

## Corn Bread, Portable Soup, and Wrinkle Cures

MARJORIE KREIDBERG

A HOUSEWIFE in the 1870s stirs the currant ketchup that simmers on the wood-burning stove, and the aroma of its spices mingles with the compelling fragrance of freshly baked bread cooling on the kitchen table. Happily she knows her husband will not become either "dyspeptic or frowning" from the bread, its sweetness guaranteed in her book of *Valuable Recipes* (187[?]).<sup>1</sup>

Within its covers she finds instructions for preparing pickled chicken, strawberry acid, hickory nut cake, corn bread, and hominy pudding, but she also discovers a formula to cure wrinkles, a remedy to relieve neuralgia pain, and a method for cleaning alpacas and ribbons.

Her domestic guide, published by the ladies of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, is part of a diverse and extensive collection of cookbooks and

household manuals in the Minnesota Historical Society that together represent over a hundred years of cooking literature. Among the books produced prior to 1900 are those published locally by churchwomen, others planned as promotions for commercial interests, and larger works that enjoyed nationwide sales.

A landmark in cookbook publishing history — and one of the earliest in the society's collection — is *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book* (1852). Its author, Catherine E. Beecher, a reformer with an evangelical zeal, hoped to remedy the evil suffered by young women who enter "their most arduous and sacred duties so inexperienced and uninformed" that their health, spirit, confidence, and happiness are threatened.<sup>2</sup> To achieve her goal, the sister of the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher

*Mrs. Kreidberg, a former part-time editorial assistant on the staff of the historical society, is compiling a recipe collection from the society's holdings.*

<sup>1</sup> Westminster, *Valuable Recipes*, 27. A list of the books used in preparing this article appears on page 116. Pages cited in these footnotes refer only to the quotations given.

<sup>2</sup> Beecher, *Domestic Receipt Book*, preface.

Stowe dedicated her life to education. She founded schools for women and promoted domestic science as an essential part of the curriculum. She wrote articles and books and lectured widely to pursue her crusade for domestic education.

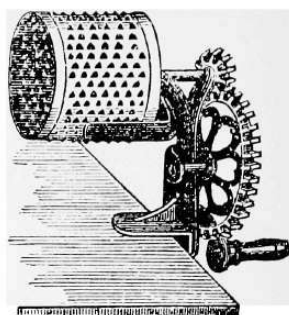
Miss Beecher's treatise, first published in 1841 and quoted—not always with credit—for many years afterward, combines recipes, cooking instructions, and exhaustive advice on matters of domestic concern. Central to all of her rules for housekeeping is the "habit of *doing everything in the best manner*," a basic tenet that she equates with good taste, "that nice perception of fitness and propriety which leads a person to say and do whatever is *suitable* and *appropriate* in all possible circumstances."<sup>3</sup>

She is not content merely with prescribing standards but tells how and why they are to be applied. Her general directions for preparing cakes, for example, caution the cook to "Tie up your hair so that none can fall, put on a long-sleeved apron, have the kitchen in order, and then arrange all the articles and utensils you will have occasion to use." In advance of her time, Miss Beecher instructs the cook to weigh the ingredients the first time she prepares a recipe, then transfer each to a "small measure cup," noting the amount in her "receipt book, and ever after use the same measure cup."<sup>4</sup>

A sound reason for the cook to follow exact instructions is dramatized by Miss Beecher in the chapter on breadmaking. Such care, she writes, may be considered "a great drudgery, but it is worse drudgery to have sickly children, and a peevish husband, made so by having all the nerves of their stomachs rasped with sour, or heavy bread. A woman should be *ashamed* to have poor bread, far more so, than to speak bad grammar, or to have a dress out of fashion." A housewife, she continues, who turns out poor bread regularly "may set herself down as a *slack baked* and negligent housekeeper."<sup>5</sup>

To counteract the disastrous results of

A "kitchen  
luxury"



poor cooking is but one of Miss Beecher's aims in her campaign to relieve the "deplorable sufferings" of young women subjected to a "*defective domestic education*." She emphasizes the need to plan ahead, preserving, canning, and drying food in the proper season to provide an agreeable variety throughout the year. Fundamental to such planning is the care of family stores. The storeroom should be cool and dry. Barrels of salt fish "must not be kept near other food, as they impart a fishy smell and taste to it." Decayed vegetable matter should be disposed of regularly to prevent the "miasma" it creates "that sometimes causes the most fatal diseases."<sup>6</sup>

Prevention of illness and care of the sick are among Miss Beecher's concerns. She supplies designs for furnishings to bring comfort to them. Her interest in functional conveniences extends to household needs as well. Efficient broom closets, a combination ironing table and settee, a reflector oven, a long-handled dustpan, and a dual-purpose knife and saw blade are some of the useful objects illustrated and described in the book. Details for the construction of an inexpensive refrigerator are included for persons who cannot afford to buy one.

When Miss Beecher turns her attention to the specifics of cooking, she provides varied recipes for meat cookery, soups, cakes, puddings, pies, preserves, ice creams, and temperance drinks. All ingredients,

<sup>3</sup> Beecher, *Domestic Receipt Book*, 217, 274.

<sup>4</sup> Beecher, *Domestic Receipt Book*, 130.

<sup>5</sup> Beecher, *Domestic Receipt Book*, 230, 231.

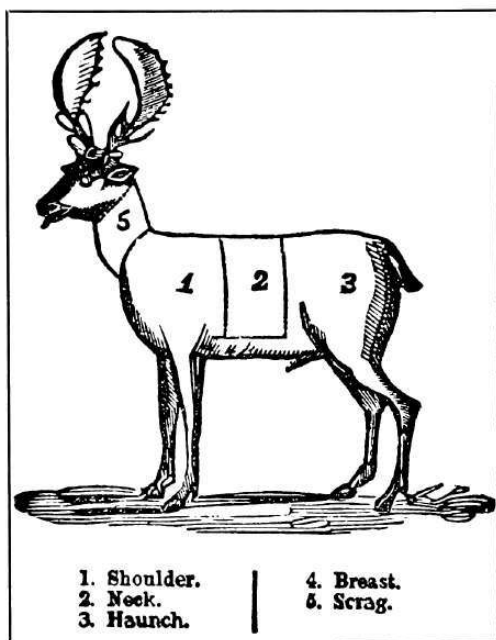
<sup>6</sup> Beecher, *Domestic Receipt Book*, preface, 223.

amounts, and methods, when included, are recorded in a series of running sentences. Measurements are most often expressed in terms of gills, ounces, pounds, pints, and quarts—infrequently in cups or spoons. “One great spoonful of flour, loaf sugar, or of melted butter, equals a quarter of an ounce of same. It should be a little heaped.”<sup>7</sup>

IN CONTRAST to Catherine Beecher’s encyclopedic, all-purpose treatise is *Miss Leslie’s New Cookery Book* (1857), a six-hundred-page “complete manual of domestic cookery in all its branches.” The author, Eliza Leslie, who also wrote children’s stories and contributed to women’s magazines, became wealthy through the sale of her culinary works. Distinctive in the recipes is Miss Leslie’s use of the provender of America such as venison, buffalo, and game. Indian meal is basic to many of her recipes for breads, griddle cakes, muffins, and even cakes for dessert. Her recipe for “Very Plain Indian Dumplings,” a combination of Indian meal, salt, and boiling water, she explains, is “an excellent appendage to salt pork or bacon.”<sup>8</sup>

With recurring enthusiasm she summons her primary theme that implicit in the nation’s plentiful food supply is the opportunity to improve nutrition, cooking practices, and the kitchen habits of America. Characteristically, she observes that in “America, where good things are abundant, there is no necessity of imbibing the flatulency of weak washy soups.” Her recipe for “Squatter’s Soup” underscores the point. When served with wild turkey or roasted buffalo hump and stewed grapes sweetened with maple sugar, it “will make a good backwoods dinner.”<sup>9</sup>

For a company dinner, Miss Leslie furnishes a recipe for soup made from four wild ducks, seasoned with salt, pepper,



A meat chart from Miss Leslie’s  
New Cookery Book

minced sage, and simmered with the addition of onions and a quarter of a pound of butter that is first rolled in flour. The cooked soup is then thickened with boiled or roasted chestnuts that have been peeled and mashed. Quite different but unquestionably appropriate for a gift to give “friends going the overland journey to the Pacific” is her “Portable Soup,” a forerunner of the bouillon cube. The soup requires three days to prepare, and is made “into a jelly, and then congealed into hard cakes, resembling glue.” Further, her awareness of the American way of life inspired other recipes such as one for “Camp Catsup” that she claims will keep for years if the bottles are well corked and stored in a dry place. The formula calls for strong ale or porter, mixed with white wine, minced shallots, and seasoned with mace, nutmeg, and gingerroot, then boiled slowly and bottled with the addition of a teaspoon of salad oil.<sup>10</sup>

When the practical-minded author focuses on meat cookery, she calls attention not only to the abundance of meat in America but to its reasonable cost. Therefore it

<sup>7</sup> Beecher, *Domestic Receipt Book*, 283.

<sup>8</sup> Leslie, *New Cookery Book*, title page, 418.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie, *New Cookery Book*, 35, 68, 69.

<sup>10</sup> Leslie, *New Cookery Book*, 51, 53, 328.



*Housewife in a turn-of-the-century kitchen*

is unnecessary for anyone to prepare more than is essential for use at any one time. Only well-done meat is wholesome and digestible, she declares, and underdone meat "is now seldom seen but at those public tables, where they consider it an object to have as little meat as possible eaten on the first day, that more may be left for the second day, to be made into indescribable messes, with ridiculous French names, and passed off as French dishes, by the so-called French cook, who is frequently an Irishman."<sup>11</sup>

While the author sanctions the use of alcoholic beverages in some recipes, she vigorously disapproves of the tradition of adding liquor to mince pie. "The foolish custom of setting the pies on fire after they come to the table, and causing a blue blaze to issue from the liquor that is in them, is now obsolete, and considered ungentle and tavern-like."<sup>12</sup> Resolute and firm in her convictions,

Miss Leslie scatters pronouncements on weaknesses in the nation's customs throughout her cookbook. Yet the custodians of the American home whom she sought to change could find Miss Leslie had fulfilled her commitment to produce a complete guide to cookery.

HOUSEWIVES of the late 1870s would discover in *Buckeye Cookery and Practical Housekeeping*, another book in the society's collection, a combination of recipes and instructions on domestic matters. The book was first published in 1877, a time when a competent housewife got ready for spring cleaning by laying in a supply of gall soap to wash floors and bedsteads, sawdust to dampen and use as a sweeping compound, cayenne pepper to discourage mice, rats, and vermin, lime for whitewashing, kerosene to keep stoves and iron utensils from rusting, and carbolic acid to disinfect sinks and drains. Appropriately the book is dedicated to the "Plucky Housewives Of 1876, Who Master Their Work Instead Of Allowing It To Master Them." A corresponding tenacity is apparent in the United Brethren churchwomen of Marysville, Ohio, who produced the book as a benevolent project and hoped to "pack between its covers the greatest possible amount of practical information of real value to all, and especially to the inexperienced."<sup>13</sup>

Their orderly guide abounds in rules, procedures, directions, and suggestions. Little is left to the housewife's imagination. "Provide on Saturday for Monday," she is counseled, "so as not to take up the fire with cooking, or time in running errands on washing-day." When work allowed the housewife time to pause, she could consult the manual to learn the effect of food on her complexion. "Strong coffee, hot bread and butter, heated grease, highly spiced soups, meats, or game, hot drinks, alcoholic liquors,

<sup>11</sup> Leslie, *New Cookery Book*, 139, 140.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie, *New Cookery Book*, 490.

<sup>13</sup> United Brethren, *Buckeye Cookery*, 1877 edition, preface.



fat meats, are all damaging to beauty," the Ohio ladies warn.<sup>14</sup>

Most of all, however, the Buckeye women are writers for the kitchen, dedicated to helping the homemaker avoid the "whole train of horrors that result from bad house-keeping." One horror is the cookstove with its complex of dampers and ventilators. The advisers recommend hardwood, such as ash, for the firebox for use when baking cakes. Dampers must be turned to force heat to the bottom of the oven after the fire has produced a "good body of heat." To achieve a more uniform heat, the hearth is then closed when the cake goes into the oven. The housewife's guide for determining oven temperature is the knowledge that "if the hand can be held in [the oven] from twenty to thirty-five seconds (or while counting twenty or thirty-five), it is a quick oven." A "moderate" oven requires a count of from thirty-five to forty-five seconds; a "slow" oven, forty-five to sixty seconds. "All systematic housekeepers," the writers prophesy, "will hail the day when some enter-

prising Yankee or Buckeye girl shall invent a stove or range with a thermometer attached to the oven, so that the heat may be regulated accurately and intelligently."<sup>15</sup>

The host of subjects covered, the many recipes and instructions are all intended to simplify household tasks and "stimulate that just pride without which work is drudgery and great excellence impossible."<sup>16</sup> With that ambitious goal and a parallel desire to sell their book, the United Brethren churchwomen had fourteen thousand copies of the first edition printed. By 1883, the book had enjoyed a sale of "more than 100,000 copies," according to its title page. The Buckeye Publishing Company of Minneapolis is designated as the publisher.

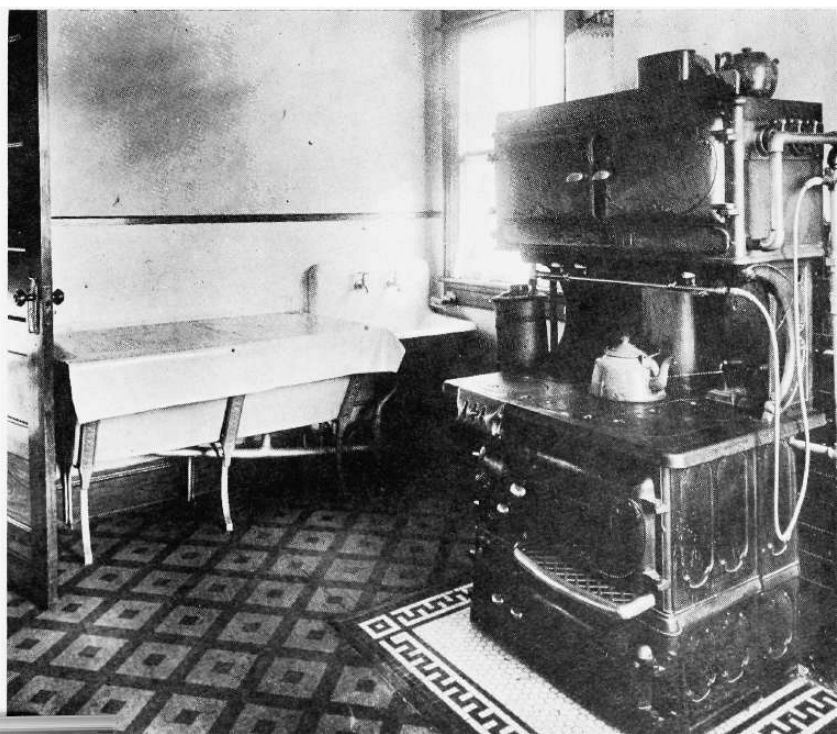
The later editions are more enlarged than they are revised. "Jugged Pigeons" and "Partridge Pie," for instance, are dropped after the first edition. Added to the 1883 edition are menus for a full year, and a chapter on the chemistry of food to help the housewife adapt meal planning to her family's specific needs. She learns that the "brain-worker demands a diet rich in phosphorous, and [that]. . . . The food that best sustains a laborer in the open air is not the best for those who live among the excitements and exhausting demands on the brain, that are the rule in city life." For

<sup>14</sup> United Brethren, *Buckeye Cookery*, 1877 edition, 343, 419.

<sup>15</sup> United Brethren, *Buckeye Cookery*, 1877 edition, 44, 332.

<sup>16</sup> United Brethren, *Buckeye Cookery*, 1877 edition, preface.

*A coal-burning stove, sink, and covered wash-tubs in a 1900 kitchen*



those reasons, the compilers recommend fish, game, cheese, vegetables, and especially potatoes for city dwellers.<sup>17</sup>

EMPHASIS on the chemical composition of food along with its dollars-and-cents value claimed the attention of Juliet Corson, another author, lecturer, and teacher. Prominent in her field, she conducted cooking classes in the United States, Canada, and Europe. At the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, she was awarded a prize for scientific cooking and sanitary dietetics. Her reputation had been established earlier, however, as a result of her writing. In 1879, when she was superintendent of the New York Cooking School, Miss Corson prepared a *Cooking School Text Book; And Housekeepers' Guide to Cookery and Kitchen Management* (1879). The book, she explains in the preface, is intended to meet the growing public interest in "cheap and good cookery." Requirements for good cooking, she continues, demand "intelligent comprehension" of the fundamentals of food chemistry, economic values, and the "physiology of nutrition."

The book is divided into three sections: lessons for the young daughters of working people, referred to as "artisans"; courses for plain cooks, young housewives of moderate and comfortable circumstances, and domestics who seek employment in families "where the table is nice without being too expensive"; and, lastly, the "Ladies' Course" that provides "some of the elegancies of artistic cookery with those economical interests which it is the duty of every housewife to study."<sup>18</sup>

A revolutionary departure from the usual narrative style is the tabulation of a list of ingredients for each recipe, and next to that the cost of the amount needed, as well as the total sum of all costs. The expenditure required for all ingredients appears in the index. A six-pound beef rib roast, prepared with vegetables and seasoning, costs \$1.00; apple pie, 19 cents; a three-pound chicken sautéed with mushrooms, wine, flour, oil,

and seasonings, 74 cents; and three eggs scrambled in an ounce of butter, 5 cents.

An example of Miss Corson's methodical orderliness, clarity, and disposition for detail is found in a recipe for an oyster sauce to accompany boiled fowl. "Blanch one quart of oysters by bringing them to a boil in their own liquor; drain them, saving the liquor; wash them in cold water and set them away from the fire until you are ready to use them; stir one ounce of butter and one ounce of flour together over the fire until they form a smooth paste; strain into them enough of the oyster liquor and that in which the chicken was boiled, to make a sauce as thick as melted butter; season with a teaspoonful of salt, quarter of a saltspoonful of white pepper, and some grated nutmeg; put in oysters and serve." The total cost for the chicken and oyster sauce is 66 cents.<sup>19</sup>

Miss Corson's penchant for the explicit carries over into her opinions on food, nutrition, and kitchen management. She recognizes that occupational needs, habits, and mental conditions influence nutritive demand. "An unpurged appetite [*sic*]," she writes, "is the voice of the physical system making known its needs, and it may always be trusted to indicate the foods necessary to the preservation of health."<sup>20</sup>

The author's accomplishments as a lecturer and teacher became known to twelve hundred persons who attended a cooking demonstration at the University of Minnesota agricultural college in 1884. Miss Corson's series of six lectures, interspersed with her views on food, were published by the board of regents under the title *A Course of Lectures on the Principles of Domestic Economy and Cookery* (1886). The series covered a broad range of cookery, including "Cheap Dishes for Rewarmed Foods" and cooking for the sick.

<sup>17</sup> United Brethren, *Practical Housekeeping*, 1883 edition, 596.

<sup>18</sup> Corson, *Cooking School Text Book*, 25, 103, 143.

<sup>19</sup> Corson, *Cooking School Text Book*, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Corson, *Cooking School Text Book*, 210.

Guests at the Minnesota lectures also heard Miss Corson's lament that Americans think that only meat provides nourishment. They listened to her praise the strength-sustaining value of lentils, fresh or dried peas and beans when they are prepared with fat meat, suet, or butter. The nutritious value of some vegetables, she declared—"what the dressmakers would call 'trimmings'"—is comparable to meat.<sup>21</sup>



SIMILAR practical lessons in cooking were presented by Maria Parloa, another professional in domestic education. But *Miss Parloa's New Cook Book* (1880) is also representative of a group of cookbooks in the society's collection used as promotions to advance business interests. The Washburn-Crosby Company of Minneapolis presented Miss Parloa's book as a complimentary gift to consumers of the company's flour. A bread recipe and a line drawing of the mill appear on a separate sheet tipped into the book.

Miss Parloa, founder of two cooking schools and a prolific author of cookbooks, states in the preface that it is "unwise to leave much to the cook's judgement. . . . Many ladies will not undertake the making of a dish that requires hours for cooking, and often for the poor reason only that they do not so read a recipe as to see that the work will not be hard."

Mindful of this dictum, she tells how long to stir curry sauce, how long to allow it to simmer, and how it should be served. She furnishes pan sizes, designating the need for deep or shallow pans, "sheets," and loaf pans with a welcome consistency. Indeed, it is Miss Parloa's practice to suggest serving styles, borders, and garnishments as part of the recipes.<sup>22</sup>

Her concept of a departure from the or-

dinary in food preparation, enhanced with a measure of elegance, is suggested in the titles and sometimes in the ingredients as well. In a selection of chicken recipes, she includes chicken soufflé, blanquette, chateaufort, *chaud-froid*, quenelles, and pilau, as well as fried chicken and pot pie.

Advanced as she was in some areas, Miss Parloa did not advocate commercial baking powder as a leavening agent for cakes, muffins, and quick breads at the time the cookbook was published. Even though commercial baking powder was available and was advertised in the book, Miss Parloa nevertheless specifies saleratus or the combination of cream of tartar and soda in the recipes.

Perhaps commercial baking powder was less suspect among St. Paul housewives who received a gift copy of *The Snow Flake Cook Book* (1881). Charles R. Groff, a manufacturer and retailer of spices, extracts, and baking powder, intent on the promotion value of the cookbook as an advertising device, dedicated the hundred-page book "To the Ladies Using the Celebrated Snow Flake Baking Powder."

Generally the recipes offer the gamut of cookery: soup, meat, fish, vegetables, salads, sauces, pastry, cakes, puddings, and pickles. Pickle recipes, found in quantity in the early cookbooks, are grouped in two sections, one for brine-prepared, the other for sweet. Instructions for preparing quail and woodcock, as well as chicken, duck, and turkey, appear in a section on poultry. Further consideration for native bounty is evident in a recipe for parsnip stew made with the addition of salt pork.

Directions for the most part assume knowledge and experience on the part of the cook, but occasionally some rules, comments, and suggestions are interspersed among the recipes. Instructions for roasting a goose, for example, caution that a "green" goose, four months old, is the most desirable. The breastbone of the goose should be beaten flat with a rolling pin and the wings and legs securely tied before stuffing.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Corson, *Principles of Domestic Economy and Cookery*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Parloa, *New Cook Book*, 43.

<sup>23</sup> Groff, *Snow Flake Cook Book*, 29.



The *Snow Flake Cook Book* also furnishes the custodians of the household with enough advice to fill the final third of the book—advice appropriated word for word from Catherine Beecher's *Treatise*. But Groff's practical recipes and purloined recommendations for efficient household management are altogether different from those published as a promotion for the St. Paul Roller Mill Company in 1885, producers of Orange Blossom flour. The *Orange Blossom Cook Book* intermixes a history of flour development, an unresolved romance, twenty-one recipes, and baking instructions all within fifty pages.

The mill's manager, Kingsland Smith, introduces the book as his company's effort to offset the deficient instructions in popular cookbooks on "every point about bread making." To insure greater interest and appeal, he writes, Orange Blossom's guide to breadmaking is "woven into a story" to be continued in later editions. If later editions appeared, it is not known; the first is the only one in the society's collection.

The story revolves around Lucy Knight, a "cultured young heiress" from Minnesota. Lucy, who has earned the degree of mistress of household science from the School of Domestic Economy in Ames, Iowa, operates a cooking school in Florida. One of Lucy's students, Sophie Southgate, discovers that her health, ruined by the "course

of study and course of diet" in a young ladies' seminary, is quickly restored when she eats bread and rolls made exclusively from Orange Blossom flour used in the cooking school. Romance develops when an urbane colonel, Frank Mayo, realizes his considerable admiration for the "two earnest, warm-hearted and truthful women." At the end of the first installment, the colonel faces the dilemma of choosing between them.<sup>24</sup>

Digressions from the main story allow for a recital of the gradual progress made in flour and milling production, and Lucy Knight's role of teacher is the artifice used to bring in recipes and instructions on the art of breadmaking. Special emphasis is given to the excellence of the hard wheats grown in Minnesota, the enterprise of the millers in the state, and their leadership in the production of quality flour.

TO E. M. MAY of Minneapolis the virtues of flour, problems of oven temperatures, and principles of breadmaking were minor concerns. His primary interest was quality food of all kinds, its preparation by the catering company he operated, and the solicitation of patrons who would use his service. To that end, he produced a volume that he called a *Catalogue* (1887). The book is a conglomeration of many things, recipes among them. It lists the company's products and services, but it also presents essays on table courtesies, ballroom etiquette, the correct form for calling cards, invitations, and programs, and a description of wedding arrangements. It features discourses on correct dress, a history of gloves, instructions for wine selection, diagrams of table settings to meet a variety of occasions, articles on how to achieve a well-ordered kitchen and dining room, a resumé on the digestibility of food, a table of weights and measures, a calendar of foods in season, and menu suggestions.

Significantly, the catalog reveals an ele-

<sup>24</sup> Gray, *Orange Blossom Cook Book*, 6, 47.





*"Kings of the Kitchen," according to the legend in May's Catalogue*

gance in food, dining, and style of living that was available at least to some residents of Minnesota during the late 1880s. From E. M. May & Son ice cream—thirty-eight flavors—and ices could be had in a variety of dramatic forms such as a mold of a large deer (for \$5.00) or an elephant (\$6.00), either sufficient for serving twelve guests. Some edible, decorative pyramids made from fruit, macaroons, bonbons, or ice cream are offered. A wide assortment of meat and poultry suggestions includes a haunch of venison and fillets of hare with truffles. A miscellaneous list provides a number of timbales, a "Mounted Wild Goose," a "Wild Boar's head in gelantine," pheasant prepared with sauerkraut, and a separate category for oysters prepared in eighteen different ways.

Table appointments—silver, china, glass and tableware, linens—are available for rental along with awnings and special lights. A "full drilled corps" of servants is another service offered in the introduction.

THOMAS K. GRAY, a Minneapolis drug-gist, promoted eating as opposed to feasting,

catering to routine needs rather than to elegant entertainments. In the introduction to his gift cookbook, he notes that ten thousand copies were produced at a cost of "several hundred dollars." If achievement can be measured by four more editions that appeared biennially, *T. K. Gray's Cook Book* (1896) justified the investment.

Gray's good-will offering is as much a merchandising promotion as it is a cookbook. The left-hand pages announce and sometimes illustrate a wide range of compounds and nostrums to cure, correct, and rehabilitate people and horses. Hair restoratives, paint, and chewing gum are other products advertised. Each advertising page states that the product is available from T. K. Gray, whose portrait appears on the front cover. His stately residence adorns the back cover.

Imagination is an integral part of Gray's cookbook, however. A section devoted to leftover food is titled "Made-Over Delicacies," while another division is labeled "Picnic Dainties." Names for recipes such as "Minnehaha Cake" and "Prairie Tea Cake"

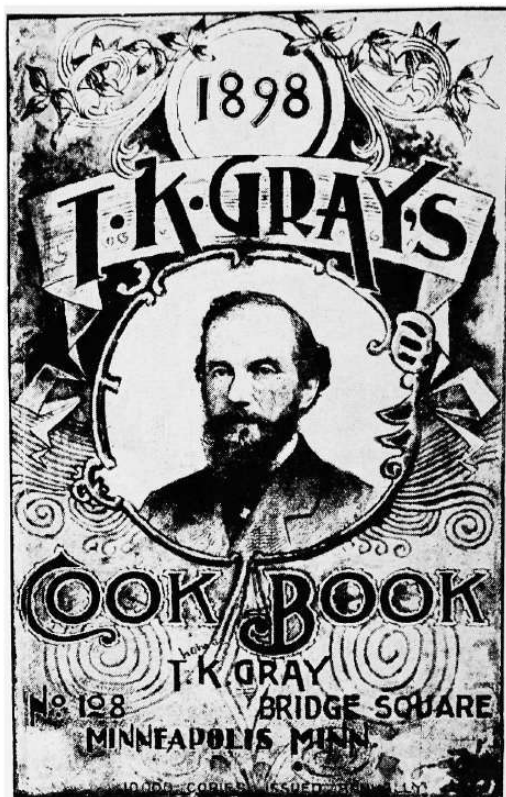
suggest a native influence, although there is nothing that distinguishes the basic ingredients from other cakes of the period.<sup>25</sup> The druggist turned to poetry to introduce each edition. His personal rhymes focus on the location of the drugstore—108 Bridge Square—and praise the quality, selection, quantity, and economy of his products.

Claims of excellence were not unusual in the cookbooks published during the last half of the nineteenth century. The “best receipts are not to be found in any other book of receipts.” So boasts the introduction to *Our Chef's Best Receipts* (1899), a book used to promote James J. Hill's Northern Steamship Company of St. Paul. Advertising within its pages describes the merits of Hill's Great Northern and Duluth, Missabe & Northern railways as well as those of hotels and merchants in St. Paul and Duluth.

The chef is not identified, but other persons who contributed to the collection are named. Credit is given, too, for the source of quoted lines used to describe the general content of recipes in each chapter. Thus Ralph Waldo Emerson's statement, “The amassed thought and experience of innumerable minds,” keynotes a miscellaneous selection with its mixture of a recipe for cheese fondue, a formula for cleaning wallpaper, advice on using stale cheese, recommendations for washing point lace, and the suggestion that “Common cooking molasses will remove grass stain from garments.”<sup>26</sup>

Recipes, however, far outnumber the confederation of generalities and advice in the cookbook. The form in which they are presented reflects the gradual drift toward the standard columnar listing of ingredients, but chancy directions for amounts—“Enough flour to roll,” or “Sugar to suit taste”—continue to prevail.<sup>27</sup>

LOCALLY PUBLISHED cookbooks provide clues to the preparation of daily fare and homemade cures in Minnesota before the turn of the century, and *Valuable Recipes*, compiled by the ladies of the Westminster Church of Minneapolis, is the



A typical front cover from T. K. Gray

earliest church-sponsored cookbook in the society's collection. Prepared “for the benefit of the public in general, and the Church in particular,” the book has an informal style, sprinkled with the comfortable language of the kitchen—“Take your beef, be it much or little.”<sup>28</sup>

Here are recipes for curing hams, making beer, preparing Indian bannocks, corn meal muffins, corn batter cakes, and corn bread. Here also are two recipes for corn fritters, one called “Corn Oysters,” the second simply “Another.” Chicken—fried, jellied, pickled, or used in salad—yeast to be made from hops or potatoes, and a method for making vinegar are among the recipes

<sup>25</sup> Gray, *Cook Book*, 1896 edition, 25, 63, 83, 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Our Chef's Best Receipts*, 112.

<sup>27</sup> *Our Chef's Best Receipts*, 52.

<sup>28</sup> Westminster Church, *Valuable Recipes*, introduction, 13.

gathered into the book. Here, too, are formulas for preparing cough medicine, a prescription for cholera, and a cure for wrinkles that calls for a contented mind and glycerine added to the morning wash water.

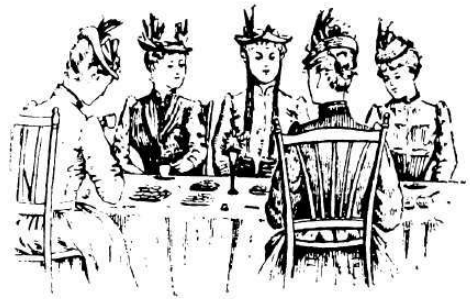
Here is the easy nonconformity of style in which one cake recipe is merely an enumeration of ingredients while another details ingredients, method, and pan sizes. Among the measurements that are set forth in standard terms, there are some calling for a "bowl of flour" and a "large ironspoonful of lard." Cakes and breads are called by names that simply designate a dominant ingredient: hickory nuts, cornstarch, coffee, sugar cakes, or gingerbread.<sup>29</sup>

This personal quality in recipe writing also characterizes *The Tried and True Cook Book* (1881), published by the ladies' society of the First Baptist Church of St. Paul. The volume is a significant record of the everyday kitchen arts practiced by Minnesotans in the 1880s. They cooked parsnip stew and made squash and cranberry pies; they prepared the batter for Indian meal muffins at night, ready to bake for breakfast the next day. For "Sunday Pudding," tapioca was "put to soak on Friday night" and baked into a pudding on Saturday. Brown sugar, molasses, and tartaric acid were mixed together, a base for "Sassafras Mead" when it was needed.

Although recipes are the primary concern of the Baptist ladies, they also supply detailed formulas such as a hair restorative made with a "quart of strong sage tea drawn in porcelain teapot, one-quarter pint of good whiskey, one large tablespoonful of pulverized borax, thirty grains of quinine. Use soft water. Put on boiling hot."<sup>30</sup>

*The Tried and True Cook Book* reflects the dedication of the women who produced it. A similar devotion prompted the women of St. Paul's Dayton Avenue Presbyterian

Church to publish *A Cook Book* in 1892 in response to interest that developed from a cooking school conducted at the church by a domestic science teacher, Mrs. Willett M. Hays. In the tradition of Catherine Beecher, Mrs. Hays describes cooking as "the most useful, elevating, dignified and important of all occupations lying at the very foundation of our peace, prosperity and happiness." Formal instruction in cooking principles, nutritional awareness, and the practice of economy are the bases for Mrs. Hays's multilateral approach to cookery. The simple system, she writes, of "ordering wisely, cooking properly, and wasting nothing" can keep food costs to \$1.50 a week for each person in any city in the country.<sup>31</sup>



NEITHER explanations nor counsel on general cooking principles appears in the forty-page *Christmas Cook Book* published in 1899 by the Ladies' Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Buffalo, Minnesota. Instead the book is limited to signed recipes that represent a medley of individual specialties grouped under general headings. The collection is a record of daily fare, of how to make do with whatever provender is available.

A half gallon of pumpkin becomes "Grandma's Pumpkin Butter" with the addition of molasses, cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper, mixed and then boiled for two-and-a-half hours. Sugar, water, egg white, and raisins are the ingredients for "Minnehaha Frosting." If maple sugar is available, it can be boiled with cream and butter, flavored with vanilla, and used as a cake filling. Dried apples, soaked and then

<sup>29</sup> Westminster Church, *Valuable Recipes*, 34, 55.

<sup>30</sup> First Baptist Church, *Tried and True Cook Book*, 96.

<sup>31</sup> Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church, *A Cook Book*, 4, 6.

simmered in molasses, are the basis for a "Dried Apple Cake." A recipe for "Pork Cake" calls for salt pork, molasses, spices, eggs, soda, currants, raisins, and "enough flour to make as a pound cake." A "Christmas Pudding," with instructions to "Boil in a bowl 12 hours," is the only recipe directly associated with the book's title.<sup>32</sup>

Over three hundred signed recipes published by the Central Presbyterian Church women of St. Paul in 1900 give further examples of daily fare. The contents of *The "Central" Cook Book* reveal some of the difficulties encountered in food preparation and marketing. "Get a hard Hubbard squash, one that has to be broken with a hatchet," writes the contributor of a squash pie recipe. The brief instructions for preparing a sponge cake end with the admonition to "beat, beat, beat!"<sup>33</sup>

A miscellaneous chapter includes recipes for grape wine, creamed celery, baked tomatoes, a formula for mucilage, and one for furniture polish, but a remedy to relieve

coughs appears in a chapter on "Confectionery." The homemade cough syrup is prepared from brown sugar and gin boiled to a syruplike consistency. A dose of one teaspoon every two hours is recommended.

*The "Central" Cook Book* and all of the church-sponsored, commercially supported, or major recipe books and domestic guides in the Minnesota Historical Society's collection are a contemporary record in the literature of cooking and domestic life. In the quickened pace of 1968, with household conveniences undreamed of a century ago, these volumes can bring the "Plucky Housewives" of the past as close as today in so congenial a place as the kitchen.

<sup>32</sup> Methodist Episcopal Church, *Christmas Cook Book*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Central Presbyterian Church, *"Central" Cook Book*, 40, 41, 42, 68.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS on pages 108 and 109 are from the society's collection; the drawings on pages 106 and 111 are from *Practical Housekeeping*; and those on pages 112 and 115 are from the Dayton Avenue Presbyterian Church cookbook.

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