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**Raw Food Movement**, see *Vegetarianism*

**RC Cola**, see *Soda Drinks*

## Recipes

Recipes, in America, as in the rest of the world, are the ideas and the instructions for handling foods and preparing particular dishes. Although directions for cooking exist in oral form, the historical record is derived mainly from those that are written down, and this account of the development of the recipe in America is based on the written record.

From the times of earliest settlement in the New World, the new immigrants brought their recipes with them. Prominent among the early compilations was a seventeenth-century work, *De Verstandige Kock (The Sensible Cook)*, a book brought by Dutch settlers, whose recipes used the simple, abbreviated forms of the period:

*To Make Meatballs. Take veal with veal-fat chopped, add to it mace, nutmeg, salt, pepper, knead it together, then you can make [meatballs] from it as large or as small as you please, also all of it is fried in the pan as one large meatball. Many take a few of the outside peels thinly pared of oranges or lemons, cut very fine. It gives a very good smell and flavor.*

The informal, permissive character of the instructions is apparent, based on the assumption that the user of the book was generally knowledgeable about ingredients, about cooking methods, and about the character of a particular dish and the way it should taste. The recipe was basically a set of hints and guidelines, informal in character, often with a suggestion that the reader was being addressed personally—one cook to another. This can also be seen in another major cookbook that immigrants brought with them, Hannah Glasse's legendary *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (1747; first American edition, 1805):

*To Make an Eel Pie. Make a good crust; clean, gut, and wash your eels very well, then cut them in pieces half as long as your finger; season them with pepper, salt and a little mace to your palate, either high or low. Fill your dish with eels, and put as much water as the dish will hold; put on your cover and bake them well.*

Many of the early recipe collections were not published books but handwritten household journals, passed from mother to daughter, each generation adding its own materials and annotations. One of the most famous, which began in England, perhaps in the early 1600s, migrated to America with the Custis family, and it was a widowed Custis daughter-in-law, born Martha Dandridge, who took the book into her second marriage—to George Washington—perhaps making some contributions of her own. The tone, from *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* (orthography modernized), is familiar:

*A Hash of Mutton. Take a boiled leg of mutton and mince both fat and lean together and break the bone to lie in the dish. Stew it betwixt two dishes with water and good store of capers. When it is enough, put in as much salt and verjuice as will season it, and a piece of butter, if you please, with an anchovy, and so serve it up.*

In 1796, the first book written by an American-born woman and published in America appeared. Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery* was a conscientious attempt to offer a "treatise . . . calculated for the improvement of Females in America," but the recipes still shared the brisk, simple, cook-to-cook form of address of many of its predecessors:

*Baked Custard. Four eggs beat and put to one quart of cream, sweetened to your taste, half a nutmeg, and a little cream—bake.*

As long as cooks were familiar with ingredients and the desired outcome, cooking depended on aide-mémoire—reminders about the food people knew and the observations they had made in their home kitchens as family members

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*Appendix to the Art of Cookery.*

*To make Hamburg Sausages.*

**T**AKE a Pound of Beef, mince it very small, with half a Pound of the best Suet; then mix three Quarters of a Pound of Suet cut in large Pieces; then season it with Pepper, Cloves, Nutmeg, a great Quantity of Garlick cut small, some white Wine Vinegar, some Bay Salt, and common Salt, a Glaſs of red Wine, and one of Rum; mix all this very well together; then take the largest Gut you can find, and stuff it very tight; then hang it up a Chimney, and ſmoke it with Saw-duſt for a Week or ten Days; hang them in the Air, till they are dry, and they will keep a Year. They are very good boiled in Peas Porridge, and roasted with toaſted Bread under it, or in an Amlet.

**Recipe.** Eighteenth-century beef sausage. *Culinary Archives & Museum at Johnson & Wales University, Providence, R.I.*

and servants cooked. What was called for was good taste and common sense. From the 1833 edition of Lydia Maria Child's *American Frugal Housewife* (originally 1828):

*Bread, Yeast, &c. It is more difficult to give rules for making bread than for anything else; it depends so much on judgment and experience. In summer, bread should be mixed with cold water; during a chilly, damp spell, the water should be slightly warm; in severe cold weather, it should be mixed quite warm, and set in a warm place during the night. If your yeast is new and lively, a small quantity will make the bread rise; if it be old and heavy, it will take more. In these things I believe wisdom must be gained by a few mistakes.*

By the 1840s and 1850s a number of changes came into play that would have profound impact on the character of the recipe. Many of the household helpers who were actively involved in cooking began to abandon domestic service for opportunities in the outside world—factory work and other jobs generated by the Industrial Revolution, in addition to immigration into the expanding frontier as the new nation surged westward. As domestic servants left, those who drew up menus and supervised the preparation of meals found that they were charged with carrying out the kitchen work themselves, and they were often ill equipped to do so.

Increasingly, the details of food preparation were no longer self-apparent, and what was called for were more specific, more instructional recipes—recipes that assumed less and left less to chance. Thus there is in a Civil War-era book, *Mrs. Hill's New Cook Book* (1867), a degree of explicitness seldom seen earlier, even for relatively simple dishes:

*To Boil Grits. Wash them in several waters, rubbing between the hands well until all the bran is separated from the white of the grain. When perfectly white and clean, pour over boiling water; let it set a few moments. Put the grits to boil in a well-covered stew-pan (lined with tin or porcelain is best); cover with plenty of water. Salt the water to taste; boil until the grain is soft, keeping the cover on. Should there be too much water when the grits are nearly done, take off the cover until the water is sufficiently reduced; if there is a deficiency, supply it by adding hot water. Grits should be boiled slowly, to give them time to swell, and plenty of water used. The hominy when done should be moist, neither very dry nor wet.*

This period also saw the growth of cooking schools to serve the needs of those who could no longer get training at home, and the schools, such as the immensely successful Boston Cooking School incorporated in 1879, committed themselves to produce and teach recipes that “worked”—that were error-free and replicable and that guaranteed uniform quality. This required a distinctly new approach in recipe writing. *Mrs. Lincoln's Boston Cook Book* (1884) by Mrs. D. A. Lincoln, the school's first principal, exemplifies the way in which the cook was now shielded:

*Break each egg into a cup, being careful not to break the yolk. . . . Cut cold meat into . . . half inch cubes, remove all the gristle and the crisp outside fat. . . . Mix [ingredients] in the order given and divide the dough into four equal parts.*

Many of the recipes provide precise measurements:  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup butter,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups pastry flour,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons cream of tartar, white of 8 eggs. This is truly domestic science.

Mrs. Lincoln's successor at the school, Fannie Farmer, developed these principles even further, adding to her own *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (1896) a section called “How to Measure,” asserting that “correct measurements are obviously necessary to insure the best results.” Her recipes frequently reach a new level of detail. Amelia Simmons's recipe for baked custard was just twenty-one words long; Fannie Farmer's runs more than six times that, not including a preceding ingredient list (itself a user-friendly device introduced gradually during the latter part of the nineteenth century).

Another factor that helped bring about longer, more detailed recipes was the expansion of the cooking repertoire in a country that was growing and diversifying rapidly, exposing its citizens progressively to foods that were new and unfamiliar—foods the “correctness” of whose taste could not be judged by the cook against memory or experience. Interestingly, there was probably more exposure to “foreign” foods in culturally heterogeneous Europe than there was in pre-melting pot America, except perhaps in the case of such cosmopolitan figures as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, who had both lived on the Continent.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, however, new immigrant foods began, modestly to be sure, to make inroads into the way Americans ate, and the immigrants themselves were gradually exposed to each other's foods as well as to those that made up America's more traditional

diet. Recipes under these circumstances could no longer suggest simply "as you please" but had to say, "do it as we tell you," and such works written for immigrants as *The Settlement Cookbook* (1903 and many editions thereafter) provided newcomers with straightforward, no-questions-asked versions of the mysterious new foods they would be encountering as they made their way in the New World. From the thirteenth edition of the *Settlement* (1924):

*Corn Chowder*

*1 can or 2 cups fresh corn,  
4 potatoes cut in slices,  
2 onions sliced,  
2 cups water,  
2 tablespoons flour,  
3 cups scalded milk,  
3 tablespoons fat drippings,*

*Salt and pepper.*

*Fry onion in fat, add flour, stirring often, so that the onion may not burn; add 2 cups water and potatoes. Cook until the potatoes are soft; add corn and milk, and cook corn 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, and serve.*

Equally explicit are recipes for Old World specialties that the immigrants were beginning to lose as their grandparents and parents were no longer present to provide the memories of methods and tastes that had made it possible to cook from the older style recipes.

Throughout the twentieth century, as cooking and eating habits changed, as more and more women went out to work, as more and more people ate meals outside the home, as the search for new tastes severed reliance on memories of foods "we all know," as new and unfamiliar ingredients came to the market, those who cooked became progressively unable to rely on instinct to guide their hands and their palates in the kitchen. Recipe writing in books, and in due course in women's magazines and in newspapers, began to cater increasingly to this diminution in knowledge, becoming increasingly specific, and in the process rendering the home cooks more and more dependent, undermining their ability to use the recipes as mere guides or reminders.

Recipes at the turn of the twenty-first century were, by far, longer and more explicit than ever before. As distinct from the personal, permissive suggestions to cooks in

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America as hoops and slingshots are from video games are such recipe instructions as:

*Lower the heat if the glaze at the bottom of the pan threatens to burn.*

*In a mortar, crush the peppercorns with a pestle.*

*Saute the sage leaves in the butter in a small saucepan over medium-high heat 2 minutes, or until crisp.*

*Add broth, wine, and saffron. Cook uncovered for 6 minutes. Stir well and cook for 6 minutes more.*

*Peel the avocados and halve them lengthwise, discarding the pits.*

*Rub the avocados well with the cut sides of the lemon.*

*½ teaspoon dried thyme, ¼ cup soft fresh white bread crumbs, 1 ounce dried French chanterelles, ½ cup bourbon, 2 tablespoons slivered toasted almonds.*

Although it is impossible to know in exactly what direction recipes will develop later in the century, there are some indications that simpler, more intuitive cooking is becoming attractive to increasing numbers of Americans. If this proves to be the case, there may be movement on the part of food writers and editors to provide their readers with more in the way of inspiration and guidance and less in the way of highly specific prescriptions. Certainly recipes that invite people to explore and to grow in their kitchens will, in the long run, produce better and more innovative cooking, thereby contributing to an overall improvement in the ways Americans eat.

[See also Advertising Cookbooklets and Recipes; Child, Lydia Maria; Cookbooks and Manuscripts; Cooking Manuscripts; Farmer; Fannie; Lincoln, Mrs.; Rorer, Sarah Tyson; Settlement Houses; Simmons, Amelia.]

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NACH WAXMAN

### Redenbacher, Orville

Born in 1907 in Brazil, Indiana, Redenbacher grew up on a one-hundred-acre farm. He studied agronomy and genetics at Purdue University and conducted research on the first popcorn hybrids. Upon graduation in 1928, he was hired as a vocational agricultural teacher at a high school, a position he held until May 1929. He was then employed as an assistant county agricultural agent in Terre Haute, Indiana. When the county agent moved to Indianapolis, Redenbacher took over his position and conducted a five-minute radio program beginning in 1930. He was the first county agent in the country to broadcast live from his office and the first to interview farmers in the field with a mobile unit.

In January 1940 Redenbacher began managing a twelve-hundred-acre farm in Princeton, Indiana, which was used for seed farming. He built a hybrid seed corn plant and experimented with popcorn hybrids. Under Redenbacher, Princeton Farms' operations grew by 50 percent. While at Princeton Farms, Redenbacher met Charles Bowman, the manager of the Purdue Ag Alumni Seed Implement Association, of Lafayette, Indiana. Redenbacher and Bowman went into partnership in 1951 and purchased the George F. Chester Seed Company at Boone Grove, Indiana. Popcorn was part of their hybrid field seed operation, and within a few years Redenbacher and Bowman became the world's largest supplier of hybrid popcorn seed. They also developed new hybrids. In 1965 their popcorn experimentation came up with a new variety, which expanded to nearly twice the size of commercial brands and left almost no unpopped kernels. This new variety was called Red Bow after the first three letters in Redenbacher's and Bowman's last names. For

five years Redenbacher tried to sell his new hybrid to the major processors. Unfortunately, it cost more to harvest, and yields were smaller, and consequently processors were not interested.

Redenbacher traveled at first to local stores in northern Indiana, hawking his popcorn to anyone who would buy it. In 1970 Redenbacher quit producing popcorn seed for other processors and concentrated on selling Red Bow. Redenbacher and Bowman visited a Chicago public relations firm that persuaded them to change the name from Red Bow to "Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn." As the price was higher than that of other popcorn, consumers needed to be convinced that Redenbacher's popcorn was of a better quality than its competitors. The advertising line "The World's Most Expensive Popcorn" emerged. Redenbacher and Bowman achieved regional success through word-of-mouth promotion and virtually no advertising, but they needed assistance to expand nationally. To market their gourmet popcorn, they teamed up in 1973 with Blue Plate Foods, a subsidiary of Hunt-Wesson Foods based in Fullerton, California. This connection permitted national advertising and a widespread distribution system.

When Hunt-Wesson sold Blue Plate Foods in 1974, Redenbacher's gourmet popcorn was so successful that Hunt kept the rights to it. In 1976 Orville Redenbacher's Gourmet Popping Corn business operations and property were sold to Hunt-Wesson, which launched a massive advertising campaign, starring Redenbacher himself, for their newly acquired product. He made hundreds of personal presentations a year and appeared in scores of television commercials. Redenbacher was one of America's most unlikely television stars. His bow tie, dark-framed spectacles, and midwestern accent convinced many that he was just an old country hick. The image worked. Consumers easily recognized the label adorned with Redenbacher's folksy image. Redenbacher's contract for television commercials was not renewed in 1994. While lounging in a hot tub in his home in Coronado, California, Redenbacher suffered a heart attack and drowned on September 19, 1995. His gourmet popping corn stands as his shining legacy.

[See also Advertising; Popcorn.]

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