



1982

# What's Cooking in Special Collections

Terry Warth  
*University of Kentucky*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kentucky-review>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

**Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.**

## Recommended Citation

Warth, Terry (1982) "What's Cooking in Special Collections," *The Kentucky Review*: Vol. 3 : No. 3 , Article 8.  
Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/kentucky-review/vol3/iss3/8>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Kentucky Libraries at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Kentucky Review by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact [UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu](mailto:UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu).

## What's Cooking in Special Collections

---

Terry Warth

The cookbooks in the Department of Special Collections at Margaret I. King Library run the gamut from *What's Cooking in Education across the Nation* (1969), with a recipe for elephant stew, to Lina Dunlap's *Candlelight Tea* (1910), with elegant recipes for champagne ice and oyster sandwiches; and they range chronologically from tomes of the last century, such as *The Carolina Housewife* (1847), in which the vocabulary is almost incomprehensible, to the *Courier Journal's* contemporary and stylish *Cissy Gregg's Cookbook and Guide to Gracious Living*. Cooks looking for new recipes, anthropologists and nutritionists studying food habits, sociologists evaluating our past and present, cooking cultists, folklorists, brides and grooms, and even people-who-hate-to-cook-but-are-obliged-to will find what they want in Special Collections. There are cookbooks devoted to single topics, such as seafood, relishes, cheeses, desserts, beer, apples, and even peanuts. There are books on related topics which are of interest to the dedicated cook: the care and feeding of children and the sick, herbals, housekeeping, and canning. A short paper cannot adequately describe the abundance. This article will therefore be limited first to discussing a selection of books from the eighteenth century to the present as they reflect changes in American life, and then calling attention to a few of the categories of books in the collection.

As far as we know, there were few cookbooks written in America before 1840. Most were intended for the middle and upper classes and seem to be based on the assumption that every family had at least a scullery maid or an old aunt or cousin if not a full battalion of servants to prepare the time-consuming recipes. Indeed, a recent book (*Americans and Their Servants*, by Daniel E. Sutherland, 1981) states that millions of American households had servants in the 1800s; as many as two million people (90 percent women) were in service by 1910, some 7 percent of the labor force. The book clearly shows that domestics were a more important part of American life than many people realize, and the cookbooks of

the period present a convincing case that this was true. The enormous amount of preparation required and the lack of adequate tools, refrigeration, and even condiments obviously put the cooks to all sorts of ingenious, laborious, and fanciful stratagems. The incredible number of dishes considered necessary at each meal is revealed in volume after volume.

Meat was the chief item in the American diet in the 1800s; often four or more kinds were served at a meal. Caroline B. Piercy (*Shaker Cook Book*, 1953), in writing about the early Shakers and what they ate and drank and why, says that they had a marked influence in bringing about a much more extensive use of whole grain, fruits, and vegetables, not only in the American diet but in that of Europeans as well. She notes that milk and water were not used as beverages in those days. Water was often scarce, and cows were not raised for their milk but for their hides or to breed oxen. Popular opinion that milk was not a wholesome beverage was probably correct, she says, because it was handled in a most unsanitary way: bottles for milk were not introduced until 1880 in Philadelphia. There were very few flavoring extracts in the United States until near mid-century, and almost every household made its own supply of rose water to flavor pies, cakes, puddings, and custards.

Although oysters were quite in vogue around 1840 (there were oyster parlors, oyster cellars, oyster saloons, and oyster bars as far west as Cincinnati), beef remained the favorite meat of Americans. *The Table* (1890) by Alessandro Filippini of Delmonico's emphasizes the American love affair with prime beef by complaining about the hazards of going abroad and being denied one's favorite steaks and roasts. The menus Filippini (leaning heavily on French terminology) suggests for each day in the year are typical for the well-to-do of that century. A standard breakfast menu: scrambled eggs with asparagus, broiled pompano, mutton hash, potatoes, and German pancakes; or, ham omelet, fish balls, calf's liver with bacon, creamed white potatoes, and whipped cream with kirsch. Breakfasts always included potatoes and ended with a sweet dish. Luncheons were much lighter, involving only five dishes as a rule: two meats, a vegetable, salad, and dessert. Dinners, of course, were a delight to any potential Gargantua. They began with seafood, soup, and hors d'oeuvres; went on into four meats, each accompanied by an elaborately prepared vegetable, and wound up with a salad, dessert, and coffee. There was no difference in

menus whether the season was winter or summer.

Mrs. Estelle Woods Wilcox, who lists breadmaking at the head of domestic accomplishments, dedicated *The New Buckeye Cook Book* (1888) "to those plucky housewives who master their work instead of allowing it to master them." How she expected this to be accomplished with the heavy meals she recommends for 1,288 pages is not well delineated. Of minor interest to librarians is her remark that the "fumes of a brimstone match will remove berry stains from a book, paper, or engraving."

Mary Virginia Terhune, writing under the pseudonym of Marion Harland (*House and Home*, 1889) relies heavily on starches to satisfy her hungry readers. An ordinary breakfast included grits, mutton chops, mashed potatoes, egg muffins, cold bread, toast, oranges, tea, and coffee. Her suggested lunches are somewhat skimpy, leading one to suspect that the lady of the house dined alone. While the number of dishes was moderate, however, the percentage of starches was not. Sample luncheon: roe omelet, steamed brown bread, stewed potatoes, crackers and cheese, cake and marmalade, and hot chocolate.

Marion Harland's 1875 cookbook, *Breakfast, Luncheon and Tea*, features croquettes, then new to the United States. Her breakfast menus incorporate all kinds, and she recommends a piquant sauce for them consisting of "a little currant jelly stirred into a good brown gravy." A chapter on allowances and budgets would doubtless delight a feminist of today. "Marriage is licensed beggary to a woman," she complains, and suggests an annual salary of \$1,850 for wives to cover their duties as housekeeper, nurse, and cook. She pities the poor housewife who has to beg for every dollar.

Harland's *Common Sense in the Household* (1871), while basically a cookbook, has many other items to recommend it. An amusing chapter on company starts with the golden rule: "Never pay a visit without notifying your hostess elect of your intention to thus favor her." Another dictum: "As to party and dinner giving be chary of undertaking what you cannot carry through successfully. Pretension is the ruin of more entertainments than ignorance or the lack of money."

An 1878 handbook by Eliza A. Youmans, *Lessons in Cookery*, has a supplement entitled "The Principles of Diet in Health and Disease" by Dr. Thomas K. Chambers. The doctor recommends feeding babies only milk until their teeth come in. He is also a firm

believer in "a little wine for thy stomach's sake."

An interesting translation of a French cookbook is Urbain Dubois's *Cosmopolitan Cookery* (1870). The opening chapter concerns the art of eating at table. "In order to eat at one's ease, and without automatic stiffness," he states, "one must first be seated commodiously, and perpendicularly, neither too high nor too low; the chest upright, at an equal distance from the back of the chair and from the table." He lists a number of 1867 bills of fare, including a dinner given by the Tsar. These meals usually had six courses, with a vegetable always served with dessert. Asparagus hollandaise was the most popular, but other choices were French beans, peas, artichokes, potatoes, and celery. A footnote explains that "American crackers" are "little dry biscuits similar to English pic-nic biscuits served at tea, only somewhat thicker and of the diameter of a crown piece." He suggests such pleasant touches as adding the head and tail of a pheasant to the poultry dish, or serving rabbit meat with the head intact and garnished by a sauce thickened with the blood of said rabbit.

None of the cookbooks in Special Collections mentions bacon and eggs for breakfast until considerably after World War I. *The Blue Grass Cook Book* (1903) by Mrs. Peter A. White lists the following meats appropriate for that meal: beef hash, lamb chops, sausage, beef stew, steak, deviled ham, hog's brains and feet, veal hash, tripe, broiled fish, and turkey hash.

Miss [Maria] Parloa's *New Cook Book* (1883) debates the merits of gas and oil stoves versus wood ranges: "One would not think of doing the cooking for a large family with one, or indeed two of them . . . [however] they are a great comfort in hot weather, many small families doing their entire cooking with them."

A good textbook for beginners was published in 1934 by the Kansas State Agricultural College entitled *Practical Cookery and the Etiquette and Service of the Table* (15th revised edition). Wood ranges were still in vogue, though it was noted that gas and electric stoves were increasing in number. Closed-unit ranges similar to modern Corning stoves were available, as were pressure cookers. Rules of etiquette are outlined, beginning with how to enter a dining room and advancing to general deportment ("Do not touch the hair while at table"). Other kinds of advice are offered: "Cultivate a firm steady hand while carving."

Menus were considerably lighter by the time Eva Roberta Robinson's 1913 *Lessons in Cooking through Preparation of Meals*

came out. She was concerned over the lack of ice and refrigeration. "A heavy gunny sack cloth dipped in water laid over a heavy box serves very well in summer" was the best she could suggest. Meals were still served with no distinction as to the season of the year. A breakfast in July had hot frankfurters with hot biscuits and coffee; one in December had cooked cereal and waffles. Her lunches consisted mostly of soup, bread and butter, marmalade, and coffee.

Lucille VanCleve Wallace's *Recollections and Recipes* (1976) describes a typical southwestern Kentucky Christmas dinner of the early 1900s: turkey and dressing, hot biscuits, mashed potatoes, candied sweet potatoes, escalloped oysters (still very popular in America sixty years after the original craze for them had subsided), peas or asparagus, celery, pickles, cranberry sauce, Waldorf salad, ambrosia, cake, mincemeat pie, and coffee.

The first noticeable hint in the collection that calories might be worth watching may be found in *The New Cookery* (1924) by Lenna Frances Cooper. She gives the number of calories in each suggested serving.

No collection would be complete without a copy of Irma Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking*. Any edition is a treat, and the third, published in 1943 in the middle of World War II, is especially interesting. When she began compiling it, there was no warning that ration cards would soon be rearing their ugly heads; and several emergency chapters had to be added to meet the difficulty. Sugarless dishes, meat substitutes, and meat stretchers were presented, which in these inflation-ridden times might be copied as earnestly as in wartime. Soybeans and peanuts were featured. Eleven pages are devoted to the non-rationed "innards" of animals: tongue, liver, brains, heart, etc. However, the Newburg dishes she suggests are generally too expensive these days to consider.

Acquisition emphasis in Special Collections has been on Kentucky cookery and food habits. However, since the implementation of the University of Kentucky Appalachian Studies Program, the collection is adding a varied and rich group of mountain regional cookbooks as well. Because it would be impossible to write about all the ones available in this area, only a few attention-catching volumes are presented.

The most entertaining of the Appalachian cookbooks is John A. Parris's *Mountain Cooking* (1978). Each chapter is devoted to one culinary subject, and the readable narrative recalls childhood memories and other family anecdotes associated with each dish. A

sample passage: "Oysters were only to be had at Thanksgiving and Christmas and came to Mr. Varner's market in barrels of salt brine. The Varner boys would sneak some of us in and charge us a penny to watch them swallow the raw oysters, something even the grown ups would never do." The formal recipes are given at the end of the book and cover such items as bear and dumplings, 'possum and sweet potatoes, and corn cob jelly. Nine pages are devoted to wild game recipes.

Lou Harshaw has a forty-page book covering only wild game: *Wild and Wonderful!* (1973). Its chapters are arranged environmentally—that is, by rivers, meadows, forests, "and other parts of this green land." It has quite excellent and easy-to-cook recipes from bear meat to frog legs.

*The Southern Appalachian Mountain Cookbook* (1964) edited by Ferne Shelton has over 175 rare old recipes. It includes beverages and wines, unusual recipes for candy ("apple leather") and desserts (persimmon pudding, tipsy cake, and moonshine pie). For a miscellaneous treat there is a recipe for pickled grapes.

*Southern Appalachia[n] Mountain Cookin'* (1974), compiled with cartoons by Louise and Bil [sic] Dwyer, also has unusual recipes accompanied by illustrations of "ol' timey cookin' utensils." It has an informative chapter on greens, with photographs of unfamiliar ones such as ramps, which "make garlic smell like Chanel No. 5. After one whiff of ramps, you'll either love them, or light out for the flatlands." (Ramp is a wild leek, a member of the onion family that causes a more powerful bad breath than onions do.)

Delmer Robinson's *Appalachian Hill Country Cook Book* (1980) mentions ramps, corn cob jelly, pepper jelly, and a cookie recipe that calls for hartshorn (baker's ammonia), a leavening that preceded today's baking powder. The Kentucky burgoo recipe on page sixteen is one of many in Special Collections. Robinson notes that the original recipe called for 800 pounds of beef, one dozen squirrels, and 240 fat hens for each one hundred gallons of the product. In addition, he includes recipes from the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. He maintains that while TV dinners are rampant in the hills, one may find as well gourmet quiche Lorraine, moussaka, sauerbraten, and Bibb lettuce cream soup, for all of which he gives recipes. His most fascinating recipe in the book is

## BALLOON WINE

1 13 oz. can frozen grape juice concentrate	1 package dry yeast 1 gallon jug 1 heavy '10-cent' balloon
4 1/2 cups sugar	

Combine concentrate, sugar and yeast in the jug. Fill with water to its shoulder and mix well. Tie on the balloon. Wait 21 days. If balloon deflates sooner, the wine is ready. If balloon blows off, merely replace it.

There is even an Appalachian foreign cookbook, *West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival Cookbook* (1980) by Martina Neely, which features recipes brought from Italy by early immigrants to Clarksburg. These dishes may still be enjoyed today in two restaurants there where second and third generation Italians preside over the kitchen. Each section has an interesting essay on the origins of the Italian foods listed. For example, we learn that the Crusaders brought sugar cane to Rome; previously Italians had to make do with grape syrup and honey for sweetening. Cheesecake was one of the earliest Roman desserts. An unusual recipe handed down through the generations provided a milk substitute in the absence of refrigeration:

## HOT COFFEE WITH EGG

1 egg yolk	1 cup hot strong coffee
1 teaspoon sugar	

Whip egg yolk with sugar until thickened and light yellow in color. Slowly stir hot coffee into egg mixture until well blended.

Many other foreign cookbooks may be found in Special Collections. Alice Miller Mitchell's *Oriental Cookbook* (1954) comes complete with chopsticks attached and has a good recipe for won ton soup, the oriental ravioli. *Oxfordshire Kitchen* (1977) quotes from a recipe of 1600 in the Ashmolean Museum: "Wild thyme gathered near the side of a hill where fairies used to be enables one to see the fairies." A "rhubarb flummery" is a quite



elegant dessert complete with a hearty dollop of Grand Marnier. Joan Poulson's *Old Yorkshire Recipes* (1977) opens with Yorkshire pudding and includes an old 1748 recipe for fine fritters: "Into half a pint of thick cream put four eggs well beaten, a little brandy, some nutmeg and ginger. Add enough flour to make a thick batter and fry in butter." The French are well represented; the most famous volume is by Brillat-Savarin: *Physiologie de goût; ou, Meditations de gastronomie transcendante* (1861).

Another major assortment in the department are those cookbooks compiled by amateurs, often regional and church groups. Frequently spiral bound and inexpensively produced, these volumes are usually put together for fund-raising purposes. The lack of consistency in the directions and the poor indexing often conceal many superb dishes. Generally, however, the recipes vary little from book to book except in a few regional efforts. To quote Karen Hess in a *New York Times* book review of 14 October 1973: "There is no branch of American publishing today where the listing of uncredited material has become such a standard procedure as in cuisine."

Publications of such diverse groups as the Louisville Bar Association Auxiliary (*You Be the Judge*, 1977), the First Baptist Church, Leitchfield, Kentucky (*New Cook Book of Fine Old Recipes*, 1974), and the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, Kentucky Chapter (*The Liberty Hall Cook Book*, 1963) are representative of this category. One of the better of these books—hardbound—is *Stay for Tea* (1948) compiled by the Woman's Club of the University of Kentucky. It was published for the benefit of the Frances Jewell McVey Memorial Scholarship Fund and contains many of Mrs. McVey's recipes for which Maxwell Place hospitality was justly famous. It has no index.

An interesting amateur cookbook is *The Key to Kentucky Kitchens* from Kappa Kappa Gamma, Lexington, Kentucky, Alumnae Association. Published in 1962, it leans heavily on turkey and chicken. Many desserts and candy recipes are included, which simply emphasizes—as so many Kentucky cookbooks do—that Kentuckians have a sweet tooth and it would be unthinkable to ignore the fact.

The *National Council of State Garden Clubs Cook Book* (1935) contains recipes contributed by thirty-three states. Kentucky and North Carolina are the best represented, with eight pages each. Ham recipes predominate. From Kentucky comes the famous punch

of Lexington's own Monsieur Giron:

### FRUIT PUNCH

Boil together to thick syrup 3 cups of sugar and 2 cups of water. Cool and add:

1 cup pineapple juice	1/2 cup orange juice
2 cups fresh straw- berry juice	1/2 cup lemon juice
	1 quart cold water

Chill thoroughly and when ready to serve pour over 1 quart of orange ice that has been placed in the punch bowl.

Mrs. A. J. Thaxton of the Millersburg Garden Club, who contributed the above recipe, goes on to say: "Monsieur Giron was a famous dancing teacher. His school was held in a ballroom over his confectioner's and caterer's shop in Lexington, Kentucky, in the latter part of the eighteenth century. These meetings were most exclusive and fashionable affairs, and he was famous for this delicious punch and his dainty assorted cakes."

There are a great many house cookbooks in Special Collections, such as *Kentucky Style Pork Cooking* (1978) published by the Kentucky Pork Producers Association, which includes carving tips, cooking times, and this amazing recipe:

### SAUSAGE CAKE

1 tbsp. cocoa	2 eggs
4 cups flour	1 pound pork sausage
1/2 tsp. salt	1 1/2 cup white sugar
1 tsp. baking powder	1 1/2 cup brown sugar
1 tsp. soda	1 cup raisins
1 tsp. nutmeg	1 cup nuts
1 tsp. allspice	2 cups sour milk
1 tsp. cloves	

Cook cocoa in a little water; cool. Mix dry ingredients except sugars; sift twice. Stir in slightly beaten eggs. Combine sausage and sugars; add raisins, nuts and milk. Stir in flour mixture. Add cocoa. Place in lightly greased and floured pan. Bake at 350 degrees until cake tests done. This cake is best 2-3 days after it is baked.

Probably the best of the home style cookbooks is *The Farmington Cookbook* (1974). It was designed to raise money for the restoration and preservation of Farmington, an 1810 Federal style house built by John Speed on the Bardstown Road in Louisville. It contains tested recipes, buying guides, tips, sensible directions, menu suggestions; and it recognizes that most hostesses nowadays have little or no help and must plan carefully.

For those seeking interesting reading between recipes and menus, *Who Says We Can't Cook!* (1955) by the Women's National Press Club should prove entertaining. Sample quotation: "In the process of eating my way across France (who said travel wasn't broadening?). . . ." One of the most enjoyable chapters is by Elizabeth Carpenter, a Washington correspondent (who later became Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson's press secretary). She writes of dinner at the White House (with menu) and of Washington dinners in general: "Quite possibly nowhere else in the world are so many filet mignons, so much pâté de fois gras, so many glasses of champagne consumed by so few people!"

Children are not neglected in the cookbook collection. The best book for youngsters is Sayre School's (Lexington, Kentucky) *Yummies for Tum mies* (1977). Simple and interesting, with clear directions and clever illustrations, it seems to be just the thing for beginners. One recipe starts with the basics: "With the electric blender turned off, put in all the ingredients, cover, turn on and process until smooth." Recipes are given for snacks, salads, sandwiches, beverages, and—predictably, the largest section—desserts.

Perhaps the most colorful and appealing book in Special Collections is *Kentucky Living Cookbook* (bicentennial edition, 1974) edited by Susan P. Arena. It incorporates many appetizing recipes and favorite menus from prominent Kentuckians. It proves, as many of the books do, that Kentuckians have a predilection for sweets, because there are more recipes for cake, candy, and jam than for any other type of food. That the Kentuckian's penchant for sweets extended back into the nineteenth century is illustrated by a closing recipe from Marion Flexner's *Out of Kentucky Kitchens* (1949):

#### MARY TODD'S WHITE CAKE

President Lincoln is said to have remarked that Mary

Todd's white cake was the best he had ever eaten. This confection was originated by Monsieur Giron, a Lexington caterer, on the occasion of Lafayette's visit to that city in 1825. The Todds got the recipe from him and treasured it ever after. . . .

1 cup butter	1 cup finely chopped
2 cups sugar	blanched almonds
3 cups flour	3 teaspoons baking
(sifted before	powder
measuring)	whites of 6 eggs
1 cup milk	1 teaspoon vanilla (or
	any other pre-
	ferred flavoring)

Cream butter and sugar, sift flour and baking powder together three times, and add to butter and sugar, alternating with the milk. Stir in the nutmeats and beat well. Then fold in the stiffly-beaten whites and the flavorings. Pour into a well-greased and floured pan. The old-fashioned, fluted copper pan with a center funnel was probably used originally. Bake one hour in a moderate oven, or cook until the cake tests done. Turn out on a wire rack and cool. This makes a large cake. The batter can be cut in half and baked in two 9-inch layers if desired. For a good basic white cake, omit almonds. Frost this cake with . . . [an] old-fashioned boiled white icing.