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Tradition and novelty: food representations in Irish Women's magazines 1922–73

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ABSTRACT

Based on a qualitative content analysis of selected Irish women's magazines, this paper provides a brief overview of Irish food culture from 1922 to 1973. It illustrates how selected texts from women's magazines, mainly recipes, food columns, practical suggestions for cooking and housekeeping, as well as articles on food topics mirrored social, cultural, economic, and religious characteristics of a particular period. The paper discusses various culinary trends apparent in the content and style of cookery pages focusing on a paired category of novelty and tradition adapted from the quantitative research conducted by Alan Warde.

KEYWORDS

Culinary culture; cuisine; Irish women's magazines; tradition; novelty; economical cooking

Introduction

Over the last few decades food studies has become an established academic field examining the complex relationships among food, culture, and society from a wide array of disciplines in the humanities, social studies, and sciences. Much of the research carried out within the scope of food studies has been centered on traditional culinary sources such as cookbooks, menus, manuscripts, and archeological objects (Appadurai 1988; Bower 1997; Tobias 1998; Albala 2012; McWilliams 2013). Women's magazines have remained relatively underexamined for the culinary information that they may yield. While the body of research in relation to women's magazines in the Irish context has been limited (Conway 1997; Clear 2000; 2015; Strachan and Nally 2012; Tiernan 2012), there has been a considerable amount of academic work internationally, acknowledging periodicals aimed at a female readership as a valuable source of information regarding food, mainly in the presented recipes and advertisements (Mennell 1996; Warde 1998; Inness 2001; Parkin 2006). Given that academic consideration of modern Irish food culture remains sparse, periodicals aimed at a female readership are of particular importance in an Irish context. The marginalization of Irish food culture stems partly from the Great Irish Famine, and subsequent mass emigration and widespread poverty. Goldstein points out that Ireland has suffered twice for its famines and food shortages: "first due to very real deprivations; and second because these deprivations present an obstacle to the exploration of Irish food. All too often the story begins

and ends with potatoes or famine” (2014, xii). Analysis of Irish culinary heritage is still at an early developmental stage, although doctoral research in the field has been rising in recent years (Flavin 2011; Shanahan 2014; Deleuze 2015; Cashman 2016). Academic texts mainly concern the theme of food prior to the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 (B. Mahon 1991; Sexton 1998; Clarkson and Crawford 2001). Notwithstanding the work of Sexton (2005), Mac Con Iomaire (2009, 2011, 2015), E. Mahon (2016) and despite three important publications—*Tickling the Palate: Gastronomy in Irish Literature and Culture* (Mac Con Iomaire and Maher 2014), *Food and Drink in Ireland* (FitzPatrick and Kelly 2016), and *The Food Issue of the Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* (Richman Kenneally and Mac Con Iomaire 2018)—there are gaps in the literature on research concerning Irish culinary culture after the famine. This paper seeks to provide a brief overview of Irish food culture from 1922 to 1973 as represented in Irish women’s magazines. The selected time-frame ranges from the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 to the accession of Ireland into the European Union in 1973. The research is based on a qualitative analysis and includes selected texts from women’s magazines, mainly recipes, food columns, practical suggestions for cooking and house-keeping, as well as articles on food topics. Textual analysis of this material will allow us not only to contribute to the work on Irish culinary heritage of the twentieth century but also, in a broader socio-cultural context, to illustrate how culinary issues presented in Irish women’s magazines mirrored social, cultural, economic, and religious characteristics of a particular period.

Women’s magazines in Ireland: research

The authors of this paper embrace the definition provided by Cynthia White who asserts that “any periodical intended primarily for female use” can be classified as a women’s magazine (1970, 18). Due to the abundance of the material and the nature of this paper focusing on Irish culinary culture, the authors choose to analyze mainly those Irish magazines published in the period of interest that have devoted considerable space to culinary issues and enjoyed a measure of longevity. The sources were consulted in the National Library of Ireland in Dublin, with digitized versions of one periodical assessed using the ARROW.ie repository. The magazines identified for the purpose of this paper include *Model Housekeeping: The Magazine of Practical Ideas*, (previously known as *Everyday Housekeeping* from 1927 to 1928, renamed in September 1962 as *Woman’s View and Model Housekeeping*) published monthly from 1927 to 1966; *The Irish Housewife*, published annually from 1946 to 1967; and *Woman’s Life* published from 1936 to 1959, firstly weekly, then fortnightly. Other Irish women’s magazines consulted during this research include *Woman’s Mirror*, in circulation from 1932 to 1956; *The Modern Girl and Ladies Home Journal*, which appeared from March to November 1935; and *Woman’s Way*, which began in 1963 and has been continuously published since then. Furthermore, we also included the only Irish culinary magazine of the period, namely *Good Cooking* (January 1958), re-titled in July 1958 as *Good Food and Better Cooking*, published monthly for eleven issues.¹ Clear asserts that “reliable circulation figures for Irish magazines are impossible to determine before the 1980s, though from the magazines themselves and from other sources, a rough picture of the geographical distribution of individual magazines can be built up” (2015, 4). Although some of the magazines themselves provided circulation figures (Clear 2015, 137), women would have handed on or

exchanged some magazines, naturally increasing the readership. Apart from *Good Cooking* aimed at a specific type of readers (at the beginning food enthusiasts who had attended cookery classes with the editor and publisher Maura O'Casey in the Royal Hibernian Hotel and elsewhere), the above-mentioned magazines were targeted at girls and women of all ages, from various social backgrounds (they would have been primarily in the possession of the middle to upper social classes), mainly from urban areas, including small towns. The content of culinary columns and articles illustrates that mainly town dwellers, both inexperienced and more skillful housewives, would have benefited from the presented material. Occasional articles, however, attempted to deal with the issues of country women (*Woman's Life*, July 4, 1936, 22; *The Irish Housewife*, 1946, 27–28). It is quite unlikely that country women would have been able to afford those magazines (Clear 2015, 2). Although the contributions of recipes imply the interest of the readers in culinary matters, they do not prove that those recipes were in common use, since as Clear notes “this media is ‘read’ as primarily escapist and recreational in function, rather than advisory” (2000, 213).

Methodological approach

Although the culinary information presented in women's magazines should not be treated as concrete proof of what people ate at a given period of time, Mennell argues that “it is easier to feel more confident about the connection between what appears in the cookery columns and what actually happened in the domestic kitchen than was the case with the cookery books,” adding that “there is a certain amount of evidence from both England and France about the use made of cookery column recipes” (1996, 233). Since there is a lack of evidence in regard to Irish use of culinary recipes from the magazines in the period of interest, it needs to be emphasized that this research does not aim to treat the material as the factual reflection of consumption patterns. Nevertheless, the images, ideas, and the selection of food presented in those magazines together with the focus on cultural, social, political, religious, and economic influences that were in operation during the time period in question provide a valuable perspective on the culinary aspects of the everyday life of the Irish.² In order to gain an insight into the dietary patterns and shifts presented in women's magazines, the authors of this paper, although conducting qualitative research, adapt Warde's (1998) analytical methodology. Warde, who carried out a systematic analysis of recipes published in British women's magazines in two twelve-month periods 1967–68 and 1991–92, analyzes his sources according to four paired categories: novelty and tradition, health and indulgence, economy and extravagance, convenience and care. The themes he identifies as worthy of investigation include:

... the persistence of tradition; the spread of ethnic cuisines; the attraction of novel foods; the preservation of health; the spread of vegetarianism; the origins of pleasure derived from food; the constraints of time on food preparation; the symbolic significance of home cookery; the reproduction of domestic cooking skills; the significance of cost; the sensual and utilitarian values of foods; the structure of meals; the impact of household composition on food behaviour; the presentation and style of dishes; and the impact of the seasons. (1998, 45)

The authors of this article have used the first major paired category, tradition and novelty, and the above-mentioned themes as key thematic concepts during the analysis of the material. The list has been amended as new ideas relating to tradition and novelty have been derived from the analysis of recipes, culinary columns, and food articles. The codes constructed under the category of tradition included, but were not limited to home cookery, seasonality, domestic skills, gender roles, and religion, whereas such codes as foreign cuisines, chefs' contributions to culinary columns, technological inventions, and the sensual value of food were used in order to inspect the concept of novelty. Furthermore, the authors have also identified themes likely to be important in understanding of both the persistence of tradition and the attraction of novel foods, including the constraints of time on food preparation and the significance of cost.

Historical and social background

The latter part of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century saw the rise of cultural nationalism in Ireland (O'Mahony and Delanty 2001). The first twenty-five years of independence have been characterized by many historians as the era of economic, social, and cultural stagnation (Brown 1985; Ferriter 2005; Keogh and McCarthy 2005). Under the strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church, the Irish population faced considerable levels of unemployment, low pay, and emigration (Brown 1985, 175). The introduction of certain legislation during the decades following the establishment of the Irish Free State, including the 1927 Juries Bill, the 1934 Criminal Amendment Act, and the 1936 Conditions of Employment Act, determined women's role in society for the next 40 years (Mohr 2006, 20–59; Owens 2005, 252–279). The family in Ireland of those years was patriarchal with clearly defined roles (Beale 1986, 7). The association of women with the domestic sphere and the role of the mother and housewife were reflected in the Constitution of (Bunreacht na hÉireann, 1937).³ During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s women were predominantly channeled into domestic work, which was regarded as ideologically congruent with their roles as wives and mothers (Clarke 2016, 85–86). Although, as Owens rightly observes, the number of women working as servants had been decreasing since the 1880s, until the Second World War domestic service constituted an important source of employment among Irish women (2005, 225). It needs to be emphasized that, as Clear points out, “throughout this period, nobody—neither feminists, anti-feminists or neutrals—dissented from the view that girls needed to be trained in housework” (2000, 37).

Although Ireland remained neutral during the Second World War, its economy was restricted due to shortages of commodities such as bread, tea, butter, clothes, footwear, cooking, and heating appliances (Evans 2014, 80). As a result, the Irish government was forced to introduce a full rationing system in 1942 (Evans 2014, 44–68). The 1940s and 1950s continued to be marked by emigration as well as lack of political and economic stability. It was not until the 1960s that the country started to experience an economic revival (Brown 1985, 241–266).⁴ Free trade replaced the policy of self-sufficiency and brought swift economic growth. In the 1960s and 1970s Ireland witnessed a rapid modernization, improvement of living standards, and a decline in emigration (Tobin 1984, 10). The industrial developments and societal changes that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s started to open up new possibilities for Irish women, but, as Beale emphasizes, “positive changes in women's position in society did not come easily”

(1986, 10). Women had to fight for equal rights for a further decade before they were granted a greater degree of gender equality. Some major changes, linked with Ireland's joining the European Union, included the removal of the marriage bar in 1973, legislation on equal pay in 1974, and employment equality in 1977 (Beale 1986, 10). Moreover, in both the urban and rural areas, technological changes such as the supply of electricity and running water and the availability of electrical devices, namely cookers, refrigerators, freezers, and washing machines, significantly transformed women's experience with domestic chores (Richman-Kenneally 2015).

Prior to the Second World War

The content of Irish women's magazines published in the years 1922–73 was influenced greatly by the economic conditions and the dominant political ideologies at work during that time. The recipes and culinary guidelines, especially of the first quarter century of Irish independence, reflected the unfavorable Irish economy. Above all, their aim was to provide housewives with some advice on how to balance limited resources with increasing prices. Due to an Anglo-Irish trade war and agricultural failures many ingredients were scarce and food supplies were largely determined by seasonality (Adelman 2017, 238–239). Thus, the primary concern with the economics of cooking is evident in various culinary columns. Housewives were encouraged to deal with shortages by making the most out of seasonal produce, minimizing waste by using leftovers, and finding alternative foodstuffs when they could not purchase certain ingredients.

The editions of *Everyday Housekeeping* from the period prior to the Second World War are of particular interest to this research as many of its articles are devoted to culinary issues. Recurrent and explicit concern with making sure that dishes were cheap to prepare characterizes many issues of this magazine. For example, in May 1928, contributor Daisy Granard provides an exemplary menu of “Lentil Soup. Mutton Cutlets and Green Peas. Mashed Potatoes. Junket and Whipped Cream” (*Everyday Housekeeping*, 47). Although the recipes are based on very simple and affordable ingredients, the author highlights that they are lacking in neither flavor nor nutritional value: “These menus provide the economical housewife with welcome suggestions for tasty, wholesome meals. The cost in each case will work out very low, yet each meal will prove temptingly appetizing and fully satisfying” (*Everyday Housekeeping*, May 1928, 47). Several months later, in the September issue, August Renton asserts in her “Dainty Dishes from Odds and Ends” that “every bit can be transformed into a tempting dish” (*Everyday Housekeeping*, 206). Using various leftovers from the previous day, she provides four recipes, a Fish Mould, Ham Breakfast Loaf, Fruit Custard Meringue, and Chicken Soufflé respectively (*Everyday Housekeeping*, September 1928, 206, 239). The author relies on very basic ingredients that would have been easily found in the larders of most middling housewives. In the same magazine, the feature entitled “Never Waste Anything Corner” by Susan Talbot offered some advice and recipes to housewives that would help minimize waste. For instance, in the July 1929 issue, it is emphasized that “great care should be taken that nothing, which might, by proper management, be turned to good account, is thrown away or suffered to be wasted in the kitchen” (*Model Housekeeping*, 279). It was a housewife's duty to acquire skills that

would allow her to run an efficient household adhering to the philosophy “Waste not, Want not.”

Similarly, a number of frugal recipes turn up repeatedly in other women’s magazines of the period. For example, in *Woman’s Life* Martha Gray provides some practical suggestions concerning the use of leftovers, believing that “just a little care and your ‘re-made’ dishes will be welcome successes instead of despised ‘left-overs’” (September 26, 1936, 18–19). The recipes featuring in this column include, for example, Ham Croquettes, Egg and Ham Pie, Meat in Butter, or Scalloped Lamb. By delivering tempting recipes, the author demonstrates that even odds and ends can be transformed into a tasty dish by an efficient and skilled woman of the house. To remedy the deficiency of various products, some of the culinary issues also aimed to assist women in finding alternative ingredients. One of the most interesting and surprising recipes is provided in the issue of *Woman’s Life* on August 8, 1936, where Martha Gray suggests “an eggless, milkless, butterless cake,” which she believes “tastes as good as the dearest fruit cake” (18–19). This inexpensive cake would have been an ideal solution to the women who had no dairy products in their larders. Parallel to the frugal recipes represented in women’s magazines, household advice and cookery books including the Department of Agriculture’s *Cookery Notes* (1925, reprinted several times) and Redington’s *Economic Cookery* (first published in 1905, reissued in 1927) were pre-occupied with the advice on how to efficiently use the limited resources.

Although most of the recipes of the period called for simple and easily obtainable ingredients, exceptions can be found. A number of sophisticated recipes as well as references to dishes of foreign origin were presented in various culinary columns. For example, in the issue from June 6, 1935 of *The Modern Girl and Ladies Irish Home Journal*, an author signed as A.H. provides recipes for “five varied and easily-prepared salads,” namely Boxty Salad, an American Salad, a Russian Salad, a Meat Salad, and a Lobster Salad (63). A typically Irish potato dish, Boxty (although not usually served as salad), features alongside some other salads from different parts of the world (Mac Con Iomaire and Óg Gallagher 2009). Efforts were made to improve the range of dishes served and cooking techniques used. The French style of cooking was frequently called upon as the model to be copied: “For a pleasant change on fish days try these favourite recipes of the French Housewife” (*Model Housekeeping*, March 1929, 134). The author provides a few French recipes based on different kinds of fish, including salmon or plaice. Similarly, in his analysis of the issues from *Good Housekeeping* of the same period, Mennell notices that although the English way of cooking was not visibly influenced by French cookery at that time, “the French housewife was constantly being held up as a paragon” (1996, 247). Housewives were strongly encouraged to master the art of cooking, which was especially apparent during the period following the establishment of the Irish Free State, mirroring the national ideal of a woman on whom the welfare of the family depended. The need for the improvement of housekeeping conditions and cooking skills was pointed out by Katharine Tynan, an Irish poet, who lamented that “Irish girls have received far less training in the domestic arts than the women of most civilized countries” and urged some Irish women to learn housecraft and others to start teaching it (1924, 170–174). Even prior to the establishment of the Irish Free State steps had been taken to improve the living conditions of women, especially in

rural areas, by providing essential information concerning hygiene and nutrition (Clear 2000, 28), and by offering access to cooking knowledge through Domestic Science, taught at the level of primary and post-primary education (Clarke 2016). Although taking care of the family would not have been an easy task during those years, a sense of excitement and enthusiasm displayed toward cooking can be observed when one looks more closely at the vocabulary used to describe some dishes, which are referred to, by various authors, as “delicious,” “fascinating,” “appetizing,” “delightful” or “palatable,” to mention only a few. Not only were the meals supposed to be affordable, nutritious, and tasty but they were also expected to have esthetic appeal. Moreover, a housewife was obliged to provide a hospitable service since “Dainty Service and an inviting table atmosphere adds as much to the meal as good cooking itself” (*Model Housekeeping*, December 1928, 45). Given the harsh living conditions of the majority of Irish women throughout this period, cooking would have been often regarded as a burdensome task and some of the content of the culinary columns would have rather mirrored the reality of those from the upper echelons of society.

The emergency

Although not directly involved in the Second World War, at the time known in Ireland as the Emergency (1939–46), the emphasis on delivering frugal yet nutritional meals was even more apparent. The recipes featuring in magazines during this period called for seasonal produce more frequently than those of the previous years. The magazine *Model Housekeeping* published a recurring feature, “Housekeeping for,” conducted in the early 1940s by J. N. Mullally, “Diplomee of the National Training College of Domestic Subjects, London.” Many recipes called for vegetable stews, soups, and various fruit-based desserts. Since seasonal fruits and vegetables were plentiful during the summer, housewives were encouraged to preserve any available produce for the winter:

Make this month your harvest month. The garden and the hedgerows are full of fruit and vegetables ready for gardening and storing for later use. As we get into the winter we will become more and more conscious of the acute scarcity of foods and the impossibility of varying our menus if we have not taken the precaution to store up the bountiful crops which nature has given us. (*Model Housekeeping*, September 1941, 592)

The author encourages every housewife to use all foods that are easily obtainable and to preserve them using various methods and techniques including bottling, drying, or salting so that her family could enjoy nutritious food even during winter. In the same cookery column from June 1942, Mullally again calls for the need to preserve available resources, especially fruit:

During these times of scarcity it is very important that there should be no waste of garden produce: all available surplus should be preserved either by Jam making, bottling, drying, etc. so that there will be an ample supply when the scarce months of winter come again. (*Model Housekeeping*, 346)

Making jam, however, posed some problems as sugar would have been in short supply at that time. The author, aware of this fact, includes “a few recipes containing less sugar” (*Model Housekeeping*, June 1942, 346).⁵

What constituted the prevailing conception of economical cooking based on seasonal ingredients can be inferred from any of the week's menus provided by Mullally. However, a closer look at some of the menus also gives us an insight into the culinary traditions that were cultivated during those years. Below, a Friday menu from the feature "Housekeeping for June" in 1941:

Friday: Breakfast—Fruit Juice/Kippers/Scrambled, Boiled and Poached Eggs/Toast and Marmalade/Tea and Coffee, Dinner—Vegetable Soup/Fried Fish/Colcannon/Tapioca and Rhubarb/Coffee, Tea—Sardine Sandwiches/Afternoon Tea Cakes/Bread and Butter/Preserves/Tea, Supper—Hot Milk or Cocoa/Biscuits. (445)

In this feature the author includes fruit and vegetables in every menu: for example, rhubarb makes its appearance in many desserts, and either salad or a seasonal vegetable accompanies every dinner. Second, the everyday menu features various potato dishes. Despite the link with the Famine, Cowan and Sexton assert that "the potato is still of paramount importance in the diet of the Irish and in many households the potato is served daily with main meals" (1997, 77). In the above menu Mullally refers to the traditional Irish potato dish, Colcannon (a well-known dish of mashed potatoes with kale or cabbage). In the everyday dinner menu, the author suggests potatoes prepared in different ways: for instance, steamed potatoes on Mondays, mashed potatoes on Tuesdays and Wednesday, baked potatoes on Thursday, Colcannon on Friday, and potato loaf on Saturday, finishing with roast potatoes cooked on Sunday (Cowan and Sexton 1997, 77). Finally, a Friday menu is worthy of closer analysis due to the Roman Catholic tradition of fasting on that day where, typically, meat is not eaten but replaced by fish dishes. The readers are introduced to kippers, which are lightly salted and smoked herring. Cowan and Sexton explain that herring, which was present in the Irish diet from medieval times, enjoyed popularity among the Irish for two reasons: first because it could easily be preserved and second because Catholics were bound to abstain from meat at certain times during the year (1997, 46). Mac Con Iomaire emphasizes that the custom of refraining from meat on various fast days and during Lent significantly influenced the increase of fish consumption in Ireland (2006, 220). Various recipes provided for Lent illustrate adherence to traditional religious rules. The feature entitled "Our Cookery Institute" conducted by the Director of Cookery and Housecraft from *Model Housekeeping* from April 1943 provides instructions for preparing fish during Lent, followed by two recipes for Baked Stuffed Haddock and Steamed or Boiled Mackerels. The author highlights that: "During the Lenten season fish figures more prominently on our daily menu than at any other time in the year. Although the restrictions on meat eating at present are less rigid than formerly, there are many who will observe the traditional fast of two days a week" (251). In the past, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday were fasting days in Ireland (Carew 1835, 226). Although fish was consumed mainly on the fast days, the author of the above feature stresses that it should not be treated as inferior to meat and not only consumed on Lenten days (*Model Housekeeping*, April 1943, 251).

Although with Catholicism came not only austere days of religious fasting but also numerous occasions for feasting, due to harsh economic conditions during the Emergency, delivering the desired festive dish was not a simple endeavor. Housewives had to deal with the scarcity of many products, especially dairy products, sugar, and

flour. Mullally, however, reassures her readers that despite all the difficulties of present times, “cooking and planning well ahead” will help every housewife to deliver the Christmas dinner that will satisfy the needs of the family and guests during the festive season (*Model Housekeeping*, December 1944, 107). Below are the two exemplary Christmas dinner menus suggested during the Emergency:

Menu No. 1: Gravy Soup. Escallops of Cod. Roast Turkey. Cranberry Jelly. Potatoes. Celery. Christmas Pudding. Mince Pies. Milanaise Souffle. Cheese Aigrettes. Dessert: Nuts. (*Woman's Life*, November 30, 1940, 35)

Menu No. 2: Hare Soup. Roast Turkey. Force meat Stuffing. Cranberry Sauce. Boiled Ham or Tongue. Brussels Sprouts. Braised Celery. Plum Pudding. Foamy Brandy Sauce. Mince Pies. Rich Apple Cake. Christmas Cake. Coffee. (*Model Housekeeping*, December 1944, 107)

Despite some variations, both menus include soup for a starter, roast turkey with various sauces and vegetables for a main course, and Christmas pudding and mince pies for dessert. As far as poultry is concerned, Sexton highlights that whereas geese and hens “have historically been the firm favourites since at least the early medieval period,” turkeys were introduced in Ireland in the wake of the Tudor and Stuart settlements but first appeared only in the diet of the wealthy aristocratic classes (1998, 52–53). Although goose and chicken feature on many Christmas menus, turkeys make their occurrence more frequently. Also Christmas pudding, introduced in each of the above menus, is worthy of closer analysis. Christmas pudding, also known as plum pudding, an integral part of the typical Irish festive meal, was probably introduced in Ireland in the sixteenth or seventeenth century (Cowan and Sexton 1997, 144–145). The plum pudding from the above menu from *Model Housekeeping* consists of breadcrumbs, suet, flour, brown sugar, spice, nutmeg, baking powder, currants, raisins, peel, treacle or Parisian essence, eggs, whiskey or brandy (109). Whereas the provided recipe is quite rich, the following year in the same magazine in the feature entitled “Our Cookery Institute” the Director of Cookery and Housecraft, having in mind the wartime difficulties, provides recipes with meaningful names for Wartime Christmas Pudding, War Time Mince Meat, Canadian Plum Pudding, and other Christmas pudding recipes submitted by readers in the competition, which “ranged from rich pre-war pudding to the most economical war-time mixture” (*Model Housekeeping*, December 1941, 79). The variety of recipes for Christmas pudding caters for both those well-off and those less fortunate. Although both the traditional (Roast Turkey, Christmas Pudding, Mince Pie) and the modern (Milanaise Souffle, Cheese Aigrettes) feature in the second provided menu, during the Emergency authors of festive culinary columns mainly called for the dishes traditionally associated with Christmas; not much space was provided to novelty over that period.

Despite the severe economic conditions during the Second World War, the dishes presented in culinary columns of Irish women’s magazines of the time were varied and interesting. Although the menus were compiled with a view to saving money, they were well balanced and based on a wide selection of fresh, nutrient-rich ingredients, including various kinds of meat, seafood, seasonal fruits, and vegetables. Most of the dishes were traditional. Occasionally, however, culinary columns and articles featured more sophisticated novel dishes, like for example, Lobster Patties (*Model Housekeeping*, November 1939, 43), Shrimp Salad (*Woman's Mirror*, July 1945, 24) or Chinese Cake (*Woman's Life*, February 17, 1940, 14). In terms of providing access to cooking knowledge, there was no shortage of cookery books printed in this period (*Blue Bird Cookery Book for Working*

Women 1939; The Homecraft Book 1944; All in the Cooking 1946; Kind Cooking 1946). Clear points out that those books were used in secondary schools and schools of domestic science offering realistic cookery and household advice, firmly placed within the context of the time (2000, 68–80). However, similarly to the case of the magazines, not all women had access to those publications, mainly because of the price (Kiely 2014, 105).

Trends in post-Emergency Ireland

The difficulties that women had to face did not dissolve with the end of the war and continued until the late 1950s (Kiely 2014). Food shortages and rationing continued in post-Emergency Ireland, forcing women to deal not only with limited ingredients but also with rising prices of available products:

Walk down any street in any town, you will see them, women carrying baskets, bulging string or leather bags.... Whether they housekeep in one room, or own a mansion, their fundamental interests are centered on their homes, and the health and happiness of their families. These women are all feeling the pinch, they are all trying alike to adapt their means to meet the ever increasing cost of living. (*The Irish Housewife*, 1948, 9)

As the author Hilda Tweedy, one of the founder members of the Irish Housewives Association (IHA), emphasizes, women had to face great difficulties in order to be able to run an efficient household. Tweedy is conscious of the increasing prices of products and realizes that it is a hard task to maintain “a decent standard of living” (*The Irish Housewife*, 1948, 9). Thus, she explains that the IHA supports women in bringing these serious matters to the Government’s attention.⁶ In addition to the articles on political matters, the magazine provided recipes for cheap dishes. Due to the continued scarcity of products, various recipes called for simple ingredients, seasonal produce, and leftovers. In 1951 *The Irish Housewife* started to publish a feature called “Homecraft,” which included a wide range of recipe pages that could have been neatly ripped or cut out for later use. In the issue from 1951, eleven pages from the “Homecraft” section were devoted to recipes and culinary advice. The recipes were divided into sections: the soup category included instructions for making French Onion Soup and Everyday Soup; the fish section: Creamed Salmon and Fish Chowder; meat: Nutritious Meat Course for Eight People and Meat Roll; savoury: Cheese Rings, Easy-Make Omelette; and the dessert section contained a great number of recipes for Apple Snow, Lemon Pudding, Fudge Batter Pudding, Banana Pudding, Party Cake, Devil’s Food Cake, Honey Cookies, and Cherry Cake. There are some easy but useful cooking tips provided, such as thickening soup by shredding potatoes, which is “superior in flavour to flour,” or preventing an unpleasant smell by placing “a hard crust in the water” while boiling cauliflower or cabbage (“Cooking Hints” *Irish Housewife*, 1951). Cookery columns and articles also glorified some Irish produce and traditional Irish dishes:

Women in Ireland often do not realise until they go abroad how lucky they are to live in a country where nature and the climate ensure that food is succulent, meat and poultry (if you can afford them!) juicy and tender, milk and butter (ditto!) good and plentiful, at least in the country districts and in normal times. (*The Irish Housewife*, 1949, 52)

The author asserts that the island can pride itself on the abundance of ingredients that nature can offer. The Irish housewife was exposed to plentiful dairy products, abundant fruit and vegetables, as well as to meat of the highest quality—if only the budget were not an obstacle

and the economy were less restricted. Traditional dishes are presented in numerous features entitled “With Kitty in the Kitchen” of *Woman’s Mirror*. The menu from January 1948 included, for example, Irish Stew and Curried Mutton (25–26) whereas in the same year in March recipes for Baked Sheep’s Heart, Roast Neck of Mutton, and Tripe and Onions were proposed (27–28). Irish stew, one of the most famous traditional Irish dishes, as Sexton asserts, “was recognized as a national dish as early as the eighteenth century” (1998, 39). Thus, the dish makes its occurrence on countless occasions. Although traditionally this peasant dish was based on neck mutton pieces, potato, and onion, variations of the dish allow for the use of lamb or beef along with carrots or turnips (Cowan and Sexton 1997, 35–36).

As far as culinary issues are concerned, the analysis of numerous issues of women’s magazines from the first decade of the post-Emergency period reveals very little content variation in comparison with the previous decades. Although we encounter a number of modern specialties of foreign origin (*The Irish Housewife*, 1948, 93–94), a high proportion of dishes revolve around traditional recipes. It was not until the mid-1950s that some gradual yet substantial changes took place in the content and style of cookery pages of Irish women’s periodicals. Although the need for budget cooking due to unsteady prices was still present, a more adventurous culinary picture emerges from various recipes, culinary columns, and articles of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1969, Audrey O’Farrell gives a very interesting piece of advice to her female readers in the feature “Budget Kitchen”: “Don’t economise; cook up to a standard, not down to a price; set aside a certain sum for food each week and make sure that you don’t underspend” (*Woman’s Way*, March 28, 1969, 38). Hence, this kind of suggestion would have seemed incongruous in the previous decades, but now a more vivid, bright, and humorous kind of writing was quite common. Brian O’Nolan, an Irish novelist, playwright and satirist, writes in the article “Pots and Pains,” from *The Irish Housewife* under the pseudonym of Myles na Gopaleen:

Married life and cookery are almost undistinguishable. If the heart be the seat of love, the stomach next door is its spare room. A husband may patiently endure tantrums, temper, a dirty and damp bed. But cold, wretchedly cooked food? The fat will be in the fire then, and no cookery transaction will be in question! (1963–64, 71)

In this very interesting article with its witty verbal structure, the author touches upon an issue of cooking on open fire in a time of technological boom of new gas and electric cookers (*The Irish Housewife*, 1963–64, 70). Although he acknowledges the benefits of those technological inventions as “cleanliness,” “speed,” and “labour saving,” with a dose of nostalgia, he looks back at the times when traditional cooking techniques were used: “In older days roasting was done on the spit over a live fire preferably mainly of wood, while roasting was also done, with baking in hot ashes. Grilling meat on a gas or electric cooker is impossible ...” (*The Irish Housewife*, 1963–64, 70–71). Not only were the traditional ways of cooking appreciated in the culinary columns, but also the columns continued to feature a number of very old recipes. In *Woman’s Way* culinary matters were mainly in the hands of Jimmy Flahive, the first Irish television chef, and Honor Moore, a noted Irish food writer.⁷ A high proportion of their recipes focused on traditional Irish dishes; for example, offal recipes suggested by Flahive were: Stuffed Pig’s Feet, Brawn, Pig’s Kidneys or Pig’s Cheek (October 31, 1963, 45). In many countries mainstream culinary culture is dominated by a long association between

offal and the poor since the fifth quarter is regarded as inferior to carcass meat (Strong 2006). Also in Ireland, various offal dishes, including pig's feet, also known as crubeens or pig's trotters, brawn, drisheen, or skirts and kidneys, were mainly regarded as popular foods among the poorer part of Irish society (Cowan and Sexton 1997, 10–23). The pig, however, on whose offal those dishes are based, has been regarded as one of the most traditional of Irish foods and an important component of the Irish diet since prehistoric times (Mac Con Iomaire 2003). Therefore, nothing was wasted not only for economic reasons, but also due to the prominence that this kind of meat enjoyed in Ireland. In the same issue, Flahive presents a few traditional recipes for “Hallow E'en party,” including Barm Brack, Tea Brack, Boxy, Boxy Bread, Boxy Pancakes, and Boxy Dumplings (*Woman's Way*, October 31, 1963, 8). Traditionally, both barm brack and boxy were prepared during Halloween, occasionally the former also on New Year's Eve and the latter on New Year's Day. Cowan and Sexton highlight that the references to those dishes featured repeatedly in various folklore records (1997, 117–118, 140–143).

Alongside recipes for hearty traditional Irish dishes the authors of culinary columns suggested more modern fancy dishes. The traditional and the modern dishes were apparent in the cookery column from *Woman's Way* entitled “Check Pot,” where readers asked questions concerning old recipes such as related to baking barm brack or cooking heart, and regarding some novelties, such as croutons (January 3, 1969, 33), bisque, and French soup (January 31, 1969, 44). Greater prominence was given to culinary ideas from abroad. Whereas in previous decades, as has been already illustrated, we would come across many French recipes, the rise of ethnic restaurants in the 1950s and 1960s influenced the spread of a wide array of foreign dishes. Furthermore, Sexton rightly observes that “increased foreign travel during the 1950s and 1960s together with the liberating effects of television from the 1960s onwards encouraged dietary experimentation” (2005, 239), which was reflected in the culinary content of women's magazines. For example, *The Irish Housewife* in its “Homecraft Section” of cut-out recipes presents such dishes as Spaghetti with Sauce Bolognese (1956), Curry Chicken (from Malay) or Curried Veal (from India) (1963–64); *Woman's View and Model Housekeeping* provides instruction for preparing such unfamiliar dishes as Caribbean Kebabs and Barbados Bananas (January, 1964, 123), whereas in *Woman's Way* Honor Moore suggests a recipe for Chili Corn Quaso (*sic*) that is, as the author explains, “a cooled-down version of the red-hot Mexican original” (March 7, 1969, 67). The recipes called for exotic spices, such as curry and chili powder, and imported fruits, including coconut, mango, and avocado, made a frequent appearance. Readers were introduced to a wider range of culinary possibilities and some culinary articles, like that written by Audrey O'Farrell who encouraged women to be more adventurous: “The carton of milk and the foil-wrapped section of cheese you automatically reach for in the shop when you rush in to get something for your tea will nourish you adequately—but why not take home a few frozen scampi instead?” (*Woman's Way*, March 28, 1969, 38). Noticeably greater amounts of space were devoted to the advertising of domestic appliances, which promised to modernize the housewives' lives and ease their household chores (*Woman's Way*, September 14, 1963, 25, 28). Furthermore, in the culinary pages more space was devoted to the illustrations of the presented dishes, notably in *Model Housekeeping* and *Woman's Way*. Although the photographs were black and white, they helped to highlight the visual side of cookery.

In comparison with Ireland, the noticeable changes in English cookery took place a bit later (Mennell 1996, 258).

The vigorous interest in cookery in the 1950s in Ireland is mirrored by the publication of *Good Cooking*, Ireland's first monthly food magazine, in January 1958.⁸ The first few issues of the magazine were distributed by controlled circulation, which was a very novel method at that time, particularly in Ireland. Although the magazine ran for only eleven issues, it provides detailed information about elaborate dishes that followed culinary trends of famous Irish restaurants of that period. The magazine features a wide range of recipes provided by professional chefs working in various Irish restaurants including Jimmy Flahive (Dublin Airport Restaurant), Gerry Ferns (Red Bank Restaurant), and Maurice O'Looney (Shelbourne Hotel). Alongside the European recipes, one can come across numerous suggestions for oriental and exotic dishes. Mahmoud Butt, the proprietor of the Golden Orient restaurant, provides a recipe for Lamb and Vegetable Curry in the March 1958 edition (21). In the same issue we are exposed to other Indian dishes including Malay Curry, Madras Curry, Chicken or Mutton Dopiaza Curry, Tomato Chutney—Daily Chutney and Puppodums (20). The Christmas 1958 issue of *Good Food and Better Cooking* gives an account of a Chinese meal consumed during the forty-ninth meeting of the Wine and Food Society held in Cathay Restaurant at 19 Kildare Street, Dublin. Overall, from the 1950s onwards, there was a more cosmopolitan trend in Irish women's magazines and the food suggested in the culinary columns was more diverse and adventurous than before. The thriving interest in culinary issues is further illustrated by the growing number of cookbooks published (Lavery's *Full and Plenty* (1960); Sheridan's *Monica's Kitchen* (1963); Fitzgibbon's *A Taste of Ireland* (1970); Blake's *The Irish Cookbook* (1971); to mention only a few) and specialized food-related training offered during that period (Mac Con Iomaire 2009, 256–262).

Conclusions

This paper has explored culinary trends as represented in the selected Irish women's magazines in the period ranging from 1922 to 1973. Even a cursory reading of those periodicals suggests that food played a significant role in Irish society and it was much more than just a commodity produced in order to satisfy basic physiological needs. Considerable space in the researched magazines was devoted to culinary content, which to a great extent mirrored the economic and social situation of a given period. The period ranging from 1922 to the mid-1950s can be characterized by an overall emphasis on budget cooking, reflecting the unfavorable economic conditions in Ireland. Women were encouraged to learn to cook, to improvise in their cooking, and to be innovative in the face of economic shortages. With some exceptions, recipes were based on rather simple and cheap ingredients, and in large measure complicated cooking techniques were avoided. From the mid-1950s however, due to swift economic growth (increased availability of kitchen equipment, the variety and lower costs of foods, the wider availability of restaurants) and international tourism, some significant changes can be observed, namely the emphasis on the variety and sophistication of recipes, a more prominent focus on nutritional and esthetic values of prepared dishes, the growing popularity of novel dishes of foreign origin, and cooking suggestions from professional

chefs. Nevertheless, the preoccupation with novelty did not replace tradition, which still featured regularly in the form of well-known Irish specialties and dishes closely related to religious customs and rules. Although the importance of women's magazines as a valuable source providing some specific information about the food products, cooking techniques, table settings, manners, cooking equipment, and technological innovations cannot be underestimated, it needs to be highlighted that Albala's assertion concerning cookbooks can suitably be applied with regard to women's magazines:

Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned is that cookbooks are rarely if ever accurate descriptions of what people actually ate at any given time and place. They are usually prescriptive literature, and thus reflect peoples' aspirations, or even merely the authors' expectations of what readers might like to know rather than just an actual culinary practice.... (2012, 229)

Much of the culinary content of women's magazines would have mirrored the lifestyles of affluent city dwellers and conveyed only the cooking aspirations of the less prosperous. For example, articles and advertisements propagandizing labor-saving domestic devices, such as electric cookers or refrigerators, as early as in the late 1920s are clear examples of the way the authors took certain facilities for granted (*Model Housekeeping*, September 1928, 467; June 1930, 361; and August 1930, 467). Although Irish cities and some towns had been electrified since the 1920s, the rural electrification of Ireland started in 1946 and still in the 1960s there were households in the countryside with no electricity or piped water supply (Shiel 2005). Nevertheless, as Albala adds in relation to cookbooks: "This makes them no less valuable as historical documents though" (2012, 229). Hence, culinary information included in women's magazines provides a valuable insight into social, cultural, economic, or even religious characteristics of a particular period, but only when placed within a proper historical context.

Notes

1. Since Ireland is an Anglophone country, many British publications, including magazines such as *Woman's Own* and *Woman's Weekly*, were on sale in Ireland during the researched period. This article, however, is concerned with the reconstruction of the Irish culinary culture as represented in women's magazines published in Ireland. Furthermore, many Irish food writers were influenced by English culinary writing as some of them were educated, worked, and lived in England.
2. On background to the research see: Clear (2007), and Miller (2014).
3. See Article 41.2 of the 1937 Constitution, 164 (Bunreacht na hÉireann).
4. The election of Seán Lemass as *Taoiseach* in 1959 and his support for Ken Whitaker's "Programme for Economic Expansion" helped to improve the Irish economy and open it up to external investments. Whitaker's program entailed switching from protectionist policies to a free market, a focus on foreign investments by offering low corporation tax, and promotion of Irish exports (Brown 1985, 241–266).
5. On recipes aimed at overcoming war shortages see: Laverty (1941).
6. On the Housewives' Petition of 1941 see: Tweedy (1992, 14–15).
7. Monica Sheridan was Ireland's first television cook and was popularly known as "finger licking Monica."
8. Available on <http://arrow.dit.ie/culmag/1>.

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