook from the mountain South would know and the recipes specific to this local Tennessee community—which turn out to originate from all over the greater South. As it highlights the contributions of different Southern cuisines to this unlikely cosmopolis, which may be important empirical data, just its title page communicates something less direct but no less important about gender norms: the author presents herself as both Mrs. George Augustine Washington and the former Queenie Woods. There is also telling tension within the book's rhetorical framing: despite selling a narrative of the frontier, its very title points to the mythology of the plantation. Cookbooks also help contextualize, corroborate, or complicate other sources, primary and secondary. For instance, one expects "soul food" cookbooks to emerge from the South or from the African American diaspora in Harlem or Oakland;[66] one does not necessarily expect such books to represent Arkansas, Ohio, or Oregon.[67] Cookbooks also serve as a personal or cultural record where such a record does not exist otherwise. For instance, the compiled recipes of African American women like Viola Lampkin Brown and Mrs. Walter Tillman may be the only record they leave behind, at least in writing.[68] However, as print culture, cookbooks can also reflect society's usual processes of marginalization. For example, the food of the poorer classes has often been treated as unworthy of recording,[69] and the cuisine of oral cultures may fall between the cracks or be subject to damaging interpretation by outsiders. Individual cookbooks or the genre as a whole can be used to open broader discussions of the gaps and silences in the historical and archival record.

Cookbooks can also play interesting pedagogical roles outside of the context of the research assignment. They point to the unconventional nature of primary sources, occupying a middle ground between rare books and archival materials. For instance, self-published charity cookbooks like the *Heavenly Recipes: Oak Grove*

65. Queenie Woods Washington, *Sewanee Cook Book: A Collection of Autographed Receipts from Southern Homes and Plantations* (Nashville, TN: Baird-Ward, 1958).

66. See the following: Ruth Jackson, Ruth Jackson's *Soulfood Cookbook, Plains, Georgia* (Memphis, TN: Wimmer Bros. Books, 1978); *Sylvia Woods and Christopher Styler, Sylvia's Soul Food: Recipes from Harlem's World Famous Restaurant* (New York, NY: Hearst Books, 1992); and Dorothy Kuffman, *West Oakland Soul Food Cook Book* (Oakland, CA: Peter Maurin, 1970).

67. Dorothy Brackin, *Arkansas Soul Foods* (1969); Delma W. Millsap, *The Way I Do Things* (Columbus, OH: Cook Book, 1974); Cleophas C. Limbrick, *Cookin' with Cleophas: Straight from the Heart Southern Cuisine with a Northern Flair "Soul Food,"* (Portland, OR: 1996).

68. Viola Lampkin, *Viola's Favorite Recipes* (Olathe, KS: Cookbook Publishers, 1988); Mrs. Walter Tillman, and Oscar A. Rogers, *My Mother Cooked My Way through Harvard with These Creole Recipes* (Jackson, MS: Oscar A. Rogers, Jr., 1977).

69. Tobias, "Early American Cookbooks as Cultural Artifacts," 7.

AME Zion Church Friends & Family Cookbook and *Viking Vittles: Favorite Recipes of Huffman High Band*[70] defy the usual techniques for evaluating book sources: they are published but unresearched and unmediated by an editor, familiar and informal like manuscript items but mass produced. Cookbooks pair dynamically with other types of materials for comparison and contrast, primarily personal items like diaries, scrapbooks, or memoirs; and food-related materials, like handwritten "receipt books," recipes clipped from food packages or periodicals, and brand-promotion pamphlets. Familiar and deceptively straightforward, they are disarming items with which to practice document analysis. As generally sturdy objects (excepting older specimens, which may exhibit the same structural problems as any older books), they provide a low-stakes and less anxiety-inducing scenario for introducing artifactual literacy (that is, how to handle and "read" an artifact). Finally, cookbooks allow for much pedagogical flexibility; they may be examined individually or as a corpus, analyzed by close reading of the text or for broader themes, and facilitate individual work or group activity.

Points of Analysis

Cookbooks are a heterogenous genre, allowing for multiple avenues of analysis. Cookbooks can represent cooking styles from the regional to the national or from a particular ethnic, religious, or cultural group, reinforcing or exploding our understanding of these communities and their food, depending on the purpose of the book and its audience. For example, a 1983 cookbook for a particular Lutheran Church in Wisconsin is a treasure trove of Norwegian heritage recipes, a historical reality that may be news to a transplant to the region but not to a local.[71] Cookbooks can, of course, be created to highlight just about any aspect of cuisine, such as a specific ingredient, food category, health restriction, or dietary preference; or focus on practical factors like learning unfamiliar cooking technologies, ease of preparation, time constraints, or budgetary realities. Each of these choices reflects something about the person or society that produced it, about the role of cooking and eating in daily life. For instance, an early 1970s volume, *The How-Not-to-Miss-the-Cocktail-Hour Cookbook*,[72] explicitly puts the focus on ease and simplicity in cooking for dinner parties, so as to allow the cook to spend more time out of the kitchen, socializing. It paints a picture of the middle class: its focus on entertaining implies leisure time and disposable income, but its concern with the hosts staying out of the kitchen acknowledges that they do their own food preparation. It also shows a rigid separation of the kitchen and cook from the social sphere that may

70. *Heavenly Recipes: Oak Grove AME Zion Church Friends & Family Cookbook* [Erwin, NC] (Collierville, TN: Fundcraft Publishing, 1996); *Viking Vittles: Favorite Recipes of Huffman High Band* [Birmingham, AL] (Lenexa, KS: Cookbook Publishers, 1983).

71. *Vaer Så God: A Treasury of Recipes* (DeForest, WI: Christ Lutheran Church, 1983).

72. Edward W. Lowman and Robert E. O'Donnell, *The How-Not-to-Miss-the-Cocktail-Hour Cookbook* (New York, NY: D. McKay Co., 1971).

stem from things beyond class, including gender and culturally determined norms surrounding hospitality.

Cookbooks can be organized in a variety of ways, which may also become a site of investigation. *What Cooks in Suburbia,*[73] published in 1961, uses the days of the week to order its recipes, reflecting its emphasis on cooking for everyday needs rather than special occasions. On the other hand, 1995's *A Kwanzaa Celebration*[74] is organized by the days of the holiday it focuses on. Some books, like the 1913 volume *Fifty-two Sunday Dinners*, present groups of recipes, providing guidance on planning a whole menu.[75] Even in those that stick to the tried-and-true breakdown by course or part of the meal, the arrangement of sections—and what is included in them—can be illustrative. What does "vegetables" really mean if it includes things like macaroni and cheese or ambrosia salad? Should casseroles get their own section, and is "hot dish" a recipe or a category of recipes? Do punches necessitate a section for beverages, or should there be a section for parties, even if it also includes foods as disparate as Mexican wedding cookies and spinach-artichoke dip?

However they are structured, cookbooks can be viewed from multiple perspectives of creation, especially authorship, purpose, and audience. Authorship may be personal (gathering one's own recipes) or editorial (gathering the recipes of others), communal (multiple sources presented with a single voice) or composite (multiple sources acknowledged as such). The creator may or may not have a clear reason or much authority for producing a cookbook, especially among offerings from celebrities. For example, writer Maya Angelou was known to be a good home cook, and the recipes in her book reflect things she prepared herself, from recipes handed down in her family; on the other hand, actress Mo'Nique clearly acted primarily as creative director of her cookbook, which has a co-author and credits celebrity chef G. Garvin as "recipe consultant."[76] In either case, the author's choices can be evaluated, in context. A cookbook's purpose can be expressive (for example, Billi Gordon's satirical *Eat This Book*, 1987), instructive (as with the late 19th century classic *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* by Fannie Merritt Farmer), or even commercial (like the *"Gone with the Wind" Cook Book*, an advertisement for Pebeco toothpaste coinciding with the 1939 movie), sometimes all at once, modes

73. Lila Perl, *What Cooks in Suburbia* (New York, NY: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1961).
74. Angela Shelf Medearis, *A Kwanzaa Celebration: Festive Recipes and Homemade Gifts from an African-American Kitchen* (New York, NY: Dutton, 1995).
75. Elizabeth O. Hiller, *Fifty-Two Sunday Dinners: A Book of Recipes, Arranged on a Unique Plan, Combining Helpful Suggestions for Appetizing, Well-Balanced Menus, with All the Newest Ideas and Latest Discoveries in the Preparation of Tasty, Wholesome Cookery* (Chicago, IL: N.K. Fairbank Co., 1913).
76. Maya Angelou, *Hallelujah! The Welcome Table* (New York, NY: Random House, 2004); Mo'Nique and Sherri McGee McCovey, *Skinny Cooks Can't Be Trusted* (New York, NY: Amistad, 2006).

and purposes that interact in interesting ways.[77] For instance, the *Melrose Plantation Cookbook* celebrates the history of that Louisiana estate and the work of its longtime cook, noted African American artist Clementine Hunter, but its tone and contents are shaped by not just its authorship by one of the plantation's white owners but also its use as a fundraiser and promotional tool of its restaurant.[78] Overall, a cookbook can be aimed at groups that are fairly homogenous or completely variable and that audience can fall along just about any social and cultural spectrums one might imagine, including level of experience and attitude about cooking.[79] One can examine how the cookbook genre changes based on the creator, purpose, and audience, or how those aspects of the rhetorical situation are in turn shaped to fit into a cookbook. When writers begin to combine recipes or the cookbook format with other genres and modes of expression—like the traditional storytelling of *The Griots' Cookbook* or the humor of *Being Dead Is No Excuse: The Official Southern Ladies Guide to Hosting the Perfect Funeral* [80]—then such questions are more complex and, one hopes, rewarding.

Case Studies

My experience with cookbooks as research sources and teaching tools is based in the holdings of the W.S. Hoole Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama, a large public research institution. Our cookbooks total approximately 1,500 volumes across four collections, notably the David Walker Lupton African American Cookbook Collection.[81] As a consequence of our general collection development policy, those that are not in the Lupton Collection are overwhelmingly from the Southern United States, and they largely date from the mid-nineteenth through late twentieth centuries. Class reading room visits to see cookbooks have all been initiated by the instructor rather than stemming from directed outreach efforts. This is undoubtedly due to the existence of the Lupton Collection, since requests have generally centered on those materials even when others would have also been appropriate or indeed more useful. This suggests that even an engaged and knowl-

77. Billi Gordon, *Eat This Book: The Last Diet Book* (San Francisco, CA: West Graphics, 1987); Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Co., 1924); "Gone with the Wind" *Cook Book: A Gift with Your Purchase of Pebeco Toothpaste* (Bloomfield, NJ: Lehn & Fink Products Corp., 1939).

78. Francois Mignon and Clementine Hunter, *Melrose Plantation Cookbook* (Natchitoches, LA: Baker Print & Office Supply, 1956).

79. Memorably, Peg Bracken's *The I Hate to Cook Book* (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960) was explicitly written for the person finding themselves in the role of cook when they would rather not.

80. Alice McGill, Mary Carter Smith, and Elmira Washington, *The Griots' Cookbook: Rare and Well-Done* (Columbia, MD: C.H. Fairfax Co., 1985); Gayden Metcalfe and Charlotte Hays, *Being Dead Is No Excuse: The Official Southern Ladies Guide to Hosting the Perfect Funeral* (New York, NY: Miramax Books, 2005).

81. https://www.lib.ua.edu/collections/the-david-walker-lupton-african-american-cookbook-collection/.

edgeable local scholarly foodways community may not be aware of all the possibilities on offer for research: that is, these scholars may not know that cookbooks can be a part of general historical collections. (They may, in fact, have found this to be true.) Additionally, one of the instructors approached me because of general collections outreach—a public exhibit based in these collections—which alerted her to these holdings and prompted her to consider them for her course. Most instruction sessions involving cookbooks have focused on cookbooks as artifacts or as texts, using activities that are typically focused on practicing critical thinking and document analysis. However, these activities frequently served to introduce materials that might be used in sundry current or future course assignments and projects.

The following examples indicate some of the variety I have experienced in teaching and researching with cookbooks, in terms of professor's disciplinary background, course subject, learning outcomes, and pedagogical approaches. I collaborated with all four instructors discussed below on more than one occasion, in some cases for different cookbook-related courses and course assignments. This is possible because in each case we have nurtured productive, balanced collaborations wherein both instructor and librarian feel comfortable suggesting alterations to the list of materials pulled for the visit or the approach to activities. Although the distribution of labor and responsibility was different in each example, it was vital to student learning both that the instructors took advantage of my expertise and valued my general observations about and approaches to cookbooks, and that I encouraged them to inflect this with the perspective of the course or discipline. Overall, only one of these four instructors was especially experienced with food studies as a research focus or methodology. The others apparently found food to be approachable to nonexperts, themselves and their students alike, although they of course remained experts in disciplinary methods of rhetorical, social, cultural, or historical analysis, which were generally the aims of their courses. Also note that all of these were special topics courses in humanities departments or interdisciplinary programs. The specific titles and descriptions of these courses are not found when searching the catalog, which reflects only a generic scope and aim. However, they clearly represent a rich field of possible curricular collaborations and interactions; so, when seeking those out, it is worth the effort to look for course descriptions on departmental websites or solicit them from faculty.

Southern Foodways

This course was a specific iteration of a junior-level thematic seminar for an interdisciplinary living-learning community. The instructor was an environmental anthropologist, but the course was designed for novice scholars outside his discipline. Each of the class sessions involved first cooking and eating a meal; immediately after one of these sessions, the class made a visit to the reading room. The instructor

provided a list of ten titles to examine, which we used during our first collaboration, when I was still fresh in the position. I made some additions for a subsequent visit, less to round out their view of the collection than to identify similar and similarly engaging items—the examination of strong examples was the focus of the visit. However, because they would potentially be using cookbooks in a research assignment, I centered the class discussion on source evaluation: specifically, how normal tools for evaluating secondary sources are not very useful when it comes to primary sources, which can include published items like cookbooks. I also asked the students to consider the scope of usefulness for personal sources, weighing their valuable first-hand insights against their limited point of view and inherent bias. Both discussion points were meant to inform their current project and to increase their overall information literacy competency. As an activity, each student chose one book and considered the following instructions, delivered verbally:

- Who created this?
- What gives him or her authority?
- What does this want to communicate? Is it successful?
- What else do you learn from this?

The instructor took a more active role in engaging students in this exploration, helping turn their efforts toward sites of analysis and observations especially germane to course and assignment goals. Takeaway: It is not necessary to exhibit an excessive number of cookbooks to demonstrate the usefulness of the collection for research. Encounters with a small, well-curated group of items will communicate how these items may be evaluated and integrated, which is better than a failed attempt at breadth.

Global Foodways

This course was a specific iteration of Advanced Studies in Writing, a senior-level English course. The instructor's specialization was American literature, but she regularly taught undergraduate writing, and this was not our first collaboration in food-related pedagogy. In the context of student-chosen topics in world cuisine, special collections materials were presented literally alongside those from the main library; cookbooks were treated as a genre, irrespective of location in all but the dimension of access. The discussion and activities of the class visit supported various assignments for which cookbooks may or may not serve as sources, including a recipe narrative, a restaurant review, an informational interview, a geographical analysis, and a literature review. All of these were to be included on the student's webpage, which was linked to the class website. In the session, the instructor ran a source analysis activity, using a list of a dozen or so books that represented her choices and my additions, grounded in the students' established topics. While the

instructor wanted to retain a high degree of control over the materials and activities, she was also receptive to collaboration and input at all stages, notably, in the pre-semester time of course planning and assignment writing. With such intentional and considered curricular integration, I did not need to be in the driver's seat for the session. Overall, putting the role of special collections in perspective was key, especially regarding the reason for the visit: to help students find good sources for their assignments, whatever and wherever they were, not to force them to use historical cookbooks. Rather than be a limitation, this allowed us to demonstrate that special collections materials can be discovered and used in the same ways as more familiar research materials. Takeaway: Cookbooks often span regular research collections and historical collections, providing a unique opportunity for librarians in both settings to demonstrate primary source discovery and integration.

Food for Thought

This course was a specific iteration of Perspectives in the Humanities, a sophomore-level course in an interdisciplinary program. The instructor's research focus was gender and sexuality in popular culture, so the course was not taught from a strong food studies standpoint but more as a general humanities course. It was a service learning seminar that incorporated growing and cooking food with traditional classroom assignments and activities. The visit was added to the course calendar late in the semester, on the spur of the moment, so it was not integrated with a particular assignment; nevertheless, it was a hands-on learning activity that supported course goals. In the session, we discussed what one can learn from cookbooks, using six show-and-tell examples the instructor asked me to select, given my familiarity with the materials and her aim to introduce the genre more than present specific content. After some discussion, an activity had students individually or in pairs perusing the items and choosing one for analysis, which they would later informally report out to the class. They were guided by a worksheet I provided (see appendix), designed to walk them through important broad elements of analysis for cookbooks—introductory material, organization, and recipes—via specific questions. For example, under recipes, they were asked to examine the kinds of ingredients used and consider what these indicated about the place and time in which the book was created, recognizing what foods the readers had access to and how those foods were preserved. Takeaway: While students can carry out cookbook analysis without a structured activity, some scaffolding, like the modeling and guidance built into a worksheet, brings better—and more focused—results without being burdensome to create or use.

Radical Stitches

Subtitled "Forming Identity Through the Creation of Texts," this course was a specific iteration of a junior-level special topics Honors College seminar. The instructor had a degree in English with a focus on women's studies, and she was interested in

cookbooks as a type of women's alternative text comparable to a quilt. The session was part of a two-visit sequence, the first focused on cookbooks and the second on diaries. The first time we collaborated, a single session was divided between diaries and cookbooks. Once she realized how much time each would take to contextualize, she reworked her syllabus for subsequent semesters to allow for two visits, with activities and learning outcomes tailored to each. For our cookbooks session under the two-session model, I chose enough examples such that each student could have one to examine, as requested by the instructor, selecting solely on the strength of each item's prefatory material. After some general co-led discussion about how women's stories are reflected in cookbooks, students were asked to take one of the cookbooks and begin a writing assignment about it, previously given them by the instructor. For future visits, I would negotiate for an activity they could complete during the visit, enabling me to more easily gauge their learning in the moment and by collecting copies of their work. It is notable that the cookbook session, while not more intellectually challenging than the diary session, involved less intrinsic cognitive load—the cookbooks contained no cursive and involved less unfamiliar and confusing personal or historical context, so students could devote more time to analysis of their items. Takeaway: Cookbooks are uniquely suited to allow students to explore social history via primary sources when they can't read handwritten materials.

Conclusion

Cookbooks are underused but rewarding sources that instructors may not think to introduce to students. They are adaptable to many disciplines, but (maybe more importantly), they are primary sources, the tools of advanced research. Assignments that ask students to get beyond merely modeling the behavior of advanced scholars and actually participate in a disciplinary conversation in a meaningful, often public-facing way are increasingly important to the undergraduate curriculum. As teaching tools, cookbooks are accessible for learners at multiple levels, in part because they do not require specialized knowledge, although they are also rich enough for more advanced or discipline-focused interrogation. They are excellent for exploring history, culture, and identity, or for practicing critical thinking, rhetorical analysis, or writing. Above all, cookbooks are fun. Generally light in tone, they are filled with dishes that may bring up fond memories for students or spark their creativity. If nothing else, recipe oddities will demand attention, from the delightful to the appalling, ensuring that any interpersonal ice is broken quickly. For all these reasons, it is worth getting to know one's local cookery collections. Even if there is more quality than quantity, these items can point students and instructors in food-focused courses toward the genre and suggest its further exploration elsewhere—in databases of digitized historical texts (such as HathiTrust Digital Library, Internet Archive, or Google Books), on the shelves of the local public library or secondhand book store, or tucked into a cabinet above a family member's stove.

APPENDIX. Analyzing Primary Sources: Cookbooks

Look at the introductory material.

> Who created this book? What are his or her credentials for writing about food and cooking? Do you trust this creator as an authority on the subject? Why or why not?

Look at the table of contents.

> How is the book organized? What does this tell you about how it is meant to be used? Is this arrangement effective? Why or why not?

Look at a few of the recipes.

> What kinds of ingredients are listed? What does this tell you about the time period in which the book was created?

> How are the directions written? What does this tell you about the book's target audience?