

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DOUGH: FOOD, LITERATURE, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

by

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of the environment, literature, and the culinary history of the North American West is under-investigated and requires further study to determine the ways in which focusing on these intersections reveals more about American foodways. By examining three community cookbooks, three corporate cookbooks, three works of literary fiction, and the archival contents of *America Eats*, a subsidiary of the Federal Writers' Project, this paper investigates sociocultural interactions in the United States between 1930 and 1959, particularly in Montana. Research revealed the connection between rural and urban through the presence of advertisements and brand-name products in community cookbooks, while corporate cookbooks displayed the depth of culinary-related gendered ideology in twentieth century America. Further investigation highlighted the interconnections between distinct foodways, the environment, and Western literature during the time period in question. This paper concludes that Montana foodways between 1930 and 1959 exhibit the last remnants of regional uniqueness prior to the widespread culinary homogenization in postwar America. Additionally, this study revealed the importance of preserving culturally and geographically specific foodways to bridge gaps among communities both rural and urban. Ultimately, this study concludes that the food present in Montana between 1930 and 1959 in all its iterations—literary, physical, and in the space between perception and creation in the world of advertising—is representative of the vestiges of a unique regional foodway.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in Montana, it was not uncommon to hear me utter the words, not so fondly, “the end of nowhere.” I wished that I could be literally anywhere but here. Oftentimes, with the endless howling winds and the snows so frigid and deep that they freeze doors shut, it seemed like I was occupying space on an alien, inhospitable planet. Of course, I grew up doing all the things that Montana kids do, the things that people come from all over the world and pay buckets of money to do. I skied, I fished, I hiked, I camped. I stayed outside under the scorching Montana summer sun until I was crisped brown and utterly feral. I blew my breath out in plumes like a dragon when the temperature dropped below freezing and accidentally broke off bits of my hair after swimming because I forgot that I live someplace where wet things can freeze and break. And I enjoyed some of it; I would absolutely be lying if I said I enjoyed all of it, but some of it was quite nice. As I have gotten older, I have realized that there’s a reason why people come from all over to just *be* here. To breathe the clear air and see that giant big blue sky we’re so famous for.

There are many reasons why I chose the time period, 1930 to 1959, for my study. It spans the Great Depression, WWII, and the postwar period. The 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s are the decades that contain the last vestiges of unique regional foodways before American foodways become more uniform and standardized across the country. On a more personal note, the 1930s have held a special place in my heart for the past several years. My undergraduate degree culminated in a thesis specifically focusing on Montana foodways during the Great Depression, and I still find this period fascinating. Ultimately, I chose the period 1930 to 1959 because it is representative of a larger shift in our connection and attitude to food as a nation. Each of these

decades represents a time of cultural, political, and economic significance and change in the United States. These three decades represent a transitional period in American history, from the conflict and deprivation of the Great Depression and WWII to the growing prosperity and Cold War tensions of the postwar era.¹

This period was also a time of extraordinary liminality of American foodways, both nationally and regionally. Prior to the technological innovations circa WWII that revolutionized, standardized, and industrialized domestic technologies (such as the dishwasher and the microwave oven), regional foodways were far more unique than they were in the postwar era.² With improvements in preservation, preparation, and transportation, there was a decreased reliance on local and seasonal foodstuffs, as reliability and availability made processed food items available universally. It is important to recognize that today's culture of instant gratification and accessibility is relatively new. For most of American history, if the desired item was unavailable locally or you were not well-off enough to pay great amounts to obtain it from far away, then that item was simply inaccessible to you and your family.

With improvements in packaging and preservation technologies, such as commercial canning and freezing, it was possible to obtain goods such as fruit and vegetables year-round. Previously you would have had to preserve your own home-grown or locally obtained foodstuffs to have access to these foods during the winter months. While home canning and preservation of

¹ In this context, postwar America is defined as the period between the end of WWII to the middle of the 1960s. "U.S. History Primary Source Timeline: 1945-1968," Library of Congress, accessed February 27, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/post-war-united-states-1945-1968/overview/>.

² Kate Hilpern, "The Secret History of the Dishwasher," The Independent, accessed March 05, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/features/secret-history-dishwasher-2119320.html>.

foodstuffs were standard practices among many rural families, the availability of canned products year-round in stores was a boon to many over-worked housewives and urban dwellers, although many were initially suspicious of these canned goods. By the mid-1900s, the quality and safety of mass-produced canned goods was better than ever before and many people had moved past their initial distrust.³ In 1943, home canning reached its pinnacle in the United States with over four billion cans preserved. Despite the popularity and reliance on both home and industrial canning during the mid-nineteenth century, by 1945 canning was no longer the primary means of home preservation. The decline in popularity of canning stemmed from the growing availability of home refrigeration units.⁴ The growing availability of time-saving items and technologies in stores nationwide and the shifting labor and gender divide contributed to the culture of convenience in the 1940s and 1950s. Beginning in the 1930s, the changing social and economic atmosphere of the United States solidified the shift from locally based, regional foodways to a more homogenous national foodway.

I am interested in the intersection between the environment, literature, and culinary history in the North American West. I have spent the last few years of my life writing and researching, then writing and researching some more about the complexities, dichotomies, and juxtapositions of what it means to have a recognizable regional foodway; what that means to different communities; and how that translates on a national stage. And of course, how so many different *life* factors play into everything when making even the simplest dish of potatoes and peas. Politics, gender, environment, culture, ethnicity, race, class...these are all inherently

³ “How Did We Can: The Evolution of Home Canning Practices,” USDA: National Agricultural Library, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.nal.usda.gov/exhibits/ipd/canning/timeline-table>; “History of the Can: An Interactive Timeline,” Can Manufacturers Institute, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.cancentral.com/can-stats/history-of-the-can>.

⁴ “How Did We Can,” <https://www.nal.usda.gov/exhibits/ipd/canning/timeline-table>.

intertwined with every bite of food consumed, every recipe prepared, passed down, and shared. Every carrot, every apple, every box of Jell-O. Food is an everyday factor of life, something that is necessary, essential for life to continue. But there is much more to it than that. There is the joy, the agony, the creativity, the resignation that can come with food, hitched to it like an unwanted barnacle. These feelings, the emotion embedded in the very nature of cuisine, and the hidden and untold history behind every recipe is what drew me—and continues to entrance me—to culinary history.

It wasn't until my senior year of undergraduate studies that I started to fully gain an appreciation, and perhaps even a grudging love, for my home state. My mentor suggested that I might be interested in the America Eats project, started by the Federal Writers' Project, a branch of the Works Progress Administration, during the Great Depression. It was intended to provide jobs to out-of-work journalists, writers, and sometimes even people who didn't have much writing experience at all. I started reading the files, looking at all the notes and correspondence, and a funny thing happened. I felt a sense of sameness, a feeling like kindred spirits wrote those reports on local Montana foodways, especially those written by several of the female writers employed by the Montana office of the America Eats project. Some of their writing, their words could have come right out of my mind, my mouth. Their feelings of loneliness, isolation, the despair of seeing an endless sea of prairie grass stretching out to the unseen horizon, the resignation of being trapped by white-out blizzards and temperatures so cold nothing seems to work properly. Of course, I cannot claim that I have lived a truly lonely life, spending all my days in a creaky, drafty wood cabin miles from any neighbors, living a life dictated by the weather and the success of the harvest. But there was just something about the *voice* in the

papers of America Eats that struck me, and I haven't been quite able to leave it behind for nearly three years now.

I chose the community and corporate cookbooks—three each, one from each decade of the mid-twentieth century—because I found them to be emblematic of the time and place in which they were created. I did not set out with specific cookbook locations or commercial food brands in mind, I wanted to cast as wide a net as possible and see what I pulled in. I knew that I wanted two cookbooks, one community and one corporate, for each decade of study, the 1930s, the 1940s, and the 1950s. 1930 seemed like an excellent place to start, a period of liminality and hardship coming straight off the success and wealth of the Roaring Twenties. Just as things seemed to be looking up again, the United States was plunged into another World War and lives were marked by sacrifice and rationing. In the postwar period of the 1950s, America entered an unprecedented era of consumerism and ingenuity, the likes of which had never been seen before. And as the 1950s drew to a close, another era was just beginning when the burgeoning counterculture and back-to-the-land movements collided with the violence of the Vietnam War. There are relatively few community cookbooks from Montana during this period that are available for purchase online, and even fewer that are already digitized and available. I was able to borrow several cookbooks from the personal collection of my graduate committee chair, the Big Hole Cookbook and the Moose Cookbook.⁵ Luckily, I had found the Dorcas Cookbook for

⁵ Luckily the Montana State Historical Society has a large collection of community cookbooks—1046 at last check of their database—but hardly any are available online. As I was unable to travel during the years I spent researching for this thesis, I was unable to utilize the Historical Society's vast collection of culinary ephemera including Montana community cookbooks. "Search results, Collection: Cookbooks," Montana State Historical Society, accessed April 11, 2022, https://mtsc.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/MT-HIST/search/results?qu=cookbook&qf=ITEMCAT2%09Collection%091%3ACOOKBOOK%09Cookbooks&te=SPECIALS&lm=MT-HIST.

sale online, where the seller noted that the cookbook had been in a family member's attic since the 1950s. The Big Hole Cookbook was found in an antique store in Butte, Montana. While I reviewed many more community cookbooks from this period, my choices were ultimately based on a combination of availability as well as geographic spread. Of the Montana community cookbooks available to me from 1930-1959, the Big Hole Cookbook (Wisdom), the Moose Cookbook (Roundup), and the Dorcas Cookbook (Glendive), presented the most diverse geographic spread. Wisdom is in the far southwest of the state, Roundup is in south central Montana, and Glendive is located in the far east central area of the state. While I would have liked for one of the cookbooks to have been from the northern areas of Montana, none of the cookbooks I surveyed were both in my chosen period of study and in the northern part of Montana. In direct contrast to the difficulties I had with the community cookbooks, there was such a plethora of corporate cookbooks—available both digitally and physically—it was difficult to choose which ones I wanted to focus on. There were so many truly excellent examples of odd and intriguing corporate culinary ephemera from 1930 to 1959 that I ultimately chose the three brands that I thought brought the greatest name recognition even now, many decades later. This decision resulted in my focus on Jell-O, Karo Syrup, and Bisquick as the three corporate food brands in this text. Of the many community and corporate cookbooks I surveyed from these decades, the six that will appear in the following pages are representative of the mid-twentieth century.

Literature can serve as a valuable resource for the examination of culinary history, particularly in rural areas of the country where official documentation might be hard to come by. By using these three texts—Louise Erdrich's *Master Butchers Singing Club*, Ivan Doig's *English Creek*, and Mildred Walker's *Winter Wheat*—as primary sources, certain culinary trends and

patterns become clear, which enables one to see the broader implications of the history of food in the North American West. A particularly powerful connection between literature and history is memory. Many authors base at least some of their written words on their own lived experiences, their past, their families, their hopes and dreams, their fond and bittersweet memories of a past rooted in place and people. It is in this sense that the connection to the America Eats project—discussed in Chapter Five—becomes clear. There were echoes of the fictional characters and their lives in the interviews and stories recorded by the America Eats writers, linking fiction and history together in a tangible way. I found that the America Eats materials were, in some way, a form of literature themselves, as memoirs or reflective biographical writing (this concept will be discussed in greater detail shortly). Ultimately, the power of literature lies in its transportive and transcendent qualities, in its ability to create links between past and present, fact and fiction, place and people. It is a way to view the world in less strict terms, in shades of grey rather than sharp black and white. Literature connects creativity and history in a way that perfectly encapsulates what I want to do with this work, to allow the reader to see beyond the cut-and-dry facts and imagine what was and what might be if only we can listen to what the past (fictional or not) has to tell us.

As seen in the title of this work, the American Dream is discussed throughout the next five chapters. While there are traditional understandings of the American Dream—typically involving monetary success and opportunity—I tend to view it slightly differently. There are four common definitions of this phrase.

A life marked by material wealth and comfort. —Merriam-Webster Dictionary

An American social ideal that stresses egalitarianism and especially material prosperity. —

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

The ideals of freedom, equality, and opportunity traditionally held to be available to every

American. — Dictionary.com

A life of personal happiness and material comfort as traditionally sought by individuals in the

U.S. — Dictionary.com⁶

In the following pages, I will emphasize the parts of these definitions that highlight the ideals of equality and happiness in American culture. I am in no way denying that individual economic success was held up as the golden standard. While this is an undeniably important aspect of the American Dream, I find myself thinking of the many immigrants who came to the United States not just for the promise of greater economic success than was available in their homeland, but also as the promise of religious, political, and personal freedoms. My ancestors came to America fleeing religious persecution, leaving behind all their worldly possessions and forsaking a prominent economic and social status in Russia. To me, the ideal of the American Dream has always been more closely associated with a sense of community and a sense of security—both social and economic. While I have my doubts about the endurance of the American Dream in the contemporary American sociopolitical culture, I find it hard to ignore the strains of hope and desire for prosperity and richness of both community and materiality found in primary sources,

⁶ “American Dream Definition,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed February 09, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/American%20dream>; “American Dream Definition,” Dictionary.com, accessed February 09, 2022, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/american-dream>.

cookbooks, and literature of the era. In the context of this paper, think of the American Dream as not just an idealized financial state of being, but also a sociocultural mindset.

Another concept that is used differently in the following chapters than it is in traditional historical scholarship is the environment. In the following pages, the environment will be discussed through the lens of literary analysis rather than more traditional environmental history methodologies. Something that surfaced numerous times in the sources I referenced—both primary and secondary—is the idea that nature is a force to be reckoned with; nature is almost anthropomorphized as a contentious and at times unpredictable adversary. This is seen particularly with the literary works discussed in Chapter One and in the essays in the *America Eats* materials examined in Chapter Five. As such, the environment will not be referred to in customary geographic and ecological terms but rather in a more metaphorical manner to reflect the descriptions found during my research.

Travel and food (or culinary) writing are two distinct but interconnected disciplines, sharing a similar interest in exploring and describing the world. Travel writing can be defined as an “account of a journey or description of a place that is based on firsthand experience,” while food writing “refers to any type of written media dedicated to talking about food.”⁷ Oftentimes, these two styles of writing focus on one’s own experiences with an emphasis on real-world experiences or memories. The writing in the materials focused on in Chapter Five combines the two disciplines, while simultaneously adding a twist of something different. The *America Eats*

⁷ Alasdair Pettinger, “Travel Writing,” Oxford Bibliographies, updated July 31, 2019, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846719/obo-9780199846719-0119.xml>; “Guide: How to Become a Food Writer,” Skillshare, updated May 31, 2021, <https://www.skillshare.com/blog/guide-how-to-become-a-food-writer/>.

materials often tell the stories of other people, be it with interviews or the written retelling of oral histories. The addition of the extra personal element is something seldom seen in traditional food or travel writing but is striking in the writing of the Montana Project. The *America Eats* embodied a mixture of what would become in another half century the hallmarks of modern travel and food writing.

This work is composed of five main chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. All chapters focus on work produced or set in the mid-twentieth century. Chapter One examines the role of food and the environment in literature of the North American West set or written between 1930 and 1959. Chapter Two explores the complexities and dichotomies of community cookbooks produced in Montana. Chapter Three focuses on the political and social undertones of corporate cookbooks produced by prominent food brands in the United States in the twentieth century. The similarities and differences between the chosen community and corporate cookbooks are analyzed in Chapter Four. The final chapter delves into the history of the *America Eats* project in Montana and examines its significance in the development of culinary literature.

My love for recipes and cooking and cookbooks has been lifelong, cultivated by a strong mother and grandmother who allowed me to help in the kitchen even when I was small enough to be more a hindrance than a help. Over the years, my interests have transitioned more to the cooking ephemera of the past with an emphasis on vintage community cookbooks and culinary advertisements. It seemed like a natural transition to look at these interests in a more academic light, to see what linkages could be made between seemingly disparate topics. My goal for this work was to highlight how the mid-twentieth century served as a turning point for national and regional foodways and how these changes are evident in cookbooks and literature of the period. I also wanted to show how undervalued culinary history is in historical methodology and the

opportunities it presents to form a greater understanding of rural communities. By examining the intersection between the environment, western literature, and culinary history the shifting sociocultural landscape of the United States in the mid-twentieth century is illuminated.

CHAPTER TWO

FOOD AS LITERATURE AND FOOD IN LITERATURE

*The first requirement in mountain hospitality is food—plenty of it.*⁸

Setting the Table

Whistling winds whip across the prairie, blowing the snow into drifts that from a distance look like the white-capped peaks of a storm-tossed sea. Small homesteads dot the landscape and cattle cluster together in pastures green with fertile summer grasses and dandelions. This is Montana, land of the big sky, home to fiercely independent people shaped by the challenging environment and strong community ties. There is a certain amount of poetry, of lyricism to this wide-open land. But it is also a land of extremes and broken dreams. Lured by the promise of acreage and bountiful opportunities, thousands of settlers flooded into the Far West only to face a harsh reality, one that indigenous peoples had known for countless generations. The West is full of dichotomies, summer nights filled with stars and laughter and winter blizzards so cold and so long food runs out and the wood pile quickly dwindles. The starkness of the windswept plains of eastern Montana and the rugged mountainous terrain of the western portion of the state present unique challenges to the unprepared newcomer, a situation only heightened in a time with fewer modern conveniences.

Food is a central aspect in the life of every being. In the twentieth century, the worst economic depression the United States had ever seen, the grim reality of wartime rationing, and

⁸ Editorial Notes (Montana Office), 1936-1942, Collection WPA Records: America Eats, Box 1, Folder 3, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

the idyllic facade of postwar America cast food in particular and shifting roles. Wartime pamphlets and cookbooks urged housewives to cook in thrifty fashion with less meat, to do their part to conserve food for the boys and allies overseas. Food found its home in consumers' manuals for the latest kitchen gadgets, in advertisements for fancy Jell-O molds and bundt pans. Government agencies advocated for the best use of summertime crops and the ideal way to preserve for long winters and hard times ahead. Advertisements featured smiling housewives in frilled aprons serving pie to their dapper husbands, briefcases in hand. Between 1930 and 1959, a wide array of literature counseled Americans on how to prepare, preserve, and consume food.

Sweet rolls dripping with butter, barbecue still carrying a tinge of hickory, honey reminiscent of meadows filled with bright wildflowers. Farmers markets on early summer mornings, local produce and meat displayed lovingly, snuggled in with scarves knitted from the softest wool and warm baked goods. These are some of the images that may come to mind when considering what food means to you. For everyone, food means something different. For some it's a reminder of relatives long since passed and afternoons spent strolling in warm autumnal sunshine in apple orchards. While the memories are individualistic, food is significant for several key reasons. Food is necessary for life, but is also inherently tied to family, culture, and home. Food is tethered to the natural and built environment, interconnected with human, animal, and societal influences. Literature can be an invaluable way to examine and interpret Aspects of everyday life are steeped in broader significance and by examining foodways in literature, one can interpret critical elements of the past that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Louise Erdrich's *The Master Butchers Singing Club*

The Master Butchers Singing Club by Louise Erdrich is a sweeping examination of the reality of immigrants who come to America in pursuit of freedom and opportunity. This story showcases the power of family in search of the American Dream in a new, unknown land. However, this is not what makes the book special. After all, books about people pulling themselves up from nothing to come to America and be rewarded with a life of prosperity, where all their hopes and dreams come true, are a dime a dozen. To be fair, these books always seem a bit unreal, almost like Americanist propaganda. What makes Erdrich's *Singing Club* unique and powerful is the way she uses food as leverage, as a tool that the characters need, desire, and trust. Through food tropes, Erdrich portrays the ways that the natural and cultural environments affect every aspect of life in the middle of the twentieth century.

Taking place between 1918 and 1954, *Singing Club* is a book rich with culinary symbolism and cultural significance. Centering around a young German couple who move to North Dakota shortly after the Great War, *Singing Club* is redolent with family traditions, heritage, hopes, and dreams. Fidelis Waldvogel is a young master butcher who moves to the United States from Germany after WWI with his young wife and son. Fidelis establishes his own butcher shop in the fictional town of Argus, North Dakota and builds a home for himself and his family. He also organizes a singing club with all the best singers in the small town.⁹ Eva Waldvogel is Fidelis's wife, whom he married as the fulfillment of a promise to his dead best friend. Delphine Watzka is a local woman who makes her meager living as part of a traveling acrobatic show before returning home to care for her alcoholic father. Delphine and Eva quickly become friends, and after Eva succumbs to terminal cancer, Delphine vows to take care of

⁹ Louise Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003).

Fidelis and the four children. The relationship between Delphine and Fidelis eventually culminates in marriage.

In a cold “land [that] seemed barren as a moonscape...the two butcher shops divided the town between them, just as the Catholic and Lutheran churches did.”¹⁰ Pete Kozka and Fidelis are the two owners of the butcher shops in Argus, each offering the town quality meats. Pete Kozka is “a good-natured but humorless block of a man, always in need of help since his ways were cheap and men quit.”¹¹ Kozka hires Fidelis shortly after his arrival in Argus and the two men become rivals upon Fidelis’s departure to begin his own (very successful) shop. While the rivalry between the two butchers “was amicable enough” sometimes “things turned more serious,” particularly regarding Fidelis’s booming business and his relationship with Kozka’s beloved dog Hottentot.¹²

At that period, people were sorted by religion and ethnicity. Fidelis is a new German immigrant while Kozka is a long-established member of Argus. While the division mentioned by Erdrich plays on religious imagery, the main difference between them lies in their mastery of butchery. Fidelis proves his superiority over Kozka—at least in the eyes of many townsfolk—due to his fantastic sausages and custom butchery skills. Kozka’s meats and other foods served in his butcher shop pale in comparison to Fidelis’s luminous sausage links, studded through with fresh garlic and smelling of smoke and salt. Additionally, as Fidelis’s popularity and word of his

¹⁰ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 30, 42.

¹¹ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 31.

¹² Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 31-32.

skill spreads, he is able to purchase several delivery trucks with which he is able to expand his business.¹³

Interaction with food occurs on a daily basis and close interpersonal relationships and respect (albeit perhaps begrudging) are established between local food purveyors and purchasers. The fact that there are two butcher shops in a town as small as Argus, North Dakota in the middle of the twentieth century speaks to several important cultural factors. Not only does this represent the presence of several ethnicities and religions within a small geographic space, there is an apparent division and conflict between them, indicated by the existence of two butcher shops in an otherwise unremarkable small town. Fidelis and his family are German, and many people in Argus during the post-war period regard them at first with suspicion and distrust, only to be won over eventually by Fidelis's sausage-making prowess. This speaks to enduring prejudices and biases against widespread anti-German sentiment in the United States following WWI. Food plays a pivotal role in counteracting and overcoming these prejudicial tendencies.

More than just revealing cultural and ethnic tensions, the presence of two butcher shops in a rural town addresses broader implications about accessibility and environmental adversity. *Singing Club* is set between 1918 and 1954, and for the majority of this time access to large grocery stores and other commonplace urban institutions in rural locations was out of the question. Local foodways can be defined as food that is produced, processed, prepared, and sold in a relatively small geographic circumference. As transportation of commodities was not as standardized and widespread as it is in the contemporary United States, reliance on local foodways was a necessity, particularly for rural areas of the American West. The relationship to

¹³ "But Fidelis had the truck, packed with sausage, out on a wide sweep of deliveries to various grocery stores." Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 30, 143

food was much more personal and localized in the 1930s through the 1950s than it is today, so the butcher shops in *Singing Club* are an indication of a unique social and cultural phenomenon. They are also a representation of the way the natural environment has an effect on the built environment and the local culture. Fidelis not only ran his butcher shop in Argus, he travelled to farms and did custom butchering for local townsfolk. He prides himself in crafting exquisite sausages, made only from the freshest, locally sourced ingredients.¹⁴



Figure 1: Ranch hands butchering a cow at the Quarter Circle U Ranch in the summer of 1939. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.¹⁵

¹⁴ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 29-30.

¹⁵ This photograph was created by photographer Arthur Rothstein in the summer of 1939. The Quarter Circle U Ranch is located near Birney, Montana in Rosebud County. The ranch was

Rather than being a trend, as it is in contemporary America—to source everything locally and claim sustainability—Fidelis recognized the necessity of local ingredients.¹⁶ This can be attributed to the remoteness of Argus as well as transportation issues. While Argus originated as a railroad town, the availability of fresh meat, vegetables and more were not entirely reliable. Thus, it was the reasonable decision to insist on only local, fresh ingredients for Fidelis’s sausages. The taste of incredibly fresh food is superior to foods crafted with older, less fresh ingredients brought in by train from other locales. Due to the relative remoteness of Argus, North Dakota, it was necessary to rely on local foodways to satisfy the demands of the community. In general, there was a closer connection to food in the mid-1900s than there is today, there was a distinct interaction with the environment and local foodways in rural areas of the country like the American West.

Forming strong interpersonal ties with your fellow townspeople was essential in the mid-century West for several vital reasons. Not only did these connections provide one with the necessary sustenance for one’s family to survive the long, difficult winters but they were also a source of familiarity, as Eva Waldvogel remarks, in a place where “signs of human presence

established in 1882 by George Warren Brewster and as of 2017 remains under family ownership. This photograph is sourced from the Farm Security Administration- Office of War Information Photograph Collection (Library of Congress). Arthur Rothstein, “Butchering a cow, Quarter Circle U Ranch, Montana,” Library of Congress, accessed May 25, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017725308/>; “Quarter Circle U,” National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, accessed May 31, 2021, <https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/finding-aids/quarter-circle-u/>.

¹⁶ This is also known as the ‘locavore’ movement, or the use, insistence on and preference of local and fresh foods over processed foods. It is often seen as a status symbol in contemporary North American society. Megan J. Elias, *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4cw5.1>.

[are] diminish[ed]” and wild things fade in and out of the periphery.¹⁷ After the initial discrimination against the Waldvogels shifts to admiration for Fidelis’s master butcher skills and the family’s kind, generous nature, it becomes apparent that the townsfolk of Argus value the Waldvogels’ contribution to the local foodway. Perhaps one of the most significant of all the food representations in *Singing Club*, the continuing presence of the butcher shops throughout the novel is indicative of the prevalence and reliance on local foods in the mid-nineteenth century American West. Local foods primarily consisted of animals (including sheep, pigs, and cattle) and crops that are conducive to being grown in a relatively harsh environment. These locally grown and raised foodstuffs are supplemented with canned foods and other shelf stable items.

The Waldvogel family ate in much the same way that other families of the town did, with the inclusion of ethnic German dishes. Meals consisted of “strong coffee...cheese and bread and stewed prunes,” with supplemental cold beer and lemonade and vegetables grown in the “garden [which] was everything raw and wild that Eva’s [organized] house was not.”¹⁸ And of course, no day’s meals would be complete without the omnipresent sausages and meats that Fidelis lovingly prepares in his butcher’s shop. After Eva becomes sick and eventually dies, and as Delphine becomes an ever-more important part of the family, the house is filled with sugar cakes and pies, “crock[s] of beans laced with hot mustard, brown sugar and black-strap molasses,” and “of course more sausages.”¹⁹ Delphine prepares “Hungarian-style goulash” as Eva had taught her,

¹⁷ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 30-31.

¹⁸ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 34,107-108.

¹⁹ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 123.

with spaetzle and sour cream, “an extra egg...two more onions...all the meat.”²⁰ Food has an undeniable impact on daily life on a simply necessary level, but foods like this feel like a *homecoming*, especially when they have memory attached to them. Delphine’s experiences with Eva in her kitchen often felt like “a fabulous expansion of being,” transformative and comforting all at once.²¹

In one scene, Delphine Watzka brings “a lemon pound cake to the table, and tension eased up quickly,” feelings drifting to the surface like so many crumbs falling to the tabletop.²² Food has a power to it, an emotional, physical, financial heft to it that it does not often receive acknowledgement. It is a form of connectivity, of community and family. It mends heartache and fills empty minds and stomachs, creating strong bonds where there were previously none. It functions for the most part in a subconscious way, whereupon food serves as a conclusive factor in not just sustenance and life, but also the more intangible aspects of being a human being. There is a phenomenon, called *madeleine de Proust*, or an involuntary memory evoked by touch, taste, smell, or sound.²³ The Proust Madeleine is the neurological and psychological explanation for what happens inside one’s mind when confronted with something that elicits a deep, profound emotional memory, one associated with smell, sound, taste.

²⁰ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 142.

²¹ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 70.

²² Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 154.

²³ Also called the Proust phenomenon, a Proust madeleine, the Proust effect or a Proust memory, the term is named for Marcel Proust’s description of his experience eating a madeleine in the book *In Search of Lost Time*. “Madeleine de Proust,” The Local, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://www.thelocal.fr/20190814/french-expression-of-the-day-madeleine-de-proust/>; “Proust Phenomenon,” APA Dictionary of Psychology, accessed April 16, 2021, <https://dictionary.apa.org/proust-phenomenon>.

Joy, hope, anger, fear. My grandmother used to tell me that angry hearts did not make happy food, that an angry baker's pie crusts would turn brittle and tough and bread would become inedible, filled with an indescribable sourness. I always feel that longing and sadness produce food tinged with the emotional equivalent of cold tea and slightly burned toast. Food is a physical manifestation of emotional states, secrets kept, hidden hopes. It is a way to express love but also frustration. Food is *never* just food. It is a hidden ecosystem of tropes, providing insights into environmental, political, economic, and cultural factors.

Delphine Watzka serves Fidelis a slice of lemon pound cake, made with his deceased wife's recipe. The familiarity of the recipe brings Fidelis close to tears, while simultaneously easing the strain between Fidelis and Delphine. While this scene may appear on the surface to have a veneer of domesticity, it is indicative of larger cultural factors. There is a long tradition of women sharing recipes, as a form of conscious and subconscious identity reinforcement as well as practicality. The act of trading recipes and interacting with other women in the community creates strong social ties, especially in rural areas where both geographic and social isolation is inherent. As Kennan Ferguson states in "Intensifying Taste, Intensifying Identity," recipes serve to "contextualize and communalize the land, resources, experience, technology, and care."²⁴ When Delphine prepares a recipe that she learned from Eva, a fellow townspeople, she is demonstrating the intersection between community and necessity. Beyond the social and cultural implications of this scene, the use of lemons is also indicative of other phenomenon in the United States at the time. By 1928, lemons were relatively cheap, with a dozen lemons selling between

²⁴ Kennan Ferguson, "Intensifying Taste, Intensifying Identity: Collectivity through Community Cookbooks," *Signs* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 712.

21 cents to 41 cents.²⁵ Lemons became progressively more common by the mid-1900s, due to the prevalence of advertisements aimed at bringing citrus to every corner of America to be used both in food as well as a cosmetic aid and household resource.²⁶ Better transportation networks of train and truck brought lemons to remote rural places such as Argus, North Dakota. Baking a lemon cake for Fidelis using a recipe curated by her darling departed friend is an indication of the increasingly intertwined national foodways beginning to infiltrate even the most rural of locales. Furthermore, this scene serves a *madeleine de Proust*, evoking bittersweet memories for both Delphine and Fidelis as they are silently transported back to times when Eva would carefully spend an afternoon in the big farm kitchen, making an enjoyed and treasured family recipe.

The scene speaks to the enduring power of food, a power that is easily mistaken as nostalgia or yearning for a past that is gone from this world. On the contrary, food represents a bridge between this world and the next, an adjoiner of the dead and the living, a reminder that those we love never truly leave us as long as we still have their recipes. The dead come to life, at least for a moment, in the movements of spoon through thick batter, strong hands kneading dough on a worn kitchen counter. It is with the physical act of preparing a loved one's favorite food that food gains its transcendental mastery over the human spirit, lodging itself next to hope and memory, tucked in beside the heart.

²⁵ Lynne Olver, "Lemons," Food Timeline, accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.foodtimeline.org/foodpies.html#lemons>.

²⁶ Olver, "Lemons," <https://www.foodtimeline.org/foodpies.html#lemons>; *Sunkist Lemons Bring Out the Flavor*, (Los Angeles: California Fruit Growers Exchange, 1939), Adam Matthew: Food and Drink in History.

Some twenty years after Fidelis returns home from the Great War, his sons fight on different sides of World War II. Delphine, now Fidelis's wife, settles into the daily routine of "grocerying and butchering and figuring accounts" at the butcher shop.²⁷ "The war was changing the business," with "Jewish synagogues" seeking Fidelis out "for custom kosher work" while all the while supply "shortages plagued them."²⁸ The shop adapts by selling oleomargarine instead of the rich country butter they stocked prior to the war. In the aftermath of the war, two of Fidelis's sons are dead, killed on opposite sides of the conflict. Fidelis and Delphine travel to Europe to attend the unveiling of a memorial in Fidelis's hometown, which was bombed during the war. Irrevocably altered by the events of the war and weakened by "an enlarged liver and a threatened heart," Fidelis dies upon their return to the States, remembering "his father boiling the sausages in the great copper sausage kettle" and wondering at the familiarity of this, his dying moment, to "the day of slaughter."²⁹ He had always "been there to carry out death's chores. [And] [n]ow [that] it was his time" he wonders "[w]ho was there to do the same for him?"³⁰

The final years of Fidelis's life are marked by tragedy and hardship: death, rationing, and sadness. While his business survives (and thrives) after World War II, Fidelis finds himself becoming weaker and weaker, a novelty for someone who has been physically and mentally strong his whole life. In the end, he finds himself just like the many animals whose lives he has ended, helplessly trapped in the moment. He can vividly see his father, the master butcher who taught him everything he knows and he hears the voices of a not so heavenly choir. The voices of

²⁷ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 343.

²⁸ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 343.

²⁹ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 378.

³⁰ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 343.

the master butchers singing, the sight of Delphine's face and sudden silence, and Fidelis is no more.

Food plays an important role in Louise Erdrich's *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, representative of the cultural, environmental and familial value of food. As Erdrich introduces readers to her vivid characters, it becomes apparent that foodways shape every aspect of everyday lives. Not only does food play a vital economic role in the health, happiness, and satisfaction of the Waldvogel family, it is also an indication of the economic wellbeing of Argus, North Dakota. While Argus originated as a railroad town and found its initial wealth and success from this fact, it quickly became "as up-and-coming a place as anywhere in North Dakota."³¹ An indication of the town's relative economic success (especially for a town the small size of Argus) is the presence of two butcher shops, several groceries, and the honor of becoming the county seat. Food is also an intrinsic factor of emotional and cultural life in Argus.

The Waldvogel family instills the community with a stable source of fresh meats, in addition to providing much needed processing for local farms and families. In a rural location, where food sources are predicated on the success of harvests and the temperament of the natural environment as well as the reliability of supply trains, a dependable family who values and cares for the surrounding towns is incredibly valuable. Not only do the Waldvogels fill a niche for skilled culinary craftsmen, but they refine and develop the preexisting foodways in Argus, through their integration into the community. The valuation of the family only grows over time, as the Waldvogels endear themselves to the other townsfolk and prove themselves indispensable. The Waldvogels substantiate themselves to be a contributing and symbiotic part of the Argus community. The vivid descriptions of food throughout *Singing Club* make apparent the value and

³¹ Erdrich, *The Master Butchers Singing Club*, 29.

impact that food has on everyday lives. It is also clear that while the proximity to the railway provides certain oddities and creature comforts (including a variety of foods that cannot thrive in the harsh North Dakota climate) the local townsfolk must rely on each other for culinary necessities. The Waldvogels play an integral role in the local foodways, as they fill a niche gap for the processing and preparation of locally raised mammals. Beyond this obvious involvement in the functioning of both foodways and society, the Waldvogel family represents the much lauded ideal of the American Dream. So many come to the United States with the hopes of entire generations on their backs, determined to find a life better than the one they left behind. While Fidelis and his family experience their own share of tragedy and misfortune, they are also free to live, to love, to dream as they were unable to do in the old country. Wrapped in the warm shroud of familial love and affection, cloaked in the steam of hot kitchens and the smell of fresh garlic folded into young lamb, the Waldvogels are the manifestation of the strength that food provides.

Ivan Doig's *English Creek*

In the summer of 1939, amidst waves of sheep, forest fires and the last remnants of the Great Depression, teenager Jick McCaskill grows up. Ivan Doig's *English Creek* is a coming of age tale set in Northern Montana at the tail end of the Great Depression. The book is the epitome of the real West, a portrait of the true Montana in the 1930s. The story follows fourteen-year-old Jick and the rest of the McCaskills through the events of one summer in the Two Medicine country of Montana on the late 1930s. Jick's life is shaped by the unique environment of the Rocky Mountain West; he grows up helping his father count sheep and fight forest fires. Told through the lens of Jick from many years later, as he remembers growing up in Montana in the 1930s, *English Creek* examines what it means to be a Montanan living in a place of extremes during a time of great hardship.

Jick's life has been shaped by the ramifications of the Great Depression, whose effects manifest themselves in both tangible and intangible ways. Jick marvels at his mother's deftness, making the most of what little food they had available to them. He remarks upon watching her "starting in on whatever it is cooks like her do to connive food for three into a supper for five."³² This scene is indicative of larger societal factors during this time period, particularly the effect of the economic downturn in the 1930s. In a time when many Americans relied on the generosity of neighbors who were not hit as hard, on home gardens for supplemental food, and food aid assistance programs, Jick's mother Beth McCaskill must be creative and pertinacious in order to stretch limited supplies. This brief passage reveals food-related ingenuity during the 1930s that developed in order to compensate for the inconsistent access to (or lack of) foodstuffs. Furthermore, the scene reveals ingrained gender stereotypes. While it is not explicitly spelled out, there are certainly implied gender norms in Jick's simple observation. Jick's mother is expected to prepare meals for the family (as well as any additional guests) every day, and in order to do so, she must find ways to stretch and adjust meals to accommodate for inconsistent and reduced food supplies.

Additionally, this scene is representative of the ways in which everyday life was altered due to the economic depression during the 1930s. Particularly in rural places like Montana, there was a lack of supplementary support systems in place to assist with food aid. As Jick notes early in the novel, "[b]efore WPA relief jobs and other New Deal help began to take hold, many a farm family got by only egg money or cream checks. Or any damn thing they could come up with."²⁶ The stigma felt by many people regarding accepting aid—either in the form of surplus food, food stamps or other forms of aid once it came around—sometimes prevented them from

³² Ivan Doig, *English Creek*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 5.

accepting any form of assistance.³³ Recognizing the presence of federal, state, and local aid programs at this time is important, but it is equally significant that people's pride often prevented them from utilizing these resources. This simple scene of a loving and hardworking Montana mother trying to make ends meet with the limited resources available to her is representative of how Montanans faced the scarcity and obstacles of the Great Depression.

The family's meals were supplemented heavily with canned foods, with gingersnaps, kept in an old Karo tin, coffee, and goods from the garden like pole beans.³⁴ When away from home, Jick ate foods like "slices of fried ham between slabs of homemade bread daubed with fresh yellow butter," and cans of plums, fresh-caught fish, cans of pork and beans, canned tomatoes, "aging loa[ves] of bread and some Velveeta cheese."³⁵ In almost every instance where Jick's mother is mentioned, she is busy in the kitchen making meals or with other domestic tasks, like canning vegetables. In contrast to the vivid descriptions of foods when Jick and company are not at home, the meals eaten while at home are rarely described in the novel, usually being referred to in vague, off-handed mentions, like "[d]innertime was not far off, her [Jick's mother] cookly conscience now...siding with her motherly one," and "after supper."³⁶ This is representative of gendered divisions of labor and also Jick's own assumptions. Where else would his mother be if she wasn't somewhere in the house or otherwise busy with domestic work? His relative indifference to foods eaten at home is especially stark considering the detailed descriptions of foods prepared by himself or by others outside of his home. This is perhaps an indication that Jick was so accustomed to his mother's cooking that it didn't warrant, in his mind,

³³ Doig, *English Creek*, 39.

³⁴ Doig, *English Creek*, 128, 281.

³⁵ Doig, *English Creek*, 38, 51-52, 88, 92.

³⁶ Doig, *English Creek*, 291, 119.

much or any description. In his mind, it was simply ordinary and to be expected. The repeated instances where foods prepared and consumed outside of Jick's childhood home are expounded upon can also serve as a representation of entrenched gender ideologies. This is certainly not to say that Jick is not self-sufficient when it comes to food, as he prepares many of his own and others' meals throughout the novel. But perhaps this self-sufficiency does not extend to the home front.... it's certainly food for thought.

Bubbling water rushes over pebble gravel and stones rubbed smooth by the river's soft caresses, coated in algae floating like a maiden's hair in the swift current. Tobacco cans filled with hooks and worms wiggling, sun hot on the back of burnt necks, browned from the ruthless Montana summer. The cool splash of the river against sore limbs, tired and worn-down from endless days in the saddle riding the hills of the Montana backcountry. The McCaskills have a long running agreement that whenever someone is unable to catch ten fish, they owe the other family members a milkshake. Jick states that over the years, his brother Alec owed Jick and his father eight milkshakes each, until he finally gave up fishing altogether.³⁷ Jick and his father are an even match, each having only failed once to catch ten fish. Beyond the novelty and charm of this scene, which at first glance appears to be a touching father-son bonding moment, it reveals the need to supplement meals with foraged and locally obtained materials.

³⁷ Doig, *English Creek*, 51.



Figure 2: Jim Whilt cooking fish in a frying pan over open coals. Photo courtesy of the Montana Memory Project.³⁸

The trout represent a habituated need to source foodstuffs from local areas to supplement meals that would otherwise not be adequate to feed a family. This is an indication of not only the rurality of Montana but also the need to rely on one's own family rather than federal, state, or local agencies to provide an adequate food supply for a family of four, plus any additional

³⁸ Photograph of Jim Whilt circa 1940-1965. At the time of the photograph, Whilt had been employed as a guide in Glacier National Park in Montana for twenty years. The photograph was taken by Walt Dyke who worked for the Public Relations Department of the Great Northern Railway Company. This photograph was provided by the Glacier National Park Archives to the Montana Memory Project as a digital contribution to their digital historical photographs collections. "Jim Whilt cooking over fire," Montana Memory Project: Glacier National Park Historical Photographs, accessed May 23, 2021, <https://mtmemory.org/digital/collection/p16013coll83/id/394/rec/180>.

guests. While it is easy to view the prevalence of trout fishing in *English Creek* as merely a representation of place and the bountiful local environment and ecosystem, it is in fact a politically and economically charged activity. When looked at closely, it resembles a strong attitude of self-reliance, in a time when federal, state, and local aid programs were unable to keep pace with the sheer volume of broke and starved families. It is an indication of the desire for independence, something that has traditionally typified the stereotypical Montanan. It must also be noted that fishing in this instance serves as both pastime and necessity. That something as seemingly innocuous as a milkshake is seen as a special treat reveals multitudes about the state of family's economic status in the Great Depression. While the McCaskills may not have been hit as hard as other families in the area, milkshakes represent a treat, a splurge, something that must be earned and is not freely given. Additionally, the way that these milkshakes is earned through the use of fishing is indicative as well. The act of fishing provides much needed supplementary nutritional value for the family, while also serving as a bonding experience between father and son.

One fine day, Jick and his father Varick set out to fish along the banks of English Creek, determined to catch enough fish for their meal. Each successful at catching ten fish apiece, they settle down to “fry up both catches of fish, eat as many for supper as [they] could hold” and save the rest for breakfast.³⁹ Jick describes the way the “little brookies, Eastern brook trout about eight inches long, are among the best eating there can be.”⁴⁰ After devouring about four trout each, they share a can of pork and beans and buttered bread before finishing off the rest of the freshly caught and fried fish. The prevalence and ease of fishing can be viewed as an indication

³⁹ Doig, *English Creek*, 51.

⁴⁰ Doig, *English Creek*, 51.

of the relative health of the streams during the Great Depression. Although it may seem trivial that the McCaskills are consistently able to catch ten trout apiece, it speaks to potentially wider environmental phenomenon of the mid-twentieth century. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to substantiate this positing, at least for the time period in question. Ultimately, this scene speaks to the pervasive nature of self-reliance and emphasis on self-sufficiency among Montanan families during the mid-twentieth century. Additionally, it is a factor that shares parallels with community cookbooks of the era, as I will discuss in my second chapter. In many recipes and non-commercial cookbooks dating to the twentieth century (and earlier) it was common, perhaps even assumed, that recipes would be predicated on the use of local, homegrown or foraged ingredients.⁴¹ Through many of the mentions of food in Doig's *English Creek*, it becomes apparent that the McCaskills'--what some may call, rugged self-sufficiency-- parallels rural trends during the Great Depression of using and relying on local foods as not only a supplement to government aid, but perhaps even a substitute for it.

Years later when Jick is grown, he reminisces about the last interaction he has with his father prior to his passing. Varick goes off fishing one day in the late 1950s, joking that he bets Jick a beer that Jick has "forgotten how to string ten fish on a willow."⁴² When Jick tells his father he cannot get away from work to accompany his father fishing, his father goes alone. This is the last conversation Jick has with his father. By nightfall, when Varick does not return home, Jick and several other men go in search of him, but are unable to find him before darkness falls, finding only his truck parked alongside the river. It is Jick who finds his father early the next

⁴¹ Alison P. Kelly, "Choice Receipts from American Housekeepers: A Collection of Digitized Community Cookbooks from the Library of Congress," *The Public Historian* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 30-52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2012.34.2.30>.

⁴² This passage is not only a sweet recall to times gone past, but also a bittersweet indication that Jick is now grown, as the traditional milkshake bet has shifted to beer. Doig, *English Creek*, 336.

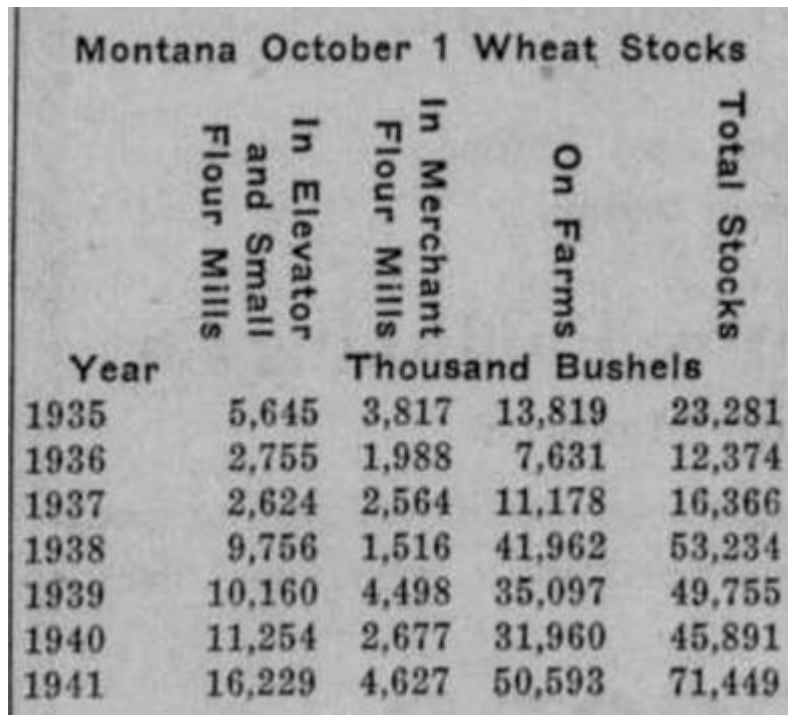
morning, on the banks of English Creek with a willow string of nine brook trout--the tenth still hooked on the line.

Although the Great Depression and its economic hardships have since passed, it has become as much a habit as a pleasure to fish the crystalline streams and lakes of the Montana wilds, just as Jick and his father did. As evidenced in Ivan Doig's *English Creek*, family and cultural memory is inherently linked to the experience of the natural environment and food. Much like other families in the North American West, the McCaskill family relies on foods foraged from the surrounding ecosystem, demonstrating the necessary dietary supplementation during the Great Depression. The scenes involving food in the novel represent economic hardships that necessitate extraordinary inventiveness and ingenuity. They are also indicative of both the vulnerability and reliance predicated on the health of the natural environment. *English Creek* is an exemplary illustration of the ways in which literature functions as a lens through which food has a substantial impact on everyday life. Doig paints a vivid picture of the way limited nutritional resources is a driving factor behind the actions of everyday activities, like cooking for a family and foraging, fishing, and hunting. Beyond the boundaries of grocery stores and paved roads, water rushes over sun-dappled river stones and yellow warblers sing in the willows along the banks of English Creek.

Mildred Walker's *Winter Wheat*

Windswept prairies, a future dependent on the wheat harvest, and a life oriented by the tempestuous seasons in central Montana. This is how *Winter Wheat* by Mildred Walker begins, with the crackle of the old radio and the reading of wheat prices. The novel takes place in the early 1940s, as the main character Ellen Webb prepares for college and later returns to Montana as a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse. *Winter Wheat* epitomizes the challenges and also joys of

living in an environmentally capricious place where life's successes and failures are predicated on crop yields and prices. Walker's novel is a creative and poignant examination of growing up in Montana in the twentieth century in the midst of war, economic hardship, and environmental adversity.



Year	Flour Mills	In Elevator and Small Flour Mills	In Merchant Flour Mills	On Farms	Total Stocks
Thousand Bushels					
1935	5,645	3,817	13,819	23,281	
1936	2,755	1,988	7,631	12,374	
1937	2,624	2,564	11,178	16,366	
1938	9,756	1,516	41,962	53,234	
1939	10,160	4,498	35,097	49,755	
1940	11,254	2,677	31,960	45,891	
1941	16,229	4,627	50,593	71,449	

Figure 3: Wheat stock quantities from 1935 to 1941. Photo courtesy of Chronicling America.⁴³

Ellen Webb's life is shaped by her time spent on her family's dryland wheat farm in central Montana during the 1940s. Born to a father from Vermont and a mother from Russia, Ellen grows up knowing that the quality and quantity of the winter wheat grown on the family

⁴³ Newspaper clipping detailing the quantities by thousand bushels (broken down by location) that were produced in Montana from 1935 to 1941. Excerpt from *The People's Voice*, a newspaper published in Helena, Montana from 1939 to 1969. "Wheat Stocks October 1 At New Peak," *The People's Voice*, November 5, 1941, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/data/batches/mthi_douglasfir_ver01/data/sn86075189/00414211008/1941110501/0412.pdf.

farm will determine whether she can go to college and for how long. On the day Ellen leaves for college funded by the “wheat money,” she wonders at the luxury of the train.⁴⁴ There are real flowers, long tablecloths in the dining cars and the food. Oh, the food! Ellen picks “up the menu and order[s] the same things the folks would have had hours earlier: prunes and oatmeal and toast and coffee” before realizing that she could have ordered anything she wanted.⁴⁵ Ellen reflects that she could have asked the waiter for “strawberries or melon...sausages [or] ham,” but she was too embarrassed to change her order with the waiter standing there, so she looks “out the window as though [she] wasn’t interested in food.”⁴⁶ This scene is indicative of larger cultural forces at work in the American West during the 1940s.

⁴⁴ Mildred Walker, *Winter Wheat* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 5.

⁴⁵ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 15.

⁴⁶ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 15.

WHEAT STOCKS OCTOBER 1 AT NEW PEAK

Office of the Agricultural Statistician co-operating with the Grain division, Montana state department of agriculture.

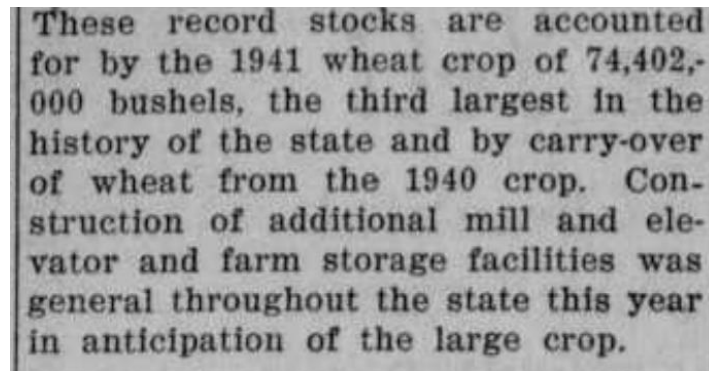
A total of 71,449,000 bushels of wheat stored in all positions in Montana on October 1, 1941 is the largest all position storage figure on record for October 1. By the three positions, October 1 wheat stocks in grain elevators and small flour mills are 16,229,000 bushels; in merchant flour mills, 4,627,000 bushels; on farms, 50,593,000 bushels. Wheat stocks in each of these three positions are also the largest on record for October 1.

Wheat Ground

During the month of August, 1941, the 17 Montana merchant flour mills with a daily 24-hour milling capacity of 9,610 barrels, ground 465,849 bushels of wheat, and produced 104,394 barrels of flour. This compares with 441,709 bushels of wheat ground and 97,940 barrels of flour produced for the previous month of July, 1941. For the crop year July 1, 1940 to July 1, 1941, Montana merchant mills ground 4,948,283 bushels of wheat and produced 1,099,496 barrels of flour.

Figure 4: Detailed information about the success of the wheat crop of 1941. Photos courtesy of Chronicling America.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Newspaper clipping elaborating on the success of the wheat crop for the 1941 growing season in Montana. Excerpt from *The People's Voice*, a newspaper published in Helena, Montana from 1939 to 1969. "Wheat Stocks October 1 At New Peak," *The People's Voice*, November 5, 1941,



These record stocks are accounted for by the 1941 wheat crop of 74,402,000 bushels, the third largest in the history of the state and by carry-over of wheat from the 1940 crop. Construction of additional mill and elevator and farm storage facilities was general throughout the state this year in anticipation of the large crop.

Figure 5: Continued information about the success of the wheat crop of 1941. Photos courtesy of Chronicling America.⁴⁸

The American West during the 1940s was relatively rural in comparison with other regions of the country; Montana's population was 558,000 people according to the 1940 census.⁴⁹ This rurality in combination with extreme and unpredictable weather patterns contributed to unique foodways shaped to accommodate these unavoidable facts of life. When Ellen is exposed to a multitude of food choices on her rail trip to college in Minnesota, she simply orders what she had seen folks order that morning in the dining car. It does not cross her mind until after the fact that there are many options available on the train. This speaks to the lack

https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/data/batches/mthi_douglasfir_ver01/data/sn86075189/00414211008/1941110501/0412.pdf.

⁴⁸ Newspaper clipping elaborating on the success of the wheat crop for the 1941 growing season in Montana. Excerpt from *The People's Voice*, a newspaper published in Helena, Montana from 1939 to 1969. "Wheat Stocks October 1 At New Peak," *The People's Voice*, November 5, 1941, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/data/batches/mthi_douglasfir_ver01/data/sn86075189/00414211008/1941110501/0412.pdf.

⁴⁹ "Montana Population 1900-2020," MacroTrends, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.macrotrends.net/states/montana/population>; "Place Explorer: Montana," Data Commons, accessed March 21, 2021, https://datacommons.org/place/geoId/30?utm_medium=explore&mprop=count&popt=Person&hl=en.

of availability and accessibility that Ellen is accustomed to in rural central Montana in the 1940s. The types of food available were predicated on the time of year, the local climate, and accessibility. In mid-century rural Montana the foods available would be largely the foodstuffs that were grown, produced, processed, preserved, and sold in local foodways. Local foodways in this case are foods that originate from within the state as well as foodstuffs purchased at small groceries, including canned and the shelf stable goods.

When Ellen is too embarrassed to change her order to something that is out of the ordinary for her, something that would be a treat, it is indicative of her discomfort in a more urbane setting. Growing up in a rural environment, living a lifestyle dependent on the whims of the weather and the tumultuous agricultural market, Ellen had become accustomed to local foodways that contained almost exclusively local, easily accessible foods. Faced with a more sophisticated, urban palate, Ellen marvels at the menu, but automatically orders the familiar. Ellen even goes so far as to look out the train window, to pretend that she is not interested in food at all. This is a further manifestation of Ellen's discomfort and embarrassment about originating in a rural, agricultural state that has limited accessibility and diversity of foodstuffs during the twentieth century. Ultimately, this scene on the train shows us that food, although an essential component of life, was inherently complicated. Food is also representative of larger economic and environmental factors that speak to the access and availability of foodstuffs in local foodways. By examining the ways in which Ellen Webb responds to external stimuli in the form of food, the impact of local foodways on the culture and people of a place becomes clearer.

During Ellen's first semester at college, she begins a job in the school's cafeteria, surrounded by "the smell of fresh coffee...fresh broiled bacon...[and] fried eggs...like daisy

heads.”⁵⁰ Ellen thinks to herself how easy it would be to feed a whole threshing crew in a cafeteria setting but laughs when she realizes that the harvesters would never become accustomed to serving themselves. As this scene reveals, Ellen relates each interaction with food to previous experiences. In this case, Ellen’s reminiscences about harvesting time and feeding whole crews of hungry men are representative of a regional phenomenon as well as environmental elements. While the tone of this passage is nostalgic and rich in sensory details, hiding in plain sight are signifiers of the culture and natural environment that Ellen comes from. Threshing and other harvesting activities are integral aspects of life in many agricultural communities, marked by long days of hard labor in challenging conditions. Typically, women of the family are expected to produce meals of substantial quantity to feed the large crews of workers. It is indicative of Ellen’s past growing up in an agricultural community that she associates large amounts of food with harvest time. Additionally, this passage speaks to the entrenched gender roles that were prevalent during the mid-twentieth century. Ellen’s casual off-the-cuff remark about knowing a threshing crew would never serve themselves is representative of the belief that women are intended to serve men.

After Ellen’s year away at college, she returns to Montana to assist with the wheat harvest, which isn’t as bountiful as previous years. Due to the poor harvest, Ellen is unable to return to Minnesota for a second year of college. When Ellen tells her father that she will not be returning to college, he seems almost relieved. This hurts Ellen more than her mother’s coldness when she informs Ellen that going back for her second year is impractical and useless. Perhaps this is due to the atmosphere in the decades between the first and second world wars. Ellen’s parents experienced the hardship and trauma that accompanies war like a black cloud. Ellen’s

⁵⁰ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 22.

father Ben fought in the Great War, where he met Ellen's mother Anna in Russia where he was wounded. The bitterness and occasional resentment but also deep and enduring affection between her parents marks Ellen's life, as do Ben's war wounds. The shadows of the Great War wrap their thorny tendrils around the Webbs, cocooning them in a fine ash of guilt, pride, and familial friction. While Ben wants Ellen to go off and enjoy college, Anna is more practical, valuing the financial security of a debt-free farm over her daughter's (in her mind) foolish and childish desires. Ben remarks on the evening before Ellen leaves for college that he wants her to have "a good time," especially if the wheat fails and they were unable to send her for longer than one year.⁵¹ This sentiment strikes fear in Ellen's heart, as if it was a "drop of temperature in the middle of a summer's day; you begin to worry about hail striking."⁵² Ellen's worries find fruition when her mother discusses potential employment options as an alternative to returning to school, without informing Ellen until the decisions are all but made. Instead of returning to college, Ellen takes a job as a teacher at a remote schoolhouse.

As Ellen and her mother drive the eighty-five miles north of Ellen's hometown to the schoolhouse, she looks at the "endless, flat, treeless plains" and feels "chilled [,] as though the wind was already rushing across the plain."⁵³ Her mother helps Ellen bring "the canned goods and provisions" into the schoolhouse, which were meant to last Ellen through the winter.⁵⁴ While Ellen intends to return home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, she knows she will not have the time or means to travel the miles back south very often. "The jars of fruit and chicken and [the Webb's] own beef and vegetables filled the cupboard" and pile up on the floor, representing the

⁵¹ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 9.

⁵² Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 9.

⁵³ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 145-146.

⁵⁴ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 147.

meals that Ellen will eat alone in the old schoolhouse through the short fall, into the long winter and finally into the green spring.⁵⁵ As Ellen's mother drives away, Ellen feels the emptiness envelope her and reality sets in. She will be alone, with only her eight students for daytime company for months at a time in a barren landscape, flat as the winter is long.

This section introducing Ellen's new job as a school teacher makes several key elements evident. While the lodging, wood, furniture, and school supplies are provided by the county, Ellen is required to supply her own food. Due to the intended duration of her stay at the schoolhouse, Ellen must be prepared with enough food to last her at least seven months. The abundance of canned goods is a sensible choice, as they have a long shelf life and are relatively durable in comparison to fresh produce and unpreserved foods. Ellen has canned goods that have been purchased as well as food that she and her mother had canned during harvest time. This is an indication of the reliance on canned goods during the mid-twentieth century, especially in places whose geographic remoteness prevented easy access to grocery stores and other sources of fresh food. The canned food produced by the Webb family is especially representative of the reliance on local foods, particularly the foods grown, produced, and preserved in the same geographic area where they will ultimately be consumed. Additionally, this scene shows the isolation and remoteness of Montana, even as recently as the 1940s. The nearest town was too far away for Ellen to reach easily, even if she had a mode of transportation, which she did not. The stockpile of canned, shelf-stable goods is an indication of the impact the remote and bitter environment of Montana had on seemingly simple facts of life, like consistent and reliable access to certain foodstuffs.

⁵⁵ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 147.

The Webbs, in addition to wheat, raised pigs, turkeys, cows, and chickens, as well as a large kitchen garden with beets and cucumbers. There are mentions throughout the book of dried beans that need soaking overnight, cabbage, “bread and cold pork,” “chicken pie and candied sweet potatoes and Mom’s rolls.”⁵⁶ Ellen’s mother makes homemade wine of dandelion and raisins, huge pots of borscht which Ellen describes as “Mom’s famous Russian soup.”⁵⁷ Despite Ellen’s mother being from Russia, traditional Russian foods and ingredients are not often mentioned in the novel.

It is not just the natural environment that has an impact on foodways in *Winter Wheat* but the built environment. The term “built environment” can be defined as “man-made or modified structures that provide people with living, working, and recreational spaces,” and is fundamentally linked to the conditions of the natural environment.⁵⁸ Ellen’s schoolhouse is centrally located for rural families with children. However, there is no accompanying infrastructure with the schoolhouse, only increasing Ellen’s relative remoteness and subsequent reliance on prepared foodstuffs; she doesn’t have the means to grow food or to easily shop for food. Nor does she have well-equipped kitchen.

On a bitterly cold Montana morning, snow pounding against the windows and blocking out the light, Ellen’s parents arrive at the teacherage, bearing copious amounts of food. Canned foods, a freshly killed and prepared turkey, cranberry sauce, and borscht. Ellen knows without asking that the big kettle her mother brings in from the old farm truck is borscht. Her father jokes that Ellen will not be able to get the smell of the soup out of schoolhouse for a week, the scent of

⁵⁶ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 9, 261, 266.

⁵⁷ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 71.

⁵⁸ “Basic Information about the Built Environment,” United States Environmental Protection Agency, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.epa.gov/smm/basic-information-about-built-environment>.

the hot beets is so strong. The next morning, when the children arrive and Ellen reheats the soup, they exclaim about the vibrant color of the steaming bowls of red soup, many of them experiencing the Russian dish for the first time. Ellen and the children sit at their desks, watching the snow blow past the windows and feeling the chill creeping in along the floorboards. The radio that Ellen's father brought crackles with tinny dance music until an urgent announcement from the Highway Department breaks through, warning "motorists to stay off the roads" and advising schoolchildren to shelter in place at teacherages overnight as temperatures will fall to fifty below.⁵⁹ Ellen entertains the children by promising to teach them to "'make candy-two kinds, fudge and taffy'," but the evening ends in tragedy, as one of the students wanders outside alone and gets lost in the blizzard and freezes to death, still clutching a cookie tightly in his mittened hand.⁶⁰ The blizzard is one of the worst in recent memory, with many livestock deaths and seventeen human fatalities, including Robert, Ellen's pupil. Although cloaked in terrible misfortune, the blizzard scene in *Winter Wheat* reveals both environmental and cultural phenomena. The tumultuous and unpredictable weather in Montana results at times in calamity, and contributes to a culture of resiliency and self-sufficiency. Additionally, the food present during this scene provides a small snapshot into Montana demographics. The children's experience with the borscht demonstrates the cultural diversity in Montana during the 1940s. The children are exposed to a cuisine they have never experienced before, albeit under less the ideal circumstances. Borscht makes multiple appearances throughout the novel, demonstrating the enduring spirit of Ellen's mother's cultural background. Ellen is raised with elements of Russian cuisine, mixed with the food particular to a small Montana farm family, largely reliant on foods

⁵⁹ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 171.

⁶⁰ Walker, *Winter Wheat*, 174, 179.

grown in kitchen gardens and animals and crops raised for both commercial and private purposes. The mixing of cultural cuisines represented in the Webb family meals is an indication of the adaptability and mutability of foodways.

Hot summer nights, face burnt and legs scratched by wheat chaff, kitchen stifling and thick with the scent of boiling beets. Ellen spends her childhood running along dusty roads and swimming in shallow seasonal ponds, learning to drive tractors and old farm trucks, and tending the wheat crop. The boundless prairie and dusty fallow fields of central Montana belie the vibrant culture present in the small towns scattered across the landscape. It is through books like Mildred Walker's *Winter Wheat* that it becomes evident how food, environment, and culture are inherently intertwined. It is apparent that the environmental challenges and rurality of central Montana in the 1940s contributed to a culture of hardiness and vitality. The culture of Ellen's hometown of Gotham, Montana was clearly impacted by a reliance upon the success of the seasonal crops and the dangers of hail, grasshoppers, and other crop catastrophes. The success of local families and subsequently the success of the local economy was dependent on the yield and price of crops, particularly wheat. As evidenced with the Webb family, Ellen is only able to attend college for one year due to the disparity of crop yields and prices from one year to the next. The small agricultural community in Gotham is reliant on crop successes and are held at the imperative of the challenging environmental conditions. Foodways are established based on the environment and the culture of the place, as evidenced by the Webb family in *Winter Wheat* by Mildred Walker.

Conclusions

Golden wheat trickles through wind-roughened fingertips, trailing its loving fingers along the backs of denim-clad legs, swaying like ocean waves touching a distant shore. Cold water

rushes past weary legs, feet growing numb to the current, slipping on slick moss-covered rocks. Listening to the wild wind whistling, whining over an endless expanse of prairie, broken only by outcrops of dusty, worn towns. These are the experiences of the American West during the 1930s, 40s and 50s. It may seem like a simple life, and it could be one filled with beauty and peace where hardship and adversity only makes the successes that much sweeter.

Through the use of food tropes in literature set in the period 1930 to 1959 in the American West, it becomes apparent that food is indicative of larger societal phenomena. *Master Butchers Singing Club*, *English Creek* and *Winter Wheat* speak to the way the harsh and unpredictable climate of the Northern Plains and Rocky Mountain West shapes every aspect of life and predicates the manner in which foodways are shaped and formed. Foodways in the region are oriented around a reliance on locally grown, harvested, and processed foods such as wheat, big game, and foraged materials. Those are supplemented by shelf-stable and canned goods. The use of food tropes in these novels reveals a great deal about the way small communities functioned in the West between 1930 and 1959, and further reveals the importance of the environment on the foundation of foodways.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNITY IN CORPORATE AMERICA

*There is romance and tragedy hidden in the leaves of every woman's cookbook.*⁶¹

Introduction

Old, weathered hands mold the dough, shaping it into the two little mounds that look like a miniature buttery snowman. An ever-present carafe of strong, black coffee rests in its customary place of pride on the counter, next to the kitchen sink. The air scented with anise and extra-sharp cheddar cheese, pots of mystery bubbling merrily on the stove. What is it that you think of when you think of family? Of the women in your family? For me, it is these memories that coalesce in my mind like so many bubbles on the top of live yeast. Many people have these memories, these Proustian madeleines lurking in their subconscious, something that is hardly thought of, locked tightly in its black box in the dusty corners of your mind. A scent, a taste...something triggers these murky memories, unlocking that box, bringing them to the forefront and leaving one wondering where they came from, what they mean, to whom are they connected. Opening the yellowed pages of cookbooks from the era of your ancestors can elicit these responses. Touching the stains left from cooking adventures (perhaps misadventures) and reading the faded pencil demarcations in the margins deeming certain recipes 'To die for!' or 'Disaster' only strengthens the threads connecting one to the past. It is not only personal remembrances and recollections that emerge from the cookbooks of mid-twentieth century America. These cookbooks function as diaries, as logbooks, as ledgers that allow one to delve

⁶¹ Editorial Notes (Montana Office), 1936-1942, CollectioWPA Records: America Eats, Box 1, Folder 3, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

into the past, into the minds of people long since passed. By examining the intersection and juxtaposition of community and corporate cookbooks between 1930 and 1959, it is apparent that beyond serving as treasured family memorabilia, these cookbooks also provide a window into a transformative time in American history.

A bit of Historical Intrigue and Clarification

In the United States, the three decades in the mid-twentieth century were marked by an incredible transformation of not just American thought and culture but also every aspect of daily life. Transportation became increasingly standardized and widespread, boosted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal so-called alphabet soup agencies.⁶² One of the major goals of the new programs, including the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR), was to develop and improve preexisting infrastructure across the United States. This served a dual purpose, as it improved America's infrastructure, including highways, dams and bridges, and provided jobs to out of work Americans.⁶³ Coinciding with the regularization of highways and other transportation methods across the country, foodways became increasingly homogenous beginning in the 1930s. Progressing into the 1940s and 1950s, foodways across the

⁶² The many programs established under FDR's New Deal were colloquially called the "Alphabet Soup" agencies, so named for the acronyms developed for their otherwise lengthy names. Ida Yalzadeh, "7 Alphabet Soup Agencies that Stuck Around," Britannica, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/list/7-alphabet-soup-agencies-that-stuck-around>; "The New Deal's Legacy," Digital Public Library of America, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://dp.la/exhibitions/new-deal/legacy/transportation>.

⁶³ A point of clarification is needed here. While the PWA did provide jobs, these jobs were provided indirectly as the federal government paid private contractors to build and improve upon preexisting infrastructure. This is dissimilar to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other agencies which directly hired out-of-work citizens. "New Deal Programs," The Living New Deal, accessed May 17, 2021, <https://livingnewdeal.org/what-was-the-new-deal/programs/>.

country became less unique as wide-spread modern conveniences, such as dishwashers and other time-saving home appliances, and mass transit of convenience and processed goods became the accepted norm. The last vestiges of individualized foodways can be discerned in the pages of community cookbooks, as they typically combine the remnants of localized preferences and quirks with common national food trends.

It is important to have several baseline definitions prior to digging into the meat of this chapter. Community cookbooks can be defined as recipe collections compiled by members of local organizations, including churches and ladies aid societies, typically for the purpose of fundraising.⁶⁴ These types of cookbooks are also referred to as fundraiser cookbooks, and date back to the Civil War era. As Harriet E. Wintermute describes in her article, “The Joy of Cataloging Community Cookbooks,” community cookbooks originated as “concentrated efforts to provide assistance for injured soldiers [during the Civil War] and sold recipe compilations to raise funds.”⁶⁵ By the period in focus in this chapter, community cookbooks were prevalent across the United States and serve as emblematic reminders of the social, environmental, and economic factors of the time and place in which they were created. By examining several community cookbooks created in Montana between 1930 and 1959 and comparing them to corporate cookbooks produced in the same period, trends become evident.

Methodologically, I have retained the original spellings, punctuation, and grammar unless otherwise noted. It was not uncommon in community cookbooks of the era to have the

⁶⁴ Cookbooks, Community,” [encyclopedia.com](https://www.encyclopedia.com/food/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/cookbooks-community), accessed June 21, 2021, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/food/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/cookbooks-community>.

⁶⁵ Harriet E. Wintermute, “The Joy of Cataloging Community Cookbooks,” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 55, no. 4. (2017): 197-228, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639374.2017.1291461>.

occasional error which, in my opinion, only adds to the authenticity and flavor of the compilation. Additionally, I have chosen to mark the compilers of each community cookbook, if noted, as editors in both the footnotes for this chapter as well as in the full bibliography. While the groups or individuals responsible for the collection of recipes, layout, and format were essential to the creation of the cookbook, they did not serve as editors per se. The committees and individuals responsible for gathering recipes emblematic of the cookbook's mission—often as simple as community favorite recipes—did not edit the submitted recipes beyond perhaps adding a name for the recipe if not included with the original recipe or providing the origin of the recipe. This is worth taking note of, as not all recipes include the name of the person who submitted it. This may be attributed to several factors, including the fear of potential disapproval. As Rebecca Sharpless discusses in “Cookbooks as Resources for Rural Research,” naming practices shifted over time and the inclusion of a name usually indicated that “[t]he writer wants to let the reader know where the recipe came from and that that matters.”⁶⁶ The names of recipes mentioned in this chapter will use the same capitalization—or lack thereof—that is used in each of their respective cookbooks.

Community Cookbooks

Big Hole Cookbook of Tested Recipes and Compendium [sic] of Useful Information (1934 Wisdom, Montana)⁶⁷

A charmingly rotund chef with rolling pin in hand and a stereotypical *toque blanche* graces the pages of the *Big Hole Cookbook of Tested Recipes and Compendium [sic] of Useful Information*, published in 1934 in the tiny town of Wisdom, Montana by Arthur M. Sanderson

⁶⁶ Rebecca Sharpless, “Cookbooks as Resources for Rural Research,” *Agricultural History* 90, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 195-208, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3098/ah.2016.090.2.195>.

⁶⁷ The title of the Big Hole Cookbook spells the word compendium “compendum.”

and Ian Sanderson. Wisdom, Montana is located in southwest Montana and at the time of the 1930 Census, was a small town of 901 residents.⁶⁸ Wisdom was named for the Wisdom River (now called the Big Hole River) that flows through the Big Hole Valley in southwestern Montana.⁶⁹ By examining the 1930 U.S. Census data for Wisdom, we can see that there were many immigrants in the community. Beyond people who moved to Montana from other states, there are twenty other countries listed as Countries of Birth on the census. These are as follows: Germany, Switzerland, Scotland, Sweden, Prussia, Canada, England, Holland, Poland, Denmark, Wales, Norway, Italy, Finland, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Ireland, Spain, Austria, and Albania.⁷⁰ There are a wide variety of jobs represented in the 1930 Census which speaks to both the availability of jobs during the Great Depression years in Wisdom as well as the assortment of jobs present in such a small town. Occupations include fur trapper, farmer, rancher, cook, telephone operator, butter wrapper, barber, postmaster, mail carrier, and teacher.⁷¹ While

⁶⁸ “1930 Census Data: Beaverhead County, Montana,” Montana State Genealogical Society, accessed April 11, 2022, <http://montanamsgs.org/1930/Beaverhead1930.htm>.

⁶⁹ “Wisdom, Montana,” VisitMT.com, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://www.visitmt.com/places-to-go/cities-and-towns/wisdom>.

⁷⁰ “1930 U.S. Census Data: Wisdom, Montana,” Ancestry.com, accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/6224/>.

⁷¹ A full list of occupations as noted in Wisdom, Montana for the 1930 Census is as follows: farmer, laborer, cook, cashier, telephone operator, mail carrier, butter wrapper, blacksmith, teacher, butcher, barber, garage mechanic, stone keeper, general store clerk, postmaster, farm manager, government trapper, butter maker, restaurant proprietor, public school granter, pool room proprietor, general store manager, general store book keeper, forest ranger and forest guardian, carpenter, freighting contractor, watchman, copper miner, silver miner, Teamster road work, silver mine foreman, rancher, housewife, ranch labor, laundress, hotel proprietor, grocery store salesman, lumber mill sawyer, railroad engineer, railroad manager, sheep herder, hotel housekeeper, fur trapper, highways contractor. It is also worth noting that “None” was also listed under occupation at least once on every page of the Census data for Wisdom, regardless of enumeration district. “1930 Census Data: Wisdom, Montana,” Ancestry.com, Accessed April 20, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/6224/>.

Wisdom was a small town in the 1930s, it is apparent that there was a thriving multicultural community at the time of the publication of *The Big Hole Cookbook*.

The 1934 cookbook is the second edition; the first was published in 1921. This is an indication of great enough popularity among the community for the first cookbook that there was not only a desire but perhaps even a demand for a second edition. This cookbook (hereafter known as *The Big Hole Cookbook*) is one hundred thirteen pages and is divided into twenty-one sections. The sections are as follows:

Bread, Rolls, Muffins and Hot Breads

Soup, Noodles, and Dumplings

Hot Cakes, Waffles, and Syrup

Meats and Fish

Vegetables and Eggs

Cheese

Salads and Dressings

Pickles and Preserves

Catsup and Meat Relishes

Pie

Puddings

Dessert

Doughnuts and Cookies

Small Cakes

Cakes

Icings

Sandwiches

Icings and Drinks

Confectionery

Compendium of Useful Information and Some Bright Ideas

Blank Pages for Pasting New Recipies [sic]⁷²

The sheer quantity of divisions within this cookbook, while amusing to the modern eye, can indicate two things. First, the extent of community participation in the creation of this cookbook.⁷³ Second, the way in the community cooks categorized foods, it is also representative of the way in which different foods were placed in different categories, even if they potentially fall under the same larger umbrella term, such as differentiating between pie, small cakes, and cakes rather than classifying all such relevant recipes as desserts. It does not appear as though

⁷² Arthur M. Sanderson and Ian Sanderson, eds., *Big Hole Cookbook of Tested Recipes and Compendum [sic] of Useful Information*, (Wisdom: Arthur M. Sanderson and Ian Sanderson, 1934).

⁷³ There are 122 contributors to the Big Hole Cookbook, only accounting for each person once regardless of how many recipes they submitted for the cookbook.

The Big Hole Cookbook was published or produced by a professional publishing house, but rather by a pair of community members. Arthur M. Sanderson and Ian Sanderson are credited on the inside cover of as having “mimeographed and published” the second edition of the community cookbook in Wisdom, Montana in 1934.

Extensive searching revealed that Arthur and Ian Sanderson were brothers, sons of a Missoula minister, Reverend J. Marshall Sanderson. From the short mentions in the *Dillon Examiner* and the *Montana Standard* in the summer months of 1934, it appears that the brothers, upon graduating from high school, resurrected the defunct *Big Hole Basin News*, which had previously been operated and edited by Richard Hathaway prior to his death. The Sandersons’ version of the newspaper was a mimeographed ten-page weekly bulletin. Arthur acted as editor while his brother Ian managed cartoons, advertisements, and artwork.⁷⁴ It is likely that the brothers were paid or asked to publish and subsequently print copies of *The Big Hole Cookbook*.⁷⁵ It is impossible to know whether or not the Sandersons were responsible for procuring and gathering the individual recipes and compiling them. Rather, it is more likely that a separate group—likely religious in nature—oversaw the actual content of the cookbook, while the brothers later organized, formatted, illustrated, and printed copies. This is part of the charm—or so I fondly like to believe—of community cookbooks. The unknown nature and

⁷⁴ Mary N. Cottrell, “News Items from Around the County: Wisdom,” *Dillon Examiner*, July 18, 1934, NewspaperArchive, <https://access-newspaperarchive-com.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/us/montana/dillon/dillon-examiner/1934/10-10/page-4>; “Big Hole Basin News, Edited by Missoula Youths, Mimeographed.” *Montana Standard*, August 12, 1934, NewspaperArchive, <https://access-newspaperarchive-com.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/us/montana/butte/butte-montana-standard/1943/01-31/page-10/>.

⁷⁵ I was unable to find a trace of the Sanderson brother’s iteration of the *Big Hole Basin News* in 1934 to see if the cookbook was advertised in any way in the paper, but I think it was likely. As the brothers produced both the newspaper and the cookbook, it stands to reason that the second edition of *The Big Hole Cookbook* would have been showcased in the weekly news bulletin.

uncertainties contained within the pages of all the best old cookbooks, stained with food and worn by many loving hands, can be simultaneously enchanting and tantalizing.

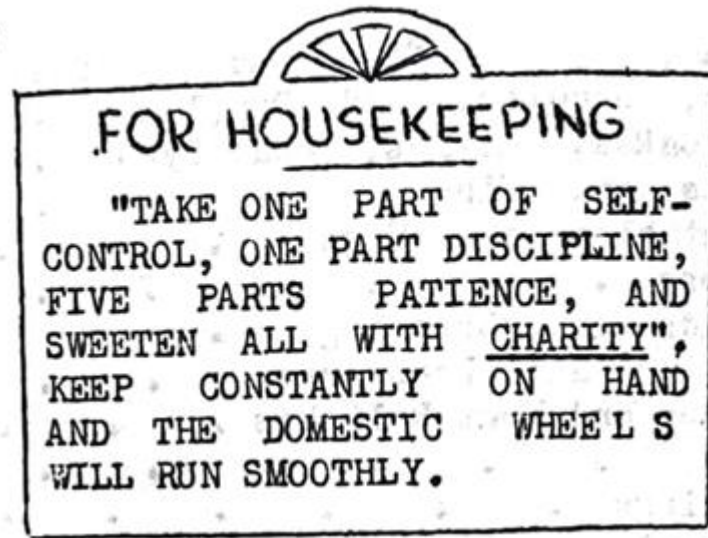


Figure 6: Illustration from the 1934 edition of *The Big Hole Cookbook*.⁷⁶

There are a variety of additional illustrations and inserts alongside the recipes in *The Big Hole Cookbook*. The stylized, hand-drawn illustrations each showcase landscapes, important buildings from Wisdom, and scenes of domestic life. Of course, the plethora of cherubic chef illustrations cannot be ignored, as they grace many pages throughout the cookbook. These were most likely drawn by Ian, who was responsible for the artwork in the *Big Hole Basin News*. There is an insert titled simply “For Housekeeping” that details in humorous prose the ways to keep all elements of domesticity running without conflict.

Name usage varies in *The Big Hole Cookbook*. While some women are represented by their married names, i.e., Mrs. John Smith, there are also a number of women noted by their first

⁷⁶ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, iii.

and last name, with no indications of their marital status. While some of the contributors may have chosen to include their social titles when volunteering recipes for the community cookbook, it is important to consider that the compilers of the cookbook may have simply chosen to record what they knew of the individual (Mrs., Miss) if not otherwise included or noted in the submitted recipe. It is impossible to know for certain whether the Sandersons made conscious efforts to include the titles of the community members who submitted recipes, but I would be remiss if I did not mention the possibility of that occurrence. The book includes a limited number of recipes without attribution and even fewer that were contributed by a male member of the community. In fact, there are only six men who contributed recipes to *The Big Hole Cookbook*.⁷⁷ There are also some names that it is hard to tell for certain whether the contributing member was male or female, as their names are denoted with titles (Dr.) or by initials. Several recipes are not attributed to singular people, but rather to “Cook Book” or “Knox’s Recipes.”⁷⁸

While the reference to a “Cook Book” is hard to ascertain or determine the origins of, it is possible that the cookbook in reference might be to the first edition of *The Big Hole Cookbook*, published in 1921. The mention of Knox’s Recipes is a reference to one of the most popular and prevalent brands of gelatin, both in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. According to the Knox Gelatine website, “More than one hundred years since the brand was first introduced [in the United States], Knox Unflavored Gelatin is still as timely as ever. A low-calorie, pure protein food, it fits perfectly into modern lifestyles as an essential ingredient for light, healthful cooking.”⁷⁹ Knox Gelatine is mentioned several times throughout the cookbook, which can serve

⁷⁷ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, 6, 11, 35, 48, 51, 74.

⁷⁸ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, 24, 28.

⁷⁹ “Knox History,” Knox Gelatine, accessed July 19, 2021, <https://www.knoxgelatine.com/history.htm#:~:text=In%201889%2C%20Charles%20B.,for%20his%20revolutionary%20marketing%20techniques>.

as an indication that this was one of the preferred brands of Wisdom housewives during the 1930s.

There are eight brand names mentioned in the cookbook, appearing with limited frequency.⁸⁰ Brands like Crisco and Swans Down Flour only appeared once each, while Knox Gelatin had two recipes that called for the ingredient by name and Karo Syrup had three. While this shows that brand names played some role in recipe construction in the rural community of Wisdom, Montana, we cannot automatically assume that this indicates brand preference. Rather, this is perhaps proof of effective advertising in local papers. By looking at newspapers from the surrounding big cities—or big relative to Wisdom—we see evidence of brand name advertising during the year of publication, 1934. Brands like Swans Down Flour, Crisco, Fleischmann's Yeast, Mazola Oil, and Baker's Chocolate appear in advertisements for grocery stores in cities like Butte, which was just over an hour's drive from Wisdom. The corresponding presence of the same name-brand products in advertisements as well as in the community cookbook alludes to the dual possibilities of brand preference and convenience. It is too simple to assume that brand named products appearing in the recipes is due to the brand loyalty of the creator. A simpler explanation may just be the truth: the products were readily available in grocery stores nearby, oftentimes at a sale price. For example, a large package of Swans Down Cake Flour was sold at Safeway Stores and MacMarr in Butte, Montana for a mere twenty-nine cents in November 1934, while a half pound of Baker's Chocolate was sold for twenty-one cents in October at Eclipse Grocery stores.⁸¹ Another likely possibility is that there were limited options in grocery

⁸⁰ The eight brands present in *The Big Hole Cookbook* are Fleischmann's Yeast, Crisco, Mapleine, Knox Gelatin, Mazola Oil, Swansdown Flour, Baker's Chocolate, and Karo Syrup.

⁸¹ "Safeway Stores and MacMarr: Prices Effective Until Thanksgiving," *Montana Labor News*, November 22, 1934. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/1934-11-22/ed-1/seq-4/#date1=1934&index=4&rows=20&words=Flour+Swansdown&searchType=basic&sequence=>

stores, both small ones close to or in Wisdom as well as larger options in bigger cities like Butte or Dillon. Many Montana newspapers in 1934 reported on the rising grocery prices and decreasing stock, with grocery stores like the Safeway in Butte adding warnings like, “Elberta Peaches: “Last Report” Peaches almost gone in the Yakima Valley and Prices Advancing,” into their weekly ads.⁸² The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl made food shortages common along with higher grocery prices. With all of these considerations, we must consider the reality that it nearly impossible for women to ignore advertisements, particularly for groceries.

As Katherine J. Parkin asserts in *Food is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America*, food advertisements conveyed the message that preparing homemade meals was not only a woman’s way of providing for her family, but also a way of showing love. She further states that “advertisers blurred the line between promoting their products and propagandizing for their country to convince women to buy the complete ideological package: name-brand foods, strict gender roles, and democracy.”⁸³ This era urges one to reconcile the duality of new traditionalism and an increasingly modern and technological society. While the marked preference for certain brands is noted throughout *The Big Hole Cook Book*, their (the brands’)

[0&state=Montana&date2=1934&proxtext=swansdown+flour+&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/1934-10-04/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1934&index=0&rows=20&words=Baker+Chocolate&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Montana&date2=1934&proxtext=baker%27s+chocolate&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1).; “Eclipse Grocery Co. Inc.: Friday, October 5th,” *Montana Labor News*, October 4, 1934. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/1934-10-04/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1934&index=0&rows=20&words=Baker+Chocolate&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Montana&date2=1934&proxtext=baker%27s+chocolate&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>.

⁸² “Safeway Stores and MacMarr: For Friday, Saturday, and Monday August 10th, 11th and 13th,” *Montana Labor News*, August 9, 1934, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/1934-08-09/ed-1/seq-4/#date1=1934&index=9&date2=1934&searchType=advanced&language=&sequence=0&words=food+grocery+GROCERY&proxdistance=100&state=Montana&rows=20&ortext=grocery+&proxtext=food&phrasetext=&andtext=&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=2>.

⁸³ Katherine J. Parkin, *Food Is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), ProQuest Ebook Central, 96.

presence can be interpreted as an indication of indoctrinated social norms subconsciously enforced in the lives of primarily white American housewives. While Parkin's postulation about the meaning behind food advertising does have some merit, in the case of *The Big Hole Cook Book*, it is more likely that the presence of brand-name products can be attributed to necessity or even chance. These products were available perhaps when others were not, and thus made their way into the recipes found in this particular community cookbook.

There are several quirks in *The Big Hole Cookbook* that are representative of the 1930s, the decade when the second edition was published. Some of the recipes do not include instructions on their preparation, indicating an assumption of a moderate level of prior domestic knowledge. This is seen in recipes like Breakfast Muffins, Cooked Cereal Muffins, and Macaroni Salad, which all list the required ingredients but provide no further instructions on how to use them to form an edible, appealing dish. Also of note is the fact that this community cookbook makes little to no distinction between ingredients and instructions. As Library of Congress scholar Alison P. Kelly discusses in her work on culinary history, "[a]cross time in [community] cookbooks, you can follow the trend toward standardization in recipes, measurement, and ingredients."⁸⁴ As will become apparent when examining the two other community cookbooks in this chapter, the use of division and clarification between ingredients and instructions became increasingly common over time, to the point where it was the standard rather than the rare exception. In *The Big Hole Cook Book*, there is no such separation, but rather a melding of instruction and required ingredients, requiring a deft mind and the ability to read a recipe through at least twice prior to jumping in and giving it one's best effort. An example of this type of

⁸⁴ Alison P. Kelly, "Choice Receipts from American Housekeepers: A Collection of Digitized Community Cookbooks from the Library of Congress," *The Public Historian* 34, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 30-52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/tph.2012.34.2.30>.

blending is seen with the recipe for Boneless Birds, which mixes the ingredients and instructions together in paragraph format.

Boneless Birds

Take a large round steak, cut so it will roll nicely, little less than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick. Cut in pieces so it will pin together after the following have been put in each: A little finely chopped onion, salt pork, pinch of ginger, salt and pepper; pin together with toothpicks. Put in kettle as for pot roast and brown, cover well with hot water and cook until tender, which will take 4 hours or longer. When done remove toothpicks and put birds in deep dish, make gravy and pour over the birds. Mrs. Chas. Quist

Figure 7: Recipe for Boneless Birds submitted by Mrs. Chas. Quist for the 1934 *Big Hole Cook Book*.⁸⁵

Other recipes make reference to foodstuffs by price point, as seen in the recipe for Pimento Sandwiches. This recipe makes specific mention of “1 fifteen cent can pimentos [sic]” and ensures that readers know the pimentos are also available in “25 cent cans.”⁸⁶ One of the other qualities that makes this recipe so unique and also telltale of the times is that the contributor notes how many people the recipe will feed, serving between “20 to 25 people.”⁸⁷ The large number of people that could be fed on a relatively low cost meal is indicative of the hard economic climate in which the recipe was created and subsequently submitted to the Sandersons for inclusion in the book’s second edition. While this recipe is certainly indicative of

⁸⁵ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, 21.

⁸⁶ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, 86.

⁸⁷ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, 86.

the time in which it was created, there are no other recipes in this cookbook that specifically note within the context of the recipe the cost of ingredients or the number of people the recipe should be able to feed. Perhaps we can read this as an indication that the community of Wisdom was not hit as hard as other Montana rural communities.

Many of the recipes rely on ingredients that would have been relatively easy to obtain in a rural, agricultural community like Wisdom and the surrounding small towns. Recipes utilize ingredients like eggs, dairy, and meat products, and vegetables which would have typically been grown, produced, and sold in local foodways rather than be brought in from out-of-state producers and sold in grocery stores. The majority of ingredients—with the exception of some canned and dried goods and fruits—would have likely been on hand for the typical farming family during the 1930s, either from their own crops and animals or from neighboring farms/ranches. Perhaps the most exotic ingredient—or at the very least not what one would expect to find in a Montana cookbook—is pineapple, which appears in a surprising number of recipes including Cream Fruit Salad and Salad. The Cream Fruit Salad calls for walnuts, oranges, vanilla, and bananas in addition to one cup of chopped pineapple. The simply named Salad calls for walnuts, whipped cream, and one can of pineapple along with, what seems to me anyway, a large quantity of marshmallows, a half-pound.⁸⁸ Both recipes have minimal, if any instruction beyond their ingredient list, trusting that the user would know what steps to take to transform the individual ingredients into a tasty, crowd-pleasing salad. The presence of pineapple in so many recipes in the 1934 community cookbook is explained at least in part with the mention of pineapple in a multitude of ads from Montana newspapers. Even if we just look at the newspapers in towns relatively close to Wisdom—typically Butte’s newspaper the *Montana*

⁸⁸ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cookbook*, 27, 29.

Labor News—pineapple appears multiple times in ads for grocers in 1934. In August 1934, Del Monte sliced or crushed pineapple was offered three cans for sixty-eight cents, while a November 1934 ad offered a larger can of crushed pineapple for a mere fifty-nine cents.⁸⁹ In just these two instances, we can see that pineapple perhaps wasn't as much a luxury or unusual food in foodways in Montana as was assumed.⁹⁰

The preparation and tools mentioned and required in the recipes in *The Big Hole Cookbook* are relatively simple. There is little to no mention of special technologies needed for the preparation of the majority of the recipes, many of which require basic kitchen equipment like a range, pots/pans, and typical tools like sieves and molds. Many recipes make mention of canning equipment as well, which would have included jars and lids. There are multiple instances where blending or beating is called for, which could indicate that the ingredients were either being manipulated by hand or with technological assistance. It is entirely possible that some or perhaps the majority of community contributors were relying on electric mixers like KitchenAid. KitchenAid debuted their first stand mixer in 1919, followed shortly after by the

⁸⁹ "Eclipse Grocery Co. Inc.: Friday, August 31, 1934." *Montana Labor News*, August 30, 1934. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/1934-08-30/ed-1/seq-2/#date1=1934&index=18&rows=20&words=PINEAPPLE&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Montana&date2=1934&proxtext=pineapple&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>; "Safeway Stores and MacMarr: Prices Effective From Friday Nov. 2nd to Wednesday, Nov. 7th." *Montana Labor News*, November 1, 1934. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075141/1934-11-01/ed-1/seq-6/#date1=1934&index=1&rows=20&words=PINEAPPLE&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Montana&date2=1934&proxtext=pineapple&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>.

⁹⁰ Today, fifty-nine cents is the equivalent of \$12.28 while sixty-eight cents is approximately \$14.15. "1934 to 2021 Prices," Inflation Calculator, accessed February 09, 2022, <https://www.usinflationcalculator.com/>.

electric hand mixer.⁹¹ By the 1930s, the brand became increasingly popular among housewives, particularly with the smaller, more user-friendly Model K, which debuted in 1937. The second edition of *The Big Hole Cookbook* was produced and printed in 1934, prior to the release of the new Model K KitchenAid, however it is possible that contributors to the cookbook were using electric mixers for ease of cooking and baking rather than relying purely on hand strength.

While there are no handwritten notations in the examined copy of *The Big Hole Cookbook*, there are several small stains. These discolorations appear primarily on the front cover and several following pages. The book is in remarkably good condition considering it is eighty-seven years old, boasting crisp white pages and a relatively unbroken spine. This can be interpreted to mean that this particular cookbook was not necessarily a favorite of its prior owner or owners and was not used often in the kitchen. Furthermore, it is possible that this community cookbook was purchased by its original owner in an attempt to lend monetary support to the fundraiser of choice. It is not specified in the cookbook what the fundraiser was for, or even if the community cookbook was intended as a fundraiser to begin with. The length of the cookbook is also noteworthy. In comparison to the other Montana community cookbooks from the era (1930 to 1959) *The Big Hole Cookbook* contains more recipes and additional information like cleaning tips. This community cookbook has one hundred thirteen pages, while the other two

⁹¹ KitchenAid's H-5 model, the brand's first in-home product, was the precursor to the 1937 Model K and debuted in 1930. It cost approximately \$189 or the 2021 equivalent of \$3,155.30. It is possible that some households in Wisdom might have had a model H-5. Baldwin, Cory. "How the KitchenAid Stand Mixer Achieved Icon Status." *Eater*. February 24, 2020. <https://www.eater.com/2020/2/24/18629399/kitchenaid-stand-mixer-history-kitchen-essential-baking-appliance>; David Kindy, "For 100 Years, KitchenAid Has Been the Stand-Up Brand of Stand Mixers," *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed July 26, 2021, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/100-years-kitchenaid-has-been-stand-brand-stand-mixers-180972838/>; "Making History: KitchenAid," KitchenAid, accessed July 26, 2021, <https://www.kitchenaid.com/100year/history.html>.

community cookbooks that I will be focusing on in this chapter have seventy-seven and one hundred twenty-nine pages, respectively. While researching various Montana community cookbooks for the writing of this chapter, *The Big Hole Cookbook* was one of the longest cookbooks I looked at. The majority of community cookbooks I perused before settling on my final three generally were between thirty and seventy pages.

Unlike many community cookbooks, *The Big Hole Cookbook* does not contain any advertisements. While it is impossible to ascertain the intentions behind the cookbook, it is apparent that the compilation was popular enough to receive at least one reprinting (originally produced in 1921 and again in 1934). It is also possible that there were additional reprintings and revisions after 1934. This community cookbook is unusual in the fact that there are no ads present, even in limited areas such as at the beginning and end, which is traditionally where community cookbooks place advertisements. The unknown aspects of the cookbook may occasionally prove vexatious, however there are small clues sprinkled throughout that provide important context for the community cookbook as a whole, as well as for how it fits into American thought and culture of the 1930s.

By examining the use of easily procured, primarily locally sourced foodstuffs throughout the community cookbook, it is clear that many contributors to the cookbook were prioritizing thrift over the purchase of potentially expensive food items. While it is the exception rather than the rule in this cookbook to mention the cost of ingredients in the recipe, the majority of the recipes rely on easily obtained ingredients with simple assembly instructions. Some of the recipes do call for ingredients that might have been hard to come by during the Great Depression—such as some spices and sugar—however, there is no mention of how these ingredients were

obtained or paid for. It is possible that they were obtained through bartering, the burgeoning food stamp program (or the surplus food program), or perhaps even by paying by check or cash.

There are fifteen ethnic recipes present in *The Big Hole Cookbook*, including recipes for Oriental Cream, Steamed Suet Pudding, and Marinated Herring. Marinated or pickled herring is a common ethnic dish, shared among Scandinavian countries as well as Russia, Poland, and Germany. The recipe has large quantities of all ingredients while also being both time and labor intensive. Recipes like Marinated Herring, while relatively few-and-far between in the cookbook, are a representation of the community's ethnic diversity.

The Big Hole Cookbook is an intriguing example of the ways in which communities still thrived even in the midst of a national economic depression. In many ways, community cookbooks function as regional, place-defining literature, much in the same way as the literature discussed in Chapter One. While it is hard to tell if this community cookbook was used as a fundraiser for the community, it would make sense in the context of the Great Depression. The cookbook's lack of advertisements is unusual for both the time and the type of cookbook, making it a fairly unique example of a community cookbook from the 1930s. *The Big Hole Cookbook* is an example of how community cookbooks in the 1930s tended to convey more unique regional foodways and food preparation and production techniques, as the influence of national brands and the widespread accessibility of food products and technologies of later decades were not yet available.

Furthermore, this cookbook highlights the ways in which small town resourcefulness was a necessity during the Great Depression. Rather than hire a potentially expensive outside firm to pay for the publication and printing of the community cookbook, several members of the community stepped up and produced the necessary copies themselves, no simple or short task.

This might also explain the lack of ads, local or otherwise, present in the cookbook as the two compilers had no need to raise the funds for the outsourcing for the production and printing of *The Big Hole Cookbook*. Ultimately, this cookbook functions as an example of regional, rural foodways without a significant impact or influence from outside marketing or national standardization and industrialization. That being said, it is important to recognize that the cookbook still reinforces traditional gender roles with only several recipes being attributable to men. Those were recipes usually involving meat; cooking meat would have been seen as more appropriately masculine than, for example, baking a cake.

Montana Women of the Moose Cookbook (1948 Roundup, MT)

The *Montana Women of the Moose Cookbook* was compiled by the Homemaking Committee of Roundup, Montana No. 932 in 1948.⁹² Roundup is in Musselshell County, Montana in the eastern central part of the state and served as a place for cattlemen to gather their cattle next to the Musselshell River. According to James Harrison Hightower's letters, he proposed the name Roundup in 1882 and by the following year the newly-minted town had a

⁹² The Women of the Moose is the sister organization of the Loyal Order of the Moose, which is a fraternal religious organization that focuses on service missions. The fraternity boasts an impressive list of notable people, including several former U.S. Presidents. The Women of the Moose is a branch of Moose International and was established in 1913. According to their website, "The Women of the Moose provides social, educational and community service opportunities for its members" as well as serving as a charitable organization. The Roundup, Montana chapter of The Women of the Moose is recorded as No. 932, and it was the Home Making Committee in that compiled this particular cookbook. It does not appear as though this chapter is currently active, and I did not find any evidence as to how long the chapter operated out of Roundup, Montana.

post office.⁹³ Roundup, Montana had a population of 2,644 at the time of the 1940 Census.⁹⁴

There were twenty-six countries of birth besides the U.S. recorded in the data for Roundup, and the town had a host of varied jobs listed as occupations in 1940 including meat cutter, history writer for the WPA, jeweler, game warden, coal miner, and cook.⁹⁵ The wide variety of nationalities and occupations recorded in the Census data allows us to see what a diverse town Roundup was, in spite of its size, in 1940. The cookbook is divided into thirteen short sections, including an introductory segment of “Helps for Meal Planning.”⁹⁶ The sections are as follows:

Helps for Meal Planning

Beverages

Breads, Coffee Cakes, Etc.

Cakes, Frostings, Fillings

Cookies

⁹³ *Roundup on the Musselshell*, (Roundup: Musselshell Valley Historical Museum, May 1974), 5.

⁹⁴ “Number of Inhabitants: Montana,” U.S. Census Bureau, accessed April 11, 2022, PDF file, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-2/15276180v2p26ch1.pdf>.

⁹⁵ A partial list of occupations as noted in Roundup, Montana for the 1940 Census is as follows: coal miner, railroad laborer, seamstress, electrician, mail carrier, Forest Service trail builder, carpenter, housekeeper, butcher, forester, waitress, stenographer, truck driver, salesman, usherette, general office clerk, sheriff, auto mechanic proprietor, creamery proprietor, retail hardware manager, deputy sheriff, coal mine proprietor, student worker NYA (National Youth Administration), and mortician. For the full list of occupations, see Appendix A. “1940 Roundup, Montana Census Data,” Ancestry.com, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/2442/>.

⁹⁶ Frances Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book* (Roundup: The Home Making Committee of Roundup, September 1948), 2.

Confections

Desserts, Puddings, Ices, Etc.

Doughnuts, Croquettes, Etc.

Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.

Pastries

Pickles, Relishes, Preserves, Etc.

Salads, Dressings

Sandwiches⁹⁷

The quantity of sections listed in the *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*—hereafter referred to as the Moose Cookbook—is an indication of the prevalence of and ease of collection and cooperation from the community. The cookbook is approximately eighty pages, including full-page advertisements from local entities, and each section contains a minimum of three recipes. The division of different sweet goods is intriguing, especially considering the variety of dishes represented within the cookbook. Rather than lump all the dessert recipes together in one cumulative section or chapter, the recipes are grouped by style of dessert. This shows a certain level of sophistication and nuance on the part of the Home Making Committee.

In addition to the division of recipes within their respective sections, there is also a variety of what can be viewed as quaint additions to the cookbook. These include a black and

⁹⁷ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book* (Roundup: The Home Making Committee of Roundup, September 1948), 2.

white illustration of “The Basic 7 Food Groups,” which details the types of foods that should be eaten, in what quantities, and how often.⁹⁸ On the page immediately following the nutritional food wheel, there is a numerical checklist that the cookbook compilers urge their readers to comply with when cooking meals. Some of the rules include “Potatoes and other vegetables and fruit[.] Two or more servings daily” and “Meat, poultry, fish[.] One serving daily, if possible[.]”⁹⁹ While these two additions to the cookbook are seemingly run-of-the-mill and common appearances in community cookbooks, the other addition in the final pages of the cookbook is indicative of the time in which the Moose Cookbook was produced. The 1940s were a time rife with domestic expectations and ideals, particularly for women in the role of housewife. The short, anecdotal “Husband Conserve: A Recipe for June Brides” is simultaneously a funny play on marriage and the societal expectations for women in the late 1940s. This addition may appear to be merely a satirical and playful but also truthful portrayal of married life, the passages prove to be epigrammatic. Several phrases stand out as especially reflective of the conflict between traditional gender ideations and rapidly modernizing and industrializing America during the mid-twentieth century. Much of the brief insert utilizes cookery similes, such as, “Should he seem weak or troubled with feminine infatuations, smother him in onions and garlic, and treble your charm.” This may appear to be a light-hearted joke made at the expense of an errant husband’s wandering eye, but it in fact speaks to the expectation that women should go to any lengths to keep their husbands. Furthermore, this sentence speaks to the belief that if one’s husband focused his attentions elsewhere it was solely the fault and responsibility of the wife to retain or regain his affections. Rather than advise the primarily

⁹⁸ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 3.

⁹⁹ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 4.

female audience of the cookbook that perhaps they should seek a new partner or address their husbands directly about infidelity issues, women are encouraged to cook with strong ingredients like onions and garlic to make their husbands smell and thus become subsequently less attractive to potential flings.

Husband Conserve

A RECIPE FOR JUNE BRIDES

By Goldie Lemon

Select the best man you can find and brush him carefully to rid him of any indifference. Be careful not to beat him as you would an egg or cream, for beating will make him tough and apt to froth at the mouth.

Lift him gently into the home-preserving kettle and tie him with strong cords of affection which are not easily broken. Do not sear him with sarcasm, for that causes spitting and sputtering which may ultimately result in spontaneous combustion. Scramble when difficulties arise.

Do not soak him in liquor either, for excessive draughts will make him mushy and spongy with your friends, and in the Middle West, stewed husbands have never been very popular.

It is best to let him simmer tenderly at will, to blend tactfully with dressing and seasoning. Stuff him one hour before taking him out or before asking a great favor of him. A little caress or a glass of cool water will often add to his tenderness.

Flavor him with oil of happiness, an ounce of understanding, and a bushel of laughter and fun.

Should he seem weak or troubled with feminine infatuations, smother him in onions and garlic, and treble your charm.

Need him; need his dough, and be sure to save some of the dough for the little dumplings.

Do not spoil him by over-indulgence, but serve him daily on a platter of strength and courage, garnished with clean shirts and trousers.

—Submitted by Edith Klokow.



Figure 8: Goldie Lemon's "A Recipe for June Brides," poem included in the Moose Cookbook.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 78.

While this may seem archaic and chauvinistic, the fact remained that divorce was not widely socially acceptable. By including a humorous addendum in the final pages of the Moose Cookbook, the Women of the Moose are reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. Augmenting the cookbook with materials that were intended for informative or educational purposes, allows the Moose Cookbook to retain its power through the decades. This permits historians in the twenty-first century to glean more discerning information about the functionality of the community cookbook for rural communities.

There is a mixture of name usages throughout the Moose Cookbook. While many of the recipes utilize the full names of their creators/submitters, others still utilize their married names. Traditionally, in social situations married women went by their husband's name (for example, Mrs. Paul Smith) and the submission and appearance of a chosen recipe would qualify as a social setting. As previously discussed, the inclusion, or lack of inclusion, of a woman's name in correlation with a recipe signifies not only her social standing but also practices of the time and the place in which the recipes were published and produced. The 1940s represent a liminal period in women's history. During and after WWII, women increasingly worked outside the home and interacted with a wider social sphere than prior to the war, leading to gender ideation conflict. The mixed use of both traditionally "proper" married names as well as the less formal use of names without any prefixes is emblematic of the ways in which conflicting gender ideologies were at play in even the smallest, sleepiest towns during the 1940s.

Several contributors appear numerous times in the Moose Cookbook with recipes in multiple categories. Frances Stalcup contributed sixteen recipes to the cookbook in nine separate categories. This is an impressive show of community support by Stalcup, a truly prolific contribution of recipes for the Roundup Homemaking Committee. Or is it? Frances Stalcup is

credited on the title page of the Moose Cookbook as a prominent member of the Roundup Chapter, leading me to believe that perhaps her recipes were given preference in the creation of the cookbook. Other leading members mentioned on the title page also have a large number of recipes in the Moose Cookbook, including Cecilia Meznarich with eighteen recipes and Rose Meznarich with six recipes. Recipes were contributed from Moose Chapters all over the state of Montana, with an approximately even split of recipe contributions between Roundup 932 and all other Montana chapters.¹⁰¹ Edith Klokow, a member of Roundup 932 contributed twenty-six recipes, while Hilda Meyer of Great Falls 547 has eight recipes. Even though many women contributed more than one recipe, the quantity of different names and chapter locations shows statewide communication and participation in the creation of the Moose community cookbook.

The Women of the Moose (the sister organization of the Loyal Order of the Moose) served as both community and family and as such, women formed connections with participants in other chapters around the state, bonded simply by the fact that they belonged to the same organization. While their day-to-day lives may have been very different, they found common ground in their shared ideologies and beliefs. The cookbook and the recipes within function in a way as a form of communication among women amidst the rurality and isolation of Montana during the 1940s, much the same as letters or weekly lunch club meetings would. The recipes serve as a way of informing other members about one's current socioeconomic status, one's current geographical location, as well as proving their domestic prowess by providing time-honored, family-tested recipes. Something as seemingly simple and mundane as a recipe serves

¹⁰¹ The Moose Cookbook refers to Women of the Moose Chapter numbers by the town name and the chapter number, in this case Roundup 932 (town name, chapter number).

as a method of communication amidst a group that at times found itself limited by the impositions of its gender and the daunting distances of Montana.

There are ads throughout the cookbook, exclusively from Roundup and the surrounding areas. The companies advertised showcase the dichotomy between local and national taste making ideals during the 1940s. Following World War II, the tension between traditional domestic ideology and feminine independence and solidarity grew. One of the most interesting aspects of this particular cookbook is the prevalence of ads relating to technological innovations, which speaks to a desire to free up time otherwise spent on labor and time intensive household tasks. There are ads for Zenith, Frigidaire, and GE appliances, all national brands with the goal of serving as a household aid. These national brands make an appearance in the Moose Cookbook alongside ads for local companies like New Elk Cafe, Model Grocery, and Musselshell Valley Equipment Company. The diversity of ads shows the extent of national interaction between the rural and urban, particularly with the juxtaposition of national brands with local, primarily machine-oriented or agricultural services. Advertisements for the Roundup grain elevator and the Roundup Creamery are beside Keene Coal, showcasing the intersection between national and local companies. Many of the advertisements are agricultural in nature, which is demonstrative of the agricultural and rural landscape that the Moose Cookbook was produced in. Interestingly enough, many of the same companies and brands that have advertisements in this community cookbook are not present in any newspaper in Montana during the year of publication, 1948. This may be due to the predominantly local companies—based in Roundup—that took out ad space in the Moose Cookbook, but there are several nationally recognized brands mentioned in the cookbook that do not appear in any newspaper advertising in the state. One of the only exceptions to this is Frigidaire, which has extremely limited

appearances in ads during 1948, primarily in Libby, Laurel, Columbia Falls, and Butte newspapers.¹⁰² Along with the numerous ads for local grocers and cafes, the Roundup community cookbook highlights the often dichotomous transition from primarily local foodways to the increasing incorporation of nationally recognized brands. Furthermore, the Moose Cookbook is the epitome of remaining regional uniqueness and locality even in the midst of growing homogeneity and consumeristic similarity.

There are minimal handwritten notations within the margins of the copy of the Moose Cookbook I examined. One of the notations reads, “Welcome to Montana Land of Shining Mountains,” in a simple handwritten print. An incredibly small scribble in beautiful script at the bottom of a page is the word “strength” spelled out several times. The other significant handwritten notation is an adaptation for a gelatin carrot salad recipe. The scribbles indicate that the previous owner of the cookbook typically made a larger batch of this recipe than the original recipe calls for. There are amendments to the amount of each ingredient, doubling the quantity originally required. This may have been a recipe used by the previous owner with relative frequency, or simply a favorite recipe. The cover exhibits slight stains, including what looks to be coffee or another similar liquid substance, perhaps even something that stems from a recipe contained within the pages of the cookbook. These stains are evidenced almost exclusively on the front cover of the cookbook and to a lesser extent on the back cover. This could be an indication that this particular cookbook was stored in a kitchen or another place where the book came into latent contact with cooking materials. However, the notable lack of stains or marks on

¹⁰² “Search Results 1948 ‘Montana, Frigidaire,’” *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, accessed January 16, 2022, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/pages/results/?state=Montana&date1=1948&date2=1948&proxtext=frigidaire&x=0&y=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&rows=20&searchType=basic>.

the pages with actual recipes perhaps insinuates that the Moose Cookbook was not a favorite cookbook of the previous owner, or owners, and was not frequently used.

The recipes themselves reveal a great deal about the community and time in which they were created. By examining the ingredients and any special equipment required by each recipe within the Moose Cookbook, it becomes apparent that the women creating these recipes most likely belonged to an affluent, albeit rural, network of women across Montana. There is a mixture of affluence and thriftiness apparent in the recipes, as well as evidence of a level of experimentation within the Moose Cookbook. This can be interpreted in several different ways. Like all communities, Roundup and the surrounding areas—as the cookbook collected recipes from women around the state—had a diversity of socioeconomic strata during the 1940s. This is evidenced throughout the cookbook. While some recipes call for items like dates or citrus—a potential signifier of a household with more disposable income for culinary experimentation—there are also a great number of recipes utilizing common and relatively cheap ingredients. Perhaps one of the best comparisons to be made about the variety of ingredients within the recipes of the cookbook is with the Pineapple Upside Down Cake and Fried Cakes.¹⁰³ The pineapple cake contains several noteworthy “imported” ingredients, including canned pineapple, maraschino cherries, and grated orange rind. Citrus fruits at this time, while becoming

¹⁰³ The recipe for Pineapple Upside Down Cake may be found on page 19 of the Moose Cookbook while the recipe for Fried Cakes is located on page 43. While the Fried Cakes recipe has an author and her associated town and chapter number, the Pineapple Upside Down Cake does not. Frances Stalcup, Rose Meznarich, Cecilia Meznarich, Rose Bujok, and Viola Johnson eds. *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*. Roundup: The Home Making Committee of Roundup, September 1948, 19, 43.

increasingly common in Western foodways and an accustomed taste in rural palates, were not used in enough recipes to indicate relative commonness.¹⁰⁴

PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

2 tblsp. soft butter	2 eggs, beaten
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar	$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. grated orange rind
Canned pineapple slices	Maraschino cherries
Pecans	1 tsp. vanilla
2 cups sifted cake flour	1 cup sugar
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or shortening	$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
2 tsp. baking powder	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup cold water

Brush 8x10x12 pan or a 10 inch frying pan with the butter. Cover bottom with brown sugar. Arrange pineapple slices on sugar mixture with maraschino cherries in the center of each slice. Fill in with pecans.

Batter:

Cream butter, add sugar gradually, then eggs, grated rind and vanilla. Sift flour with salt and baking powder. Add alternately with water to creamed mixture. Stir until batter is smooth. Pour batter over fruit. Meanwhile preheat oven. Bake 20 to 30 minutes at 375°. Turn out at once upside down on a cake platter. Serve plain or with whipped cream.

Figure 9: Recipe for Pineapple Upside Down Cake from the Moose Cookbook.¹⁰⁵

FRIED CAKES

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar	Flour to roll soft
1 cup buttermilk	1 egg
Shortening size of egg	1 tsp. soda

Fry in deep fat until brown. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

—Mary A. White, Roundup, 932.

Figure 10: Recipe for Fried Cakes from the Moose Cookbook.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ However, as previously noted, citrus like pineapple was offered at relatively reasonable prices at grocery stores in larger cities like Laurel or Billings. In fact, there is even an advertisement in the Moose Cookbook for the Roundup branch of the Miles City Mercantile Co. that offered Del Monte canned goods as a selling point. Del Monte offered—and still does—a variety of canned fruits including both pineapple and cherries.

¹⁰⁵ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 43.

The 1940s were also a time of wartime rationing, and at the time of the publication of this cookbook (1948) many households were still accustomed to creating and producing foods that relied on the readily available foods during wartime. However, towards the end of the 1940s, food became increasingly adventurous and deviated from previously settled foodways, particularly in the North American West. The preparation process is fairly fiddly, with many steps laid out in the instructions. The recipe is produced in degrees, each building off the last. While there is no preparation time listed (though baking time is) it is apparent that the process of preparing this recipe would require no insignificant amount of time. In addition to the thirty minutes spent in the oven, the cake requires prep before and after it comes out of the oven. The recorded steps are perhaps an indication that the woman, unnamed in the cookbook, who created the recipe had ample time on her hands. Either that or she perhaps had domestic staff to help her with the production/creation of this recipe. The recipe for Pineapple Upside Down Cake had a long history already by the late 1940s. Most likely originating in the 1920s, the cake became a staple in many American households by the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ Much like many American foods, the cake started its culinary life as a trendy status symbol—think Jell-O in its early years—before transitioning to the signifier dessert of a comfortable, all-American family.

On the other hand, the recipe for Fried Cakes relies on commonly found and available ingredients like flour, eggs, and sugar. Ingredients like eggs were commonly sourced from local farms, or even family owned and raised chickens, and are frequently found in recipes for baked

¹⁰⁷ “The History of Pineapple Upside Down Cake,” Quaint Cooking: For the Love of the Vintage Kitchen, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://quaintcooking.com/2020/04/08/the-history-of-pineapple-upside-down-cake/#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20exact%20date,ad%20for%20Gold%20Medal%20flour.'>

goods during the 1940s. The recipe also calls for “shortening [the] size of [an] egg.”¹⁰⁸ Rather than rely on a precise measurement (i.e., 1 quarter-cup shortening, etc.) the recipe assumes at least a basic level of understanding on the part of the reader, that they would not only understand the size of a typical egg, but also be able to apply that knowledge to a practical recipe.

Additionally, the preparation and directions for the recipe are incredibly straightforward, simply requiring one to fry the prepared dough in hot oil and subsequently sprinkle the fried dough with powdered sugar. The assumption of basic knowledge in combination with the use of old-fashioned terms such as frizzled and peck as well as archaic measurement designations do not lend the Moose Cookbook to being easily comprehensible by the average, modern reader.

However, these terms and usages do allow historians to discern more about the contributors of these particular recipes as well as the compilers of the cookbook as a whole.

There are several ethnic recipes in the Moose Cookbook, indicating a level of diversity in Roundup in the late 1940s.¹⁰⁹ Thirteen recipes have names that are distinctly ethnic in nature, demonstrating not just diversity but also a level of community acceptance.¹¹⁰ While some of these recipes may not have been contributed by a member of the recipe’s associated ethnicity or nationality, the inclusion of such recipes does show that the community was perhaps more

¹⁰⁸ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ By examining the 1940 U.S. Census data for Roundup, we can see that there were many immigrants in the community. Beyond people who moved to Montana from other states within the country, there are twenty-six other countries listed as Countries of Birth on the census. These countries are as follows: Poland, Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia, England, Russia, Norway, Canada, Sweden, Scotland, Wales, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Italy, Ireland, Austria, Lithuania, Hungary, Chile, Bulgaria, France, Japan, Greece, American Samoa, New Zealand, and Romania. “Roundup, Montana 1940 Census Data,” Ancestry.com, accessed February 09, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/2442/>.

¹¹⁰ In this case, ethnic means a food that is typically associated with a certain nationality or ethnicity.

accepting of different foodstuffs than what they were traditionally accustomed to. Recipes like German Coffee Cake are a prime example, showing not just a traditional recipe for a victimized ethnic group but also evidence of brand names and recipe contribution from outside of Roundup 932.¹¹¹

GERMAN COFFEE CAKE

Mix the following: 3 c. sifted flour, 4 tsp. baking powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ c. sugar, 2 tsp. cinnamon, 1 tsp. nutmeg, handful of currants. Mix in $\frac{1}{2}$ c. crisco as for piecrust.

Stir into the above: $1\frac{1}{4}$ c. sweet milk. Beat in 2 eggs.

Mix the following and pour over top before baking: $\frac{3}{4}$ c. brown sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ c. crushed nuts, 1 tsp. cinnamon, 2 tblsp. flour.

Sprinkle milk lightly over this and bake in oven $\frac{1}{2}$ hour (375°).

—Nancy Krimmer, Anaconda, 177.

Figure 11: Recipe for German Coffee Cake from the Moose Cookbook.¹¹²

Reading this recipe felt a bit like reading family history, especially when I saw that currants were a primary ingredient and then saw the last name. The recipe is attributed to Nancy Krimmer from Anaconda 177. Krimmer is a last name of Germanic origins, a derivative of a Middle High German word—krimmen—that means to pinch or to flex, possibly an indication of

¹¹¹ Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 9.

¹¹² Stalcup et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, 9.

an occupation as a falconer.¹¹³ Krimmer is also the name of the religious denomination KMB, or the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren which has a long and complex history. Mennonites fled persecution in Germany and Prussia to Crimea in the 1700s, where congregations like the KMB built communities, until further persecution by the Russian government led to the mass immigration of Mennonites to the U.S. Plains states, like Kansas and Nebraska, and the Western Provinces of Canada.

Around this point, you may be saying, “Okay, but what about the food? This thing is supposed to be about food, right?” And you’re right, it is about the food, but it’s also about the history. In this case, it’s about *my* history, or rather, the history of my ancestors. Seeing the recipe for German Coffee Cake reminded me of the maternal side of family, and the last name of the contributor, Krimmer, made me think of my family. In centuries past, my Mennonite ancestors fled Russia and settled primarily in Kansas before disseminating across the Western United States. They brought with them next to nothing, but recipes survived the tumultuous period of change. I must have been very small, but I have a hazy memory of my relatives arguing over what should be used in dessert recipes, currants or raisins. From what I can remember, one side argued that currants were the Old World preference while raisins were more popular in the States. I guess it boiled down to what was traditional versus what was more readily available. The recipe in the Moose Cookbook calls for a handful of currants, as well as a wonderful mixture of spices, and one-half cup of Crisco. The collision of the old and new in this recipe, the traditional and the modern, is evident with the use of currants alongside the brand-name shortening. While we can’t know for certain whether Nancy Kimmer was German, and with even

¹¹³ “Krimmer Name Meaning,” Ancestry, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=krimmer>.

less certainty that she was Mennonite. But it could be that her recipe contribution meant that her ethnicity still played a role in her life, and that she wanted to share a family heirloom.

Additionally, the inclusion of a German recipe shortly after the conclusion of WWII is indicative of perhaps a more understanding and inclusive community.

Other ethnic recipes from the Moose Cookbook include Italian Spaghetti, Tamale Pie, and Dago Dill Pickles. The recipe for Dago Dill Pickles is simple, but the name is telling. The term “dago” is an offensive term used to describe a person of Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese descent.¹¹⁴ The recipe was most likely titled to indicate a different, more Mediterranean style of dill pickle than what was accustomed to in Harlowton, where the contributor lived. Other than the different spices that were used in contrast to the other included recipes for pickles—horseradish, bay leaves, and green and red peppers—the process of preparing the pickles is much the same as the others.

The thirteen ethnic recipes in the Moose Cookbook are the smallest number of ethnic recipes included in any of the community cookbooks surveyed, which is perhaps a reflection of the aftermath of WWII. There was great emphasis and pride during wartime on being as American as one could possibly be, and oftentimes that included forgoing one’s own cultural heritage—particularly if you were German or Japanese—in favor of assuming a more nationalistic, homogenous Americanism. This may be an explanation for the depressed number of ethnic recipes in the Moose Cookbook.

The *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book* is an excellent example of how community cookbooks can be used to form a deeper understanding of rural communities in the

¹¹⁴ “Dago,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed January 18, 2022, [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dago](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dago).

mid-twentieth century. The recipes and the design of the cookbook paint a picture of a community of women linked by faith and geographic location. Additionally, the cookbook is an apt demonstration of the way in which an increase in national transportation (including but not limited to the development of the US Highway System) is inherently linked to a blending of regional and national foodways.¹¹⁵ This is evidenced by the proliferation of canned goods like Maraschino cherries and pineapple and brand name foods, like Jell-O and Knox gelatin. However, there is also an abundance of foodstuffs that would have been easily attained from either a kitchen garden or other locally sourced farms or markets. The dichotomy between locally sourced ingredients and mass-produced goods in regards to the functionality and liminality of nationally influenced local foodways highlights the complexities of foodways in rural areas like Montana. While the recipes in this book allow researchers to understand the foods and technologies available during the time of the cookbook's production, they also serve as a window into the relationship between nation and region. The rapid change resulting from the growing standardization of American consumption and production practices resulted in corresponding shifts in both societal and environmental aspects. There are distinct alterations to rural ways of knowing throughout the twentieth century, perhaps most importantly the transition to a more homogenous, national cuisine rather than distinct regional foodways.

The Dorcas Cook Book (1950s Glendive, MT)

This cookbook was published in the 1950s in Glendive, Montana by the Dorcas Society of the Congregational Church. Glendive, Montana is in Dawson County in the far east central region of the state. Glendive is often referred to as the “Gate City” due to its close proximity—a

¹¹⁵ The federal (or interstate) highway system was a complex process spanning three presidencies and three decades (the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s).

mere thirty miles—to Montana’s eastern border abutting North Dakota.¹¹⁶ The town is home to the Makoshika State Park, created in 1953, which encompasses impressive badlands.¹¹⁷ The town was established by Northern Pacific Railway in the late 1800s, and by the postwar years of the 1950s, the town had increased in size by sixteen percent.¹¹⁸ This resulted in a housing crisis in Glendive, with “[m]any men holding full-time jobs spen[ding] their evenings and Sundays working on homes.”¹¹⁹ Due to the population increase and subsequent building boom, there was a shortage of gas in the town, which remained unresolved until Montana Dakota Utilities brought in another pipeline. Additionally, due to drought conditions—with rainfall reaching lows of less than ten inches in the 1950s—water rationing was imposed on the city.¹²⁰ The community was in need of improvements, including the installation of a new pool, a new high school gym, “a vocational training shop, a civic center, a county hospital,” and improvements to roads, bridges, and the water and sewage systems.¹²¹ However, these plans were waylaid by the discovery of oil in Dawson County. The infusion of newcomers—drawn by promises of oil work—added to “Glendive’s social and civic life,” with community events such as Oil Appreciation Days and Community Concerts.¹²² Glendive had a population of 5,254 at the time of the 1950 Census, and had twenty-five countries, not including the interstate migration within the United States, listed as countries of origin.¹²³ There were also a wide variety of occupations recorded in the 1950

¹¹⁶ Marie MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town* (Glendive: The Gateway Press, 1968), 5.

¹¹⁷ MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town*, 6.

¹¹⁸ MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town*, 14, 39.

¹¹⁹ MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town*, 75.

¹²⁰ MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town*, 39.

¹²¹ MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town*, 80.

¹²² MacDonald, *Glendive: The History of a Montana Town*, 96.

¹²³ These countries are as follows: Hungary, Poland, Germany, Canada, Norway, Russia, Iceland, Sweden, Italy, Denmark, England, Ireland, Austria, Scotland, Czechoslovakia, Austria-Hungary, Ukraine, Bohemia, China, Philippines, Wales, Switzerland, Romania, France, and Belgium.

Census including beekeeper, watchmaker, milk pasteurizer, and florist.¹²⁴ The vast assortment of nationalities as well as occupations is an indication of Glendive, Montana's remarkable diversity, especially when considering that the town was in a rural state. The cookbook is divided into seventeen sections, seen as follows:

Breads, Muffins, Waffles

Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and Date Bread

Cakes

Frostings and Fillings

Cookies

Doughnuts, Fritters, Croquettes

Soups

Luncheon and Snack Recipes

Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs

Salads and Salad Dressing

"1950 Census of Population: Preliminary Counts." U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. PDF file. Accessed February 10, 2022.

<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/pc-02/pc-2-03.pdf>; "1950 Census Data, Glendive, Montana," Ancestry.com, accessed April 22, 2022, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/search/collections/62308/>.

¹²⁴ For a full list of occupations in Glendive, Montana in 1950, see Appendix B.

Vegetables

Pastries

Desserts

Confections

Pickles, Relishes, Preserves

Jams

Large Quantity Cookery¹²⁵

The layout of the cookbook is remarkably well-organized, perhaps owing to its production and subsequent publication by an actual publishing house rather than being hand typed and printed by community individuals. The Glendive Dorcas Society was not the only one of its kind; the phrase ‘dorcas society’ is commonly applied to typically religious organizations that focus their attentions on attending and assisting the poor and needy. The preface of the cookbook introduces the Glendive Dorcas Society and details the particulars of their new cookbook for the 1950s.

While not specified, it is inferred that this edition of the cookbook is not the first; it states it includes a collection of “favorite recipes from the original edition.”¹²⁶ The compilers go on to state that not only have favorite recipes been carried over, but new recipes have also been procured from previous contributors. There are several intriguing allusions made to wider

¹²⁵ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, (Glendive: Dawson County Publishers, 1950), 2.

¹²⁶ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 1.

phenomenon of the mid-twentieth century throughout this short introductory note. These include an emphasis on the standardization of abbreviations and shorthands, the clarification of recipe times, temperatures, and serving quantities, and “Kitchen Tested” recipes.¹²⁷ Each of these factors taken singly are significant but taken together it becomes apparent that this cookbook is very much a product of its environment. By the 1950s, it had become standard form for cookbooks, including self-published, locally published, or limited number runs of community cookbooks, to present a list the ingredients needed prior to the instructions for making, rather than include them in narrative paragraph form.¹²⁸ While many cookbooks also adapted the use of either bulleted or numbered lists for the instruction segment of a recipe, this is seen with mixed use in community cookbooks. In *The Dorcas Cook Book* recipes almost wholly still appear in paragraph format rather than use a list format. However, almost all recipes contained in this community cookbook are fairly simple recipes, requiring minimal instruction as an accompaniment to the ingredients.

As evidenced in the section titles, there are some idiosyncrasies, with some of the topics of each section being repeating in following sections. Another interesting aspect of how this community cookbook is laid out is the use of color coordinated pages in correspondence to the sections. For example, the section on Cookies is a dark blue while the section on Pastries is a bright yellow. In total, there are eleven different color-coded sections present in *The Dorcas Cook Book*, with the allowance of several sections sharing a color and some colors being repeated. There are no notations throughout the copy of the community cookbook I examined,

¹²⁷ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 1.

¹²⁸ Rebecca Sharpless, “Cookbooks as Resources for Rural Research,” *Agricultural History* 90, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 195-208, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3098/ah.2016.090.2.195>.

however there are several stains, limited to the covers. These stains appear to be from some sort of liquid damage, perhaps exacerbated by prolonged exposure to sunlight as parts of the front and back covers are significantly faded. Overall, for a book published over seventy years ago, the cookbook is in excellent condition. The spiral bound spine is still completely intact, there are no stains on the internal pages, and the several fully colored photographic ads are still bright and clear. As with most any small, locally-published community cookbooks, there are several spelling and grammar errors, but not to the extent that it hinders the readers enjoyment and understanding of the cookbook.

While the majority of the recipes in *The Dorcas Cook Book* simply list the name of the submitter, several of the recipes have a city and/or a state noted after the contributor's name. As this is only present in several recipes, one can only assume that the compilers of the community cookbook decided to denote a recipe with a place name whenever the contributor was not from Glendive, Montana. The recipes where this specific annotation is present are typically still from Montanan contributors; however, there are several that are from different states including Ohio, California, New Mexico, and Texas. The Dorcas Cookbook also contains several recipes that are not attributed to individual community members, but rather to other publications such as Good Housekeeping and U.S. government agencies. There are also a limited number of recipes attributed simply as "A Dorcas Recipe," such as the recipe for White Bread. The name usages throughout *The Dorcas Cook Book* utilize almost exclusively married names (i.e., Mrs. John Smith) with only several instances of the contributor's full name without an indication of marital status with title prefixes. There are a limited number of recipes that have no listed contributor (only thirteen) and there is only one instance of a male contributor. The recipe in question is called Hunters Dinner, calling for two different types of meat—notably, in direct contradiction to

its name, not game meats—and a variety of canned vegetables.¹²⁹ This recipe epitomizes the gendered cooking that became increasingly prevalent in postwar America, particularly with meat. As historian Jessamyn Neuhaus argues, masculinity was inherently tied to the preparation of meat and was the epitome of the sexualization of cooking. Additionally, she asserts that postwar cookbooks are full of contradictions while simultaneously challenging and reinforcing postwar gender ideologies. Ultimately, “meat was more than the main dish: it signified male desire and privilege and feminine acquiescence,” and the singular presence of a male contributor’s meat-centric recipe in *The Dorcas Cook Book* encapsulates the use of postwar cookbooks as a voice of authority.¹³⁰

Neuhaus’ argument that “postwar cookery texts, in their relentless repetition of gender norms, were an articulation of general fears and uncertainties about those norms,” is seen in community cookbooks such as this, with the use of married names as well as the lack of male contributors to the cookbook.¹³¹ The aspect of her argument that best applies to *The Dorcas Cook Book* is Neuhaus’ idea that “[c]ookbooks are the voice of authority...[and] recipes are the directions for detailed behavior.”¹³² The recipes contained in this community cookbook showcase the conflicting messages present in American thought and culture at the time of its

¹²⁹ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 63.

¹³⁰ Jessamyn Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s,” *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 529-555, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789341>, 542.

¹³¹ Neuhaus’ arguments in this 1999 *Journal of Social History* essay are a perfect summarization of the way that postwar cookbooks differed from previous decades. *The Dorcas Cook Book* functionally addresses and affirms all of the points made in her essay, particularly that of the contradictory nature of cookbooks from the 1950s and also the reinforcement of traditional gender norms. Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart,” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789341>, 547.

¹³² Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart,” <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789341>, 547.

publication. While women were indoctrinated to believe that their womanly duty was to provide wonderful food as a show of love and devotion to their husband and children, they were also deluged and bombarded with advertisements touting the benefits of new and improved food and technological products that would save them time and effort in the kitchen. The ads present in *The Dorcas Cook Book* are a mixture of local advertisements as well as national advertisements for brand name food products. Something that many of the ads have in common is the use of rhetoric that emphasizes ease and time-saving. This is seen with both national and local ads, which highlights the growing intersection between regional and national foodways and foodscapes across the country.¹³³ These food advertisements also reinforced traditional gender stereotypes, emphasizing the importance of preparing home-cooked meals, albeit through the use of time-saving brands.

In the Dorcas Cookbook, there are several examples of name-brand advertising that claim to save time while still presenting a home-cooked meal. In the cookbook, there are ads for International Harvester freezers, Swans Down Cake Flour, Crosley and Westinghouse Appliances, Del Monte canned goods, Baker's Chocolate, and Youngstown Kitchens. One of the full-page, color advertisements is for Swans Down Cake Flour, put out by General Mills. The advertisement proclaims, "[d]on't look so wistful...you can make one that's just as elegant—just as proud...And when you're busy...Make the grandest hurry-up cakes you ever saw with Swans

¹³³ The term 'foodscape' is borrowed from the historians Elizabeth Ransom and Wynne Wright, as used in their essay "Constructing Culinary Knowledge." I find this term to be a charming encapsulation of the typical term 'foodway' in relation to local, regional, and national contexts. Elizabeth Ransom and Wynne Wright, "Constructing Culinary Knowledge: Reading Rural Community Cookbooks," *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 16, no. 4 (April 2015): 669-689, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413X13758634981895>.

Down Instant Cake Mix.”¹³⁴ The combination of promises of grandeur as well as a quick dessert solution showcase 1950s marketing techniques. By highlighting both the time-saving elements of the product as well as the potential for impressive desserts, General Foods is targeting busy housewives. The presence of this ad in a community cookbook from rural Montana is evidence that by the 1950s, regional foodways were becoming less distinct and individualized and were increasingly feeling the influence of national name brands. However, there are no recipes in the Dorcas Cookbook that specifically name Swans Down flour as an ingredient. Perhaps Swans Down was the preferred brand and as such, it was not necessary to explicitly use the brand’s name in recipes, as it was implied and assumed that that was the brand needed.¹³⁵ The subliminal gender normative stereotypes that accompanied ads such as the Swans Down ad--even though they also emphasized speed and ease of preparation for the busy wife and mother--ultimately reinforced traditional American gender divisions of labor.

Many of the recipes list very basic instructions for the preparation of the dish, for example, the recipe for Yum Yum Gems by Mrs. Wayne Laisy. This intriguingly named recipe is listed in the section of the cookbook entitled ‘Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and Date Breads’ and has two short and sweet sentences detailing the process of preparing these so-called gems. The instructions are as follows: “Mix well together, bake in muffin tins 350 degree oven for 20 minutes. Makes 16 gems.”¹³⁶ These incredibly straight-forward sentences of instruction leave little to the imagination as to what is required of the cook, emphasizing the trend towards recipes that were impressive and tasty but required minimal effort on the part of a

¹³⁴ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 30.

¹³⁵ While searches for Glendive newspapers in the 1950s did not turn up many results, Swans Down products appeared 860 times in Montana newspapers between 1950 and 1959.

¹³⁶ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 12.

homemaker, wife, and/or mother. This is an interesting recipe to view through the lens of 1950s American domestic ideology.

YUM YUM GEMS	
½ c Crisco	1 tsp each of soda, cinnamon,
1 c brown sugar	nutmeg, cloves
1 egg (unbeaten)	1 c raisins
1 c sour milk	½ c nuts
2 c sifted flour	Salt
Mix well together, bake in muffin tins 350 degree oven for 20 minutes. Makes	
16 gems.	—Mrs. Wayne Laisy.

Figure 12: Recipe for Yum Yum Gems from the Dorcas Cookbook.¹³⁷

By the mid-twentieth century, traditional gender ideals actively collided and conflicted with women leaving the domestic sphere for work away from the home. This is certainly not to say that millions of women in America were up and leaving their hungry husbands and children clamoring for some scrap of dinner at the perfectly set dining table. No. Women were balancing—in numbers reaching the millions—work in the domestic and public spheres. Thirty-four percent of the participating labor force in 1950 was female.¹³⁸ Women sought out recipes and ingredients that lent themselves to quick and easy assembly, recipes that would satisfy every member of the family without breaking the bank or stretching their increasingly limited time spent in the kitchen. Corporations also targeted these trends with new and improved food products and technologies, as was discussed previously in the chapter. While the recipes in *The Dorcas Cook Book* illustrate the ways in which rural communities were adapting to changing

¹³⁷ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 12.

¹³⁸ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Monthly Labor Review, *A century of change: the U.S. labor force, 1950-2050*, PDF file, May 2002, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2002/05/art2full.pdf>.

societal ideologies, they also contain valuable information about the ways they remained the same.

Another facet of *The Dorcas Cook Book* is the inclusion of ethnic recipes, including recipes for Lutefisk, German coffee cake, Koolitch [sic, typical spelling is ‘kulich’] Russian Easter Bread, Australian Apple Cakes, and Belgian Raised Waffles. The presence of thirty-six ethnic recipes in the cookbook—more than either of the other community cookbooks—is a representation of the variety of ethnic backgrounds of the contributors and their desire to emphasize that background, which is somewhat unexpected considering the increasingly prevalent culture of homogeneity and uniformity spreading across the United States.¹³⁹

There is no written context for some of the recipes, however, the ingredients and names of the recipes reveal more than might be evident at first glance. For example, the recipe for Lutefisk has no ingredient list—one of the few in the cookbook that does not have a separate list—but rather a brief set of instructions. This recipe requires no insignificant amount of prior knowledge, as the instructions feel more like close, intimate family knowledge, like a conversation around a round kitchen table, rather than a series of steps for the uninitiated to follow. On the flip side of the coin, the recipe for Australian Apple Cakes is extremely specific, detailing step by step the exact way to shape the list of ingredients into small, delightful treats. Another interesting aspect of this recipe is the addendum to the recipe name, “Very Easy to Handle Roll Dough Cookies.”¹⁴⁰ This almost functions as a catch phrase or a tagline for the recipe, highlighting the ease with which these quick and simple cookies come together.

¹³⁹ This was in part due to increasingly widespread commercial transportation that brought brand-name products and more to areas across the country with greater reliability and frequency than was seen previously.

¹⁴⁰ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 36.

Ultimately, the ethnic recipes in the Dorcas Cookbook are indicative of a complex and surprisingly diverse community in Glendive, which is a direct contrast to what is portrayed in corporate cookbooks of the decade, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

AUSTRALIAN APPLE CAKES
(Very Easy to Handle Roll Dough Cookies)

1 c sugar	Mix all together and work in
2¼ c flour	¾ c butter or margarine
2 tsp baking powder	2 eggs, well beaten
½ tsp salt	

Roll thin and cut into large rounds. Put 2 tsp of applesauce in center of one round and cover with another. Press edges together. Bake at 400 degrees until light brown. Icing: 1 c powdered sugar and 1 tsp grated orange rind. Add orange juice to spread.

—Mrs. K. H. Harstad.

Figure 13: Recipe for Australian Apple Cakes.¹⁴¹

The scent of warm, rising yeast fills the air, ushering in a fresh Montana morning. The soft clinking of measuring spoons sounds quietly, mixing with the scents of cinnamon and nutmeg. *The Dorcas Cook Book* is the epitome of 1950s rural cookery, highlighting the intersection between traditional domesticity and an increasingly industrial and standardized world. By examining the use of brand name ingredients and advertisements throughout the cookbook, it becomes apparent that even rural communities like that of Glendive in the 1950s were not immune to the charms and subliminal messages pushed by national marketing campaigns.¹⁴² It is also evident that by the 1950s local foodways were far less unique than they were in previous decades, as reliance on more unique local foodstuffs and production decreased

¹⁴¹ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 36.

¹⁴² The population in Glendive in 1950 was only 5,254 with an annual growth rate of 1.51%. “1950 Census of Population: Preliminary Counts.” U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. PDF file. Accessed February 10, 2022.
<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/pc-02/pc-2-03.pdf>.

in correspondence with an increasingly interconnected America. While the recipes are still unique in their own right, the majority of them rely on canned or mass-produced convenience foods with the occasional supplementation of local flavor. There is, of course, the presence of a number of ethnic recipes in *The Dorcas Cook Book*, showing that there were a variety of ethnicities present in the Glendive, Montana community in the postwar period. Ultimately, this community cookbook is an exemplary illustration of the entangled web of gender ideology in American thought and culture during the mid-twentieth century and the overt and subliminal messaging and influence of brand name products. These aspects truly make *The Dorcas Cook Book* emblematic of the time in which it was produced.

Conclusions: Community Cookbooks

These three community cookbooks, spanning the years between 1930 and 1959 demonstrate a progression of foodways. From a reliance on local foodways with the occasional supplementation of mass-produced goods to increasingly interconnected national and regional foodways, these cookbooks demonstrate the liminality of food in the twentieth century. It is important to note that while each decade maintains at least some form of regional uniqueness, by the end of the 1950s, foodways in Montana were markedly less unique (at least in terms of local specialties) than in previous decades. Although this correlates in some ways with the findings of scholar Mary Drake McFeely, who said in her work *Can She Bake A Cherry Pie?*, “[b]ut by midcentury, community cookbooks in which women share their favorite recipes all looked pretty much alike,” it seems too simplistic to chalk up the similarities seen between cookbooks as loss of authenticity or adoption of identicalness.¹⁴³ In some senses, I agree that on a base level many

¹⁴³ Mary Drake McFeely, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie? American Women and the Kitchen in the Twentieth Century*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 99.

recipes share similarities, especially as the twentieth century progressed. However, just because ingredients and preparation techniques were shared between community cookbooks in Montana does not indicate an across-the-board uniformity as McFeely seems to be claiming.

The many Montana community cookbooks I examined while researching show evidence to the contrary, indicating that geographic location, ethnic breakdowns in the local populations, and environmental conditions predicate a great deal of recipe particulars as well as the distinction and presence of different sections within a compilation of local recipes.¹⁴⁴ Similarly, McFeely argues that ethnic recipes largely disappear from American cooking, stating that the “emphasis of standard cookbooks on Americanization turned people away from the cooking of their ethnic background toward an American style that blended multiple traditions, often losing the best elements in the translation.”¹⁴⁵ There are multiple flaws in this black and white way of thinking. While McFeely is not incorrect in her assessment that the presence of ethnic recipes decreased in commercially published cookbooks—including mass-produced cookbooks and corporate cookbooks—this type of cookbook is often not a completely accurate view of cooking and foodways across America. Oftentimes, cookbooks like these present the viewer with an idealized, in some ways propagandized, style of cooking that conforms to societal norms and the “appropriate” foods and cooking techniques of the time. It is hard to deny the Americanizing and assimilating impact that these “standard cookbooks” have on peoples across the United States,

¹⁴⁴ While only three community cookbooks are discussed in this chapter, I examined many such recipe compilations ranging from 1930 to 1959 in Montana—and beyond—before narrowing my analysis down to just three works. There are additional factors that also contribute and play heavily into the format and develop of distinct recipes, ingredients, and instructions beyond the three mentioned above, as community cookbooks are very much a representation of the people, place, culture, and more they are created in.

¹⁴⁵ McFeely, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?*, 50.

but the fact remains that this is simply not present in community cookbooks from Montana in the mid-twentieth century. This is especially not the case with the Dorcas Cookbook, which had more ethnic recipes than either of the other community cookbooks combined: thirty-six in the Dorcas versus twenty-eight for both the Big Hole and the Moose cookbooks. I cannot claim unassailable knowledge of all community cookbooks, especially in other regions of the country, but certainly in the Far West region at the time in question there is not an insignificant presence of what can be termed as “ethnic recipes.”

ETHNIC RECIPE	RECIPE CATEGORY	COOKBOOK	LOCATION
Broiled Sweetbread	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Jamboliah (sic jambolaya)	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Marinated Herring	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Tamale Pie	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
For Spanish Stew	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Goozleum	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Goulash	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Danish Stuffed Cabbage	Meats and Fish	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Mexican Fool	Cheese	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Suet Pudding	Puddings	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Steamed Suet Pudding	Puddings	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Oriental Cream	Dessert	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Bavarian Cream x2	Dessert	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Eccles Cake (An Old English Recipe)	Cakes	Big Hole Cookbook	Wisdom MT
Wassail	Beverages	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
German Coffee Cake	Breads, Coffee Cakes, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
French Cream Filling	Cakes, Frostings, Fillings	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Mexican Fudge	Confections	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Goulash	Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Italian Spaghetti	Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Indian Stew	Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Veal Stew with Rice-Grecian Style	Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Tamale Pie	Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Spaghetti Oriental	Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Dago Dill Pickles	Pickles, Relishes, Preserves, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Piccalilli	Pickles, Relishes, Preserves, Etc.	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
Spanish Sandwiches	Sandwiches	MT Women of the Moose	Roundup MT
German Coffee Cake	Breads, Muffins, Waffles	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Belgian Raised Waffles	Breads, Muffins, Waffles	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Koolitch Russian Easter Bread	Breads, Muffins, Waffles	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
English Muffins	Breads, Muffins, Waffles	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Spanish Bun Bread	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Spoon Bread	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Corn Bread (Southern Style)	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Lafsa	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Potet Kager (Potato Pancakes/Scandinavian)	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Potato Pancakes	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Scotch Potato Scones	Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and D	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Toasted Angel Cake With Mexico Chocolate Sauce	Frostings and Fillings	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Australian Apple Cakes (Very Easy to Handle)	Roll Cookies	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Russian Tea Cakes	Cookies	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Mexican Wedding Cakes (to serve with Ice Cream)	Cookies	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Sand Bakkels (Sand Tarts)	Cookies	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
3 Hour German Red Beet Soup	Soups	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Goulash	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Mexican Rabbit	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Italian Spaghetti x2	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Spanish Spaghetti	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Spanish Rice x2	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Welsh Rarebit	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Scandinavian Meat balls	Luncheon and Snack Recipes	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Hassengreffer	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
English Brown Stew	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Italian Meat Loaf	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Lutefisk	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Swedish Ham Balls in Brown Sauce	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Spanish Eggs	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Swiss Eggs	Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
South Sea Rolls	Desserts	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Mexican Orange Candy	Desserts	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT
Italian Spaghetti with Meat Sauce	Large Quantity Cookery	The Dorcas Cook Book	Glendive MT

Figure 14: Author created spreadsheet detailing the occurrence of ethnic recipes in Montana community cookbooks.

By comparing the three community cookbooks—*The Big Hole Cookbook*, *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*, and *The Dorcas Cook Book*—and compiling the instances in which ethnic recipes were mentioned in each, it becomes quickly and abundantly apparent that McFeely's claims of the absence of ethnic recipes seems to only apply to standard cookbooks.¹⁴⁶ In *The Big Hole Cookbook* there are fourteen ethnic recipes present, divided between five different categories: Meats and Fishes (with eight recipes), Puddings (two recipes), Dessert (two recipes), Cheese (one recipe), and Cakes (one recipe). The *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book* contains thirteen ethnic recipes, falling into seven categories: Luncheon Dishes, Meats, Fish, Etc. (six recipes), Pickles, Relishes, Preserves, Etc. (two recipes), Beverages (one recipe), Breads, Coffee Cakes, Etc. (one recipe), Cakes, Frostings, Fillings (one recipe), Confections (one recipe), Sandwiches (one recipe). *The Dorcas Cook Book* listed thirty-six recipes with ethnic origins, allotted to nine categories: Luncheon and Snack Recipes (eight recipes), Meats, Fish, Poultry, Eggs (seven recipes), Muffins, Corn Bread, Popovers, Waffles, Nut and Date Breads (seven recipes), Breads, Muffins, Waffles (four recipes), Cookies (four recipes), Desserts (two recipes), Frostings and Fillings (one recipe), Soups (one recipe) and Large Quantity Cookery (one recipe). These findings are in direct contrast to claims by food historians like McFeely that the diversity of cookbooks was in sharp decline by the middle of the twentieth century, due to the influencing factors of concerted Americanization and assimilation propagated by typical cookery texts.

¹⁴⁶ As will be discussed in the following chapter, the presence of ethnic recipes in corporate cookbooks is rather lacking, ascertaining the veracity of McFeely's claims in the realm of a different style of cookbook.

Recipes increasingly represented the intermingling of local and nationally produced foods, with a marked increase in recipes utilizing products that could not be grown or produced within the state's boundaries. Essentially, the recipes and the techniques used to produce them are an indication of an increasingly modern and technologically advanced culinary scene, even in rural communities in already rural states like Montana during the mid-twentieth century. While it may seem obvious that the very nature of food is to change over time, the culinary history evident in the community cookbooks focused on in this chapter exemplifies the way that these three decades proved to be a period of liminality in American thought, culture, and consciousness. There is an evident transition from the era of the Great Depression to that of a seemingly idyllic postwar America. This is representative of a shift in the United States, particularly in regards to a woman's place and responsibilities in the home, as well as the environmental predictors of the availability of foodstuffs and later the ability of mass national transportation that enabled products to be available with relative ease at almost any time of the year. The argument can be made that community cookbooks function as a regional, place-defining literature, in a similar fashion to the literature discussed in Chapter One.

CHAPTER FOUR

BUSINESS, BISQUICK, AND BETTY CROCKER IN MID-CENTURY AMERICA

But the mail man didn't come...when he did come he brought our little group no groceries...I had...a package of Bisquick and a little canned fruit, one can of Campbell's soup and some pineapple...Suddenly a figure appeared struggling through the snow...he appeared with...a floursack of beans, a can of Crisco, a dozen cans of tomatoes and some prunes. The weather improved and the mailman came through.¹⁴⁷

Introduction

You're rushing through the grocery store, poodle skirt swaying and swishing, kitten heels clicking on the linoleum floor, small children tucked safely by your side, ensconced in the shopping cart's child seat. You're rushing home from work, children getting off the school bus, and husband walking through the door asking what's for dinner. You are the quintessential American woman in mid-twentieth century America, attempting to juggle the demands of being the good homemaker, wife, and mother while also keeping up with the fast-paced, often misogynistic atmosphere of work in the public sphere. Now imagine that in prime areas in the supermarket and located strategically at the check-out counter in stores selling refrigerators and toaster ovens, there are small pamphlets that tell you exactly how a specific brand's products are the perfect answer to all of your cooking and homemaking needs. Corporations produced booklets, pamphlets, or small-sized cookbooks, all containing a compilation of recipes that utilized a specific name-brand foodstuff or even showcased a certain homemaking technology.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Montana-Phillips County, Collection 2336, WPA Records: America Eats, Box 2, Folder 14, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

¹⁴⁸ Companies began publishing culinary ephemera as early as the late 1800s, with the earliest pamphlet I was able to find published in 1894 by Knox Gelatin. In general, most corporate culinary proceedings were produced beginning in the early twentieth century. Corporations like

In this chapter, I will examine three corporate cookbooks, one each from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s to demonstrate how mid-twentieth century corporate cookbooks—alternatively called commercial cookbooks—functioned not only to sell their particular brand of goods, but also to assert the dominance of American products and propel growing culinary nationalism and consumerism in the United States.¹⁴⁹

Corporate Cookbooks

Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream (1936 Jell-O Ice Cream Powder by Jell-O)

Nothing screams “America” more than ice cream on a hot summer’s day. What could make this even more American? Jell-O. Lots and lots of Jell-O. In 1904, Jell-O debuted their Jell-O Ice Cream Powder as a quick and easy dessert sure to please the whole family and certain to impress one’s friends and neighbors alike.¹⁵⁰ Jell-O Ice Cream Powder filled a niche in national foodway marketing that served both as a promotional tool and simple quick dessert.

Jell-O is one of those ubiquitously American phenomena, associated with free-floating fruit cocktail and baby shrimp, suspended as if by magic (or perhaps witchcraft) in a veritable rainbow of colors and shapes in a translucent space. It was—and is—present at block parties, family reunions, funerals, and weddings, to name a few occasions. It is one of those recognizable, weirdly American foodstuffs that makes other countries cock their eyebrows and

those discussed in this chapter—Jell-O, Karo, and Betty Crocker/General Mills—created a variety of ephemera to promote their brands to American consumers.

¹⁴⁹ In this instance, “nationalism” can be defined both as distinct pride in American products as well as a growing national homogeneity of cuisine.

¹⁵⁰ “The Jell-O Company,” New York Historic, accessed August 6, 2021, <https://nyhistoric.com/2014/01/jell-o-company/>.

wonder what the hell it is. Despite the gradual and then rapid disappearance of unique localized foodways by the middle of the twentieth century, replaced with a more industrial and uniform national foodway (driven in part by the prevalence of name brands, box stores, and ease of national transportation) almost all corners of American cuisine retain at least some recipes for gelatin-based desserts. More often than not, these foodstuffs use Jell-O (or more rarely, its lesser known cousins Royal Gelatin or Knox Gelatin) to create a gelatinous but strangely appealing and jiggly American icon. As recently as February 17, 2021, I received in my email inbox recipes for Lime Cottage Cheese Jello Salad with Sour Cream Chili Sauce Dressing and Cherry Cola Jello Salad from *Southern Living*'s recipe department.¹⁵¹ The oddly endearing and enduring qualities of Jell-O have cemented its place in the halls of American cuisine, becoming a part of culinary nationalism and United States foodscapes.

Jell-O was one of America's first processed foods, invented by Pearle Wait in 1897. Due to slow sales and a lack of initial success, the patent for Jell-O was sold in 1899 to Orator Frank Woodward for \$450. Even after Woodward bought the rights to Jell-O, the product still failed to sell reliably leading to frustration and attempted sales attempts by Woodward. However, by 1902 Jell-O had become a quarter-million-dollar business, and by 1903 Jell-O had put out its first of many promotional materials, a booklet of more than fifty recipes.¹⁵² Many iterations and variations of Jell-O products were unveiled by the end of the 1950s, including flavors like lime,

¹⁵¹ More recently, I also received an email with the intriguing clickbait article title "Let's Talk About Circus Peanut Jello Salad, One of the Weirdest Retro Recipes Out There." I'm strangely drawn to click on it to read more about this gross phenomenon, but also repulsed. *Southern Living*, "Vintage Sides Grandma Always Served With Dinner," email, sent to Emily O'Brien on February 17, 2021; *Southern Living*, "Let's Talk About Circus Peanut Jello Salad, One of the Weirdest Retro Recipes Out There," email, sent to Emily O'Brien on December 23, 2021.

¹⁵² Carolyn Wyman, *Jell-O A Biography: The History and Mystery of "America's Most Famous Dessert."* (San Diego: Harcourt Books, 2001), 7.

apple, and cola. Additional products like weekly recipe bulletins—issued beginning in 1934 and spearheaded by Jell-O’s home economist Frances Lee Barton—and promotional molds, spoons, and dishes contributed to Jell-O’s continuing and growing success well beyond the twentieth century. Lynne Belluscio, the town historian of LeRoy, New York, the birthplace of Jell-O, claims that “Jell-O democratized gelatin,” and she’s certainly correct. Historically, the process of making gelatin was difficult and lengthy, typically reserved only for those rich enough to have hired help to do laborious tasks.¹⁵³ By creating a product that was ready to use and easily available, Jell-O broke down the class barriers that had long held gelatin dishes back from the lower classes. By World War II, Jell-O had become an established and recognized name-brand product in households across America. As Carolyn Wyman—a food historian best known for her work on SPAM and Jell-O—describes the influence of the post-war period on Jell-O’s continued success, “Jell-O was the beneficiary of the processed food school of cooking that sprung up after the war.”¹⁵⁴ So-called war foods such as Jell-O became integrated into American foodways, leading to the rise of convenience food cookery. There seems to be two classes of Jell-O dishes: plain and fancy. Dishes like freezer ice cream—requiring only one quart of milk and one package of Jell-O ice cream powder in any flavor—present a picture of simplicity, exemplifying plain Jell-O dishes. For many, dinner was often accompanied Jell-O, sometimes in as simple a presentation as prepared and put in a bowl. This is in contrast to Jell-O’s more complex cousin, the fancy gelatin dish. This type of dish brought shock-and-awe reactions, prompting exclamations of admiration and even a hint of jealousy. This is seen with dishes in impressive casserole form, either sweet or savory, with multiple layers of Jell-O—like the Pineapple Dessert

¹⁵³ Wyman, *Jell-O A Biography*, 20.

¹⁵⁴ Wyman, *Jell-O A Biography*, 49.

from the Moose community cookbook with layers of raspberry and lemon Jell-O—or in ice cream sandwiches such as those in the Jell-O corporate cookbook. Personally, I will always associate Jell-O with being very small, holding my grandmother’s hand, not taller than her waist, as she showed me the long folding tables in the church foyer full of casseroles with potatoes and peas and cream, and, you guessed it, Jell-O. I remember being entranced by the shimmering rainbow globes of jiggly *stuff*, with little pieces of pineapple and grapes and apples floating, suspended in the mysterious, slightly suspicious gelatin. There’s something both special and alarming that comes with the realization that since Jell-O’s beginning, many generations of children have had similar formative experiences with the brand. As Allie Rowbottom, a descendent of Orator Frank Woodward, says in her memoir about growing up under the shadow of the Jell-O empire, Jell-O was both a blessing and a curse, blessing the family with a fortune but also emblematic of everything that was wrong with American society. In Rowbottom’s mind, Jell-O only perpetuated the idea that women should “stay cute, stay pretty, [and] stay silent.”¹⁵⁵ And as Caroline Wyman argues, Jell-O is also a sign of assimilation, served to newly arrived immigrants on Ellis Island.

Let’s take a step back for a moment and think about this. Something as seemingly innocuous as a wiggly piece of disintegrated bone...being representative of everything that’s wrong with America? The racism, sexism, forced assimilation, rise of suburbia, fad diets, homogeneity, and consumerism, all held within a single wobbly spoonful of the zero point food lauded for its miraculous abilities to transform any meal into an *American* one. It seems astonishing until we remember that this is the United States, where everything can be marketed

¹⁵⁵ Allie Rowbottom, *Jell-O Girls: A Family History*, (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018), 7.

and turned into an American icon. Jell-O had the ability to transcend ethnic boundaries and blast past class lines, all while simultaneously enforcing gendered ideologies about the separation of the domestic and public spheres.

Despite accompanying a post-war era of bland aestheticism and culinary homogeneity in mainstream America, Jell-O makes the ordinary beautiful. When housewives in the post-war era produced elaborate gelatin dishes like Parfait Pie or Jell-O Stained Glass through the use of molds and layers of different-colored Jell-O, simple foods were elevated.¹⁵⁶

There is something poetic and delightful about something as simple as taking collagen from broken-down animal parts and creating an immense brand recognized by people around the world. In similar fashion to other large industrial food companies of the twentieth century, Jell-O employed home economists, although there is little publicly available information about whether these employees were women or to what extent they influenced Jell-O as a brand. It is known that Jell-O invented Frances Lee Barton, a voice for the company modeled after General Mills' Betty Crocker. "Mrs. Burton" was responsible for hosting a radio program called "The Cooking School of the Air," as well as answering letter inquiries and writing weekly recipe bulletins. While the character of Mrs. Burton was voiced by a real woman named Isabella Beach, it seems unreasonable to believe that she was single-handedly responsible for writing new recipes, producing brand-driven content for radio, and answering letters from thousands of people every week. It seems far more rational and believable that there were a team of home economists employed by General Foods creating Jell-O-branded content. And it seems even more believable

¹⁵⁶ Wyman, *Jell-O A Biography*, 51.

that a large amount of the acclaim that Orator Woodward and General Foods garnered was due to the employees who steadfastly worked behind the scenes to create a gelatin empire.

The promotional Jell-O pamphlet that I analyzed for this chapter is sixteen pages long and was published by General Foods Corporation in 1936.¹⁵⁷ There are a number of illustrations throughout the brochure, both in black and white and in full color. On the most basic level, this corporate cookbook functions as both an informative guide to the wonders of new refrigeration and freezing technologies. The tone of the cookbook is extremely promotional, both for Jell-O products in general as well as for modern kitchen technologies (items also produced by General Foods). There are six loosely grouped main sections as follows:

Introduction

Points to Remember

About All Ice Cream Making

Hints for the Hand Freezer

Hints for the Automatic Refrigerator

Tips on Using The New Iced Fast-Freezing Trays

Master Recipes

Ice Cream Recipes

¹⁵⁷ The Jell-O Company, Inc. was sold to the Postum Cereal Company, Inc. in late 1925, “becoming the first subsidiary of a large merger that would eventually become General Foods Corporation.” “The History of Jell-O,” The Jell-O Gallery, accessed July 31, 2021, <https://www.jellogallery.org/history.html>.

Sherbets and Specialties

Ideas for Desserts¹⁵⁸

While there are roughly divided sections in this cookbook, there is no table of contents or glossary present. This differs from traditionally published cookbooks as well as from the community cookbooks discussed in the previous chapter. While this can be interpreted as an attempt by the parent company of Jell-O to make the pamphlet brief, organizational prowess is not the goal of this pamphlet. The primary objective of this pamphlet is to sell Jell-O Ice Cream Powder and promote General Foods companies. Its brevity can be viewed as a way to limit production costs, as it is likely that many of these short pamphlets were printed for wide, free dissemination across the country. This informational brochure is designed with marketing and aesthetic appeal in mind. The illustrations feature smiling housewives with perfectly coiffed hair and easy smiles alongside captions that highlight the ease of making ice cream when one is using Jell-O's helpful ice cream powder. These small images serve as a punctuation mark to the point emphasized by the delicious desserts depicted in the larger, full-color illustrations. The aesthetic design of The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook emphasizes the impact and importance of targeted advertising that corporate America used to influence women during the mid-twentieth century.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, (USA: General Foods Corp.), 1936.

¹⁵⁹ For ease of understanding and clarity, I will be referring to the Jell-O corporate cookbook as The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook or just the Jell-O Cookbook rather than its actual title (*Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*) in this chapter.

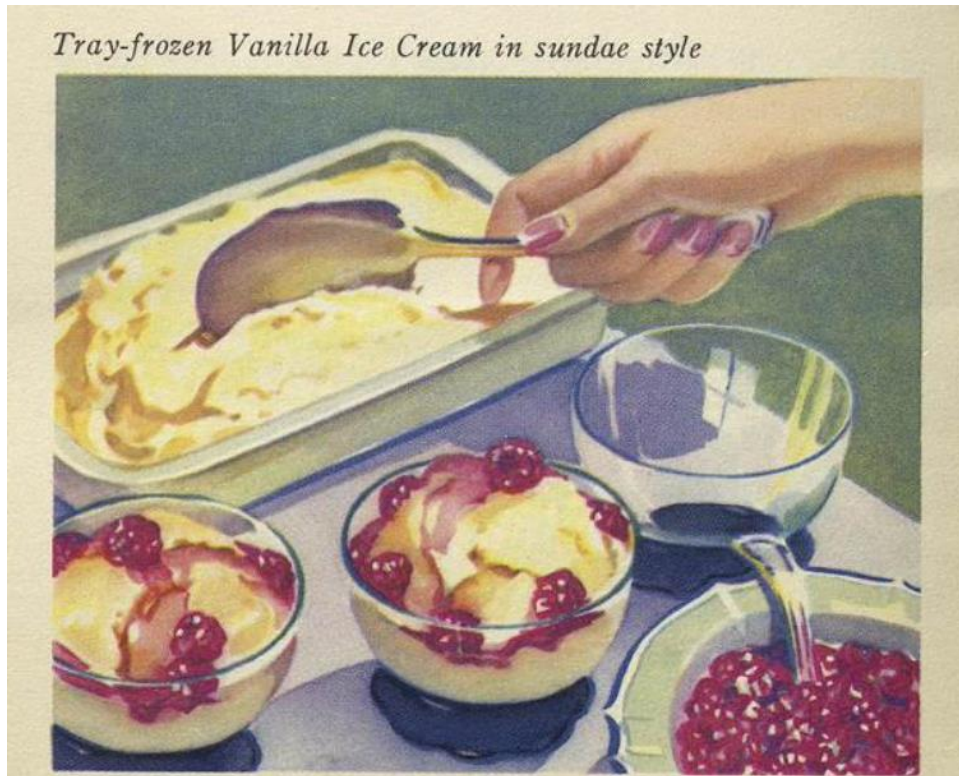


Figure 15: Illustration from the Jell-O Cookbook.¹⁶⁰

Promotional pamphlets such as these raise the query whether corporate cookbooks can even be considered cookbooks. While they do not have the same appearance, format, or intention as traditional cookbooks (or even community cookbooks) they function on much the same basic level, to provide cooking instructions. Ultimately, corporate cookbooks such as the Jell-O Cookbook highlight the underlying reliance of the corporate food economy on women, particularly the American housewife and mother. The heavily gendered illustrations, word choice, and messages in many corporate cookbooks, including The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook, make this evident.

¹⁶⁰ *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, 4.

There are no individual authors or name usages to analyze with corporate cookbooks as the creators of the recipes are cloaked by the company name. However, the companies themselves can stand in the place as simultaneous authors and editors/contributors of the recipes and content contained in corporate cookbooks. In the case of this particular cookbook pamphlet, the “author,” so-to-speak, functions as Jell-O, or more specifically the Jell-O marketing team. Rather than placing trust in a singular cook or a community of cooks compiling a series of tested recipes, the home cook is instead putting her trust in a corporation. This is a marked difference from what is found in community cookbooks, as discussed in the previous chapter, where the consumer would rely on the compilers of the cookbook to put together a cookbook with only the finest quality recipes, tested either by themselves or by the women who submitted the recipes, or in some case, both. The dichotomous relationship of the American consumer—for all intents and purposes, typically women—with so-called “trusted recipes” is intriguing. While many women relied on their close community of fellow women and homemakers to provide them with quality recipes, as well as home remedies and other practical advice, with corporate cookbooks women depended on professional homemakers, often hidden behind a brand name.

The recipes present in this Jell-O advertisement range from incredibly simple and straight forward to those with greater complexity and nuance. The basic recipes included are for freezer ice cream and what is referred to automatic refrigerator ice cream. They are excellent and easy jumping off points for beginner cooks. In addition to the so-called “Master Recipes,” there are a number of specialized recipes, such as Tutti-Frutti Ice Cream, which calls for canned pineapple chunks and maraschino cherries, complete with the juice from their respective cans.¹⁶¹ All of the

¹⁶¹ The recipe for Tutti-Frutti Ice Cream also calls for heavy cream, milk, and walnuts, and of course the obligatory Jell-O ice cream powder, this time in vanilla. *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, 11.

supplemental recipes included in the booklet are organized in columns, the ingredients and instructions in the left column belonging to the freezer method while the right column is exclusively for the tray method of ice cream preparation. This allows for ease of understanding and greater clarity for those following the recipes, especially considering the fact that the recipes rely almost exclusively on both short ingredient and instruction lists. While the division between the freezer and tray methods of preparation only extends to the ice cream recipes, the simplicity is continued with the sections for Sherbets and Specialties and Ideas for Desserts.



Figure 16: Recipe for Tutti-Frutti Ice Cream from the Jell-O Cookbook.¹⁶²

The ingredients present in the selection of recipes in *The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook* offer a glimpse into American corporatism, consumerism, and targeted advertising during the twentieth century. The reliance on canned fruits for the majority of the desserts is an indication of the way in which canned foods became a part of the American foodway zeitgeist. Even though the booklet was published during the Great Depression, the majority of the ingredients called for in the recipes would still have been easily accessible and reasonably inexpensive. The base

¹⁶² *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, 11.

recipes call for only one or two foodstuffs in addition to the ice cream powder. The Master Recipe for Freezer Ice Cream calls for only two ingredients: one package of the maker's choice of flavored Jell-O Ice Cream Powder and one quart of milk.¹⁶³ In contrast, the Master Recipe for the Tray Method (also referred to as Automatic Refrigerator Ice Cream) requires several more ingredients, such as sugar and cream, while reducing the required amount of ice cream powder to only a half packet.¹⁶⁴ The supplementary recipes accompanying these two basic, introductory recipe require additional ingredients, all of which would be easily found in a typical grocery store.

While these corporate brochures may have targeted primarily middle class to affluent white women in urban areas, their reach extended into rural areas. There were a reasonable number of advertisements for Jell-O in Montana newspapers from the 1930s through the 1950s. This is a demonstration of not only the extended and pervasive reach of big brands like Jell-O (particularly after it was absorbed by General Foods in the early twentieth century) but also the enduring popularity of certain name brand products. Even in rural Montana in the 1930s, there were still multiple advertisements for Jell-O, alternatively referred to as jello or Jello, in papers all across the state. *The Wolf Point Herald* published a full page ad for a grocery clearance sale with a small insert for twenty-nine cent jello in 1931; *The Sidney Herald* advertised nine flavors of jello six packs for fifty-five cents in 1959.¹⁶⁵ It is apparent that even in relatively rural states—

¹⁶³ *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, 8.

¹⁶⁴ *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, 8.

¹⁶⁵ *The Sidney Herald*, "SIX is the MAGIC number this week," July 15, 1959, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83004278/1959-07-15/ed-1/seq-12/#date1=1930&index=4&rows=20&words=jell+jell-O+O&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Montana&date2=1959&proxtext=jello&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>; *The Wolf Point Herald*, "4th Annual Grocery Clearance Sale Northwest Services Stores," March 27, 1931,

and their most rural sectors—Jell-O was one of the few universal, household recognized name-brands. Even simple black and white advertisements in local papers were enough to elicit customer satisfaction and trust. The presence of numerous Jell-O advertisements in Montana newspapers—even for very small, rural towns—is indicative of Jell-O’s almost universal appeal across the United States. Having built up a loyal following among housewives across the country, Jell-O became integrated into the American culinary zeitgeist of the mid-twentieth century.

As evidenced in *The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook*, the manufacturers of Jell-O aimed to reach the American consumer audience in several ways. The short and easy recipes with a variety of preparation methods which conveniently (and strategically) utilized the newest kitchen technologies targeted busy wives, homemakers, and mothers, while simultaneously appealing to consumers with the low net cost of producing the recipes. Despite the marked decrease in many consumer products during the Great Depression, companies like Jell-O and its parent company General Foods still produced propaganda-like materials that highlighted the positive effects of their products. This is a testament to the enduring popularity of products like Jell-O. Even during one of the worst economic crises in American history pamphlets such as these were still produced and distributed across the United States. While it is impossible to ascertain the exact geographical distribution of *The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook*, the presence of Jell-O advertisements in Montana papers is at the very least an indication that Jell-O’s distribution and popularity was aided at least in part by the dissemination of pamphlets such as this. This in

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86075272/1931-03-27/ed-1/seq-3/#date1=1930&index=5&rows=20&words=jello&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=Montana&date2=1959&proxtext=jello&y=0&x=0&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1>.

combination with the growing wide availability of name-brand products due to national transportation improvements enabled Jell-O to cement its place in American food culture.

Perhaps one of the more interesting elements of this small corporate cookbook is the use of a mixture of recipe formats. While some of the recipes show a marked delineation between ingredients and instructions, listing each separately, typically in columns, others mixed the ingredients required in with the instructions. This is indicative of the time in which this pamphlet was published, as Elizabeth Ransom and Wynne Wright discuss in their article “Constructing Culinary Knowledge.” By the mid-twentieth century there was a marked transition from paragraph style cookbooks (particularly with community cookbooks) to those that prioritized a standardized ingredient list and instructions.¹⁶⁶

This corresponded with an increased use of processed foods in recipes as well as the use of name brand products. The use of brand names in non-corporate cookbooks is an indication of the lasting impact and reach of those same corporate cookbooks, standing in stark contrast with one another. This is evidenced in all three surveyed community cookbooks, with several brands appearing in all three cookbooks, including Crisco, Knox Gelatin, and Karo Syrup. This is no small feat, as the community cookbooks span three decades, and only proves the enduring power of these brands on the American psyche, national, and regional foodways. Recipes include Pink and White Cake with Cherry Filling (Crisco in the Moose Cookbook) and Tuna Fish Mold (with Knox Gelatin from the Dorcas Cookbook).

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Ransom and Wynne Wright, “Constructing Culinary Knowledge: Reading Rural Community Cookbooks,” *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 16, no. 4 (April 2015): 669-689, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174413X13758634981895>.

Jell-O has left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the United States, wiggling its way into American thought and culture, suffusing cuisine across the country, crossing state borders and ethnic lines. This has resulted in a reduction of culinary diversity, although regional uniqueness is still evident in community cookbooks, as discussed in the previous chapter. While the homogenization of American foodways cannot *all* be attributed to Jell-O, the brand represents a shift in the use of targeted, brand-name marketing that only continued to permeate the country as the twentieth century progressed. Over the decades, Jell-O has become the symbol of *the* American dessert, filling a space on the table with a distinctly American creation. This lends itself to a feeling of unity and community in an incredibly vast, diverse country, which, while perhaps not the main goal of the company, only perpetuates the myth of the American Dream. And as the company likes to claim, Jell-O: “Somehow It’s Always Right.”¹⁶⁷

Karo Kookery (1941 Karo Syrup by The Corn Products Refining Company of New York)

I can clearly remember the voluptuous bottle of golden liquid in the back of my grandmother’s cupboard, brought out during the winter season to create peanut brittle that cracked under the lightest touch. Holding the bottle in small hands, carefully measuring and pouring the viscous liquid into the pan to heat and bubble, eagerly waiting for that burst of slightly burnt, caramelized sugar and the bite of crisp peanuts. I can only imagine—based on how often I have read vintage recipes utilizing the thick syrup—that many people across the country have similar memories, albeit likely with different recipes. Coming across the Karo booklet of recipes seemed serendipitous, recalling childhood memories of learning how to bake with my grandmother.

¹⁶⁷ Rowbottom, *Jell-O Girls*, 118.

The Corn Products Refining Company of New York published the *Karo Kookery* cookbook in 1941. This corporate cookbook, like many in the genre, highlights the use of promotional materials, colorful advertisements, and quick and simple recipes that popularized brand names and contributed to their enduring popularity and usage today. *Karo Kookery* is short, a mere twenty-eight pages and contains recipes in eight different categories. These categories are as follows:

Breakfast Dishes

Main Dishes and Garnishes

Desserts

Frostings and Candies

Ice Creams and Ices

Baked Treats

Fruit Desserts

Basic Beverage Syrups¹⁶⁸

According to the opening paragraph on the first page of the booklet, the recipes included “are designed for homemakers who are interested in adding food value as well as flavor and

¹⁶⁸ *Karo Kookery*, (New York: Corn Products Sales Company, 1941), 1.

appetite interest to the meal they serve.”¹⁶⁹ Right off the bat, the company bombards consumers with the identity of who should be using this recipe booklet—homemakers— as well as reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes of women as mothers, wives, and caregivers. The introductory page sings the praises of the talents and many purposes of Karo Syrup, going so far as to include a real-life testament to the health benefits of the product from the caregiver of one of the most famous families in North America.

“Karo is the only syrup served the radiantly healthy Dionne Quintuplets. Dr. Allen Roy Dafoe says: ‘Its maltose and dextrose are ideal carbohydrates for growing children.’”

The promotional component to this booklet continues throughout the pages, appearing in large italic font, often at the beginning of a new recipe section.

Karo is referred to in several different ways throughout the recipe booklet, including KARO and Karo. For the sake of continuity, I will be using Karo in my discussion of this corporate cookbook. Furthermore, Karo appears in several other ways throughout the cookbook. Each recipe makes a point to emphasize what *type* of Karo syrup should be used in that particular recipe, for example Karo blue label, Karo red label, or Karo Waffle Syrup. This places further emphasis on not just the versatility of Karo in all manner of recipes, but also the wide variety of products suited to the consumers’ specific needs. Karo Red Label Syrup was a light corn syrup

¹⁶⁹ *Karo Kookery*, 1.

made with vanilla extract.¹⁷⁰ Karo Blue Label Syrup was dark corn syrup with added refiners syrup for a molasses flavor.¹⁷¹ While these details were unknown to me, one can assume that at the time of the booklet's publication in 1941 it was common knowledge what the terms blue and red label referred to. Another significant detail that lacks explicit context within the booklet is the full-page illustration on the back cover. The words "Karo in glass is the same delicious syrup you've always enjoyed...same purity, body, fine quality," are written in bold capitalized letters alongside illustrations of Karo-branded glass bottles and metal cans. While this may seem like a simple branding shift, it is indicative of the impact of World War II on America at home. During the war, it was common and expected practice to reserve metal items for the war effort, with citizens conducting scrap metal drives and companies operating under strict metal restrictions. Some companies were unable to meet the wartime restrictions, and subsequently did not make their products—or made them at a reduced amount—while others, like Karo's parent company switched their packaging from metal to glass to accommodate the new rationing system.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ "Karo Red Label Syrup," Google search results, accessed October 17, 2021, <https://www.google.com/search?q=karo+red+label+syrup&oq=karo+red+label&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0i22i30.3405j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.

¹⁷¹ Refiners syrup is another term for golden syrup or light treacle. It is a byproduct of the sugar refining process. "Karo Blue Label Syrup." Google search results. Accessed October 17, 2021. <https://www.google.com/search?q=karo+blue+label+corn+syrup&oq=karo+blue+&aqs=chrome.0.0i512j69i57j0i22i30l3.2199j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>; Ellen Morrissey, "This is Why the Brits Love Golden Syrup So Much—and Why You Will, Too!" marthastewart.com, April 5, 2021, <https://www.marthastewart.com/8079251/golden-syrup-explained-how-use-it>.

¹⁷² "Rationing," The National WWII Museum, accessed October 17, 2021, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/rationing>; Karen Fishman, "Scrap for Victory!" Library of Congress Blogs, January 15, 2015, <https://blogs.loc.gov/now-see-hear/2015/01/scrap-for-victory/>.

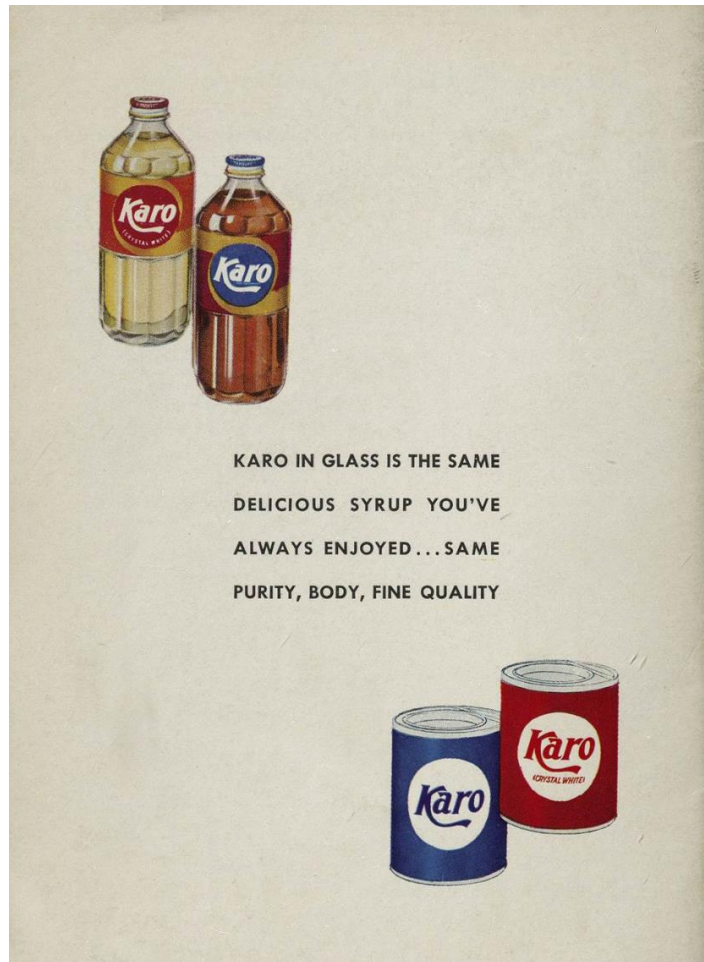


Figure 17: Illustration on the back cover of the Karo Cookbook.¹⁷³

The recipes themselves are relatively simple, with short ingredient lists and brief and clear instructions. There are full-page illustrations scattered throughout the instructional and promotional booklet featuring aesthetically appealing dishes that included Karo Syrup as the key, dish-defining ingredient. At the end of the culinary brochure, there is a table titled, “Chart for Preparing Beverages (Makes 1 serving)” that offers the consumer a different recipe experience. While still presenting recipes using Karo Syrup products, this chart lays out possible

¹⁷³ *Karo Kookery*, back cover.

combinations of beverages, Karo bases, and other ingredients to create all new drinks to delight family and friends. Perhaps this layout was an endeavor by marketing minds in the Corn Products Sales Company—Karo’s parent company—to appeal to a more masculine audience. By operating under the assumption that men would be more inclined to follow a recipe that was laid out in a more scientific or mathematical manner, this could potentially be an attempt to include men in limited tasks of domesticity. However, it is also possible that this chart is a reflection of growing standardization and efforts by the field of home economics to integrate a more unified and scientific approach to cooking and homemaking. In many ways, home economics programs and home economics classes functioned as educational sources to shape the ideal wife and mother. But these classes also helped produce functional, useful members of society, especially during wartime years.

Karo employed home economists to write their promotional cookbooks and develop their signature recipes. In 1910, Karo employed Emma Churchman Hewitt to publish, compile, and write the second edition of the *Karo Cook Book*. Hewitt was the former associate editor of the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, which was one of the premier women’s magazines from its founding in 1883 until its dissolution in the 2010s. One of the leading principles of the magazine was to promote middle class values as well as highlight the importance of women in domestic roles. Karo’s employment and subsequent use of a woman who was previously employed by such a company is an indication of their desire to become integrated into American culture. By employing Hewitt, Karo not only provided a familiar name and face to their consumers—through the cookbooks produced and written by Hewitt—but also furthered the ingrained, traditionalist

gender ideologies perpetuated at the *Ladies' Home Journal*.¹⁷⁴ This is just one example of the use of home economists to pen commercial products for large food companies. Interestingly enough, the only evidence I could find on the Karo website—or even on the internet, period—of the fingerprints of home economists being responsible for culinary pamphlets or cookbooks was in that first mention of Hewitt's production of the 1910 edition of the *Karo Cook Book*. It seems reasonable to assume that the company had at least some home economists on staff working on these culinary offerings, however, as the years progressed maybe the production of recipes and of the pamphlets were separated and relegated to different departments. Another interesting element found amongst the history that Karo itself provides on its website is the publication date for the corporate cookbook in question in this section: *Karo Kookery*. While the website claims that the cookbook was published in 1949, the physical copy of the pamphlet that I utilized during my writing and research has a small publication note on its first page that asserts it was published in 1941.

While the Karo Syrup booklet covers a wide range of recipe types—i.e., breakfast, main dishes, and desserts—the style of cookery remains the same. There is an emphasis on ease of preparation, with very simple but detailed instructions that could successfully inform even the most culinarily inept housewife. The recipe for Broiled Grapefruit, for example, contains only three ingredients including the obligatory Karo Syrup: four grapefruits, eight Maraschino cherries, and a half cup of Karo Waffle Syrup. Originating in Barbados, the grapefruit came to the United States in the early 1800s and only became a commercially available cultivar less than

¹⁷⁴ While the booklet of 120 recipes, Hewitt's first cookbook for the company, lists Hewitt as the author, the culinary ephemera I examined for this study did not mention her by name. Karo Foodservice, "About Us," ACH Food Companies, Inc., accessed November 1, 2021, <https://www.karofoodservice.com/about>.

two centuries ago.¹⁷⁵ The first record of commercially transported grapefruits dates to 1880, but it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the grapefruit became a staple in American kitchens all across the country.¹⁷⁶ With the advent of the so-called Grapefruit Diet in the 1930s and especially successful successive crops in the 1940s, grapefruits rocketed to one of the most desired and eaten fruits in America.¹⁷⁷ The recipe for Broiled Grapefruit shows significant understanding of the commercial food markets on the part of the recipe developers, as well as knowledge of what was currently an “in” food, so to speak, in contemporary American food culture. The Karo recipe spoke to the demand for quick and easy dishes. A short and sweet paragraph describes in succinct detail how one would prepare this culinary masterpiece. As seen in just the first sentence of the instructions—“Wash, and cut grapefruit in half,”—even the most basic preparation techniques like washing the fruit is mentioned.¹⁷⁸ This is a distinct departure from the community cookbooks discussed in the previous chapter. They almost exclusively omitted basic preparatory information; rather they assumed a base level of knowledge from the consumer.

¹⁷⁵ Julia Davis, “How Did the Grapefruit Get Its Name?” *Mental Floss*, July 17, 2015, <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/65242/how-did-grapefruit-get-its-name>.

¹⁷⁶ Eliezer S. Louzada and Chandrika Ramadugu, “Grapefruit: History, Use, and Breeding,” *American Society for Horticultural Science* 31, no. 3 (June 2021): 243-258, <https://doi.org/10.21273/HORTTECH04679-20>.

¹⁷⁷ Lesley Rotchford and [health.com](https://www.health.com), “Diets through history: The good, the bad and the scary,” CNN, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/02/08/health/diets-through-history/index.html>.

¹⁷⁸ *Karo Kookery*, 9.

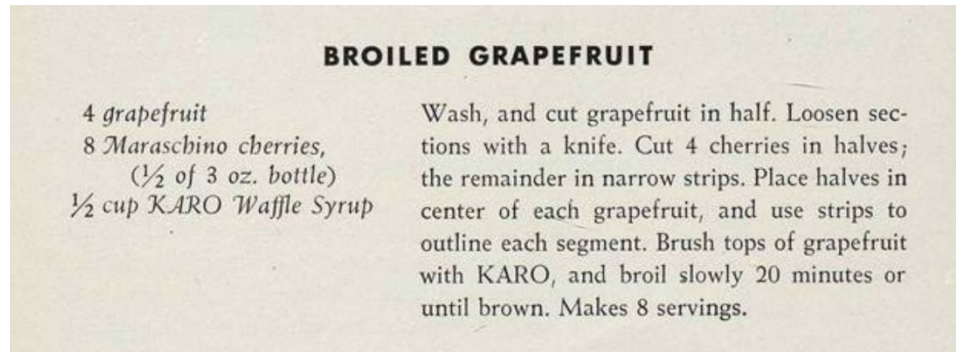


Figure 18: Recipe for Broiled Grapefruit from the Karo Cookbook.¹⁷⁹

The Karo corporate cookbook has a whole section dedicated to ice cream recipes, which purport that “Karo makes smoother Ice Creams and Ices.”¹⁸⁰ The popularity of ice creams soared in the United States in the mid-twentieth century. By the 1940s, ice cream had become such an enduringly American symbol that it was a major part of morale bolstering during the Second World War.¹⁸¹ American soldiers were provided with plentiful amounts of ice cream product during World War II, with just one branch of the military—the U.S. Army— producing hundreds of millions of gallons of ice cream mix and 135 million pounds of dehydrated ice cream.¹⁸² Karo

¹⁷⁹ *Karo Kookery*, 9.

¹⁸⁰ *Karo Kookery*, 19.

¹⁸¹ As Matt Siegel states so eloquently in his article about ice cream’s importance during wartime in *The Atlantic*, “[i]ce cream in fact played a significant role in the nation’s wartime efforts—and would be used for support in the military-industrial complex for decades.” It is the second part of this quotation about the military-industrial complex that proves so intriguing. The fact that something as simple and Americanized as ice cream could be used as a major support beam for the military-industrial complex is fascinating. Just more proof that food holds extraordinary socio-political power, especially during times of turmoil and strife. Matt Siegel, “How Ice Cream Helped America At War,” *The Atlantic*, August 6, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/08/ice-cream-military/535980/>.

¹⁸² Matt Siegel, “How Ice Cream Helped America At War,” *The Atlantic*, August 6, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/08/ice-cream-military/535980/>.

gambled on the skyrocketing popularity of ice cream in the United States to endure and even increase during wartime, by creating a whole section of the culinary booklet just for ice cream recipes.

The recipes range from simple vanilla ice cream to the more complex Spiced Blackberry Swirl Ice Cream. This recipe calls for the preparation of two other Karo recipes, Karo Vanilla Ice Cream and Raspberry Swirl. One first makes the ice cream and allows it to freeze to one inch thick before following the instructions—found on an earlier page in the booklet—for Raspberry Swirl, substituting it with the blackberries, the necessary spices and the obligatory Karo syrup. This speaks to a high level of preparation and ability of the cook, as this recipe is really three recipes nestled within each other like Russian nesting dolls. A recipe such as this would have been time-consuming, most likely prepared for an event or special occasion. It can also be viewed as a status symbol, as a recipe this intensive during wartime speaks to a certain level of luxury. Even though the majority of the ingredients seem relatively common, this booklet was produced during World War II amidst rationing and scarcity. A recipe like this, both labor and ingredient intensive, seems to be targeted towards those of an upper echelon rather than those of a lower class.

The majority of the ice creams build off a basic recipe, calling for additional ingredients to make more complex desserts. The presence of four pages of ice cream recipes are evidence of the influence that popular consumer habits—namely the steadily increasing consumption of ice cream treats by Americans at the time—had on promotional materials and consumer marketing. But this also goes the other way. Much in the way that America's fascination with iced desserts influenced food companies marketing efforts, the targeted consumption patterns of many

Americans was in turn influenced by the products and brand names integrated into promotional recipes.

The slogans or catchphrases scattered throughout the Karo corporate cookbook present the consumer with an idealized view of the results achieved through the use of the promoted product. Phrases like, “Karo adds flavor plus food value,” draw attention to the brand’s purported benefits as well as reinforces the idea that by using this product, a mother is helping her family to be happy and healthy.¹⁸³ Additional slogans include, “Karo makes Baked Foods real Treats,” and “Delightful, Different Desserts.”¹⁸⁴ These catchphrases, if you will, or promotional soundbites, further emphasize the taste and satisfaction factor of using Karo in your household cooking.

The parting image consumers are left with as they flip the last page and look at the back cover of *Karo Kookery* is this short declaration: “Karo in glass is the same delicious syrup you’ve always enjoyed...same purity, body, fine quality.” This last assertion is designed to leave a lasting impression of success and victory. Words like “always,” “purity,” and “quality” further accentuate the lasting perfection and suitability of Karo products for the American housewife. “Always” implies that not only has Karo been a part of the typical woman’s culinary repertoire for a long while, but also indicates the company’s confidence in the continued success and upward mobility of Karo products. Additionally, this final takeaway leaves the consumer with the distinct feeling of satisfaction at having chosen such a quality product to feed their families. It is a powerful marketing and advertisement effort to extend the ideal impressions and goals of the company on the consumer, all the way to the very last page.

¹⁸³ *Karo Kookery*, 3.

¹⁸⁴ *Karo Kookery*, 9, 22.

133 Quicker ways to homemade...with Bisquick (1959 Bisquick by Betty Crocker: General Mills)

Bisquick and Betty Crocker. As a kid, one of my favorite things to look at in the kitchen cupboards was the yellow Bisquick box. The fluffy pancakes and biscuits that came out of that special box remain a fond memory. The 1959 *133 Quicker ways to homemade...with Bisquick* cookbook reminded me of how much I enjoyed Bisquick recipes as a kid and also how Bisquick has been a part of countless children's childhoods since the 1930s.¹⁸⁵ Bisquick was—and still remains—a subsidiary of Betty Crocker, which is under the umbrella of General Mills.¹⁸⁶ For continuity and clarity, I will be referring to this corporate cookbook as the Bisquick Cookbook in this section. The corporate cookbook is twenty-seven pages in length and contains ten sections, not including the index on the back cover of the booklet. The sections are as follows:

Biscuits

Main Dishes

Muffins, Coffee Cake

¹⁸⁵ Karen Fredrickson, "The Untold Truth of Bisquick," *Mashed*, updated December 30, 2020, <https://www.mashed.com/210022/the-untold-truth-of-bisquick/>; Lynne Morioka, "How Bisquick got its start," General Mills, April 2, 2015, <https://blog.generalmills.com/2015/04/how-bisquick-got-its-start/>.

¹⁸⁶ Betty Crocker celebrated its 100th anniversary as a company in October 2021, and her signature red spoon logo, test kitchen, and recipes remain a beloved part of food culture not just in the United States but also worldwide. Lynne Morioka, "How Bisquick got its start," General Mills, April 2, 2015, <https://blog.generalmills.com/2015/04/how-bisquick-got-its-start/>; "The Story of Betty Crocker," [bettycrocker.com](https://www.bettycrocker.com), updated October 5, 2021, <https://www.bettycrocker.com/menus-holidays-parties/mhplibrary/parties-and-get-togethers/vintage-betty/story-of-betty-crocker>.

Dumplings

Nut Breads

Pancakes, Waffles

Shortcake

Velvet-Crumb Cake

Yeast Baking

All-Time Favorites

Index¹⁸⁷

As is customary in corporate cookbooks, the Bisquick Cookbook contains recipes that utilize Bisquick products as the primary ingredient. This culinary booklet supplements recipes with informational photographs, food illustrations, as well as infographics with recipe suggestions. The booklet begins with a short introduction from the fictional character of Betty Crocker, detailing how wives and mothers can now have enough time to lovingly prepare homemade creations for their families with the time-saving ideas and recipes in the Bisquick Cookbook. A unique aspect of this corporate cookbook is the use of illustrations accompanying step-by-step instructions, followed shortly after with suggestions on tasty variations to your “perfect” biscuits.¹⁸⁸ This is paired nicely with an aesthetically appealing chart with suggestions

¹⁸⁷ Betty Crocker of General Mills, *133 Quicker ways to homemade...with Bisquick*, (USA: General Mills, Inc., 1959), 2.

¹⁸⁸ Betty Crocker, 3.

on how to embellish and enrich Bisquick biscuits and what one should serve along with these improved biscuits. For example, biscuits enhanced with curry powder should share mealtime with chicken casserole and/or fruit salad. Or perhaps one is in the mood for something more unusual and would like to add peanuts to the biscuit mix. In this case, pot roast and vegetables would serve as a nice pairing.¹⁸⁹ Later in the culinary booklet, there are also suggestions for how to “dress up... dumplings” including raisins, mint, and pimienta green peppers and how to make more fanciful pancakes and waffles with onions or corn.¹⁹⁰ These examples only serve to reinforce efforts made by the Betty Crocker promotional team to make a series of basic recipes more impressive, accessible, and customizable for consumers.

Betty Crocker is a globally recognized brand, in part due to the success of its marketing campaigns and recognizable product branding. As Susan Marks says in *Finding Betty Crocker*, a comprehensive examination of the history and influence of Betty Crocker, “Betty Crocker has grown, over eight decades, into one of the most successful branding campaigns the world has ever known.”¹⁹¹ Behind the emerald curtain of consumeristic success were countless home economists, working to ensure General Mill’s Betty Crocker was a friendly and informative figure, one any woman—or man—could turn to with homemaking questions or concerns. In the 1920s, Gold Medal Flour launched a promotional campaign promising a pincushion to anyone who completed a puzzle printed in the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹⁹² Much to the surprise of the

¹⁸⁹ Betty Crocker, 4.

¹⁹⁰ Betty Crocker, 11, 15.

¹⁹¹ Susan Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America’s First Lady of Food*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁹² Gold Medal Flour is one of the flour brands produced by General Mills. While the brand was around prior to the inception of what is now General Mills, it was eventually folded into the company’s portfolio in the twentieth century when the Washburn Cosby Company became GM.

company's advertising manager Samuel Gale, many of the 30,000 puzzle entries were accompanied with queries about baking and homemaking. Typically, when the company received homemaking questions, the all-male staff would "gather professional cooking advice and recipes from the all-female Gold Medal Home Service staff, then forward the information to inquiring customers."¹⁹³ Gale never felt comfortable signing his own name to return letters, feeling that women would be less likely to want, or take, advice from a man. He proposed a "female chief of correspondence," not a real woman, but rather an invention of pure imagination.¹⁹⁴

The company held a contest for the best signature, decided on a suitable name, and thus, Betty Crocker was born. It became company policy to sign "every single letter regarding recipes, cooking, baking, or domestic advice...with Betty's signature," to further establish confidence in the brand.¹⁹⁵ Of course, there never was only *one* Betty Crocker: she was an amalgamation of many women and men working behind the scenes to ensure consumers were provided with the best domestic advice available. Over the years, "[h]ome economists Ina Rowe, Agnes White, Ruth Haynes Carpenter, Blanche Ingersoll, Janette Kelley, and Majorie Child Husted were the "voice" of Betty Crocker in print and in person."¹⁹⁶ Thus, many General Mills employees behind the success of the booming brand, lent their expertise to the countless letters, booklets, cookbooks, and other ephemera created under the umbrella of the Betty Crocker label.

In addition to a plethora of appealing and intriguing recipes, the Bisquick Cookbook also addresses baking in quantities, either for large crowds or for preparation for later use. There are

¹⁹³ Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 11.

¹⁹⁵ Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 11-12.

¹⁹⁶ Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 22.

basic instructions on how to adjust the biscuit recipe for twelve two-inch biscuits to make sixty medium sized biscuits, and how to increase the standard pancake recipe to make sixty pancakes or one hundred pancakes. The inclusion of this aside, is perhaps a nod to the busy homemaker who might also be engaged in work outside of the domestic sphere and be subsequently pressed for food preparation time. In this case, a woman could prepare this large quantity biscuit recipe ahead of time and perhaps freeze the majority of the recipe for use at a later time. However, it is also possible that this recipe is intended as advice for the homemaker who was hosting a large party, or in charge of bringing the bread to a gathering. In either case, the inclusion of this large quantity recipe is a nod to women, an effort to ease the burden of figuring out the maths of increasing a standard recipe and thus saving the woman time. This is emblematic of the mission of the Betty Crocker brand: to produce “good homemade food, quickly prepared.”¹⁹⁷

Each recipe specifies the quantity as well as the preparation time, a standardization effort intended to save the consumer time. Additionally, the majority of the Bisquick Cookbook includes a serving portion indication at the end of each recipe. This is a nod to the role of nutritional sciences and home economics in standardizing portion sizes and including dietary information in recipes. Many of the recipe names include words to indicate speed or ease, such as Pronto Puppies, Easy Pizzas, and Hurry-Up Yeast Rolls.¹⁹⁸ While the bulk of the corporate cookbook’s recipes are typical dishes for the 1950s—think a lot of Chiffon pies, pinwheel rolls, and baked meat dishes—there are several stand-out recipes. Recipes like Sauerkraut with Franks and Dumplings and Hawaiian Yeast Rolls represent an attempt by the Betty Crocker promotional team to incorporate ethnic recipes along with the stereotypical American dishes in the rest of the

¹⁹⁷ Betty Crocker, 2.

¹⁹⁸ Betty Crocker, 23, 24, 27,

booklet. Hawaii officially became a state on August 21, 1959 and mainland America quickly became obsessed with a romanticized idea of the islands, leading to a boom in tiki-culture inspired parties, decor, and foods.¹⁹⁹ The Bisquick Cookbook was published in 1959, and already shows the beginning signs of the upcoming Hawaiian obsession in mainland United States with recipes like Hawaiian Yeast Rolls.²⁰⁰ Recipes like Sauerkraut with Franks and Dumplings showcase German foodstuffs that would have been essentially taboo during World War II. During wartime there was widespread anti-German sentiment throughout the United States, prompting the renaming of ethnically German foods. The term ‘hot dog’ that supplanted frankfurter has lengthy and debated origins. The terms/phrases were used more-or-less interchangeably over the course of the twentieth century. The long sausages are rarely called anything other than hot dogs in the United States today, which seems to reiterate and strengthen the position of frankfurters as a German foodstuff.²⁰¹ Likewise, hamburgers were commonly referred to as liberty steaks to distance the food from its Germanic name and association.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Landess Kearns, “5 Reasons America Became Obsessed with Hawaii in the 1960s,” *HuffPost*, updated December 6, 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/america-obsessed-hawaii-1960s_n_6837068.

²⁰⁰ Betty Crocker, 25.

²⁰¹ There are a variety of theories regarding the origin of the term ‘hot dog’ including crediting sports cartoonist T.A. Dorgan who was incapable of spelling ‘dachshund’ in the common name of dachshund sausage in the early 1900s. However, there is also speculation that due to the association of frankfurters—or hot dog—with Germany and the widespread anti-German sentiment during WWII, the term hot dog became popularized in the US. “Hot Dog History,” National Hot Dog and Sausage Council, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://www.hot-dog.org/culture/hot-dog-history>; Peggy Trowbridge Filippone, “How Hot Dogs Earned Their Name,” *The Spruce Eats*, updated September 27, 2019, <https://www.thespruceeats.com/hot-dog-history-1807613>; “Hot Dogs & frankfurters,” [foodtimeline.org](https://www.foodtimeline.org/foodmeats.html#hotdogs), accessed October 12, 2021, <https://www.foodtimeline.org/foodmeats.html#hotdogs>.

²⁰² Similar renaming practices occurred during WWI as well, notably with sauerkraut’s rebranding as ‘liberty cabbage.’ “7 Stunning Facts You May Not Know About World War II,” *Ancestry.com*, updated February 06, 2015, <https://blogs.ancestry.com/cm/7-stunning-facts-you->

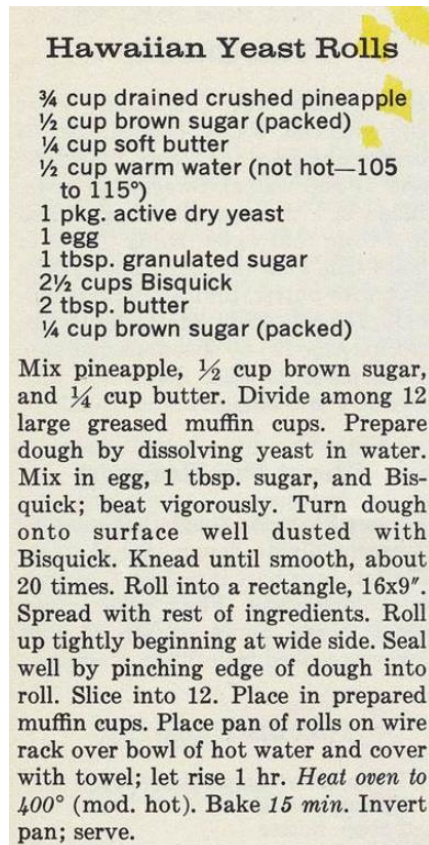


Figure 19: Recipe for Hawaiian Yeast Rolls from the Bisquick Cookbook.²⁰³

[may-not-know-about-world-war-ii/](#); Karen Fredrickson, “The Untold Truth of Sauerkraut,” *Mashed*, updated May 22, 2020, <https://www.mashed.com/209619/the-untold-truth-of-sauerkraut/>.

²⁰³ Betty Crocker, 25.

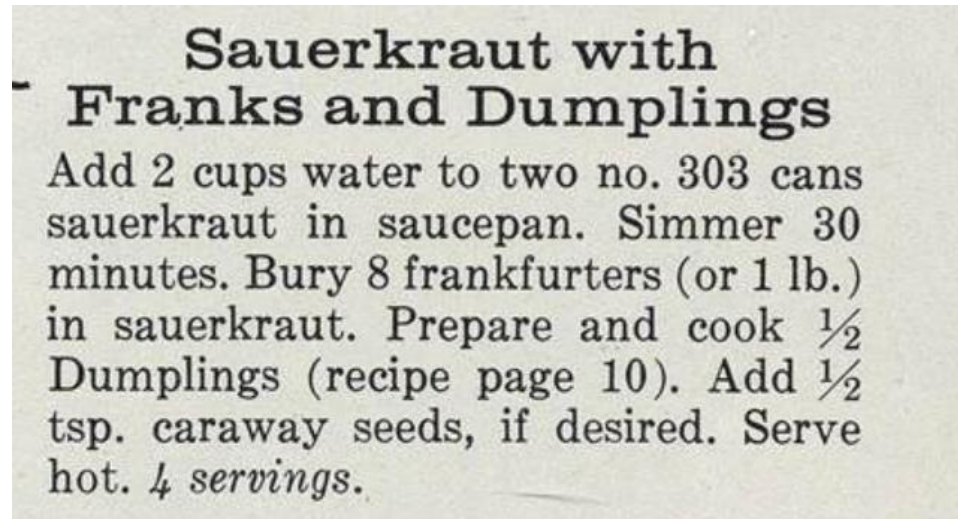


Figure 20: Recipe for Sauerkraut with Franks and Dumplings from the Bisquick Cookbook.²⁰⁴

The presence of ethnic recipes such as these in the Bisquick Cookbook serve as an indication of the “new melting pot” as historian Elaine Tyler May calls postwar America, as well as the increasingly homogenous foodways across the country.²⁰⁵ While there are several recipes that could be termed as “ethnic,” there is not nearly as much variety in this corporate cookbook as there is in the community cookbooks surveyed. This dichotomy between the apparent desire of the producers of the Bisquick Cookbook to appeal to a wider consumer base and the vying reality of postwar homogeneity is evident throughout the cookbook, particularly in the presence of so few ethnic recipes. As Jessamyn Neuhaus asserts in her article, “The Way to a Man’s Heart,” there was not just a homogenization of cuisine in postwar America but also a desire and “taste for meat and potato and highly processed comfort food...[a]cross class lines

²⁰⁴ Betty Crocker, 11.

²⁰⁵ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 28.

and geographical distances.”²⁰⁶ In the postwar period, there was a particular strengthening of American culinary nationalism, evident in the prevalence of similar recipes in both corporate and community cookbooks.

The Bisquick Cookbook proves to be an invaluable window into seemingly idyllic postwar 1950s America. The prevailing gendered domestic ideology and unprecedented consumerism that characterized this era is steeped into every page, emphasizing the increasingly dominant *American* foodscape. Through manuals, booklets, pamphlets, and other promotional resources, companies vied for the attention and cash of Americans, targeting, in particular, women who were increasingly looking for products—both foodstuffs and technologies—that would save them time and energy, while maintaining the homemade quality that was deemed socially acceptable and expected. These materials served as a kind of consumer propaganda for American retailers and companies. In many cases, the promotional recipes or cookbooks not only aimed to attract attention and money to particular name brand foodstuffs—in this case, Bisquick—but also to encourage consumers of the necessity of modern time-saving technologies like the newest fridge-freezer combo, blenders, or even toasters.²⁰⁷ Indeed, many of the recipes included in corporate materials not-so-subtly hinted at the desirability of having the newest, most modern homeware devices, which would not only prove a timesaver for the modern housewife—many of whom had entered the workforce, in record numbers—but also serve as a badge of

²⁰⁶ Jessamyn Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s,” *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 529-555, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789341>.

²⁰⁷ “Favorite Technologies of the 1950s,” Google Arts & Culture, accessed October 19, 2021, <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/favorite-technologies-of-the-1950s/gQuaEtll>.

honor, a way to participate in the postwar, Cold War consumerism that was pervasive in the United States at the time.

Conclusions: Corporate Cookbooks

Jell-O, Karo, and Bisquick. What do these three name brand foodstuffs & the booklets promoting them have in common? These cookbooks all furthered the mission of corporate America and culinary nationalism, enabling big brand name producers to not only subtly integrate their own products into the lives of Americans, but also to reinforce societal ideologies. Ultimately, corporate cookbooks such as these function as a form of societal propaganda, enforcing predetermined ideals and expectations. Through these commercial cookbooks, corporations were able to assert the importance of gender and class ideals, as well as enforcing the importance of consumerism in American culture. On the surface, it may appear as though these branded product cookbooks were intended to simply sell the product they are promoting, but in reality they are advertising something much more intangible: the “American dream.” These cookbooks are selling the idea that if the consumer would only buy these products, cook these recipes, and follow advice by homemaking experts, they would belong to the coveted middle class of America. Relatively well-off, with kids, spouse, house, and the ability to buy the newest, most modern *things*. Cars, fridges, toasters, washers, and dryers. New technologies boomed in the period between 1930 and 1959, helping to establish the United States as a nation of consumers.²⁰⁸ In many ways, the nationality of the U.S. *became* consumerism, especially in

²⁰⁸ As Susan Marks states in *Finding Betty Crocker*, “Betty’s usefulness in the kitchen rose in tandem with the twentieth-century electrical and industrial innovations that would forever alter the time-honored traditions of home and hearth.” Marketing for popular brands like Betty Crocker coincided with technological advances in the home, creating an atmosphere where the domestic collided with increasingly scientific and technical homemaking technologies. This

the postwar period. There is a plethora of examples of how mid-century consumerism became integrated so deeply into American thought and culture, but in my mind there is nothing that epitomizes this better than corporate cookbooks. They highlight the ways that companies targeted consumers—particularly white, middle-class women—and built up a solid client base that has endured over the decades. These cookbooks showcase a very specific moment in American culture, with strange and intriguing recipes (Jellied Pickled Beet Ring or Tuna Royal Pancakes, anyone?) and create a tantalizing tableau of domesticity and gender ideologies during the twentieth century. But more than anything, these corporate cookbooks tell us, the modern reader, all about *history*. We can clearly see the entrenched gender roles, the worries of the Great Depression, the anxieties of World War II, and the fears of the Cold War. The increasing reliance on highly processed foods as one progresses through the cookbooks—one for each decade in the mid-twentieth century—only serves to highlight the average American’s slow divorce from the natural world and the process of food production. There is a marked distinction from community cookbooks, as will be further discussed in a later section, which typically highlight a recipe’s connection to the local environment, be it with ingredients from a local farm or ranch, or foodstuffs grown, raised, produced, and processed in one’s own backyard. It seems to me that these three corporate cookbooks only serve to emphasize the growing distance between the majority of Americans and the natural world. The foodstuffs celebrated in the pages of the booklets helps to integrate the slow and gradual alienation of sustainable, local foodways in broad nationwide foodways, a process which to some extent continues to this day.

resulted, often, in a need for practical explanations and problem solving for those inexperienced with these new technologies, which is where brands like Betty Crocker stepped in to satisfy this need. Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker*, 12, 27.

CHAPTER FIVE

ADVERTISING, ASSIMILATION, AND AMERICA

*After all there are just two kinds of people—those that live to eat and those that eat to live.*²⁰⁹

Introduction

While on the surface community and corporate cookbooks seem inherently different, they are in fact undeniably intertwined. Community cookbooks reveal the inner workings of a community, showcasing local businesses and highlighting inter-community connections. But contained within the pages of many community cookbooks are ads for nationally recognized brands, brand name products in recipes, and mentions of specific brand name appliances. The influence of corporations on small, local communities, even in rural areas like Montana, is evident in community cookbooks. These two seemingly diametrically opposed culinary products are intrinsically intertwined by socio-cultural ideals and gender ideologies. In many ways, both styles of cookbook serve to reinforce societal expectations of gender, cultural, and class norms. While corporate cookbooks serve an obvious purpose to further integrate a branded product into the lives of—typically white, middle class—Americans, they also function as a product that reinforces American nationalism. By emphasizing the idea that if one only has certain material goods—refrigerators, toasters, dishwashers, etc.—and behaves in a certain manner that adheres to previously determined American ideals, corporate cookbooks integrate the ingrained idea of the American Dream.

²⁰⁹ Collection 2336, WPA Records: America Eats, Box 2, Folder 11, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

Compare and Contrast Community and Corporate Cookbooks

Community cookbooks contain a plethora of place and time specific information encoded into their chosen recipes. Whether it's a recipe for Chocolate Sunday Pie or Asparagus Shortcake with Cheese Sauce, recipes leave clues about the influence of pop culture, societal ideations, worldwide phenomenon, and regional and national environmental factors. It is without a doubt that recipes can—and sometimes should be—read as just that, a recipe. But other times, it is prudent to read between the lines and examine the influences behind the ingredients, instructions, and even tools called for in each recipe. While community cookbooks place deep value in localized foodways, they are undoubtably influenced and changed by regional and national forces beyond the control of the towns in which they were produced. A community cookbook oftentimes gathers recipes in a variety of divisions—dessert, pastry, main dish, bread—from participating community members, sometimes even doubling, or tripling up on recipes to provide an accurate view of how townsfolk are cooking, feeding their families, and entertaining their neighbors. Names will repeat themselves, as will the recipes on occasion, but this tells the reader all about the dynamics of the town or the organization that produced or compiled a particular cookbook. It seems that it is less common for people to gather physical recipes in the twenty-first century with tens of thousands of recipes a click away on the internet.²¹⁰ It wasn't that long ago that recipes were written down, spilled and scribbled on, gifted and received. The recipes present in community cookbooks represent those treasured recipes, oftentimes a sort of family heirloom—much in the same way prized tomatoes or snapdragons can be—and serve as a

²¹⁰ Many groups and organizations, religious or otherwise, still produce recipe compilations, an exception to this statement.

hallmark of the times in which they were created, shared, and improved upon. The flip side of the coin, the recipes carefully and purposefully curated for corporate cookbooks, represent a different sort of recipe, as well as a different sort of intention. Oftentimes recipes in community cookbooks were shared to further strengthen the ties of a community, and in a way corporate cookbooks were not so different. The recipes created by corporations for the dispersal of culinary ephemera were frequently an attempt to create a standardized, Americanized way of cooking, an assimilation of cooking and cultures. Both forms of cookbook are attempting to assert or reinforce a set of ideals, laid out in the subtexts of recipe. While the goal of corporate cookbooks differs from community cookbooks, often boiling down to singing the praises of brand-name products to consumers, both styles reinforce gender and socioeconomic ideals deemed appropriate and mainstream by twentieth century America.

Community and corporate cookbooks, to a varying degree, paint a clear picture of how the perfect woman, wife, and mother should look and act in her domestic sphere. Two of the three community cookbooks contain helpful hints and tricks for keeping a smooth-running household and kitchen, in addition to offering short poems detailing how to keep a husband happy. The *Big Hole Cook Book* and the *Montana Women of the Moose* have sections, at the front and back of each cookbook, dedicated to household information, heavily centered in the cisgendered ideology common and expected of the mid-twentieth century. Short aphorisms like that of the “Husband Conserve: A Recipe for June Brides,” found in the last pages of the *Montana Women of the Moose*, featured alongside recipes and household advice, serve as a

humorous reminder of womanly duties and obligations.²¹¹ This “recipe” details in pithy similes how to properly care for a husband, complete with the advice to “[f]lavor him with oil of happiness, an ounce of understanding, / and a bushel of laughter and fun.”²¹² The person who submitted this poem, a woman named Edith Klokow, appears throughout the cookbook twenty-six more times, with recipes in every category of the book except for Beverages. Klokow must have been an active participant in the Montana Women of the Moose Roundup chapter, the compilers of this particular work. The fact that women submitted all of the recipes as well as the inclusion of the “Husband Conserve” poem is further evidence of the deeply ingrained of association of women, cooking, and caregiving. This phenomenon is discussed at length in Laura Shapiro’s work *Something from the Oven*, with Shapiro stating that cooking has become “tantamount to a sex-linked characteristic.”²¹³ The format of this poem as well as other adages and helpful household tips in community cookbooks spring from and reinforce this mindset, of a woman’s innate connection to cooking, rearing children, household labor, and keeping husbands happy. The *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book* offers in addition to the “Husband Conserve” poem a pie chart of “The Basic 7 Food Groups” and a list of rules for meals. The *Big Hole Cook Book* also offers a variety of helpful household tips, including an artistic drawing with

²¹¹ Poem written by Goldie Lemon, submitted by Edith Klokow. Frances Stalcup, Rose Meznarich, Cecilia Meznarich, Rose Bujok, and Viola Johnson, eds., *Montana Women of the Moose Cookbook*, (Roundup: The Home Making Committee of Roundup, September 1948), 80.

²¹² Stalcup, et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cookbook*, 80.

²¹³ Laura Shapiro, *Something in the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 2004), xvii.

a humorous if droll commentary on domestic life and a “Compendium of Helpful Information and Some Bright Ideas.”²¹⁴

While *The Dorcas Cook Book* did not contain these household tips, this is just as telling as the other two cookbooks that do have tips. Published in the 1950s, this particular cookbook is the one that you would think would have dedicated sections, or at the very least small inserts, devoted to tips and tricks for the domestic sphere. Given the 1950s reputation as being a postwar landscape of domestic tranquility and bliss, one would expect an abundance of household advice to be present in a cookbook such as this. However by the 1950s, the food industry in the United States had begun a transition away from “traditional, kitchen-centered home cooking” and towards a more sterile, hands-off approach to mealtimes.²¹⁵ The growing reliance on prepared foods—canned, ready-made, frozen—required less time in the kitchen, decreasing the need for helpful household tips like “[t]ough meat may be made tender by laying it for a few minutes in vinegar water or add 1 tablespoon vinegar to boiling meat or chicken if you think same is tough.”²¹⁶ There was little need for comments such as these in the postwar era of the 1950s, as so much of cooking responsibilities had shifted to preparing close to ready-made foodstuffs. In many ways, *The Dorcas Cook Book* mimics the commercial cookbooks of mid-century America, referencing brand-name products in a vastly higher occurrence than the other two community cookbooks.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Arthur M. Sanderson and Ian Sanderson, eds., *Big Hole Cook Book of Tested Recipes and Compendum [sic] of Useful Information*. (Wisdom: Arthur M. Sanderson and Ian Sanderson, 1934), iv, 97.

²¹⁵ Shapiro, *Something in the Oven*, xix.

²¹⁶ Sanderson and Sanderson, *Big Hole Cook Book*, 105.

²¹⁷ By examining the three community cookbooks, there were thirty-six brand-name products mentioned, with twenty-seven of those brands appearing in *The Dorcas Cook Book*. In contrast,

Commercial cookbooks also showcase established patterns of traditional gender ideologies in food marketing, advertising, and culinary ephemera. The three corporate cookbooks I examined, while obviously sales-oriented, all profess that their product will help women to become the best version of themselves: the perfect housewife and mother. The Jell-O Ice Cream Cookbook begins with an image depicting two perfectly made-up women exclaiming over the ease and beauty of ice cream made with Jell-O Ice Cream Powder. This image is followed by a series of black and white illustrations showing a woman in various stages of ice cream preparation, from mixing it, to placing it in the freezer, to greeting her children with carefully prepared bowls. These are interspersed with colorful images of aesthetically pleasing ice cream dishes. The majority of the cookbook is devoted to extolling the virtues of the product, explaining how it's as simple as choosing "the...[recipe] that fits your equipment, follow[ing] the directions carefully, and your wonderful ice cream desserts will make your dinners famous, with new honor and reputation for the hostess!"²¹⁸ Beyond simply promoting the ease and simplicity of using Jell-O's ice cream powder, this commercial pamphlet not-so-subtly highlights the importance of women preparing excellent, home-cooked food, especially if the typical labor-costs required of the woman were alleviated by quick products like the ice cream powder. Similarly to community cookbooks, the Jell-O cookbook provides ample traditional gender-conforming stereotypes, but presented in a more upfront manner. However, rather than read every page as a form of gendered brainwashing carefully propagated by General Foods, perhaps we can simply view the Jell-O pamphlet as a shameless grab for consumers' money. At the very least, it is likely that whatever gendered ideology portrayed in the Jell-O pamphlet was

the other cookbooks had instances of only nine and eleven, respectively, brand-names mentioned in recipes.

²¹⁸ *Recipes for Delicious Ice Cream*, (USA: General Foods Corp., 1936), 5.

subconscious, deeply ingrained in the mind of the marketing team and professional home economists who produced the pamphlet and its recipes.

The *Karo Kookery* recipe pamphlet also has messaging with political and gendered undertones. Published in the 1940s, this booklet extolls the virtues of Karo Syrup, proclaiming that its purity and “food value” make it a “staple food in millions of homes.”²¹⁹ Included on the very first page of the booklet, before the recipes even appear, is a testimony to the medical benefits of Karo by a well-known doctor. Beyond the introductory domestic enforcement, *Karo Kookery* lacks much of the commonplace domestic ideology found in the other corporate cookbooks. Perhaps more significantly is the presence of an advertisement on the back cover of the recipe booklet that has a multitude of undertones. Illustrated bottles of Karo syrup are juxtaposed against metal cans of the brand-name syrup, with the words, “Karo in glass is the same delicious syrup you’ve always enjoyed...same purity, body, fine quality.”²²⁰ Considering that the pamphlet was produced in 1941, the same year as the United States’ entry into World War II this statement can be read as charged with political, militaristic, and social meanings. Karo is not just a brand on the national, but international stage, and the transition from glass bottles to metal cans demonstrated Karo’s commitment to supporting the war effort. The advertisement implied women would not sacrifice serving quality food to their families when they chose to support the war through their consumer purchases.

The presence of political messaging is mirrored in the *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book* with food charts and nutritional advice. In 1943, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) War Food Administration produced a pamphlet titled “National

²¹⁹ *Karo Kookery*, (New York: Corn Products Sales Company, 1941), 1.

²²⁰ *Karo Kookery*, back cover.

Wartime Nutrition Guide.”²²¹ This guide provided detailed nutritional standards that should be followed for optimal health, proclaiming in bold print on the cover of the pamphlet that the “U.S. needs us strong/eat the basic 7 every day.”²²² Over the next five pages of the government-issued pamphlet, each of the seven basic food groups are broken down with suggestions of appropriate foods for each. The categories are described as follows:

Group One: Green and Yellow Vegetables

Group Two: Oranges, Tomatoes, Grapefruit

Group Three: Potatoes and Other Vegetables and Fruits

Group Four: Milk and Milk Products

Group Five: Meat, Poultry, Fish, or Eggs

Group Six: Bread, Flour, and Cereals

Group Seven: Butter and Fortified Margarine²²³

The presence of a food chart in a community cookbook indicates an awareness of nutritional standards even in a small community. A pamphlet such as this would have been widely dispersed during wartime to ensure not just proper nutrition but also promote a patriotic, national pride in

²²¹ United States Department of Agriculture: War Food Administration, *National Wartime Nutrition Guide*, PDF file, September 1, 1943, <https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/1789449/PDF>.

²²² USDA, *National Wartime Nutrition Guide*, front cover.

²²³ USDA, *National Wartime Nutrition Guide*, 1-3.

those who abided by the nutritional “rules.” While the pamphlet was published and distributed several years prior to the compilation of the Moose Cookbook, the seven food groups remained the same until 1956 when the USDA downgraded the number of food groups to four.²²⁴ The seven basic food groups as outlined by the USDA during the 1940s served as a guideline for women to create nutritious meals, as evidenced with its appearance at the beginning of the Moose Cookbook. The homemaking committee that compiled the cookbook was probably not thinking of the political implications of including a food chart in their community cookbook. Rather, they were most likely thinking that including the food chart was a good way to inform the users of the cookbook of the best way to provide nutrients to themselves and their families. In many cases, community cookbooks were used not just by members of the community in which they were produced but were also purchased and sent to new brides or family members outside of the immediate area. The tips and information included in accordance with the USDA nutrition standards provided guidance to new cooks as well as reminders for the more seasoned housewife. Regardless of the intentions of the homemaking committee in including the food chart, its presence is a clear indication of the often subconscious observance of and adherence to government recommendations.

The messaging behind adages like those found in community cookbooks—such as the *Big Hole Cook Book* and the *Montana Women of the Moose Cook Book*—is one of political and social motivations. As Kennan Ferguson argues in his book *Cookbook Politics*, cookbooks operate as political tools on a variety of levels, including but not limited to perpetuating practices

²²⁴ Carole Davis and Etta Saltos, “Dietary Recommendations and How They Have Changed Over Time,” PDF file, accessed January 5, 2022, https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/42215/5831_aib750b_1_.pdf.

of ideology and community.²²⁵ Beyond simply reinforcing gendered ideology—i.e. a woman's place is in the home and in the kitchen—homemaking aphorisms also assert a homogenous approach to being a woman in the mid-twentieth century, complete with goals and expectations. Commercial—or corporate—cookbooks offer a similar approach to the assertion of traditional gender roles. In the commercial cookbooks analyzed, there is an abundance of gendered ideology and, to a lesser point, political ideals. The corporate cookbooks also contain a variety of ideologies that enforce gendered work in the domestic sphere. However, the format of the commercial cookbooks differs from that of the community cookbooks. While still adhering to recipes grouped by type—i.e., Desserts or Sandwiches—the commercial cookbooks include informative and aesthetically appealing illustrations to demonstrate why their brand-name product is the best. Everything about a commercial or corporate cookbook is about selling a product, convincing consumers to purchase and use a branded product, and provide further incentive in the form of recipes for committed consumers to continue using a designated product. At the most basic level, there are some apparent differences between the community and corporate cookbooks surveyed in previous chapters.

The corporate cookbooks do not have any listed authors for the recipes included in the booklets. No names are listed, as all recipes follow the assumption that they are produced by the same person or persons, in this case the brand that produced the booklet. This is in contrast to the

²²⁵ Kennan Ferguson is a political theorist whose most recent work focuses on the role of politics in American culinary traditions and ephemera. See also his work “Intensifying Taste, Intensifying Identity: Collectivity through Community Cookbooks” for additional thoughts on community cookbooks. Kennan Ferguson, “Intensifying Taste, Intensifying Identity: Collectivity through Community Cookbooks,” *Signs* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 695-717, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/662697>; Kennan Ferguson, *Cookbook Politics*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

community cookbooks, as only several recipes are without attribution. As in the case of the Moose Cookbook, there is a notation that “[n]ames were omitted from some contributions,” and that the compilers were “indeed sorry not to be able to give credit where due.”²²⁶ Whereas names were included with recipes if at all possible in community cookbooks, attribution was assumed to be the same for all recipes in the corporate cookbooks, as they were produced by a company. As was noted in previous chapters, large corporations like General Mills and Jell-O employed home economists or recipe developers to create new content, update old recipes, or connect with the public to refine ideas. In many cases, these employees are virtually invisible, as they are given no official credit for the recipes and content that they created or refined. Their work is included under the broad umbrella of the company’s name. As with the Bisquick Cookbook, the front cover attributes all content within to “Betty Crocker of General Mills.”²²⁷ While the community cookbooks often have compilers or committees, whose names are listed on the title page, they also take care to pair the recipe with its creator, creating a sense of individuality amidst a communal device.

Community cookbooks are longer than the commercial cookbooks examined. The average page length for the three community cookbooks is 108 pages (113 pages for the Big Hole Cookbook, 82 pages for the Moose Cookbook, and 129 pages for the Dorcas Cookbook). This is in direct contrast to the length of the corporate cookbooks, which averaged twenty-three and one third pages (fifteen pages for Jell-O, twenty-eight pages for Karo, and twenty-seven pages for Bisquick). There are several explanations for the discrepancy. Perhaps the simplest

²²⁶ Stalcup, et al., *Montana Women of the Moose Cookbook*, 80.

²²⁷ Betty Crocker of General Mills, *133 Quicker ways to homemade...with Bisquick*, (USA: General Mills, Inc., 1959), front cover.

explanation is that oftentimes commercial cookbooks were provided free of charge and their production needed to be inexpensive. Handed out in supermarkets, through product purchases, or mail order, it made financial sense to keep these culinary booklets short and sweet. By keeping the booklets short, costs were kept down. Even if the product was provided for free, the money spent on producing these booklets was made up for in the advertising and promotion of the product. Additionally, by making these brochures aesthetically pleasing with intriguing recipes, companies potentially increased the odds of attracting new consumers and maintaining the business of current customers.

Community cookbooks' longer length could also be partially motivated by economics. This type of culinary ephemera was typically used as a fundraiser, intended to raise money for a specific cause. Frequently, community cookbooks were produced by religious organizations, as is the case with Moose Cookbook and Dorcas Cookbook. While there was not a price attached to any of the three cookbooks examined, we can certainly postulate that these books were sold and distributed within the community and perhaps beyond. In this case, it makes sense that the cookbooks would be longer than the corporate cookbooks, as they were recovering costs lost producing the books and also gaining revenue for the community's cause. These cookbooks earned money from the community and put it back into the community. Beyond the monetary rationale behind larger community cookbooks, there is also a deeper sociological reason for the higher page count. Community cookbooks represent the intersection of many cultures and ethnicities, which can result in a larger quantity of diverse recipes in the community cookbooks. While there are some contributors who provided more recipes than others, there are still many individual participants who contributed recipes to each cookbook. The sheer volume of recipes contained in each cookbook, spanning a wide variety of categories and styles, is a further

indication of the diversity present in the style of cookbook, particularly in comparison with commercial cookbooks. Commercial cookbooks present a united front, so-to-speak, a standardized, largely one-tone cuisine, oriented, of course, around a specific brand. This limits the variety and diversity of the enclosed recipes in a way that is completely contradictory to what is presented in community cookbooks.

The increased presence of ethnic recipes in community cookbooks versus corporate cookbooks is indicative of regional diversity.²²⁸ While corporate cookbooks pushed the ideal of a homogenous American cuisine—marked by similar foods regardless of geographic location, ethnicity, or cultural ties—community cookbooks provide perhaps a more realistic view of America, region by region. The three Montana community cookbooks have a variety of ethnic recipes, far more than the ethnic recipes present in the three commercial cookbooks. While the community cookbooks all boast at least thirteen ethnic recipes each (fifteen recipes for the Big Hole Cookbook, thirteen recipes for the Moose Cookbook, and sixteen for the Dorcas Cookbook), the three corporate cookbooks have five ethnic recipes combined. This presents an interesting but predictable dichotomy between the two styles of cookbooks, highlighting culinary regional diversity while simultaneously indicating the presence of assimilation in national “American” cuisine. Historian Mary Drake McFeely claims in her book *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie*, “American cookbooks, [while] not outspokenly patriotic, were cautious about ethnic recipes; when they appeared at all, it was in a far-from-literal translation of the original.”²²⁹ This may be

²²⁸ In this case, ethnic recipes may be defined as recipes originating in countries other than the United States. For the purposes of my analysis, I only classified recipes as “ethnic” if the recipe name indicates a certain ethnicity. This does not take into account recipes that are ethnic in nature and origin but have a nondescript name.

²²⁹ Mary Drake McFeely, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie? American Women and the Kitchen in the Twentieth Century*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 111.

the case with commercial cookbooks produced in the mid-twentieth century, but it is certainly not representative of the distinctive regional cuisine presented in the three community cookbooks. The presence of so few ethnic recipes in the Jell-O, Karo, and Bisquick recipe booklets speaks to a wide-spread, state-sanctioned attempt to assimilate recently arrived peoples and those who clung to their cultural and ethnic heritage by replacing unique ethnic foodways with homogenous, highly standardized foodstuffs. The limited ethnic recipes, rather than serving as an indication of diversity, are an example of cultural appropriation. The recipes, when present, are a pale duplication of the originals and represent an attempt to take popular, wide-spread ethnic recipes and Americanize them. This serves as a form of control, as brand-name products are promoting the idea that only certain ethnic cultures are “okay” and only if their own, very American products are used in ethnic recipes. Ultimately, the ethnic recipes present in the Jell-O, Karo, and Bisquick recipe booklets are an example of deeply ingrained imperative for assimilation in “American” culture—which is, in actuality, the accumulation of many different cultures and ethnicities—and national foodways.

Just the opposite is true for the community cookbooks. While ethnic-name recipes are in the minority, there are still enough to indicate a distinct and diverse regional foodway in the Rocky Mountain West. Beyond being a representation of the presence of a multitude of ethnic groups in Montana in the mid-twentieth century, this speaks to the resilience of the people who made the Big Sky state their home. Many of these recipes were likely inherited, passed down from mother to daughter through the generations. The home countries where they originated long since left behind. Yet they represent something much larger than just a faded, stained recipe card. They represent endurance and resiliency and hope. And above all, they represent a belief in an American Dream, where all are welcomed, even if that America didn’t believe in them. Despite

the adversity and challenges to authentic cultures and cuisines presented by big corporations that supported and propelled the cause of assimilation and homogenization, pockets of uniqueness persisted across America. It may seem hard to find evidence of diversity in mid-century America, but all one has to do is flip through the worn pages of a community cookbook to find an enduring sense of spirit and community, despite all disparities great and small.

Conclusions

Cookbooks are a manifestation of American thought and culture, a representation of the collision of cultures, ideals, and circumstances. They can provide a sense of community, of belonging, with recipes reminiscent of being a child standing in your grandmother's kitchen asking to lick the batter spoon. But they can also serve as a symbol of the American Dream, of the goals and hopes that people should have. Cookbooks come in all shapes and forms, just like people. Ranging from glossy, beautifully photographed cookbooks that are closer in appearance to luxury coffee table books, to independently published, spiral-bound accumulations of heirloom recipes, cookbooks hold a special place in the American psyche. Many people can remember the cookbooks that family members always reached for, be it an old, worn copy of Fannie Farmer recipes or carefully transcribed family dishes passed down through the generations. Regardless of their presentation, cookbooks serve as a gateway to another time and place, a portal to another world.

Corporate cookbooks provide an idealized example of Americanized cookery, emphasizing the "importance" of brand-name products and homogenous foodways. In contrast, community cookbooks oftentimes portray a more accurate, complete picture of what regional foodways actually looked like at a given time. Ultimately, community cookbooks can be used as

a regionalized example of how larger societal, political, and environmental factors exemplify themselves in real communities. Corporate cookbooks only focus on a very specific, curated image of how brands envision American foodways: a tool of assimilation, commerce, nationalism, and consumerism.

Regardless of the type of culinary ephemera in question, both community and corporate cookbooks present a window into American culture through the ages. Both are emblematic of food trends, changing methods of transportation, advertising, and technology, and shifting societal norms and ideals. The base importance of cookbooks is the niche they fill for Americans of all statuses and positions: cookbooks feel like home, a reflecting pool of one's past, present, and future. Recipes tell us stories, from the ingredients to the instructions, added notations and spatters of unknown substances on the pages. The tales cookbooks tell differ depending on when they were produced, why the recipes were chosen, and the ulterior goals and messages behind their creation. But at their core, community and corporate cookbooks are emblematic of how Americans have lived—both realistically and idealized—over the decades of the mid-twentieth century.

CHAPTER SIX

DRUNKEN MINCE PIES, SURPRISE BIRTHDAY CAKES, AND WEDDING FEASTS

*Remember...This is the greatest country; with the tallest mountains, the longest rivers, and the biggest pies.*²³⁰

Introduction and Setting the Table

From the rolling hills and the wind-swept prairies of the East to the pine forests and crystalline streams of the West, Montana's rugged nature was -and is- an enduring symbol of the idealized North American West during a time when uncertainty, fear and suspicion permeated American culture. In the calamitous economic climate of the 1930s, scarcity and incertitude created foodways marked by necessity and locality. Even when desperate, pride prevented many people from accepting the limited amounts of aid the government (in all its iterations, local, state and federal). A reliance on locally produced, processed and procured foodstuffs as well as an emphasis on efficiency and hardiness epitomized Montana foodways in the mid-twentieth century. In this instance, "local" can be interpreted to indicate any and all foods that were grown, cultivated, harvested, processed, sold, distributed and prepared within a small geographical area. It is into this climate of uncertainty that America Eats enters the scene.

Background and a bit of History

In the time between the world wars, in the midst of an economic depression, there were a series of government-funded programs known as the Alphabet Soup agencies. One such agency

²³⁰ Editorial Notes (Montana Office), 1936-1942, CollectWPA Records: America Eats, Box 1, Folder 3, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.

was the WPA, or the Works Progress Administration. The WPA, like the many other Alphabet Soup agencies, was created by the federal government to provide jobs for out-of-work Americans during the Great Depression. Much like Russian nesting dolls, the WPA had several sub-agencies under its purview, including the FWP, or the Federal Writers' Project. Established in 1935, the FWP was created with the intention of providing employment "for historians, teachers, writers, librarians, and other white-collar workers."²³¹ Most well known for their renowned American Guide Series and *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives*, the FWP's early success was followed in the late 1930s with the burgeoning America Eats project.²³² The brainchild of Katherine Kellock—an FWP administrator—the America Eats project was developed in 1939 to document the unique and varied regional foodways of the United States. Created with the intention of emulating the popular American Guide Series, it called for a series of essays compiled into "a 75,000-word book on 'American cookery and the part it has played in national life...traditional attitudes and customs,'" with particular emphasis "divided between food and people."²³³ Kellock wanted the writing of the America Eats project to be "light but not tea shoppe, masculine not feminine." She wanted to distance the project from the food

²³¹ "New Deal Programs: Selected Library of Congress Resources," The Library of Congress Virtual Programs & Services, accessed November 23, 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fwp.html>.

²³² The nuances of the many federal agencies created as part of the New Deal in the 1930s by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt would take many pages of background and thorough analysis to truly understand. To grasp the magnitude of the so-called Alphabet Soup Agencies, one must understand that at its heart, the New Deal was created as a social aid tool to restore the United States to its idealized prosperity and abundance. The simplest way to explain how America Eats fits into the rest of these social work programs is this: The WPA was created in 1935, with the FWP created shortly after. By 1939, the America Eats project was created, although it was never completed. "New Deal," [history.com](https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/new-deal), updated October 5, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/new-deal>.

²³³ Mark Kurlansky, *The Food of a Younger Land* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), 2, 16-17.

writing of the time, which was typified by “the belief that women were not interested in politics and social problems,” as Mark Kurlansky discusses in his book on the project, *The Food of a Younger Land*.²³⁴ Kurlansky theorizes that Kellock’s insistence on a specific style of writing was an effort for food writing to be taken more seriously.

The America Eats project was divided into five distinct regions, according to data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. The book was to correspond with these five regions, with sections to be titled as follows: The Northeast Eats, The South Eats, The Middle West Eats, The Far West Eats, and The Southwest Eats. Each region contained numerous states; however, the amount of material produced depended entirely on how many Writers’ Project offices were present in each region. Regions like the South, with fifteen separate projects producing copy, generated far more material than regions like the Southwest which only had five projects.²³⁵

Despite expressed interest by several major publishing houses like Houghton Mifflin and Harper & Brothers, by the fall of 1941, the America Eats project began to fall apart.²³⁶ By 1940, the majority of the experienced writers—such as Vardis Fisher and John Cheever—had left the Federal Writers’ Project and were no longer participating in the accumulation and refinement of the America Eats copy material coming into the regional offices.²³⁷ Thanksgiving 1941 was the deadline for all copy, but the deadline came and went with none of the regional offices sending any material in to the FWP headquarters in Washington D.C. The project heads sent out

²³⁴ Kurlansky, 17.

²³⁵ Copy in this instant refers to the short essays, photographs, notes and correspondence produced for the five regional offices.

²³⁶ Harper & Brothers, one of the publishing houses interested in purchasing the rights to the in-progress America Eats book, is now called HarperCollins or, alternatively, Harper in the twenty-first century.

²³⁷ Kurlansky, 18-20.

reminders, but still nothing arrived. And then, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and finishing the project took on a tone of urgency. The end of December brought on a new flurry of urgent correspondence sent out to all FWP offices, urging offices to send in any and all materials that they could as soon as they could. States sent in whatever they had, widely varied in polish and finesse, in various states of completion. Some states provided more material than others, but ultimately, with the entry of the United State into World War II, there was not much time, money, or manpower to whip the rough materials of the theoretical *America Eats* book into any sort of shape.

In early 1942, the Federal Writers' Project was integrated into a different aspect of the WPA. With the re-creation/reinvention of the FWP as the Writers' Unit of War Services, the focus shifted from distinctive regional foodways to "Servicemen's Recreational Guides, a guide to the U.S. Naval Academy, [and] books on military history."²³⁸ By May 1942, the woman behind *America Eats* was summarily dismissed with just two weeks' notice. Kellock spent the last days of her tenure with the Federal Writers' Project making sure everything she had in her possession relating to the *America Eats* project was safely interred at the Library of Congress. Just under a year later, the parent agency of the WPA was shuttered, the Writers' Project alone having produced millions of words documenting American thought and culture during the mid-twentieth century.²³⁹

While the completed book *America Eats!* never saw the light of day, the unpolished, unfinished materials not sent to Washington lay quietly in universities, archives, and historical societies across the country, for the most part gathering dust in obscurity. Some materials have

²³⁸ Kurlansky, 21-22.

²³⁹ Kurlansky, 22.

been lost to the ages, be it by fire, human error or carelessness, or just a consequence of time. Some regional collections are more complete than others, with some states' materials missing entirely or seriously lacking. Some provide a more complete picture of regional foodways, complete with local anecdotes, short poems, and photographs. The amalgamation of voices present in the raw materials left behind provide, in a way, a more intriguing and complete story of the variety of cultures and the intermingling of peoples and traditions in foodways across the United States than the finished *America Eats!* book ever would have.

Materials for Montana and the rest of the Far West are housed at Montana State University's Archives and Special Collections in Bozeman, Montana. These papers are part of a larger collection known as the WPA Records, which contains not only *America Eats* but also twenty-four other series of materials generated during the 1930s and 1940s by the WPA, including Folklore Studies, Indian Legends and Studies, and Livestock and Grazing History. In 1942, Professor Merrill G. Burlingame of Montana State University, employed as a professor of history, began corresponding with the WPA in the hopes that the materials would be transferred to the then-state college. By February 1943, Burlingame had succeeded and many of the WPA materials were transferred to Bozeman, Montana, where they have remained until this day. According to the correspondence contained in the original accession record for the WPA Records, Burlingame first discussed the matter in person with Clyde McKee, the Dean of Agriculture for the then Montana State College. He emphasized the importance of preserving the WPA's materials prior to the closure of the Montana office, and in subsequent correspondence with George D. Marsh—the acting State Supervisor for the Montana Writers' Project in 1943—Burlingame determined what materials the college would take.

The correspondence is filled with anxiety and uncertainty about the war, with Burlingame noting on February 3, 1943 that he is “suggesting early action since the threat of army invasion will give a number of us less time a month from now if the cadets should come.”²⁴⁰ The Montana Writers’ Project office at this point in time was located in the Old High School Building in Butte, Montana, where Marsh noted that there were many cases of materials that must be removed prior to the closure of the office on February 15, 1943. There are also indications in the correspondence of a WPA warehouse, also in Butte. Burlingame and Marsh made arrangements for a truck to deliver the materials to MSC, and despite several delays, a delivery of “twenty-eight filing cases...a wooden master file, and two bundles of maps and pictures” weighing approximately 1400 pounds was made on February 18, 1943.²⁴¹ Upon receiving the materials, Burlingame wrote Marsh and assured him that the WPA files were in good hands and in a fireproof building on campus, safe in their fiber travelling cases.

²⁴⁰ Accession File, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

²⁴¹ Accession File, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

April 7, 1975
 Miss Minnie Paugh
 Librarian, Collections Library
 Bozeman, Montana 59715
 April 10, 1975
 Dear Mrs. Paugh:
 Mrs. Lee Castleberry
 Ekalaka, Montana 59324
 Dear Mrs. Castleberry:
 I am interested in
 finding out the Fulton
 or the Mackays. The researcher in Fallon County
 may not have worked, or his papers may have been
 lost. The set was salvaged by Dr. M. G. Burlingame
 before it was taken to the dump in Butte.
 Dan Fulton told me he deposited his ranch papers
 with the Montana Historical Society in Helena.
 He may have left reminiscences.
 The Mackays may have been included in an oral
 history program which is being funded at the
 present time through the Montana Historical
 Society. It includes major cattlemen.
 Very truly yours,
 Minnie Paugh
 Special Collections Librarian
 MP/is
 different ranches. All
 three, are in Fallon
 County. I think this
 project was carried
 on around 1938-1940.

Figure 21: Letter from Special Collections Librarian Minnie Paugh. The last sentence of the first paragraph details the provenance of the WPA files.²⁴²

²⁴² Accession File, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

Reading through the multitude of thin, onion-skin papers—in the neat, cream colored folders, filed tidily in two small manuscript boxes—that compile the entirety of what remains of the Far West region’s copy several things become apparent. The complexity of regional foodways in the Far West can be clearly seen through the variety of cultural references and foodstuffs discussed in the copy collected by the Montana Writers’ Project.²⁴³ Michael Kennedy and Edward B. Reynolds, administrators of the Montana Writers’ Project, corresponded with the national office of the project, determining what the Montana office should focus on. Administrative paperwork for the America Eats project describes the Far West’s foodways as follows:

Mixed tradition but dominated by mining, cattle raising, and lumbering traditions; miners’ banquets with champagne and other exotic items were earliest social gatherings; round-up barbecues and big game hunts came next—primarily male feasts; meat always most important part of feasts; church and schoolhouse became community centers where picnic and suppers were held—schoolhouse supper-dance a frontier feature. Colorado’s mountain trout suppers; Montana’s hunters’ dinners and Labor Day barbecues; Wyoming’s sportsmen’s riots, mountain oyster feasts (when lambs are docked); Nevada’s old prospector dinners; Washington’s pigeon pie suppers and salmon barbecues; Oregon’s loggers’ dinners; California’s pioneer dinners.

²⁴³ As Mark Kurlansky so aptly describes in his introduction to *The Food of a Younger Land*, the materials that are left provide a different picture than what would have been if the WPA book had been published. “Instead, we have a chaotic and energetic assortment of reports, stories, and poems on America and its food by hundreds of different voices, including a few who became prominent writers. Together these many writers in their different voices bring to life the food and people of 1940 America in a way the single-voiced, well-edited book would not have.” Kurlansky, 25.

Roundup BarbecueMormon Ward ReunionGame Dinner²⁴⁴

The description, particularly of Montana and the generalized traditions of the Far West, speaks to the dichotomous nature of the assumed rather than the actual foodways of the North American West, both of which are present in the papers generated by the writers of the Montana Project. While there are stereotypical reports of barbecues and the like, there are also more unique meals and culinary events that were not mentioned as the defining characteristics of Montanan foodways. The writers gathered interviews, authored short essays and poems, took extensive notes, and generated content based on their findings. Many of the materials produced for Montana painted a picture similar to the idealized summary found in the outline for the *America Eats!* book.

The remaining paperwork and copy for the Far West region is housed at Montana State University's Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections, housed in two legal sizes manuscript boxes. Box 1 contains thirteen folders, while Box 2 holds nineteen carefully labeled folders. Box 1 is devoted to administrative correspondence, procedural reports, and copy for states—excluding Montana—in the Far West. Box 2 is entirely dedicated to copy produced for the state of Montana.

²⁴⁴ Correspondence Washington, D.C., 1936-1942, WPA Records: America Eats, Box 1, Folder 1, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

Of the papers that exist for the Far West, there is significantly more material for the state of Montana than there is for the other states included in the Far West region. For the entirety of my time spent working on my graduate degree, I have simultaneously worked at the Montana State Archives and Special Collections, which has enabled me to get up close and personal with the remnants of the Far West America Eats materials. Reading through all the copy, seeing the handwritten and typewritten corrections and suggestions, the rejections, and praise mixed liberally with a dose of mid-twentieth century rural country charm was nothing short of transportive. The voices of the authors are individualistic and strong all while being extremely informative and detailed.

Digging into the Material

The America Eats project perfectly encapsulates what it meant to be a part of the great American melting pot in the mid-twentieth century, simultaneously showcasing ethnic uniqueness as well as growing homogeneity in foodways across the country. Even though the projected book was never completed, the collected interviews and WPA writers' essays showcase a remarkable, ground-breaking story of American foodways. They detail how and why Americans like to cook and that work can be seen as constituting the first foray into modern American food writing, or culinary travel writing. Today it's everywhere. Flip open a travel magazine, there will surely be an article exalting the glory of local, artisanal cheese made from the happiest damn goats you ever did see. Turn on the TV, commercials, programs, and more all try to sell the viewer on the idea that if one simply broadens one's mind, travels a bit, and opens themselves to the possibility of a mind-altering, life-changing—fill in the trendy food of choice here—that that missing piece inside you will find a home, sigh, and settle into place. Of course, it is impossible to neglect the significant impact of writers like M.F.K. Fisher, Cecily

Brownstone, and James Beard. However the writers of the America Eats project provide a glimpse into what it meant to be a Montanan or Oregonian or Washingtonian during some of the pivotally forming years of the American consciousness and identity.

The connections revealed between unique foodstuffs and traditions and immigrants and their enduring impact on the overall foodways of the Rocky Mountain region and the Far West are hard to deny. Beyond the apparent benefits of being able to examine the records of the Montana America Eats chapter as a culinary historian, there are unavoidable and remarkable preludes to today's booming foodie scene in the writings of the Montana authors. Written in short essays—in a similar manner to most commercial modern food writing and literature—the authors created vignettes, little glimpses into life in a rural, agricultural state in a way that serves as a precursor and a foreshadowing into what would, in the next fifty years, become known as food writing or culinary literature. What has now become synonymous with celebrity chefs and foodie culture, food bloggers and culinary tourism, Montana's America Eats writers present an early prelude to the essay format of food writing.

From an early age, I was obsessed with food. On weekly trips to the library, I would leave with pudgy kid arms piled with cookbooks, not to cook from but to read through and look at the beautiful, glossy photos. I would spend hours watching food programming on TV. Anthony Bourdain's shows were always my favorite, partly because they provided some common ground between my father and me and partly because Bourdain always made me feel like anything was possible. As an adult, not much has changed. I still devour cookbooks voraciously, although now I often cook from them as well as drool over the stories, personal asides, and photos. I still deeply admire the late Bourdain and frequently rewatch his old

programs, loving the history of the place and the food that he and his team subtly wove into each episode.

It seemed like such a serendipitous gift to read the accounts from the Montana America Eats project, from the rejected stories to the heavily edited and thoroughly revised essays, the frustrated and anxious correspondence between the Montana chapter and other chapters in the region and to the main office on the East Coast. The essays functioned in many cases as the transcripts for interviews with old timers, people whose families had been working the rugged land for generations. There are racist or insensitive remarks throughout the hundreds of pages of unpublished materials from the Far West region that, while perhaps shocking and appalling to modern sensibilities, reveal a great deal about ethnic tensions and racial inequality in the West during the mid-twentieth century, particularly in the most rural areas. The essays written by female authors disclose the truths about what it meant to be a woman in Montana in the 1930s and 1940s, and the oftentimes dichotomous nature of being female in a rural agricultural state.

Alice Prescott Young is the writer I found myself drawn to the most.²⁴⁵ She captured the loneliness, boredom, and isolation of a Montanan housewife, stuck at home during bitter

²⁴⁵ From what small amount of information I have been able to find about Prescott Young, it appears she was living in Butte, Montana shortly after her time writing for the Montana Project. There is a marriage notice from 1943 between Alice and a man named Julius F. Voels both from Butte and aged forty. In 1940 and 1950, she was appointed as a commissioner in the Rosicrucian Order. While it is possible that there were two women named Alice Prescott Young in Montana during the 1940s, it seems likely that these mentions in the Montana Standard and the Butte Montana Standard are about the same woman writing for the Montana Project. "Butte News in Brief: Marriage Licenses," *Butte Montana Standard*, January 31, 1943, NewspaperArchive, <https://access-newspaperarchive-com.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/us/montana/butte/butte-montana-standard/1943/01-31/page-10/>; "Butte News in Brief: Receives Appointment," *Butte Montana Standard*, May 26, 1940, NewspaperArchive, <https://access-newspaperarchive-com.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/us/montana/butte/butte-montana-standard/1940/05-26/page-2/>; "Ten, Twenty, Thirty," *Montana Standard*, May 26, 1950, NewspaperArchive, <https://access->

Montana winters and left to make ends meet, to be both innovative and frugal in the kitchen. Her essays were beautifully written, striking with their conversational tone and vivid details of the events of everyday life in rural Montana. She wrote about the preparation of lamb's quarters, a spinach-like wild green that "grew in profusion around [her] ranch home," remarking on the appearance of the green in Audubon's journals.²⁴⁶ She begins her essay with a quote from Audubon's journals, dated June 7, 1843:

The whole country around was over-grown with "Lamb's quarters" (*Chenopodium album*), which I have no doubt, if boiled, would take the place of spinach in this wild and, to my eyes, miserable country.²⁴⁷

A Montana housewife reading Audubon's journals some "ninety years later" while she makes "tiny nests" of lamb's quarters with a cracked egg in the middle is intriguing and unexpected.²⁴⁸ It certainly isn't how one typically expects a housewife from a rural state to while away her small amount of downtime. Prescott Young flies in the face of orders with this essay, detailing exactly how she prepares the lamb's quarters and explaining that she modeled the dish after a spinach recipe. This is in direct contradiction to the mandate of the America Eats project, where administrators placed great importance on a light tone, "masculine rather than feminine," with

newspaperarchive-com.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/us/montana/butte/montana-standard/1950/05-26/page-4/.

²⁴⁶ Box 1, Folder 3: Editorial Notes and Research (State Office), WPA Records: America Eats, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

²⁴⁷ This quote is from John James Audubon's Missouri River journal 1843. Maria R. Audubon, *Audubon and his Journals Vol. II.*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 14, https://books.google.com/books?id=JpGju0qdPCgC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

²⁴⁸ Box 1, Folder 3, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

particular focus on “American cookery and the part it has played in the national life,” and emphasis “divided between the food and the people.”²⁴⁹ Prescott Young’s essay does not fit these prescriptions, featuring a conversational, feminine tone with the inclusion of a recipe for lamb’s quarters, complete with instructions and commentary. This is perhaps the reason for the note on its first page, designating the essay as a “maybe” for inclusion in the completed Far West regional submission.

Prescott Young wrote several other essays that are representative of Montana foodways and culture, including “Depression Cake.” Her essay “Depression Cake” is an account of homesteaders attempting to make a cake for a Fourth of July celebration in the Missouri Flats, in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.²⁵⁰ The wife, Ethel, has no eggs, butter, or milk. She reflects that “[n]ecessity was the mother of invention,” and decides to improvise a cake with stewed raisins, baking soda and powder, spices, flour, sugar, salt, and bacon drippings.²⁵¹ The cake is such a hit, that, as Prescott Young notes, the recipe survives until “many years later when another and larger depression hit the Missouri Flats” and the recipe for Depression Cake finds its way to her.²⁵² The three-page essay has limited notations and changes, an indication that it was accepted and was slated for inclusion in the Far West section of the completed *America Eats!*

Another essay of Prescott Young’s, “Home Made Yeast,” is an excellent example of the isolation and rurality that defined Montana life in the twentieth century. She writes of herself as a young housewife whose yeast has frozen solid in the bitterly cold Montana winter and of her

²⁴⁹ Box 1, Folder 2: Editorial Procedures and Reports, WPA Records: America Eats, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

²⁵⁰ The Missouri Flats is a plain in southwest Montana, near West Yellowstone and south of Ennis, Virginia City, and Big Sky.

²⁵¹ Box 1, Folder 3, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

²⁵² Box 1, Folder 3, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

eight mile journey to the nearest neighbor for companionship and advice. She is gifted with a fresh loaf of bread and “the quaintest recipe for homemade yeast.” In nine days time she has her very own crock of yeast made from mashed potatoes, sugar, and salt.²⁵³ This piece is representative of the adaptations to foodways and daily life made necessary by the extreme climate of Montana, and it shows how people maintained community even with geographic, environmental, and separation. It had only minor edits.

Prescott Young’s tone in her writing sounds like the voice of an old friend, as if we’re sitting on a porch in the hot Montana summer sun, drinking lemonade, and gossiping. She feels *familiar*, as if the stories she tells are shared remembrances or oft-told and heard tales. Of all the projects Montana writers, Alice—as I tend to think of her in my head—submitted a number of short stories, almost all of which were accepted, albeit typically with a great deal of edits. These edits were usually grammatical in nature, however there are instances where significant portions are crossed out, with no note as to the reason. The crossed-out writing is still visible, and I found her essays more personable and interesting with these redacted parts. Her voice was altered notably in several of her submissions, and not necessarily for the better. Alice is notable because she is one of only several female writers for the Montana office, which had relatively few writers to begin with. Her writing is reminiscent of the style commonly found in food and travel blogs in the twenty-first century, or in food writing appearing in specialized magazines or online publications. These essays are certainly a precursor to the food writing that is so popular today, putting Prescott Young firmly ahead of her time.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Box 1, Folder 3, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

²⁵⁴ Prescott Young’s writing style uses storytelling combined with historical facts and details in much the same way as contemporary travel and food writers. Additionally, her tone is

Mabel C. Olson wrote of the P.O.W camp at Fort Missoula during WWII, one of few specific mentions of the effects of the war on the Montana homefront. She describes how the “supply department of the forest service in Missoula is often asked to secure supplies,” including “when the commissary department at Fort Missoula was faced with a shortage of garlic for the 2,000 Italian prisoners detained there.”²⁵⁵ A little known fact about Montana during the Second World War is that Fort Missoula—an old U.S. Army base on the west edge of the city of Missoula—served as an internment camp for Italian citizens. According to Montana PBS film, these men were crew members on Italian cargo ships that were seized by the U.S. Coast Guard in spring of 1941. Even though the US had not yet officially entered into the war, the seizure of ships and detainment—and later internment—of the crew was the “first use of U.S armed forces in WWII.”²⁵⁶ These men were first held at Ellis Island and then later transferred to Fort Missoula, which they coined “Bella Vista”; many remained in the camp until 1944 when it was officially closed.

conversational and personal rather than detached and formal, another connection to the culinary writing done in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

²⁵⁵ Box 1, Folder 4: Field Research Material (Rejected), WPA Records: America Eats, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

²⁵⁶ “Bella Vista: An Unseen View of WWII, Internment of Italian Civilians at Fort Missoula,” Montana PBS, accessed January 22, 2022, <https://montana.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bella-vista-internment/bella-vista-internment-of-italian-civilians-at-fort-missoula-during-wwii/>.



Figure 22: Detainee cooks at Fort Missoula, 1943. Photo courtesy of the Montana Memory Project.²⁵⁷

Olson's essay further details that only "with much difficulty [were]...500 pounds of garlic and a proportionate amount of macaroni" obtained.²⁵⁸ This essay presents an interesting dichotomy. While the Italians were technically Prisoners of War, camp administrators gave them

²⁵⁷ "Detainee cooks at Fort Missoula," Montana Memory Project, accessed March 25, 2022, <https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com/nodes/view/4990?keywords=&lsk=c32b906383e7161b8e6203ed3822a880>.

²⁵⁸ Box 1, Folder 4, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

the dignity of having food they were accustomed to, even when ingredients proved difficult at times to find. The resiliency of the Italian prisoners—demonstrated by the retention of authentic foods—represents hope and endurance against assimilation.

Olson titles her essay “Garlic for 2,000.” The writing is based on an interview with a woman named Miss Ethel Linn, who worked for the Forest Service during the Italian internment at Fort Missoula. While the essay is both timely, interesting, and relevant to circumstances in 1940s wartime Montana, Olson’s essay was rejected, with a note saying simply, “No good.”²⁵⁹ This is likely because the essay doesn’t necessarily show the U.S. at its finest moment, especially as the camp does not appear to have been successful at assimilating the Italian internees. It is commonly understood that internment camps were primarily a means of detention, I believe it can be argued that these camps also served as an assimilation process, even for aliens. The internees kept at Fort Missoula were Italian, but they did not necessarily return to Italy when released from the camp. As such, the lessons of immigrant assimilation--i.e., how to act in all ways like a proper American--were likely carried with them in the post-war period. While the internment camp at Fort Missoula was not, by firsthand accounts from former internees, on the same level of forced assimilation, terror, and detention as the Japanese internment camps in the United States during the same time, it can be posited that the Italian prisoners learned what was deemed appropriate sociocultural behavior in America. That is, what was a suitable and approved mixture of old traditions and cultures and what needed to be adapted to American norms and ideals.

²⁵⁹ Box 1, Folder 4, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

Interestingly enough, according to several former internees, food proved to be both good and plentiful and served as “a way the men made themselves feel at home.”²⁶⁰ The only instance of violence at the camp was a result of the attempted introduction of 400 pounds of beef suet into the camp’s kitchen. This resulted in an attack on the butcher, who was in fact Italian, with a large chunk of the suet and the destruction of the rest. In response, troops were dispatched to address the situation, which was falsely reported by the FBI as a mass revolt. The Assistant Supervisor of Alien Detentions at Fort Missoula corrected the misconception stating that he had “learned his lesson,” and “now know[s] that little importance should be attached to arm waving.”²⁶¹

Regardless of the fact that “Garlic for 2,000” was rejected by the Montana office, it represents a significant aspect of Montana’s foodways during WWII, as well as the interaction of certain ethnicities with these same foodways. It is also a symbol of resiliency and strength, as the internees would not allow the alteration or destruction of their traditional ways of culinary consumption.

These essays are only a tiny fraction of the notes, interviews, and writings produced by Montana writers for the America Eats project. Many of the essays mention banquets and large gatherings where food was the centerpiece of the event. This includes weddings, celebrations of holidays, religious events, church dinners, and feasts of numerous natures. A large variety of ethnicities and cultures are also reported on throughout the Montana essays, including Norwegian, Irish, Italian, Dutch, English, Slavic, Croatian, Hungarian, and Indigenous. There is

²⁶⁰ “Bella Vista,” Montana PBS, accessed January 22, 2022, <https://montana.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bella-vista-internment/bella-vista-internment-of-italian-civilians-at-fort-missoula-during-wwii/>.

²⁶¹ “Bella Vista,” Montana PBS, accessed January 22, 2022, <https://montana.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/bella-vista-internment/bella-vista-internment-of-italian-civilians-at-fort-missoula-during-wwii/>.

an amazing amount of diversity in foods present in the reporting for the Montana Writers' Project, an indication of the substantial variety of ethnicities and cultures that called Montana home during the mid-twentieth century and their ability to get the foods important to them. According to administrative correspondence, the "most popular public meal eaten in...Montana is the beef barbecue which is served at a number of small rodeos on Labor Day," and the most popular and common meals in the state are rodeo barbecues, big game dinners, and meals eaten in logging camps.²⁶² This list was submitted by Byron Crane, the Acting State Director for the Federal Writers' Project. While these meals are certainly present in the essays and notes compiled by the Montana Writers' Project, I feel this list undersells and underestimates the diversity of Montana foodways. Threshing dinners, birthday and wedding celebrations, and diner meals are talked about just as much as the previously listed recommended meals. And there were many other events and dishes that are also commonly written about.

Ultimately, the compiled essays and notes from Montana Writers' Project showcase a complex and deeply fascinating culinary culture. The writings emphasize the diversity present in the state in the mid-twentieth century, foodways complicated by environmental demands, economic depression, and wartime rationing. The Montana America Eats compilation is a representative examination of how culture, environment, societal expectations, and ethnicity collide to create an utterly unique foodway that couldn't be found anywhere other than the Rocky Mountain West.

Montana submitted its completion paperwork on February 14, 1942 with Michael Kennedy's stamp as State Supervisor on the bottom of a page yellowed with age. This would

²⁶² Box 1, Folder 3, WPA Records, Merrill G. Burlingame Archives and Special Collections.

have been shortly before the America Eats project was terminated, along with the dissolution of the Federal Writers' Project itself just a year later. It is a shame that these essays and notes—and the rest of the book's materials—never made it in a completed form of *America Eats!* It seems apparent to me that a book such as this would have been an invaluable addition to the lexicon of American culinary writing, far before writings such as these were commonplace.

What Might Have Been

The pages are thick and thin, crumpled in the corners and yellowed with age. There are rusted staples and paper clips, now removed, long forgotten quarrels and squabbles over words and food choice. As an undergraduate, I wrote about the Montana chapter of America Eats, dwelling on the romantic and sweeping descriptions of the rugged landscape and people living in one of the most rural areas of the country during one of the worst economic depressions in human memory. I was struck by the strange foodstuffs, things that are no longer served, with names no longer appropriate or politically correct. I was obsessed with the idea that someone somewhere had thought that food was worth writing about, worth chronicling the history of at a time when people were fighting to put food on their table and take care of their families. Now, as I review the many hundreds of pages of correspondence, rejected, and accepted materials, it becomes clear to me that it's not really about the food. Well obviously, it's about the food, but not the *food*, you know? It's about the intangible aspects of human existence, the comfort of knowing where you come from by simply looking down at one's dinner plate. It's about the human experience, the facets of life that make it worth living: the green of a summer's wheat field before the heat of August touches it and burnishes it to gold, the feeling of the season's first ripe tomato, so warm and smooth from the hot sun, hidden in cool green leaves. It has become abundantly clear to me by looking at the collection of America Eats papers that it had intended

potential. I can feel the fingerprints of people from the past, the shadows of their thoughts and hopes and dreams about the future of these materials. It was always the intention to produce a comprehensive guide to the regional foodways of the United States by combining intensive research efforts and essays grouped by geographic region. And then World War II happened, and carefully laid plans all went by the wayside. Funding was funneled to more “essential” avenues in the war effort, and the people who spent all their time writing and thinking about food were shuttled off to unemployment lines, other government lines, or back to the kitchen. Reviewing the PDFs I made of the thirty-two folders in the two boxes of America Eats material in consecutive order revealed the blueprint for this book that was never published, the best laid intentions that were never brought to fruition. If the book could have been brought into existence by sheer force of will it would have been. Katherine Kellock fought for her project, staying until the last possible moment when the project’s funding was allocated to wartime programs.

It is in this examination that I find myself imagining what might have been. What might have been if the majority of the America Eats project had not been lost to time, to fire, to human error, to the unknown. What might have been if despite the war, the materials were successfully compiled, and a comprehensive book was published. That might have changed the course of culinary history and the study of food in North America, or maybe not. I was recently reading a biography of Anthony Bourdain, reading how his first few food-adjacent books were popular but never really gained any significant traction. It was not until Bourdain became a known entity with the publication of *Kitchen Confidential* and later became a household name with the popularity of *No Reservations* and *Parts Unknown* that his earlier books got any sort of significant attention. Is this what the fate of the would-be book would have been? To languish in relative obscurity until the foodie revolution of the twenty-first century?

I can hear their voices, see their shadows in the pages, I understand as much as I can their hopes and ideas and motivations. These materials function as an early form of culinary literature, laying the unknown blueprints for those that would follow in their footsteps. Talking about the unknown. I feel their thoughts like fingerprints, like smudges on the pages, their voices echoing down through the ages. To think that these people, writers and subjects alike, occupied the same space as I do is simultaneously humbling and invigorating. To acknowledge how many things have fundamentally changed about Big Sky Country and how many things have stayed the same.

I admit that it is impossible to predict the future or change the past. What's in the past is in the past, and the future is not for us mere mortals to predict or determine. But it is important to think of the might haves and the possibilities of alternative pasts, presents, and futures. If we imagine a different reality, one where Pearl Harbor didn't predicate the doom of the America Eats project, where the scattered scraps of paper were treated as the historically important relics that they are, maybe, just maybe we would experience food writing in a different way than we do today. The project is arguably the first example of what society contemporaneously recognizes as culinary writing: short essays, with pithy but culturally relevant remarks, and photographs. While America Eats did not present their stories on glossy websites, featured alongside gorgeous, drool-worthy photos of the best locally-raised vegetables and farmer's market cut flowers, the essays stand as testament to the reality they experienced while writing and researching.

The essays are such a wonderful representation of unique interactions between cultures, the environment, and local history. I believe that culinary history is an undervalued way to examine the past and to connect to present and future communities, and as such it is my firm opinion that regional foodways should be considered as cultural landscapes. There is an opportunity here, one that I think we—this generation's historians, preservationists, and cultural

ambassadors—would be foolish and shortsighted to ignore. Foodways, such as the ones seen in Montana, are distinct and important, and they should be treated as such. By creating cultural landscapes and emphasizing cultural preservation in communities that center around local cuisine, there is a valuable opportunity for multi-cultural preservation. Foodways are in many ways intangible, it's hard to determine their precise geographic borders as is common in historical and cultural preservation. But the chance to preserve our shared history shouldn't be ignored just because the process may prove challenging. Creating a cultural landscape centered around foodways specific to Montana would highlight the complexities of the area. But how does one determine the parameters of such a cultural landscape? By ethnic group? By state borders? By city? Would one choose a specific area of a state—for example, Butte's downtown—as emblematic of the complicated and tangled foodways of the Rocky Mountain West, or Far West region? I do not have all the answers, but I think the possibilities presented by foodways such as those detailed in the *America Eats* papers are an invaluable lens in which to view the communities and places in which we live.

Perhaps a part of the legacy of *America Eats* is its impact on the culture of the Far West. By acknowledging the role that food plays in the formation and alteration of American socio-cultural elements, we can begin to preserve the culinary past and educate the public about foodways, which oftentimes are amorphous and hard to grasp in their entirety. I think it is possible to create a protected area—whatever that may look like—that incorporates food history into the cultural landscapes of the Far West in a way that highlights how food and culture are intrinsically intertwined.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Small hands cup tightly around bright raspberries, the color of sun-kissed joy. Laughter and the smell of caramelizing sugar and apples fill the small kitchen, the scrape of dishes in the worn ceramic sink marking the end of a long day. Dark brown soil, warm and crumbly between toes as cucumbers and radishes are gathered for lunch. For many, food is at the center of core memories, reminiscent of family and friends.

It should be the goal of any type of historical scholarship to preserve knowledge systems, to highlight unique ways of being and existing, to show how people and places and things can survive and flourish under the right circumstances. I hope I have done so in the past five chapters, as it is my enduring wish that more people will grow to understand what a complex and complicated picture of the past food presents us with. Over the course of this project, I have examined the ways in which culinary history, literature, and the environment are inextricably woven together, creating a rich and fruitful tapestry. Cookbooks, particularly those produced in rural locales such as Montana, are an undervalued and underutilized source of enticing historical knowledge, deeply representative of the place and time in which they were created and the people who compiled and contributed countless recipes. The oftentimes stark contrast of idealization and reality is abundantly evident when one compares community and corporate cookbooks. The boundary between fact and fiction becomes ever the more blurred as Americanist propaganda, assimilation, and nationalism takes center stage in the mass-produced and widely disseminated culinary ephemera of the mid-twentieth century. These trends sometimes stand in stark contrast to the regional specificity and community-based stories that

community cookbooks tell. At other times the recipes, advertisements, and brand-name usage in community cookbooks document the inroads that national trends made into Montana communities. That juxtaposition is emblematic of the conflicting message of the American Dream.

Culinary ephemera is a historical source that presents unique narratives and creates insight into distinct regional knowledge systems. The community cookbooks revealed vital information about the regional foodways of the Rocky Mountain West in the mid-twentieth century including providing sociocultural context for recipes. The *America Eats* materials painted a picture of a state deeply rooted in ethnic traditions and behaviors developed around the tempestuous environment of the American West. Literature like Erdrich's *Singing Club*, Doig's *English Creek*, and Walker's *Winter Wheat* highlight the strong ties formed in rural Western communities, predicated on shared difficulties and joys. Corporate cookbooks displayed the commercialism, consumerism, and gendered ideology running through American society between the Great Depression and the post-war era. The commonality among all of the themes explored in the preceding chapters is food. Food both strange and wonderful, ordinary and beautiful, "ethnic" and "American." By analyzing culinary history alongside Western literature and environment, several prevalent themes emerged that characterized the years between 1930 and 1959 in the United States. The importance of gender, class, and ethnicity appeared time and again in all resources examined, manifesting in a variety of ways both subtle and obvious.

Advertisements that enforced traditional gender ideology, such as those seen in *The Dorcas Cook Book* with full-page adverts for Swans Down Flour and International Harvester Freezer appeared in community cookbooks. While the Swans Down ad is exclusively targeted towards women with phrases like "[d]on't be so wistful...you can make one that's just as

elegant—just as proud,” the International Harvester ad targeted both men and women with traditional gendered catchphrases.²⁶³ For women, “they’re gorgeous/ they’re spacious/ they’re convenient/ they’re beautiful,” but for men the ad claims that this freezer “saves food/ saves time/ saves work/ saves money.”²⁶⁴ The juxtaposition between aesthetic appeals and the economical and “sensible” showcase the gendered language common in advertisements in mid-twentieth century America. This ad shows not just gendered language but also enforces engrained gender beliefs with the emphasis on beauty for women and economics (both in terms of money and physicality) for men. The one commonality between the two is the assertion that these freezers are convenient and will save time, a frequently occurring theme in advertisements for culinary technology.

Not only are both adverts gendered in nature, they are also class-based. The phrasing of the Swans Down ad makes it apparent that this ad is geared towards a middle-class white audience with its reference to refinement and dinner parties. This is reinforced by a picture of a luxurious-looking cake and a sketch of a women in an expansive Scarlett O’Hara-esque dress posing with a parasol in front of an enormous Southern mansion framed by neat landscaping.

²⁶³ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, (Glendive: Dawson County Publishers, 1950), 29, 30.

²⁶⁴ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 29.

Old Mansion Party Cake

Deep South's treasure turns into a Swans Down "Guessing-Gone" recipe!



Fruit-filled white cake glows under the Old South's party candlelight. Sometimes the inch-deep frosting is white . . . sometimes, as here, it's lime-flavored, champagne-toned, with glints of silver.

Don't look so wistful . . . you can make one that's just as elegant—just as proud. For the old "receipt" has been transformed into a sure, tested Swans Down "Guessing-Gone" recipe. Strokes counted . . . every step tested in home kitchens.

Of course, superfine Swans Down is an important secret of this cake's success—always has been—and never more vital than today. You can't get Swans Down quality with anything but Swans Down.



A product of General Foods

For fine cake—use cake flour!
For Superfine Cake—Swans Down

Figure 23: Advertisement for Swans Down Flour from *The Dorcas Cook Book*.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 30.



Old Mansion Party Cake

A Swans Down "Guessing-Gone" Recipe

Preparations. Have shortening at room temperature. Line bottoms of pans with paper; grease. Use two round 9-inch layer pans, 1½ inches deep. Start oven for moderate heat (350°F.). Sift flour once before measuring. (All measurements are level.)

Measure into sifter:
 2½ cups sifted Swans Down Cake Flour
 3¼ teaspoons Calumet Baking Powder
 1 teaspoon salt
 1½ cups sugar

Measure into mixing bowl:
 ½ cup shortening

Measure into cup:
 1 cup milk
 1½ teaspoons vanilla
 ¼ teaspoon almond extract

Have ready:
 4 egg whites, beaten to meringue* with ½ cup sugar

*** For meringue, beat 4 egg whites with rotary egg beater (or at high speed of electric mixer) until foamy; add ½ cup sugar gradually, beating only until meringue will hold up in soft peaks.**

Swans Down's "Guessing-Gone" part!
1. Stir shortening just to soften. Sift in dry ingredients. Add ¾ of the milk and mix until all flour is dampened. Then beat 300 strokes by hand, or 2 minutes in mixer (at a low speed).
2. Add meringue mixture and remaining milk and beat 150 strokes by hand, or 1 minute in mixer (at a low speed).
 (Count only actual beating strokes or beating time. Scrape bowl and spoon or beater often.)

Baking. Turn batter into pans. Bake in moderate oven (350°F.) 30 to 35 minutes, or until done. Cool thoroughly before frosting.

Frosting. Prepare Fluffy Lime Frosting as directed below. To ½ cup, add 2 tablespoons each chopped raisins, nuts, candied cherries, and citron and spread between layers. Cover top and sides of cake with remaining frosting. Decorate with silver dragées.

Fluffy Lime Frosting

Cream together 6 tablespoons butter, ¼ teaspoon salt, and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Add 1 unbeaten egg white, then add 3½ cups sifted confectioners' sugar, alternately with 2½ tablespoons lime juice, beating well after each addition. Add 2½ teaspoons grated lime rind and beat until of right consistency to spread.

And when you're busy...

Make the grandest hurry-up cakes you ever saw with Swans Down Instant Cake Mix (makes all your favorites) and Swans Down Devil's Food Mix (richer, deeper chocolate flavor from special new Walter Baker blend).

The only cake mixes of Swans Down quality! And complete . . . with delicate-flavored egg whites right in the Mix.



SWANS DOWN CAKE FLOUR AND CAKE MIXES ARE PRODUCTS OF GENERAL FOODS

2231. Printed in U.S.A.

Figure 24: Continued advertisement for Swans Down Flour from *The Dorcas Cook Book*.²⁶⁶

The ad for the International Harvester Freezer also implies a level of class-based privilege. The ad targets a family with additional income to spare on modern domestic technology. This is evident in not just the words used in the ad but also with the inclusion of the claim that this is the world's leading freezer, which implies a level of desirability and success.

²⁶⁶ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 30.

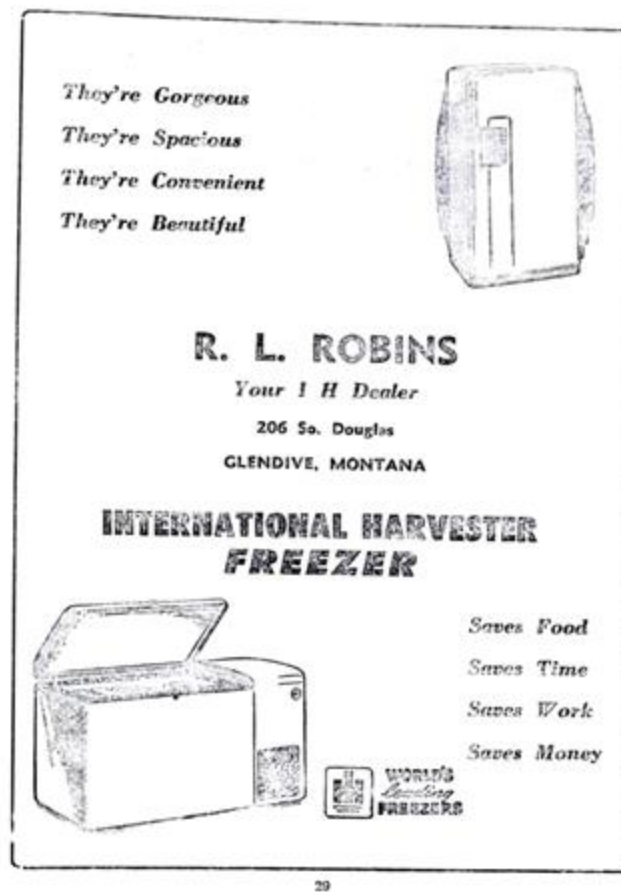


Figure 25: Advertisement for International Harvester Freezer from *The Dorcas Cook Book*.²⁶⁷

These examples of brand-name advertisements are representative of not just gender and class but also of growing national brand presence in rural communities. The themes of class and gender appear in far more than just advertising; they are in the recipes of both community and corporate cookbooks. While it may seem apparent that the nationally distributed ephemera of brand-name products would appeal to the prevailing sociocultural and political norms of urban America, it is just as woven into the fabric of fundraiser booklets produced in rural towns in Montana.

²⁶⁷ The Dorcas Society, eds, *The Dorcas Cook Book*, 29.

Ethnicity is not only a lens through which to examine culinary ephemera of the twentieth century, but also a way to construct a heritage bridge between the past and the present. The presence of ethnic recipes in all six community and corporate cookbooks is significant. While all three corporate cookbooks contained far fewer ethnic recipes combined than even one community cookbook, it is still an indication that well into the twentieth century there was still a substantial amount of ethnic diversity in the United States. This is particularly evident in the community cookbooks, with a wide variety of ethnicities represented, highlighting the diversity of rural towns in Montana between 1930 and 1959. The three novels analyzed also display the role of ethnicity in a variety of ways, with themes of immigration and employment playing an important role in the narratives of ethnic characters. Many of the Montana essays collected for *America Eats* explicitly detail the ways different ethnicities coexist and interact in 1930s and 1940s Montana, with emphasis on exploring distinct food traditions for ethnicities common in Montana, such as Scandinavian and German Russian.

Ethnicity, gender, and class all play important roles in the construction of the sources examined for this thesis. These concepts are inherent aspects of distinguishing Montanan foodways, the interplay between the local and national stages, and the development of a distinctive style of culinary writing. The themes and concepts explored in the past chapters can be applied to contemporary attempts to create meaningful discourse within communities. I believe that unless we know our history, we are doomed to never understand our present. Culinary history presents a unique bridge between the past, present, and future. By preserving culinary knowledge systems and creating culinary repositories that span potentially divisive categories like race, gender, and class we can create a more holistic view of communities, both rural and urban. Whether it's teaching cooking classes with family recipes brought in to share

and enjoy or collecting recipes for community cookbooks, food can serve as a connection between peoples. It is my hope that these pages have inspired my readers to ponder how food has contributed to the formation of their character and to go forth to share their stories, recipes, and food with their communities in whatever way they may choose. Go forth and share that heirloom potato casserole that your granny always used to make, or the *plumi moos* that everyone tried to avoid at family reunions, or the iridescent, jiggling bowl of Jell-O with perfect spheres of fruit. After all, food is meant to be shared.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COMPLETE LIST OF 1940 CENSUS-LISTED ROUNDUP, MONTANA OCCUPATIONS

Complete list of occupations as listed in 1940 Census records:

Coal miner, railroad laborer, seamstress, electrician, mail carrier, Forest Service trail builder, carpenter, housekeeper, butcher, forester, waitress, stenographer, truck driver, salesman, usherette, general office clerk, sheriff, auto mechanic proprietor, creamery proprietor, retail hardware manager, deputy sheriff, coal mine proprietor, student worker NYA (National Youth Administration), mortician, laundress, grocery store proprietor, railroad telegrapher, railroad billing clerk, clergyman, plumber, auto mechanic, barber, coal mine mechanic helper, high school coach, painter, druggist, cook, bartender, mine night watchman, junior range examiner, garage manager, coal mine manager, railroad car man, landscaper, pin setter, hoisting engineer, power company manager, mine mechanic, shipping clerk, delivery boy, slate picker, deputy clerk and recorder, janitor, WPA field research worker, clerk, WPA laborer, telegraph operator, filling station attendant, medical doctor, school superintendent, supervisory foreman, teacher, coal mine operator, railroad section laborer, warehouse foreman, CCC truck driver, farmhand, CCC laborer, dishwasher, field supervisor, accountant, librarian, lawyer, assistant welder operator, under sheriff, bookkeeper, engineer, engineer, coal mine tibble man, county superintendent of public schools, jackhammer man, sheep herder, WPA abstractor, novelty shop proprietor, county fireman, railroad commission agent, county extension agent, timekeeper, parts manager, beauty operator, grader operator, gas station manager, jeweler, printer, dentist, postal clerk, secretary, WPA instructor, liquor clerk, hair dresser, mule driver, real estate agent, coal mine waterman, assistant engineer, MD specialist, game warden, drag line construction, laundry owner, laundry assistant, insurance agent, pay role clerk, mine cutting machinist, mine rope rider, meat cutter, WPA history writer, braddish man [sic], cigar store proprietor, mine rock picker, mine brakeman, mine timber man, electrical engineer, laundry hand presser, assembler WPA, mine shot lighter, box car loader, office work, WPA instructor, county treasurer, bread wrapper, dam construction

foreman, railroad station foreman, hotel/bar proprietor, tailor, child governess, engine watchman, cleaning crew, plasterer, railroad track laborer, bottling works operator, church cleaner, bakery delivery man, railroad roadmaster, railroad agent, range technician, Lutheran church pastor, dray man, Catholic priest, electrician apprentice, junior range foreman, embalmer, auto salesman, locomotive engineer, nurse, hospital superintendent, dental assistant, coal dumper, blacksmith, multigraph operator, grade school principal, patrol operator, patrolman, hotel maid, road construction powder man, apprentice carpenter, saloon proprietor, oil distributor, apprentice undertaker, cafe proprietor, Methodist church minister's wife, Minister Methodist church, Episcopal priest, chiropractor, beauty operator, government junior interviewer, radio repairman, state public welfare supervisor, chief usher, baker, general tester, steam boiler fireman, common salvager, traveling salesman, warehouse store keeper, commodity attendant state welfare, oil refinery owner, rancher, grain elevator warehouseman, student, junior case worker, Caterpillar tractor operator, butter maker, civil engineer, city magistrate, railroad conductor, photographer, chamber maid hotel, bridge carpenter, theatre usher, cement finisher, mine joy loader operator, musician, operator of cement pump, stationary engineer, mine shot firer, ironer, lump coal breaker, x-ray technician, apprentice seamstress, pipe fitter mine, mine conveyor loader, mine driller, mine repairman, shaker pan man, newspaper delivery boy, mine cager, mine rope cutter, cabin camp manager, bakery boy, sawmill worker.

APPENDIX B

COMPLETE LIST OF 1950 CENSUS-LISTED GLENDIVE, MONTANA OCCUPATIONS

Complete list of occupations as listed in 1950 Census records:

Feed grinder, salesman, electrical engineer, brakeman and conductor, shop foreman, laborer, freight, baker, welding, railroad conductor, bank vice president, osteopathic physician, surveying, civil engineer, nurse's aide, farm foreman, farm helper, electrician, RN, lumber manager, railroad telegrapher, restaurant desk manager, medical doctor, pipe line engineer, post office clerk, janitor, Standard Oil salesman, grain elevator manager, bookkeeper, truck loader, filling station operator, seismographic driller, city water plant pumper, bartender, welder, minister, carpenter, chemical engineer, auto mechanic, grocery clerk, trucker, highway foreman, stamping cigarettes, wholesale distributor, mail carrier, bowling alley manager, grocery store manager, railroad road master, meat cutter, housework, project engineer, telephone combination man, social services teacher and coach high school, legal stenographer, clothing store owner, clothing salesgirl, housemaid, pipe line engineer, garage manager, production engineer, petroleum engineer, newspaper printer, railroad dispatcher, hospital bookkeeping, farm mail carrier, theatre owner, home economics teacher, manager dairy wholesale, contractor, rural school teacher, chemistry teacher, railroad machinist, plumbing, dentist, manager rural service department, laundry manager, lab tech hospital, superintendent of nurses, diet maid hospital, waitress, librarian, aircraft engine mechanic, car painter, car salesman, hotel remodeling, mortician, secretary, railroad building supervisor, dock foreman, radio engineer, bartender, oil surveying, administrative county high school, city hall magistrate, office manager state highway, owner hardware store, bank teller, head of land department, vacuum cleaner salesman, telephone operator, gasoline laborer, general teacher church school, railroad switchman, news editing, credit office cashier, railroad dispatcher, pharmacist, surgeon, crew leader Census Bureau, stockman, test board man telephone company, real estate agent, English teacher, music teacher, superintendent high school, delivery boy newspaper, lawyer, insurance, railroad car inspector,

physics teacher, cement finishing, grade teacher, railroad pumper, laundry, relief cook, clerical
 bank, police officer, radio repair and salesman, assistant postmaster, supply builder, brakeman
 railroad, newspaper publisher, beekeeper, heating engineer, meat salesman, post office clerk,
 bottling, beautician, florist, locomotive engineer, meat cutter, biology teacher, wire chief
 telephone, highway engineer, banker, state patrolman, crusher operator, rancher, commercial
 teacher, drug salesman, extension agent, railroad dispatcher, grain elevator auditor, livestock
 dealer, athletic teacher, coal miner, industrial engineer, bar card dealer, insulation, drilling
 laborer, fireman, hustler, bar manager, passenger engineer, deputy, county commissioner, Father
 Catholic Church, theatre usher, piano teacher, shirt finisher, clothing alterations, Welcome
 Wagon Co. Worker, railroad test rock operator, bar assistant manager, oil drilling crew, Elks
 Club steward, retail gift shop owner, payroll clerk, optometrist, welfare worker, farmer, railroad
 special agent, appliance repair work, social studies teacher, Spanish teacher, assistant chief
 engineer power plant, church minister, railroad ticket clerk, county high school principal, law
 clerk, motel owner, healer, pin setter bowling alley, saddle maker, laundry washer, baking pies,
 shoe repair, takes care of chickens in hatchery, brick layer, boilermaker, hatchery operator, fruit
 and vegetable unloader, pastry chef, sheriff, railroad night clerk, city park caretaker, milk
 pasteurizer, dry cleaner, linotype operator, meter reader, jeweler, musician, liquor store vender,
 silk finisher laundry, checker and presser laundry, cemetery sexton, handy man, ditch digger,
 potato chip salesman, sign painter state highway, railroad police, well driller, hotel bellhop,
 district executive Boy Scouts, gallery operator, movie ticket seller, upholstering, hospital orderly,
 newspaper paper roller, watchmaker, railroad yard master, railroad luncheonette manager,
 manager Knights of Columbus Club, taxi driver, child care, missionary, veterinary surgeon,

slaughterhouse owner, window decorator, Caterpillar driver, railroad baggage man, railroad grease man, railroad store helper, railroad cement helper, railroad crane operator, photographer.

APPENDIX C

AMERICA EATS BOX AND FOLDER LIST

Box 1:

America Eats—Correspondence Washington D.C. 1:1
America Eats—Editorial Procedures and Reports 1:2
America Eats—Editorial Notes and Research (State Office) 1:3
America Eats—Field Research Material (Rejected) 1:4
America Eats—Arizona Field Material & Correspondence 1:5
America Eats—Colorado Field Material- Correspondence 1:6
America Eats—Idaho Field Material and Correspondence 1:7
America Eats—Nevada Field Material and Correspondence 1:8
America Eats—Oregon Field Material & Correspondence 1:9
America Eats—So. Dakota Field Material, Correspondence 1:10
America Eats—Utah Field Material and Correspondence 1:11
America Eats—Washington Field Material and Correspondence 1:12
America Eats—Wyoming Field Material & Correspondence 1:13

Box 2:

America Eats—Montana-Blaine County 2:1
America Eats—Montana-Cascade County 2:2
America Eats—Montana-Custer County 2:3
America Eats—Montana-Deer Lodge County 2:4
America Eats—Montana-Fergus County 2:5
America Eats—Montana-Hill County 2:6
America Eats—Montana-Lewis and Clark County 2:7
America Eats—Montana-Madison County 2:8
America Eats—Montana-McCone County 2:9
America Eats—Montana-Meagher County 2:10

- America Eats—Montana-Missoula County 2:11
- America Eats—Montana-Musselshell County 2:12
- America Eats—Montana-Park County 2:13
- America Eats—Montana-Phillips County 2:14
- America Eats—Montana-Powder River County 2:15
- America Eats—Montana-Ravalli County 2:16
- America Eats—Montana-Sanders County 2:17
- America Eats—Montana-Toole County 2:18
- America Eats—Montana-Yellowstone County 2:19