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POSTMODERN FEMINISM, HYPERTEXT, AND THE RHETORIC OF COOKING WEB
SITES

by
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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the ways cookbooks and their rhetorical dimensions have been re-imagined using hypertext and Web technology. Using the tenets of postmodern feminist rhetoric and Web design theory, the study considers how commercial cooking hypertexts construct users' identities. Although hypertext is a potentially empowering technology, democratizing rhetoric and knowledge making practices, commercial hypertext often circumscribes agency formation and prohibits participation. Participatory, constructive hypertexts are difficult to design and costly to maintain. Of the three sites studied, Epicurious.com, BettyCrocker.com, and FoodNetwork.com, only Epicurious.com encourages meaningful communication between users and between users and designers. In many ways, Epicurious.com conceives of its users as active agents. Most of its content celebrates many knowledge making practices traditionally considered feminine and embodied. In contrast, BettyCrocker.com and FoodNetwork.com rely on closed, proprietary systems designs to maintain their authority. Users have little opportunity to participate as active agents. In small ways, however, users can begin to deconstruct the hypertexts, to resist the standards and strictures of expertly created recipes by reporting variations and opinions. The features that most reflect the tenets of a constructive feminist hypertext make possible some small movements toward agency.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement	2
Research Questions	4
Organization.....	5
Project Significance	7
Limitations and Opposing Approaches.....	9
CHAPTER 2: THEORISTS IN THE KITCHEN	12
Gender and the Cookbook	12
Postmodernism and Feminism.....	19
Descartes and Dualism.....	24
Feminist Critiques of Rationalism	26
Foucault, Postmodernism, and Biopower	29
Technologies of the Self	36
Hypertext Theory	39
User Centered Design	39
Home Pages and Navigation.....	40
Sitemaps.....	41
Search Design	42
Design Reliability and Integrity.....	42
Interactivity	43
Interactivity, Agency, and Democracy	46
Hyperlinks.....	51
CHAPTER 3: METHODS	54
Feminist and Positivist Rhetoric	54
Web Usability	55
Visual Semiotics	57
Data Set.....	59
Betty Crocker	61
The Food Network	72
Epicurious	78
Methods and Data Set Summary.....	84

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS	86
Searching Food Destination Web Sites.....	89
Searching Epicurious.com	90
Searching FoodNetwork.com	94
Searching BettyCrocker.com	98
Epicurious Membership	101
Member Recipes	102
My Recipe Box	104
Recipe Reviews.....	105
Forums	107
FoodNetwork.Com Membership	111
Recipe Box.....	112
Recipe Reviews.....	113
BettyCrocker.com Membership.....	115
Recipe Box and Recipe Reviews	116
Blogs	119
Basic Cooking Instruction.....	126
Epicurious.com Basic Cooking Instruction	127
FoodNetwork.com Basic Cooking Instruction	137
BettyCrocker.com Basic Cooking Instruction	140
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	152
Knowledge Systems.....	152
A Feminist Hypertext Wishlist	157
Applied Research	165
REFERENCES	169

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Google search for keyword: recipe. September 8, 2006	60
Figure 2: BettyCrocker.com Homepage. September 8, 2006	63
Figure 3: The Betty Crocker Test Kitchens from <u>The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook</u>	64
Figure 4: Betty Crocker Test Kitchens 2006 from Bettycrocker.com. September 30, 2006	65
Figure 5: How-to Photograph from Cakes section of <u>The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook</u>	67
Figure 6: Toasting in the Kitchen from an entertaining page of BettyCrocker.com	69
Figure 7: BettyCrocker.com Homepage October 7, 2006	70
Figure 8: “Kids Meals” page from BettyCrocker.com. September 30, 2006	71
Figure 9: Food Network.com Homepage. September 15, 2006	73
Figure 10: FoodNetwork.com Primetime Television Programming	75
Figure 11: FoodNetwork.com Primetime Television Programming	76
Figure 12: Epicurius.com Homepage January 20, 2007	81
Figure 13: <u>Bon Appétit</u> Online on Epicurious.com September 30, 2006	82
Figure 14: Epicurious.com Search Results, July 20, 2007	93
Figure 15: FoodNetwork.com search results, July 20, 2007	97
Figure 16: BettyCrocker.com search results, March 3, 2007	100
Figure 17: My Recipe Box on Epicurious.com July 20, 2007	104
Figure 18: My Recipes on FoodNetwork.com, July 20, 2007	113
Figure 19: Grocery List on BettyCrocker.com July 21, 2007	115
Figure 20: Cooking Class Introduction on Epicurious.com July 4, 2007	133
Figure 21: Kitchen Notebook on Epicurious.com July 4, 2007	134
Figure 22: Tools of the Trade on Epicurious.com July 4, 2007	134
Figure 23: Technique Videos on Epicurious.com July 6, 2007	135
Figure 24: Basic Cooking Instruction on BettyCrocker.com July 12, 2007	141
Figure 25: From the Cakes section of The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook	147

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Welsh Rarebit is a simple dish of cheese, spices, and bread or crackers. It is not a common dish, though. Only three of my many cookbooks include a recipe for it. It was not easy to find in these three books either. In one, Welsh rarebit is the second recipe in a section titled “All-Day Breakfast.” This is a longish recipe with fifteen ingredients and six steps. The result is a tangy, crumbly muffin of cheese, mustard, rye, and Worcestershire sauce. In a much older book, Welsh rarebit is a simple soupy affair of cheese, beer, and a few spices served on toast and grilled tomatoes. Finally, in a book from 1912, Welsh rarebit is just plain old Baked Rarebit. The ingredients are the same as the others, but the method is very different. Fannie Farmer tells us here to layer the breadcrumbs, cheese, paprika, salt, and pepper, and then pour the beaten eggs and milk over the whole. Bake in a moderate oven for twenty-five minutes. Serve very hot. These recipes all sound very tasty, but as yet unsatisfied that I have learned all there is to learn about Welsh Rarebit, I point my Web browser to another cooking source, FoodNetwork.com.

When I’m stumped (what *is* Welsh rarebit anyway?), when I need a basic recipe, when I’m desperate for a substitution for buttermilk (sweet milk and vinegar by the way), I turn to two sources: [Betty Crocker’s Picture Cookbook](#) and FoodNetwork.com. In this case, Betty let me down. Not a peep about Welsh Rarebit, Baked Rarebit, or any other bits as far as I could tell. Betty’s index is none too simple to use, however. Unless you know your dish is a dessert, or a cake, or a meat dish, or some other kind of dish, you’re sunk. No ingredient indexes or recipe titles here. FoodNetwork.com, on the other hand, lets me search by recipe, by ingredients, by occasion, by mealtime, and even by celebrity chef. I can save the recipe once I find it to my electronic recipe box. I can print out the recipe in handy 3x5 or 4x6 index card sizes. I can post

my opinions about the results to the Food Network online community. I can offer my additions: I use a blend of peppery jalapeno cheese and mild cheddar instead of sharp and olive oil instead of vegetable oil. What I can't do is email FoodNetwork.com my suggestions (why not include recipe and ingredient histories?) or ask the chef questions (why does the cheese separate and get oily?). I cannot send Food Network my pitch for a Welsh rarebit holiday special unless I am the head of a television production company. So I print and file my newest recipe and move on to other sites.

After an hour surfing and searching three food Web sites, I have three different recipes and a brief history of Welsh rarebit—not Welsh and not rare and definitely not rabbit. The Columbia Guide to Standard American English claims Welsh Rarebit is likely a corrupted form of Welsh Rabbit, a poor man's dish meant to slur the Welsh who could not afford meat. I have serving suggestions: serve with burned sticky sausages for breakfast; with a fresh herb salad and sweet, firm sliced apples and pears for lunch; or with a lean roast pork tenderloin and sliced tomatoes, basil, and olive oil for dinner. I also have several observations and a few questions. Some of these sites are intuitive and flexible and so are easier to use than others. Some load quickly; some bog down even my broadband. Some welcome my participation and some don't.

Problem Statement

The size and depth of convergence-media hypertexts like FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com are overwhelming to even this experienced Web surfer and cook. Do site size and structure diminish my power as a visitor? Can I make a site and its products (recipes, wine, cookbooks, and kitchen equipment) my own? Do its producers even want me to? If users are primarily women (still the cooks in most American homes), how do these sites understand the

relationship of women to technology, cooking, and food? Do Web site interfaces shape the way users think or construct their identities as some hypertext theorists like Steven Johnson claim? I explore the rhetoric and design of industry leading cooking Web sites FoodNetwork.com, Epicurious.com, and [Betty Crocker.com](http://BettyCrocker.com). The purpose of this rhetorical analysis is to discover the epistemologies informing these sites and to determine the ways in which guiding epistemologies, and the designs that express them, construct site users' identities, grant or limit their agency, and normalize gender or class roles. This project also examines issues of how users construct agency within technologized environments. I argue that cooking hypertexts could be sites of contention for creating identity and could function as conduits for micro-resistance to the disciplinary powers of science and technology. I consider hypertext the key feature engendering resistance because hypertext has the potential to decenter authority and univocality. Hypertext is often multilinear, nonsequential, polyvocal, open-ended, and theoretically user-defined. These are also the characteristics of postmodern feminist rhetoric, a connection key to this project's central argument.

The study extends the theoretical work of Mark Bernstein, Diane Greco, George Landow, Wendy Morgan, and Stuart Moulthrop who all call for rhetorical analysis of hypertext structures. Moulthrop especially has called upon scholars to forge critical practices

emphasizing the contingency or 'iterability' of any discourse—its susceptibility to rearrangements and changes of context that may radically alter meaning . . .

Deconstructive hypertext may ultimately be the tool for formulating a true post-print rhetoric, a theory that accounts for the management of discourse in radically multiple and contingent contexts ("Beyond" 295-296).

This study takes up Moulthrop's challenge to theorize hypertext applications. Moulthrop and

other hypertext theorists rarely analyze commercial Web sites, however. They usually confine their studies to hypertext fiction and academic hypertexts, but hypertext today typically means the World Wide Web. So much of contemporary living radiates to and from Web space. To truly appreciate hypertext's power to deconstruct discourse, we have to go to where hypertext flourishes, and that is in commercial cyberspace. I contend that commercial cooking Web sites are fertile ground on which to test ideas about deconstructive and poststructuralist hypertext spaces. I apply hypertext theory and the practical design principles of Jakob Nielsen, Patrick J. Lynch, and Sarah Horton to three industry leading commercial hypertexts and consider whether and to what extent popular Web site designs achieve hypertext's disruptive, constructive potential.

Research Questions

1. The most basic question asks what theories of hypertext are operating here? What do the hypertext structures look like?
2. The next set of questions unravels the epistemologies guiding site structure and use. How open and negotiated are cooking Web sites? What fundamental beliefs about knowledge creation and knowledge sharing are at work under the code?
3. As cooking knowledge migrates to the World Wide Web, to what extent do gendered stereotypes about food preparation and its role in identity and subject formation go with it? Novero phrases the question this way: "in what ways do they aim at constructing women" (163)?
4. Finally, I consider whether the potentiality of hypertext (its interactivity, its flexibility, and its dynamism) might deconstruct "the discursive autonomy" of

positivism and scientific cookery (Moulthrop “Beyond” 295). Can cooking and cooking Web sites act as forms of micro-resistance to the dominant discourses on gender and knowledge-making practices? Clearly these sites are not just aimed at women, but since women are traditionally responsible for food and cooking, how might feminist theories of discourse structure site usability?

Organization

The project begins with an exploration of embodied feminism, what I define as a third wave feminism, a postmodern feminism. I contend that postmodern feminism could find its fullest expression in hypertext, a potentially collaborative, polyvocal, and multimodal technology. Hypertext is one of many possible self care practices, practices that encourage creativity, agency, and expression. Cooking, writing about cooking, and learning about cooking from others are three others. Online recipe collections have the potential to bring these three self care practices together. Cooking, contributing to a cooking Web site, and participating in a community of other cooks might then become forms of agency and self expression. But, then again, the commercial forces of cyberspace and the persistent gender stereotypes shaping American cooking instruction might never move the Web toward feminist rhetoric. Chapter two weaves together three strands of theory representing this movement through postmodern feminist epistemologies to hypertext theory to gender studies of cooking texts.

Chapter three details the data set and methodology for this study. I present the history of these three cooking and lifestyle brands in print, television, and online. I discuss the role each plays in the recipe industry and their audiences. My methodology is a rhetorical and structural analysis of each Web site. I draw on the rhetorical heuristics of hypertext theorists who call for

political and cultural assessments of hypertext. Postmodern feminist theory informs these heuristics. The attention here is to all of those elements in the rhetorical situation: purpose, audience, context, knowledge claims (evidence), arrangement, and style. An analysis of style considers rhetorical elements like sentence composition, figurative language, symbol, or pronouns. By knowledge claims I mean ethos, pathos, logos appeals, but also appeals to specific epistemologies: embodied, experiential, socially constructed, scientific, expert, and/or individualistic. I determine the other elements of the rhetorical situation, purpose, audience, and context from the advertising specs for each site and the success of each Web site in the cooking industry. Success is a subjective term, but by it I mean the longevity of a Web site, numbers of hits, awards a site might have received, and its role in the brand's media convergence. The final element of the rhetorical situation, arrangement on Web sites, is in large part about structure and design and so I examine the rhetoric of Web design.

The structural analysis of each Web site applies Web design theory and practice. I apply the recommendations of usability experts like Jakob Nielsen, Patrick J. Lynch, and Sarah Horton. My methodology also explores the theoretical recommendations of Stuart Moulthrop, Michael Joyce, and George Landow. To a lesser degree, the visual semiotic work of Claire Harrison, Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, Sonja Foss, and Keith Kenney offers an analytical template for deciphering the visual and textual rhetoric of Web sites. Visual semiotics asks many of the same questions of "texts" as does rhetorical analysis, questions about context, purpose, and style.

Chapter four presents the analyses of each Web site. The three subsections could be read as separate studies, but the comparisons and contrasts between the three sites are most illuminating about gender and class identity, the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes formed a century ago, and limitations of commercial hyperspace. Still, some cooks are resisting the

limitations of disciplining power and discovering that hypertext gives public expression to their private experiences with food. In chapter five, I consider how we might interpret cookery literature, whether in print, on television, or online, as a knowledge system—a tool for organizing and communicating information about our world. Drawing on the work of Daniel Headrick, I conclude that reading cookbooks and cooking Web sites as knowledge systems opens these texts to richer, rhetorical analyses than does simply reading them as historical or cultural artifacts. Cookbooks demonstrate more than just a culture's attitudes towards women or its food tastes. Cookbooks reveal how a culture thinks, how it knows the world. Tracing the changes in cookbooks helps us trace our changing relations to knowledge and technology, and to the systems we devise to organize them.

Project Significance

Recipes and cookbooks tell us plenty about their authors' values and worldviews. We know, for example, from the oldest extant cookbook, written in the third century CE, that the Roman gentry were wealthy enough to acquire a taste for exotic foods prepared by chefs and servants. From eighteenth and nineteenth century commercial cookbooks we know that married women were beginning to run their households on tight budgets, without the help of hired servants. These texts show us the emergence of middle class values in America, Britain, and Europe (Theophano 19). Early twentieth century household manuals tell scholars that cookbook authors strove to legitimize women's work as home economics, as the perfect practical application of science and technology (Shapiro Perfection Salad 6-9, 25). These books expose the Western world's drive toward mechanization, industrialization, and Taylorism. Post-war cookbooks also strikingly display their authors' worldviews. Following every major American

war cookbooks urge women to make of their homes islands of harmony, peace, and spirituality. These books hoped to offer antidotes to the fragmentation and despair wrought by war. Today, cookbooks reflect our fascination with the cult of celebrity, our obsession with convenience, and our longing for comfort. Five thousand years of cookbook history suggest that food writing has always told us who we are, what we value, and how we organize our lives.

Neuhaus notes, “as historical documents—supplying information about the publishing practices, available ingredients, food fashions, or household technology of the past—cookbooks reveal much about the societies that produce them” (1). Commercial cookbooks are prescriptive literature, however. They likely reveal how people wished their lives were or how authorities believed people’s lives should be (Inness Dinner Roles 14; Neuhaus 3; Theophanos 7). From private recipe books, chapbooks, community cookbooks, and cooking diaries, we learn much more about how actual women cooked and ate (Neuhaus 3). All recipe collections, though, “offer evidence about national trends, desires, and anxieties” (Neuhaus 4). In the ingredients, style, and scope of recipes, we can trace technological, social, ideological, cultural, and political change (Neuhaus 8). Food preparation, then, is a microcosm of culture.

An important function of culture is to help individuals create identities for themselves. Culture teaches us, among other things, how we should behave, what we should or should not eat, and what skills or jobs we might learn. It is not a novel idea to suggest that culture shapes our identities as men and women, our very concepts of what gender means at all. Neither is it revolutionary to study food as a marker of culture. Anthropologists and ethnographers have been doing that for a hundred years. It is more unusual, however, to study the influences of food and gender on one another. Philosophical, social, and political investigations of the ties between food and gender construction are not quite twenty years old. Even the claim that gender is *constructed*

and not innate has only received currency within the last two decades. The study of food, culture, gender, and identity is thus a field open to new studies and new approaches.

Limitations and Opposing Approaches

Several factors limit the proposed study. First is its scope. The online recipe database is a broad genre ranging from packaged food Web sites to magazine and newspaper sites to user-created databases and food blogs. In addition to the many different types of Web sites, the sheer volume of cooking Web sites published in the United States is overwhelming. A quick Google search returns 120 million hits for the keyword recipe and nearly 140 million for the keyword cooking. Obviously, not all of these matches are relevant to cooking and recipe collections, but the genre is simply too large and too diverse to study exhaustively. Confining the analysis to only a handful of commercial cooking Web sites limits the applicability of the study's conclusions and muddies the picture of food knowledge, gender politics, and identity construction on the Web. Critics could legitimately argue that the project is guilty of the same narrow, hegemonic focus as the positivist texts it criticizes. Despite these obvious limits, the study's findings still reveal the ways some of the most popular cooking Web sites reflect the dominant domestic ideology on gender, food, and technology.

The second possible limitation is the theory itself grounding the study. Some might argue that cookbooks and cooking Web sites are not symbolic of knowledge systems, but instead are products designed and marketed for profit. Promotional cookbooks like The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook are simply advertising and so the world or knowledge they offer is constructed to maximize their editors' profits. From such a perspective, these sites would tell us little about how society constructs women's identities or about how women come to know in their daily

lives. Another criticism of the theoretical framework for this study might come from its sources, most notably from Bower and the authors she has collected in Recipes for Reading. These authors might claim that their work has already undertaken the serious poststructuralist analysis I attempt here. They read recipes for linguistic clues, for narrative discourse, and for social constructions of community knowledge. Likewise, Curtin and Heldke might maintain that their collection Cooking, Eating, Thinking already explores the relationships between cooking and feminine epistemologies. Each of these critics might argue that the proposed study does not significantly add to the body of research already available on cookery literature.

While poststructuralist and philosophic discussions of cookery literature come closer to unpacking the power of cookbooks and recipes to organize knowledge than do socio-cultural, historical analyses, the former still miss the role cooking texts play in the power-knowledge-technology complex. Cookbooks, cooking, eating, food technology, and now Web sites have figured significantly in the rise of discrete knowledge disciplines over the last two hundred years. A Foucaultian analysis of the mechanisms at work in the online recipe industry shows that cooking Web sites do not simply represent gender norms or reinforce gender stereotypes. Rather cooking Web sites represent ways of knowing, episteme, that bring with them discrete roles for men and women. In other words, cookery literature does more than represent constructed reality or community knowledge as Bower suggests. Cooking Web sites also function as schema to organize that knowledge. A focus on the World Wide Web rather than on print and on the Web sites as organizing schema, as power-technology, distinguishes this study from its sources. Furthermore, a focus on online cooking texts as epistemological documents separates the proposed study from socio-cultural, historical analyses that tend toward Marxism or cultural studies. Marxist approaches reduce cooking texts to either advertising or propaganda. Cultural

studies see cooking literature as prescriptive and oppressive. Neither position appreciates the richness of cookery literature or accounts for the changes in cookbooks from manuscript chapbooks to scientific manuals to online lifestyle guides.

CHAPTER 2: THEORISTS IN THE KITCHEN

Gender and the Cookbook

Despite only recent scholarly attention, the food industry is a lucrative and diverse one covering everything from kitchen design to farming to gourmet imports. The American cookbook industry, for example, is a growth industry. An entire cable network has featured food twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for a decade and Summer 2007 saw two blockbuster films, No Reservations and Ratatouille about the joys of cooking. Clearly all these texts demand critique. As cooking knowledge now appears in multiple media: print, television, and online, we should consider how cookbook rhetoric has been reimagined for new media. Much of the secondary literature explores the historical relationship between mainstream cookbooks and gender (see Bower, Inness Dinner Roles, Neuhaus, Shapiro, and Theophano). These authors conclude that cookbook rhetoric, along with advertising rhetoric, defined women's roles as cooks and homemakers. Sherrie Inness's recent work represents a growing body of literature positing women's agency rather than oppression in the kitchen. Two new edited collections by Inness, Cooking Lessons and Kitchen Culture in America, investigate the ways cooking and food "have offered women a way to gain power and influence in their households and larger communities . . . [and] a way to display their talent in an acceptable venue" (Inness "Introduction" xi). The work of Meyers, Curtin and Heldke, and Leonardi also belongs to this movement. Meyers explains recipe sharing as communication and community. Curtin and Heldke consider food as an instrument for transformative philosophy. Leonardi's essay specifically discusses cookbooks as rhetorical discourse. These works lay the foundation for understanding how cookery literature has constructed women's identity. We can then consider how cooking Web sites express

constructions of gender, identity, and agency.

Shapiro's 1986 analysis of the scientific movement in cookery is a groundbreaking study. It is among the earliest published works discussing cookbook literature. Through close readings of nineteenth and early twentieth century cookery manuals, Perfection Salad documents the socio-cultural forces that drove the scientific movement in cooking. Shapiro focuses her analysis on the women who married science to domesticity and, in the process, profoundly changed women's relationships with food and with knowledge about the rest of world. She argues that the elevation of housewifery to the realms of home economics and domestic science granted women of the last two centuries authority and legitimacy in a world that was dominated by men, their machines, and the scientific method (4-5, 9). Domestic science gave women precise tools for controlling their world, a world groaning under the social, economic, and political dislocations following the American Civil War, the industrial revolution, food shortages in Great Britain and Europe, and British Imperialism. The world was chaotic and its confusion threatened to seep into the home. Scientific cookery, however, was a weapon against germs, malnutrition, and moral decay (Shapiro 4-6). Most importantly, situating cooking and housewifery in the realm of science gave women access to a male-dominated world of professionalism and logic. Shapiro reflects that

Home economists were able to convince themselves that [industry, government, and educational institutions] would work to ennoble the American home by modernizing it, and would raise the homemaker to a position of power and dignity by modernizing her as well . . . what they really wanted was access to the modern world, the world of science, technology, and rationality, and they believed the best way to gain access was to re-create man's world in woman's sphere . . . They

chose domesticity as a way of getting out of the house, and food as a means of transcending the body. (8, 9, 10)

By suffusing cooking and food with science and technology, seemingly knowable and controllable entities, home economists could tame the messy and unpredictable human body.

This passage highlights cookery literature's adoption of a positivist, Cartesian epistemology. Subjectivist, embodied ways of knowing would all but disappear from mainstream cookbooks for several decades. Embodied epistemologies still structured much food writing during the twentieth century, but we see it in works intended for sophisticated readers rather than in mainstream cooking manuals. The collected works of MFK Fisher, for example, celebrate the sensuality and the story of cooking and eating, but Fisher was primarily an essayist, not a cookbook writer. Continental cooking too was much less likely than American cooking to espouse scientific cookery and the gender stereotypes that come with it. Elizabeth David, James Beard, Jacques Pepin, and Julia Child are examples of continental cooks who combined positivist methods, what Marion Rombauer Becker (co-author of The Joy of Cooking) called the action method of cookbook writing, with subjectivist, embodied ways of knowing food and cooking.

The success of domestic science is tied to the ascendancy of technology and modernism in the twentieth century. Technology like gas and electric stoves, indoor plumbing, electric lights, and small appliances promised to give women all the tools they needed to perform efficiently in the kitchen. Convenience foods appeared in great numbers in the decades following the First World War, and these too promised to liberate women from the drudgery and physical labor characteristic of old fashioned cooking (Inness 156-162; Shapiro 222). Inness points out in Dinner Roles, though, that convenience foods and time saving technology "made it more

difficult for women to abandon their supposedly much ‘simpler’ kitchen tasks” (158). If for example, frozen dinners and electric can openers made dinner preparation so effortless, women could not convincingly argue that they needed help in the kitchen or that they wished to share domestic burdens with their families.¹ Inness’s study of the ways cookbooks shaped and represented gender in the twentieth century makes clear that while domestic scientists may have hoped to legitimize domesticity as a worthy intellectual endeavor, they actually locked women into more sophisticated, but equally constrained gender roles (Dinner Roles 4). We can make a similar argument today about electronic technology promising gourmet meals in 30 minutes or less. With a tiny TV and a laptop computer in the kitchen, meal ideas are constantly at women’s fingertips. Some Web sites even link recipes to grocery lists so women do not need to take time to write out their shopping lists. It could not be easier today to plan and cook a different fabulous meal every night. Yet all this information so conveniently available pressures women to delight in preparing all the family meals.

Dinner Roles is an excellent examination of the social construction of knowledge and gender. Her discussion of images, pronouns, and gendered recipes echoes Leonardi’s rhetorical analysis of cookbooks. Unlike Shapiro, Inness, or Neuhaus, Leonardi, however, is not concerned with gender stereotypes or the ways in which cookbooks shackle women to the kitchen. Her essay is really a rumination on recipes as embedded narratives. She recognizes that cookbooks are gendered discourse, but she celebrates this gendering as evidence of women’s ways of knowing. Because they have historically been denied access to public institutions and formal

¹ See Susan Strasser’s Never Done: A History of American Housework (Holt, 2000), Ruth Cowan Schwartz’s More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Housework from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (Basic Books, 1985), and Christina Hardyment’s From Mangle to Microwave: The Mechanization of Household Work (Polity, 1985).

networks, women know through social contexts, chat, and experience, according to Leonardi (343). She contends that recipes bond women together in communities of sharing: “Even the root of *recipe*—the Latin *recipere*—implies exchange, a giver and a receiver” (340). Chatty cookbooks like the 1931 and 1951 editions of The Joy of Cooking and like Nigella Lawson’s How to Eat or Nigella Bites invite readers to participate in the construction of cooking knowledge and therefore in the community of cooks. Leonardi suggests the power of a feminine cookbook tradition to forge community and connections between women. Cookbooks steeped in the precepts of scientific cookery, on the other hand, books like the 1963-revised edition of The Joy of Cooking and Betty Crocker’s Picture Cookbook abandon the narrative and thus the social context of cooking. In this opinion Leonardi comes closest to Inness and Neuhaus in identifying the negative influences of a positivist epistemology.

Theophanos is also interested in cookbooks as evidence of a community’s collective knowledge. She describes the cookbook as an archive of a community’s ethos, its rituals, and its identity (49-52, 70). Theophanos contends, as does Leonardi, that a community cookbook serves as a cultural artifact and as such is often interdisciplinary and intertextual. Theophanos, like many of the scholars, describes cookbooks as historical documents “characterizing women’s everyday affairs” (2). For many researchers of cookery literature, recipe collections and cookbooks are primarily important as historical documents or cultural artifacts. Most of these early cookbook studies ascribed little agency to women because the studies focused on artifacts of middle-class mainstream cooking. They described women as powerless to form their own identities because twentieth century domestic science cookbooks imagined women as extensions of technology, science, and industrialism. Women did not have a hand in creating kitchen technology or have much choice in its use. Feminist cultural and historical studies by Susan

Strasser, Never Done, or Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother, found that technology shackled women to the kitchen rather than liberated them as advertisers claimed. Technology is an emblem of patriarchy in much of this literature and food preparation is a form of oppression. The factors influencing material production, distribution, and design of cookbooks represent women's place in their society and until recently few saw this place as a good one.

Recently, scholars have begun to explore cooking, food technology, and cookery literature as factors participating in a changing power-technology complex. My research joins this burgeoning discussion. While the work of Shapiro, Inness, Leonardi, and Theophanos pave a path for understanding the ways food and cooking might empower women rather than oppress them, they do not specifically address postmodern feminist agendas, feminist rhetoric, or new media. Media studies of cooking and gender have so far been confined to television, for example. Ketchum in "The Essence of Cooking Shows: How the Food Network Constructs Consumer Fantasies" and Hollows in "Feeling Like a Domestic Goddess: Postfeminism and Cooking" consider how television fashions a worldview from food, class, and gender. According to both writers, The Food Network and Nigella Lawson construct cooking and eating as pleasurable, sensuous experiences, in other words, as fantasies of luxury, ease, and wealth (Hollows 18, Ketchum 220). Ketchum notices, however, that the Food Network primarily portrays female cooks as givers of pleasure to others and male cooks as both givers and receivers of pleasure (224). Occasionally, female celebrity chefs appear in public settings on the Food Network. For example, Rachel Ray travels the world in \$40 A Day and Paula Deen cooks in front of a live studio audience in Paula's Party. These are rare exceptions. Bordo's analysis of print advertising came to the same conclusion as Ketchum's study: "men eat and women prepare" (119). On what Ketchum terms traditional domestic instructional programs like Rachel Ray's 30 Minute Meals,

Martha Stewart's From Martha's Kitchen, and Sara Moulton's Sara's Secrets, female hosts cook in softly lit and carefully decorated home or mock-home kitchens. They have no audience other than the imagined viewer and the television camera (223-24). In contrast, male chefs like Emeril Lagasse, Bobby Flay, Mario Batali, and Anthony Bourdain cook for live audiences or travel to exotic locations to cook and eat expensive or unusual food. Bordo found that "popular representations [of food preparation] almost never depict a man preparing food as an everyday activity, routinely performed in the unpaid service of others" (119). While the female chefs are confined to their kitchens and typically shot from medium distances at chest level, we see the male chefs in long shots moving frequently through large, open social spaces (Ketchum 226). Male cooks on television and in print are entertainers, not caretakers.

Ketchum claims that the male chefs assume an attitude of rebellion as they challenge traditional mainstream cooking with spices or extreme ingredients from faraway locales. But, she points out that their rebellion is "paradoxical" because they insist viewers use only the best and most expensive ingredients (226). The message here is two-fold. First, viewers really have few choices if they wish to recreate the fantasies the Food Network offers. Second, rebellion is open only to those with the money to purchase the commodities advertised by Food Network sponsors: travel, gourmet foods, and expensive cookware. Rebellion by conspicuous consumption hardly seems rebellious at all. Food Network proffers an egalitarian fantasy of easy, luxurious cooking and eating, but Ketchum concludes, "this egalitarianism is misleading" (228). Food Network inscribes good food with class distinctions and reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. The network's fantasies imagine women alone in the kitchen cooking everyday meals for other people and men in public cooking and eating for social celebrations. The Food Network on the Web demonstrates the same sensibility.

Hollows also makes connections between fantasy, food, class, and gender. She describes Nigella Lawson's cooking style, her ironic appropriation of domestic goddesshood, as postfeminist because Lawson easily marries an upper-class sensibility about leisure and epicureanism with middle class demands for domestic duty. Hollows analyzes several episodes of Lawson's television programs as evidence of her thesis that "the representation of cooking in Nigella's work starts from the importance of satisfying and caring for the self rather than others and in this way offers an alternative mode of representing the pleasures of domestic femininity" (184). As this is also an argument of my research, Hollows' work on Nigella Lawson and the work of Lawson herself are important to my project. Hollows finds that Lawson is so successful in finding pleasure in domestic duties because she inverts the binary oppositions that fueled domestic science. For Nigella Lawson, messiness is fun, fat and calories are the building blocks of good taste, and laziness is the mother of kitchen strategy. Despite food's pleasure and sensuousness, Lawson does not ignore the stresses of preparing it. According to Hollows, "Lawson seeks to negotiate anxiety" by addressing her audience in a conversational tone and by exposing her own mistakes (186). Lawson assures readers and viewers that mistakes in the kitchen do not mean that cooks have failed to achieve some ideal domestic standard, nor are mistakes necessarily irreparable. The rejection of some preset standard of domesticity or femininity is fundamental to postmodern feminism, Hollows concludes.

Postmodernism and Feminism

Prefixing the word *post* to any -ism is always a dubious venture. At best, post-isms signal the end of one zeitgeist and the vague stirrings of another. At worst, a post-ism is a copout, the unwillingness to analyze cultural change in a thoughtful, critical way. Call a movement *post* and

you herald its failure, its irrelevancy, and its quaintness. Postmodern feminism is no exception. There is of yet no agreement on its definition or its tenets. This essay is an attempt to posit both. The field is muddied, however, by oppositional definitions. Charlotte Brunsdon, writing in Cinema Journal, notes that “the debates about feminism and post-feminism circle around questions of generation, periodization, and the validity and national specificity of notions of ‘backlash’” (2005, 112). Brunsdon sees postmodern feminism as a clash between Second and Third Wave feminists and women who have benefited from the battles fought for voting rights, reproductive freedom, and protections against employment discrimination and harassment. Young American women, for example, have never known a workforce not swelled by women, have always had access to birth control and legal, safe abortion options, and have always had the legal right to vote. To these women, postmodern feminism might mean that the feminist movement is over.

To others like Janelle Reinelt, columnist for The Scholar and Feminist Online, the online journal from the Barnard Center for Research on Women, postmodern feminism has come to mean anti-feminism. They may even misunderstand postmodern feminism as anti-femininity. Reinelt defines postmodern feminism as “arguments against a perceived puritanical morality and a culture of victimization” (2003). Postmodern feminism is thus a disputed term. To conservatives it means a backlash against egalitarianism and liberal ideals. To radicals it means a celebration of difference rather than equality and a focus on women’s unique experiences. To many others, though, and to me, postmodern feminism is not a rejection of any feminist ideals, such as egalitarianism, nor is it an essentializing and polarizing valorization of feminine experiences at the expense of male, or simply human, experiences. Postmodern feminism is an exploration of difference as a mechanism to build knowledge.

Though postmodern feminists are as yet unwilling to relinquish the continued pursuit of social justice, many admit the importance of difference, of women's unique experiences. They advocate truth telling without delving into the sentimentality of confession. For them, the personal is still political because it is *personal*, because it yells out the uselessness of judging all humanity by male standards. Postmodern feminists no longer naively accept the universal humanist metanarratives of Truth, Justice, and Progress. Schooled in postmodern philosophies of power and difference, postmodern feminists work against patriarchal logic. They challenge foundationalism, universalism, positivism, and objectivism. They advocate embodied epistemologies, collaboration, self-care, micro-resistance to oppression, and alternative expressions of agency and autonomy.

There is, of course, a radical element to anti-positivist worldviews. Nevertheless, postmodern feminists do not simply invert the binaries: woman good/man bad. While they celebrate feminine experiences, they are not essentialists. Postmodern feminism does not understand embodied knowledge systems as inherently female. These are ways of knowing open to all. Women's experiences are unique social experiences, not uniquely bound to biology or some elemental quality of femaleness. Postmodern feminism, like liberal feminism, understands notions of male and female as socially constructed, cultural, and local. Feminist ideology is therefore open to both men and women. Postmodern feminists assume the possibility of individual agency and collective social transformation. Postmodern feminism, as I define it, understands feminist (as opposed to the more essentialist "feminine") ways of knowing as powerfully disruptive to patriarchal logic. A postmodern feminist way of knowing the world is relational, polyvocal, collaborative, often nonlinear, experiential, and most importantly, embodied.

Postmodern feminism borrows many of its tenets from postmodernism and poststructuralism. Specifically, the theories of Michel Foucault on the intersections of power, technology, and knowledge shape my conception of postmodern feminism. Foucault offers postmodern feminists a critique of norms, subjectivization, and self-policing. Lois McNay explains Foucault's appeal to feminists this way:

Foucault's idea that sexuality is not an innate or natural quality of the body, but rather the effect of historically specific power relations has provided feminists with a useful analytical framework to explain how women's experience is impoverished and controlled within certain culturally determined images of feminine sexuality. (3)

McNay suggests, "the problem of feminine identity is better approached as an historically and culturally specific construct rather than as an innate phenomenon . . . By showing that sexuality is not a historical constant, Foucault indicates that there may be other ways of defining ourselves" (5, 70). It is no wonder then why postmodern feminism has taken up Foucault's theories of power, the body, gender, and sexuality. But Foucault's early theories of discipline and power disallow individuals any agency. The determinism of the early Foucault turns off many feminists. In contrast, his later theories on sexuality and ethics suggest purposeful agents who create their own ethics and identities in resistance to oppressive, disciplinary power. The "final Foucault," says McLaren lauds practices of the self or technologies of the self like "writing, truth-telling, and living a balanced life" (227). We could add cooking, eating, and growing food to this list of technologies of the self. Curtain and Heldke describe technologies of the self as thoughtful practices and note that these practices ask that we give our attention to "the relation between self and other; roles played by the community; bodily elements of thoughtful practice;

and the significance of the emotional and the erotic” (216-217). Disciplining one’s life through cooking, gardening, writing, or praying is an active, integrative, holistic, embodied practice, in other words, a thoughtful, postmodern feminist practice.

The theorists contributing to this outline of postmodern feminism are diverse and some would likely balk at their inclusion. Lois McNay finds postmodern feminism “unviable” (21) yet her explanations of Foucault’s work on the body and the self structure my own thinking. Likewise, Margaret McLaren, Helen O’Grady, and Marianna Valverde help me understand Foucault’s ethics of the self, truth telling, and micro-resistance. Susan Bordo, Alison Jaggar, and Beverly Sauer are central thinkers on embodied subjectivities. Andrea Lunsford and Donna LeCourt inform my understandings of feminist rhetoric. Finally, Ruth Berman and Donna Wilshire unravel the Cartesian framework and explicate feminist critiques of science.

I delineate three subtopics of my definition of postmodern feminism. First are the fundamental philosophies of the Cartesian worldview and the arguments against Descartes’s mind/body split. Essential to these arguments are explorations of embodied and feminine epistemologies, such as feminist rhetoric and hypertext, as critiques of science and objectivism. I believe we cannot understand postmodern feminism without understanding Foucauldian theories of power, the body, and the self, and so the third movement in this definition of postmodern feminism lays out the relevant theories and feminist critiques of Foucault. We can counter the shortcomings of Foucault’s early theories on discipline and power with his final theories on practices of the self. Finally, I explore ethics of the self as tools for micro-resistance, agency, and autonomy.

Descartes and Dualism

To understand postmodern feminist disdain for the Cartesian framework, we need to first consider the assortment of -isms that constitute it. Jagger and Bordo describe Enlightenment philosophy as a “critical quest for certainty, order, and clarity” (3). The quest settled on reason as the primary faculty for ordering the universe and decided that the universe truly was knowable if one rightly conducted the reason. Faith in knowing the “invariant, natural laws. . . which rule the intellect in the investigation of truth” is positivism (Auguste Comte qtd. in Berman 236). The right conduct for exercising reason is the scientific method, called empiricism, and one executes it with objectivism. The tenets of scientific objectivism according to Berman are (1) “that a rational method of investigation, the scientific method, exists, which can be utilized regardless of social context or of the phenomenon being investigated” (2) that any “‘good,’ well-trained, honest scientist can apply this well-defined, neutral method to the object being investigated and obtain ‘objective,’ unbiased data” (3) that facts derived through this neutral method are “immutable, and unaffected by personal concerns” or “the specificity of the conditions under which the data were obtained” (Berman 236). The neutral observer values tools and technology that enhance sensory observation, quantify it, and protect it from the vagaries of subjective human cognition (Jagger 148). Thus positivism, objectivism, and empiricism imply their opposites: the particular, the subjective, and the intuitive. Descartes lumped these last three ways of knowing together with the body.

Any practice associated with the body, cooking, eating, sexuality, or manual labor for example, were likewise lumped into that category of vagary. Curtain and Heldke claim that this was so because the physical world was always changing and so it was “in some sense unknowable” (204). Embodied activities produced only transitory results. This was in contrast to

supposedly “timeless truths” gleaned from science and philosophy (205). A postmodern worldview, on the other hand, embraces change and “fluidity” as the defining “feature of reality” to use Susan Bordo’s words (228). But to Cartesians, the messy, changeable world is bad news. It must be managed, controlled, and disciplined.

The Cartesian worldview also turns on at least three other -isms: epistemological individualism, mechanism, and foundationalism. Epistemological individualism is the assumption that humans come to know the world through their own solitary endeavors. We can oppose this belief to social constructionism, which holds that knowledge is socially, culturally, and historically constituted and that individuals create knowledge as members of social, cultural, and historical groups. Secondly, mechanism understands the universe as composed of discrete, elemental units that function together like a predictable machine (Berman 235, 239). The solitary knower can thus know all there is to know about a phenomenon by observing and analyzing its components. Mechanism is tied to foundationalism. If the universe is composed of discrete elements, and we can know these elements absolutely, that is infallibly, then we can build knowledge from the simplest atom to the most complex machine.

All this talk of tidy machines, foundational knowledge, and objective observation came to be associated with white, upper class males from at least the seventeenth century onward. The prevailing worldview held that reason is the province of men and their mental capacities, and reason’s opposite, emotion, is the lot of women and their messy physical bodies. Women endure emotions. According to Jaggar: “emotions happened to or were imposed upon an individual, something she suffered rather than something she did.” Emotions are “variable and idiosyncratic” and so “untrustworthy” (146). Hence, those who succumb to them (women and incontinent men) are variable, idiosyncratic, and untrustworthy. No wonder that both the

philosophical and the scientific traditions celebrate maleness, rationality, and mentality and deplore femaleness, emotionality, and physicality (Wilshire 94). Sexism is a product of this kind of dualism and both are thoroughly entrenched in the Western consciousness.

Feminist Critiques of Rationalism

Far from the only way to know, positivism is one of many ways to know. Sondra Farganis contends that “what positivists call science is a particular form of knowledge (technical) satisfying a particular kind of interest, control of the environment and of other humans” (209). Different epistemologies produce different kinds of knowledge. Emotions, for example, might be appropriate for certain moral or ethical knowledge (Jagger 162). On the other hand, the scientific method might be more appropriate for identifying apparent causes and effects of phenomena at certain times under certain conditions. The point that postmodern feminists maintain is that any epistemology is an expression of its context. Jagger argues “modern [Cartesian] epistemology itself may be viewed as an expression of certain emotions alleged to be especially characteristic of males in certain periods, such as separation anxiety and paranoia or an obsession with control and fear of contamination” (156). Berman adds that science is never an expression of absolute, knowable truths, but is an expression of a society’s ideology and is typically controlled by the hegemony. She contends,

the goals of the practitioners of science, their thinking as well as their actions, are derived from the social process within which they operate. This ideology both reflects the increasing social and economic polarization of the rulers and the ruled and reinforces it with conceptual dichotomies justifying its existence . . . It

represents a way of thinking necessary to the preservation of a society based on the hegemony of the elite. (230)

Knowledge as product and preserver of ideology helps to explain the continued disconnect between the experiences of women and the rhetoric used by the patriarchy to justify their oppression.

Feminist and postmodern feminist researchers are exploring alternatives to positivism's oppressiveness. According to Farganis, they

want to understand the daily lives and experiences of the people about whom they have an interest in writing . . . they do not merely want to observe and describe behavior of individuals as if either the observed or the observers were not real subjects in a concrete world . . . they want to introduce an emancipatory dimension into their research and writing. (213)

Scholars like Patti Lather, Beverly Sauer, Patricia Sullivan, and James Porter challenge positivist and dualist assumptions about research. Their postmodern feminist agendas for science employ research methodologies like ethnographies, case studies, and grounded theory studies. They are especially interested in the situated discourses of the research contexts and attuned to embodied epistemologies. Sauer lays out the postmodern feminist research agenda this way:

- Consider questions of literacy, knowledge, and expertise
- Raise issues about what counts as evidence in a closely controlled corporate structure
- Raise issues about how we value information when it comes from sources outside the network of experts and those credentialed to speak in corporate networks

- Raises questions about how we structure information to achieve political, social, and economic ends
- Raises questions about the genres we admit and those that we exclude
- Raises questions about the gendered assumptions that structure . . . texts
- Raises questions about how discourse reflects both the salient and silent power structures in discourse communities. (78)

Such projects lead to a focus on embodied knowledge and alternative genres. Postmodern feminism rehabilitates epistemologies and forms for their expression that traditional philosophy and science have discounted. Embodied knowledge, emotional and intuitive knowledge, myth, metaphor, orality, and hypertext not only inform research from this perspective, but are often the subject of research. Haas and Witte, for example, point out that most practices of everyday life are embodied and so researchers must consider embodied knowledge as part of an “active meaning-making process” (414, 446). Ignoring the embodied dimension impoverishes the research process. Haas, Witte, and Sauer define embodied practice as site-specific, recurrent, goal directed practices that link technology and knowledge with the body and the senses. Haas and Witte assert that the concept of embodied practices effaces the Cartesian mind-body split as “embodiment signifies a unification of mind and body that, in fact, denies the possibility of abstracting the body as an analytic category . . . “ (417). Donna Wilshire calls this integrated approach to knowledge an “inclusive method of minding” (98) that reclaims emotion, intuition, physical gesture, and sensory experience as legitimate ways of knowing the world. Jagger argues, for example, that “emotions are neither more basic than observation, reason, or action in building theory, nor are they secondary to them. Each of these human faculties reflects an aspect of human knowing inseparable from the other aspects” (165). The fact that traditional science

and philosophy have separated them, however, highlights the workings of power and disciplining technologies. Here is where the work of Michel Foucault comes to bear on definitions of postmodern feminism.

Foucault, Postmodernism, and Biopower

Lois McNay perhaps best articulates the appeal of postmodernism to feminists. Postmodernism takes as its major program a “critique of the rational subject” (2), a rejection of humanist metanarratives, and the metaphysical pursuit of an original truth:

The poststructuralist philosophical critique of the rational subject has resonated strongly with the feminist critique of rationality as an essentially masculine construct. Moreover, feminists have drawn extensively on the poststructuralist argument that rather than having a fixed core or essence, subjectivity is constructed through language and is, therefore, an open-ended, contradictory and culturally specific amalgam of different subject positions. (2)

Specifically, Michel Foucault contends that reason is self-created, the product of social relations and power negotiations. Indeed all subject positions are self-created or at least socially created and thus contingent. This idea has had particular consequence for feminists. Understanding sexuality and gender as cultural, social, and historical constructs rather than as biologically determined fixities allows for the possibility of significant change.

Not that cultural change is not difficult and stereotypes not insidious. Foucault’s work also helps to explain to feminists the persistence of sexism and oppression despite the apparent successes of consciousness raising and legal reform. Cultural norms are so pervasive and so internalized, claims McNay, that “in their daily lives many women do not experience themselves

as oppressed and, indeed, they exercise an amount of power and influence over other individuals” (66-67). Foucault explains that oppression need not be overt or even exercised by one over another. Instead, normalizing structures of society (like the Cartesian framework) discipline individuals to control themselves. According to Susan Bordo, “in the realm of femininity,” most especially, “where so much depends on the seemingly willing acceptance of various norms and practices,” internalized power structures “shape and proliferate—rather than repress—desire, generate and focus our energies, and construct our conceptions of normalcy and deviance” (167). For women, these normalizing webs of power, to paraphrase McNay (85), trap them in positions of subordination, personal inadequacy if they fail to live up to cultural norms, self-doubt, and constant self-surveillance (O’Grady 94-95).

Under the influence of Cartesian dualism, the physical body, as the site of unruly passions and unpredictable sensations, is the locus of self-policing in Western culture. The body and its physicality, its sensuality, had to be controlled or ignored. Modern power focuses its attention on knowing and controlling the body. Normalizing systems of patriarchy, for example, naturalize and legitimize biology as the reason for female oppression. The ruling ideology constructs the body, especially the female body or the body of the Other, in such a way as to preserve and legitimate its domination (McNay 16). The body is a “site of struggle” according to Bordo (184), and for McNay the body is “the principal target of the power/knowledge relations transmitted through discourse” (28). In Discipline and Punish, Foucault interprets the body as the stage on which power expresses itself. He argues that a “political technology of the body” (1995, 26), a “systematic discourse” of complex institutions, apparatuses, and disciplines, produces a micro-physics of power that in turn produces knowledge. Technology, according to Foucault, is “the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and

knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power” (29). Technology is the mechanism through which these expressions of power structure our lives, our bodies, and our selves.

Technology is literal machinery, tools, and things that plug in (electric ovens, hairdryers, and washing machines), but technology is also technique, institutions, and disciplines (home economics, fashion, and nutrition). McNay urges feminists to consider “how the body is invested with certain properties and inserted into regimes of truth via the operations of power and knowledge” (28). Knowledge produces more power, as the more one knows about another, the more that other becomes a subject, both in the senses of one under study and one under control. The technology-power-knowledge matrix evolves into not just disciplines and institutions like nutrition or science through which bodies are known and controlled, but into an entire economy of technology and power (Foucault 89-92). Knowledge of the body and the techniques by which we come to know it are commoditized and exchangeable. Eventually, the body, power, and knowledge come to have value not in themselves, but in what they represent.

Technologies of representation are perhaps never so apparent as they are on women’s bodies. Representations and interpretations of the female body are perfect examples of power-knowledge at work. According to Susan Bordo, “the discipline and normalization of the female . . . has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control” (166). McNay adds that “far from constituting the most intimate truth about oneself, the sexuality of the individual is in fact an instrument of social regulation . . . [and] the construction of gender inequality from anatomical difference is central to the creation and maintenance of social hierarchies” (32, 46). Bordo extends Foucault’s ideas of the body as abstraction to read the body as cultural text. The body, especially the female body, is a surface on which to inscribe culture and all of its disciplining and controlling technologies (165). Bordo interprets the “normalizing

disciplines of diet, makeup, and dress” as technologies of power that structure women’s bodies, women’s time, and women’s space (166). All of these activities come to not just represent, but to form our cultural conceptions of womanhood and femininity.

Gender is therefore a technology of representation, a mechanism upholding the workings of biopower. The gendered female body is a body to be known, and thus to be subjected, “manipulated, shaped, trained, [a body] which obeys, responds” (Foucault 136). But as biopower manipulates the female body, makes it physically conform to the strictures of a “useful body,” it also creates a symbolic representation of the ideal “intelligible body” (Foucault 136; Bordo 181), the body we can know and control. These two bodies, the useful, practical body and the ideal, intelligible body, are part of a gender economy of technology. Literally, we see this economy structuring the lives of women through diet, exercise, fashion, cosmetics, and the magazine publishing industries. Metaphorically, women exchange control over their lives for the bodily symbols of femininity: tiny waists, big breasts, pouty lips, and coifed hair or the trappings of domesticity: clean toilets, happy children, and perfectly baked chocolate cakes. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault implies that this technology of engendered power is inescapable and unchangeable because it works so well to maintain the status quo. Bordo suggests that a “critical discourse” and critical analysis of biopower can, however, lead to change and this is a discourse postmodern feminists take up. She sees the female body as a “site of struggle” between the contradictory pulls of practical, useful power and technologies of representation: “I view our bodies as a site of struggle, where we must work to keep our daily practices in the service of resistance to gender domination, not in the service of docility and gender normalization” (184). Although Foucault seems less willing than Bordo to admit the possibility of altering biopower,

he describes the workings of it, like Bordo does, as a struggle, a battle for the power to normalize and organize individual behavior.

Foucault's attention to insidious norms and disciplinary power prompts McNay to "analyse power not just from the perspective of mechanisms of domination, but also from the level of a 'microphysics' of power" (66-67), what has come to be called biopower. Biopower operates on the level of the mundane, on the micro level rather than on the macro level. Our daily habits, what we eat, what we wear, how we cook, and how we play are all representations of the technologies of biopower. McNay, McLaren, O'Grady, and Bordo maintain that the positive operations of biopower imply their opposite: resistance. Postmodern feminism allows for an analysis of microresistance. Rather than seeing gender norms as always a form of oppression and instead of considering women powerless victims of patriarchy, postmodern feminism examines the exchanges of power in gender relations and revalues stereotypical behaviors as potentially resistant behaviors. Susan Bordo has written extensively, for example, on anorexia as microresistance. While anorexia seems a capitulation to cultural ideals on slimness and femininity, in many ways, it grants women power over their own bodies and their own wills. Refusing to eat enables women to control bodily functions, physical sensations, fertility, and sexuality. Mastery of food consumption affords women with little social or economic power control over their destiny and cultural roles. Disorders like anorexia, agoraphobia, and hysteria are, according to Bordo, "pathology as embodied protest—unconscious, inchoate, and counterproductive protest without an effective language, voice, or politics, but protest nonetheless" (175). Starving oneself is microresistance. Refusing to leave one's home is microresistance. Obesity is in a way microresistance. Even burning the dinner is microresistance. All of these behaviors or states of being thwart cultural expectations. They are parodies of

notions of femininity and they demonstrate women's power in their traditional sphere: food preparation. It is no coincidence then that cookbooks have come to reflect gendered stereotypes of women and that cooks frequently resist cultural cooking norms by changing recipes. Resisting norms and ideals by disordering one's body "indicts those ideals," Bordo maintains, "precisely by pursuing them to the point at which their destructive potential is revealed for all to see" (176). While no one would advocate such extreme, damaging forms of resistance to biopower, their prevalence demonstrates the power available to even those who seem powerless on the macro level.

Microresistance is just as frequently positive as negative. If gender is an interpretative performance as Judith Butler insists, then we might just as easily interpret gender stereotypes as points of value on the micro level. Domestic tasks have frequently been sites for protest and self-expression for many women. American women in the nineteenth century protested slavery, demonstrated solidarity for suffrage, and supported political parties all through the patterns they stitched into quilts. The social expectations of mothering—care and concern for children—have generated countless protests against pesticides in food, faulty children's toys, unsafe drinking water, and drunk driving. Private concerns become public protests. Certainly cooking, sewing, and home decorating can be outlets for creative expression, agency, and autonomy. Although Martha Stewart is the housewife American women love to hate, she has garnered tremendous power and wealth perfecting domestic tasks. Emily Jane Cohen suggests in a recent comparison of Martha Stewart's success with a renaissance of the American Gothic that "Martha is maddening less because of her perfection than because she takes the signifiers of an old-fashioned lifestyle and scrambles the conventional signifieds" (669-670). We might interpret Stewart's celebration of all things domestic as surrender to the strictures of femininity, but we

might also interpret her public commoditization of domestic duty as microresistance to women's confinement to the private sphere.

Microresistance is one answer to the critiques feminists have levied against Foucault's theories of biopower. In Discipline and Punish bodies are passive with little or no self-determination or active subjectivity. Microresistance offers an anti-determinist explanation of women's perceived autonomy and agency that does not simply explain these away as self-deluded self-policing. Exploring microresistance is also in keeping with postmodern feminist interests in difference and women's personal experiences. Understanding the ways in which women subtly resist oppression, subvert norms, and shape their own identities is very much part of the postmodern feminist agenda. But microresistance cannot adequately counter the postmodern explosion of subjectivity and relativism. Many feminists have been reluctant to link feminism with postmodernism because just at the point where women are beginning to express their subjectivity and craft themselves as active agents, the philosophical tradition begins to deconstruct subjectivity and agency as viable epistemological positions. The first page of McNay's text asks

[W]here does the poststructuralist deconstruction of unified subjectivity into fragmented subject positions lead in terms of an understanding of individuals as active agents capable of intervening in and transforming their social environment?

(1)

McNay later insists that the "the postmodern insistence on the local precludes systematic analysis of large-scale levels of oppression" (127), but she fails to consider the ways in which local analyses of microresistance might illumine both the extent and insidiousness of oppression.

Technologies of the Self

Self care or technologies of the self are another postmodern feminist answer to criticism of the early Foucault. In The History of Sexuality, Foucault describes an ethics of the self that returns self-determination to the individual. Through technologies of the self, or self care practices, individuals can and do fashion their own identities in relation to cultural norms. Foucault came to recognize that individuals invest their daily lives with meaning and significance. The quotidian activities of being who we are in the world are, in this later Foucauldian ethic, forms of salient, although perhaps unnoticed, protests against the normalizing force of biopower. Our ethos emerges from embodied practice rather than from universal norms and cultural expectations (Taylor and Vintges 3). The focus is on an agent's relationship with herself first rather than on her oppression by or resistance to others.

O'Grady insists that establishing a relationship with one's self "requires creative interaction with given identity practices, standards, and norms" (102). The individual is no longer a passive, docile body, but an active agent engaged in active self-fashioning (McNay 61; O'Grady 96). These activities can challenge traditional power relations even if only on the micro level. Two ways individuals fashion their own identities and their own ethics of the self are through truth telling and writing. Feminist theories of rhetoric are therefore central to understanding technologies of the self. Following Foucault in The History of Sexuality, McNay (1992), McLaren (2004), and Valverde (2004) suggest that truth telling and writing are discursive practices of microresistance. From the very beginnings of the feminist movement, "breaking the silence" showed women that their experiences of oppression were not uncommon. Telling the truth helped many women recognize problems of domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and job discrimination. Truth telling also serves to move private concerns to

the public sphere. The stories women tell may be counter to culturally sanctioned truths. These “oppositional truths” can disrupt or at least destabilize systems of oppression (McNay 137).

Writing is often the form of truth telling because it connects an individual with others. Even when writing is private, it is a space for self-reflection and for trying out new knowledge.

Writing with this postmodern aesthetic is feminist rhetoric. Mouthrop defines rhetoric as “an interface between *techne* and *logos*: a way of reconciling actual media of communication with the social practices that shape discourse” (292). Feminist rhetoric explores alternative discourses that may be multi-genred, polyvocal, and nonlinear. Postmodern feminism advocates a feminist rhetoric that is collaborative, communal, cooperative, embodied, integrative, mediated, and negotiated. The understanding is that such a rhetoric will advance a democratic agenda. Postmodern feminist rhetoricians are exploring alternative textualities like hypertext as disruptive technologies of the self. Hypertext has the potential to decenter authority and univocality. In theory, hypertext can represent many voices and viewpoints simultaneously. Writers can easily collaborate on the creation of a hypertext. Hypertexts are also multimedia or multimodal. They might incorporate text, image, sound, and video. The ease of creating and publishing hypertexts also makes them perfect tools for grassroots micro-resistance. The popularity of blogging, text messaging, and online activism is an example.

LeCourt and Barnes note that because hypertext privileges multiplicity, dislocation, and collaboration, it can be an intervention in the discourse systems and power relations of traditional knowledge making (323). Lunsford too celebrates media that allow alternative authorship, what she terms “alternative rhetorical practices for enacting multiple selves in discourse” (190). Electronic writing is certainly one such alternative practice. Lunsford reminds us that the aim of technologies of the self is to realize a self “always in relation” to shifting positions of truth,

authority, and agency (185). Most importantly for postmodern feminism, a self always in relation is never fixed by social norms or social power because power itself is always a manifestation of these shifting relations.

These ideas about technologies of the self depart from Foucault's bleak determinist principles of biopower. They help to explain the very real reform second-wave feminism has secured. Women's alternative truths about their experiences raised the consciousness of three generations. Liberal feminism has long sought to demonstrate women's capacity for rational thought and so to elevate women to the status of men. This seems a straightforward enough project: give women the intellectual, economic, and social advantages men have enjoyed and they will equal men in their achievements. The aims of the liberal feminist project are far from full realization, however; women have not achieved parity with men in many professions, their individual rights are constantly threatened by conservative religious fundamentalism, and women are still more likely than men to be victims of poverty. Still, no one can deny that women have more intellectual, economic, and social opportunities today than they did in the 1970s.

Postmodern feminism builds on the achievements of liberal feminism. It embraces all knowledge making practices, not just reason and the scientific method. The emotional, physical, intuitive body, for example, offers a richness and spontaneity to life that the rational mind does not. Postmodern feminism reclaims this richness without essentializing it. *All* bodies, male and female, experience the world intuitively, physically, and emotionally. Culture has come to expect and respect these experiences more for women than for men. Thus, postmodern feminism understands identity formation as simultaneously an embodied and cultural practice. Cultural systems influence the valuing of practices at the same time that individual bodies interpret the culture's norms. Postmodern feminism understands both of these processes as constantly in flux.

The individual has many choices open to her or him to interpret and misinterpret norms. Embodied knowledge, truth telling, and alternative textualities are some expressions of these interpretations and misinterpretations. Postmodern feminism represents the middle way between liberal feminism's adoption of a man's world and radical feminism's rejection of it. Far from *post* meaning *passé*, postmodern feminism signals a third-wave of perhaps less idealistic, but no less significant attention to the simple binary oppositions of patriarchal logic.

Hypertext Theory

User Centered Design

If hypertext can be a tool for self-care—a technology of the self opening spaces for creative agency—it makes sense to understand the characteristics of good hypertext design. The best Web sites, according to usability experts, are egalitarian: they are open and accessible to all users. Users have little doubt about their purposes or how to navigate them. They immediately know where they are and what the site does (Nielsen 166). “The goal,” say Lynch and Horton, “is to provide for the needs of all your potential users, adapting Web technology to their expectations and never requiring readers to conform to an interface that places unnecessary obstacles in their paths” (20). Web usability guru Jakob Nielsen agrees: “the site should be structured to mirror the users’ tasks and their views of the information space” (15). Good Web design is user centered design. Nielsen reminds designers that visitors come to Web sites to accomplish specific goals, even if those goals are just to explore and kill time. Site design must accommodate both goal-directed activities and exploration.

User centered design unites the arguments of poststructuralism—decentered truths, plurality, and privileging the margins—with the insights of hypertext theory—“multilinearity,

nodes, links, and networks” (Landow 1). George Landow sees hypertext as the realization of Michel Foucault’s and Roland Barthes’ notions of open textuality. Hypertext is multilinear, nonsequential, polyvocal, open-ended, and, theoretically, user defined. At the very least hypertext requires an active reader; Web surfers must choose their path. The readerly text of print becomes a writerly text in hypertext (Landow 4). Web designers are as much readers of other Web sites and other voices as users are readers. Writers-as-readers and readers-as-writers construct meaning; neither merely points at it or intends it. The writer-as-reader and reader-as-writer negotiate multiple purposes, voices, and conventions. We might even substitute the word “hypertext” for “writer-as-reader and reader-as-writer.” Thus Landow insists that hypertext is deconstructed text. Deconstruction as a theory of text maintains that meaning resides only in the text itself, that there is no “outside” the text; no one true, original meaning ascribed to a sovereign author exists (Derrida 68-69). Meaning is contingent, is constantly shifting with each reader and with each subsequent reading by the same reader. This is so because language itself, writing itself, is constantly at play in the fields of our multiple discourses, our multiple communities. Deconstruction thus implies the social construction of knowledge and the communal expression of that knowledge—both concepts fundamental to hypertext and, as we shall learn later, feminist rhetoric.

Home Pages and Navigation

User centered design demonstrates clear navigation aids like hyperlinks, “consistent icons,” and “graphic identity schemes” (Lynch and Horton 20). Lynch and Horton argue that “Web design should offer constant visual and functional confirmation of user’s whereabouts and options” (25). Graphic identity schemes and hyperlinked logos orient visitors who may have

reached a site through an absolute (external) link or through a search engine. Nielsen suggests graphic elements like logos linked to the home page on every internal content page (27). Nielsen also recommends locating this “single consistent link” to the home page in the upper left corner of Web pages (178). The home page is so important because it anchors the site and guides visitors to content. User-centered home pages include navigation tools (perhaps in the form of a directory or a menu), announcements or promotions, and a search box (Nielsen 168). Navigation tools should not dominate the page, however. Nielsen admonishes site designers to limit navigation and advertising to less than 50% of the Web page. The most usable designs feature content on 50% to 80% of what Nielsen calls “destination pages” (22). Thus, a key element of user centered navigation schemes is direct access to information in as few clicks as possible and with as few distractions as possible. “The primary design strategy in thoughtful hypertext is to use links to reinforce your message, not to distract readers,” say Lynch and Horton (148). They suggest designers locate “real content . . . only a click or two away from the main menu pages” or a site (22).

Sitemaps

Sitemaps can be useful navigation tools if they tell visitors where they are, where they have been, and where they can go (Nielsen 188). Nielsen calls these interactive sitemaps “active” sitemaps. He imagines an active sitemap would clearly identify where in the design architecture the visitor is currently and would “visualize his or her trail through the site” (189). This notion of trails or breadcrumbs through a Web site speaks to Vannevar Bush’s innovative Memex machine (first described in 1945) that would allow a user to create associative trails or links through “the maze of materials available to him” (Bush 15). Although no one has ever realized the Memex in

the way Bush described it, trails, breadcrumbs, mazes, and webs have since become the conventional metaphors for hypertext applications. Active sitemaps might come closer to realizing Bush's vision if they integrate search results. Nielsen hopes for sitemaps that highlight where search results appear on the map thus making the sitemap dynamic and responsive to users (189). Key to the idea of dynamic, responsive navigation is always showing users the possible paths and options.

Search Design

Until site design integrates sitemaps and search results, we will have to rely on search engines. Nielsen claims that a majority of Web users are search dominant and only one fifth are link-dominant. That means that most users will want to search a site to quickly find what they are looking for rather than browse menus or directories. The major commercial recipe sites like Epicurious.com and FoodNetwork.com feature prominent recipe search boxes. The site producers understand that while visitors might enjoy exploring the rich lifestyle content on these sites when they have time, most visitors log on to find quick ideas for dinner. Responsive search engines accept natural language searches like questions and phrases, they do not demand Boolean logic operators (AND, NOT, OR), and they offer synonyms or spelling suggestions. Useful search results might include abstracts for each page or links to similar results. User centered search boxes anticipate questions and errors. Like all facets of user centered design, user centered search is intuitive and above all simple.

Design Reliability and Integrity

I have argued that feminist rhetoric and feminist epistemology focus on choice, openness, and flexibility. These are also elements of reliable Web site design. Simple, consistent, and stable

designs speak to the reliability and integrity of site sponsors (Lynch and Horton 25). Three elements of reliable Web sites are cross-platform functionality, accessibility, and response times. Tim Berners-Lee wrote HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) to be platform independent. That is, the markup tags would render text the same way regardless of a computer's operating system (Berners-Lee 40-42). The commercial popularity of the World Wide Web, however, has invited slick branding designs that focus on presentation rather than meaning. Designers from the advertising industry frequently disregard the cross-platform and open heritage of the Web. Their graphically intense and proprietary code designs do not take into account real world users who may access pages from slow computers with slow Internet connections and on platforms and Web browsers very different from those the designers used. For these reasons, Nielsen instructs designers to “separate meaning and presentation” (28). In other words, user centered designs feature content not style. Open, flexible sites accommodate all users regardless of their equipment, their skill set, or their physical characteristics.

Interactivity

Finally, user centered approaches to Web site design value user feedback and encourage dialogue in an “ongoing relationship with users” (Lynch and Horton 25). Interactivity has long been a hallmark of the most successful Web sites and the feature that promised to set the World Wide Web apart from other cool media like TV. Interactivity is one of six criteria by which the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences Webby Awards evaluate excellence in Web sites. The Academy describes it this way:

Interactivity is the way that a site allows you to do something. Good interactivity is more than a rollover or choosing what to click on next; it allows you, as a user, to

give and receive. It insists that you participate, not spectate . . . It's input/output, as in searches, chat rooms, e-commerce and gaming or notification agents, peer-to-peer applications and real-time feedback. It's make your own, distribute your own, or speak your mind so others can see, hear or respond. Interactive elements are what separates [sic] the Web from other media. Their inclusion should make it clear that you aren't reading a magazine or watching TV anymore. ("Judging Criteria")

The best user centered designs and the most successful Web sites not only solicit user questions and comments, but also plan for this continued dynamic relationship. Sustained two-way communication between site producers and users is expensive and time-consuming, however. An alternative is moderated discussion groups linked to in-house content (Nielsen 256). Discussion groups encourage visitors to contribute to the content and focus of the site yet demand fewer resources than direct dialogue.

Not all discussion forums are created equal. Users have to want to participate in an online community and the ability to wax poetically about the joys of the common artichoke is not necessarily going to encourage social interaction on a cooking Web site. Kollock contends that successful communities, online or otherwise, must provide members a consistent identity and sense of space, meaningful rituals, norms and rules for behavior, sanctions for violating those rules, boundaries defining the community, and opportunities for interaction (CITE). Girgensohn and Lee identified three challenges to designing online communities: encouraging user participation, fostering social interaction, and promoting visibility of people and their activities (137). Kollock further contends that holding all these social interactions together is the perceived benefit of cooperation (CITE).

Girgensohn and Lee encouraged users to participate in two online communities by first creating awareness of the Web sites. They suggest sending invitations to potential users, staging contests to drive visits to sites, and offering meaningful content to both registered users and guests. They also found that recognizing participation encouraged other users to participate. Noting how often pages are viewed or indicating how frequently users post encouraged other visitors to post and visit content (139). This strategy is tied to promoting people and their activities, the second social design principle. Users must be able to create and maintain a consistent identity. This creates a level of trust between users but also promotes a sense of self in the virtual world. Girgensohn and Lee required users to create profiles and pseudonyms (which could be their real names). Registration required real-life information like a valid email address, names, locations, affiliations, and interests. Members could also include links to their own Web sites during the registration process. I suppose one could always fake this information, but the assumption is that users will perceive more benefit from the site by telling the truth. From these profiles, the designers could steer users to social browsing tools like member directories and visual clusters of users organized and reorganized by datum like location, interest, access dates, or registration dates (139). Svensson, Höök, and Cöster call these tools for social navigation (374).

Girgensohn and Lee enriched participation in discussion forums by attaching forums to content pages. They used a split panel screen so visitors could easily move between content and forums. Forums displayed posts chronologically with the most recent posts on the top of the list and highlighted new threads or new content since users last logged in. Svensson, Höök, and Cöster likewise found that timely markers aided social navigation. Their creation and study of a Web based recipe collection called Kallas demonstrated that recommendations, comments, and

the presence of other people influenced user behavior (397). In addition to forums, they suggest online communities designed for “recommendations computed from others’ choices, real-time broadcasting of concurrent user activity in the interface, possibilities to comment and vote on [content], the number of downloads per [pages], and chatting facilities” (374). The designers argue that these features encourage return visitors and social interaction among visitors. Quick polls are another way to spur low-risk, but valuable participation if polls influence the site’s content, focus, or operation (Girgensohn and Lee 140). These results point to the potential success of Web sites designed for agency and meaningful interaction, what hypertext theorists term constructive hypertext.

Interactivity, Agency, and Democracy

Readers-as-writers have much more power in hypertext to create the texts they wish to read. Their power may be limited to simply choosing a path in read-only hypertext, but bloggers have power to annotate or even subvert hypertexts in a running commentary. Many commercial hypertext systems like cooking Web sites fall somewhere between these two extremes of read-only and read-write interfaces. As commercial sites selling a brand message, they are probably closer to read-only. Site search engines, discussion lists and forums, site maps, email lists, and hyperlinks open multiple paths to visitors and grant them limited agency. But, Janet H. Murray, author of Hamlet on the Holodeck, points out that activity, simply clicking a link or reordering a site map, is not agency (128). “Agency is the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices” (Murray 126). Choice is key to redistributing the power of text creation. “One of the greatest strengths of hypertext,” Landow contends, “lies in its capacity of permitting users to find, create, and follow multiple structures in the same body of

information. Essentially, [hypertext inventors] describe the technological means of achieving Derrida's concept of decentering" (Landow 10). Many paths through a text equal many truths gleaned from that text (Morgan 209). The theme running through most hypertext theory is this decentering, hypertext's potential for flexibility, for dynamism, for instability, and for contingency, its interactivity and customizability according to both the reader's and the writer's associative thinking.

Hypertext theorists speak lovingly of the democratizing power of the World Wide Web and other hypertext interfaces. According to Moulthrop, hypertext threatens "to upset the stability of language-as-property—a possibility with great political ramifications" and social ramifications for gender ("You Say" 2507). Moulthrop believes "post modern modes of communication (electronic writing, computer networks, text-linking systems) can destabilize social hierarchies and promote broader definitions of authority" (Moulthrop "You Say" 2508). Bolter likewise argues that "poststructuralists also provided a theoretical foundation for hypertext[;] hypertext as writing technology can be aligned with the critique of the Cartesian ego" (196). Furthermore, Bolter declares in Writing Space that, "electronic writing seems then to accept as strengths the very qualities—the play of signs, intertextuality, the lack of closure—that the poststructuralists posed as the ultimate limitations of literature and language" (183). When text and writing space can no longer lay claim to authority and authoricity, many of the mechanisms perpetuating social hierarchies lose their power.

Landow puts the changes this way: "Without linearity and sharp boundaries between inside and outside, between absence and presence, and between self and other, philosophy will change" (113). We have certainly witnessed the philosophy of intellectual property change over the last decade. Digitizing texts makes them easier to create, edit, maintain, and access. Add

hypertext and hypermedia and readers become writers, critics, commentators, and even spoofers because digital texts are easily sampled, edited, and shared. Media file sampling and sharing through services like Napster and Limewire demonstrate the sticky copyright issues inherent in digital texts, but Landow, Morgan, LeCourt, and Barnes have realized the scholarly and creative possibilities of data riffing. Landow says the “ease of cutting, copying, and otherwise manipulating texts permits different forms of scholarly composition, ones in which the researcher’s notes and original data exist in experientially closer proximity to the scholarly text than ever before” (44). This practice is a good example of that blurring of subject and object discussed earlier by Curtain and Heldke.

Wendy Morgan, for example, translated Patti Lather’s book Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS (Perseus 1997) for hypertext. The printed book juxtaposes Lather’s research notes and scholarly discussions with the voices of her subjects. Morgan decentered and destructured both the authors’ voices and the subjects’ voices so much so that not even Lather was sure which texts were her own in the hypertext environment. Morgan also added hyperlinks to “supplementary texts,” spaces for readers-as-writers to comment and save their new materials. Constructive hypertexts like this one turn texts into “provisional constructs” and readers into active agents creating knowledge rather than simply receiving it (Morgan 213). Bernstein, Joyce, and Levine define constructive hypertext as texts “rewritten by the act of choice” (165). Constructive hypertexts invite collaboration, but most importantly they encourage action and participation.

Morgan sees hypertext as an empowering disruptive technology, much the same way Donna Haraway envisions the cyborg, a posthuman agent resisting science, patriarchy, and capitalism by appropriating the tools of the dominant ideology. Morgan calls for a postmodern

feminist assessment of hypertext theory that deconstructs “positivist knowledges” and simultaneously constructs “eccentric, provisional knowledges” (208). Morgan also suggests a vocabulary and a heuristic to assess Web site design and usability. User centered hypertext, according to Morgan, is rich with associative links, inter textual and intra textual juxtaposition, rhizomatic and nomadic thinking, non-sequential polylogic, and multi-generic collage (209-12). Morgan shares with Landow and Diane Greco the language and agenda of postmodernism with attention to agency formation and to the social construction of knowledge. Because Morgan uses her own work as an example of feminist, postmodern hypertext, her conclusions may not be generalizable. She identifies polylogic, multiple-genres, intertextuality, and associative linking in hypertext because these are the structures she built into her own text. The project for me, then, was to determine whether and to what extent these same features are operating in commercial cooking Web sites.

Diane Greco’s paper, “Hypertext with Consequences” is a counterbalance to Morgan’s ideas. Greco critiques applications of postmodern theories to hypertext. Specifically, she notes the absence of politics and gender in many postmodern approaches. She argues that hypertext and all technologies are inherently political in questions of access, censorship, distribution, cost, use, and identity construction: “All these questions must be addressed for any theory of hypertext . . . to become a motivation, articulation, and catalyst for real change on the levels of systems and interface design, pedagogy, and participation in communities both real and virtual” (85). Greco contends that despite the characteristics of hypertext that invite shifting reader/writer relations and the metaphors of hypertext (webs, paths, networks, links, weaving), the theories and ideologies surrounding hypertext and computer technology still celebrate singularity and authority. The paper suggested a vocabulary and an agenda for the present study. Greco

highlights the potential of hypertext: non-hierarchical, non-linear expression, collaboration, and intuitive, associative construction of knowledge. Her insistence, however, that there is nothing inherently collaborative about the systems and institutions deploying hypertext resonated with my suspicion that recipe collections as commercial Web sites may not fully develop the potentialities of hypertexts. The cooking sites with discussion forums, blogs, recipe sharing, and recipe ratings are just beginning to blur the boundaries between readerly and writerly cookbooks, a practice actually more common to print cookbooks with note pages or margins wide enough to write in. Despite the controls site producers exercise over commercial interfaces, hypertext theory suggests the role Web sites might play in helping users forge a postmodern self that, like the cyborg, makes problematic the human-technology interaction.

Yet despite these celebratory theories of hypertext, commercial and governmental forces on the Web use hypertext to promote, or at least to maintain, social hierarchies and power. Lawrence Lessig's The Future of Ideas is a counter balance to Steven Johnson's and George Landow's utopian vision for hypertext. Lessig argues that old media practices like one to many broadcasting and rigid copyright laws constrain the promise of hypertext and networked innovation and creativity. Big telecoms and cable television providers increasingly control the Internet backbone. According to Lessig, these companies control access to network architecture and may make it prohibitively expensive to operate constructive hypertexts. As we have already learned, proprietary code destroys the openness of Web design and limits the kinds of content sites can offer. Content providers further constrain Web linking by exploiting copyright laws and by requiring registration for site content. Essentially what Lessig sees happening is the consolidation of architecture, code, and content, a sort of toll road for Web access and content. Rather than encouraging collaborative hypertext, big companies build the network, write the

code that runs over it, and develop the content for that code. Web sites must either throw in with the monopolies or pay for access to their systems (Lessig 238). There is still plenty of room on the World Wide Web for innovators, but the economy of scope Lessig foresees is likely to squeeze out applications like forums, dynamic searching, social browsing, and personalized content that are more time consuming and costly to maintain.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks power the World Wide Web. From a strictly technical HTML perspective, there are three types of hyperlinks: absolute links to external Web sites (<http://www.bettycrocker.com>); relative links from one page to another within a site (http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/solution/Meal_Ideas.aspx); and anchor links to a specific word or section of a Web page (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_Mills#History). From a design perspective, two types of hyperlinks are structural links and associative links (Nielsen 195). Structural links are the navigation aids—menus, hotlinked logos, indexes, sitemaps, search engines, or directories. Associative links represent the trails or paths connecting chunks of discrete material. Traditionally, hyperlinks were underlined blue text that changed to purple after users clicked the link and followed the trail. Moving the mouse over the link (“mousing over”) changed the pointer to a white, pointing hand. None of the commercial cooking sites in this study has entirely adopted this tradition. While non-standard linking strategies and visual designs thwart the open platform tradition of Web applications, successful Web sites must at least demonstrate a consistent linking strategy and functional visual design *within* the site.

Besides non-standard link designs, frames, new windows, and impermanent links may threaten the rhetorical conventions of hypertext. Hypertext links should demonstrate a “rhetoric

of departure” and a “rhetoric of arrival.” Jakob Nielsen defines the rhetoric of departure as a justification, why users “should leave their current context and what value they will get at the other end of the link.” Rhetorics of arrival “situate users in the new context and provide them with value relative to their point of origin,” says Nielsen (66). Nielsen interprets designs that break or disable the functions of hypertext and browsers, functions like unique URLs and back buttons, as hostile messages of control. While Nielsen is extreme in his polemic, the unique URL is still the essential component that makes the Web the Web. Tinker with that and you have a closed system that borrows the metaphor of hypertext, but not the universal, unconstrained, community that Web progenitors imagined.

Frames, for example, disable unique URLs. Clicking a link in a framed site opens a Web document inside the original frame, but the browser does not display to the user the unique location of this new document. The site design now controls how users view the Web. Opening Web pages in new windows similarly breaks down the associative trails of Web browsing. Users can no longer easily trace, through back and forward buttons or browser histories, the path that brought them to individual pages. Finally, impermanent links like those often assigned to daily articles on news Web sites frustrate users trying to bookmark a page, reference it in writing, or refer back to it. The hallmark of a successful site, note the judges of the Webby Awards, is one people bookmark or visit regularly. Transient URLs make repeat visits difficult. While perhaps not downright hostile as Nielsen might argue, impermanent URLs, new windows, and frames shift the focus from user centered design to server centered design.

The three cooking Web sites under review here achieve many of the goals of user centered design. To varying degrees, they encourage user participation, offer navigational tools, and link content associatively. They commit many of the mistakes against which experts caution too.

They don't always maintain consistent design identities, for example. They fail to offer opportunities for meaningful communication between users and producers. Most importantly, at least two of these sites fall prey to Lessig's fears about one to many broadcasting. The World Wide Web becomes another medium for branding and selling rather than for agency. The next chapters explore these designs and their consequences in detail.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

My analysis employs research methods from a variety of disciplines. From rhetorical analysis I borrow an attention to purpose, audience, context, metaphor, and language. The grounded theory approach to qualitative research offers an open-ended method for coding and categorizing rhetoric. General coding categories include setting and context codes, knowledge claims, process codes, activity codes, relationship and social structure codes, metaphor codes, and multiple binaries (Creswell 193; Sullivan and Porter 184). The literature review and my preliminary observations of the data set generated four narrower categories: purpose (internal or external validation and pleasure), authority, flexibility, and metaphors. I hypothesize that the extent to which cooking Web sites support internal validation and pleasure, promote open and negotiated authority, and are flexible and intuitive implies the epistemologies steering site design.

Feminist and Positivist Rhetoric

Two oppositional epistemologies informing traditional print cookbooks are feminist and positivist. One aim of this study is to determine whether these same epistemologies inform commercial hypertexts. As cooking knowledge migrates to the Web, I wonder whether traditional notions of knowledge and gender go with it. Preliminary research suggests that concept indicators for feminist epistemologies and discourse are metaphors of dialogue, conversation, and celebration. Themes are indulgence, fun, pleasure, and sensory enjoyment. Authority in feminist texts is open and negotiated. The purposes of recipes/food/eating/cooking are subjective and focused on self-care rather than on care for others. Texts demonstrating feminist epistemologies are flexible and participatory. Knowledge is constructed socially and

collaboratively. Flexible, participatory sites demonstrate elements of both exploratory and constructive hypertext according to Stuart Moulthrop (“Beyond” 295). Concept indicators for flexibility and participation are multiple methods for searching site content, dynamic content, meaningful two-way communication (email, newsletters, asynchronous discussion boards, and/or synchronous chat), and alternative views (site maps or multiple printing views). I expect sites guided by feminist epistemologies to be user centered.

Concept indicators for positivist epistemologies and discourse, in contrast, are metaphors of science, architecture, construction, and business. Themes are efficiency, modernity, thrift, and quickness. Authority rests with the author/editor/site. Purposes of recipes/food/eating/cooking are objective and focused on pleasing or serving others. Knowledge is procedural and received. I expect Web sites demonstrating positivist epistemologies to be closed to visitors. They will not allow social construction of knowledge or meaningful user participation. I expect positivist sites to be inflexible. Sites guided by positivist epistemologies are producer centered rather than user centered.

Web Usability

In addition to analyzing rhetorical codes, I evaluate Web design and usability strategies. Content, structure and navigation, visual design, functionality, and interactivity fit well with rhetorical analyses and grounded theory (content), with Web usability (structure, navigation, functionality, and interactivity), and with visual semiotics (visual design). I determine structure, navigation, and functionality from home pages. Structure means information architecture, and navigation refers to design features like menus, hotlinked logos, breadcrumbs (trails of links users can follow back to the homepage), and site maps. The home pages for all the sites in the

data set are rich with media and hotlinks, elements of functionality. Functionality refers to how quickly sites load, how well Web sites work with any browser or any user's special requirements, and whether sites have active links. Finally, interactivity is especially important to the present study because I expect interactivity or its absence to suggest a site's guiding view of knowledge creation and agency. I analyze the mechanisms for meaningful interaction and communication, features like search engines, community forums, opportunities to provide feedback or site content, and email.

Critical hypertext theory also offers an evaluative heuristic. Greco's "wish list for a political praxis of hypertext" judges hypertext first by its opportunities for user participation—its interactivity. Participatory hypertext according to Greco lets "everyone who uses it speak for themselves, and thereby constitute their own subject position" (89). Second, resistant hypertext should redefine or blur distinctions between genres. On cooking Web sites, I might look for memoir, news, recipes, stories, poems, letters, or documentary. Third, thoughtful, political hypertext should understand non-linear expression. Most hypertext links, while associative, are additive or supplemental. They link readers outward to related Web sites in a linear progression of thought; they offer more or next. Non-linear expression, in contrast, according to Diane Greco, George Landow, and Steven Johnson sees the link as a modifier to ideas or even as a divergent argument (Johnson 130-137). Non-linear expression might juxtapose resources and texts and thus encourage problem solving. In other words, non-linear hypertext should allow users to construct paths in order to draw their own conclusions. Finally, Greco calls for an evaluation of the extent to which hypertext supports communal authorship. This is akin to the meaningful interactivity—the agency—the IADAS (International Academy of Digital Arts and

Sciences) and Janet Murray describe. Communal authorship is not just feedback or participation, but means that users can contribute content.

Visual Semiotics

Hypertext spaces are as much visual spaces as they are textual spaces. My study of hypertext structure, rhetoric, and discourse treats Web sites as both visual and textual artifacts. Sonja Foss suggests that rhetorical analysis of visual artifacts “is characterized by attention to one or more of three aspects of visual images—their nature, function, and evaluation” (Foss 146). Kenney defines nature as formal description and adds another level of analysis to the rubric: an image’s historical context (Kenney 153). An analysis of a visual’s nature begins with a literal description of the image. What is the subject and how does the subject appear in the design? What is the most salient feature of the image (Kress and Leeuwen 212)? Attention here is to design features like space, line, color, shape, text, size, contrast, texture, and arrangement. These are the presented elements according to Foss. The suggested elements are cultural symbols, myths, “concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a viewer is likely to infer from the presented elements” (Foss 146). From all of these elements, presented and suggested, we infer meaning or what Kress and Leeuwen term “information value” (193). This is the nature of the visual, what it means and the compositional elements that bring about the meaning. In the case of Web sites, we could describe obvious navigational features like menu bars, breadcrumbs, frames, and absolute or relative links. We might describe the linking structure, the placement of images and text, and the presence or absence of advertising.

Visual semiotics has recently found expression through the work of Gunther Kress and his interpreter Claire Harrison. Visual and linguistic texts with many entry and exit points are

multi-modal texts according to Kress. Multi-modal texts are typically user-centered in their design. Multi-modal texts offer many more options for entering and interpreting texts. Choice, according to Kress, is user-centered. Kress suggests these conventions of multi-modal texts:

- Open order, order designed by reader.
- “Page” site with multiple entry points.
- Knowledge produced by visitor/reader in accord with the needs of their life-world.
- Page and/or message designers imagine the assumed characteristic of the life-world of their audience.
- Reading path designed by reader and/or visitor.
- Reader designs/selects her/his point of departure.
- Image dominates the organization of the “page.”
- Image and writing potentially co-equal for the presentation of material.
- Use of mode governed by “aptness”, insecurity about or absence of canonical modes (11).

Kress could be describing usability features of Web sites. I contend that many genres demonstrated these characteristics long before Web pages. Cookbooks, for example, possess many, although not all, of the characteristics Kress identifies. Readers dip into and out of cookbooks regardless of the order imposed on the book by its bindings. Tab dividers, indexes, table of contents, and menus are entry points into cookbook texts. Many cookbooks are picture-heavy like Betty Crocker’s Picture Cookbook and the spate of celebrity chef cookbooks made popular by the Food Network. Image and text are co-equal in these books. The images are promises that demand readers’ attention. “This is what you can do,” they shout, or “your dish

should look like this.” They are also demonstrations, illustrations, and decoration, but they are rarely gratuitous. We should not be surprised to find images on cooking Web sites equally important to meaning making. Neither should we be surprised if cooking Web sites demonstrate the features of multi-modality similar to those of printed cookbooks.

Data Set

This study reviews three cooking Web sites: FoodNetwork.com, BettyCrocker.com, and Epicurious.com. The sites demonstrate many common features such as dynamic home pages, searchability, site registration requirements, recipe indexes, menu plans, FAQs, About Us or About the Site, online shopping, advertising, newsletters, and community forums. Each is a cooking industry leader, but they are only three of millions of recipe collections on the World Wide Web. They are among the most popular, however. A Google search for keyword: recipe returns FoodNetwork.com, Epicurious.com, and BettyCrocker.com in the top ten sites. The Food Network site and Epicurious also make the top five results in a Google search for keyword: cooking.

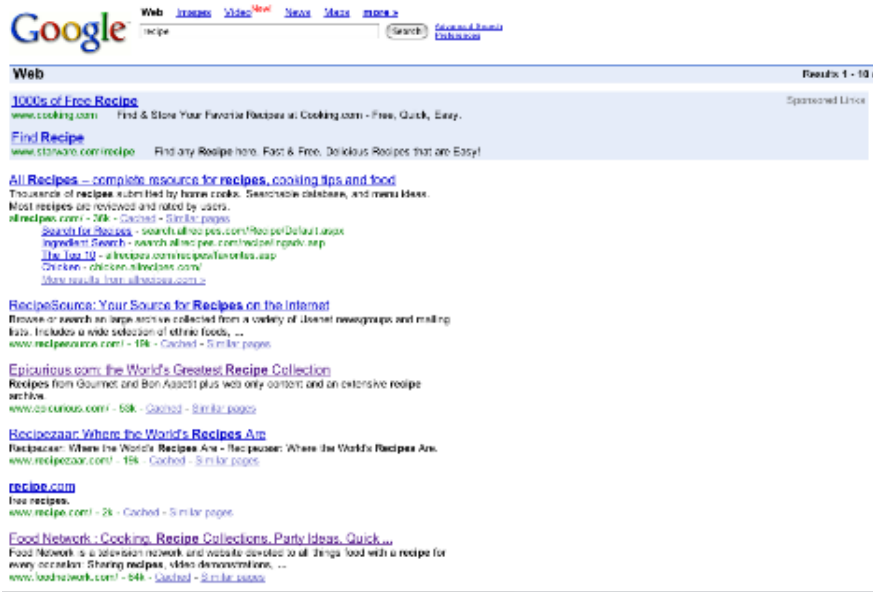


Figure 1: Google search for keyword: recipe. September 8, 2006

The Food Network and Betty Crocker are industry-leading names in mainstream cooking. The Food Network reaches 88 million television viewers. Between cable television, broadband, On Demand Television, and print cookbooks, the Food Network dominates the multi-media recipe industry. It claims to be the number one food Web site with over five million unique users every month. It received a 2004 Webby nomination for best Web site in the Living category. Betty Crocker, on the other hand, dominates cookbook publishing with 200 titles, and 65 million copies of its books sold. Its presence on the Web is therefore not surprising. I use this site because of the company’s history and depth in the recipe industry. Epicurious.com, the online counterpart to CondeNast publications like Bon Appétit and Gourmet magazines, is also an industry leader. It boasts many Web design and cooking literature awards. It claims to house the largest collection of recipes on the World Wide Web.

All of the sites are graphically rich and their content is dynamic. All include searchable recipe indexes and some level of customizability via site registration. Registration gives users

access to online recipe boxes, newsletters, and forums. BettyCrocker.com is a closed site in the sense that there are no links to third party advertisers or Web sites. Links are internal, to books or catalogs or to other site features. FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com, in contrast, link users to many outside sites. FoodNetwork.com, Epicurious.com, and BettyCrocker.com are clearly large corporate sites. Each has many pages, many internal links, and a complicated structure. These general observations were not surprising considering the likely purposes of the sites and their role in the market.

All of the sites have grown out of more traditional media markets. FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com are media convergence sites. They extend the breadth and depth of their sister media, television and print respectively. The advertising relationship is obvious here. Television and print media depend on advertising. Food Network and CondeNast (the parent company of Epicurious) have simply adopted the same marketing model. BettyCrocker.com is also a product extension, but because its parent company is a commercial goods producer (General Mills) rather than a media outlet, its purposes and interactivity are also different. Betty Crocker only includes ads for its own products or those of its parent company. It has adopted the same marketing model it uses in print. The Betty Crocker cookbooks are vehicles for General Mills products; they are self-referencing like the Betty Crocker Web site.

Betty Crocker

Betty Crocker recipe collections have dominated the cooking industry for eight decades. Flour, cereal, and packaged goods manufacturer General Mills first published Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook in 1950, but the book was the culmination of thirty years of recipe booklets, radio programs, and letters from the General Mills Home Service Department to confused

housewives. The book would be the first in a long line of Betty Crocker cookbooks. It was not, however, the first cookery bible designed for young brides with little cooking experience. The Boston Cooking School Cookbook by Fannie Farmer came out early in the century. Irma Rombauer published The Joy of Cooking in 1931 with a vanity press, and at about the same time that Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook appeared, The Joy of Cooking was in its third edition. What set Betty Crocker's book apart from these others was the marketing powerhouse of General Mills and the Betty Crocker brand, a well-known, trusted friend and confidant in the kitchen. No matter that Betty Crocker was fictional and that the book shamelessly touted General Mills products like Softasilk cake flour, Gold Medal All Purpose flour, and Wheaties. Betty's cookbook had instant cachet with home cooks.

McGraw-Hill printed 950,000 copies of this first edition (Shapiro 180). By 1952, grateful housewives had purchased more than two million copies (Marling 79). Seven editions and 41 years later, Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook had sold 26 million copies ("General Mills"). The most recent edition is copyrighted December 2005. The original, called Big Red, is still available in a facsimile edition. Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook may have been so successful because it promoted a people-pleasing middle class lifestyle of fun, quick family foods. The title page of the 1998 facsimile edition proudly announces, "The recipes are exactly as they appear in the original cookbook to reflect the heritage of American cooking." That heritage is distinctly mid-western, colonial, and middle class. Despite this celebration of origins and heritage, the original letter to the reader proclaimed the book, "a new and different cookbook for a new age." Modernity, efficiency, and scientific methods are keys to the lifestyle the book promotes and are constant themes throughout. Betty Crocker was the no nonsense matronly teacher designed to

“forge a crucial link between old habits and modern food” (Shapiro 178). The book and the Web site endeavor to balance this appeal to nostalgia with a push toward modernity.



Figure 2: BettyCrocker.com Homepage. September 8, 2006

But this is a lifestyle grounded in the American values of hearth, home, and traditional gender roles. The Betty Crocker test kitchens pictured on pages one and two of the book are simulacra of those values and roles. Each one pops off the page in happy vibrant colors: sky blue, red and yellow polka dots, yellow and white Swedish designs. The cabinets in these kitchens are “commodious,” Betty tells us by way of introduction to her cookbook. Fabrics and walls are “colorful.” The Terrace Kitchen has “every known home-type convenience.” The spaces are “happy” and “amusing” yet serious work goes on here.



Figure 3: The Betty Crocker Test Kitchens from The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook, 1950

They are temples to cleanliness and efficiency. Shapiro quips that “Sober, disciplined professionals strive tirelessly” in these odd factory reproductions of home kitchens (188). Each serves its own function: testing recipes, experimenting with appliances, or formulating new packaged foods. The staff is all women, all smiling, and immaculately dressed in starched, white lab uniforms and white shoes. Their hair is coiffed and their lips are red. They look like nurses in this clinic for food, midwives birthing new culinary pleasures. Betty Crocker’s Picture Cookbook

elevated cooking and housekeeping to a science on par with medicine and chemistry. Once mysterious and laborious, the text tells us above a photograph of a reproduced 1750s American dining room and cooking hearth, cooking was now a field in which any woman could excel and be proud.



Figure 4: Betty Crocker Test Kitchens 2006 from Bettycrocker.com. September 30, 2006

Part of the rationale for elevating women's work to the level of science and manufacturing was, ironically, women's liberation. The scientific movement in cooking, begun fifty years earlier by home economists like Fannie Farmer, sought to garner appreciation for women's work by adopting the vocabulary and mechanisms of the industrial revolution. Marjorie Husted, the advertising genius behind the words of Betty Crocker, likewise felt duty-bound to remind women who were suffering under enormous workforce setbacks following WWII that housework was as valuable to the American way of life as manufacturing (Shapiro 186-187). The other reason for lauding domesticity was to convince women that their role in post-war society was to civilize and socialize returning soldiers whom war had brutalized and made

savage. Male dominated industries may have fired women in favor of men, but by sacrificing their jobs and financial independence, women were ensuring the success of post-war values like civility, industry, and progress (Hartman 228; Horner 335-336).

Horner argues that Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook was a ritual response to the horrors of war. It served as a field guide to reintegrating members of society who had been away for some time and whose experiences were now outside the norms and values of the community. The task of reintegration fell to women, the literal and spiritual mothers of a fractured community. "Through word and image," Horner claims, "Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook symbolically connects the domestic practice of modern women's cookery to the birth of the United States and, in turn, to the postwar renewal of the nation" (332). Many feminists have since decried the damage done to women's status by housekeeping manuals like this one, but their outrage is testimony to Betty Crocker's generational success at inscribing patriarchal gender roles on countless American households.

The Picture Cookbook was a book full of contradictions and ironies. It celebrated traditional roles through modern conveniences like electric appliances and packaged foods. It also touted colonial heritage in a book marked by its modern, multi-modal design. It is no coincidence that this first full-length general use publication by General Mills was also full-color and pictured. The year 1950 was the dawn of the Golden Age in television and General Mills had had a foothold in the burgeoning TV industry since its inception. Betty Crocker herself had her own short-lived TV show and products with her name on them were frequent sponsors of other shows. The influence of the image is evident in this cookbook. The Picture Cookbook is a sort of 1950s USA Today. While images are frequently used simply as illustrations, they are also "text" as the two-page test kitchen spread described earlier demonstrates. Marling suggests that the

Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook borrowed its photo-essay layouts from magazines in which General Mills advertised its products.



Pour egg yolk mixture in thin stream over entire surface of beaten egg whites, carefully cutting and folding with whip or rubber scraper until completely blended.

Figure 5: How-to Photograph from Cakes section of The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook, 1950

While most of the how-to photographs are black and white, the finished dishes appear in garish color photography: pink cakes on chartreuse table cloths, chocolate cake layers peeking between airy yellow frosting, red tomato sauces drizzled over pale green, snowy cream-cheese stuffed celery, and my favorite, lipstick red maraschino cherries poking out of fat green olives. Color, Marling points out, marked advertising of the 1950s. It was sex appeal, decorative cooking, glitz and gloss, but more symbolically, color

signified . . . a break with the sameness of the military uniform, an answer to the drabness of hard times, a visible sign of a product bought brand, spanking new, an extra, a mark of futuristic technology at work, or miracle fabrics and plastics in a thousand unimaginable rainbow-tinted hues. (Marling 85)

The Big Red Book was officially titled The Picture Cookbook until the 1969 edition, when by this time, pictures were so much a part of consumer culture and cookbook publishing that their presence need not be announced.

Audience demographics have much to do with cookbook and Web site features and presentations. Audience analysis begins to address my second and third research questions, questions that consider guiding epistemologies and their role in constructing gender, identity, and agency.

- How open and negotiated are cooking Web sites? What fundamental beliefs about knowledge creation and knowledge sharing are at work under the code?
- As cooking knowledge migrates to the World Wide Web, to what extent do gendered stereotypes about food preparation and its role in identity and subject formation go with it? Novero phrases the question this way: “in what ways do they [recipe collections] aim at constructing women” (163)?

The audience for Betty Crocker publications, for example, is women with families who likely do not have much practical, hands-on experience in the kitchen. These women are from middle-class families and are raising middle-class families of their own. They live in suburban areas and shop at supermarkets where they purchase name-brand convenience foods². These women likely socialize primarily with other women. Only recently has BettyCrocker.com positioned itself as an outlet for grown-up party planning. In this way, it moves a bit closer to the luxury sites, Epicurious.com and FoodNetwork.com. Late in 2004, entertaining information on BettyCrocker.com was limited to hosting a cookie exchange, celebrating children’s birthday

² See Shapiro and Inness for the history of convenience foods.

parties, and cooking holiday meals. By September 2006, its Entertaining page, a link from the Meal Ideas drop down menu, featured a photograph of thirty-somethings toasting wine glasses in a well-appointed kitchen. The page offered visitors three hotlinked tabs: All about Entertaining, The Entertaining Kitchen, and Gatherings, Celebrations & Planning Guides. It is here on this last tab, three clicks from the homepage, where Betty Crocker's traditional focus is clear. "Fun Parties for Grown Ups" appeared at the bottom of a long list of other celebrations like children's birthday parties and family barbeques. By October 2006, however, the entertaining pages along with their tips on dinner party planning had disappeared. The focus on kids' parties was back as the kids and family holiday season, beginning with Halloween and ending with Christmas, approached. Even the homepage underwent a radical redesign between September 2006 and October 2006. The newer page featured children's celebrations, candy corn shaped cookies, and Halloween treats.



Figure 6: Toasting in the Kitchen from an entertaining page of BettyCrocker.com. September 15, 2006

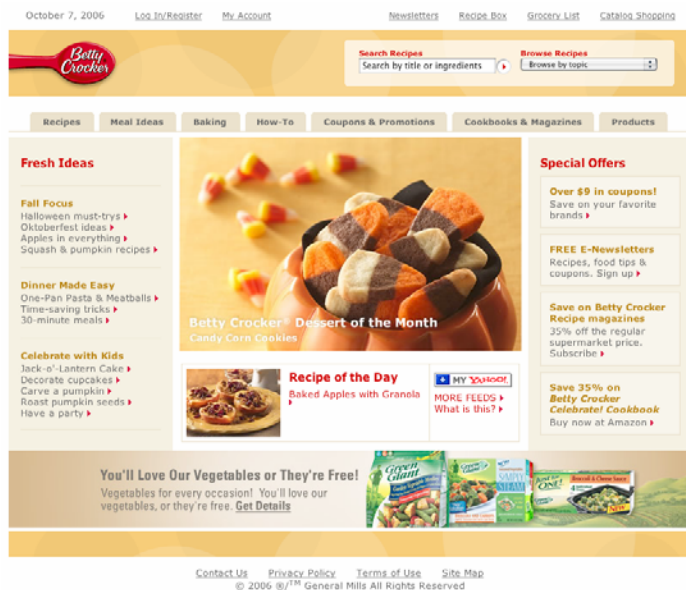


Figure 7: BettyCrocker.com Homepage October 7, 2006

The women most likely to visit BettyCrocker.com need a teaching manual that carefully explains cooking basics: methods, terms, ingredients, and even serving and shopping suggestions. They need support and reassurance. The November 2004 homepage, for example, urged visitors to “Tackle the Turkey.” The Gatherings and Celebrations page reassured readers with tips to “Your First Thanksgiving Dinner.” The September 2006 homepage asked “Apples, Apples, Apples: Which Ones to Use for What?” Furthermore, the “All About” page especially highlighted the trepidation BettyCrocker.com visitors feel about cooking, baking, or party planning. “All About Cooking” primed visitors with the command “Ready, Set—Cook!” and suggested “basic” cooking shortcuts, encyclopedia-like entries all about food groups from appetizers to vegetables, and even taught users how to set up their kitchens. Such basic how-to guides along with the recurring tab graphic on many of the site’s pages conjure up the look, feel, and content of most Betty Crocker cookbooks.

The text suggests that family is important to site users, but that they are pressed for time and harried. Mealtime is “family time” according to BettyCrocker.com. Dinner preparations should be easy, quick, and “no-nonsense.” Cooking should “nourish your family.” Prominent features are Kid Meals, Kid-friendly Baking, Grocery Lists, Dinner Made Easy, and recipes made with convenience foods like Bisquick, Hamburger Helper, and Betty Crocker Frosting. The site is graphically rich with lots of photographs of food and General Mills products. Photographs of people support the family and kid friendly message. Children are in the kitchen cooking with adults. The message here is wholesome family values through cooking and eating together. The site’s subtitle enforces the message: Make Every Day Homemade. The irony here is that women are to make every day homemade by purchasing and using ready-made convenience foods.



Figure 8: “Kids Meals” page from BettyCrocker.com. September 30, 2006

The Food Network

The users of FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com are also primarily women, but these are upper-middle class, educated, professional women. They are married, but less likely to have children than BettyCrocker.com users. These are Web sites for foodies not for those who must cook simply to satisfy their families. Site users are sophisticated, like to travel, like expensive products, and love to drink wine. Ads hawk expensive kitchen wear, luxury cruises, wine, and automobiles. In its media kit, Food Network boasts that its web site “sparks creativity in viewers’ kitchens and self-empowerment in their lives, linking them inexorably to Food Network’s outstanding on-air productions.” Epicurious similarly declares that it “serves up a virtual cornucopia to indulge those with a passion for food.” Visitors to these Web sites have the time, money, and skill to indulge their passions. They are, in other words, epicures.

The Food Network reaches some 88 million television viewers according to its parent company The E. W. Scripps Company. The company claims its Website reaches 5.5 million users a month. Seventy percent of those site visitors are women whose median age is 44. Three quarters of these users are married. They own their own homes and they enjoy the comforts bought with household incomes over \$67,000 (Demographics). The site’s users are upscale, discerning, intelligent, and product-savvy according to its advertising page. FoodNetwork.com describes itself this way:

FoodNetwork.com is a leading online destination for both the food and TV categories. It has one of the largest crossover audiences of any TV network, and is the #1 food site on the web. The site includes more than 25,000 recipes and contains such topical categories as TV, video, cooking basics, travel destinations, holidays, parties, easy entertaining, healthy lifestyle ideas, wine & drinks, Food

Network chefs, contests, original broadband series, popular merchandise, and a database of products and locations featured on Food Network shows. (Overview)

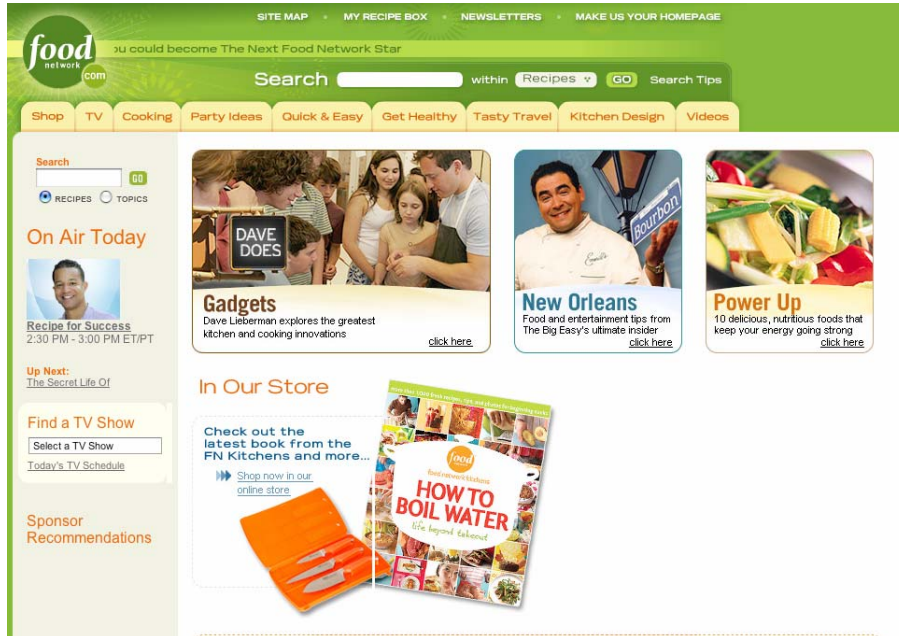


Figure 9: Food Network.com Homepage. September 15, 2006

The Food Network premiered on cable television in 1993. It now presents fifty-five different programs, twenty-three hours a day, seven days a week. Most of the programs are 30 minutes long. Only its prime-time programs Good Eats, Emeril Live, and Iron Chef America are 60 minutes. Food Network Specials may also air for one hour. On weekends, the network begins airing programming at 7:00 A.M. During the workweek, beginning at 11:00 A.M. and ending at 9:00 P.M., celebrity chefs like Bobby Flay, Giada deLaurentis, Paula Deen, Emeril Lagasse, Ina Garten (better known as the Barefoot Contessa), and Rachel Ray present their programming at the same time slot every day. These daytime shows follow the traditional cook-in-the-kitchen format pioneered by Julia Child on her public broadcasting series The French Chef.

Recently, the Food Network has adopted the tag line “Food Network Nighttime: Way More Than Cooking” to promote its travel and reality programming. Until recently, Rachel Ray

was the only woman fronting any of these shows. She stars in two prime time slots, \$40 a Day and Rachel's Tasty Travels. The Network debuted a primetime party show starring Paula Deen in September 2006 and occasionally airs a similar show with Giada deLaurentis called Behind the Bash. The other titles feature competitions like Iron Chef America and Throw Down with Bobby Flay, or bad boy chefs like Duff Goodman of Ace of Cakes or George Duran of Ham on the Street. FoodNetwork.com heavily promotes these primetime favorites to the much sought-after television viewing demographic, what Harper's Magazine writer Frederick Kaufman calls "the men who like to watch," eighteen to thirty-five year old men who don't cook and don't watch Food TV to learn how (56). Not coincidentally, this demographic is also likely to own computers ready for the media-intensive FoodNetwork.com. Each page of the site is heavy with images, Flash animations, pop-up windows, and video. Food Network is clearly expecting nighttime viewers to be crossover Web users.

Home > TV

Search

RECIPES TOPICS

TV

- TV Schedule
- HDTV
- Show List A to Z
- Hosts / Celebrity Chefs
- Food Network News
- Where to Find Guide
- Be on Food Network

Find a TV Show

Today's TV Schedule

Emeril LIVE

Don't miss this month's special guests [click here](#)

Find an Episode

Choose a show

Episode Topic

Enter Topic

Or was shown during

Select week



ACE CAKES

Thursdays at 10:30pm/9:30c

Meet Duff's Crew
Learn about Duff's faithful band of bakers

[CLICK HERE](#)

food network
nighttime
WAY MORE THAN COOKING

Advertisement


More on Food Network...

ROAD TASTED




TUESDAYS AT 10PM/9C

HAM ON THE STREET




WEDNESDAYS AT 10:30P/9:30C

WE WANT YOU TO BE THE NEXT FOOD STAR



APPLY NOW

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS



MONDAYS AT 9-10P/8-9:30C

Don't Miss:

IRON CHEF AMERICA

Flay vs. DeChellis
Find out who will reign supreme, Sunday at 9pm/8c.

Power of Food

Learn how two Food Network viewers are using food to make a difference. [click here >>](#)

Recently Aired Specials

- [Bringing Back the Bayou](#)
- [Feasting on Asphalt, Part 1](#)
- [Feasting on Asphalt, Part 2](#)
- [Feasting on Asphalt, Part 3](#)
- [Feasting on Asphalt, Part 4](#)

Figure 10: FoodNetwork.com Primetime Television Programming. Clockwise Duff Goodman, George Duran. Eric McLendon, Next Food Star application, Emeril Lagasse, Bobby and Jamie Deen. September 23, 2006

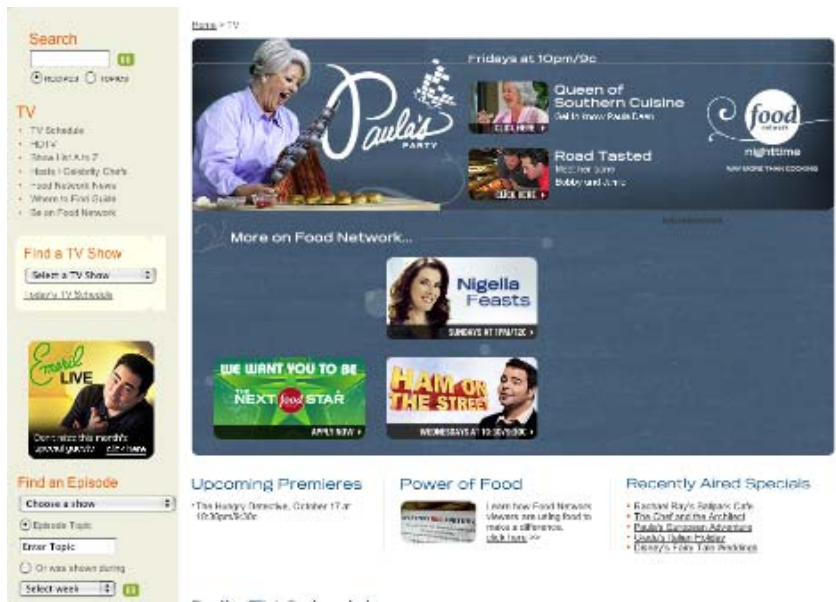


Figure 11: FoodNetwork.com Primetime Television Programming. Clockwise Paula Deen, Bobby and Jamie Dean, Nigella Lawson, George Duran, Next Food Star application, Emeril Lagasse. September 30, 2006

Like BettyCrocker.com, FoodNetwork.com features a tabbed navigational design. The most prominent features on the page, however, are photographs of the celebrity chefs. All of these images are hotlinks to TV show or episode information. TV, in fact, is the second tab across the top of the page, left to right. The first is Shop. Cooking comes third. Six more tabs link to pages on Party Ideas, Quick & Easy meal ideas, Get Healthy, Tasty Travel, Kitchen Design, and Videos. The tabs change colors and pop up and down when users click them. This design reminds me not so much of a tabbed cookbook, but of a recipe card box. Clicking the Cooking tab, links the reader to a graphically intense page with yet more photographs of celebrity chefs, but also text links to cooking basics like Cooking Guides, Cooking Demos, Cooking for Kids, Culinary Q&A, and an encyclopedia. These links appear in a left navigation text menu, but also in a splashy photograph-turned-hotlink on the bottom of the Cooking page

called “Cooking 101.” This beautiful image of shrimp and clams is also the backdrop for a “Cooking Tools” menu. Despite the buying power and leisure time of Food Network viewers and site users, the audience values basic how-to just like Betty Crocker devotees.

Like BettyCrocker.com, FoodNetwork.com focuses on quick preparation. Its visitors might enjoy luxury foods, but they have little time to prepare them. Judging from the popup ads on the site and on Food Network television, the site’s audience is more likely to buy frozen food, and pre-cut vegetables than peel the artichokes Giada deLaurentis and Alton Brown are so fond of. The fourth top navigation choice is “Quick & Easy.” The attention here is to quick cuisine like Chinese food or to recipes with short ingredient lists like pizza. The Food Network audience is also more diverse than the BettyCrocker.com audience. Visitors might be cooking for themselves or for small families and so click on “Meals for One” and “One Pot Meals” or they might find themselves unexpectedly cooking for a party. The “Instant Party” feature would appeal to these users. The site includes pages on packing children’s lunches, cooking seasonal fruits and vegetables, tasting regional wines, visiting unspoiled beaches, and cooking dinner in thirty minutes or less. FoodNetwork.com thus positions itself as a lifestyle Web site, a site the harried mom or partying bachelor can surf to and come away with smart, classy, and tasty food ideas. The focus though is always on ease of preparation and recipes with few ingredients and simple techniques. The “101” theme is frequent on many of the pages as is the “Culinary Q&A.” A goal of the Food Network Web site is bringing gourmet flavors to the everyday kitchen and these site features suggest that cooking is a simple skill anyone can learn.

Epicurious

The difference between FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com seems one of Hollywood television production and New York magazine publishing, except that the Food Network is also headquartered in Manhattan. Epicurious, though, is somehow more hip and posh than the Food Network. The Food Network, after all, has found its success in the homes of daytime television watchers, not young urban professionals. The online home of Bon Appétit, Gourmet, Self, and Home & Garden magazines, Epicurious exudes urban cool. Its homepage uses words like exclusive and haute, words we typically see in upscale fashion magazines like Vogue, another CondeNast publication. Tailgate parties for Epicurious visitors, for example, are not burgers and dogs on the hibachi, but “Haute Tailgating” with conch chowder, rack of lamb, and crab cakes. Epicurious advertises luxury travel by Hilton Resorts and Luxury Link. During the fall months of 2006, Epicurious prominently featured an “exclusive” charity event called Feast and Fundraise: Wine.Dine.Donate. For \$125 to \$200 a plate, guests could enjoy dinner from top chefs and raise money for America’s Second Harvest—The Nation’s Food Bank Network. Epicurious is quick to tell readers that if they cannot attend an event in San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, or Dallas, they can host a fundraising event of their own with a suggested \$50 donation by guests. The site includes menus for such an event, dinner party planning tips, and printable invitations and place cards. Epicurious site users are thus not busy moms searching for a quick Tuesday night supper. These users are wealthy and well-connected. They have the income and time to plan elaborate dinner parties and the community consciousness to want to.

This is an appealing audience to top-tier advertisers. Epicurious describes itself to advertisers this way:

Boasting more than 20,000 recipes from Bon Appétit, Gourmet, House & Garden, and Self; a wealth of lively, useful original content on every aspect of food and drink; and a thriving online community of passionate cooks, Epicurious is the most popular food hot spot on the Web . . . House specialties include entertaining, comprehensive editorial packages themed around every big “eating” holiday; daily updates on what’s new in the food world; guides to restaurants in the world’s major cities; profiles of prominent chefs; introductions to global cuisines; regular columns by noted wine writers; video tutorials on cooking techniques; personalized recipe boxes where users can store their favorites; and a shop featuring quality merchandise from handpicked retail partners . . . Epicurious.com serves up a virtual cornucopia to indulge those with a passion for food, and keeps them coming back for more. (Epicurious.com Media Kit)

The Epicurious audience has some kitchen experience, but is eager to learn gourmet techniques and broaden its recipe repertoire. Users are urbane and cosmopolitan. They have access to organic meat and produce, ethnic foods, and specialty foods like cheese, fine wines, and exotic condiments as recipes frequently call for these ingredients. Their lifestyles afford them leisure time (weekends and vacations) that they spend shopping, cooking, and entertaining. These cooks are not nutrition, calorie, or weight conscious. Most recipes begin with lots of butter, many call for heavy cream and alcohol, and cooking methods celebrate the fact that the flavor is in the fat. In 2004, none of the sites had a “healthy eating” page. Food Network now features “Get Healthy” from its homepage, and Epicurious positions “Healthy” on a new left navigational rail and two mouse clicks from the homepage under Cooking. Low-cal, low fat or low-carb cooking are just not top priorities on Epicurious.com.

Like FoodNetwork.com, Epicurious.com is one of the leading food destinations on the Web. Until very recently, its masthead read: “Epicurious—the world’s largest recipe collection.” Its database indexes 22,000 tested recipes from the magazines, chefs, cookbooks, and restaurants and another 22,000 member-contributed recipes. Each month, the site adds about 150 new recipes (Steel). After a recent site redesign pushed by editor-in-chief Tanya Wenman Steel, the masthead reads: “Epicurious: For People Who Love to Eat.” In a personal interview, Steel described site users as people “obsessed with food.” First online in October 1995, Epicurious and its parent company CondeNet claim a “position on the Internet vanguard” (Bios). Full color photographs, illustrated instructions, searchable recipe databases, user forums, email newsletters, and technique videos make the site dynamic, interactive, and media rich. The site attracts 3 ½ million unique visitors each month (Steel). According to its media kit, the site attracts visitors who are 70% female, college educated, upper-middle class, married, and employed full-time in professional or managerial positions. Less than half of site users have children at home. Epicurious.com sells luxury and indulgence to these people with a can-do attitude. In many ways, the site sells cooking itself, empowering visitors with the skills, knowledge, and flair to cook like professional chefs. It is the portal for Gourmet and Bon Appétit magazines. I subscribe to both and have come to rely on the magazines and their online counterpart for variety, consistency, and menu planning. While recipes from the magazines and the Web site sometimes call for expensive and difficult to find ingredients, they are rarely difficult to prepare and always delicious. I have never prepared a recipe from any of these sources that wasn’t delicious and exactly as promised. I often search this site rather than dig through back issues for the recipe I remember reading months ago.

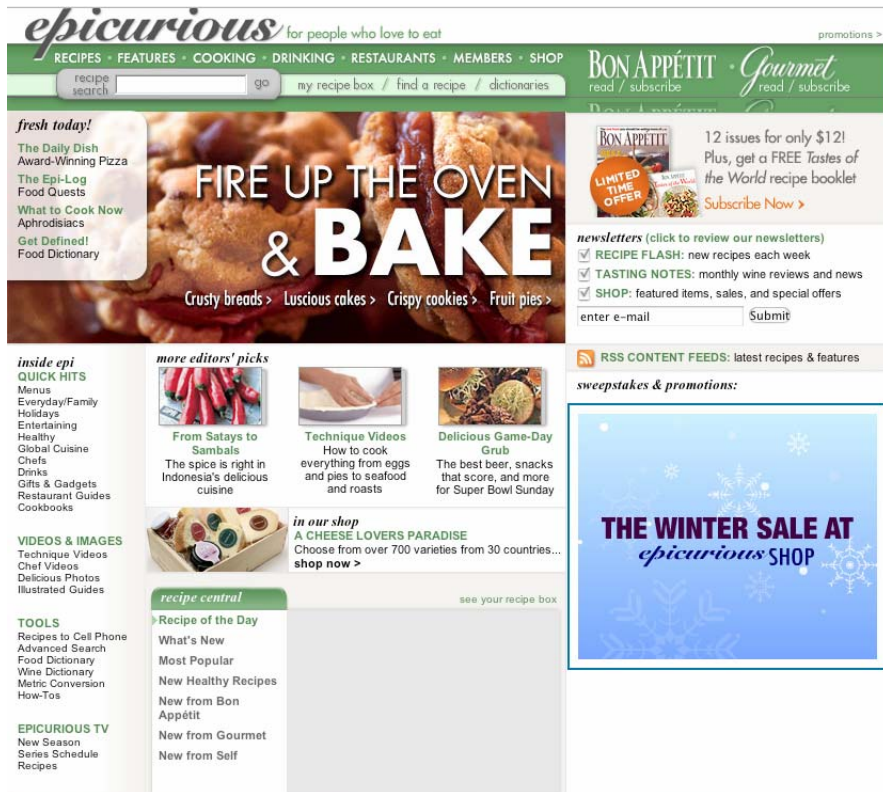


Figure 12: Epicurious.com Homepage January 20, 2007

That is exactly the kind of synergy CondeNet is hoping for. The magazines drive visitors to the sites with sweepstakes and polls. Throughout 2006, for example, Bon Appétit urged readers to visit Epicurious.com and vote on the best recipes from the magazine's history. The publication celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2006. The editors chose three barbeque recipes or three chocolate cake recipes or three cheesecake recipes, for instance, and sent readers to the Web site to print the recipes, prepare the dish, and then cast their vote. The next month's issue reported the readers' favorite. Gourmet drives readers to Epicurious.com with a similar contest. The magazine asks readers to vote online for their favorite Gourmet covers. Additionally, the Web site boasts online-only content like blogs, podcasts, menu planning tools, and nutritional information. A regular feature of Bon Appétit is "This Month on BonAppétit .com." Testament

to the synergy of the Web site and the magazines, entering www.bonappetit.com or www.gourmet.com redirects a user's browser to www.epicurious.com. Steel notes that both publications want an increasingly branded site within Epicurious, but only 30% of Epicurious content is “repurposed magazine content” while 70% of the site's content is written exclusively for the Web.

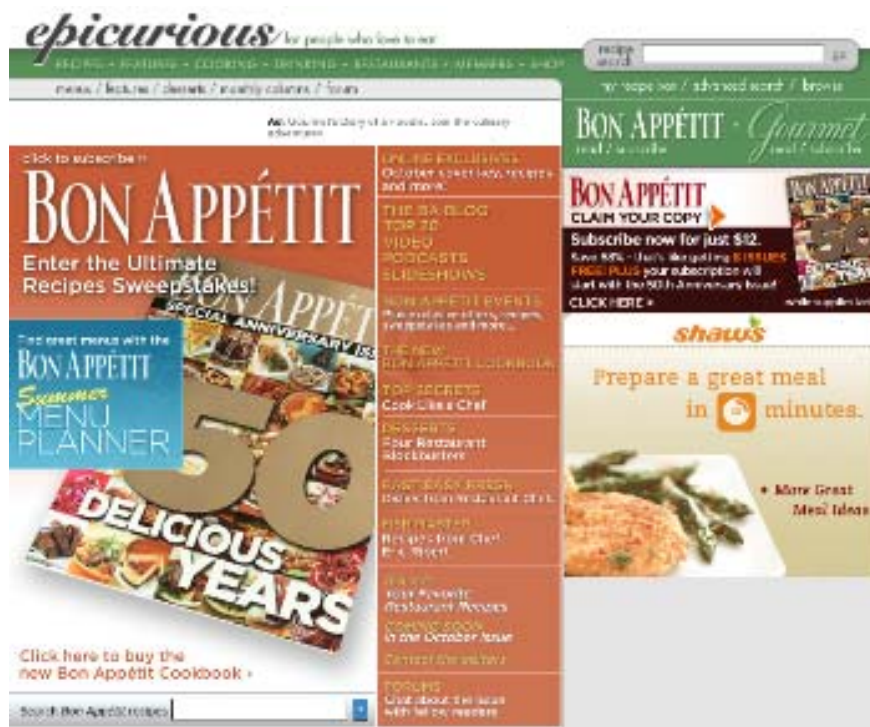


Figure 13: Bon Appétit Online on Epicurious.com September 30, 2006

Epicurious is a much-lauded site by industry critics. It won the 2006 [Webby](#) for best Food and Beverage Web site. Its Webby history is long. The site has won the Best Site in the Living Category five times and has been nominated six times. It has beat out competition like MarthaStewart.com. In 2004, the site won both the Webby and People's Voice award for best site in the Living category. The [Media Industry Newsletter](#) has honored Epicurious for design, content, and online communities in 2004 and 2006. Yahoo! voted it one of the 50 friendliest sites

on the Web and twice ranked it one of the 100 best sites. [PC Magazine](#) did the same in 2001 and 2004. The Internet industry is not the only one tuned into the success of Epicurious. [Time Magazine](#) and [Forbes](#) both rated Epicurious best of the Web. Even the illustrious [James Beard Foundation](#) honored Epicurious for its excellence in Internet writing (Epicurious.com Media Kit: Awards).

Unlike [BettyCrocker.com](#) and [FoodNetwork.com](#), Epicurious does not employ a tabbed navigational design. Its navigation is text driven. Left to right, its pages are divided into thirds. The left third is a menu of choices that lists content unique to each subset of pages. The left rail menu is a recent edition to Epicurious. On the homepage, it's headed "Inside Epi" and is Steel's idea to manage the complexity of Epicurious. She estimates that Epicurious links to thousands of pages. The center column displays a small thumbnail photograph, which is hotlinked, and a sampling of content choices, the latest headlines, and drop down boxes for more stories or departments. The right third is reserved for advertisements and content present on all pages. The recurring content in this column is a recipe search box, a link to "My Recipe Box" (an electronic file of favorite recipes available to registered users), a form to sign up for email newsletters, a link to a list of RSS feeds (really simple syndication or rich site summary), and links to subscribe to [Bon Appétit](#) and [Gourmet](#). Also present on all pages are two menus, one on the very top of each page and one on the very bottom. The top menu links to the major subdivisions of Epicurious: Recipes, Features, Cooking, Drinking, Restaurants, Members, and Shop. The bottom menu links to technical pages like, Help, Site Map, Contact Us, Masthead, Newsletters, Subscriptions, Advertising, Press Center, and login/logout. These links are common to most CondeNet destination sites, to which Epicurious users can link and view in a new browser window.

A submenu unique to each major division appears immediately below the top rail. For example, after clicking Features a submenu displays News, Entertaining, Chefs, Cookbooks, Global Cuisine, Gifts and Gadgets, and Epicurious TV. Mousing over these choices produces a short, dynamic list of featured content that changes every few days. During the first week of October 2006, mousing over Entertaining displayed: Wine.Dine.Donate, Fall Holiday Table Settings, Tailgating, and Kids' End of Summer Party. The submenu on the Cooking page links to Menus, Everyday, Healthy, Holidays, How To, and Reference. Mousing over Holidays in October 2006 listed Ramadan and Halloween. Just like the center third of each page, all of these rollover menus are dynamic; the content changes often to reflect a holiday or seasonal focus. Tanya Wenman Steel notes that at least some content on the site, like these menus, changes everyday.

Methods and Data Set Summary

For each site, I analyze the content, structure or navigation, visual design, functionality, and interactivity. Applying the grounded theory approach to qualitative research proposed by Anselm Strauss, I code each component for its rhetorical position on context, relationships and social structures, purpose, authority, flexibility, and metaphors. Such coding, or detailed, close reading of data, fuels inductive reasoning, according to Strauss (11). Induction means developing insights, hunches, and what a colleague once called “generative questions derived from experience.” These ideas in turn suggest a hypothesis. I hypothesize that food Web sites demonstrating feminist rhetoric will value dialogue and conversation. These sites will encourage users to speak for themselves through meaningful two-way communication. They will construct knowledge socially and collaboratively through two-way communication, communal authorship,

and multiple genres. Food Web sites valuing a feminist approach to knowledge will advocate experiential and bodily knowledge through sensory enjoyment and storytelling. Feminist hypertext design will support multiple methods for searching and alternative views. Users will be able to construct their own, non-linear paths through dynamic content. Finally, feminist sites will promote self-care or what Foucault and his postmodern feminist adherents call technologies of the self, thoughtful practices that encourage attention to ourselves in relation to our own bodies, to our communities, and to others. I test this hypothesis through deductive analysis, comparing my hypothesis to the data.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

Epicurious.com, FoodNetwork.com, and BettyCrocker.com demonstrate basic Web usability standards. Each presents a consistent graphic identity, an easily accessible homepage, navigational tools like menus and site maps, and search features. The sites also demonstrate features that have become standard on food destination Web sites. Epicurious.com, FoodNetwork.com, and BettyCrocker.com offer users dynamic home pages, recipe search tools, membership to the sites' online communities, and basic cooking instruction. Chapter 3 discussed home pages; Chapter 4 discusses the usability of search, membership tools, and basic cooking instruction. The sites embrace some tenets of user-centered hypertext, but none of the sites follows all the conventions of traditional hypertext. In fact, each breaks with Nielsen's dictum to "separate meaning and presentation" (28). For example, the sites are all graphically intense and employ proprietary code and designs. Nevertheless, these food destination Web sites strive for a level of reliability, integrity, and interactivity with varying degrees of success.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the audience demographics for users of Epicurious.com, FoodNetwork.com, and BettyCrocker.com. Epicurious users and FoodNetwork users are upscale compared to BettyCrocker users. Users of the former two are educated and professional and approach cooking as entertainment and relaxation. They may still cook for their families, but food preparation and eating are opportunities for luxury. FoodNetwork.com users are also television watchers and so are accustomed to the one-to-many, authoritarian epistemology of the television voice. The Food Network on the Web or on TV is all about the celebrity chef. These chefs live lives that viewers enjoy vicariously. Epicurious users, in contrast, likely came to the site through print media. Unlike television programming, magazines offer readers many choices

at the same time: the front of the magazine or back of the magazine, various departments, photographs, text, graphic designs, advertising, feature articles, columns, and short text boxes or pull-out quotes. Each of these genres within a magazine speaks with a different voice and the organization of the magazine invites readers to move quickly between these many voices. All this is not to say that television watchers do not read magazines or that magazine readers do not watch television, but the vehicles bringing users to these two sites structure their expectations differently.

The expectations of BettyCrocker.com users are different still than those of Epicurious or FoodNetwork users. Betty Crocker users expect efficiency and no nonsense instruction. For countless American women over the last eighty years, the voice they heard on cooking and food was the knowledgeable and professional voice of Betty Crocker. Betty is the expert and she knows best. She respects users' budgets and time constraints. Readers of the printed cookbooks and users of the Web site are typically middle class suburban women. They one-stop shop at suburban supermarkets where they purchase convenience foods like cake mixes, instant potatoes, ready-made frosting, and frozen or canned fruits and vegetables. Like FoodNetwork.com users, they are accustomed to the one-to-many voice of the television or cookbook authority. The BettyCrocker.com site, like the printed cookbooks of the last century, pushes General Mills products, most of which are advertised on television. While BettyCrocker.com users may enjoy food and cooking, food preparation is their duty rather than simply their luxury. They cook to feed families. They are often time-crunched and would rather turn to convenience foods than make a sauce or a cake from scratch. They are less concerned with flexibility and choice when cooking than the gourmet cooks drawn to Epicuroius.com and the adventurous cooks drawn to FoodNetwork.com. Instead, they want a quick answer to the nagging question "What's for

dinner?” Food events for these users are connected to family: birthday parties, Sunday dinner, weeknight supper, and school lunches. With eighty years of experience and a high-tech test kitchen, Betty Crocker is the voice of wisdom and authority for these users.

Epicurious.com is the most complex site of the three, but its complexity sometimes interferes with its usability. It indexes nearly 45,000 recipes from four magazines, restaurants, chefs, and users. The site makes content available magazine content, features extensive online-only content, and changes content weekly to feature food holidays, food events around the country, and news from the gourmet food and cooking industries. Users have so many choices that they may get lost in the site’s depth. Epicurious.com is generally flexible, however, easy to use, and conversational in its approach to cooking, food, and to the users themselves.

FoodNetwork.com is next in complexity. Its database indexes 25,000 recipes from more than fifty different television programs. Like the others, its homepage changes frequently to highlight television events or food holidays. Its pages are less text driven than Epicurious.com and in that sense simpler to navigate. FoodNetwork.com is generally easy to use, but less flexible than Epicurious.com and its approach to cooking, food, and users is anti-communal. The chefs are the leaders and the authorities. The users can imitate them, but the recipes and the site content are copyrighted and used only with the chefs’ permissions. There is a voyeuristic quality to FoodNetwork on TV or on the Web. We watch as handsome chefs in handsomely appointed studio kitchens coo over the sensuality of ingredients and finished dishes. We watch, but the TV chefs act.

In contrast to the literary complexity of Epicurious.com and the voyeuristic gluttony of FoodNetwork.com, BettyCrocker is the simplest site to use and the least complex in its design and depth. The site maintains a balance between text and image and employs a three-column

design with a navigational menu across the top and bottom. Its simplicity makes the site user-friendly, but its lack of choices also makes it inflexible. BettyCrocker.com's approach to cooking, to food, and to users is characterized by efficiency and convenience. The site, like the Betty Crocker brand cookbooks, is a paragon of the scientific method. Epistemologies of the body and of emotion do not appear on BettyCrocker.com. Whereas, Epicurious.com's approach to cooking and eating celebrates embodied ways of knowing and the FoodNetwork.com celebrates expert knowledge, the producers of BettyCrocker.com value order and efficiency as the path to morality. Epicurious and FoodNetwork honor the spontaneity and sensuality of food, cooking, and eating. Their chefs and their users are messy and experimental in the kitchen, characteristics that would make Betty Crocker and the fans of scientific cookery shudder.

Searching Food Destination Web Sites

According to Web usability expert Jakob Nielsen, most Web users rely on search engines to navigate Web sites. A user-centered search engine accepts natural language searches using keywords and phrases. It is flexible enough to understand spelling errors and typographical errors. It suggests synonyms, spelling suggestions, and alternative searches. Results pages should include abstracts for each page returned as a hit and links to similar results. Search tools should also be available from every page in the site. All the sites in this study offer search tools to their users. Epicurious.com and FoodNetwork.com searches are the most flexible and interactive, although neither fully meets the criteria of a user-centered feminist hypertext. BettyCrocker.com searches likewise fail to fulfill the potential of feminist hypertext, but the search tool is easy to use and accurate, if inflexible.

Searching Epicurious.com

Users can search Epicurious.com from any page on the site. They can only search recipes, not content, which is unfortunate considering the breadth and depth of content on the site covering everything from travel to health to philanthropy. A recipe search box appears on the top of all pages and also appears on the left navigation frame of the Members and Recipes pages. The box is clearly labeled “Recipe Search.” After typing in the white text box, users click a clearly labeled “Go” button. Next to this box is a list of three menu choices for managing recipes or finding more information: My Recipe Box, Find A Recipe, and Dictionaries. I discuss My Recipe Box in detail when I explore the membership features of each site and I discuss Dictionaries under the Cooking Basics features of each site. The Find A Recipe feature is more important to this discussion. Mousing over Find A Recipe displays at least five more options for searching recipes: Advanced Search, Browse, Drink Search, Buzz Box, What’s New, and Most Popular. Advanced search encourages users to search by ingredient, food category, mealtime, preparation, and even regional cuisine. Browse lists the many categories of recipes like healthy options, occasion, regional cuisine, or type of dish. There’s also a link to a list of recipe collections. These are features from the magazines like “Quick Kitchen” from Gourmet Magazine and restaurant recipes from the “RSVP” column of Bon Appetit, among others.

The other three options are prepared searches. The Buzz Box displays the recipes receiving the most user comments in the past thirty days. What’s New returns the most recently added recipes. Magazine content, for example, appears on Epicurious about two weeks after the magazines arrive to subscribers and newsstands. The Most Popular search displays the most highly rated recipes over the past week. Finally, in addition to all of these searches, users could choose the Recipes link from the top navigation bar. The left navigation column of this page lists

all of these search options, plus Search Help and two more prepared searches, one called All-Out Chicken and another called Search Spy, a real-time ticker of current searches by all users updated every fifteen seconds.

The recipe search itself is easy to use and quick. I can type in a phrase—I've been searching for the perfect chocolate brownie recipe and searching “chocolate brownies”—and tap the Return key on my keyboard or click Go with my mouse. At the top of the results page are links to Advanced Search, Browse All Recipes, and Search Our Drinks Database just in case I did not find exactly what I was looking for. Also at the top of the results list are the numbers of results, the search term I used, and the collection I searched. The default collection is Epicurious Recipes. A drop-down box lets me choose Member Recipes or Drink Recipes. At the bottom of the page are links to search tips, a blank search box into which I can enter a term and search within my results, and a list of “other great ways to find the perfect recipe.” These include the prepared searches from the Buzz Box, Most Popular, and What's New. These are all useful and user-centered options offering me choices and flexibility. If I did not find what I was looking for, I can try other search methods. I am also reminded of the term I used in case I want to refine it and I can easily see how many recipes I have to choose from. Navigation is obvious and easy on the results page. I have a link to the previous page and the next page in the results list and I can see how many results I have viewed and how many total hits I found. I can sort my results by Best Match, the default choice, by Fork Rating, by Part of Menu, by Quick, or Healthy Options, by Wine Pairing, or by those recipes with photographs.

The results themselves appear in a three-column display colored mint green and gray. Left to right, the columns are the user rating called the Fork Rating, the recipe title, and an icon indicating whether the recipe is part of a menu, includes a photo, is quick, or recommends a wine

pairing. The key to these icons appears at the bottom of the search results page. The colors on this page are pale and the text is small on my Safari and Firefox browsers. The text is green and black. The links to recipes are in bold capital letters and under the title of each recipe is a short description of its providence: from “Bon Appetit, March 2001” or “Reprinted with permission from *The Food You Want to Eat*, © 2005,” for example. This textual and link pattern breaks from the conventions of traditional Web design, which demand blue underlined links, but is consistent within the search results so users could recognize the patterns that signal links once they learn them. The search results do not open in a new window, which is in keeping with Web design conventions and gives users the freedom of using their browser’s functions in addition to the site’s built-in navigational tools to navigate a site. Flexibility and choice are hallmarks of feminist hypertext, so Epicurious displays many features that invite user participation and so allow users to create their own paths and identities as site users.

The screenshot shows the Epicurious website interface. At the top, there is a green navigation bar with the site logo and various menu items like RECIPES, FEATURES, COOKING, DRINKING, RESTAURANTS, MEMBERS, and epi shop. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar with the text 'recipe search results' and a search button. The search results are displayed in a list format, with each item showing a rating (represented by four forks), the recipe name, and the source (e.g., Bon Appétit, Gourmet). The first result is 'CHOCOLATE BROWNIES WITH PEANUT BUTTER FROSTING' from Bon Appétit, July 2004. To the right of the search results, there is a sidebar with a 'recipe search' box, a 'Welcome' message, and a 'NEWSLETTERS' section with checkboxes for 'RECIPE FLASH', 'TASTING NOTES', and 'SHOP'. Below the newsletters section, there is an 'RSS CONTENT FEEDS' section. At the bottom of the sidebar, there is a vertical image of a bottle and glasses, with the text 'Discovering the' visible below it.

Figure 14: Epicurious.com Search Results, July 20, 2007

The three primary recipe collections in the database are from magazines, chefs, and restaurants. These are “respected, trusted sources” according to Epicurious and all the recipes in this database are “tested.” Epicurious expects users to look to it as an authority and expert on gourmet cooking. In contrast, the 22,000 recipes included in the Member Recipe Database are “not tested or approved by Epicurious.” The site is careful to remind users that it is “not responsible for member recipes.” So although Epicurious invites and showcases community and collaboration, it disavows responsibility for it. Regardless, the site encourages user participation with instructions and tips for searching both databases. The tips are friendly and conversational peer statements like “Advanced search lets you . . . “ or “you can,” “you could,” “you may,” “you also have the option,” and “you might.” These subjunctive verbs suggest possibilities rather than dogma. Search tips are accessible either from the Help link on the navigational footer or from the Advanced Search page. The Help text is generally conversational like that above. Users can read search tips and learn from examples of successful searches. The help pages sometimes offer encouragement and empowerment such as “In need of a little inspiration” or they employ metaphor like “in the same way you leaf through chapters of a cookbook.” These phrases assume an intelligent, active agent in need of suggestions rather than instruction. On the other hand, the search feature and its help pages do not allow for many mistakes. The search engine only occasionally offers suggestions if it does not match the search terms. If I mistype chocolate, for example, the engine returns no suggestions and no hits. If I mistype tagine, on the other hand, I receive this kind correction: “Did you mean one of these similar terms? (Note: Our computer tries to come up with close matches, but even though it’s a smart machine, it’s no cook, so please

excuse the occasional blooper.)” This inconsistency is unfortunate considering that on the whole, the search feature demonstrates the characteristics of a constructive, feminist hypertext.

One final method of searching Epicurious.com is by enabling RSS feeds on your Web browser. RSS means Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary, two Web standards for publishing dynamic content like news, podcasts, or in the case of Epicurious, recently added recipes. RSS subscribers must have a reader that aggregates the feeds and displays a summary of them on one page. Many shareware, freeware, and proprietary readers exist, but the recent updates of popular Web browsers, Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari all include RSS readers. My Safari browser displays “RSS” immediately to the right of a URL if the site publishes RSS contents. Clicking that RSS symbol displays a list of recently added content and a search box at the left of the screen. If I bookmark this feed, Safari will indicate recent updates to the feed every time I open my browser. I can also search within the feed and then bookmark the results. Safari will then scan for recent feeds that include these search terms and will likewise indicate recent additions. RSS feeds are the latest personalized push media to bring content to users’ desktops. Epicurious is the only site of the three food destinations Web sites under review here to offer RSS. RSS keeps me connected to the immediacy of the site and helps forge a sense of community on Epicurious. I am in the know, so to speak, a part of the community.

Searching FoodNetwork.com

Like Epicurious.com, FoodNetwork also employs a robust search engine. A search box is available on every content page. It appears prominently at the top of every page and also more discreetly on the left navigation frame of every page. Unlike Epicurious or BettyCrocker, users can search recipes and content, called a topic search on FoodNetwork. To the right of the top

search box is a link to Search Tips. This link does not appear to the right of the smaller left navigation search box. The search engine itself is highly flexible. It understands Boolean search operators, keywords, phrases in quotes, and proper names. In addition to simple recipe or topic searches, I can search for a TV show or search for a keyword within the episodes of a particular show. Once I type in my search term, I click a button labeled Search. If I don't know what to search for, an assumption FoodNetwork.com makes frequently, I can click the hotlinked image titled "Can't Decide What to Eat? Click Here For A Recipe." This image also appears on the left navigational rail, the center frame being reserved for cookbook, cookware, or celebrity chef advertising.

Two other search tools are available to FoodNetwork.com visitors. If I still can't decide what to eat after clicking the image link for the recipe of the hour, I can click "Random Recipe" from the Search Tips page. Similar to the real-time recipe ticker of Epicurious, the Random Recipe displays "a new recipe every time you click." Unlike the recipe ticker, however, users have no control and no participation in the results. The database randomly chooses and displays whatever recipe its algorithm identifies. This feature is the ultimate in abdicated authority. No human agent even participates in the search or selection. Still, FoodNetwork does permit human agency in its other search features. If I do have an idea of what I am hungry for, I can conduct a Power Search if I can find it. The Search Tips page describes the Power Search but doesn't tell me where to find it. There is no link to it from the home page, but instead the link to Power Search appears only on the Cooking page. Like the Advanced Search of Epicurious, Power Search on FoodNetwork asks me to toggle a check box next to a food category (FoodNetwork means an ingredient), a region, occasion, technique, or meal type. Oddly, by technique the producers include both culinary style (sauté, sear, broil, for example) and genre (vegetarian, for

example). This is confusing, especially to novice cooks who are likely unfamiliar with jargon associated with culinary technique. Unfortunately, I also found the Power Search tool confusing to use and inaccurate. Random Recipe and Power Search are useful in theory, but neither proved very user-centered or feminist. My sample search on Power Search was for dinner, meatless, and vegetables as the meal type, technique, and food category. I expected vegetarian entrees, but instead received 357 recipes ranging from vegetable side dishes to fish recipes. There was no way to refine my search results with keywords, so I abandoned my search for vegetarian entrees and returned to the simple search box and my quest for the perfect chocolate brownies.

With this I had more luck. The search results are visually and textually accessible. The number of hits and the search term I used appear above the results. The results display in a four-column list. The columns from left to right are the title of the recipe, the chef or show that created the recipe, a difficulty rating, and a user rating. The difficulty rating ranges from easy to medium to expert. The user ratings are stars. Many stars indicate top ratings. Not all recipes are rated by users and not all identify the difficulty level. If I only want easy brownie recipes though, I can sort the recipes by clicking the Difficulty column header. I can do the same with each of the other column headers. It is unclear in what order the results display by default, but clicking the recipe header alphabetizes the list by recipe title and sorting by chef/show alphabetizes by the chef's first name or the show's title. If I made a mistake or received too many results, I can refine my results using a search box at the bottom of the page, or I can link to the Search Tips.

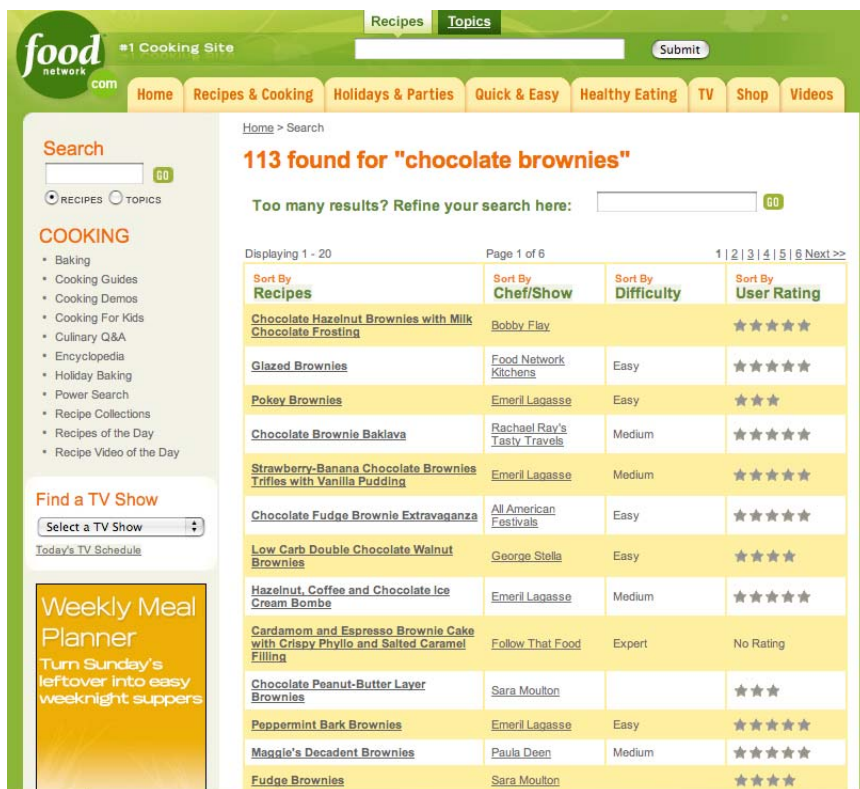


Figure 15: FoodNetwork.com search results, July 20, 2007

The Search Tips themselves are directive and assume the user has or will misuse the engine. FoodNetwork.com orders me to “double check” my spelling and warns me “the search engine is very sensitive,” but sensitive to what I’m not sure. Three of the six recipe search tips display instructional phrases in capital letters, which command users to search for ALL words, to find AT LEAST ONE term, or to surround EXACT phrases in quotation marks. All of these commands and the visual rhetoric with which they are presented assume a user with little agency and even less skill.

Further circumscribing agency on FoodNetwork.com is the prominent presence of celebrity chefs. Images of the chefs dominate all pages and all frames of the site. The one-to-many TV tie-in is obvious even in the search results list. Clicking one of the recipes in the list opens a new page featuring the chef. The TV show appears on the top left, followed by the

episode information. Frequently, but not always, a smiling head and shoulders photograph of the chef adorns the right side of the page. Under the recipe title, TV show, and episode title is the copyright: all recipes “Courtesy of” the chef. The chefs are the leaders, the experts, and the authorities. They lead the visitors and permit them to copy their creations, but at no time are visitors invited to create on their own. Instead, FoodNetwork expects visitors to get all their meal ideas from their favorite chefs. Indeed, this is the tag line on the Recipe Collections page.

Searching BettyCrocker.com

As the least complex food destination Web site in the data set, BettyCrocker.com also employs the least sophisticated search engine. Nevertheless, the engine is accurate, easy to use, and quick. The search box appears on the upper right of the home page and all content pages. Visitors can search recipes by title or ingredient or browse recipes by topic like mealtime or their favorite BettyCrocker and General Mills brands. Unlike Epicurious and FoodNetwork, however, the BettyCrocker search tool does not include an obvious Go or Search button. I can press Return on my keyboard to initiate the search or I can click a cryptic red arrow to the right of the search box. It is not obvious that this arrow means “Go” or “Search,” but the site consistently employs it so once I identify its function on the home page, I can apply this knowledge throughout the site. If I am slow to learn the unique functions of the BettyCrocker.com site, I have no primer. The site does not provide a help menu or FAQ on its home page or anywhere else on the site. There are no search tips, no advanced search, no opportunities to refine search results, and no topic or content search. I can only search recipes and the only way to do that is with a keyword in the search box. If I make a mistake, the engine is not sophisticated enough to understand my spelling errors or to offer alternative searches. Instead it only returns a childish retort: “Oops! We’re not

able to offer results for your search. What would you like to do next?" Below these sentences are links to browse recipes, to choose from a selection of categories like Desserts of the Month, Meal Ideas, Baking Tips & Techniques, or Coupons.

Despite these obvious flaws and the engine's simplicity, I prefer its search results display to either of the more dynamic engines, although I cannot sort the results and it unclear in what order hits appear on the list. Above the results, I see the number of hits and the search term. The results list includes three unlabeled columns; one displays full-color photographs of the recipes, the next states the recipe title and a brief description of the recipe, and the last column presents the user rating, number of ratings, and number of reviews. Ratings and reviews are separate categories on BettyCrocker.com, so I might see a recipe with six stars, but only one review. I discuss the reviews in detail under the heading Membership, Communities, and Forums. The three-column design is clean and easy to read. The results page utilizes lots of white space. In fact, the entire site takes advantage of this clean, spare design. The content appears in the center of the browser window. The background for the page is white. The content frame itself includes a tan-colored left rail and sometimes a right rail. Subtle gray lines separate recipes, photographs, and links. On either side of this content frame are large blocks of white space. The white space focuses the viewer on the center content frame. The effect is simple, efficient, and professional, all the things Marjorie Husted, the first Betty Crocker, would demand of herself and her test kitchen staff.

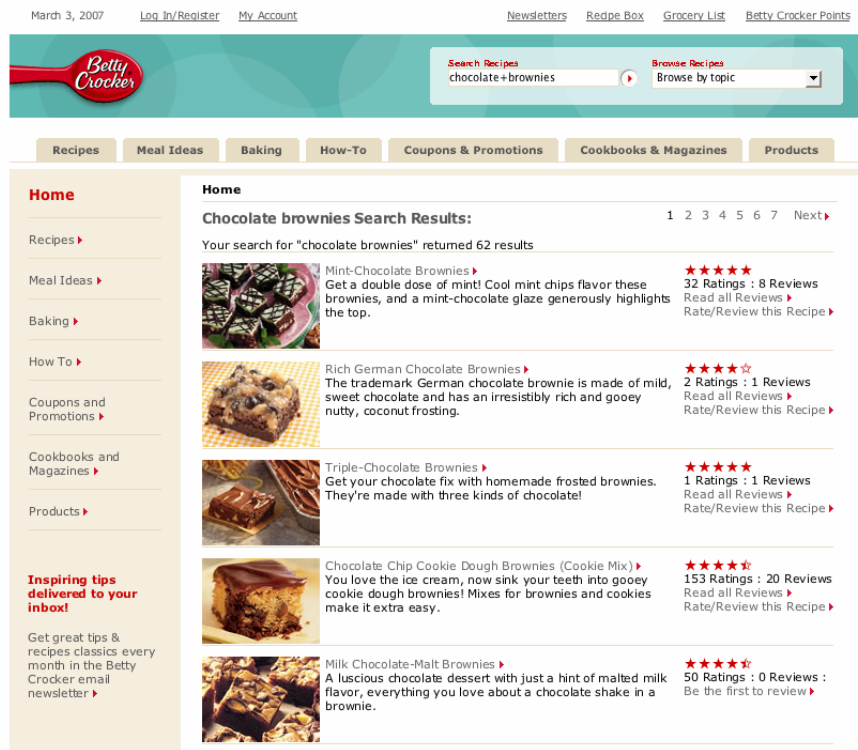


Figure 16: BettyCrocker.com search results, March 3, 2007

It is not surprising that Betty Crocker is the only site that includes photographs in its search results. The brand was built on full-color photography with the publication of The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook. The photographs are the most salient objects on the results page. The eye is drawn first to these photographs of colorful foods and then to the recipe title beside them. The recipe titles are gray links. Next to the titles are the red arrows we first encountered next to the search box. Again, a savvy user will understand that the gray titles are likely hotlinks and the red arrows mean “Go,” but an inexperienced user might look at these photographs and these titles and be uncertain as to how to proceed. With a little exploration, however, I discover that the photographs are hotlinks to the recipes, the recipe titles also link me to the recipe, and the red arrow links me to the title. BettyCrocker is also the only site in the data set to offer so many options for linking to the recipes. I like that flexibility as much as I like the photographs.

Flexibility is a hallmark of postmodern feminist rhetoric and of the politically responsible hypertext envisioned by Wendy Morgan. Flexible Web sites allow users to bring different epistemologies to the sites, what Morgan calls “eccentric, provisional knowledges” (208). No matter how I know something or how I understand the relationship between ideas, I can find what I need from a flexible Web site.

Once I find the recipes I want from any of these three sites, I can print them and file them away in the physical world. If I liked the recipe, I might keep it in a neatly organized binder or stuff it into a drawer bulging with other recipes. If I did not like the recipe, I will likely toss my printout into the recycle bin. In the virtual world, on the other hand, I have another option: all three of the sites in this study want me to save recipes to my online recipe box. I have to register with the site to do this. In exchange for personal information, I receive an organized file of recipes and menus and the right to comment on and rate recipes. I might even receive the right to post my own recipes. Since the early years of commercial cyberspace, Web site producers realized that to drive advertisers and users alike to their sites, they needed to gather personal information and give people something in return for divulging their demographic details, psychographic personalities, and Web surfing habits. Membership has its privileges, but those privileges are very different on our three food destination Web sites. The differences are indicative of site complexity, and, I argue, of epistemology.

Epicurious Membership

The Epicurious.com homepage invites users to become members of the Epicurious community. “Members” is the last link on the top navigational menu on the homepage and all inside pages. The member area is the only collection of pages within the site to present images of

people. The member pages are also the only pages to display drawings rather than full color photography. Until the site redesign in April 2007, the drawing on the member area welcome page was a clever fusion of virtual and real worlds. A group of friends, two women, one man, and one person of indeterminate gender, is gathered around a table. On the table are an iMac, a platter of hors d'oeuvres, two bowls of something lumpy and colorful, and a covered tagine. On the screen of the computer are a wine glass and another platter of hors d'oeuvres. The screen image, however, is not static. One friend reaches from the "real" world of the drawing into the "virtual" world of the computer screen and fills up the wine glass on the screen. Another friend reaches into the screen and plucks an hors d'oeuvre from the "virtual" platter. This image represents the blurring of online and real community that Epicurious hopes to encourage. Editor-in-chief Tanya Wenman Steel comments that community, both in cyberspace and in physical space, is "hugely important" to Epicurious members. The site courts that importance in a number of ways. The four privileges of members are the member recipe database, the online recipe box, the right to comment on and rate recipes, and the forums.

Member Recipes

The member recipe database indexes about 22,000 recipes. I can post my own recipes here and browse the recipes of other members. I can also rate and comment on these recipes although few users comment on member recipes. I suspect that is because few people actually read the recipes of other members. The recipe search feature does not include member recipes. I must search that database independently of the Epicurious database. Until April 2007, the member recipe page also included a drawing like that on the member area welcome page. This drawing was of a thin young woman with red hair and an open, bow-like mouth. She wore a long

white t-shirt-styled dress and a red apron tied in a bow at her back. She appeared in the center background of the image behind a table laden with fresh ingredients, tools, and an open cookbook. She reached above her head out of frame as if reaching into a cabinet or bookshelf. The drawing was like a window into an ideal user's life. The young woman appeared surprised by the viewer's presence, but simultaneously amused, or at least in good humor. Despite the fact that one third of Epicurious users are men and that very little of the rhetoric elsewhere on the site belies a gender-bias, it appears here that Epicurious is courting female members. The woman is an ideal user or perhaps the wife of an ideal male user.

The member recipe page is much simpler than other Epicurious pages, but it showcases a similar design. A left rail includes links to browse the database, add to the database, and link back to other Epicurious content. The standard navigational menu appears at the top. Below that is a navigational menu unique to the member area. The left rail is reserved for advertising and the center pane displays recently added recipes. The members featured here are in fact those model users depicted in the drawings. A recipe added by "byebyefly," for example, begins with the headnote: "Most of this is to taste and by personal preference. I just made this up for dinner one night off the top of my head. It's tasty and easy." Other member recipes featured on the day I visited offered suggestions for substitutions and doubling, tips for preparing difficult vegetables like hard-peeled butternut squash, and ideas to use the bounty of kitchen gardens. These cooks are creative, flexible, and connected to their ingredients, all characteristics of feminist epistemology. The member recipe area is a technology of the self, a space open for creative agency.

My Recipe Box

Users can choose their online recipe box from a second tier navigational menu called “My Epi.” This dropdown menu is new to the April 2007 redesign. The My Epi menu includes My Recipe Box, My Profile, and Account Information. The recipe box includes three tabs: Food Recipes, Drink Recipes, and My Recipes. Food Recipes and Drink Recipes are those I add from either the Epicurious or member recipe databases and My Recipes are those I have contributed to the databases. The display looks like the recipe search display, a three column display of the hotlinked recipe title, the ratings, the date I stored it, and a radio button to delete. I can sort my recipes in the box by title, rating, or date.

Recipe Name	Ratings	Date	Delete
OATMEAL COOKIES WITH CHOCOLATE CHUNKS AND CANDIED GINGER Epicurious, June 2007	★★★★	Jul 20, 2007	<input type="checkbox"/>
RED SNAPPER, VERACRUZ STYLE Bon Appétit, May 2003	★★★★	Dec 8, 2006	<input type="checkbox"/>
PEANUT BUTTER, BANANA AND DATE SANDWICHES Bon Appétit, March 1999	★★★★	Oct 9, 2006	<input type="checkbox"/>
PITA SANDWICHES WITH EGGPLANT, PEPPERS, TOMATOES AND CUCUMBER Bon Appétit, April 2000	★★★★	Oct 9, 2006	<input type="checkbox"/>
FISH IN "ACQUA PAZZA" Bon Appétit, May 1995	★★★★	Jun 8, 2005	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 17: My Recipe Box on Epicurious.com July 20, 2007

The recipe itself includes reviews immediately following ingredients and instructions, buttons to rate or review the recipe, and a space for notes. The notes tab is a new addition to the recipe display and reminds me of celebrity chef Nigella Lawson’s second cookbook Nigella Bites. In

the introduction, Lawson explains the inclusion of several blank, lined pages following each section of her book:

The sort of cookbook that's splattered and scribbled over is the only sort of cookbook I want to write. I'm not interested in barking instructions: this isn't meant to be a monologue . . . my words are merely my side of the conversation I imagine we might have. The pages for notes, then, are there for you to make your own response. (x)

Like Lawson's open and negotiated approach to cooking instructions, all the pages in the Epi member section include links to submit a recipe, share my recipe box, or rate/review recipes. These links (review, submit, and share) constantly encourage users to contribute to the community. The presence and prominence of these options signal to users that their voice and their choices matter. Thus, the Epicurious member area demonstrates characteristics of user-centered and feminist hypertext design.

Recipe Reviews

In contrast to the collaborative features of the site that invite and encourage users to speak and to share their opinions on the recipes, the recipe instructions themselves are strictly authoritarian. The voice of the recipe is directive. It commands action with present tense verbs: open, spread, sprinkle, divide, heat, add, season, bake, garnish. Recipes also instruct users on which tools to use to accomplish tasks. For example, a favorite recipe of mine for Red Snapper Veracruz instructs me to transfer my baked fish to two plates "using a long spatula." I don't happen to have a long spatula so I always serve this fish in small pieces rather than whole fillets and scoop it out using my worn wooden spoon. The recipe doesn't allow for that variation, but I

might add it in my public review of the recipe. Furthermore, the recipes never suggest variations in cooking methods or alternative ingredients. Because I am an occasional vegetarian and because my suburban supermarket rarely has even slightly exotic ingredients like herbs de Provence or chorizo sausage, I must always make substitutions. I like recipes that anticipate the realities of modern suburban homes, but Epicurious recipes do not. So I either muddle along on my own with occasional success or I hope other Epi members are in the same pot as I. Usually they are and they tell me about in their recipe reviews.

The reviews following each recipe co-opt the authoritarian voice of recipes and always describe their successes and failures with substitutions. A May 1999 Bon Appétit recipe for Stuffed Peppers, for example, calls for sweet Italian sausage with the casings removed and one egg. A cook from Salem, Oregon posted her substitutions: turkey sausage and egg beaters. My substitutions might be tofu sausage and egg whites. I would also have to suggest users fry the tofu in a nonstick skillet and add extra fat because the tofu sticks and burns and does not produce the rendered fat that Italian sausage does. All eighty-four reviews described some sort of modification. Some cooks modified so many ingredients and methods that the recipe was little like the original. Users changed herbs, cheeses, meats, even the peppers themselves. They made the changes based on what was available in their kitchens or based on their families' palates. They added ingredients. They left out ingredients. Reviews admit mistakes: "forgot to poke holes to drain peppers; plates were soaked." Reviewers critique the recipes "We really enjoyed this recipe . . . with a few modifications." Another reviewer claimed that "With some modifications, this was good." Others discussed changes they would make if they made the recipe again. Sixteen of the eighty-four reviews specifically referenced other reviews so it is clear that users read and value the comments of others in the Epi community. Users are making knowledge

collaboratively and valuing that collaborative, experiential knowledge, both characteristics of postmodern feminist rhetoric.

This set of reviews is not unique in the recipe database. Many recipes have hundreds of reviews. A March 1999 Gourmet recipe for Double Chocolate Layer Cake, for instance, has 925 reviews. It is clear from even a small sampling of reviews on Epicurious.com that the site's users exert their agency in the kitchen. The recipes in no way inhibit their choices. This is likely true of most cooks with most recipes, but the difference between Epicurious.com recipes and users and The Joy of Cooking recipes and users is that cooks can communicate with the recipe and other cooks in a meaningful way. When I modify a recipe in my own kitchen and note the changes on the pages of the cookbook, the result is real—a synthesis—and meaningful to me, but no one else save some inheritor of my book will ever engage that synthesis. In contrast, posting my changes and experiences online potentially engages 3 ½ million other cooks. The aggregation of all comments creates an entirely different kind of synthesis. This is exponential agency, microresistance to authority and expertise on a grand scale. The result is a deconstructive hypertext within the “discursive autonomy” of a proprietary, commercial Web site (Moulthrop “Beyond” 295).

Forums

Epicurious.com offers members ten asynchronous forums and one real-time chat space. The forums address six broad categories: recipes, cooking, entertaining, restaurants, drinking, and magazines.

- Recipes
 - Epicurious Recipe Swap
 - Swap Talk
 - Family Meal Solutions

- Healthy Cooking
- Cooking
 - Kitchen Counsel
- Entertaining
 - Wine.Dine.Donate
- Restaurants
 - Restaurant Roundtable
- Drinking
 - The Grapevine
 - Brew Stories
- Magazines
 - Bon Appétit
 - Gourmet

Anyone can read these forums, but only members can post. The site redesign foregrounds member contributions like the forum. The 2007 redesign displays a link to forums on all pages. It appears prominently above the standard top navigational menu in a three-item navigational bar on the top right of the main frame. Insert image of menu here. For the most part, it seems that users stick to the topic suggestions for each forum and are typically supportive and responsive. The Epicurious editor-in-chief Tanya Wenman Steel is a frequent contributor and the forums are moderated by a user named “Epicurious Editor.” Steel answers questions about site content and contributes reflections of her own like any user might. The moderator addresses content, functionality, and user behavior. For example, on February 8, 2007, Epi Editor (as the forum users call the moderator) posted an announcement warning users to post on topic only.

Announcement: Forum Conduct

Posted: Feb 8, 2007 3:36 PM

Dear Epi Swappers:

We know that recently there has been a lot of controversy concerning certain posters and their tone and civility. As of today, those posters have been warned

that absent a change in their politeness, they will be banned from using the forum. We do not want to ban anyone and would like to believe that from this day forth everyone will act with the spirit of kindness and generosity exemplified by Epicurious's millions-strong community. This is a forum about food and cooking, and offhand remarks and nasty tone will not be allowed. Thank you. (Epicurious Editor "Announcement")

This demonstrates that the editors are not afraid to censor users, but users are not afraid to criticize Epi Editor either. In January, Epicurious debuted its redesigned synchronous chat. This elicited a flurry of rants by users. Epi Editor responded once to these, to joke with another user that the conversation began shortly after the user left because "We were just waiting for you to leave!" Posts like this evince a certain bonhomme familiarity with community members and indicate that Epi Editor is a frequent participant and not just an authoritarian moderator. The editor's additional comment that despite the technological barriers, the chat room felt "more like a regular conversation" signals Epi's desire to engage users in dialogue, a key tenet of feminist rhetoric and collaborative hypertext (Epicurious Editor "Re: I Knew It").

A series of posts in early 2006 by Epicurious Editor further support the forum's philosophy. The editor asked the forum in March 2006 for slow cooker recipes. Another member must have posted a snarky reply because in May, the editor posted this remark:

Hi, Gretchen!

Posted: May 17, 2006 10:13 PM

Is this ever going to end? I asked a pleasant question as an actual person and got this type of answer in return. Most people who ask questions about recipes here can of course go out and buy a book. The idea is that if you ask here you'll get a

friendly response based on personal experience with a particular recipe. That's what I was hoping for, and indeed that's what I got from another poster. And someone else was curious and wanted tried and true recipes too.

Please post civil replies -- no one wants to post a message and be attacked.

Thank you,

Epi editor (Epicurious Editor "Hi, Gretchen!")

Five days later, Gretchen posted a slow cooker recipe as amends for her "transgression" (Gretchen6). Two things stand out about the editor's post. The first is that Epicurious Editor points out her (or his?) status as an "actual person." The editor is not an uninvolved technician, but clearly a cook reaching out for advice from other cooks. Participation like this is another tenet of feminist rhetoric and postmodern feminist epistemology. The second thing that stands out about Epi Editor's post is that the editor values the forum over a cookbook because the forum is "friendly" and the advice is "based on personal experience." The editor, and presumably the eight other participants who posted on this thread, seeks knowledge made experientially and communally. Cookbook-based knowledge only goes so far. It does not bring with it the authenticity of "tried and true recipes," according to the editor. Communal knowledge shared through personal narrative and experience is another key component of postmodern feminist epistemology.

Most posts on the Epicurious forums communicate knowledge through personal experience. A typical example is a series of posts on the Healthy Cooking forum. A user posted a question on links between diet and acne. Eight users responded. Five of the nine posts to this thread used first person pronouns five times. A brief post included one use of the personal pronoun "our." My favorite example in this thread was from Mike775 whose post displays an

amalgamation of personal, anecdotal experience and deference to authority. He begins his post with the qualifier: “I am neither a doctor nor a lawyer, so I can’t testify to the accuracy of anything below. This just comes from what I read.” Later he shares a quote found through Google and anecdotal experiences from two friends. Mike775 addresses the reader as “you” and wishes the reader “good luck” at the end of the post. The tone is helpful if mostly directive. Twice Mike775 shifts from directions to suggestions with phrases like “You may want to try” and “You may want to investigate.” Mike775 does not provide references for the information he shares, but he is credible and accurate. One could easily check the accuracy of his information as I did. His data on protein needs, for example, match USDA recommendations. Although commands characterize Mike775’s rhetoric, his protestation that he is not an expert, his secondhand anecdotal experience, and his helpful tone make his post an example of feminist rhetoric.

FoodNetwork.Com Membership

Membership to FoodNetwork.com gives users much less in return for their personal information than does membership to Epicurious.com. While Epicurious.com gives users several outlets for meaningful two-way communication and cultivates a community of active, creative participants, FoodNetwork.com limits users to only one outlet for communication: recipe reviews. The Food Network site does not offer a community forum or a member recipe database. In 2004, when I first began researching online recipe collections, the Food Network did include a forum, but by 2005, the forum disappeared from the site with no explanation. As a member of FoodNetwork.com, I can store recipes in an online recipe box, I can rate and review recipes, and I can subscribe to four email newsletters from the Food Network.

Recipe Box

I login to My Recipe Box on FoodNetwork.com from the home page and from any other interior page of the site. The link for My Recipe Box appears on a top tier, text-only navigational menu on all pages. If I have already logged in to the site, it directs me to my box. Otherwise, the link directs me to a login or registration page. The display is a four-column grid. The column headings are delete, my saved recipes, my rating, and reviews. This page prominently displays a warning to users that “some recipes are only available for a limited time, and may be removed from your Recipe Box at any time. Please print recipes in advance.” There is no additional information about which recipes these may be or with what frequency the editors might remove recipes. If my favorite recipes are still in my box, I click on the hot-linked title to jump to the recipe. I cannot read reviews immediately following the recipe as I can on Epicurious.com. I must click either Read Reviews from My Recipe Box or the Review button from the recipe. The reviews open in a new window, but I can link back to the recipe, the show’s homepage, or the episode’s page.



Figure 18: My Recipes on FoodNetwork.com, July 20, 2007

Recipe Reviews

FoodNetwork.com members can rate recipes with one to five stars. A five star rating equals “loved this recipe.” Reviewers can comment on the recipe and sign their review with their name and location. They might also choose to rate or review the recipe anonymously. Although none of the reviews I read addressed other reviewers by name, the inclusion of the users’ first names and locations personalized the communication. I could begin to “hear” the users’ “voices” by imagining Michelle from Brick, NJ, for instance, watching with amusement as her teenage son who “has some sort of weird aversion to leftovers” reheats leftover Alton Brown meat loaf (“Raves From Even the Most”). Like reviews on Epicurious.com, most reviews on FoodNetwork.com shared the personal preferences of the cooks’ children, husbands, wives, boyfriends, and even tenants. Only one of the reviews, however, noted having read other reviews. The users demonstrated an affinity with the authority—the celebrity chef—rather than

with each other or with the act of cooking itself. Two facts bear out this observation. The first is that the posts were typically an imagined conversation between the reviewer and the chef whose name appeared on it. The second is that few posts describe modifications or substitutions.

A meat loaf recipe courtesy of Alton Brown from the show Good Eats, for example, elicited 177 reviews between 2004 and 2007. Only twenty-three of these reviewers modified the recipe or substituted another ingredient. This contrasts strikingly with the Epicurious.com recipe reviews. All of the reviews posted to the recipe for Stuffed Peppers discussed earlier include suggestions for modifying. The FoodNetwork.com users defer to the authority of the celebrity chef. Thirty-two of the reviews of Good Eats Meat Loaf directly addressed the chef. All of these thirty-two posts were adorations of Alton Brown, affectionately known by his fans on the site as “AB.” Reviewers lauded Brown, expressed love, celebrated the consistency of his recipes, and one reviewer even claimed, “Alton’s a God in my house” (“The Best Meatloaf Ever!”). While only fourteen of the 177 reviews rated the recipe with three stars or less, five of these users apologized to Brown for not rating the recipe more highly. A few users felt betrayed or disappointed by Brown’s failure to measure up to their expectations because Brown is the trusted authority. A positive review stated, “I followed the recipe exactly, knowing that it is wise to trust AB, [sic] he really knows what he is talking about” (“This Should be Called”). If his recipe fails, his authority is not called into question. Instead, users chastised him for failing to perform to expectations. A two star review sulked, “The taste was good, but the meat was a little too dry. I expected more from Alton” (“Dry”). Most of the reviews, however, were hyperbolic exclamations of adulation common to Food Network programming and to celebrity gossip shows. Users punctuated these 177 reviews with 211 exclamation points. Many cooks punctuated each sentence in their review with one or more exclamation points. The rhetoric was full of

interjections like Wow! Perfect! Superb! Fabulous! Outstanding! Users seemed to believe that Brown would be reading the reviews and that he would appreciate their applause. Unlike the principals of Epicurious.com, neither Alton Brown nor any other Food Network representative responded to posts, even those including questions. Regardless, the exuberant reviews are helpful to prospective cooks if not very informational.

BettyCrocker.com Membership

Membership to BettyCrocker.com is similar to FoodNetwork.com membership. The Betty Crocker site does not include a forum, but gives users an online recipe box and the opportunity to rate and review recipes. Additionally, BettyCrocker.com members can save recipes to a printable grocery list. The links to the online recipe box and the grocery list appear on every page in a simple text-only top tier navigational menu.

July 21, 2007 Welcome Heather Log Out My Account Newsletters Recipe Box Grocery List Betty Crocker Points

Betty Crocker Search Recipes: Search by title or ingredients Browse Recipes: Browse by topic

Recipes Meal Ideas Baking How-To Coupons & Promotions Cookbooks Products **BettyCrocker** STORE

Recipes

- Appetizers and Snacks ▶
- Bread ▶
- Breakfast/Brunch ▶
- Desserts ▶
- Dinner ▶
- Drinks ▶
- Extras and Accompaniments ▶
- Favorite Brands ▶
- Lunch ▶
- Main Ingredient ▶
- Side Dishes and Salads ▶

Grocery List PRINT this page

As you find recipes on BettyCrocker.com, add them to your Grocery List. We'll create a complete list, including amounts, separated by grocery store sections. To add a new recipe, search through all of Betty's recipes. To remove, simply mark a recipe, then click on "delete."

Groceries for the following recipes:

Savory Meat Loaf ▶ Delete

Baking Mixes/Ingredients/Spices

- fresh sage leaves, chopped, 1 tsp - Savory Meat Loaf
- salt, 1/2 tsp - Savory Meat Loaf
- ground mustard, 1/2 tsp - Savory Meat Loaf
- pepper, 1/4 tsp - Savory Meat Loaf

Meat Mixes/Dry/Packaged/Cooking

Canned

Ethnic Foods

Condiments

- Worcestershire sauce, 1 Tbsp - Savory Meat Loaf
- ketchup, chili sauce or barbecue sauce, 1/2 cup(s) - Savory Meat Loaf

Cereals/Snacks/Beverages

Meat/Poultry/Seafood

- lean ground beef, 1 1/2 lb - Savory Meat Loaf

Produce

- garlic clove, 1 - Savory Meat Loaf
- onion, 1 - Savory Meat Loaf

Dairy/Refrigerated

- milk, 1 cup - Savory Meat Loaf
- egg, 1 - Savory Meat Loaf

Bakery/Deli

- bread, 3 slices - Savory Meat Loaf

Frozen

Other/Nonfood

Figure 19: Grocery List on BettyCrocker.com July 21, 2007

Recipe Box and Recipe Reviews

My online recipe box at BettyCrocker.com is much simpler than on Epicurious or the Food Network. From any recipe, I click an icon to save to my recipe box, but the box's display includes only the recipe title in gray letters and a link to delete the recipe from my box. The recipes display alphabetically. The titles link to the recipes. From there, I can read reviews, save the recipe to my grocery list, print the recipe, or rate and review the recipes myself. Like FoodNetwork.com, BettyCrocker.com users rate recipes using a five-star rating. Users can rate or review, but do not have to do both. A recipe might then receive over 100 ratings, but only 30 reviews. A recent [cookie contest prize winner](#), for example, received 133 ratings and twenty-nine reviews. The rate/review form presents these instructions:

Please rate this recipe and share your comments with other cooks like yourself.

Thanks for being a part of our community!

You must be registered with BettyCrocker.com and agree to our Content Submission Agreement below in order to review recipes. You will only need to accept the Content Submission Agreement with your first review. Remember, ratings and reviews are public and may go through an approval process (suggested guidelines).

“Suggested Guidelines” is a hotlink to a javascript pop up window, but the link did not work on the several occasions I tried to access it. This is often my experience with BettyCrocker.com and in many ways signals the site's disconnection from its users. The first time I accessed the site in 2004, the Contact Us link was broken. The now operational Contact Us page likewise presents users with this discouraging legal disclaimer:

Our policy on suggestions and idea submissions

All comments, suggestions, ideas, notes, drawings, concepts, recipes or other information disclosed or offered to General Mills by this site or in response to solicitations in this site shall be deemed and shall remain the property of General Mills. You understand and acknowledge that General Mills has both internal resources and other external resources which may have developed or may in the future develop ideas identical to or similar to the suggestion or comments to suggestions and that General Mills is only willing to consider the suggestion on these terms. That, in any event, any suggestion is not submitted in confidence and General Mills assumes no obligation express or applied by considering it. Without limitation, General Mills shall exclusively own all now known or hereafter existing rights to the suggestions of every kind and nature throughout the *Universe* [emphasis added] and shall be entitled to unrestricted use of the comments for any purpose whatsoever, commercial or otherwise without compensation to the provider of the suggestions.

If I still feel compelled to share my ideas with Betty Crocker, it is doubtful I can expect a reply. I also give up any ownership or agency over my ideas. Technical flaws like broken links and impersonal legalese are of course bad Web business, but they are also antithetical to feminist and hypertext rhetoric.

For a few months in summer 2007, however, BettyCrocker.com began soliciting visitor feedback via a consistent left rail link on all pages and a colorful square hotlinked ad on some pages. The site invited users to “Share Your Opinion. Tell us what you think about BettyCrocker.com.” I suspect, based on the survey, that BettyCrocker.com is hoping to

reposition itself as a technologically savvy destination food site like more like Epicurious. The survey asks respondents how they find recipes online and why they come to BettyCrocker.com. It also asks how often they visit sites like Epicurious, Food Network, Cooks.com, and competing packaged food sites like Kraft.com and Pillsbury.com. Most interestingly, the site producers wish to know what features users might like to see in the future. The survey asks users to rate how likely they would be to read a blog, comment on a blog, use an online menu planner, post or view multi-media, rate recipes, print recipes, save to a grocery list, and access a forum. Not surprisingly, these are all features available on Epicurious.com.

Despite discouragement, users do decide to share their reviews on BettyCrocker.com. Surprisingly, the posters are much more like members of Epicurious than FoodNetwork. Member reviews of a basic meat loaf recipe are an excellent example. Of the thirty reviews of Savory Meat Loaf, fourteen suggested modifications. Typically, users modified the recipe according to tastes and experience rather than out of necessity, as was more common to Epicurious reviews. The meat loaf recipe is simple enough that cooks are likely to already have all the ingredients in their pantry so emergency substitution is unlikely. Epicurious recipes, in contrast, frequently call for fresh herbs or ethnic pantry products that users are less likely to have on hand, so they substitute what is readily available. Besides the fourteen modifications, another four members offered serving and menu suggestions as well. One reviewer acknowledged having read earlier reviews and following the suggestions. This too mirrors the social construction of cooking knowledge I observed on Epicurious.com.

Blogs

The latest dynamic content on Epicurious.com and FoodNetwork.com is blogs. Editor-in-chief, Steel began blogging on Epicurious in March 2006. She posts daily to her blog called “Epi-log: Notes from an Overcaffeinated Editor.” Often her musings link to recipes on the site or to promotions and sponsors. The posts are about food, eating, dining out, shopping for food, entertaining, food trends, or controversies. Registered Epicurious.com users can post comments to the blogs although few do. Still, the editor concedes that blogging is the way the Web is moving and to stay current, Epicurious needed to join the blogosphere (Steel). Blogs are an outlet for creativity, according to Steel, and her Epi-log gives her a personal presence and a personal voice on Epicurious.com. The link to Steel’s blog appears prominently on the upper left of the home page under the heading: “Fresh Today!” In addition to the editor-in-chief’s blog, Martha Simon, the Bon Appétit online editor, began the BA blog (the Bon Appétit blog) in May 2006. She and the members of the magazine’s editorial staff post regularly on food and restaurant trends, interviews with chefs and restaurateurs, their travels, and their favorite food. Finally, in addition to the blogs produced by CondeNet editors and staffers, both the Epi-log and the BA blog link to a long list of other food blogs. These blogs in turn link to yet longer lists of food blogs. Although members can comment on both blogs, the only posts that elicit much commentary are those asking readers questions like “what is your favorite quick dessert” or “what food do you think is overrated?” One reason for the poor response rate may be because the BA blog is on the Bon Appétit page rather than on the Epicurious.com homepage. Epicurious users, who are not necessarily Bon Appétit readers, are not likely to know it is there. The editor’s blog prompts more frequent comments, but typically only a handful each day and often from the same two or three readers.

The Food Network blog called “Behind the Scenes in the Kitchen and on the Road” does not make any of these lists. The blog has been online since July 2006. It is difficult to find, however. Until July 2007, the only link to the blog appeared on the middle right of the Cooking main page. If I search Food Network topics for blogs, I receive three hits, but none of these is to the Food Network blog. One is to a list of blogs and directs me to an article under the Cooking tab, but the link for this page appears nowhere else on the Cooking main page so I would never find it by browsing. Once I do find the Food Network blog, I read posts by Food Network food stylists, recipe testers, behind-the-scenes chefs, and production assistants about the daily happenings in the Food Network test kitchens, sets, and locations. They might post on how they make the food look so fabulous for what the network calls its “beauty shots” or “beauties,” the close up camera shots meant to show off the colors and textures of artfully prepared dishes. Posts are usually on such backstage techniques as food styling, purchasing ingredients, distributing leftovers, and recipe testing. Readers of the Food Network blog can post comments just as they can to the Epicurious blogs, although few do. Most blog entries receive no comments at all. Users do not need to be registered users of FoodNetwork.com to comment on blog entries. Many readers post questions to the blogs, but these are never answered. The comments frequently have nothing to do with the blog, but instead are questions about programming schedules, recipes, ingredients, and equipment. Many reader comments are rave reviews of the Food Network overall or of a particular celebrity chef. None of these readers ever post more than once, unlike posters to Epicurious.com who comment regularly. On Food Network each blog comment includes the reader’s name and the date and time of the post. In 2006, names were hotlinked in these comments to the user’s email address. This seemed a touchy privacy issue especially

considering the site did not explain this practice or give users an opportunity to opt out. By 2007, email addresses had been removed.

I suspect users post here because it seems at first a likely avenue for feedback on a site that discourages meaningful two-way communication between site producers and site users. A comment form is only available at the very bottom of the FAQ page, two clicks away from the homepage. It appears in answer to the question “How do I send a bug report about the Website?” The Website Comment Form admonishes users not to use the form to comment on television programming, but to instead visit the TV link and navigate to the television show in question using the alphabetic directory of titles. The form also reminds visitors that while the Food Network “appreciates” and “reads” all submissions, the site producers cannot respond personally to email. Nevertheless, those wishing to comment or ask questions must supply their full name, their email and postal addresses, a daytime telephone number, their birth date, and their gender. All of this is required information.

I sent this request for an interview to FoodNetwork.com, BettyCrocker.com, and Epicurious.com:

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Central Florida. I am writing my dissertation on food destination Web sites and online recipe collections. Each analysis includes a history of the site and its offline counterparts. I was hoping to communicate with one of the editors or site producers of [site name] to discuss the site’s history and design philosophy.

FoodNetwork.com responded with an automatically generated email stating that my comment had been received, but would not be answered. It reminded me again that chefs could not and would not respond personally to messages. BettyCrocker.com first replied with an

automatically generated message also thanking me for my email. I later received an unsigned message telling me that site designers did not speak with users and that even if they could, the site design was proprietary information. In contrast, an Epicurious.com staffer responded to my inquiry four hours after I sent it. She referred me to the Bon Appétit online editor who in turn referred me to the assistant to Epicurious editor-in-chief Tanya Wenman Steel. Within a week, I had received personal communication from the editor-in-chief and three of her staff and had scheduled a telephone interview with Ms. Steel who graciously spoke with me for 30 minutes. Their personal response and eagerness to help me are in keeping with Steel's commitment to a "community of people obsessed with food." She envisions Epicurious as a "destination site," a site users visit everyday and call their own. Steel hopes that users will "see pieces of themselves in the text and design." Her vision for Epicurious.com is in keeping with other features of the site that demonstrate the producers' philosophy on community. Meaningful two-way communication, flexibility, and agency are valued at Epicurious.com and are consonant with some of the tenants of feminist theory and community that I have described.

The most recent demonstration of this is the announcement of the site's May 2007 redesign. The first paragraph acknowledges that good cooks make changes to good recipes and like cooking, designing a Web site demands constant tweaking. Comments from users drove many of the design changes like a more dynamic search engine and more ways to sort results. The editors acknowledge that change can be difficult for users so they encourage feedback. The new design announcement concludes with a chart detailing major features and their new locations and this invitation for comment: "We'd love to know what you think of the site, so don't hesitate to contact us. Due to the volume of correspondence, we can't respond individually to each e-mail, but we do read every one." I suspect, however, that many email messages do

receive personal responses. My own experience bears this out as do two series of posts to the forum. The most recent series is very brief, but demonstrates the editors' presence on the site and their willingness to speak with users. In January 2007, a frequent contributor to the forum, Michael in Phoenix, posted a message requesting private communication with editor-in-chief Tanya Steel. Ninety minutes later, Steel replied that she would be happy to email Michael. Steel's private email address is not publicly available on Epicurious, but Michael and Steel clearly had a bit of history communicating. Michael in Phoenix came to her and Epi's defense two years earlier in a series of forum flaming.

In late fall 2005, the Epi forum underwent significant interface changes. The forum expanded into its present slate of six categories and assumed its present design. The changes angered longtime posters to Gail's Recipe Swap, the Epicurious forum first begun in 1995. Members hated the new look and functionality of the forums and lamented the loss of the archive. What these users most missed was the sense of community created on Gail's Recipe Swap over ten years. Newly arrived editor-in-chief Tanya Steel replied regularly to angry rants. The following exchange is characteristic:

Hi Tanya

Posted: Oct 26, 2005 5:45 PM by LisalnLA

Thanks for posting here, and letting us know you are aware of the unhappiness and the technical issues that exist with the new site.

It would be great to know what, in addition to the font size issue, will be taking place. For instance, will there be a change in the display options on the main page, to be able to view the opening posts as well as the subject line of the

replies? I feel this is the main issue for most of the users of the former Gail's Swap - and it really changes the feeling of the community and type of communication that we enjoyed in the previous format.

It may seem like a silly thing, but I really feel that the whole sense of our community of Gail's is gone in this new format. While it may seem like a cosmetic change has been made to the boards to streamline them, it also has killed the whole manner in which the regular users communicated with each other. I hope Joe doesn't mind, but I've copied and pasted his words from another thread below, as he really articulated how a lot of folks feel about the new format:

“....Gail's was a site where you could check in while the water was boiling or while the broiler was heating and see in one second who's added what to the forum. The old index page was perfect that way. You could literally watch all conversations taking place at once and see which topics were taking off. A lot of the posts were just quick hellos and one-liners, but that was part of the fun.

It was like walking in on a lively, well-lit dinner party with a free-wheeling conversation. This new format, despite the choice on happy faces, is like walking into a dim bar where small groups are huddled privately.”

Joe in Long Beach

Some might think me melodramatic - but the new format, as it exists now, ripped the heart out of a wonderful community. There are many people, who over the 11 years of Gail's Recipe Swap's existence, have built a tremendous body of work and community that cannot be found anywhere else on the 'net. It appears that a lot of those same regular contributors will be lost with the new changes, and that is really very sad.

I realize that some Swappers expressed their wishes about changes being made to the forums, but it seems as though the majority of the regular users who have posted in the new format are unhappy with what has happened.

Any more detailed feedback about the changes being considered (or ones that are out of the question) would be greatly appreciated. ("Hi Tanya")

Re: Hi Tanya

Posted: Oct 26, 2005 9:22 PM by tsteel

Thanks Lisa and your letter was very eloquent and heartfelt. I really do understand the level of frustration and we need to do as much as we can to help get it to a point that works for the majority of the people. I just want you to know how seriously we are taking this. Thanks so much. ("Re: Hi Tanya")

Throughout the exchange, Steel reassured users that she was forwarding their requests to the technology staff who were working round the clock to address concerns. Although the forum

interface did not return to the look, feel, and functionality of Gail's Recipe Swap³ and so Epi was not able to accommodate the desires of many users, Steel's nearly constant replies over several days demonstrates her willingness to dialogue. Her presence, whether through her daily blog or on the forum, is unique among the three Web sites in the study. Steel is a participant in the site she produces. She collaborates with other users in constructing the text. Participation, collaboration, and personal narrative, all key to blogging and forums, resonate with the knowledge making practices of hypertext theory and postmodern feminism.

Basic Cooking Instruction

Since the nineteenth century, the bread and butter of cookery instruction for women have been basic cooking instruction. General, mass-marketed cookbooks like The Boston Cooking School Cookbook, The Joy of Cooking, The Better Homes and Garden Cookbook, The Good Housekeeping Cookbook, and The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook served as tutors and arbiters of taste and behavior for middle class women. Each of these books appeared during times of social and economic shifts in women's roles. The industrial revolution, World Wars I and II, and the introduction of convenience foods and kitchen technology following each war moved more middle class women into the kitchen and away from traditional, communally learned kitchen knowledge. Basic cooking instruction assumed women's ignorance in the kitchen (Neuhaus 74). The most popular books included recipes for major ingredient categories like eggs, bread, meat, poultry, or vegetables, but they also offered household management guidelines like outfitting the kitchen with tools and pots, stocking the pantry, storing food, setting the table, planning

³ Users can access an archive of Gail's Recipe Swap at <http://web.archive.org/web/20010611042301/food4.epicurios.com/HyperNews/print-archivelist.cgi?forum=swap>

nutritious meals, budgeting, and caring for husbands and children. Food destination Web sites, as the latest source for basic cooking instruction, likewise school ignorant users in kitchen techniques as silly as what to wear while barbequing or how to fold napkins and as complicated as tempering eggs for custard or decorating wedding cakes. In between, these sites, like their print counterparts, guide novice cooks through the basics of kitchen protocol.

Epicurious.com Basic Cooking Instruction

From the Epicurious.com homepage, there are three obvious links for basic cooking instruction: a left rail link last in the list of topics under Tools and two left rail links under the Video and Images heading. The Tools heading is fourth from the top of the screen so How-Tos appears nearly at the bottom of the first screen in Safari 2.04. The Tools menu also lists links for other less obvious basic instruction like the Food Dictionary and a metric conversion table. Under the Video and Images heading novice users might link to Technique Videos and Illustrated Guides. If I jump to the Cooking tab from the homepage or any other interior page, I can still link to How-Tos, Technique Videos, and the food and wine dictionaries. The Cooking page displays a top tier submenu with links to basic instruction choices such as Menus, How To, and Reference. Users might also select the links to each of these pages from the center frame of the Cooking page and can access How To and Reference from the left rail. Confusingly, the link choices for basic cooking instruction are different at each presentation of How To. For example, the drop down How To submenu on the Cooking page lists Chef Videos, Technique Videos, Tools of the Trade, Cooking Class, Kitchen Notebook, and Forum. The left rail How To menu on the Cooking page only lists Chef's Tips and Technique Videos. The Chef's Tips page is not the same as the Chef's Videos page, but I don't know this until I click the link. I can't help feeling

like I might be missing some key piece of kitchen knowledge and I am not quite sure where I might look to find just a basic technique or guideline. With so many different presentations and headings for How To, I find myself forgetting on what page I found a link. For example, I could not remember on which page I found the link to Chef's Tips. This link is only available from the left rail of the Cooking main page. The logic and organization of all of these options is murky.

Despite this confusion, I like that none of these hyperlinks opens a new browser window so I can easily use my browser's back button to return to the homepage. I also appreciate that all of the pages have a unique URL so I can bookmark the instructions. In these functionalities, Epicurious thus demonstrates a user-centered design recommended by Web design experts Jakob Nielsen, Patrick Lynch, and Sarah Horton and technology design expert Robert Johnson. Unique URLs and browser-based design reflect users' tasks and actions: my task is to find basic cooking instruction quickly and easily and my action is to link directly to it. On Epicurious, I can link to instruction one click from the homepage or I can link directly through my browser's list of bookmarks.

Rhetorically, basic cooking instruction on Epicurious.com elevates expert knowledge over user knowledge, but nevertheless acknowledges experiential knowledge and invites readers to share their own wisdom on the forum titled Kitchen Counsel. The best example of this blending of epistemologies is the Chef's Tips index, subtitled "Expert advice – tips from great cooks." I can browse the index alphabetically or search for topics like "Food Storage" or "Pinching Pennies." The introduction explains:

Our searchable database gathers 1,001 nuggets of kitchen wisdom from chefs who've learned the hard way. Whether you're pickling, microwaving, prepping, storing or freezing, experts like Jacques Pépin, James Beard, Betty Fussell and

Barbara Kafka probably know how to do it better. Plunder their secrets below, then share your own in our Kitchen Counsel Forum.

This brief passage draws from three different knowledge claims. First is expert. Chefs are wise and know better how to do anything we might attempt in the kitchen. Such a claim seems anti-feminist, indeed foundationalist in its elevation of the expert and denigration of the amateur. It also echoes prescriptive literature of the preceding two centuries that emphasized precision and accuracy. Chefs gained their wisdom, however, from the kitchen and they learned by doing—“the hard way.” Presumably, the hard way was by trial and error. In sharing their “secrets” with the community of Epi users, they hope to save us the same hardships they endured. Here are demonstrated the second and third knowledge claims, in opposition to the first: experiential: learning “the hard way” in the kitchen, and socially constructed: plundering the secrets of the initiated and thereby become initiates ourselves. As insiders thus tutored by expert, experiential wisdom, we are charged to share our own wisdom and secrets with the community in the Kitchen Counsel Forum.

The selection of cooks the introduction highlights similarly appeals to different knowledge claims. The two men are commercial chefs, restaurateurs, and cookbook authors while the two women are home cooks, food writers, and cookbook authors. Jacques Pépin cooked professionally in restaurants in France and in the US, served as the personal chef to French heads of state, and directed food service development at Howard Johnson’s. He is a familiar face to fans of public television cooking shows and he has published two dozen cookbooks. Despite his professional credentials, Pépin’s books take home cooking for family and friends as their subjects. His knowledge claims appeal to sensory and experiential wisdom. James Beard, in contrast, is an American icon of proper gourmet cooking. He authored twenty

cookbooks over forty years, but is best remembered as a cooking school teacher. The food industry bows to his expertise every year with The James Beard Foundation Awards. The foundation honors culinary professionals such as cookbook authors, food manufacturers, and restaurants for outstanding achievements. The foundation, as was its namesake, is an arbiter of culinary value.

It is not surprising that Epicurious lists Barbara Kafka as an expert chef in its introduction to chef's tips. The James Beard Foundation recently awarded Kafka a lifetime achievement award. With Beard, Kafka taught cooking classes at the James Beard Cooking School. She has also authored many cookbooks and has written extensively on food for national magazines and newspapers. Unlike Beard and Pépin, however, Kafka began her culinary career not as a chef or caterer but as a food writer. Her books reflect her own interests and experiments in her own kitchen, such as her bestselling Microwave Gourmet (1998) and recent award winning Vegetable Love (2005). Her recipe instructions are dictatorial, but yet still narrative. She describes her method and commands you to imitate it. Nevertheless, she admits she cannot precisely measure some aspects of cooking, like yields for recipes because every person's appetite is different or cooking times because ovens, equipment, and ingredients are never quite the same. These are things a cook can only learn from experience, not from an authority like herself, and not from a book or Web page (see Kafka's Web site <http://www.bkafka.com/>). Kafka's blended knowledge claims—experience and authority—mesh with those we read on Epicurious.com.

Betty Fussell's presence as an expert chef on Epicurious is more of a conundrum than the other three. I've never considered Fussell a chef or even a cookbook author for that matter. Fussell is best known as a food historian, editor, and memoirist. Like Betty Friedan, Betty Fussell was an educated, literary woman who bristled against 1950s domestic ideology, yet

threw herself into her role as cook and hostess. What she knows about food, she learned first from experience and second from interviewing other cooks around the country. She is a sensual eater, cook, and writer, not an authority on professional cooking. I consider her more an authority on eating and American foodways. Ironically, Fussell is perhaps best known as the ex-wife of historian Paul Fussell and for her tell-all memoir My Kitchen Wars (1999) in which she claims “cooking is a brutal business” and a “battle,” a “daily struggle to turn ingredients into edibles for devouring mouths” (1). Cooking as war and daily drudgery is hardly the image Epicurious strives to cultivate, so Fussell’s inclusion as an expert chef chafes against the site’s aesthetic of luxury and indulgence.

Besides the Chef’s Tips index, Epicurious.com serves basic cooking instruction via Tools of the Trade, Cooking Class, and Kitchen Notebook. These features appear on the How To page and also on the How To dropdown submenu from the Cooking page. From the How To page, however, users cannot access a general introduction for each feature. We can only access the current month’s topic and choose from a drop-down menu of past topics. The Cooking page drop-down submenu, in contrast, links me to a general introduction of each feature. The rhetoric of these introductions demonstrates the authoritarian epistemology present in the headnote to the Chef’s Tips. The Epicurious editors and contributor’s are educated, knowledgeable professionals, and the users of Epi are inexperienced, untutored amateurs in need of education. Most Epi users are home cooks and not professional chefs, and the users browsing the Kitchen Notebook and Cooking Class are less experienced and less knowledgeable than the contributors or else they would not be searching for basic kitchen knowledge. The suggestion on these pages is that surfing the Epi site is a suitable substitute for formal training because the experts are so skilled at both cooking and teaching. The Cooking Class page encouragingly announces:

Not a culinary school grad? Don't let that stop you from making a fabulous soufflé or delightful gnocchi. Every month, [Bon Appétit's](#) illustrated Cooking Class takes you step-by-step through one of our more challenging recipes, from the secrets of making perfect gravy to impressing your friends with a fancy three-tiered wedding cake. Just click on this month's topic below, or choose one from our archive in the pulldown above. Soon you'll be the master of your own range.

Similarly, the [Kitchen Notebook](#) page promises success by association:

Ever wish you could cook with an expert by your side? Now you can. Every month, the [Gourmet](#) editors share tips, buying advice, and other kitchen wisdom as they walk you through various techniques. Click on this month's topic below, or choose one from our archive in the pulldown above. From forming tortellini to picking out the freshest mussels, it's the next best thing to a cooking class.

Unlike the Chef's Tip page that acknowledges experience and socially created knowledge, these pages elevate the expert above the amateur. The Epi users can only learn, these pages suggest, by following instructions from experts. The purpose of learning is not sensory pleasure, but perfection of techniques, social acceptance, and mastery of equipment. These are purposes associated with positivist rhetoric.

In some of its basic cooking instruction, Epicurious.com upholds traditional ideologies about cooking knowledge. Further complicating the usability of these features is the fact that only the Cooking Class link opens under the Cooking page visual frame and navigational menu. See the differences in the images below. The Kitchen Notebook and Tools of the Trade belong to the Gourmet and Bon Appetit directories respectively so when I click the link for either of these features, I lose the Cooking Page How To submenu. See the captions below for the directory/link

in each URL. I can easily use my browser's back button to return to my starting page, but the directory/link structure disrupts a consistent page design. Recall from Chapter Two that user-centered design is consistent design. The directory/link structure evident here is a system design.



epicuriously epishop • video • forums

RECIPES FEATURES **COOKING** DRINKING RESTAURANTS MEMBERS

menus • everyday • healthy • kitchen • holidays • how to • reference

from **BON APPÉTIT** magazine

COOKING CLASS +

Cooking Class



Not a culinary school graduate? Don't let that stop you from making a fabulous soufflé or delightful gnocchi. Every month, Bon Appétit's illustrated Cooking Class takes you step-by-step through one of our more challenging recipes, from the secrets of making perfect gravy to impressing your friends with a fancy three-tiered wedding cake. Just click on this month's topic below, or choose one from our archive in the pulldown above. Soon you'll be the master of your own range.

THIS MONTH

Bon Appétit Master Class
Make Shanghai soup dumplings with chef Anita Lo

Figure 20: Cooking Class Introduction on Epicurious.com July 4, 2007

epicurios epi-shop • video • forums
 RECIPES FEATURES COOKING DRINKING RESTAURANTS MEMBERS
 menus • features • monthly columns • forum

from *Gourmet* magazine

KITCHEN NOTEBOOK More Kitchen Notebook +
 See Gourmet Institute video highlights

Kitchen Notebook

Tips and techniques from the Gourmet editors



Ever wish you could cook with an expert by your side? Now you can. Every month, the *Gourmet* editors share tips, buying advice, and other kitchen wisdom as they walk you through various techniques. Click on this month's topic below, or choose one from our archive in the pulldown above. From forming tortellini to picking out the freshest mussels, it's the next best thing to a cooking class.

THIS MONTH

Risotto Primer
 Rice advice, cooking tips, and more

Figure 21: Kitchen Notebook on Epicurious.com July 4, 2007

epicurios epi-shop • video • forums
 RECIPES FEATURES COOKING DRINKING RESTAURANTS MEMBERS
 menus • features • desserts • monthly columns • forum

from **BON APPÉTIT** magazine

TOOLS OF THE TRADE More Tools of the Trade +
 Ad: Visit the online home of Vogue & W

Tools of the Trade

The basics on equipment you can't cook without



Not certain why you need a chef's knife? Wondering how many baking pans you should have on hand? You've come to the right place. In *Bon Appétit's* informative Tools of the Trade column, contributing editor Dorie Greenspan gives you the lowdown on the equipment cooks shouldn't be without, from rolling pins to a smoker. Click on this month's tool below, or choose one from our archive in the pulldown above, and get the know-how you need to stock your kitchen with all the right stuff.

THIS MONTH

Squeeze Play
 The lowdown on the best citrus juicers

See Dorie's book, *Paris Sweets*, in our bookstore

Figure 22: Tools of the Trade on Epicurious.com July 4, 2007

We see this traditionalism further demonstrated in the Chef and Technique Videos and the Chefs and Experts page, which reinforce master/amateur hierarchies and gender stereotypes. Ironically, while the video content is positivist, the presentation of the video content destabilizes hierarchies and so resists the very positivist epistemology it present. But as with the How To menus, Epicurious offers two variations of technique videos. The most easily accessible is a series of Flash powered videos that play automatically when I click the Video or Technique Video link from any Epicurious page. The Flash interface is sleek and modern—grayscales, lots of white space, and soft, muted colors. The player opens in a new window with no navigational menu, but the interface offers buttons to bookmark, send, or embed the video. Clicking the bookmark or embed links returns the html code I need to copy and paste a direct URL to either the specific video or the general video library. Clicking the embed link returns the html code to add the video to a blog or Web page. Offering users html code to use, store, and share the videos demonstrates user-centered design (task oriented) and feminist rhetoric (social).

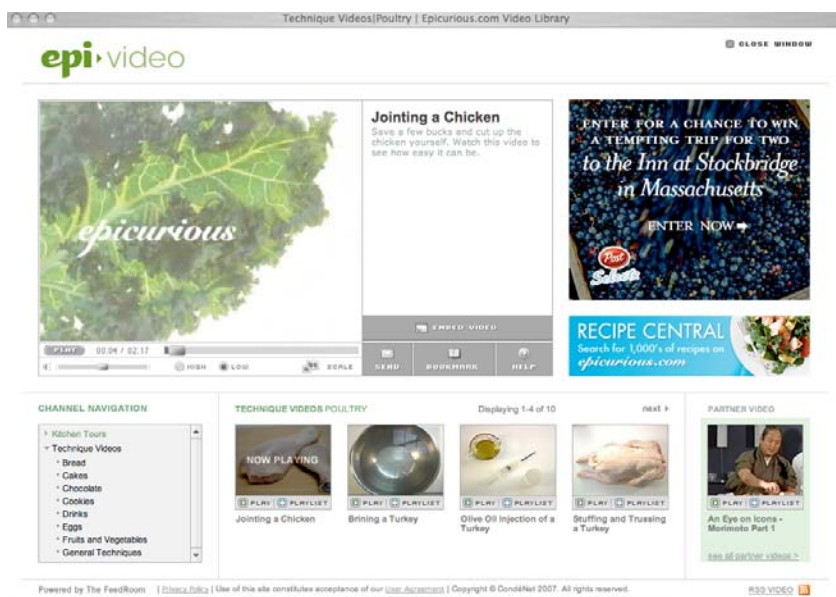


Figure 23: Technique Videos on Epicurious.com July 6, 2007

The video content, in contrast, subtly reinforces gendered stereotypes about cooking. The technique videos suggest to viewers that women cook at home, are unskilled, and need convincing that cooking can be easy. On the other hand, the chef videos give viewers the message that men cook professionally with style and creativity. The technique videos teach viewers basic cooking skills like jointing a chicken, making a piecrust, or slicing a steak. A young woman narrates each one to two minute video while the hands and torso of a young woman, presumably the speaker, demonstrates the step-by-step process described. The woman is faceless and nameless in all of the segments except the grilling videos. In these four short videos, Elizabeth Karmel, the girl's grilling guru demonstrates insultingly simple grilling tasks from how to light a gas grill (turn the knob) to how to scrub the grill grates (back and forth with a wire grill brush). Karmel herself is confident and authoritarian yet her videos on Epicurious and her Web site reinforces gendered stereotypes about cooking. While the native Epicurious content subtly validates gender stereotypes, her site proudly proclaims her "America's Female Grilling Expert." She's not just an expert, but a *female* expert. She distinguishes her expertise from male authority. "Grilling isn't just for boys anymore," she announces, but girls (her word) need special training to enter the secret, male-only world of outdoor cooking. Without her site, she promises, women will continue to fail hopelessly at grilling and will hate it too. With Girlsatthegrill.com recipes and instructions, however, "Not only will you have eaten your last piece of charred chicken or shoe-leather steak, but you'll find out just how fun it is." Grilling is "liberating" and "not at all scary" (Karmel). The implication is that outdoor grilling and all it entails—meat and fire—is just not the natural province of women. Such gendering of foods and cooking methods pervades much twentieth century prescriptive cookbook literature in the United States and persists into the twenty-first (See Neuhaus' Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking for a thorough discussion

of gendered food and cooking as seen in printed twentieth century cookbooks).

The chef videos further validate the pervasiveness of gendered cooking rhetoric evident in Epicurious.com basic cooking instruction. The technique videos demonstrate basic skills in industrial looking test kitchens. The young female cook is alone. She does not speak for herself, but instead a narrator speaks for her. She has no identity—she is nameless and faceless. Contrast this image with the chef videos in which named chefs speak for themselves, perform in large, busy restaurant kitchens or shops, and orchestrate the activities of themselves and others. They are the authority in their kitchens, shops, and gardens. They are also mostly male, on the pages of Epicurious.com and in the culinary industry at large. Between the Chef Videos page and the Chef Feature page, Epicurious presents interviews, profiles, and recipes of thirty-nine chefs. Only eleven of those are women. Several of these women own restaurants, others are famous cookbook authors, but Epicurious lists only two as professionally trained chefs. The others are variously described as homemakers, food writers, home cooks, restaurant owners, or matriarchs. Rose Levy Beranbaum is a “baking expert” (“Featured Chef”) and Edna Lewis is “a granddaughter of slaves” and an icon of “down home cooking” before she is credited with being a chef (“Honoring Edna”). The male dominated chefs’ world is creative and public; the female cook’s world is practical and private.

FoodNetwork.com Basic Cooking Instruction

Basic cooking instruction on FoodNetwork.com likewise exposes a gender bias about cooking and food. Most of the cooking instruction here appears to users via demonstration videos accessible from the Recipes & Cooking tab. Based on the rhetoric of the instructions, on the visual imagery of the instructions, and on the television ads that appear automatically when I

click a video demonstration, FoodNetwork.com assumes, like much printed cookbook literature, that most users of basic cooking instruction are women. The rhetoric of all these features exploits a domestic ideology that demands women content themselves with beauty, home, and child rearing. The metaphors used to describe cooking techniques demonstrate the inextricable links between these spheres—beauty, home, and family. Clothing metaphors, for example, connect cooking techniques to sewing, dressing, or crafting: collaring a soufflé, enrobing a cake, folding batter, weaving cake designs, and cutting paper dolls. The dominant domestic ideology evident on FoodNetwork.com basic cooking instruction connects cooking to intimate, domestic chores historically performed by women and children.

We see further evidence of this ideology in the functionality of the videos page and in the visual rhetoric. First, the Cooking Demos page always opens with a video for folding napkins. An attractive middle-age woman appears in a kitchen studio and explains how to fold a napkin decoratively “to surround a serving dish or a soufflé.” Folding napkins seems a frivolous kitchen task and one few cooks are really ever likely to perform. Like the video teachers on Epicurious.com, the woman is alone in a test kitchen, but unlike Epicurious.com, the woman on FoodNetwork.com has both a face and a name. This technique is one of two under the Entertaining category. The categories appear on the Cooking Demos page in alphabetical order beginning with Baking. The other demonstration in the Entertaining category teaches the audience how to open a bottle of champagne. No video accompanies the demonstration. Instead a dapper middle-aged man in a black suit and red tie demonstrates the process in a printable, step-by-step guide. Perhaps he is the host or the butler. Two things puzzle me about the napkin folding and champagne opening demonstrations. First, I find it odd that the napkin folding demonstration is always the first demonstration to appear automatically when I choose Cooking

Demos from anywhere else on the site. The second is the gendered rhetoric between tasks appropriate for women and those appropriate for men. Why should a woman demonstrate napkin folding and demonstrate it repeatedly whether I ask her to or not? Why should a man demonstrate how to open a bottle of champagne? Is it because FoodNetwork.com wants us to believe that women concern themselves with silly, decorative tasks and men with purposeful and riskier tasks? Setting a pan on fire or popping a champagne cork are ceremonial, dramatic, and crowd-pleasing, tasks for men according to FoodNetwork.com. Neuhaus found that cookbooks of the 1920s through the 1950s certainly subscribed to this domestic ideology. This is her thesis in Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking.

The gendered tasks in the FoodNetwork.com videos suggests the site's producers likewise subscribe to the dominant domestic ideology that sees woman as reluctant, unskilled cooks in need of "fun" and men as occasional, but adventurous and talented cooks. Women present most of the basic cooking techniques on the site. They present all the baking demonstrations and all of those that involve repetitive tasks like shucking shellfish or pounding meat. Men, in contrast, present most of the techniques involving red meat like carving red meat, preparing duck breasts, and cutting pockets in meat for stuffing. Male teachers also demonstrate two dramatic techniques: flambéing and sautéing, both of which involve high heat, inexact processes, and quick cooking times. Neuhaus notes that much cookbook literature assigns tasks like these to men (73, 215, 218).

We see gendered rhetoric further reinforced in the advertising that supports the technique videos. Video ads appear for make-up (Olay), diet foods (Crystal Light), children's foods (Kraft singles), and candy (Dove Bites). In Unbearable Weight, Bordo claims advertising images perpetuate gendered notions about feminine eating. The dominant patriarchal ideology holds

women's food consumption in mild contempt. Advertising images suggest women should eat small bites of food and enjoy those small bites as secret pleasures only. The Dove Bites ad is a perfect example. In it, a thin, beautiful young woman sits alone in a train car. As she "loses" herself in "the soft, silky taste of Dove chocolate" and eats the tiny square, a flowing drape of chocolate colored satin covers her. Her pleasure is solitary, brief as the candy is bite sized, and so private that she must experience it draped in fabric. Bordo also found that because advertising images frequently connect women's eating to sexuality and sensuality, eating must be a brief, private, solitary experience possible only if the eater is somehow lost to herself or overtaken by a momentarily lapse in continence. The female eater is allowed incontinence of will if the lapse is small, like a tiny bite of chocolate, or truly sinless, like a diet soft drink that only tastes decadent. Again, the Dove Bites ad demonstrates these characteristics. The young woman in the ad puckers her lips as if about to be kissed, she closes her eyes and relaxes as if post-orgasmic, and the chocolate colored satin drapes across her like a satin bed sheet. This ad sexualizes and makes sinful the food, the uncontrollable act of eating, and the eater. The rhetoric and the videos' automatic appearance without user control work to circumscribe women's agency on FoodNetwork.com.

BettyCrocker.com Basic Cooking Instruction

Of all the sites in the study, one might expect BettyCrocker.com to offer users the richest and most dynamic basic cooking instruction. The Betty Crocker brand, after all, has become synonymous with basic printed cooking instruction. Betty Crocker on the Web, however, gives users the least dynamic and the shallowest basic cooking instruction compared to Epicurious.com and FoodNetwork.com. The instructions are easily accessible via a How-To tab

from the top tier navigational menu available on all pages. On the How-To page, I can choose from seven basic cooking categories: Baking Basics, Charts and Reference Guides, Cooking Basics, Food Safety, Glossaries and Definitions, Party and Celebration Ideas, and Plan and Prep Strategies. Each of these category titles links to a page displaying yet more sub-categories. The How-To pages are simple, text-based lists of links. A small photograph might appear in the upper left of the center frame or in the top center of the center frame. The design doesn't chunk the text, but displays it in long scrolling lists. These pages resemble a book index rather than a dynamic Web page. Regardless, they are fairly simple to use and uncluttered in appearance. Once I link to a specific topic, I can email or print the page.

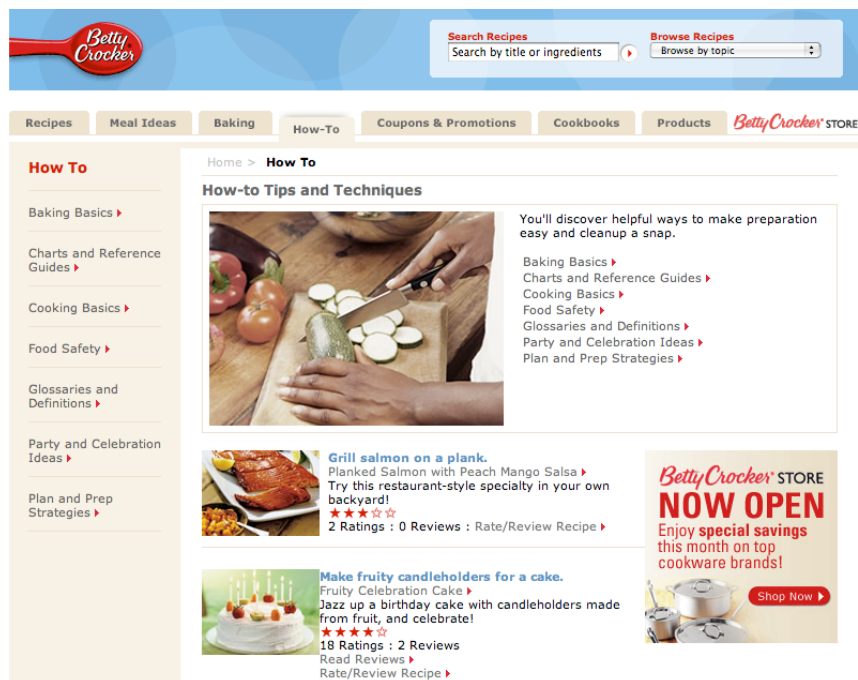


Figure 24: Basic Cooking Instruction on BettyCrocker.com July 12, 2007

The only videos available on the site are not directly connected to the How-To pages, but instead appear as a link from the home page or from the Meal Ideas tab. These videos feature a perky young woman, perhaps even a teenaged woman, who resembles a very young Rachel Ray

the spirited star of the Food Network's 30 Minute Meals brand. Like Ray, the young woman promises viewers an easy, quick, tasty meal in less than an hour. Also like Ray, the woman's movements and smile are exaggerated. She demonstrates recipes in a brightly colored studio kitchen. Dressed sometimes in brightly colored casual clothes and other times in smart dark business suits, she is the center of the frame and the videos focus on her. During the one-minute videos, the camera only briefly cuts away to close up shots of the food she prepares. The focus on the cook rather than on the food is unusual on BettyCrocker.com. The young woman might represent Betty herself, enthusiastic, capable, and confident, a symbolic inspiration to viewers. Cooking is fun, creative, and simple, she suggests, a message many cookbook producers, including the publishers of BettyCrocker.com assume women need to hear (and see) over and over.

Her rhetoric and the rhetoric on the How-To pages stress simplicity and quickness. We read or hear repeatedly the words easy and quick and slang like "in a snap" or "super fast." To achieve speed and ease, most Betty Crocker recipes on the site and many basic instructions, encourage cooks to use shortcuts like ready made pie crusts, cake or cookie mixes, canned soups, beans, and vegetables, jarred sauces, and frozen pasta. Despite the predictability of package foods, the rhetoric on Betty Crocker is problem focused. Piecrusts might "misbehave" or appear "unseemly." These words are telling. The Betty Crocker epistemology values social order and discipline. Even piecrusts can be deviates and need discipline. The instructions frequently advise users how to maintain social order beginning in their kitchens. The basic instructions warn users to use the right tools and the right recipe and, most importantly, to follow the recipe carefully. Perfection is an achievable goal according to Betty Crocker, but only if the cooks follow "no-fail" recipes and guidelines. Perfection is also key to "rave reviews" from family and friends.

The rhetoric of perfection we read on BettyCrocker.com echoes the rhetoric of Betty Crocker cookbooks. The site's introductions and instructions demonstrate positivist discourse much like what we see in the books. A brief analysis of the brand's print discourse illuminates a long tradition of positivist rhetoric. In The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook, for example, the introductions compare cooking to traditionally masculine, scientific endeavors like architecture, chemistry, and business. Successful cooks must follow blueprints, have the correct materials, and follow instructions exactly. The food they cook is an investment and so cooks must protect it carefully. The General Mills staff and its testers are the ultimate authorities on what works best in the kitchen. Any difficulties with the recipes are the fault of the cook or of failed equipment. The recipes give cooks little choice or flexibility. The introductory texts and the headings imply that the purpose of cooking is external to the cook—to please men, families, and society. It should, therefore, be gotten through quickly, but efficiently and effectively, hence the frequent focus on ease and speed we see in print and online.

My favorite example of this epistemology is the cakes chapter of The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook. The graphics, pen and ink drawings of wasp waisted women at baking socials or cheerily whipping up confections in their home kitchens, suggest that women who are successful cake bakers will also please their family and peers and secure both personal and social success. The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook tells us that cake is “a symbol of home life” (115). It is dessert, it is art, and it is science. In all of its guises, cake evokes sublime domesticity for some and aphrodisiac indulgence for others. The notion of cake itself is loaded with powerful connotations of home, childhood, indulgence, and gender. The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook, for example, declares that chocolate cake is “for the man who comes to dinner” (134). Nigella Lawson in her book Nigella Bites confesses that her chocolate cake is “the sort of cake you'd

want to eat the whole of when you've been dumped" (47). Laura Shapiro claims that "few products emerging from the American kitchen have the sentimental heft of the classic frosted layer cake, universally recognized as a triumph of love as much as skill" (68). A keyword search for "cake" on BettyCrocker.com returns 400 hits and the homepage frequently features a cake or frosting idea. Cakes, then, are a good choice for semiotic analysis.

The Cakes section of the old print cookbook includes photographs, diagrams, and pen and ink drawings. Photographs and drawings depict cakes in many shapes and sizes. Photographs demonstrate assembly and cooking techniques. Drawings portray children, men, and families making and eating cakes and celebrating cake-worthy occasions like weddings and birthdays. This section like many others in the Picture Cookbook also includes drawings of colonial mansions and farmhouses. Occasional drawings of ingredients like fruits and nuts appear beside recipe variations. The page design itself is visually regular if not interesting by today's standards, much like the simplicity of Betty Crocker.com. Rules, symbols, headings and white space guide readers through the page and identify salient recipes.

The largest and most visually interesting image is a pen and ink drawing on the first page of the cakes section. The image depicts nine women, six of them youngish and svelte, their short hair neatly coiffured. Three of them are grandmotherly, round, and white-haired, their round noses balancing round spectacles. All of the women wear aprons and high-necked shirtwaist dresses. The women talk in small groups, their heads inclined conspiratorially. One woman hands a whole cake on a platter to another. Their arms outstretched to one another create vectors indicating giving and receiving. One of the elderly women holds a cake server in one hand and gestures in a laugh with the other hand. Her listeners stand while she sits and they bend close to hear her. Two women talk in the left background, one faces the right of the picture and one's

back faces the viewer. Two other women appear in the center background. One's eyes are focused on the woman in front of her and the other appears to be looking at the viewer. I will discuss perspective and the power of this sight line in the next section. For now, I describe the women's position as representative participants (RPs) and the action implied in the image. The image includes several objects as well, four whole cakes, one that seems to be dripping with icing, one that appears speckled with coconut or sugar, one angel food cake, and one sheet cake. There are eleven plated slices of cakes and a row of forks neatly arranged on a table drawn simply as a dark line that divides the foreground (the table) from the middle ground and background.

The social concept evoked here is a ladies' social, perhaps a ladies' lunch, a charity guild meeting, or church function. The room is large and non-descript. It is not a home. One of the women wears a coat and hat telling us she has just arrived. These women have all arrived with cakes in hand to share and to compare. The text below the image narrates the events for us: "We now proclaim you a member of the society of cake artists. And do hereby vest in you all the skills, knowledge, and secrets of the 'gentle art' of cake making. Your part is only to heed the directions herein" (117). The women then are attending a meeting of this society. The cakes, cultural symbols of domesticity and culinary skill, are tickets to enter.

Only one of the women in the drawing looks at the viewer. She is in the exact center of the image. Her body is turned to the left and her head is turned away from her interlocutor toward the viewer. The other women are offers—here is a group of happy, successful cake bakers pleasing others with their cakes. The center figure, however, demands or challenges the viewer to become one of the participants. Her lips are slightly parted and her eyes look at us almost seductively in a come hither stare. The women are all assembled in the middle and

background of the picture behind a long, white table in the foreground. The viewer is on the opposite side of this table, the edges of which disappear into the white page background. The viewer, though, is lower than the RPs. The image covers the top third of the page and the motion is vertically downward from the image to the viewer to the small type text below it. Seven of the nine RPs are standing, emphasizing the vertical angle. The groups of two and three also create vertical frames with vertical space between. Vertical lines indicating paneling on the walls demarcate this space. All of this serves to elevate these members of the society of cake artists as the authority. The viewer is merely a novice or an initiate, slightly lower, but at least permitted to sit at the table.

Compositionally, the image relies on shape and contrast to make meaning since the pen and ink drawing is black, white, and brown. The women's faces lack specific details or contours except strong black lines indicating nose, mouth, eyes, and brows. They are expressionless, android-like. Their movements are frozen in time as if their clockwork suddenly stopped ticking. Everything around them is arranged in an orderly fashion. Forks are lined up next to rows of plated cake slices. Dishes are stacked neatly on either side of the table. The bows on the women's aprons are perfectly tied and perfectly symmetrical. This is *the* image of postwar domesticity and tranquility.



Figure 25: From the Cakes section of *The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook*

The image informs the text, sets the stage for it. The text tells readers that they can bake perfect cakes efficiently if they follow Betty Crocker's foolproof, modern rules. They can make meals "more satisfying, special occasions more festive, with one of these delicious cake creations" (117). And this is why the drawing is a perfect representation of the rhetorical use of images in *The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook*. The images depict an ideal cooking and eating situation. Well-dressed women and men smile at each other as they cook and serve quick, people pleasing dishes. Every dish has its role in the meal. Cake is the "symbol of home life," the sweet marker of the "most significant moments in our lives" (115). The cake takes its place in life and at dinner just like women take their place among other women, like those depicted in this drawing. Over and over, the cookbook portrays them as apron-clad smiling servers to seated husbands, children, and other women.

There are eighty-nine images in the forty-five pages of the Cakes section of *The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook*. Most are instructional photographs of cakes in various stages of

preparation. A pair of female hands is always visible performing the action the accompanying text describes, but there are few people on these pages. When they do appear, they are predominately women in pen and ink drawings. They whisper to each other on the secret chiffon cake recipe page or busily attach giant wings to a giant angel food cake. But mostly the book features small, black and white photographs of cakes, up close and front and center. Unlike some recent celebrity chef cookbooks that capitalize on the chef's face in many of the pictures, it is as if the person, the cook herself, is less important in Betty's books than the food itself. The product and the process are important here—two concepts in keeping with the domestic science philosophy inherent in 1950s cookery manuals. While the Betty Crocker web site has retained the same epistemological approach to food and cooking—efficiency in service to others—I find it unfortunate and ironic that the site is the least visual of the three sites under analysis. Each recipe begins with an enticing full color photograph of the dish, in keeping with the visual aesthetic of the printed books, but even fewer people appear on the pages of BettyCrocker.com than on the pages of The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook. An active, identifiable self matters less to the producers of BettyCrocker.com than does the product of the action.

The product—dinners and devil's food cakes, side dishes and smothered steaks—appear on the pages of BettyCrocker.com in beautiful, brightly colored photographs. I am drawn to the blacks, reds, oranges, and creams of the Southwestern Taco Salad, to the turquoise, green, and saffron plastic party forks tumbled into a yellow drinking glass, and to the white fluffiness of the frosted Tres Leches Cake. I want to produce these foods and the recipes promise to teach me exactly how. I appreciate the no-nonsense aesthetic and philosophy of the site when I am in the mood for a basic recipe. The site is simple and for the most part so is the food. Its preparation is made even simpler through the use of convenience foods. I might find all I need as a busy

working mom and the primary cook in my family: recipes, meal ideas, baking tips, how-to advice, coupons and promotions to save money on all those convenience foods, new cookbook titles, and an online store to buy everything from bakeware to small appliances. Every page of the site offers me these choices. The site also encourages me to cement my relationship with BettyCrocker.com by becoming a member. As a member, I receive an email newsletter of recipes and promotions, I can store recipes in an electronic recipe box, I can create and print grocery lists linked to the recipes I've stored, and I can share my cooking experiences in recipe reviews. The recipe reviews are the only outlet for meaningful communication, however. Betty is not really very interested in what I have to say, although other members might be. In keeping with its scientific approach to cooking and eating and with the value the producers place on efficiency, speed, and simplicity, the site itself is simple to use. Its hypertext design most follows the dictums of Nielson, Lynch, and Horton: simplicity, consistency, and adherence to Web usability standards like unique URLs. Unfortunately, the elements of user-centered design that facilitate the tasks users will complete on the site (searching, bookmarking, and linking) are in service of an epistemology and rhetoric that elevate expert, scientific knowledge over practical user knowledge.

Like BettyCrocker.com, Epicurious.com and FoodNetwork.com attract users with visually beautiful sites. I simply must serve the shrimp, mango, and avocado salad shining wet and creamy on the July homepage of Epicurious. My avocado and mango slices never fall onto the plate in such perfect crescent moons, but the photo promises me payoff if I try the Epicurious way. I want to vote for the Next Food Network Star, get to know the beautiful blonde Ingrid Hoffman, or get the inside celebrity scoop on Paula Deen and Tyler Florence. The faces of these Food Network talents smile, pout, or glare at me from the FoodNetwork.com homepage. They

gaze directly into the camera and so at me, the viewer, the aspiring cook, and the fan.

In fact, all the sites cast me in some ways as a fan, an admirer sometimes more than an actor. The homepages of all three sites situate the producers as the experts. Epicurious will pick the right tools for us and teach us to grill safely. The Epi editor's blog commands us to "Diet Right" and to eat berries now, and we better love to eat because the site title announces that the intended audience is just such a lover. Similarly, FoodNetwork.com claims authority as "the #1 Cooking Site." Its producers want us to watch TV and to engage the TV personalities as much as the food they prepare. The site is a sort of dynamic TV guide, its directions plugs for programming. Recipe collections and topic selections are branded: Ellie Krieger's Healthy Recipes, Emeril Lagasse's Recipe Collection, Ingrid Hoffman's Cocktails Delicioso from her new series Simply Delicioso. The rhetoric rarely asks, commands, or suggests I do anything other than watch. The rhetoric on the homepage of BettyCrocker.com, in contrast to these other two, forefronts the food. Only three verbs appear anywhere on the homepage: join, save, and top off. The recipe titles—adjectives and nouns like "Taco Salad," "Deviled Eggs," or "Grilled Stuffed Steaks"—are the main attraction, not the cooks who might prepare them.

In tiny letters on all three sites often tucked away at the top right of the screen, I am invited to participate more personally with the sites through membership. Here, finally, I can engage in meaningful communication if not with the site producers directly at least with other users. Each site makes available to registered users password protected recipe boxes. Registered members can rate and review recipes on the sites. I can comment on editors' blogs at Epicurious and Food Network. In these small ways, I can begin to deconstruct the hypertexts, to resist the standards and strictures of expertly created recipes by reporting my variations and opinions. At Epicurious, I can even post my own recipes for other registered members to deconstruct. And it

is to Epicurious.com that I most frequently turn when I need a recipe. Although its basic cooking instruction and its search tools are less helpful than FoodNetwork.com or BettyCrocker.com and it reinforces gender stereotypes about cooking authority, its membership features, the features that most reflect the tenets of a constructive feminist hypertext, make possible some small movements toward agency.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Knowledge Systems

I first started this project in response to a book by Daniel Headrick titled When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850. Headrick argues that technologies of knowledge existed long before digital tools, like Web sites, for classifying, storing, and accessing information (8). He defines a knowledge system as a method or technique for classifying, processing, storing, retrieving, and/or transmitting information. Such a method must compress, codify, and organize information in a systematic fashion. Consulting or applying systematic techniques to information generates or represents knowledge (Headrick 4-6). Because they reveal the ways a culture thinks about the world and what it values enough to preserve and catalogue, Headrick asserts that knowledge systems are powerful tools for historical and cultural analysis (vii). His book is “a small sampling” of the many different kinds of knowledge systems available to humans. He admits that readers will quickly identify “glaring omissions” (vii). One omission he notes in passing is cookbooks. He chooses instead to focus on systems that were “popular and useful to a broad spectrum of the population” (vii). One wonders how much more broadly useful a cookbook would have to be to merit inclusion in Headrick’s analysis.

The Junior League alone has sold over 200 million copies of its cookbooks since it began publishing in the 1950s. The Joy of Cooking and The Betty Crocker Cookbook are each in double digit editions and have also published millions of copies. Cooking Web sites like FoodNetwork.com and Epicurious.com receive more than three million visitors each month. Despite the popularity and usefulness of cookbooks, Headrick ignores them and instead focuses

his analysis on the knowledge systems of hard science and industry. It was this careless devaluing of practical knowledge, knowledge commonly associated with women, that set me to investigating the ways recipe collections classify, store, and access information. As repositories for the things we think and feel about food, cookbooks systematically organize our thinking about the world. Recipe collections thus function as knowledge systems as defined by Headrick (v).

Cooking texts, whether in print, online, or on TV, serve as evidence of what we know about the world and how we know it. Most importantly, cookbooks “classify, process, store, retrieve, or transmit information” about food, cooking, and eating (Headrick 6). Standard features in contemporary cookbooks such as lists of ingredients, step-by-step instructions, recommendations, annotations, tips on life and living, full-color photography, and standardized measures, organize a cook’s thinking in ways more profound than simply telling the reader what to serve for Sunday Brunch. First, cooking texts organize and classify information according to the producers’ world views. Does the recipe writer see the world linearly, each discrete component of a meal appearing in its time: appetizers, entrees, and desserts, for example? Or does she see the world according to her mood and activities: comfort food, party food, food to eat in front of the TV, or weekend food? Second, recipe collections display information in photographs, drawings, charts, and graphs. Next, recipe collections are spaces to store food information, another element of a knowledge system according to Headrick. They are compendiums of instructions, notes, tips, references, definitions, dietary practices, even histories, and sometimes clippings from other sources. Finally, mass media cooking texts like cookbooks and commercial cooking hypertexts communicate food information. In the case of cooking Web sites, they communicate dynamic information to millions of users all over the world. On the most

basic level cooking texts meet Headrick's definition of a knowledge system: "the methods and technologies by which people organize and manage information" (4). On a more theoretical level, cooking literature exposes a culture's epistemology.

We see some aspects of online cookery literature—forums, blogs, and recipe reviews—representing postmodern, feminist ways of knowing. Cooking Web sites collapse the boundaries between genres. For example, blogs collapse the boundaries between diaries and journalism and we see stories blended with recipes. They depict many different ways of organizing information about the world. These sites are in many ways ethnographies, histories, memoir, and documentaries. Most importantly, some parts of these texts are open and negotiated. They are collaboratively constructed through recipe reviews, comments on blogs, and in the case of Epicurious.com, through an online forum. Cookery literature, according to Lawless, "equates cooking and eating with both a sense of self and a sense of community" (216). Many members of Epicurious.com and BettyCrocker.com, for example, come to understand and to shape themselves and their community through the food they prepare. They bind themselves to culinary predecessors by remembering them in their reviews and then implementing their suggestions. They bind others to themselves by sharing recipes and cooking tasks with them. Through both of these connections, historical and contemporary, users come to know their online world. The sharing and doing are key, however. Lawless and Jaffee argue that practice, experimentation, and sharing of food knowledge connect women to each other and to their communities. Acts of connection and community liberate them from the oppressive "dailiness" of women's lives (Jaffee 210). The member contributed texts resist the authority of the experts, the producers, and the stereotypes of gendered rhetoric elsewhere on the sites.

But despite movements towards postmodernism and feminism, we also see cooking hypertexts reinforcing gendered stereotypes about women's roles and spheres of influence. In both functionality and rhetoric, cooking Web sites frequently circumscribe rather than promote women's agency. Cooking Web sites are hierarchical and many features are systems-oriented rather than user-oriented. The absence of venues for meaningful, two-way communication between users and producers on BettyCrocker.com and FoodNetwork.com reveals this anti-feminist, systems-view of hypertext design. Other design features further constraining activity and agency are inflexible search engines with strict letter-matching algorithms and limited results sorting, inconsistent page and menu designs, and faulty functionality like broken links. Finally, sexist advertising images and a rhetoric that equates culinary success with public performance, perfection, and male professionalism construct women as domestic creatures prone to ignorance, failure, and boredom in the kitchen. Gendered stereotypes like these are common to other cooking media and although grounded in the realities of many women's lives, I had hoped that the postmodern ideals of hypertext might mitigate the wholesale migration of sexist cooking knowledge to the World Wide Web. In sum, cooking Web sites only partially realize hypertext's liberatory potential.

A concern for public systems and men of science rather than with domestic tasks and women's tools is in keeping with the West's obsession with the mind, discipline, and order. Our basic need for food and the passionate, physical desires food evokes seem to fall outside the purview of rational discipline and order and so outside Headrick's analysis of early information systems. Mechanization and digitization drive techniques and technologies that create ever more discrete disciplines of knowledge. One group or another inevitably becomes associated with discrete bodies of knowledge. These disciplines exploited the scientific method to "know"

mankind and our world with ever more predictability. The scientific method ensured reproducibility and objectivity. We see this born out in scientific cookery manuals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and, to a lesser degree, in contemporary cooking Web sites. The vagaries of human perception and the unruly, messy instincts or passions, the parts of ourselves connected to our physical bodies, were no longer to be trusted (Jagger 156). Foucault contends that as technology shifted its focus in the nineteenth century from the physical body to the soul—the self and the personality—the body became an abstraction and a distraction. The body and its physicality, its sensuality, had to be controlled or ignored. Foucault's analysis of power-technology is therefore helpful in understanding the denigration of embodied ways of knowing in cooking literature from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Foucault's theories are also useful in understanding the knowledge systems structuring cooking literature because Foucault sees technologies of power as organizing systems. Organizing systems of technology evolve as mechanisms for complete knowledge discovery. Certainly the commercialization and even industrialization of cookbooks beginning in the nineteenth century attempted to discover everything there was to know about cooking and food. Cookbooks thus became the technology for knowing, controlling, and exercising power over food and by extension over the body.

In practice, however, a cookbook or a cooking Web site is prescriptive literature. Its power over food and the body is theoretical, not practical. A recipe may tell me what to cook and how. It may even tell me what tools to use, what to serve with my meal, and how to fold the napkins I lay beside the plate, but if I break the rules, only I know. Certainly there is an element of self-policing in cooking. If I fail to follow the recipe, there is a good chance my cake won't rise properly or my soup will taste too bland. I want to eat good tasting food, and I may wish to

impress my friends or please my family so it is in my best interest to follow the rules.

Sometimes, though, I make substitutions like the users of Epicurious.com and BettyCrocker.com with pleasing results. I might substitute because of necessity or just for fun. Either way, no one need know if I prefer not to tell. In this small way, I resist the normalizing power of prescriptive cooking texts, which, after all, are often written by professional chefs or commercial conglomerates with little concern for the budgets, schedules, or skills of home cooks. The recipe can only hold as much power as I wish to give it. Foucault might call this move away from cooking power-knowledge to embodied experimentation an ethic of self care, a practice of the self that simultaneously resists oppressive power systems and casts the cook as an active agent within the apparent confines of the systems.

A Feminist Hypertext Wishlist

Such opportunities for microresistance, for self care, are what we hope hypertext might offer us. As I've demonstrated, the resistive potential of hypertext is rarely realized in commercial cyberspace yet users find ways to fashion themselves active agents within these technologized environments. So what would a hypertext be up to if it expressed the ideals of a postmodern feminism and a practice of self care? Hypertext has the potential to disrupt traditional rhetorical practices like linear, logic argument. It also has the potential to democratize rhetoric and knowledge-making practices. Using hypertext, users can theoretically "talk back" to a site, construct new narratives, and incorporate non-traditional discourse like letters, stories, audio, video, and still images. Web sites demonstrating postmodern feminist rhetoric will value dialogue and conversation between users and between users and producers. These sites will encourage users to speak for themselves through meaningful two-way communication. They will

construct knowledge socially and collaboratively through two-way communication, communal authorship, and multiple genres. Food Web sites valuing a feminist approach to rhetoric will advocate multiple ways of knowing: scientific, experiential, and bodily knowledge. Feminist hypertext design will invoke users rhetorically as active agents. These sites will support multiple methods for searching, alternative views, and dynamic site maps. Users will be able to construct their own, non-linear paths through dynamic content. Design features will reflect user tasks rather than system tasks. Finally, open and negotiated sites will promote thoughtful practices that encourage attention to ourselves in relation to our bodies, to our communities, and to others.

Specifically, we should expect to see features that make conversation possible.

Discussion forums signal that a site values users' voices. The site producers should also maintain a regular presence on forums. As we saw on the Epicurious.com forums, two different site editors regularly participated in forum discussions as both users and monitors. As users, they asked their own cooking questions and started new threads. As monitors, the editors responded to questions and feedback. They also monitored user behavior to promote community and discourage flaming. In addition to forums, we might expect to see features for rating and responding to content, like the recipe ratings and reviews on Epicurious, FoodNetwork.com, and BettyCrocker.com. Forums, ratings, and reviews are three of many options for encouraging users to speak for themselves. Another option is member-contributed content, like the member recipe database. A more complex feature, and one under consideration at Epicurious.com, is a user homepage styled like [Facebook](#) or [MySpace](#). At the very least, constructive hypertexts should make available robust user profiles, searchable and easily accessible from the places users encounter one another: forums, recipe reviews, and recipe databases. Finally, I might like to see synchronous chat or closed system email, avenues for private communication between users and

between users and producers. Tools like these promote community between users as well as give voice to individual users.

A sense of community is pleasurable, but it can also be practical. Web sites that develop a thriving community of users who share their own voices develop a rich body of socially constructed knowledge. The forums and recipe reviews on cooking Web sites exemplify this. While the site-sponsored recipes present scientific knowledge in the form of researched articles and tested recipes, users interpret recipes and site content in terms of their own unique contexts. The community often values the cook's experiential knowledge over the authority of the recipe. Before I consider cooking a recipe found on a Web site or even one I've found in a magazine or watched on TV, I read the ratings and reviews. So do most other users. We share our knowledge of what parts of the recipe worked and which didn't. Perhaps the measurements or cooking times were off. We might have used different tools than those suggested in the recipe and we report our results. Often we explain the ingredient substitutions we made, why, and to what effect. New recipes spring from the site because users make so many substitutions. I especially like the comments that detail the history of an ingredient or explain the origin of a recipe. People share what they know. In the absence of friends or family to teach us recipes or methods, or maybe simply in addition to the community of cooks we value in the physical world, the constructive hypertext becomes a collaborative space to test, interpret, and synthesize cooking knowledge.

In addition to supporting community, feminist hypertexts will rhetorically invoke the user as an active agent. We might expect to read instructions more like those of celebrity chefs Nigella Lawson and Jamie Oliver whose recipes are chatty, experiential, and practical. On their Web sites and television programs and in their books, they frequently use metaphors of dialogue, conversation, and celebration. Their themes are indulgence, fun, pleasure, and sensory

enjoyment. Authority is open and negotiated. Purposes of recipes/food/eating/cooking are subjective and internal to the cook. The recipes are flexible and their instructional style is collaborative. Knowledge is embodied and/or experiential. The focus of these writers' presentation is often narration and storytelling, sharing ideas, and the subjective self. A good example is Lawson's "Chocolate Fudge Cake" recipe from her book Nigella Bites. The recipe's introduction is a confession. "If I'm being honest . . ." the text begins

for me all food is comfort food, but there are times when you need a bowlful of something hot or a slice of something sweet just to make you feel that the world is a safer place. We all get tired, stressed, sad or lonely, and this is the food that soothes. (31)

The purpose of the food in this section, titled Comfort Food, is not to please others as it might be in a traditional recipe. Quite to the contrary, food is solace for the subjective self. Chocolate cake is remedy for a lost love; the narrative recipe introduction describes Chocolate Fudge Cake as "the sort of cake you'd want to eat the whole of when you've been dumped." Later, Lawson suggests that the cake serves 10 "or 1 with a broken heart" (47-48). The instructions are narrative rather than enumerated. Prose and photographs wrap around the ingredient lists. The focus here is on eating and enjoying food not on preparing it, although Lawson often admits that the preparation itself is good solace. The point is not strict adherence to method, however, but sensual enjoyment from the process and the product.

Lawson establishes an affinity with her readers through story. She uses the first person pronoun nine times and the collective first person once in the section introduction and in the recipe. This recipe's introductory text is a confessional anecdote. Lawson confesses two vices: an online shopping addiction and a penchant for eating when she is depressed. She also admits

two personal problems: insomnia and unwanted singlehood. The instructions offer the reader a choice of equipment and a justification for the author's choices. Her personal experience is an example, not a direction or even a model: "I just like my toys and find the KitchenAid a comforting presence in itself. You do as you like." She does not intend her choice to signal a command for readers to follow suit (47). The themes in Lawson's recipe are permitting the subjective self an indulgence, solving problems through baking and eating, and reaping benefits from tedious, laborious tasks (like sifting confectioner's sugar). In this instance, the payoff for sifting sugar, which "is a pain," is smooth fudge icing (48). The purposes are comfort, consolation, and self-gratification. Lawson's approach to cookbook writing and cooking knowledge demonstrates feminist discourse. She imagines her text is a conversation. She invites collaboration. Her text also reflects feminist epistemologies. She justifies her decisions with the results of her own experiences. Knowledge is constructed. Authority is open and negotiated and the aim of cooking is subjective, internal validation. The reader is a powerful, constructive agent. On our wish list of constructive, postmodern feminist hypertext, I place text like this.

Jamie Oliver's recipe for "Party Cake" is another example of postmodern feminist rhetoric and a model for constructive text. The book from which it comes, The Naked Chef Takes Off (2000), does not include a narrative introduction for the desserts section, the shortest section in the text, or an introduction for the recipe. The instructions for "Party Cake" are narrative, however, and the recipe appears between two full color photographs, one on the facing page of a child eating a slice of cake with his hands and one of the cake assembly, which appears below the recipe. Oliver's tone in The Naked Chef Takes Off, the second book from his successful television series of the same name, is supportive and lighthearted. Oliver interjects near the end of the instructions, for example: "Happy days! You've done it." The implication is

that cake baking is difficult but achievable. He is the authority, but he is not rigid. The measurements for ingredients are imprecise. The recipe calls several times for “handfuls” of ingredients and “rounded” tablespoons. He allows the reader choice and variation. Several times he tells the reader to add ingredients “if you like” or add “to taste” (254). The themes are quickness and simplicity. He requires no special equipment (this is the central idea behind The Naked Chef. The food is naked, stripped of fancy methods or ingredients). The purpose of “Party Cake” is less explicit than in Lawson’s. The title suggests one purpose, parties, and the photograph suggests the cake is meant to please children. Oliver cautions at the end of the instructions to wait until the frosting has cooled before “tucking in.” His comment reflects his fun with cooking and eating, and suggests the desire to eat and enjoy the cake. Oliver’s text displays some elements of feminist. He encourages flexibility and collaboration, for instance. Oliver’s approach to cooking and to eating is a useful beginning for constructive rhetoric.

Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson are clearly writing in resistance to traditional conceptions of cookbooks as dogmatic authorities on method. Both resist the notion of cooking as an elaborate, restaurant-style practice. Cooking and eating for them are about fun, celebration, sensual enjoyment, and fellowship. Story and personality are important components to recipe sharing for these cooks. It is not surprising that both of these chefs sponsor Web sites that demonstrate these same qualities. Their sites, JamieOliver.com and Nigella.com, include member recipe databases, reviews, and ratings, and on Oliver’s a space for blogs and comments. Future studies might apply the heuristic demonstrated here to these two Web sites that are so very different in character and design from the lifestyle brands Epicurious.com, FoodNetwork.com, and BettyCrocker.com. I’m curious, for example, how the cult of personality shapes the representation of gender and authority on these sites. Oliver and Lawson have some

things in common: both are British, both are urbanites, and both cook with a joie de vie, which the television camera loves. In other ways they are very different. Lawson is an upper-middle class, college educated food writer with no formal culinary training. Her background is French Literature not French cooking. Oliver, in contrast, grew up cooking in his father's pub. He went to culinary school, apprenticed in Italy and with several professional chefs in England before opening his own restaurant. With these differences in mind, I wonder how their Web sites reflect their personalities and experiences. What differences might we detect in terms of agency, flexibility, site features, and usability?

Nigella.com and JamieOliver.net are recent arrivals on the Web, but they are superstars in print and television media and representatives of postmodern, embodied cooking practices. Oliver has published six cookbooks. He has been garnering media attention recently for his social activism. His series Jamie's School Dinners won a British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award in May 2006. The series tracked Oliver's Feed Me Better campaign to introduce healthier whole foods into school cafeterias. The Feed Me Better Website, a sister to JamieOliver.net, won a Webby People's Voice award for activism in 2006. The May 2006 issue of American Vogue ran a full-page article on the young Brit. Although a recent arrival to the Web, JamieOliver.net is already a rich site. The site has many recipes, a community forum, and a Jamie blog that I enjoy for his humor, his casual attitude toward cooking and eating, and his unabashed use of British slang and colloquialisms. This site is also regularly adding new features and functionality.

For years, a Google search for Nigella Lawson took me to the homepage for Channel 4, the London television station on which Nigella's television shows Nigella Bites and Forever Summer, appeared. This site had a few recipes from the shows, a link to a photo gallery, and

some news about the shows and book sales. Nigella.com came online in 2004. While the site is limited and I use it mainly for news on Lawson's new books and her US appearances, the site is growing and I visit it frequently just to review its growth. It includes a popular forum and a searchable recipe collection. Lawson's presence on the Web is not yet strong, but she has been a successful food writer for over twenty years. She has published five cookbooks, is a contributing food columnist for The New York Times, and was the food editor for British Vogue. She crossed over into television media in 2001 with Nigella Bites and Forever Summer. The Food Network has recently commissioned her for a series patterned after her latest book Feasts. Nigella Feasts premiered October 2006. Most importantly, Lawson's approach to cooking and eating celebrates postmodern feminist embodied ways of knowing. Lawson celebrates the spontaneity and sensuality of food, cooking, and eating. Her print cookbooks demonstrate features of feminist rhetoric and technologies of the self. I am interested in whether this epistemology so apparent in print translates to the World Wide Web.

Nigella.com and JamieOliver.net do not describe their audiences, but I guess that their audiences are upper-middle class women who enjoy cooking and entertaining. They also have time to browse Web sites and contribute to them. JamieOliver.net is a text heavy site, for example. Between Jamie's blog and the chatty forum, there is much to read and explore here. One doesn't visit JamieOliver.net just to find a pot roast recipe in a flash. The celebrity chefs frequently address the site users and claim to be regular visitors and participators in their own site content. They like food, they like the Web, and they share their own experiences on their sites. One gets the sense though that Jamie Oliver is a much more personal driving force behind his site. Nigella Lawson's presence on her site is confined to recipe contributions and a short personal introduction under News. Her site frequently refers to her in the third person whereas

Jamie Oliver is “I” on his site. The first person point of view and the personal involvement are consistent with the tone and style of Oliver’s and Lawson’s print cookbooks. The rhetoric reflects their epistemologies.

Reading cooking Web sites as ways of knowing opens these texts to richer rhetorical analyses than does reading them as history or as cultural artifact. While cookbooks or cooking Web sites are in many ways ethnographies and histories, recipes demonstrate more than just the history of a culture’s food tastes, its technologies, and its attitudes towards women and domesticity. Cooking texts reveal power dynamics and our changing relations to the power complexes that create and regulate knowledge. Who gets to speak? To whom? When and why? Whose knowledge is valued? What kind of knowledge is valued? The two styles of Web design, positivist and postmodern feminist, reflect two very different ways of knowing the world and in fact can be potent forces in shaping a user’s notions of gender, identity, and agency.

Applied Research

These questions of agency and identity apply not just to cooking Web sites or printed cookbooks, but to any how-to literature. Katherine Durack’s groundbreaking article “Authority and Audience-Centered Writing Strategies: Sexism in 19th-Century Sewing Machine Manuals” is an example of research that applies heuristics similar to my own. Like I have done here with cooking Web sites, Durack examined the ways sewing machine manuals rhetorically imagined their users and their ways of knowing. More recently, Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Srite determined that commercial Web documents systematically reveal cultural signifiers associated with masculinity and femininity and that these may distort the cultural values of the intended audience. Their study focused on Web sites targeted either to men (for example, US Army,

Men's Health, Playboy) or to women (Family Circle, MSN Women's Central, National Organization for Women). The data sets included sites from a variety of genres, not necessarily how-to documents, and although their study is one of the few to consider gendered rhetoric in cyberspace, there is much more research to be done on how gendered signifiers construct users of technical documents in particular. My methodology extends rhetorical analysis like Durack's and Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Srite's to technical document design, graphics, and usability as well as to content. Few other studies, however, have systematically examined a representative body of other technical genres.

Computer and Web interfaces are obvious candidates for epistemological analysis such as the one here. The computer interface is a site of colonialism that demands conformity to white, male, middle-class, professional values. The desktop metaphor assumes computer users are or will be white-collar workers. "The interface does not, for example, represent the world in terms of a kitchen counter top, a mechanic's workbench, or a fast-food restaurant" (Selfe and Selfe 486-487). The ubiquitous mouse pointer hand is white, for instance, and all menus and keystrokes are in American English. Although some software programs allow users to change their operating language, they must choose the option "Other" from an English only menu (Selfe and Selfe 488-489), but this change does not affect the language on the Web. This not so subtle othering illustrates that computers are cultural artifacts reflecting the dominant values of the Western world, values that are uncomfortably still racist, sexist, and colonialist according to Selfe and Selfe. It is worthwhile unpacking these values and developing interfaces that more accurately reflect the diversity of contemporary computer users. Postmodern feminist hypertext might help move computer and Web interfaces toward this goal.

Another application of the methodology suggested here is analysis of product manuals for household technology. Certainly others have done this exceedingly well: Robert Johnson and Donald Norman, for example. Nevertheless, much remains to be learned about product design and product manuals in terms of design, visual semiotics, and postmodern feminist rhetoric. We can ask the same questions of printed technical documentation as I've asked of hypertext documents. How do product manufacturers understand the relationship of users to technology? What epistemologies inform product manuals and in what ways do guiding epistemologies, and the designs that express them, construct users' identities, grant or limit their agency, and normalize gender or class roles? How open and negotiated are product manuals? What fundamental beliefs about knowledge creation and knowledge sharing are at work? Do manuals targeted to men and those to women exhibit different epistemologies as Zahedi, Van Pelt, and Srite found of Web sites?

Finally and perhaps most obviously, we might easily apply these questions to printed cookbooks. I would most like to read analyses of the traditional general cookbook genre, books like The Joy of Cooking, The Fannie Farmer Cookbook and The Boston Cooking School Cookbook, The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook, and The Better Homes and Gardens Cookbook. As basic cookbooks, these are the books to which generations of women have turned to in the absence of family or friends as teachers. Countless women, including me and all the women in my family, received one or another of these books as a wedding gift. The cookbook "bible" best represents the scientific cookery/home economics movement in America yet all are still in print in new editions, many even in bridal editions. How might the earlier printings have constructed women's identities and normalized class and gender roles? How much have the texts, designs, and images changed to reflect more egalitarian views of women and cooking?

Separate studies might explore only the designs or only the images, especially in a highly graphic text like The Betty Crocker Picture Cookbook. Alternatively, comparative analysis between similar recipes from different books could determine patterns common to the genre or to a specific time period.

The cookbook genre is such a rich and varied one that discussion of community cookbooks, regional cookbooks, ethnic cookbooks, or even special occasion cookbooks will yield a full image of how our society understands gender, class, technology, cooking, and eating. How are these books different from general cookbooks? How are they the same? What do they reveal about their writers? About their readers? The possibilities for applied research of this kind are far reaching. Cooking and eating are, after all, fundamental elements of culture. Cooking is a hallmark of what makes us human. Cookery texts as prescriptive literature, tell us much about what we value and what it means to be human. As our notions about humanity and our values change, so too do our cookbooks. From private recipe chapbooks to complex Web sites, we are constantly re-imagining the recipe collection. I hope that the descriptions and conclusions here can help readers unpack the assumptions and expectations that inform those texts and both reflect and subtly shape how we understand our identities.

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