

## COOKING UP A NATION

COOKING UP A NATION: PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH COOKERY, 1830-1930

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## **Lay Abstract**

This dissertation explores the origin of the idea that English food is inherently “bad” and demonstrates that this perception developed in the mid-nineteenth century. It uses cookbooks and newspaper articles to examine the connections between “bad” cookery and gender, national identity, and nostalgia. The combination of new technologies and changes in food transportation, new evidence of food adulteration, and emerging Victorian values led to the development of a negative perception of English cookery. Increasing imports through advances in shipping, refrigeration, and canning decreased the production of English goods at home. The emphasis on being economical, efficient, and clean meant that traditional English dishes such as roast beef and plum pudding were no longer celebrated, but instead, considered wasteful and monotonous. The adaptation and absorption of new imported ingredients and dishes into English cookbooks created a cosmopolitan cookery by the twentieth century, but, at the same time, deepened confusion over what an English food identity was.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores the origin of the idea that English food is inherently “bad” and demonstrates that this perception developed in the mid-nineteenth century. While it is commonly assumed that the poor quality of English cookery developed after the Second World War, this dissertation demonstrates that English cookery was perceived poorly beginning in the nineteenth century. This dissertation brings together an analysis of Victorian values, gender, food adulteration, food technologies, and nostalgia to establish how the English criticized themselves and created the belief that English cookery is “bad.” By examining cookbooks and newspaper articles, this investigation illustrates how the English criticized their own cooking and developed a sense of anxiety about their perceived flawed cookery. In the nineteenth century, cookery was evaluated based on emerging Victorian moral values rather than taste. The emphasis on being economical, efficient, and clean meant that traditional English dishes such as roast beef and plum pudding were no longer celebrated, but instead, considered wasteful and monotonous. Increasing imports through advances in shipping, refrigeration, and canning decreased the production of English goods at home. The adaptation and absorption of new imported ingredients and dishes into English cookbooks created a cosmopolitan cookery by the twentieth century, but, at the same time, deepened confusion over what an English food identity was.

By studying cookbooks, this dissertation uses an untapped resource to explore the perception of English cookery. Cookbooks, especially mass publications, helped further the belief that English cookery was wasteful and unclean, and prescribed countless remedies for readers. Cookbooks also offered another perspective for exploring gender and cookery, as middle class women found themselves multitasking as housewives, educators, and cooks. More

than just a collection of recipes, cookbooks provide historians with windows to view ideas of food identity, community, and culture.

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## **Declaration of Academic Achievement**

Lauren Goldstein is the sole author of this dissertation.

## Introduction: Studying the “Culinary Darkness”

“...the culinary darkness has settled upon us...”

“French Wines and Cookery,” *The Examiner*, September 15, 1866.

In 1928, Florence White established the English Folk Cookery Association, with the goal of celebrating English cookery. In her autobiography, she recalled that “in 1926 no one had any idea that England possessed any national cookery beyond roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, and Christmas plum pudding. It was perfectly sickening to hear nothing but these dishes mentioned as England’s cookery.”<sup>1</sup> She wrote that the English “had the finest cookery in the world, but it had been nearly lost by neglect.”<sup>2</sup> White wanted her Cookery Association to join with the Universal Cookery and Food Association, which focused on French cooking, but her attempts to add English folk cookery to their agenda were rejected. Through her own dedicated work on English cookery, White and her Cookery Association collected recipes from throughout England and published them as a cookbook in 1932, *Good Things in England*. In the introduction, White wrote, “this book is an attempt to capture the charm of England’s cookery before it is completely crushed out of existence.”<sup>3</sup> The subtitle for the book said that the cookbook contained “traditional and regional recipes...between 1399 and 1932,” to celebrate English cookery down the centuries. White’s goal was to reclaim English cookery, to demonstrate that it was more than roast beef and plum pudding, and to prove that English cookery was not “bad.”

Throughout her journalism career and campaign for English cookery, Florence White published a number of articles and broadcast on the BBC. Her autobiography described her life and varied career, concluding with her development of the English Folk Cookery Association

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<sup>1</sup> Florence White, *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1938), 317.

<sup>2</sup> White, *A Fire in the Kitchen*, 317.

<sup>3</sup> Florence White, *Good Things in England: A Practical Cookery Book for Everyday Use*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932; reprinted Persephone Books, 2007), 9.

and her crusade for English cookery. Describing her free-lance writing in the 1920s, White wrote that the criticism of English cookery, hotels, and Victorian women in the press made her a “whole-hearted partisan” and increased her “efforts to support all four: English cooks, English cookery, English hotels, and our splendid Victorian women.”<sup>4</sup> Visiting various places throughout England and trying local dishes led her to create a “gastronomic map of England” and her experience campaigning for English cookery involved “putting English cookery on the map.”<sup>5</sup> White strongly believed in the excellence of English cookery, but found it had been criticized for far too long. Her cookbook was an attempt to celebrate the excellence of traditional English cooking and counter the abuse English cookery repeatedly received in the press.

Why did White feel it was necessary to celebrate English cookery and devote years of her life to promoting English fare? What had happened to the perception of English cookery that made White believe she needed to be its advocate? This dissertation seeks to determine how and why the perception of English cookery changed, a process that began almost a century before White’s *Good Things in England* was published. English food was perceived to be “bad,” but White wanted England, and the world, to know that English cookery was not “bad,” but was, in fact, very “good.” As documented in the following chapters, from the mid-nineteenth century, the public opinion about English cookery, discussed in detail in newspapers and cookbooks, believed English cookery to be wasteful, unclean, inefficient, and insular. It was referred to as “the culinary darkness.”<sup>6</sup> The English believed their own cookery suffered in comparison to others, not only the French, but also nations that they considered otherwise inferior.

Industrialization and urbanization posed challenges, and new inventions changed the way food

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<sup>4</sup> White, *A Fire in the Kitchen*, 297.

<sup>5</sup> White, *A Fire in the Kitchen*, 316, 313.

<sup>6</sup> “French Wines and Cookery,” *The Examiner*, September 15, 1866.

was received and processed. The English cookery White celebrated was an older, traditional cookery, found in recipes passed down from generation to generation and surviving from a pre-industrial era.

Significantly, in their criticism of English cookery throughout the nineteenth century, food writers expressed an underlying anxiety about the state of English food and how poor cookery reflected the nation. The critics, who declared English cookery to be dirty, and representative of barbarians rather than a civilized country, communicated a sense of anxiousness. They feared that the damaging reputation of English cookery might damage the reputation of England in the face of competition from throughout the world. The English themselves declared European cuisine superior, and challenged the ability of English cooks. The perception of English cookery suffered from Victorian hypocrisy. At the same time as they were criticizing English cookery, English food writers promoted the use of English goods. Food writers chastised the English for a perceived insularity, stating the English were prejudiced against new foods and dishes; however, evidence found in cookbooks would suggest otherwise, that English cookery was actually more multicultural and open to new recipes than critics presented it to be.

The belief that English cookery is “bad” has had a long lasting impression, for almost the entirety of the twentieth century, and even in the twenty-first century, the belief sometimes still exists. While many believe this criticism was developed by tourists visiting England after the Second World War, in fact, there was strong condemnation of English cookery by the English themselves, beginning in the nineteenth century. This perspective did not only come from outside England, but developed within England over the second half of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century opinion was based on challenges that English cookery did not conform to

emerging Victorian values, rather than a critique of taste. While taste may or may not have been a factor, the evaluation of English cookery in the nineteenth century had a different basis than after the Second World War; it was a value judgement, not a question of taste, which retrospectively cannot be studied or judged.

In the middle of the twentieth century, social and economic historians frequently pointed to the differences in eating habits between classes, usually concentrating on relative prices, standards of living, and nutritional deprivation, but without spending much time on the cultural significance of food itself, or on the attempts to systematize recipes.<sup>7</sup> *Our Changing Fare: Two Hundred Years of British Food Habits*, a collection of papers by mainly economic historians published in 1966, argued that the standard of living improved throughout the nineteenth century, with rapid change between 1875 and 1895. The papers focused on “the broad patterns of change in food consumption,” such as trends in consuming bread, meat, fish, and fruit.<sup>8</sup> The historians asked more questions of their readers and fellow researchers, and offered observations on the changes in food distribution and diet in the late nineteenth century. Changes in transportation, such as the railway, affected the distribution of food, while steamships helped bring international imports to Britain. John Yudkin, professor of nutrition and dietetics, recommended historians and nutritionists work together to determine how food was distributed within families and what the nutritional value of specific foods meant to specific individuals.

John Burnett’s influential work, *Plenty and Want*, first published in 1966, argued that the working-class diet mainly stayed the same until the twentieth century, and that there was not a

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the works discussed, see Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, eds, *Food and Drink in History: Selections from the Annales*, Volume 5, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979); Catherine Geissler and Derek J. Oddy, eds., *Food, Diet and Economic Change Past and Present*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993); Oddy, “Food Quality in London and the Rise of the Public Analyst, 1870-1939,” in *Food and the City in Europe since 1800*, eds. Peter Joseph Atkins, Peter Lummel and Derek J. Oddy, 91-103, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> John Yudkin, “History and the Nutritionist,” in *Our Changing Fare: Two Hundred Years of British Food Habits*, eds. T.C. Baker, J.C. McKenzie, and John Yudkin, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966), 150.

“turning-point” of nutritional improvement in the nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> In studying the living standards of a variety of social groups in both urban and rural environments, Burnett attempted a history of dietary change from 1815 to after the Second World War. The first part of Burnett’s work, “England in Transition” argued that while there were some changes, such as the movement from baking bread at home to purchasing bread from the baker, overall, with regard to consumption, there were no significant transformations. Significantly, Burnett rejected the idea that economic crises in the 1840s made the decade “the hungry forties,” stating that “the 1840s were not appreciably ‘hungrier’ than the 1830s or any other decade in the first half of the nineteenth century.”<sup>10</sup> While the issue of “the hungry forties” was not explicitly addressed in the cookbooks studied in this dissertation, the 1850s marked a noticeable change in the perception of English cookery, in reaction to the changes that occurred over the previous decades. Burnett’s description of living in urban environments accentuated the growing reliance on commercial food retailers, and also the important connection made between urban life and food adulteration, a topic addressed in Chapter One of this dissertation.

In the second part of Burnett’s work, which focused on the period from 1850-1914, Burnett commented on the increase in food imports, especially wheat and meat, and how the dependence on food imports also helped improve both “the nutritional value and the variety of English diet.”<sup>11</sup> However, turning to examine “Rural England,” Burnett countered the romantic views of the countryside that existed during the Victorian period. Using evidence from medical food inquiries, Burnett stated that labourers were malnourished and the family diet was mainly bread and potatoes. The researchers also found that some of the traditional local items were no

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<sup>9</sup> John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Burnett, 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Burnett, 137.

longer consumed and rural workers were not as healthy as the romantic view would perceive them to be. The cookbooks examined in this dissertation often promoted a myth of rural English cookery surviving despite industrialization, and as better than purchased foods in cities or towns.

In 1970, Derek J. Oddy analyzed surveys from the late nineteenth century, which examined working class family budgets. While Oddy admitted the number of surveys was small, he used the data collected from the surveys to investigate how much food, and the types of food, were consumed by the working classes. Oddy's study was unable to determine how the food in a family was distributed, but his calculations demonstrated that the majority of the working class diet contained bread and potatoes, with little protein. He argued that "despite the possibility that consumption of foods such as milk and meat was rising in the late nineteenth century," protein consumption remained low.<sup>12</sup> Oddy concluded his article by challenging the assumption that "the rise in real wages or the fall in food prices led to increased food consumption," because it "ignores environmental, physiological, and psychological factors in working-class life."<sup>13</sup>

In 1976, Oddy and nutritionist Derek S. Miller edited a collection of essays on *The Making of the Modern British Diet*. In their introduction, they noted that the book was interested in "the role of food during industrialisation and urbanisation in Britain," with three sections examining the economics of food supply, food consumption, and nutrition.<sup>14</sup> Each editor wrote a chapter for the third section of the book, which dealt with nutrition, stating they hoped the history of the development of nutritional knowledge would be useful for historians. The first part, "The Supply of Food," offered chapters on the creation of a variety of food industries in Britain, from biscuits to meat to chocolate, and how the advent of new technologies or how the

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<sup>12</sup> Derek J. Oddy, "Working class diet in late nineteenth century Britain," *Economic History Review* 23 (August 1970): 319.

<sup>13</sup> Oddy, "Working class diet in late nineteenth century Britain," 322.

<sup>14</sup> Derek J. Oddy and Derek S. Miller, eds., *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1976), 7.

industrialization of older technologies affected these industries. For example, E.F. Williams explored the growth of the meat industry, arguing that changes in agriculture in the eighteenth century led to the idea of “raising animals specifically for meat,” and the industrial revolution helped spur “rapid changes in the meat industry,” especially changes in the movement of animals and methods of preservation.<sup>15</sup>

The second part, “Factors Influencing Consumption,” examined living standards, food manufacturers, and food providers. The chapters relied on commercial, regional, and governmental survey data, similar to Oddy’s earlier article. Studying “Regional Variations in Food Habits,” D.E. Allen referenced data collected from 1955-1965 to form a picture of regional food habits. Allen examined perceived regional divides, citing North versus South, Highland versus Lowland, and Tyneside and the Midlands. From the surveys and psychological attitude studies, Allen suggested that “Northerners (it is no secret) are more blunt and straightforward—in their tastes no less than in their manner...They prefer things that make immediate sense: plain, homely fare, without suspicious-sounding ingredients, fussy additions or fancy names.”<sup>16</sup> The South, on the other hand, “is the land of mixtures, of experimental mingling...and of subtler flavours.”<sup>17</sup> In his conclusions, Allen noted that regional differences were no longer as distinct as in the past, but certain distinctions still existed, leading Allen to ponder whether a national nutritional history was possible.

Twentieth century anthropologists have deciphered the meaning of food preparation for various cultures, but rarely in historical context, and rarely using the cookbook as a source. Food historians continue to make reference to the work of structural anthropologist Claude Levi-

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<sup>15</sup> E.F. Williams, “The Development of the Meat Industry,” in *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, eds. Derek J. Oddy and Derek S. Miller, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1976), 49.

<sup>16</sup> D.E. Allen, “Regional Variations in Food Habits,” in *The Making of the Modern British Diet*, eds. Derek J. Oddy and Derek S. Miller, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1976), 138.

<sup>17</sup> Allen, 139.



Strauss, who compared English and French cooking using general characteristics, and described the transformation of food as a “culinary triangle.” Levi-Strauss constructed an opposition system between English and French cuisines: “*endogenous/exogenous* (that is, national versus exotic ingredients); *central/peripheral* (staple food versus its accompaniments); *marked/not marked* (that is, savory or bland).”<sup>18</sup> Using these opposing characteristics, he believed that English cuisine was bland food, composed of local ingredients, with exotic side dishes, whereas French cuisine was a better blend of local and international ingredients into more composed dishes.<sup>19</sup> His work on the “culinary triangle” explained different cooking processes and the movement from raw to cooked to rotten as both cultural and natural transformations.<sup>20</sup> Another influential anthropologist, Mary Douglas, offered her analysis of meals and cooking in “Deciphering a Meal” in 1972. Douglas argued that the meaning of each meal was connected to the meals that had come before it, as each new meal brings something of the past meals to the table as part of a sharing a “common structure.”<sup>21</sup>

While recognising the above contributions to the field, social anthropologist Jack Goody took a different approach to the study of cooking in his 1982 work, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*. Rather than create binary oppositions between specific characteristics, Goody used the broader, “more diversified structures of household and class.”<sup>22</sup> His study compared cuisines in preindustrial Eurasia with cuisines in Africa to determine why Eurasian societies developed segregated high and low cuisines, while this did not happen in African cultures. Goody also examined the expansion of the industrialization of food and its effects on postcolonial societies.

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<sup>18</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1963), 86.

<sup>19</sup> Levi-Strauss, 86.

<sup>20</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Culinary Triangle,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, Third Edition, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 40-47.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101 (Winter 1972): 69, 80.

<sup>22</sup> Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 37.

In his study of medieval and early modern English and French cuisines, Goody analyzed early cookbooks to illustrate the development of wealthy cuisines, which emphasized meat eating and provided instructions for carving.<sup>23</sup> Goody argued that “the differentiation between classes was so great that it becomes difficult to speak of one culture of cooking,” with contrasts between rich, poor, and clerics, especially in England.<sup>24</sup> He also claimed that changes in food and cooking corresponded to changes in table manners, with prescriptive literature offering advice on proper etiquette.<sup>25</sup> In England, Goody argued that cookbooks and other printed works helped the growing middle class to learn the “secrets” of wealthy households and challenge the definition of high and low cuisine.<sup>26</sup> Goody explained that literacy and printed works created “social mobility,” because they offered instruction on “higher-status” practices.<sup>27</sup> He stated that the events of the nineteenth century in England led to a food revolution and the creation of “an industrial cuisine.”<sup>28</sup> Goody’s chapter on “Industrial Food” explored the different factors that contributed to this type of cuisine: preservation, mechanization, retailing, and transportation. The new food inventions of the nineteenth century, such as canning and freezing, also affected retailing, with the increase of grocery stores. Items were advertised and grocers sold canned and imported goods that carried specific brands, changing the food purchased from local items to nationally branded products.<sup>29</sup>

In the second volume of Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Luce Giard described the practice of “Doing-Cooking.” In this section, she wrote about cooking in France, how women traditionally cooked, and that society tended to judge cooking as boring and an

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<sup>23</sup> Goody, 136-139.

<sup>24</sup> Goody, 139.

<sup>25</sup> Goody, 143.

<sup>26</sup> Goody, 152.

<sup>27</sup> Goody, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Goody, 152.

<sup>29</sup> Goody, 170.

unintelligent action. Giard challenged this judgement, explaining that cooking actually involves many different thought processes at the same time, and the ability to manipulate ingredients into a worthwhile dish requires “a subtle intelligence full of nuances and strokes of genius.”<sup>30</sup> Giard also described the food transformations of the second half of the twentieth century, the increased movement of people and foods from across the world, and the new advances in technologies that made it easier for food to be preserved and transported. She argued that a person’s location no longer determined what food he or she could acquire, but instead “we happily eat shreds of local cultures that are disintegrating.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Giard claimed that “every regional cuisine loses its internal coherence,” and only “typical dishes” remain, dishes that function as something for tourists to try.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the disintegration of local cuisine, Giard remarked that after the Second World War, family recipes were no longer preserved or passed down from mothers to daughters, and as the twentieth century progressed, the resources for recipes broadened to include television shows and magazines, rather than only one’s heritage. Fast-paced city lifestyles and new technologies made preparing rural dishes difficult, because these dishes required longer cooking times and hard-to-find ingredients; Giard noted that this led to the “clear deregionalization of culinary practices.”<sup>33</sup>

Unlike the structural oppositions of the earlier anthropologists, Giard commented that even if two cooks were to follow the same recipe exactly, their dishes would turn out different, because each cook has inherited different cooking knowledge and practices. However, she believed that the generational transference of cooking processes was also part of the culinary disintegration, because specific methods were no longer passed through families, but existed

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<sup>30</sup> Luce Giard, *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living & Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 158.

<sup>31</sup> Giard, 178.

<sup>32</sup> Giard, 178.

<sup>33</sup> Giard, 179.

only in memories of the past. The change in food retailing contributed to the broader change in the dissemination of cooking knowledge; items used to be purchased in bulk, which then required knowledge on how to preserve the items. In the second half of the twentieth century, shoppers must be savvy at reading labels, rather than know how to negotiate with grocers. Significantly, Giard's arguments focused on France in the second half of the twentieth century, but the processes she described also occurred in the nineteenth century in Britain, which might reflect the different speed at which Britain and France industrialized. Travellers in the nineteenth century often spoke of a country's "national dish," stereotypical dishes associated with that country. British food writers also worried about hectic urban environments and compared urban and rural cooking. New methods of food preservation and food transformation were recommended in cookbooks, and cookbooks advised how to cook as efficiently and economically as possible.

Historians in the twenty-first century continued to examine issues of nutrition and living standards, although they recognized that cultural elements also contributed to what and how people ate. James Vernon's *Hunger: A Modern History*, published in 2007, questioned the meaning of hunger and how the meaning has changed over time, focusing on imperial Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Vernon argued that the idea of hunger transitioned from the belief that it was the fault of the hungry to the belief that "hunger was a collective social problem."<sup>34</sup> His book argued that hunger was its own theory, rather than just a physical state, affected by social, cultural, and political factors. Vernon examined how hunger was represented and how the perception of hunger was constructed by humanitarians, journalists, and reformers. In the second half of the nineteenth century, newspaper reports and the new technology of

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<sup>34</sup> James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History*, (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 2-3.

photography made it easier to document hunger in Britain and across the Empire, and showcase it to a widespread audience. Vernon maintained that journalists aided the humanitarian “discovery of hunger,” which recognized that humans have a right not to go hungry. Reflecting on the gendered nature of hunger, Vernon examined the issue of housewives, household management, and domestic education for girls. He argued that at the turn of the twentieth century, the advice offered to working class housewives transformed from advice based on moral values to advice that was rational and scientific and could be taught to anyone, such as budgeting and proper nutrition. The First World War refocused attention on food economy and efficiency, especially through the work of the British National Food Economy League, and Vernon commented that science provided new definitions for “waste and economy.”<sup>35</sup> In the interwar period, nutritional knowledge became regularly included information in domestic manuals and periodicals, and “domestic science...became seen as a vital mechanism for ensuring socially responsible families—that is, families whose homes were hygienic and efficient.”<sup>36</sup> The cookbooks studied in this dissertation demonstrate that cleanliness, efficiency, and economy were common concerns throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and while some interwar cookbooks do offer advice on nutritional information, they also use the same language as their predecessors, illustrating a strong connection between the moral and scientific advice.

Yuriko Akiyama’s *Feeding the Nation: Nutrition and Health in Britain before World War One*, published in 2008, explored the history of cookery and its connection to public health and medical history, rather than its connection to cuisine and culture. The chapters covered cookery education at different levels (e.g., elementary schools or cookery training schools), nurses and hospital cookery, and army and navy cookery. Akiyama’s research demonstrated

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<sup>35</sup> Vernon, 205.

<sup>36</sup> Vernon, 210.

how cookery was a public concern, especially through increased cookery instruction and education, and that this instruction was thought to be successful in spreading knowledge about hygiene to the public. Akiyama used Charles Booth's poverty study to inform her research on London schoolgirl education. Her chapter on the navy argued that because the navy emphasized cleanliness generally, it helped promote cleanliness and cookery together; therefore, the navy offered a sanitary education to men that they may not have had access to at home. Akiyama's work focused on examining the connection between cookery education and medical history, although additional information from sources outside urban centres or throughout Britain would have added to the book.

The above historians have examined food from nutritional and economic perspectives. Food historians have studied food consumption habits over centuries, often as a textbook, vast survey, or collection of essays covering a variety of geographic regions.<sup>37</sup> Others have focused on specific foods and their production, distribution, and consumption.<sup>38</sup> The *Edible Series* published by Reaktion Books has popularized the study of food and drink, with each small volume offering a global history of one specific ingredient, literally covering from soup to nuts, or, more specifically *Apple to Wine*. Food historians of Britain have also explored the immigrant

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<sup>37</sup> See J.C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, *The Englishman's Food: A History of Five Centuries of English Diet*, (London: J. Cape, 1939; revised edition 1957); C. Anne Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain from the Stone Age to Recent Times*, (London: Constable, 1973); Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, (Toronto: Random House, Inc., 1988); Peter Scholliers ed, *Food, Drink and Identity: Cooking, Eating and Drinking in Europe since the Middle Ages*, (New York: Berg, 2001); Colin Spencer, *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand Years of History*, (London: Grub Street, 2002); Richard Tames, *Feeding London: A Taste of History*, (London: Historical Publications, 2003); Linda Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2004); Laura Mason, *Food Culture in Great Britain*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004); Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England: A History*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007); Danielle de Vooght, ed., *Royal Taste: Food, Power and Status at the European Courts after 1789*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> See Redcliffe N. Salaman, *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*, (Toronto: Penguin Group, 1997) and *Salt: A World History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2002); James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-century Britain*, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); Anne Mendelson, *Milk: The Surprising Story of Milk Through the Ages*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008); Deborah Valenze, *Milk: A Local and Global History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

food experience, especially multicultural influences on the London food scene and the connection between specific geographic regions, immigrants, and food.<sup>39</sup> Some food studies have used literature to analyze the social construction of food and values.<sup>40</sup>

This dissertation also engages with broader themes in British history, especially the concept of national identity. Historians have debated the idea of a British national identity, with some concluding that it was formed before the nineteenth century<sup>41</sup> or created in the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup> One recurring theme in many of these analyses is the idea of the “other” as a key aspect to understanding national identity. Nineteenth-century national identity was imagined and defined by the relation to various “others;” however, there is considerable debate about which is the most significant “other” in defining identity. Is the “other” external? For example, a case has been made that the British defined themselves *vis-à-vis* France. Or, were there many “others” within Britain itself? Were there really four national identities—English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish?<sup>43</sup> This dissertation maintains that there was not a unified British national identity in the nineteenth century, and that the “four nations” still considered themselves separate

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<sup>39</sup> See John Walton, *Fish and Chips and the British Working Class, 1870-1940*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1992); Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001); Keith Pescod, *Good food, bright fires and civility: British emigrant depots of the nineteenth century*, (Kew, Victoria: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2001); Panikos Panayi, *Spicing up Britain: the Multicultural History of British Food*, (London: Reaktion, 2008), and “The Immigrant Impact upon London Food since c. 1850,” in *Food and the City in Europe since 1800*, eds. Peter Joseph Atkins, Peter Lummel and Derek J. Oddy, 189-202, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>40</sup> See Gwen Hyman, *Making a Man: Gentlemanly Appetites in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel*, (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009); Tamara S. Wagner and Narin Hassan, eds., *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century: Narratives of Consumption, 1700-1900*, (Toronto: Lexington Books, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: Integration and Diversity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Robbins, “An imperial and multinational polity: the ‘scene from the centre’, 1832-1922,” in *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British History*, eds. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, 244-254, (London: Routledge, 1995); Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004);

<sup>43</sup> For information on the “Four Nations” debate, see Hugh Kearney, “Four Nations History in Perspective,” in *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, eds. Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, 10-19, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), and *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*, Second Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 2006); John M. MacKenzie, “Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English Worlds? A Four-Nation Approach to the History of the British Empire,” *History Compass* 6/5 (2008): 1244-1263.

identities within the British Isles. An analysis of cookery from the nineteenth century demonstrates that English cookery was often compared to a primary internal “other,” Scotland, and a primary external “other,” France. Furthermore, with regard to cookery within the British Isles, Scottish cookery was perceived as superior, English cookery was inferior, and Irish and Welsh cookery were rarely mentioned. Therefore, in the establishment of national food identities in Britain, food writers discussed two nations, rather than four.

To further complicate matters, the English national food identity was also multinational, embracing goods from throughout the Empire and other international sources and absorbing them as its own. The connection between the Empire and British national identity has also been debated by historians, with some arguing that British history and its identity cannot exist without the Empire, while others believe the Empire to be less influential to British national identity.<sup>44</sup> Arguments in favour of the role of the Empire at home have used the idea of a “colonial other” to define Britishness.<sup>45</sup> Historians have explored cultural elements of everyday life to demonstrate the influence of the Empire at home. For example, in their edited collection, Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose argue that the Empire was part of the everyday and ordinary life of people “at home” in Britain, further demonstrating how connected the Empire was to an idea of what makes things “British.”<sup>46</sup> John M. MacKenzie has also argued a British national identity was tied to its Empire. In his edited collection, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, MacKenzie claims that the Empire was a major part of popular culture and in turn, that popular culture helped promote the

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<sup>44</sup> For a skeptical view on the influence of Empire at home, see Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), who argues that the impact of the Empire was determined by class.

<sup>45</sup> Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



Empire, from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> However, while these historians have successfully demonstrated promotion, it is much more difficult to prove the “reception” of Empire at home. Simon J. Potter contends that the Empire cannot be ignored as an influence at home, but he also argues that it was not all-encompassing.<sup>48</sup> Echoing Potter’s argument, the discussion of English cookery was effected by the Empire, but it is very difficult to know if people actually thought of the Empire while cooking or consuming Empire products. Empire goods were increasingly imported and promoted as the nineteenth century progressed, and manuscript cookery books do provide evidence of the multinational aspect of English cookery. The promotion of Empire goods in cookbooks does suggest that the Empire cannot be ignored when analyzing an English food identity, but it also was only one of many contributing factors.

Another area of British national identity explored by historians was the romantic view of history and landscape that was present in the nineteenth century. In addition to his other works on English national character,<sup>49</sup> Peter Mandler has written about the English idea of the “Olden Time,” the period between the reign of the Tudors to the Civil War, remembered as a simpler time.<sup>50</sup> His work on heritage and country homes in England has demonstrated that country homes acted as a site for where all ideas of the “Olden Time” could be presented, creating a “national heritage.”<sup>51</sup> In her analysis of the legends of Robin Hood and King Arthur, Stephanie L. Barczewski commented that people looked to the Middle Ages as a “gentler” time compared

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<sup>47</sup> John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

<sup>48</sup> Simon J. Potter, “Empire, Cultures and Identities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain,” *History Compass* 5/1 (2007): 51-71.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); “What is ‘National Identity’? Definitions and Applications in Modern British Historiography”, *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006): 271-297.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Mandler, “‘In the Olden Time’: Romantic history and English national identity, 1820-50,” in *A Union of multiple identities: The British Isles, c. 1750-c. 1850*, eds. Brockliss and Eastwood, 78-92, (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997).

<sup>51</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

to the bleak modern world of the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> The idea of rural England and the English garden have also been analyzed for their role in constructing national identity.<sup>53</sup> In *The Imagined Village*, Georgina Boyes has argued that the English Folk Revival was “both revolutionary and conservative” as well as being “contradictory” as revivalists tried to return to something old within a new modern society.<sup>54</sup> Urban culture was compared to rural folk culture and considered substandard. Food commentators writing about English Christmas cookery often looked to the past and remarked upon the great feasts Englishmen consumed in the “Olden Time.” Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century cookbook authors republished their family recipes in an attempt to save older cooking methods and celebrate the past, rather than their own hurried, urban environment.

Food historians have also explored the connection between food and national identity.<sup>55</sup> Studying French cuisine, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson argued that French cookery was a “building block...for a national identity in the making, for it encouraged the French to see themselves through this distinctive lens as both different and superior.”<sup>56</sup> She also suggested a separation between “traditional cuisine” and “modern cuisine,” with traditional cuisine connected to specific places, and modern cuisine freer to experiment and be influenced by other sources. Ferguson commented that modern cuisines require written communication, rather than

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<sup>52</sup> Stephanie L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26.

<sup>53</sup> See David Lowenthal, “The Island Garden: English Landscape and British Identity,” in *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, eds. Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Ward, *Britishness since 1870*; Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, ideology and the English Folk Revival*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>55</sup> See also the work of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30:1 (1988): 3-24; Allison James, “How British is British Food?” in *Food, Health and Identity*, ed. Pat Caplan, 71-86, (London: Routledge, 1997); Sandra Sherman, “English Nationalism,” *Petits Propos Culinaires* 78 (April 2005): 66-88; Carol Gold, *Danish Cookbooks: Domesticity & National Identity, 1616-1901*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5.

an oral transmission of recipes within a local community. She contended that the publishing of recipes creates a paradox between modern and traditional cuisines, because the “textuality of modern cuisine fixes food as traditional cuisines never can.”<sup>57</sup> Publishing recipes and cookbooks “increases the chances for social survival.”<sup>58</sup> Ferguson argued that the “nationalization of French cuisine, in short, came through its textualization, and it depended on the readers of culinary texts as much as on the cooks or the consumers of the material preparation.”<sup>59</sup> The study of cookbooks and other texts to determine a national food identity is significant; however, Ferguson’s argument makes two assumptions that are difficult to maintain: one, that written recipes were actually used and adapted in practice in modern environments, and, two, that individuals who use written recipes use them exactly as they find them. Evidence found in mass-published cookbooks demonstrates that individuals often used publications as the basis for their own manuscripts, writing notes in margins or adding their own recipes to the book. While those recipes are still written, they individualize the published cookbook and add one’s own authority to specific dishes.

Ferguson was not the first to suggest finding culinary meaning through written works.<sup>60</sup> Food historian Stephen Mennell’s influential work, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, addressed how the distribution of written material played a role in the development of different food cultures in England and France. Examining literacy in the early modern period, Mennell suggested that more Protestants

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<sup>57</sup> Ferguson, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Ferguson, 25.

<sup>59</sup> Ferguson, 34.

<sup>60</sup> In addition to the historians discussed, see also Lynette Hunter, “Cookery Books: A Cabinet of Rare Devices and Conceits,” *Petits Propos Culinaires* 5 (May 1980): 19-34, and “Proliferating Publications: The Progress of Victorian Cookery Literature,” in *Luncheon, Nuncheon and Other Meals: Eating with the Victorians*, ed. C. Anne Wilson, 51-70, (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1994); R. Elwyn Hughes, “Welsh Cookery Books,” *Petits Propos Culinaires* 50 (1995): 51-53; Gilly Lehmann, *The British Housewife: Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Devon: Prospect Books, 2003).

could read than Catholics, and therefore, more cookbooks were published in England than in France.<sup>61</sup> Mennell also noted the importance of the prefaces or introductions to cookbooks, which demonstrated that people were aware of culinary transitions, and it was common practice for authors to criticize earlier cookery writers as inferior. He commented that as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, women were writing cookbooks in England for a female audience, and the subject matter stressed “economy, plainness, and hostility to French cookery.”<sup>62</sup> Mennell’s work primarily used cookbooks and cookery material to study the differences in taste between English and French culinary traditions.

In *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food*, Nicola Humble used cookbooks to study the last 150 years of British history, although she primarily focused on the twentieth century. She argued that cookbooks illustrate “attempts to popularize new foods, new methods, fresh attitudes” and she commented that cookbooks will always provide more information about “fantasies and foods associated with foods than about what people actually had for dinner.”<sup>63</sup> The first chapter, “From Mrs Beeton to the Great War,” used popular examples; in addition to the famous Mrs Beeton, Humble also discussed the work of Eliza Acton, Alexis Soyer, and Agnes Marshall to discuss middle class women and cooking. In the next chapter, Humble studied interwar cookbooks and argued that the interwar period invented the housewife, because of the decline in servants. She also contended that cookbooks from the 1920s and 1930s were “the product of a culture that was beginning to talk about what it ate,” and that food was now a topic of discussion.<sup>64</sup> While the issue of servants and housewives

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1985), 66.

<sup>62</sup> Mennell, 96.

<sup>63</sup> Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 4.

<sup>64</sup> Humble, 72.

as cooks was discussed in the interwar period, this dissertation argues that the housewife was not a new phenomenon of the twentieth century, and the plethora of articles and cookbooks published in the nineteenth century about cookery demonstrate that it was a subject of conversation long before the 1920s. Significantly, Humble also argued that English cookery has been influenced by international cuisines, and that the idea of British cookery as “insular” has ignored these multicultural recipes that appear in British cookbooks. Her argument stated that the British “willingness” to include foreign recipes has “led to the debasement of our national cuisine,” which is an argument also discussed in this dissertation.<sup>65</sup>

The history of cookbooks as a type of publication has also been explored, most recently by Sandra Sherman in *Invention of the Modern Cookbook*. She argued that the modern English cookbook has its origin in the eighteenth century and that cookbooks needed “to convince readers that they would be better for relying on them,” which turned cookbook authors into “pitchmen, psychologists, cultural arbiters, and cultural authorities.”<sup>66</sup> Sherman contended that the development of modern cookbooks in the eighteenth century relied on the creation of culinary authority, which allowed for published cookbooks to supplant home cookery manuscripts. She explained that “cookbooks establish authority by becoming indispensable to households bereft of guidance,” by arranging material seasonally or with helpful menus.<sup>67</sup> Contrary to Humble’s argument that the twentieth century was the first to debate food as a subject, Sherman argued that cookbooks were contributing to debate and issues of “culinary nationalism” as early as the eighteenth century.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Humble, 277.

<sup>66</sup> Sandra Sherman, *Invention of the Modern Cookbook*, (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), xi.

<sup>67</sup> Sherman, xviii.

<sup>68</sup> Sherman, xxiv.

In addition to using cookbooks to study history, food historians have also written about how to study cookbooks, why historians should use cookbooks as a source, and the different types of cookbooks available.<sup>69</sup> Historian Barbara Wheaton has written extensively on using cookbooks for food history, and she currently works as Curator of the Schlesinger Library's culinary collection at Radcliffe College, Harvard University. In "Finding Real Life in Cookbooks: The Adventures of a Culinary Historian," Wheaton referred to cookbooks as "a magician's hat" because they are filled with more information than one usually suspects.<sup>70</sup> Her article described the method she uses for teaching researchers how to study cookbooks. Wheaton also offers a week-long workshop at the Schlesinger Library.<sup>71</sup> In her article, and at the workshop, Wheaton began by explaining the importance of studying ingredients within cookbooks, because they provide regional or international context to the recipes. Cookbooks also offer information about cooking equipment and cooking techniques, for example, instructing cooks to use a specific pot or utensil, to roast or to boil. Studying the verbs used in cookbooks, such as the examination of the word "clean" in Chapter One, demonstrates the skills required for cooking.

Cookbook bibliographer Elizabeth Driver, who has catalogued nineteenth and twentieth century British and Canadian cookbooks, has paid particularly close attention to community or fundraising cookbooks, including them as their own category of published cookbooks in both of her bibliographies.<sup>72</sup> Driver explained that community cookbooks were usually compiled by women's groups, such as church organizations, and included "traditional recipes for standard

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<sup>69</sup> See also Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster eds., *The Recipe Reader: Narratives, Contexts, Traditions*, (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

<sup>70</sup> Barbara Wheaton, "Finding Real Life in Cookbooks: The Adventures of a Culinary Historian," in *Food, Cookery and Culture*, ed. Leslie Howsam, (Windsor: University of Windsor, 1998), 2.

<sup>71</sup> I attended Wheaton's workshop in June 2011, and part of the analysis makes use of notes from this workshop.

<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Driver, *A bibliography of cookery books published in Britain, 1875-1914*, (London: Prospect Books, 1989), and *Culinary Landmarks: a bibliography of Canadian cookbooks, 1825-1949*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

family fare,” although they could also include recipes from people who had left the community, but who still wanted to offer support.<sup>73</sup> Driver suggested that including former community members illustrates how community cookbooks were “an important route for the integration of foreign recipes into British practice.”<sup>74</sup> She also noted that it was common practice in community cookbooks to include the name and location of the recipe donors. In her discussion of Canadian cookbooks, Driver stated that community cookbooks act as a “grassroots culinary network” for women to exchange their best recipes.<sup>75</sup> Further commenting on the inclusion of the recipe donor’s name, Driver noted that the “name is a personal endorsement that the recipe is good” and “guarantees authenticity.”<sup>76</sup> The names and locations provided also help researchers delve deeper into the community.

Driver’s bibliographies offer comprehensive lists of the cookbooks published and their availabilities in archives and libraries. Another type of cookbook, the cookery manuscript, is even more difficult to find than the community cookbook, but equally rewarding.<sup>77</sup> Manuscript and community cookbooks are historical artifacts that represent different parts of society than the mass-produced cookbook, which often took a top-down approach as part of its instructive nature. Cookery manuscripts found in archives usually consist of loose recipes, notes, and bound journals, and often include medical remedies and household instruction in addition to culinary recipes. Historian Sara Pennell has noted that names were also included in manuscripts, illustrating the community involved in compiling recipes for home usage, from family members,

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<sup>73</sup> Driver, *A bibliography of cookery books published in Britain, 1875-1914*, 37.

<sup>74</sup> Driver, *A bibliography of cookery books published in Britain, 1875-1914*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Driver, “Cookbooks as Primary Sources for Writing History: A Bibliographer’s View,” *Food, Culture & Society*, 12:3 (September 2009): 270.

<sup>76</sup> Driver, “Cookbooks as Primary Sources for Writing History,” 271.

<sup>77</sup> See also Mairtin Mac Con Iomaire and Dorothy Cashman, “Irish Culinary Manuscripts and Printed Cookbooks: A Discussion,” *Petits Propos Culinaires* 94 (December 2011): 81-109.

friends, and servants.<sup>78</sup> While manuscript cookery books can offer glimpses into family cooking, many of the surviving manuscripts in archives lack any indication of use, such as food splatters. However, Pennell commented that manuscripts were used for recording purposes and usage can be traced through notes within the recipes; for example, specific quantities of spices might be amended depending on the specific family's tastes.<sup>79</sup> Similar to Driver's remarks about providing names for recipes in community cookbooks, Pennell also stated that names in manuscripts demonstrated that a recipe "was worthy of transmission and trial," although the name alone did not guarantee that a recipe was tried, or that it was tried and found to be successful.<sup>80</sup>

Mass-published cookbooks have also been used as cookery manuscripts. Cookbooks donated to libraries often include notes in the margins, indications of use, and loose recipes added to the book. While the traditional idea of a cookery manuscript implies a collection of recipes written at home, published cookbooks were also turned into manuscripts and should not be ignored as their own type of manuscript for individual readers. The historians above who have studied published cookbooks often see them as completely separate from cookery manuscripts, as more public authoritative documents. However, Janet Theophano has noted how women used published cookbooks as manuscripts, which made it possible to "transform printed books into family heirlooms."<sup>81</sup> When studying all types of cookbooks, it is important to include the published-cookbook-as-manuscript as a valuable example that demonstrates how people used publications within their own homes.

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<sup>78</sup> Sara Pennell, "Introduction," *Women and Medicine: Remedy Books, 1533-1865 from the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine*, London, (Primary Source Microfilm, 2004).

<sup>79</sup> Pennell, "Introduction."

<sup>80</sup> Pennell, "Introduction."

<sup>81</sup> Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 104.



Theophano explored the different types of cookbooks in her 2002 work *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. She commented that “cookbooks have served as a place for readers to remember a way of life no longer in existence or to enter a nostalgic re-creation of a past culture that persists mostly in memory.”<sup>82</sup> In addition to her arguments about cookbooks as a voice for women and a way for communities to exchange and share information, Theophano's statements about memory offer a connection both to the self-improvement and self-consciousness of nineteenth century cookbooks. Through cookbooks, writers indicated there was a problem within society, that English cookery was “bad,” and offered ways to improve it. The middle class perception of English cookery was tied to a self-awareness that cookery was no longer what it used to be and that cookbooks offered a solution for the middle class to improve. While Theophano's comment about cookbooks and nostalgia was in reference to how cooking old recipes was a way to reconnect with the past, the majority of nineteenth century cookbook authors offered new recipes to try to save the poorly-perceived cookery situation.

This dissertation adds to the body of work by the above historians, by determining the origin of the idea that English food is inherently “bad.” Food historians have debated when food became a common topic of concern and have compared English and French cooking. The chapters that follow demonstrate that the second half of the nineteenth century saw a heightened interest in discussing English cookery. Historians choose specific periods to study, with the nineteenth century often expanded to its “longer” version, from 1789-1914. However, rather than cover only the nineteenth century or a shorter time period, this study examines cookbooks and the perception of English cookery from approximately 1830-1930. Between 1830 and 1860, discussions of English cookery increased and changed perspectives. Where earlier cookery was

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<sup>82</sup> Theophano, 8.

discussed generally, by 1860, English cookery was seen negatively, and was embraced by authors of prescriptive literature as something to be saved. Many nineteenth century studies end in 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, but the challenges the war brought to cooking at home in England could not be ignored. By including the 1920s, the dissertation seeks to argue that with regard to English cookery, the war did not bring a change in opinions, but the perspective of the Victorian and Edwardian periods continued into the interwar period. Therefore, studying English cookery from 1830 to 1930 offered an opportunity to examine a wide range of cookbooks, the transition from general comments on cookery to the belief that English cookery was “bad,” and demonstrate how that belief stayed the same after the First World War.

A recurring theme throughout this dissertation is the connection between cookery, the emerging Victorian values of cleanliness, economy, and efficiency, and the anxiety that occurred from the self-awareness of having “bad” cookery. Chapter One further explores the idea of “bad” English cookery, with a specific analysis of the importance of cleanliness and cookery. Chapter Two examines the role women played in cooking, and the relationship between housewives, cooks, and cookbooks. Chapter Three addresses the question of an English national food identity and analyzes the constant comparisons made between English and international cuisines. Chapter Four focuses on the specific example of Christmas cookery and how Christmas was a time each year for evaluating English cookery.

## **Chapter 1: Cleanliness, Economy, and Cookery: Victorian Values and the Perceptions of “Bad” English Food, 1830-1930**

“Cleanliness is more than wholesomeness. It furnishes an atmosphere of self-respect, and influences the moral condition of the entire household. It is the best exponent of the spirit of Thrift. It is to the economy of the household, what hygiene is to the human body. It should preside at every detail of domestic service. It indicates comfort and well-being. It is among the distinctive attributes of civilisation, and marks the progress of nations...

“In short, we want common sense in cookery, as in most other things. Food should be used, and not abused. Much of it is now absolutely wasted, wasted for want of a little art in cooking it... Health, morals, and family enjoyments, are all connected with the question of cookery. Above all, it is the handmaid of Thrift. It makes the most and the best of the bounties of God. It wastes nothing, but turns everything to account.”

Samuel Smiles, *Thrift*, Chapter XV—first published 1875

In the mid-nineteenth century, English cookery was increasingly being discussed in negative terms; it was perceived to be unclean and wasteful. Prescriptive literature, such as cookbooks, offered advice for improving English cookery and indicated cookbooks were necessities for every home. Cookbooks both reflected a dominant model for society and evoked anxiety over what had already or could be lost. In his work on self-improvement, writer and social reformer Samuel Smiles declared in 1875 that thrift was “the basis of Self-Help.”<sup>1</sup> In his publication *Thrift*, his chapter on “Healthy Homes” addressed cleanliness and cookery and their relationship to thrift. As noted above, he stated that cleanliness was “the best exponent of the spirit of Thrift,” while cookery acted as thrift’s servant.<sup>2</sup> Smiles’s discussion of the values of cleanliness and economy (thriftiness) tied both to cookery, and argued that Victorian cookery was wasteful, which made it difficult to live a thrifty life. The concern over English cookery and perception of food in the nineteenth century was not simply a subset of the emerging values of the Victorian period, but was its own integral theme that co-existed and developed at the same time. In particular, Victorian anxiety and the desire for economy and cleanliness were also prevalent concerns with regard to cookery. Furthermore, the discussion of cookery continued to invoke these values past the Victorian era and into the interwar period, demonstrating that the

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Smiles, *Thrift*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/14418/pg14418.html>, (accessed November 7, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Smiles, *Thrift*.

themes of the nineteenth century were still applicable to society after the First World War. As well, it is important to note that it was *English* cookery specifically that was problematic—not *British* cookery. While English and British were often used interchangeably in the nineteenth century, the cookery problem was considered specific to England, and sources often compared English and Scottish cookery, finding Scottish cooking to be considerably better.

This concern over cookery was based on perceptions of English food and cooking. It is unknown whether English cuisine was actually poorer as the century progressed, but perceptions of that food certainly changed. As far as can be determined, there were mostly positive impressions of English cookery in the eighteenth century; by the mid-nineteenth century, the opposite was the case. This change in the perception of cookery in the mid-nineteenth century was, in some respect, due to changing food conditions over which people had very limited control; the feeling of losing control only added to the anxiety about the status of English food. While people could usually decide what food to eat, they increasingly did not have a role in where food came from or what happened to food between the farm and the table. Food safety was a growing issue in an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society. From the changes in legislation affecting food importation, to food adulteration, to new food innovations, transportation, and manufacturing, sourcing food and cooking, it was no longer as simple as reaching into one's backyard. The space of the kitchen itself was also problematic and contributed to the poor perception of English cookery. In an era devoted to cleanliness and the idea of the "home," the kitchen was usually the last to be included in reforming projects and was relegated to dark, dirty basements.

My analysis of cookbooks and newspaper articles demonstrates that as a result of changes within society, "bad" English cookery was a dominant theme that started in the nineteenth

century and continued into the twentieth century. As noted above, whether cookery actually tasted “bad” is impossible to determine. However, from approximately 1850, English food was believed to be bad and great anxiety over cookery emerged. Examining other Victorian values, especially cleanliness and thrift, will highlight how the concern over cookery was both connected to these themes and its own recurrent trend that used social reforms to promote its cause. A focus on perceptions of food also includes the perception of England as insular, and accusations that the English were a prejudiced nation, a people who avoided new foods or products.

Historian Rachel Rich has commented that prescriptive literature (for example, manuals and cookbooks) illustrated how the middle class desired to be organized, ordered, and modest.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Rich asserted that the repetitiveness of information in these books suggested there was only one common way of doing things, a “dominant discourse” and model for middle class living.<sup>4</sup> In historian Carol Gold’s words, “cookbooks relate what their authors expect from their readers,” even if the readers were not necessarily following along in practice.<sup>5</sup> Economy, as in frugal living and living within one’s means, was stated repeatedly as the solution for bad English cookery. While Smiles believed cookery to be the “handmaid of thrift,” cookery writers believed the reverse, that thrift was actually the handmaid to cookery. In her analysis of Danish cookbooks, Gold suggested that the appearance of specific recipes in cookbooks could demonstrate societal change; for example, the appearance of bread recipes in Danish cookbooks when previously there had been none mirrored the change from bread primarily baked at home to being purchased at a store.<sup>6</sup> Gold’s argument implied that recipes and ideas stated in prescriptive

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<sup>3</sup> Rachel Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption: Food, space and identity in London and Paris, 1850-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 25.

<sup>4</sup> Rich, 30.

<sup>5</sup> Carol Gold, *Danish Cookbooks: Domesticity & National Identity, 1616-1901*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Gold, 44-54.

literature such as cookbooks were potentially illustrating society's fears; a recipe for bread was only necessary if bread was not made at home, if people no longer knew how to make it. From the mid-nineteenth century, introductions and prefaces to cookbooks repeatedly remarked on English cookery in negative terms, offering the cookbook as the solution to the problem. Applying Gold's theory on recipes to the cookbook introduction, concern over cookery in cookbooks represented a perceived fear in society about English food. Cookbooks were another version of Smiles's *Self-Help*—self-improvement in the kitchen and the home. By presenting themselves as cures to the English cookery problem, cookbooks, first, demonstrated their authors believed (or perceived) there to be a problem, and, second, established why cookbooks were necessary to address this perception.

The rules and models recommended in prescriptive literature were what their authors believed should be the “norm” for both the middle class writing for the middle classes and the middle class writing for the lower classes. Cookbooks needed to demonstrate their necessity; that is, why were cookbooks necessary if the recipes were already followed at home without outside instruction? As early as 1807, Mrs Rundell, whose cookbook sold thousands and went into at least 65 editions by 1841,<sup>7</sup> provided recipes, “which being in daily use, the mode of preparing them may be supposed too well known to require a place in a cookery-book,” but too often these daily items were made poorly.<sup>8</sup> As Gold noted, it was impossible to know if changes in society were revealed in cookbooks, or if cookbooks led to change, but anxiety about economy and cleanliness for the nation's cookery corresponded with the growing middle class concern for these things on an individual level. Furthermore, the issue of bad English cookery

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<sup>7</sup> “Mrs Rundell,” Persephone Books, <http://www.persephonebooks.co.uk/authors/mrs-rundell/> (accessed January 30, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> A Lady [Mrs Rundell], *A New System of Domestic Cookery; Formed upon Principles of Economy, and adapted to the use of Private Families*, (London: John Murray, 1807), “advertisement” page.

presented an issue for the middle class to solve for society; fixing English cookery was a new project of reform. As English cookery increasingly was discussed in periodicals from the 1830s onward (it was rarely discussed before),<sup>9</sup> cookery became part of the middle class project of “social change.”<sup>10</sup> Kate Colquhoun has commented that early Victorians “lived self-consciously in an age of transition,” and this self-consciousness was evident in the anxiety surrounding English cookery.<sup>11</sup> Cookbooks and newspapers continued to present English cookery as bad into the twentieth century.

Cleanliness was identified as something to which all families, and especially cooks in the kitchen, should aspire. In 1987, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall stated that “one of the distinguishing characteristics of the middle class was their concern with decorum in bodily functions and cleanliness of person.”<sup>12</sup> In her celebrated cookbook, Eliza Acton wrote in 1845 that “the very idea of a *dirty cook* is so revolting,” and “slovenliness” would not be tolerated.<sup>13</sup> The discussions of cookery and cleanliness in the press and cookbooks linked cleanliness not just to the individual, but to the home and to the nation. In creating a culture of “ideal,” the middle class were therefore also responsible for noting problems within the “ideal” nation. Davidoff and Hall emphasized the importance of “cleanliness and order” for middle-class values, and both of these goals were stressed as needed to help English cookery.<sup>14</sup> As stated in *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery*, from 1854, “Good Cookery—is not simply a matter of taste and relish

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<sup>9</sup> Comprehensive newspaper searches find almost no mention of “English cookery” prior to the 1820s, and a large increase in the 1850s.

<sup>10</sup> See Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The political representation of class in Britain, c. 1780-1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) for the development of the middle class, politics and “social change” in the 1820s.

<sup>11</sup> Kate Colquhoun, *Taste: The Story of Britain through its Cooking*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 293.

<sup>12</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 90.

<sup>13</sup> Eliza Acton, *Modern Cookery, in all its Branches: Reduced to A System of Easy Practice, for the use of Private Families*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845), 1-2. Emphasis in original.

<sup>14</sup> Davidoff and Hall, 344.

(though that is very important,) but that it is a matter of health and strength, and of real economy.”<sup>15</sup> Smiles noted in *Thrift* that to have a happy home, “the home must be pervaded by the spirit of comfort, cleanliness, affection, and intelligence,” and that the first lesson people should be taught was “the necessity of cleanliness, its virtues and its wholesomeness.”<sup>16</sup> He also wrote that “health, morals, and family enjoyments, are all connected with the question of cookery.”<sup>17</sup> Together, his thoughts on cleanliness and cookery emphasized the relationship between ideal values and how they could be put into practice. “Good” cookery was the practical application of good character and proper morals and led to the creation of a happy home. Wasteful cookery, as English cookery was perceived to be, was therefore the opposite—it was not clean, it was not thrifty, and it led to an unhappy existence. Smiles’s theories of cleanliness and cookery were intertwined with stories of bad and wasteful cookery and his work was another example of a prescriptive text. He stated “that in no other country do men eat so much ill-cooked food” and asked for “common sense in cookery... Food should be used, and not abused.”<sup>18</sup> These phrases were not unique to Smiles and were repeated throughout cookbooks and newspaper articles beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The language used, by Smiles and other writers, to discuss the negative state of English cookery was similar to the broader discourse on Victorian values. The increasing concern over English food that occurred simultaneously with other emerging middle class trends for society.

In *Englishness Identified*, a study of national character and perceptions of English characteristics from 1650-1850, Paul Langford argued that domesticity was one unique characteristic of the English. The idea of the “home” was considered a “quintessentially English

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<sup>15</sup> Editors of the *Family Economist*, *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery for the Working Classes*, (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1854), 6.

<sup>16</sup> Smiles, *Thrift*.

<sup>17</sup> Smiles, *Thrift*.

<sup>18</sup> Smiles, *Thrift*.



concept” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> Langford stated that the addition of the word “home” added “endless assurance of quality,” commenting that “home-spun, home-bred, home-grown, home-made, home-cooked, all were terms of approval.”<sup>20</sup> The domestic manual and cookbook, *The Family Hand-Book*, published in 1838, offered examples that support Langford’s analysis. Its preface stated the purpose of the book was “directions respecting the management of a household, as well combine economy with comfort,—the main characteristic of an English home.”<sup>21</sup> The book claimed that “domestic management, or the economy of household affairs, [was] nowhere better understood and practised than in England,” stating that England enjoyed more “comfort” and “happiness” than other countries.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the preface stated that the purpose of the work was that the “economy of a family may be ensured.”<sup>23</sup> This implied that the English were already making economic choices in their cookery and household management. In her study of travellers, Marjorie Morgan argued that the English believed that theirs was the only country to enjoy “comfort and cleanliness,” an idea which concurs with Langford’s thoughts on the “home.”<sup>24</sup>

*The Family Hand-Book* might be seen as an example of Gold’s theory on recipes and cookbooks as representatives of social change. *The Family Hand-Book* may have been presenting an early anxiety about domestic management, morals, and cookery; if everyone was already cooking economically and managing homes in a comfortable manner, why would it be necessary to publish or purchase this book? As the author of *Economical Cookery* wrote in

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character 1650-1850*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.

<sup>20</sup> Langford, 109.

<sup>21</sup> *The Family Hand-Book; or Practical Information in Domestic Economy; Including Cookery, Household Management, and All Other Subjects Connected with the Health, Comfort, and Expenditure of a Family: with a Collection of Choice Receipts and Valuable Hints*, (London: John W. Parker, 1838), v.

<sup>22</sup> *The Family Hand-Book*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *The Family Hand-Book*, viii.

<sup>24</sup> Marjorie Morgan, *National Identities and Travel in Victorian Britain*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 154.

1835, it was essential to spend time in the kitchen to “realize the idea of the far-famed *comforts* of an English home.”<sup>25</sup> The author emphasized the word “comforts,” but the more significant aspect was her use of the phrase “idea of,” implying these comforts were part of the perception of Englishness, but perhaps not always put into practice. Within two decades, cookbooks reflected a different point of view, which identified England as no longer the happiest or the cleanest. An article from 1862 on “The English in the Kitchen” began by stating that the English were “the dirtiest people that ever attained a high social civilization” and that it was necessary to “know and own this humiliating fact.”<sup>26</sup> The use of the word “humiliating” further confirmed the stigma and anxiety associated with dirtiness. The article continued: “if it may be doubted whether we have, as we think, godliness above all the nations of the earth, in the next virtue, which is that of cleanliness, we certainly do not shine.”<sup>27</sup> This article represented the more persistent perceptions of the second half of the nineteenth century. An analysis of food adulteration and new food preparation methods will help explain the change in perceptions.

Cookbook authors often noted a change in purpose and direction for their books, which also reflected changes within society and the publishing trade. Particularly in the 1840s and 1850s, authors focused their works toward the “junior cook,” home cook, or family, rather than a professional cook in a large establishment, noting that most cookbooks on the market were for experienced cooks and the recipes were too expensive.<sup>28</sup> New developments in publishing technology meant cookbooks were able to address a broader audience and reach a mass market. Publishing historian John Feather wrote that middle-class publishers identified a large market for

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<sup>25</sup> A Lady, *Economical Cookery: Or, The Art of Providing Good and Palatable Dishes for a Family, Without Extravagance*, third edition, (London: Darton and Harvey, 1835), iv.

<sup>26</sup> “The English in the Kitchen,” *The Manchester Times*, June 28, 1862.

<sup>27</sup> “The English in the Kitchen.”

<sup>28</sup> For example, I. Roberts, *The Young Cook’s Guide; With Practical Observations*, (London: Laking, 1841), xvii; *Cookery and Domestic Economy, for young Housewives*, (Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1838), iii; Mrs Williamson, *The Practice of Cookery and Pastry*, (Edinburgh: W. Forrester, 1849), preface.

self-improvement publications and “by exploiting cheaper materials, production and distribution, it was possible to sell books in far greater numbers” than before.<sup>29</sup> While new technologies, such as steam printing, helped publishers print cheaper books beginning in the 1840s, the tax on paper meant books were still expensive to produce, until the tax was eventually eliminated in 1861.<sup>30</sup> Cookbooks represented changes in society on two fronts. The increasing number of cookbooks on the market was due to changes in the publishing industry, which created cheaper publications and supported self-improvement literature. The focus of the cookbooks themselves reflected a desire to help the mass market at home. Put together, middle class publishers, authors, and consumers were all partly responsible for the construction and perception of bad English food. The publishers recognized that self-improvement works were popular and could be made cheaply for the mass market; the authors needed to find a reason to make their cookbooks desirable to readers and for readers to choose their work above others; and, by purchasing these cookbooks, consumers may also have been buying into the idea that there was a problem in their home, specifically in their kitchen, that needed to be solved.

While cookbooks offered similar information and shared the same overall goal—to improve English cookery—they needed to demonstrate their uniqueness, and often began by stating how they differed from other material on the market. Despite new copyright legislation in the 1840s and authors’ claims to be original, nineteenth century cookbooks were often close copies of each other. Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management*, published in 1861, and arguably the most famous cookbook of the nineteenth century, was an amalgamation of information from a variety of earlier sources.<sup>31</sup> Nineteenth and early twentieth century cookbooks used the same vocabulary repeatedly, stressing economy, practicality, and efficiency.

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<sup>29</sup> John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, (New York: Routledge, 1988), 105.

<sup>30</sup> Feather, 111-113.

<sup>31</sup> Kathryn Hughes, *The Short Life & Long Times of Mrs Beeton*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), 261.

*Cookery Made Easy* by “A Lady” from 1844 stated that it was “an original and purely practical work” that provided the “cleanest methods” to create “cleanly and nicely cooking.”<sup>32</sup> However, the preface to this cookbook was also the preface to another cookbook, *Gentility and Economy Combined* by George Read and published in 1850.<sup>33</sup> In addition to discussing economy, *The Professed Cook* by Robert Reynolds emphasized that “the most perfect cleanliness, regularity, and order, should be observed” in the kitchen.<sup>34</sup> Mrs Williamson, author of *The Practice of Cookery and Pastry* (1849), claimed her recipes were for “the most useful, plain, and economical dishes,” to create “judicious economy in housekeeping.”<sup>35</sup> The seemingly humble author of *The Housekeepers’ Friend, or Manual of Cookery*, published in 1852, wrote how she hoped her cookbook could find a place among the many similar publications recently printed, or as she referred to them, “works of a similar character...lately issued from the press.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time as discussing various characteristics within the home and for cookery, the cookbook was a fast-growing genre for authors to join. Cookbooks from the 1840s and early 1850s focused on providing economical recipes without necessarily prefacing their statements with a critique of English cookery.

However, in the 1850s and 1860s, cookbooks and newspaper articles began to comment on the poor quality of English food. In an article from 1859, “English Cookery and Intemperance,” the author claimed that English cookery was the “rudest of barbarous devices.”<sup>37</sup> In *Cookery and Domestic Economy* (1862), Mrs Somerville complained that “in most books on Domestic Economy the useful has been so mingled with the useless” and referred to the time she

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<sup>32</sup> A Lady, *Cookery Made Easy...*, Second Edition, (London: Dean and Munday, 1844), iii-iv.

<sup>33</sup> George Read, *Gentility and Economy Combined*, (London: Thomas Dean and Son, 1850), preface.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Reynolds, *The Professed Cook*, (London: E. Churton, 1849), xv.

<sup>35</sup> Mrs Williamson, *The Practice of Cookery and Pastry*, preface.

<sup>36</sup> A Lady, *The Housekeepers’ Friend, or Manual of Cookery*, (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1852), v.

<sup>37</sup> “English Cookery and Intemperance,” *The Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, June 24, 1859.

was writing as “these degenerate days.”<sup>38</sup> An 1862 article from the *Manchester Times*, asked “whether English cookery is not the dirtiest cookery in Europe” and concluded that “no cooks and a dirty cuisine are formidable obstacles to improvement.”<sup>39</sup> In the article, “Bad Cookery and Coarse Wines Inseparably Associated,” bad cookery was creating and continuing a “state of barbarism” and was considered an “incorrigible vice.”<sup>40</sup> In 1866, *The Examiner*, in an article complaining about English cookery, concluded that “the culinary darkness has settled upon us, and there is not the slightest reason to hope for a reformation for ages to come.”<sup>41</sup> English cookery, it seemed, was giving England a bad reputation; society was in a dark, deteriorating state because of its cookery. Cookery was not just seen as bad, but equated with barbarians and dirtiness—the worst characteristics for a society that stressed civilized values and cleanliness. English cookery was unclean, and the problem was seen to be growing. The original definition of the word “barbarian” meant an “other,” and the use of the word by critics indicated another way how they connected English cookery and English identity, claiming that through their cookery, the English were acting like “others” rather than the “civilized” English.

The negative remarks about English cookery expressed in the 1850s and 1860s were reflections of broader changes in society. As noted above, improvements in the publishing industry made it easier for cookbooks to be published and the self-help industry utilized issues in society in order to offer solutions. The repeal of the Corn Laws and changes in food transportation allowed for greater food importations. The Corn Laws, established in 1815, protected agricultural production in Great Britain and instituted prohibitive taxes on foreign grain imports. The Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, making it possible for foreign wheat to be

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<sup>38</sup> Mrs Somerville, *Cookery and Domestic Economy*, (Glasgow: George Watson, 1862), iii-iv.

<sup>39</sup> “The English in the Kitchen.”

<sup>40</sup> “Bad Cookery and Coarse Wines Inseparably Associated,” *Newcastle Courant*, December 26, 1862, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> “French Wines and Cookery,” *The Examiner*, September 15, 1866.

imported, and wheat was increasingly imported as the century progressed. New methods of transportation, such as steam ships, also helped bring foreign foods to Great Britain. The repeal of the Corn Laws allowed for wheat importations, but new technologies also helped foreign livestock and meat arrive in England. In addition to the shifts in the publishing industry and free trade, the medical community was exploring the issue of food adulteration and making its findings known to the public. These issues, publishing, trade, and adulteration, as well as urbanization and the need to feed a growing population, all affected society and perceptions of English cookery; by the 1860s, cookery writers perceived English cookery to be suffering and problematic.

### **Adulteration & Cleanliness**

While food has been tampered with throughout history, historian John Burnett has argued that the business of adulteration co-existed with industrialization and urbanization. The separation of “food producer” and “food consumer” created an environment for food fraud to thrive.<sup>42</sup> In earlier agricultural communities, families provided their own food, baked bread and brewed beer. In small towns where producer and consumer knew each other and were more interdependent, someone adulterating the product would be more easily caught and ostracized. In larger cities, such as London, food adulterators were able to flourish, and the farther food needed to travel to its consumer, the easier it was to be adulterated. The first attempt to inform the public of the poor quality of food was by chemist Fredrick Accum in 1820 with his *Treatise on Adulterations of Food and Culinary Poisons*. Accum wrote that most foods and drinks were

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<sup>42</sup> John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A social history of diet in England from 1815 to the present day*, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1966), 100.

adulterated, including bread, tea, beer, and spices, and he listed merchants who were known for committing these “nefarious practices.”<sup>43</sup> In discussing the various food additives, many of which were poisonous, Accum stressed the importance of purity, especially with water, and used the word dirty to refer both to substances and those criminals committing fraud.<sup>44</sup> Accum’s list of fraudulent merchants created enemies and he was accused of book theft and fled the country. Burnett noted that another text was not released on the subject until 1830, this one less academic, and was mainly significant for renewing awareness of the problem of food adulteration.<sup>45</sup>

One chapter of Accum’s text, “Disgusting Practice of Rendering Butcher’s Meat, Fish, and Poultry, Unwholesome,” illuminated the ways butchers and fishmongers literally “inflated” their product so it would seem plumper and fresher.<sup>46</sup> Accum wrote how animals were often forced into a state of disease before being slaughtered by improper grazing and droving methods. Animals were kept in close quarters and starved before slaughter, making an easier task for the butcher, but creating a diseased product for the market. Accum recommended that everyone follow the Jewish practice of refusing to eat any animal that died of disease, referring to it as a “wholesome lesson.”<sup>47</sup> Reference to koshering and Jewish food observances were often mentioned and advocated throughout the nineteenth century as cleaner and purer habits.<sup>48</sup> In *The Meat Trade in Britain 1840-1914*, Richard Perren documented the increase of imported meat, and explained that the unsanitary practices at fairs and markets ensured that once disease entered the country it was easily spread throughout. While Accum argued that butchers at home were already selling (and creating) diseased meat, Perren suggested that by the 1850s, it was necessary

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<sup>43</sup> Fredrick Accum, *Treatise on Adulteration of Foods and Culinary Poisons*, Second Edition, (London: Longman, et al, 1820), vii.

<sup>44</sup> Accum, 43, 37.

<sup>45</sup> Burnett, 106.

<sup>46</sup> Accum, 37.

<sup>47</sup> Accum, 39.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, S. Beaty-Pownall, *No. 5. Meats and Game, The “Queen” Cookery Books*, Second Edition, (London: Horace Cox, 1902), 29.

to sell diseased animals for food, otherwise, there would not have been enough meat available to feed the growing population.<sup>49</sup> Diseased cattle posed a problem for a nation that considered “roast beef” its national dish, implying that the once great dish of the eighteenth century was suffering in the nineteenth.

In his *Treatise on the Falsifications of Food*, published in 1848, John Mitchell remarked that food adulteration was a “growing evil,” and new forms of adulteration had been created since Accum first published his text.<sup>50</sup> Mitchell compared the situation in England with other countries, and noted that England was the one of the few countries without government regulation; Mitchell quoted the work of Dr Ure, who explained that European governments had effective health boards, especially in France and Prussia, to ensure public health.<sup>51</sup> He stressed that food adulteration was only getting worse, and focused his work on the most commonly adulterated foods, once again listing tea, bread, beer, and spices. In an appendix, Mitchell wrote about diseased meat, stating he had found “that cattle in a frightfully diseased state are continually sold for the purpose of forming an article of food. Cheap sausages are thus manufactured.”<sup>52</sup> With regard to fish, Mitchell argued that the majority of fish sold to the working classes was “in a totally unfit state of use.”<sup>53</sup> In *Food and Its Adulterations*, which summarized the investigations conducted by the medical journal *The Lancet* in the early 1850s, Dr Arthur Hill Hassall dedicated his work to Sir Benjamin Hall, Bart., M.P., President of the General Board of Health. Hassall’s dedication listed what he considered the major factors in society that were detrimental to health: “foul air, impure water, and adulterated food and

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<sup>49</sup> Richard Perren, *The Meat Trade in Britain*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), 52.

<sup>50</sup> John Mitchell, *Treatise on the Falsifications of Food, and the Chemical Means Employed to Detect Them*, (London: Hippolyte Bailliere, 1848), v.

<sup>51</sup> Mitchell, x-xiii.

<sup>52</sup> Mitchell, 325.

<sup>53</sup> Mitchell, 325.



drink.”<sup>54</sup> Hassall continued in his introduction to state that the subject of food adulteration was “one of extreme and even of national importance.”<sup>55</sup> While Accum’s and Mitchell’s discoveries were significant, Hassall’s work in *The Lancet* and in his publication were not ignored by the public, and his research led to the creation of a parliamentary committee and to the passing of the first Food and Drugs Act in 1860.<sup>56</sup> The purpose of the act was to employ analysts to regulate food, but as Burnett noted, the act was “an utter failure” and very few analysts were actually hired.<sup>57</sup>

The work of Accum, Mitchell, Hassall, and others revealed not only that many foods were unclean, impure, and potentially deadly, but, also, that this corrupt and deceptive activity had been hidden from consumers in plain sight. In *Swindled*, Bee Wilson remarked that in the 1850s, many advertisers used anti-adulteration phrases to promote their products as pure, even though Hassall’s analysis discovered these products were heavily adulterated. Wilson observed that “the worst swindlers were those who spent the most time attacking swindling,” further demonstrating the dishonest and deceitful practice of adulteration.<sup>58</sup> Burnett has maintained that in the 1850s, after Hassall’s work was published, food retailers advertised their goods as “pure and unadulterated;” Burnett has commented that this was another way to make a profit, stemming from the “same spirit of commercialism” as adulteration, and taking advantage of the “newly awakened fears of the public.”<sup>59</sup> Wilson has written on the case of Crosse & Blackwell, preserves and pickles manufacturers, who rebranded themselves as pure, by admitting to their

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<sup>54</sup> Arthur Hill Hassall, *Food and Its Adulterations*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), dedication.

<sup>55</sup> Hassall, iii.

<sup>56</sup> J.C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, *The Englishman’s Food: A History of Five Centuries of English Diet*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1939; revised edition 1957), 294.

<sup>57</sup> Burnett, 257.

<sup>58</sup> Bee Wilson, *Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, From Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 135.

<sup>59</sup> Burnett, 251.

previous adulteration and offering their new product as clean and honest, thereby reclaiming “purity” as a “marketing device.”<sup>60</sup> Another example of marketing purity was the advertisements for arrowroot and tea. Hassall reported that arrowroot was often mixed with sago, tapioca starch, and potato-flour to add weight.<sup>61</sup> In 1859, Glenfield Arrowroot remarked on the inconvenience of finding “arrowroot pure and unadulterated” and advertised its product as “warranted free from adulteration.”<sup>62</sup> Tea, another commonly adulterated item, was often mixed with old tea leaves, sand, and starch for bulk, lead, turmeric, and chalk for colour, and iron sulphate, among other ingredients, to enhance the taste and smell.<sup>63</sup> Hassall found that black tea often arrived in England in a “genuine state,” but then might be adulterated at home, whereas green tea was almost always adulterated at every step of the import process.<sup>64</sup> Hassall stated that it was normal for “tea, both black and green, to be fabricated from leaves not those of tea, and possessing no properties in common with the leaves of that plant.”<sup>65</sup> Tea retailers appropriated the language of pureness and authenticity to market their product. “The Empress of China’s Tea” was “pure and choice tea” and “analytical chemists” certified it as “genuine and unadulterated.”<sup>66</sup> Food adulteration was a real concern in the mid-nineteenth century, one that many had been unaware of until researchers released their findings. In addition, the vocabulary surrounding food adulteration found its way into other discussions of food, adding an element of fear of poison and uncleanness.

Even though much of the adulteration happened in England, in emphasizing the purity and cleanliness of items, retailers and cookbook authors stressed the importance of using English

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<sup>60</sup> Wilson, 143.

<sup>61</sup> Hassall, xii.

<sup>62</sup> “Delicious Food. Glenfield Arrowroot,” *Worcestershire Chronicle*, April 20, 1859, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Hassall, vii.

<sup>64</sup> Hassall, xvi.

<sup>65</sup> Hassall, xvi.

<sup>66</sup> “Pure and Choice Tea,” *Northampton Mercury*, March 15, 1856, p. 1.

goods. Cookbooks provided instructions on choosing products free from adulteration, how to test goods in case they might contain additives, and how to make various items at home rather than purchasing them at stores. *The New Domestic Cookery Book* from 1853 advised readers how “to discover whether bread has been adulterated with whiting or chalk” and how “to detect Bones, Jalap, Ashes, &c. in Bread.”<sup>67</sup> The concern with purchased bread illustrated the transition from making bread at home to buying it at the bakery. *The New Domestic Cookery Book*, for example, provided recipes for making bread at home alongside its advice for checking store-bought bread for adulteration. *The Family Save-All* gave instructions for making home-made cayenne pepper, recommending the use of “English chilies” to make sure it was “free from adulteration and poisonous colouring matter.”<sup>68</sup> Anne Bowman’s *The New Cookery Book* also noted that curries were often “rendered nauseous” due to adulterated purchased curry powder, and directed readers to ensure their spices were “genuine.”<sup>69</sup> Hassall noted that cayenne pepper was often poisonous, testing twenty-eight samples and finding only four to be “genuine.”<sup>70</sup> *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping*, published in 1865, warned that butter might contain ground “flint-stones” and suggested that butter suffered the most “deception” of any ingredient, not only containing additional and potentially harmful ingredients, but because fats from Ireland were imported into England and then marketed as “genuine” English butter.<sup>71</sup> This cookbook believed that cows were never even part of the production of the butter sold in London.<sup>72</sup> Mitchell argued that the milk from diseased cows was harmful, and concluded that the butter and

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<sup>67</sup> A.M. Gordon, *The New Domestic Cookery; Formed Upon Principles of Economy; Exhibited in a Plain and Easy Manner, and Adapted to the Use of Private Families*, (London: W. Tweedie, 1853), 273-274.

<sup>68</sup> Editor of “Enquire Within,” *The Family Save-All*, (London: W. Kent & Co., 1861), 132.

<sup>69</sup> Anne Bowman, *The New Cookery Book: A Complete Manual of English and Foreign Cookery on Sound Principles of Taste and Science*, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), 342.

<sup>70</sup> Hassall, xx.

<sup>71</sup> The Best and Latest Authorities, *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping*, (London: Lockwood and Co., 1865), 30.

<sup>72</sup> The Best and Latest Authorities, *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping*, 30.

cheese made from this milk would also be problematic.<sup>73</sup> Hassall reported that most butter was weighted with water and salt, beyond what was needed as preservative.<sup>74</sup> He also noted that foreign imported butter was the worst kind of butter, and in the end, not actually cheaper because it was filled with water.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time as being endorsed as convenient and inexpensive alternatives, “pre-made” products were objects of suspicion and doubt. Both Mitchell and Hassall commented on the additives in pickles, sauces, preserves, and other bottled products. Hassall recognized that “preserved provisions” were helpful pantry additions, especially for traveling.<sup>76</sup> Hassall described the opened contents of the specific preserved products he tested, declaring some acceptable for consumption, and rejecting others.<sup>77</sup> In 1867, Bowman’s *The New Cookery Book* indicated that sausages bought in cities or large towns, which therefore meant they were made by a third party, could not “always be depended on as being made of wholesome meat and with due cleanliness.”<sup>78</sup> Bowman was obviously suspicious of the quality of the meat, but she was also concerned about which bottled condiments her readers purchased. She strongly recommended that every “lady” with the “means and opportunity” should oversee the production of sauces in her own kitchen in order to ensure she did not give guests “slow poison.”<sup>79</sup> Bowman was anxious about the hygiene of the cook as well, stating the cook must take care for “cleanliness, or her cookery will be poison.”<sup>80</sup> Bowman was worried about adulterated food, quoting the expertise of *The Lancet* on food safety. Bowman’s repeated use of the word “poison” signified a legitimate concern for the quality of English food and an anxiety about what was brought into the

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<sup>73</sup> Mitchell, 326.

<sup>74</sup> Hassall, 536.

<sup>75</sup> Hassall, 536.

<sup>76</sup> Hassall, 428.

<sup>77</sup> Hassall, xix; “On Preserved Provisions,” 428-447.

<sup>78</sup> Bowman, 351.

<sup>79</sup> Bowman, 41.

<sup>80</sup> Bowman, 1.

home. Bowman was appropriating the language of the food analysts and extending it to encompass all cookery. Her concerns also reflected the nature of nineteenth century industrialized, urbanized society, where control of the production of food and its processing had become disconnected, and where the opportunities for adulteration became more pervasive. She worried about prepared packaged goods rather than the raw separate ingredients, and wanted her readers to make these items at home, suggesting a perception that most housewives were buying prepared products rather than preparing them at home.

The concern over English cookery in the mid-nineteenth century was that cookery was unclean, partly because of the revelations of Hassall, et al, and the realization that many foods were actually impure. However, unclean food and unclean cookery were not necessarily the same thing, yet the scandal of adulteration created a cultural perception wherein having any element of cookery as unclean led to the whole being seen as potentially poisonous. Moreover, the language of adulteration created harsh contrasts between pureness and impureness, cleanliness and uncleanliness, and authenticity (genuine) and deceit. Cookbooks and retailers emphasized the importance of “genuine” products; in many cases, identifying “genuine” with English and ignoring that the deceit was happening at home. Questioning the origin of a product—butter as “Irish” for instance—offered a foreign scapegoat (albeit not that foreign), and presented readers with an alternative and familiar group to blame. Cookbooks and retailers attacked this knowledge from different perspectives. Retailers had a product to sell and needed to find a new way to market it; they used the oppositional language of adulteration, remarking on the purity of their product. Cookbook authors had a different agenda. On the one hand, they needed to demonstrate the relevance of their cookbook and increasingly did so by remarking on the negative quality of English cookery. On the other hand, recommending making items at

home, also involved recommending English produce, and they tried to distance the adulteration from England. Cookbook authors recognized that adulteration was a problem and offered ways to avoid it, while at the same time encouraging the use of English products.

In his section on “Candour” and the English character, Langford argues that “openness was the essence of proper behaviour” and that “lying was thought to be innately un-English.”<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, adulteration had revealed a deceitful secret, that the English, specifically those in commerce, could be dishonest and immoral. The honest character of the English was challenged by poisonous additives and criminal food practices. Thus, Bowman’s fears were not just about the poison potentially lurking in the bottle, but also the poison of industrialized society. In *Victorian People and Ideas*, Richard D. Altick discusses the importance of respectability and Evangelicalism in the Victorian period, noting the key principles as “sobriety, thrift, cleanliness of person and tidiness of home, good manners, respect for the law, [and] honesty in business affairs.”<sup>82</sup> Food adulteration broke the laws of respectability on a number of levels. Altick also explains that it was difficult for people to uphold the qualities of respectability at all times.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, writing on Victorians and anxiety, Walter E. Houghton argues that the fear of not living up to the qualities of a respectable life left many Victorians suffering from anxiety and a fear of failure.<sup>84</sup> Food adulteration was disrespectful and dishonest business practice; at first, only a few knew of its existence, but once revealed to everyone, it was necessary to reclaim Englishness and eventually make it illegal. Unfortunately, the scandal of food adulteration occurred at the same time as an increase in food importations, and only added to the perception of English cookery as bad.

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<sup>81</sup> Langford, 99, 122.

<sup>82</sup> Richard D. Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*, (New York: Norton, 1973), 175.

<sup>83</sup> Altick, 178.

<sup>84</sup> Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 61.

The Adulteration of Food, Drink and Drugs Act was enacted in 1872, which made adulteration a legal offence and punishable.<sup>85</sup> By the 1880s, food was the safest it had been throughout the nineteenth century, but there was still a common perception that foods were adulterated. Wilson has suggested that this “mood of nervousness” benefitted advertisers in helping to brand products as reliable and containing a “unique trustworthiness.”<sup>86</sup> Ironically, one of the inadvertent consequences of the positive advertising was to reinforce concerns about cleanliness and cookery. Despite more successful legislation, it was difficult to remove the belief that English food was “bad” once it had been found that quite a bit of had, in fact, been “bad.”

### **Food Imports & Prejudice**

Writers concerned with English cookery continued to question English ingredients, especially as food importations increased. An article in the culinary journal *Knife & Fork* from 1871 argued for government intervention and regulation with regard to meat importation, remarking on the need for “sanitary inspection” to stop the spread of disease.<sup>87</sup> Perren’s work has traced the changes in the sources of meat imports, from Ireland and Continental Europe to the United States, Canada, South America, and Australasia. In the 1860s, salt-cured pork products arrived from the United States, but generally were disliked due to their strong flavour. This imported meat from the United States sold for less than British bacon, and often was purchased by the lower classes.<sup>88</sup> Perren comments that British consumers refused to eat

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<sup>85</sup> Burnett, 259.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, 147.

<sup>87</sup> “The Price of Meat,” *Knife & Fork*, 1:3 (September 1871): 37.

<sup>88</sup> Perren, 71.

imported pickled beef from the United States because of the “extreme saltiness,” and these products ended up as provisions for the army or navy.<sup>89</sup> It is possible that the significance of “plain” beef in the English mentality meant the English did not appreciate the flavour of the pickled beef, especially when people were used to the plainness that celebrated the quality of their beef. In the 1870s, North American live cattle were brought to England, replacing Europe as the leading source of imported cattle. Perren notes that American cattle were from British stock, and were superior in quality to European meat. The imported meat from the United States was in direct competition with local, home-grown cattle, as opposed to other imports from Europe.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the chilled meat trade began in the 1870s, but it was not until the 1890s that frozen meat from South America and Australasia became a more substantial import than chilled meat from the United States.<sup>91</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century, inventors experimented with canning meat and produce, but it was not until the second half of the century that tinned products became staple items for the middle classes.<sup>92</sup> Judith Flanders has noted that the issue of sterilizing the tins was not fully addressed until the 1860s.<sup>93</sup> The invention of the tin-opener in 1858 helped to increase the popularity of tinned products.<sup>94</sup> Tinned meat from Australia and South America arrived in the 1870s, but was of poor quality; Colin Spencer has commented that its only redeeming trait was how cheap it was.<sup>95</sup> Early usage of canned products also corresponded with moral anxiety and concerns about cleanliness, especially since some early canned meat was rotten and the

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<sup>89</sup> Perren, 72.

<sup>90</sup> Perren, 118.

<sup>91</sup> Perren, 125.

<sup>92</sup> Colin Spencer, *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand Years of History*, (London: Grub Street, 2002), 282.

<sup>93</sup> Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), 242.

<sup>94</sup> Flanders, 242.

<sup>95</sup> Spencer, 282.



products arriving from Australia were often all fat and sinew.<sup>96</sup> J.C. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham have maintained that the early inquiries into rotten canned meat led to prejudice against canned products and the “unfortunate belief” that canned foods would “cause food poisoning.”<sup>97</sup> *The Food Journal* reported in 1870 that there were rumours that tinned meat was an easy way for “Australian shippers” who were not “tender-conscienced” to “smuggle their refuse and bad meat with the good.”<sup>98</sup> The article recommended the Australian community investigate these claims immediately, because if there was any suspicion of the tinned products, “the hard gained confidence of the people on this side will disappear like chaff before the wind.”<sup>99</sup> *The Food Journal*’s warnings demonstrated how fragile the English perceptions of food were, especially with regard to new processes and imported foods. Spencer also noted that tinned meat looked unappealing, which implied there was a common ideal for what good English meat should look like, and the tinned product did not conform to this model.<sup>100</sup> Writing in *The Food Journal* in 1870, Anne Isabella Larkins also remarked on the poor appearance of Australian tinned meat, that it looked totally different than any English meat, and that “natural British prejudices” made those unaccustomed to the tinned product think of those who sold it to them as “swindlers,” because the meat was “stringy, greasy, and flat.”<sup>101</sup> Larkins continued to suggest cooking the tinned meat to render it palatable and at least similar tasting to “second-rate English beef.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> See Perren, 70; Spencer 282.

<sup>97</sup> Drummond and Wilbraham, 322.

<sup>98</sup> Phillips Bevan, “The Meat Question of 1870,” *The Food Journal*, February 5, 1870, p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Bevan, p. 6.

<sup>100</sup> Spencer, 282.

<sup>101</sup> Anne Isabella Larkins, “How to Cook Australian Meat,” *The Food Journal*, February 5, 1870, p. 40.

<sup>102</sup> Larkins, p. 41.

In 1874, the *York Herald* reported on the increase of imported foods, and concluded that “year by year we become better customers to the outside world.”<sup>103</sup> A few months after complaining about diseased meat imports, the *Knife & Fork* praised Australian tinned meats, as “good wholesome meats” for the working classes.<sup>104</sup> As part of accepting imported meats from the United States, South America, and Australia, writers emphasized that the livestock originated in Britain. By stressing the British connection to the imported product, the product could become “mainstream” more easily, and indicated a growing acceptance of the decline in British agriculture and the need to import foodstuffs. It also demonstrated how the English (and, in this case, the British) adapted to the need to import meat, by claiming it as their own. Writing on “Beef and Mutton,” the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented that Australian and American beef was undeniably competition for the British product, but the article advised its readers to remember that the “best herds in the kingdom have been drawn upon to supply our colonies with sires of unquestioned pedigree.”<sup>105</sup> After the repeated concerns over questionable adulterated food, claiming “unquestioned pedigree” spoke to the trustworthiness of an English product. Throughout the 1870s, the perception of American and Australian meat improved. *The Food Journal* reported in 1872 that its goal was to help introduce cheap food, but that the English public suffered from prejudice that needed to be overcome.<sup>106</sup> The article stated that meat “which ignorant people still stigmatise[d] as cheap and nasty” was becoming more popular, and hoped that more colonies would begin exporting meat to England.<sup>107</sup> In the 1870s, Australian tinned meats were a challenge to work with because they arrived “overcooked,” but by the

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<sup>103</sup> “Consumption of Imported Food,” *York Herald*, September 1, 1874, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> “Australian Preserved Meats, East and West,” *Knife & Fork*, 1:5 (May 1872): 71.

<sup>105</sup> “Beef and Mutton,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 1, 1882.

<sup>106</sup> “Meat from Our Colonies,” *The Food Journal*, January 1, 1872, p. 529.

<sup>107</sup> “Meat from Our Colonies,” p. 529.

1880s, Australian meat was referred to as of excellent quality and of English heritage.<sup>108</sup> *The Handbook of Domestic Economy* observed that it was “a well-known fact that the Australian stock is of English breeds, constantly renovated by English cattle,” and tinned meat was “economical” and “healthful.”<sup>109</sup>

The discussion of English cookery also suffered from a considerable amount of Victorian hypocrisy.<sup>110</sup> The need to perceive foods as English was similar to the discourse surrounding the food adulteration scandal. In the 1850s and 1860s, cookbooks and newspapers tried to blame outside influences for food adulteration and attempted to reclaim Englishness as “genuine” and “pure.” The importation of meat involved the same process of reclaiming Englishness, although in this case, it pulled back, as opposed to pushed away. On the one hand, writers accepted that meat was imported and no longer primarily from local farms; on the other hand, they found a way to continue to perceive their food as authentically English by claiming imported products as their own. However, writers simultaneously criticized English cookery and attempted to preserve a genuine Englishness.

In 1880, the first frozen mutton and beef arrived in London from Australia and New Zealand, and frozen meat quickly became another way to buy meat cheaply. Perren observes that London was provided with foreign meat more readily than anywhere else in the country. A foreign supplier would ship a large load of meat, carcasses or live animals, that were collected by the railway companies at the docks and then distributed. Economies of scale ensured that transportation costs were low. In contrast, the movement of home-grown animals to market was inherently less efficient, for British animal husbandry remained localized, ensuring a laborious

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<sup>108</sup> See W.B. Tegetmeir, *The Scholar's Handbook of Household Management and Cookery*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876), 32, 115-116; *Handbook of Domestic Cookery, Adapted to the Requirements of Every Household*, (London and Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, [1885]), 350-351.

<sup>109</sup> *Handbook of Domestic Cookery, Adapted to the Requirements of Every Household*, 350-351.

<sup>110</sup> See Altick, 178; Houghton, Chapter 14, “Hypocrisy.”

and costly process of collection by the railroads across rural England. Farmers complained, but the structure of the domestic industry paradoxically led to a reduction in home-grown animals reaching London and the proliferation of foreign meat in the London market.<sup>111</sup> Perren has demonstrated that it was easier to supply larger centres with frozen meat, because smaller areas had connections to the local farmers and could end up with an over-abundance of meat. In the case of lamb from New Zealand, ships originally tried to schedule their arrivals to coincide with the lamb season in the spring; however, ships often arrived too late in the summer, which lengthened the season for eating lamb.<sup>112</sup> This may have seemed problematic at first, but eventually it contributed to the decline of eating seasonally; if frozen lamb was available all year round, then it was no longer only a spring dish. Meat was also imported from Argentina, but Perren noted that it was always considered inferior, even with attempts to cross-breed with British animals, which could reflect a perceived different relationship with Argentina as opposed to parts of the Empire.

Attempts to present foreign, imported meats as English (or British) were another way to conquer prejudice; the act of reclaiming Englishness was speaking to potentially xenophobic consumers. Langford has demonstrated how by the eighteenth century, the English were perceived to be “xenophobic” and “reserved.”<sup>113</sup> Altick’s discussion of Evangelicalism emphasizes that it bred insularity, especially with regard to influences of other cultures (i.e. Continental Europe) on “art and ideas.”<sup>114</sup> He argues that the Evangelical movement’s belief in a “true Englishness...intensified the insularity” throughout the Victorian era.<sup>115</sup> Writers in the second half of the nineteenth century described the relationship between English narrow-

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<sup>111</sup> Perren, chapter 8.

<sup>112</sup> Perren, 192.

<sup>113</sup> Langford, 219.

<sup>114</sup> Altick, 188.

<sup>115</sup> Altick, 188.

mindedness and perceptions of food. In 1868, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* reported that “there is a prejudice in England, as ridiculous as it is inveterate, against anything new in food or in the manner of cooking food.”<sup>116</sup> Coinciding with the agricultural depression in the 1870s and the continual increase of imported foods, writers remarked that it was necessary for the English to abandon their prejudices to foreign or new foods. In the article, “Bad Cookery and the Distress,” the author remarked that “it has too long been the fashion in matters of food to reserve the well-known maxim, and to hold everything unknown as unpleasant, contemptible, or suspicious.”<sup>117</sup> This article hoped beans and lentils would become more popular items in the English diet. In the article “Our Food Prejudices,” the author pronounced that the “stupid, untrue, and ignorant boast, that whatever is ‘English’ must be best, cannot now last much longer.”<sup>118</sup> The article also noted that England imported as much wheat as it produced at home, commenting it was no longer necessary to “put the false brand ‘English’ on flour to make it sell.”<sup>119</sup> This only applied to flour, but as the article continued to discuss how English food prejudice meant more expensive meals and anxiety in times of crisis, both issues could be solved by being open to imported, cheaper items. Another article, “Gastronomic Prejudices,” argued that “prejudice, the mother of waste, has long found a home with us,” implying that prejudice was one of the reasons for wasteful cookery.<sup>120</sup> Another example from the 1880s argued taste was still an issue, “the very mention of garlic would be against an English cookery book, but the prejudice must be conquered.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> “Cookery,” *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, January 29, 1868.

<sup>117</sup> “Bad Cookery and the Distress,” *The Grantham Journal*, October 4, 1879, p. 7.

<sup>118</sup> “Our Food Prejudices,” *The Star*, September 20, 1879, p. 4.

<sup>119</sup> “Our Food Prejudices.”

<sup>120</sup> “Gastronomic Prejudices,” *The London Standard*, June 11, 1878, p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> “Two Cookery Books,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 25, 1887.

Changes in food transportation and new food innovations, such as canning and refrigeration, made it seem as though food imports were new to England, but spices and foods had been arriving in England for thousands of years. C. Anne Wilson's *Food and Drink in Britain* illustrated a variety of outside influences on English food, beginning in the Stone Age and continuing with Roman and Norman conquests. Wilson remarked that the idea of a "pudding" was specific to the English/British, and was developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She commented that puddings were created to be "rich in fat and carbohydrates to keep out the cold, and in sugar and fruit to build up energy," but the ingredients filling these uniquely English/British puddings were in part coming from abroad—spices, sugar, and dried fruit were part of the trademark flavour, none of which were native to Great Britain.<sup>122</sup> Cookbooks, mass-publications and home-written recipes, also demonstrated the influence of foreign ingredients and recipes. Curries and chutneys (adapted versions different from those in India) first appeared in cookbooks in the eighteenth century. While it is difficult to know how many people were actually eating curry, the vast majority of nineteenth century cookbooks (including manuscript cookbooks, which would indicate at least some people were eating it) contain at least one, if not many, recipes for different types of curries, mulligatawny soup, and homemade chutneys. Cookery manuscripts also contained recipes for homemade curry powder, suggesting that some may have been following the advice of popular cookbooks to make their own for fear of adulteration. A mid-nineteenth century English recipe book found in the Wellcome Library included a detailed recipe for curry powder provided by Miss(?) Hudson, another different recipe for curry powder, a recipe for chutney from Mrs Tabbitt(?), and a recipe

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<sup>122</sup> C. Anne Wilson, *Food & Drink in Britain: from the Stone Age to recent times*, (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1973), 321.

“To Make Red Chutnie” from D. Reuton.<sup>123</sup> Mrs Turnbull’s recipe collection of loose notes and letters from the mid-nineteenth century also contained multiple recipes for curries and curry powder, from different dates and locations. One was noted as “an excellent receipt for curry powder,” and another, different recipe, recorded as “a more general recipe for making good curries.”<sup>124</sup>

### **Cleanliness, Kitchens, & Cookery Education**

A housewife could potentially control where her food came from—trusted sources or homemade—but the worry over cleanliness was linked to the physical structure and location of the kitchen itself, something the majority of people could not control. Flanders illustrated that while there was an ideal Victorian kitchen, a separate, clean space for food preparation, the reality was that most kitchens were in dark and damp basements, and would be lucky to have a small window, if at all.<sup>125</sup> In *Demons of Domesticity*, Anne Clendinning has argued that any evidence of cooking, including the labour or smells involved, was removed from the main part of a house “in an effort to preserve the image of efficient domestic perfection.”<sup>126</sup> Poor light and poor ventilation led to a less than perfect, that is, dirty, cooking environment. With less control over the position of the kitchen in the house, cookery took the blame for being unclean, when it was quite possible that much of the problem stemmed from a bigger issue. *Household Cookery*, from 1855, argued that the English did not want “spoiled” or “dirty” produce, “yet we still

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<sup>123</sup> English Recipe Book, 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wellcome Library Collection, MS 7835.

<sup>124</sup> Mrs Turnbull, Recipe Collection, 19<sup>th</sup> century, Wellcome Library Collection, MS 5853/94-95.

<sup>125</sup> Flanders, 63-64.

<sup>126</sup> Anne Clendinning, *Demons of Domesticity: Women and the English Gas Industry, 1889-1939*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 24.

continue to build houses with the kitchens underground, dark and dreary.”<sup>127</sup> *Household Cookery* asked, “How is it possible for a person to cook a good dinner in these vile places?”<sup>128</sup> Obviously with difficulty, considering the stress placed on cleanliness and proper ways to clean. Mrs Beeton advised housewives to consider “that cleanliness in the kitchen gives health and happiness to home, whilst economy will immeasurably assist in preserving them.”<sup>129</sup> Mrs Beeton tied together all of the concerns of her middle class readers: cleanliness and economy. In the article, “Who is to Blame for English Cookery?” the author concluded that one of the faults for poor cookery was due to the kitchen, which was “usually swarming with beetles,” and contained a large open fire that was very difficult to control, rendering it impossible “to produce good cookery.”<sup>130</sup>

In her study of the Victorian kitchen, Alison Ravetz asserts that the coal-burning range of the Victorian kitchen was popular because it could accommodate roasting, and newer inventions were often dismissed because they did not leave room to roast meat in the traditional way. The “combination range” (oven and water boiler) allowed for roasting, but was not efficient at “slow, controlled stewing,” which could be one explanation why it was perceived that the English did not cook soups and stews.<sup>131</sup> Ravetz argues that certain inventions touched on a “psychological” nerve; the lack of a roasting facility was an insult to traditional English cooking, but also certain styles were a reminder of working class environments that the middle class did not want in their homes.<sup>132</sup> Chef Alexis Soyer invented a variety of kitchen gadgets and ideas for the middle-class kitchen, but his model family kitchens were unrealized. Ravetz has commented that the only real

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<sup>127</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1855), 52.

<sup>128</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 52.

<sup>129</sup> Mrs Beeton, *Book of Household Management*, <http://www.mrsbeeton.com/03-chapter3.html> (accessed January 30, 2013).

<sup>130</sup> J. Muter, “Who is to Blame for English Cookery?” *The Food Journal*, March 1, 1871, pp. 58-59.

<sup>131</sup> Alison Ravetz, “The Victorian Coal Kitchen and Its Reformers,” *Victorian Studies* 11: 4 (1968): 437.

<sup>132</sup> Ravetz, 439, 448.



planning for the kitchens was that they “should be as remote as possible from the rest of the house,” and that the quality of the kitchen stayed the same for most of the nineteenth century.<sup>133</sup>

Ravetz also has noted that the desire to modify cooking methods to work with the coal range “must have left an effect upon the domestic cuisine,” and the anxiety about English cookery implies this was the case.<sup>134</sup> The need to preserve roasting as a cooking method was one reason that there was little change in the middle class kitchen of the nineteenth century, and this only added to the perceived problems with English cooking.

Clendinning’s study of women and the gas industry posits a number of reasons for the slow transition to gas fuel, and how the gas industry used women to help promote the use of gas for cooking. While gas stoves were available in the mid-nineteenth century, gas carried a dangerous reputation. The fact that it was potentially explosive and lethal contributed to “the perception that food cooked in a gas stove was equally poisonous.”<sup>135</sup> Doreen Yarwood has also commented that throughout the nineteenth century, as various inventors experimented with gas cooking, the public resisted using gas, because they thought it was dangerous and that the fumes would be detrimental to the food.<sup>136</sup> Clendinning has written that it was hard to change the negative beliefs surrounding the use of gas cookers. The concern that cooking with gas might be poisonous further demonstrated the anxiety around food, cooking, safety, and cleanliness. It also illustrated another area where the English seemed to fear change or something new, as Ravetz pointed out how new stoves (such as gas) did not allow for proper roasting. Clendinning’s study examines the increased popularity of gas after the 1880s; before the 1880s, the introduction of gas cookers would have coincided with food adulteration. Fears that gas could cause poisonous

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<sup>133</sup> Ravetz, 449.

<sup>134</sup> Ravetz, 452.

<sup>135</sup> Clendinning, 40.

<sup>136</sup> Doreen Yarwood, *The British Kitchen: Housewifery since Roman Times*, (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1981), 95.

foods were being expressed at the same time as fears about potentially buying poisonous foods, which may have contributed to the difficulty of dismissing anxiety about using gas. The gas industry used exhibitions in the 1880s, such as the International Health Exhibition in 1884, to promote “a positive public image of gas as reliable, affordable and safe.”<sup>137</sup> Even though gas cooking was a cleaner method, it was necessary to advertise gas as safe and clean to remove any perceptions of poison. There was a difference between a clean cooker and a safe one, as the industry focused more instruction on how to clean gas cookers and cook efficiently, rather than on how to use the stoves safely. As Clendinning stated, “having a spotless cooker offered no guarantee against an explosion,” a point which further demonstrated the significance of cleanliness and cookery for the middle class.<sup>138</sup>

However, Yarwood has argued that the only real difference in cooking machinery was that the heat source was now gas, rather than coal, and there were no physical improvements in the kitchen ranges. Even without producing soot, the kitchen ranges were still difficult to clean and unattractive, and it was not until after the First World War, when there were fewer domestic servants, that new smaller, easier to clean ranges were introduced into the mainstream.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, that did not stop cookbooks and gas cooker manufacturers from promoting gas as the better cooking option.<sup>140</sup> *The “Main” Cookery Book* from 1900 was essentially an advertisement for “Main” brand gas cookers that celebrated the use of gas cooking in the home. According to this cookbook, the gas stove was easier for cooks and servants because there was “no carrying up coal, no setting the fire, kindling the wood, nor raking out ashes and cleaning

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<sup>137</sup> Clendinning, 58.

<sup>138</sup> Clendinning, 88.

<sup>139</sup> Yarwood, 97-100.

<sup>140</sup> For example, see Miss Helen Edden and Mrs N. Moser, *The Household Gas Cookery Book*, (London: Gas Publications, 1908).

flues.”<sup>141</sup> Using “Main” gas cookers meant “economy of fuel, comfort, cleanliness; for by its help cooking can be made a real blessing, and should no longer be a drudgery.”<sup>142</sup> English cookery had suffered because it was not using gas cooking; apparently now gas cooking would save English food. While gas cooking might have been a first step (at the very least for dismissing earlier prejudices), Ravetz has pointed out that gas cookers did not fully replace coal until well into the twentieth century.

Another important development that affected English food was the establishment of schools of cookery in the 1870s, and an emphasis on cooking as a subject within elementary schools. Cooking schools had been recommended throughout the century; in 1845, Acton advocated that schools would help cooks much more than the “un-useful matters so frequently bestowed on them by charitable educationists.”<sup>143</sup> In agreement with Acton, *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping* proposed teaching cookery by apprenticeship, treating cooking like any other “art.”<sup>144</sup> The 1873 International Exhibition contained a cookery school, run by J.C. Buckmaster, and its popularity led to the establishment of the National Training School for Cookery in South Kensington, London. Cities throughout Great Britain subsequently followed suit, opening their own cookery schools. The schools offered instructions for aspiring cooking teachers, who could then teach cooking in elementary schools, hospitals, and the military.<sup>145</sup> Clendinning notes that Buckmaster emphasized “the importance of cleanliness” for the home and used a gas cooker for his demonstrations.<sup>146</sup> Many of the cookbooks published after the establishment of cookery schools were written by teachers or by representatives for the school

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<sup>141</sup> “Cordon Rouge,” *The “Main” Cookery Book*, (London & Glasgow: R. & A. Main, Limited, 1900), 3.

<sup>142</sup> *The “Main” Cookery Book*, 32.

<sup>143</sup> Acton, xi.

<sup>144</sup> *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping*, 118.

<sup>145</sup> Yuriko Akiyama, *Feeding the Nation: Nutrition and Health in Britain before World War One*, (2008), 2.

<sup>146</sup> Clendinning, 16.

board, who specified on the title page and in the preface their training and qualifications.

Attending a cooking school added a further element of authority that was recognized throughout society.

The cookbooks written by cooking school graduates combined and emphasized the domestic values that had been the focus during cookery debates—cleanliness, economy, and efficiency. The words of Smiles return in the lessons found throughout the cookbooks, which stressed cleanliness and economy as the key to a happy home. Even politicians had opinions about English cookery. In May 1878, a variety of newspapers reported on Mr Gladstone, then leader of the opposition, attending a cooking class at the South Kensington School of Cookery. After the demonstration Gladstone spoke on his thoughts about English cookery, commenting that some of it was commendable, but compared with other countries, the English were the “most wasteful people on earth.”<sup>147</sup> However, Gladstone continued that everything at the cooking school was presented “beautifully, with such nice apparatus, everything is kept separate and scrupulously clean,” and even though not all of “our countrymen” have these conditions, the cooking lessons could be applied to all communities.<sup>148</sup>

In 1879, Catherine M. Buckton, member of the Leeds School Board, compiled *Food and Home Cookery: A Course of Instruction in Practical Cookery and Cleaning, for Children in Elementary Schools*. The book was grouped into various lessons on cookery, with the goal of offering “practical instruction” at home, in order that the girls could practice what they learned at school.<sup>149</sup> Buckton emphasized the intention of this book of cookery was “to induce a love of

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<sup>147</sup> “Mr Gladstone on Cookery,” *The London Standard*, May 2, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> “Mr Gladstone on Cookery.”

<sup>149</sup> Catherine M. Buckton, *Food and Home Cookery A Course of Instruction in Practical Cookery and Cleaning, for Children in Elementary Schools*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1879), v.

cleanliness, personal neatness, and order,” while teaching students how to cook.<sup>150</sup> Buckton also outlined that the Leeds School Board hoped to open eight new cookery centres, but in the meantime, cookery classes were taught in a regular classroom with a portable gas-stove. She stressed the importance of proper ventilation when working with a gas-stove, and that this was taught to the students, but she acknowledged that a gas-stove was not a viable option for all cooking centres where an “open kitchen-range” would be an acceptable alternative.<sup>151</sup> *The Leeds Mercury* reported that the Schools of Cookery were “doing their part” to help improve English cookery, especially for the working classes.<sup>152</sup> The newspaper hoped the schools would teach students how to cook economically and nutritiously.

Cookbooks contained specific instructions and emphasis on cleaning utensils, saucepans, and ovens. Recipes also included the added instruction to make sure both tools and produce were clean before use, a further indication of the importance of cleanliness and the anxiety that society was not cooking cleanly. If cookbooks demonstrated social change, the added direction to check that items were clean exemplified the desire for cleanliness and a perception that it was not occurring within the kitchen. In other words, ensuring that products were clean before use should have been an obvious task, something that did not need to be stated as part of the instructions. However, its inclusion illustrated the belief that cleanliness was lacking and needed to be taught. The *National Health Society’s Penny Cookery Book* by Edith A. Barnett, former instructor at the Edinburgh School of Cookery, stressed that pans must be clean before cooking, arguing that “a saucepan dirty inside spoils your cookery; a saucepan dirty outside wastes fuel, because it does not boil so soon as it would if it were bright.”<sup>153</sup> Dirt was both unclean and

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<sup>150</sup> Buckton, v.

<sup>151</sup> Buckton, vii.

<sup>152</sup> *The Leeds Mercury*, September 29, 1879.

<sup>153</sup> Edith A. Barnett, *National Health Society’s Penny Cookery Book*, (London: Allman & Son, 1880), 3.

inefficient because it slowed down the cooking process and used more energy. *Margaret Sim's Cookery* added a note at the end of its recipe for "Roast Sirloin of Beef" that stated the "dripping-pan should be kept very clean; it should be washed and dried thoroughly every time it is used."<sup>154</sup> Cleaning pans after use might seem self-evident today, but was perceived to be a necessary instruction in the late-nineteenth century. A large poster-board called *50 Things to Be Remembered in the Kitchen* (1906) by Mrs W.T. Greenup, an examiner at the South Kensington School of Cookery, also contained lessons in cleanliness and familiar expressions for being efficient (for example, "waste not, want not"). The first "thing to be remembered" was that "a dirty stove spoils a clean kitchen, and makes dinner late," a sentiment that combined a desire for cleanliness with efficiency and concern for time.<sup>155</sup> Number fifty included the statement to "remember that there is no place for dirt except the dust-bin."<sup>156</sup> This poster-board contained a string at the top, indicating it was likely intended to be hung on the wall in the kitchen.

Cookery schools also attempted to include new immigrants in their cooking school project. The *Jewish Cookery Book* was created for use within the London School Board by Miss M.A.S. Tattersall, a Superintendent of Cookery, School Board for London. The book was dedicated to Mrs Hermann Adler, and Adler reviewed the book, remarking that it followed the Jewish dietary code and would be beneficial to Jewish students in Board Schools.<sup>157</sup> However, other than instructions on how to keep kosher, which was noted as "revised by a Jewish lady," and a section on Passover recipes, the *Jewish Cookery Book* was very similar to all other school cookbooks. There might not be recipes that used pork products, but there were recipes for Irish

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<sup>154</sup> *Margaret Sim's Cookery*, Introduction By L.B. Walford, (Glasgow and Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co., London: Houlston & Sons, 1879), 99.

<sup>155</sup> Mrs W.T. Greenup, *50 Things to Be Remembered in the Kitchen*, (London: Marcus Ward & Co., [1906]).

<sup>156</sup> Mrs W.T. Greenup.

<sup>157</sup> Miss M.A.S. Tattersall, *Jewish Cookery Book*, (London: Wertheimer, Lea & Co., 1895), Letter from Rachel Adler to Miss Tattersall, printed inside.

stew, Cornish pasties, plum pudding, and curries. This cookbook was more of an attempt to assimilate Jewish students to English cooking than a celebration of traditional Eastern-European Jewish cooking—which might otherwise be expected, given the origin of the majority of London’s Jewish population in the 1890s. Despite negativity toward the mass of immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe in the late-nineteenth century, quite a few cookbooks recommended aspects of Jewish cooking, particularly because of its cleanliness, similar to comments made earlier in the century. In *Meats and Game*, the fifth book in the series of cookbooks by the *Queen* newspaper, the author noted that she(?) “confesses” to following the Jewish system of washing meat, and that readers should “note that their longevity and general freedom from epidemics is held to be due to their sanitary care in the matter of food.”<sup>158</sup>

Cleanliness continued to be the focus of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cookbooks, which highlighted the need for cleanliness in the home, for servants, food, and new appliances. In *Cookery for Working Men’s Wives*, Martha H. Gordon, who held a “first class diploma” in cookery, stressed the importance of using “a *clean* pot” for stewing.<sup>159</sup> The introduction to this cookbook by Dr James B. Russell exhibited Victorian Evangelical values, stating that a “good cook” must be “cleanly” and that “a knowledge of cookery” was “a cardinal domestic virtue.”<sup>160</sup> Russell also wrote that the “good cook” would be “thrifty,” “methodical,” and “religious.”<sup>161</sup> *The Home Cookery Book* from 1909 declared that the cook needed to “possess a natural regard for cleanliness, otherwise no amount of training will render her cleanly” and recommended firing any cook who was found to be “untidy” because this was

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<sup>158</sup> S. Beaty-Pownall, *No. 5. Meats and Game, The “Queen” Cookery Books*, Second Edition, (London: Horace Cox, 1902), 29.

<sup>159</sup> Martha H. Gordon, *Cookery for Working Men’s Wives*, (London: Alexander Gardner, [1888]), 4. Emphasis in original.

<sup>160</sup> Dr James B. Russell, *Cookery for Working Men’s Wives*, 8.

<sup>161</sup> Dr James B. Russell, *Cookery for Working Men’s Wives*, 9-11.

“incurable.”<sup>162</sup> Significantly, this text implied that cleanliness was a natural characteristic that could not be taught, while concurrently cookbooks were offering suggestions for cleaning and stressing the importance of cleanliness. It might have been possible to teach readers how to clean utensils, but much more difficult to teach readers to be clean themselves, despite the repeated use of the word “clean” throughout texts. *The Home Cookery Book* seemed to counter cookbooks claims as problem solvers for bad English cookery, suggesting that cooks either were inherently clean or they were not.

Other cookbooks recommended new appliances because they were perceived to be cleaner alternatives. Louisa Rochfort, author of *The St. James's Cookery Book* from 1894, promoted a “dough-making machine,” which could be found at “Kent’s, High Holborn.”<sup>163</sup> This early bread machine was “easy, quick, cleanly, and certain,” and Rochfort stated it was “of extreme cleanliness” because it was unnecessary to use hands to make the bread.<sup>164</sup> *The Household Gas Cookery Book* from 1908 emphasized the benefits of using gas cookers, stating that gas stoves were more efficient, more economical, and cleaner than other fuels, such as coal.<sup>165</sup> Aside from gas cooking, the “fireless cooker” or “cooking-box” was also promoted as a cleaner, practical new invention for cooking. *The Everyday Economical Cookery Book* published in 1913 declared the “fireless cooker” as “first rank” after gas stoves, and listed cleanliness and efficiency as some of its advantages.<sup>166</sup> The “fireless cooker” was also known as a “hay box;” it worked similarly to today’s slow cooker, by placing hot foods inside the insulated “cooker,” which would slowly cook the food over a number of hours, leaving the cook time to

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<sup>162</sup> Collins’ Useful Books, *The Home Cookery Book*, (London: Collins’, [1909]), 9-10.

<sup>163</sup> Louisa Rochfort, *The St. James's Cookery Book*, (London: Chapman and Hall, LD., 1894), 57.

<sup>164</sup> Rochfort, 57.

<sup>165</sup> Miss Helen Edden and Mrs N. Moser, *The Household Gas Cookery Book*, (London: Gas Publications, [1908]), 3.

<sup>166</sup> A.T.K., *The Everyday Economical Cookery Book*, (London: Stanley Paul & Co., [1913]), preface. See also, Constance C. Radcliffe Cooke, *The Cooking-Box How to Make and Use it*, (London: National Society’s Depository, 1917).



attend other “household duties.”<sup>167</sup> New methods of cooking were even satirized in popular music. For example, the song “Paper-bag Cookery” made fun of this method, with a husband singing about how his wife used newsprint as the paper, “where the print boils off and comes out on the grub.”<sup>168</sup> Using a newspaper would not be the cleanest of methods for cooking, which added to the satirical nature of the rhyming lyrics. New cooking tools were marketed as clean, and then because they were considered clean, they were advertised as efficient. Cleanliness was believed to lead to efficiency and economy.

### **War Economy & Post-War Cleanliness**

While cleanliness was still a concern in the 1910s, World War I forced cookbooks to stress cooking as thriftily as possible, especially since imported foods were no longer as easily accessible. By the beginning of the First World War, food imports were a significant source of British food. Avner Offer has argued that Britain supplanted “home-grown calories with imported ones and ran down farming to build trade,” and that this trade was essential to Britain’s “prosperity.”<sup>169</sup> In the decade before the war, there was real concern and discussion about what would happen to the food supply if Britain went to war.<sup>170</sup> Perren notes that by 1914, 40 per cent of meat was imported into Britain, and Offer asserts that almost 60 per cent of all food came from abroad.<sup>171</sup> In her memoir, cookery writer Florence White recalled writing an article for the *Edinburgh Evening News*, commenting that “if ever England were involved in a great continental war, the food question would be the crux of the situation, and the woman who could make a meal

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<sup>167</sup> A.T.K., preface.

<sup>168</sup> Percy Edgar and Henry E. Pether, “Paper-bag Cookery,” (London: Francis, Day, & Hunter, 1911).

<sup>169</sup> Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 81.

<sup>170</sup> Offer, chapter 15.

<sup>171</sup> Perren, 216; Offer, 219.

for two out of the allowance for one would be worth her weight in gold.”<sup>172</sup> Food was at the heart of the situation, with cookbook authors coming up with new recipes for wartime life.

With a decline in imported foods during the war, diet and food consumption needed to be re-evaluated, and cookbook authors took it upon themselves to promote the best cookery for the war effort. *How to Save Money in War Time* produced as a “Handbook for Housewives” by the National Food Economy League in 1915 emphasized the “great national responsibility” of cooking efficiently and economically.<sup>173</sup> The handbook stated that everyone could do their part in the war effort, with wealthier people “eating less” and “poorer folk” learning new methods to choose food and cook “**to the best possible advantage**.”<sup>174</sup> The handbook suggested replacing meat with lentils or beans and provided economical recipes, such as “**Delicious Soup made of materials usually thrown away**.”<sup>175</sup> *A Yorkshire Cookery Book* compiled by Mary Milnes Gaskell was published as a fundraiser for the Women’s Patriotic Guild, which assisted the war effort by making clothes for soldiers. In her introduction, Gaskell wrote how she hoped to help raise money, but also wanted to publish a cookery book that could be used where “economy is studied.”<sup>176</sup> The recipes in this book were donated from a variety of sources, including the National Food Economy League. Gaskell also noted some dishes as being “quite economical.”<sup>177</sup>

Cookbooks focused on the principle of cooking “without;” without fat, without meat, without eggs. *The Star Cookery without Eggs* was entirely devoted to cooking without eggs,

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<sup>172</sup> Florence White, *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1938), 247.

<sup>173</sup> National Food Economy League, *How to Save Money in War Time*, (London: [1915]), 3.

<sup>174</sup> National Food Economy League, 3. Emphasis in original.

<sup>175</sup> National Food Economy League, 23-24. Emphasis in original.

<sup>176</sup> Mary Milnes Gaskell, *A Yorkshire Cookery Book*, (Wakefield: Sanderson & Clayton, [1916]), 4.

<sup>177</sup> Gaskell, 35.

including a Christmas plum pudding.<sup>178</sup> Cornmeal was stressed as a good replacement for wheat, and in *Patriotism and Plenty*, Flora Guest emphasized that the more readers asked for cornmeal the more it urged the “Colonies” to harvest corn.<sup>179</sup> Her recipe for “war bread” called for “two pounds of cornmeal.”<sup>180</sup> Kate Wingfield, editor of *The Meatless Cookery Book* devoted a whole chapter to cooking with maize. May Byron’s *How-To-Save* cookbook provided advice on economy throughout the home. She listed all of the foods at a prohibitive price, including fish, eggs, cheese, meat, vegetables, sugar, and flour. She recommended using tinned fish, tinned milk, tinned produce, and egg and custard powders when possible. The chapter on meat dishes stated that it mainly uses “scraps and odds and ends,” but the recipes themselves were rather international and inventive.<sup>181</sup> African Babotie, Brazilian Stew, Curries, Spanish Dolmas, and Jamaican Fritters were examples of ways to use scraps of cold meat. Mrs C.S. Peel’s *The Victory Cookery Book* offered advice on “the art of making do” and to educate those who now needed to “cook under circumstances which they have not formerly experienced.”<sup>182</sup> Mrs Peel stressed that there was nothing “to be proud of in waste or extravagance.”<sup>183</sup> Mrs Peel also provided recipes that used tinned products, as well as international dishes, and meat dishes that used only a little meat.

Mrs Peel offered a recipe for “War Christmas Pudding,” a topic that was also discussed in the periodical *Home Cookery & Comforts*. The November 1915 issue recommended sending a rich plum pudding to the soldiers at war, and making an economical one for the family at home. The Christmas recipes eaten at home could remove all of the expensive ingredients, but to ensure

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<sup>178</sup> *The Star Cookery without Eggs*, (London: The Daily News, Ltd., [1916]), 8.

<sup>179</sup> Flora Guest, *Patriotism and Plenty: A Cook Book for War Time & All Time*, (London: John Lane, [1917]), 19.

<sup>180</sup> Guest, 23.

<sup>181</sup> May Byron, *How-To-Save*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1918]), 51.

<sup>182</sup> Mrs. C.S. Peel, *The Victory Cookery Book*, (London: John Lane, [1918]), 3.

<sup>183</sup> Peel, *The Victory Cookery Book* 174.

“Tommy” received “*his* share of Christmas cheer” it was imperative to use expensive materials to keep it preserved for the journey.<sup>184</sup> A recipe from the August 1915 issue recommended sending soldiers fruit cake because it would keep the best. An article in *The Grantham Journal* from November 1917 described a “patriotic plum pudding” made by the king’s chefs and sponsored by the Ministry of Food. The article stated that “it was almost impossible to discern that grated carrot, chopped apples, and only a modicum of sultanas” were used instead of the large quantity of dried fruit usually required, but during war-time the dried fruit was too expensive and hard to find.<sup>185</sup> Plum pudding manufacturers advertised their plum puddings as economical because they were able to make them in mass quantities. For example, the article “A Christmas Problem Solved” recommended purchasing “Aunt Ann’s Plum Puddings” as an economical solution for use at home or to send to soldiers.<sup>186</sup>

Cooking school graduates not only offered lessons through cookbooks, but they also used the schools during the war to instruct communities how to cook economically and efficiently as part of the war effort. In October 1915, *The Bath Chronicle* reported on the cookery lecture and food exhibit given at Bath Guildhall. The mayor spoke at the public meeting, and the article recounted the mayor’s insistence on the importance of “national economy.”<sup>187</sup> The lecture argued that it was necessary to stop relying on food imports, especially of meat, because the food was needed to feed soldiers. One of the women who spoke, Miss Hughes from the Glamorgan County Council, called for a “revolution” in English homes.<sup>188</sup> She stated that English homes were “backward” and “behind” other countries, and recommended English women learned to

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<sup>184</sup> “For the Soldier’s Christmas,” *Home Cookery and Comforts*, No. 268, Vol. XX (November 1915), 321. Emphasis in original.

<sup>185</sup> “Patriotic Plum Pudding,” *The Grantham Journal*, November 10, 1917, p. 7.

<sup>186</sup> “A Christmas Problem Solved,” *Western Daily Press*, November 13, 1916, p. 3.

<sup>187</sup> “War Time Cookery,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, October 16, 1915, p. 7.

<sup>188</sup> “War Time Cookery,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*.

cook using the hay-box.<sup>189</sup> Miss Hughes stated that “Englishwomen had not learned how to cook” and a variety of suggestions were provided to the audience for war time cookery.<sup>190</sup> The Reverend Shickle spoke and advised the audience to attend the cookery classes that were offered throughout the city. Miss King, Principal of the Training School for Cookery, displayed war time dishes for those in attendance to sample.

In the spring of 1917, a food economy campaign led to an increase in cookery demonstrations across England and Scotland. *The Manchester Evening News* reported in April 1917 that the War Savings and Food Control Committees had established new sub-committees to help “with the campaign to encourage food economy;” part of the effort was to provide “central kitchens” and cooking demonstrations.<sup>191</sup> *The Luton News and Bedfordshire Chronicle* reported that the “Food Economy Exhibition” would be held daily in the town hall and Miss M. Clubb, who held multiple first-class diplomas, was providing lectures with demonstrations every day.<sup>192</sup> The notice listed the demonstration subjects, including substituting wheat flour, rationing meat, and “kitchen economies.”<sup>193</sup> In May 1917, *The Aberdeen Evening Express* noted that the Aberdeen School of Domestic Science was providing demonstrations of war time cookery; one cookery lesson was about “Economical Ways of Using Potatoes,” and the newspaper wrote that it was well attended.<sup>194</sup> A few weeks later, in June 1917, the same Aberdeen newspaper reported that Miss Gordon, an instructor of cookery from Gordon’s College Technical School, gave a war time cookery demonstration at the Echt Central School.<sup>195</sup> Miss Gordon’s lesson was also described as being well attended. Also in June, *The Tamworth Herald* reported on the food

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<sup>189</sup> “War Time Cookery,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*.

<sup>190</sup> “War Time Cookery,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*.

<sup>191</sup> “Food Economy Campaign,” *The Manchester Evening News*, April 19, 1917, p. 3.

<sup>192</sup> “Luton War Savings Committee. Food Economy Campaign,” *The Luton News and Bedfordshire Chronicle*, May 17, 1917, p. 4.

<sup>193</sup> “Luton War Savings Committee. Food Economy Campaign,” *The Luton News and Bedfordshire Chronicle*.

<sup>194</sup> “War-Time Cookery,” *The Aberdeen Evening Express*, May 31, 1917, p. 3.

<sup>195</sup> “War-Time Cookery,” *The Aberdeen Evening Express*, June 20, 1917, p. 3.

economy campaign and war time cookery exhibitions held in Tamworth. Miss E. Oates, domestic subjects teacher for the Staffordshire County Council, demonstrated how to cook using a hay-box and “one-pot cookery.”<sup>196</sup> Teachers and cooking school graduates helped promote national economy during war time, and demonstrated at exhibitions throughout the country on how to cook economically.

Post-World War I cookbooks maintained a focus on economy, efficiency, and cleanliness, continuing the lessons they perceived to have been learned during the war. Despite considering themselves “modern,” many of the observations made by cookbook authors were similar to the ones made about English cookery seventy-five years earlier. *Household Economies with Economical Recipes* (1920), published by the Leeds Education Committee, was devoted to thrift, avoidance of waste, and economical foods and cooking methods. After the war, Mrs Peel published *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, stating that during the Great War “many of us became very clever.”<sup>197</sup> She argued that the nation cooked better after the war than before it, because now the British have learned the true meaning of cooking economically. Mrs Peel also discussed the “kitchen of the future,” that would be well-lit, well-ventilated, and kept clean, free of dirt and dust-collecting items.<sup>198</sup> She recommended a large double sink instead of square-shaped sinks, which were hard to clean. Any furniture would be placed on wheels, so it could be moved to allow for cleaning underneath. All shelves would be at height that allowed for easy cleaning. Mrs Peel stated that “in the ideal kitchen and larder, dirt, flies, mice and beetles will never feel at home.”<sup>199</sup> Her descriptions of the model kitchen sounded desirable, but, as she admitted, were also still an item for the “future.” Florence A. George’s *Manual of*

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<sup>196</sup> “War-Time Cookery,” *The Tamworth Herald*, June 23, 1917, p. 3.

<sup>197</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, Third Edition, (London: Associated Newspapers, 1919), introduction.

<sup>198</sup> Peel, *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, 1-3.

<sup>199</sup> Peel, *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, 2.

*Cookery* from 1921 also described the design and function of the kitchen. The cookbook stated that the kitchen “should be bright and well-ventilated,” with tile or linoleum flooring, and the walls “hung with sanitary paper and varnished.”<sup>200</sup> In *A Household Book*, edited by Blanche L. Leigh, she wrote that “health, temper, happiness, all are controlled (more than we as a nation realise) by the kitchen.”<sup>201</sup> Clean kitchens were considered the key to happy homes and efficient cookery, but since these cookbooks needed to explain cleanliness to their readers, kitchens and cookery were still perceived to be suffering in the dark.

Published in 1921, *Cookery Simplified* offered cooking instructions to its readers, “school girls,” nurses, and housewives.<sup>202</sup> Its author, Mabel Baker, was a graduate of the National Training School of Cookery. Under the heading “Important Points on Cookery,” Baker began by stating “wash the hands,” demonstrating how important cleanliness was for cooking.<sup>203</sup> Baker also included the point that everything should be washed after use, bookending her “important points” with cleanliness, of person and of utensils. *The Mrs Alan Breck Recipe Book* published by grocery store company Cooper & Co. explained that some of the recipes in the cookbook focused on economy. Recipes also included instructions on cleaning; for example, the recipe for “Ayrshire Shortbread” specified that readers should “scrub the hands very clean and flour them.”<sup>204</sup> In the third installment of “The Concise Series of Practical Housecraft,” the “general rules” listed at the beginning focused on cleanliness and avoiding dirt when cooking.<sup>205</sup> The first rule stated that cooks should be “clean in person and dress” and to “make sure that hands and nails are quite clean.”<sup>206</sup> After the rules for being a clean person were the rules for keeping a

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<sup>200</sup> Florence A. George, *Manual of Cookery*, (London: Arnold, 1921), 5.

<sup>201</sup> Blanche L. Leigh, *A Household Book*, (Leeds: N.G. Morrison, [1918]), foreword.

<sup>202</sup> Mabel Baker, *Cookery Simplified*, (Bristol: J.W. Arrowsmith, 1921), introduction.

<sup>203</sup> Baker, 9.

<sup>204</sup> *The Mrs Alan Breck Recipe Book*, (Glasgow: Cooper & Co., 1921), 122.

<sup>205</sup> “The Concise Series of Practical Housecraft,” No. 3, “Cookery,” (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1925), 4.

<sup>206</sup> “The Concise Series of Practical Housecraft,” 4.

clean kitchen, keeping utensils clean, and cleaning up at the end of the meal. Published in 1929, *The Young Cook's Recipe Book* by Lilian Gibb also provided instructions for cooking students in its preface. Of the three items listed, the first two dealt with cleanliness, stating that “cleanliness and attention to the recipe are essential to good cookery” and that all utensils and ingredients needed to be clean before use.<sup>207</sup> The inclusion of instructions to be clean as a person and to be clean while cooking illustrated the perception that English cookery had been unclean and that it was always necessary to explain to cooks the importance of cleanliness.

Cookbooks in the 1920s also worried about chemical additives and food adulteration, concerns which mimicked the earlier worries of the mid-nineteenth century. *Cookery Gossip* from 1922 discussed the importance of consuming only high quality products. The author wrote that “meat, fruit, fish, butter, milk, even eggs, and a host of other things are treated chemically” for preservation, which rendered them difficult to digest.<sup>208</sup> The author believed that chemically treated foods caused a number of health issues, including “bad tempers,” visits to the hospital, and at worst, surgery.<sup>209</sup> The author also stated that “the Jews were clean eaters,” demonstrating that the earlier perceptions of Jewish customs as clean continued into the twentieth century. The author went on to state that the laws against adulteration may have overcompensated, and mocked the efforts of sanitation inspectors by suggesting that creating “pure” ingredients ended up making them unrecognizable.<sup>210</sup> Under the “Shopping” section of the book, the author recommended specific markets and stores to purchase items. Describing an area of London’s West End, the author noted the variety of fruit, vegetables, and seafood available at the shops on Brewer Street. The author added that Francis Downman’s shop at No. 62 Dean Street was the

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<sup>207</sup> Lilian Gibb, *The Young Cook's Recipe Book*, (Glasgow: Blackie & Son Ltd., [1929]), preface.

<sup>208</sup> *Cookery Gossip*, (London: J.J. Keliher & Co., Ltd., 1922), 4.

<sup>209</sup> *Cookery Gossip*, 5.

<sup>210</sup> *Cookery Gossip*, 5.



place to find wine and liqueur “made in the old-fashioned way from grapes, rather than the chemist-shop preparations sold by grocers.”<sup>211</sup> The observations made by the author of *Cookery Gossip* indicated a continuing concern with the quality of English products and cookery.

Cookbooks on fruit and the preservation of fruit further demonstrated the importance of cleanliness and the need to avoid chemicals. In September 1915, *Home Cookery and Comforts* discussed how to bottle fruit without sugar, because of the high cost of sugar during the war.<sup>212</sup> In May Byron’s war time cookbook, she also recommended bottling fruit at home, which she explained was “exceedingly cheap and useful.”<sup>213</sup> After the war, cookbooks devoted to fruit continued to highlight the value of preserving fruit at home. *Fruit & Vegetable Bottling at Home*, published by Marshall’s School of Cookery in 1923, stressed the importance of cleanliness when preserving fruit and with regard to cooking more generally.<sup>214</sup> The first part of *Fruit and Health* by Haydn Brown recommended visiting Guernsey on holiday and noticing how healthy its residents appeared because fruit was grown in Guernsey. Brown wrote that rickets and other diseases were caused by a vitamin deficiency and that giving children fruit would help stop these illnesses. Brown also recommended eating fruit raw and to buy it in bulk, especially apples, to ensure the best price.<sup>215</sup>

Economy was still emphasized as the foundation of good cooking. *The Bazaar Cookery Book* published in 1923 by “A Practical Housewife” remarked in its preface that “economy and simplicity” were considered throughout the cookbook.<sup>216</sup> The preface also stated that the recipes were for “inexpensive, wholesome, and nutritious dishes,” combining the idea of frugality with

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<sup>211</sup> *Cookery Gossip*, 7.

<sup>212</sup> “Bottling Fruit without Sugar,” *Home Cookery and Comforts*, No. 266, Vol. XX (September 1915), 259.

<sup>213</sup> Byron, 200.

<sup>214</sup> *Fruit & Vegetable Bottling at Home*, (London: Marshall’s School of Cookery, [1923]), 3.

<sup>215</sup> Haydn Brown, *Fruit and Health*, (London: The Fruit Trades’ Federation, [1924]), 23-24.

<sup>216</sup> A Practical Housewife, *The Bazaar Cookery Book*, (London: “The Bazaar, Exchange & Mart” Office, 1923), preface.

wholesomeness.<sup>217</sup> Even though all the recipes were supposed to be economical, some recipes included in the cookbook specifically indicated that they were economical, such as a “Meat Pie” recipe, which stated “economical” beside it.<sup>218</sup> The combination of economy and simplicity was not unique to *The Bazaar Cookery Book*. *The Housewife’s Cookery Book* from 1925, with recipes collected by Miss M.K. Williamson, Cookery and Economy Director to the Y.M.C.A. Munitions Department during the War, asserted that the goal of the book was “Economy with Simplicity.”<sup>219</sup> Williamson wrote that society was “living in an age of progress” and that everybody was “striving to exercise the utmost economy.”<sup>220</sup> She demonstrated that her perceptions of progress did not challenge economy, but reinforced the need for living thriftily and efficiently. Nellie Fisher described her *The Reliable Cook Book* as “a really economical Cook-book which will satisfy the requirements of any ordinary housewife.”<sup>221</sup> Fisher was head of the Household Science Department, University College of Wales, and her recipes were influenced by her travels in Western Canada and the United States.

In the mid-nineteenth century, English cookery was perceived as “bad” and concerns over cookery embraced and intertwined with other Victorian values, such as cleanliness and economy, to present the case. English cookery was deemed unclean and an education in cleanliness was perceived as a possible solution to the cookery problem. Issues of food safety, beginning with the scandal of food adulteration, furthered anxiety about industrialization and urbanization. It also maintained the perception of insularity and prejudice against any new methods or “foreign” foods. English cookery’s negative perception challenged the creation of domestic respectability. Cleanliness, economy, and the home were connected to cookery

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<sup>217</sup> *The Bazaar Cookery Book*, preface.

<sup>218</sup> *The Bazaar Cookery Book*, 20.

<sup>219</sup> Miss M.K. Williamson, *The Housewife’s Cookery Book*, ([1925]), 7.

<sup>220</sup> Williamson, 7.

<sup>221</sup> Nellie Fisher, *The Reliable Cook Book*, (Aberystwyth: Sydney V. Galloway, [1924]), 3.

throughout the nineteenth century and into the interwar period. The sentiments of cookbook authors in the mid-nineteenth century were the same as those in the 1920s; good cookery led to a happy home and good cookery could only exist in a clean, efficient, and economical environment. Unfortunately, even as Mrs Peel hoped for a future kitchen, kitchens were still in dark basements at the beginning of the twentieth century, and innovations in cooking took a long time to spread to all homes.

## **Chapter 2: Gender and Food Production: The “Good Plain Cook,” the Housewife, and the Cookbook**

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a common, and positive, term to describe the cook in an English household was to refer to this person as the family’s “good plain cook.” Advertisements for “good plain cooks” appeared regularly in newspapers from the late-eighteenth century and a “good plain cook” continued to be deemed a required servant throughout the nineteenth century. Historian Sarah Freeman has explained that a “plain cook” was a cook that usually was not qualified to cook French cuisine.<sup>1</sup> The “good plain cook” almost always referred to a female cook, and increasingly, the “good plain cook” came to be seen as an ideal figure. In the eighteenth century, English cookery was celebrated for its “plainness,” and a “good plain cook” was therefore a cook who created good, honest, English food. However, the perception of English cookery changed throughout the nineteenth century, and “plain” English cookery came to be perceived as “bad,” which also changed the perception of the “good plain cook.” “Bad” English cookery was wasteful, dirty, and sometimes deceptive (that is, adulterated). The phrase “good plain cook” was still used as a descriptor for a family’s cook, but the definition became less clear. “Plain” was no longer as celebrated a culinary characteristic as it had been in the eighteenth century, and yet, the use of the phrase “good plain cook” persisted even into the twentieth century. With “plain” no longer considered a positive feature, the “good plain cook” was a confusing subject—how could a cook be both good and plain? Not only was the terminology unclear, but the cook herself was a contradictory figure. In 1850, Charles Dickens’s *Household Words* stated that “‘a good plain cook’—to judge from the unskilful manner in which domestic cookery is carried on throughout the length and breadth of the land—is a very great rarity. But the conventional and the true meaning of the expression widely

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Freeman, *Mutton and Oysters: The Victorians and their Food*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1989), 139.

differ.”<sup>2</sup> Dickens observed that there was both a problem with the cooks and their cooking *and* a problem with the term “good plain cook.”

By the mid-nineteenth century, Dickens’s observation was a common statement in the press and in published cookbooks. In many instances, the “good plain cook” was a working class woman, working for a middle class family, usually referred to by the common phrase of “good plain cook,” even if her cooking skills were neither good nor plain. In other cases, the cook was a middle class housewife, perhaps living outside of London, who may have aspired to, but did not fit into the stereotype of the middle class wife with multiple servants. The middle class housewife’s skills may also have been good or plain or neither, but she was not referred to as a “good plain cook.” In some cases, she was a cookbook author, at home, in the community, or for the mass market. Cookery manuscripts—recipes written at home and passed down from generation to generation—were another way middle class women demonstrated their involvement in the home. Manuscripts provide a glimpse into the transmission of cooking knowledge, and how, by the nineteenth century, cooking education was experienced through written cookbooks rather than through oral tradition. In the second half of the nineteenth century, cookbooks written by middle class women presented the housewife as a better cook than her working class counterpart; the housewife was an expert and an educator, often writing advice and recipes for the working class “good plain cook.” The middle class housewife-cook contributed to the perception of English cookery as “bad” and to the creation of the ideal, but non-existent “good plain cook,” by presenting herself as an authority figure in the field of cookery. Suggesting English cookery was “bad” created a need for her to write a cookbook and

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Dickens, “A good plain cook,” *Household Words*, May 4, 1850, p. 139. *Household Words* was a weekly periodical, edited by Dickens and included fiction and non-fiction (usually written anonymously).

offer her expertise on the subject, while also creating the perception that she had a “good plain cook” under her tutelage.

Whether “good plain cook” or middle class housewife, the nineteenth century cook was assumed to be female. This does not mean there were no male cooks, but that “cook” connoted female while “chef” usually meant male. The concern and anxiety over “bad” English food was tied to the struggle to find the best “good plain cook.” Women cooks were at the forefront of the debate about “bad” English food and as the ones actually involved in cooking it, they were involved in contributing to the perceived problem. In addition to changes in food production, food adulteration, and poor kitchens and equipment, the working class cook was identified by the middle class as one part of the “bad” English food problem and as part of middle class improvement schemes as something that could be fixed. By writing cookbooks, middle class women demonstrated, on the one hand, that they were not following the rules set by the middle class for the ideal domestic housewife, who theoretically directed, but did not participate in, the cookery activities; on the other hand, cookbooks were an extension of acceptable feminine writing and can be considered a part of the genre of improvement literature, something in which middle class women often took part. Both working women cooks and their middle class housewife-employers were blamed for “bad” English food, and middle class women, cooks or otherwise, attempted to fix this problem. Male chefs also took on this challenge as something they could solve and suggested ways housewives could become better educated and better educators for their cooks. The “good plain cook” was an ideal, a servant who would embody the nineteenth century desire for efficiency, economy, and cleanliness, with a high moral character. The middle class housewife was also an idealized figure, one who advocated these ideal characteristics for society.

## **Industrialization and Private and Public Spheres**

In many ways, the discussion of women and cookery focused on the housewife, and the stereotype of the middle class housewife was challenged by the discourse of bad cookery. In the 1970s, sociologist Ann Oakley defined the housewife and her role, as one that was created by industrialization and was specific to industrialized societies. Examining pre-industrial Britain, Oakley observed that in agriculture, women were responsible for creating the majority of food, from managing the dairy (milking cows, making butter and cheese) to baking bread, brewing beer and overseeing grains, farm animals, and gardens.<sup>3</sup> While women were in charge of food production, in most homes there was not a formal kitchen—cooking was done over the open fire that was the centre of the main room—and “housework remained integrated with the main work of the family,” rather than only done by women.<sup>4</sup> According to Oakley, it is clear women were involved in cooking and food production before industrialization, but it was not considered their sole occupation or a separate responsibility conducted specifically in the confines of the home. Oakley argued that it was industrialization that pushed women’s work deeper into the home and created housework and the housewife. Breaking down the process of industrialization and changes in women’s roles in society, Oakley reasoned that from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the factory fractured traditional family work environments, and then from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the First World War, it became less common for married women to work outside the home because it “was associated with the rising popularity

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<sup>3</sup> Ann Oakley, *Woman’s Work: The Housewife, Past and Present*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Oakley, 24.

of a belief in women's natural domesticity.”<sup>5</sup> Oakley has also suggested that middle-class housewives no longer worked and instead supervised the work of their servants; it was not until the twentieth century and the decline in domestic service that middle-class women were forced to do housework.<sup>6</sup> However, more recent scholarship has demonstrated that the middle-class housewife-supervisor was an ideal, and in fact, very few families were in that situation.<sup>7</sup> The majority of middle-class families belonged to the lower end of the economic group and had one maid, the all-encompassing “maid-of-all-work,” who worked side by side with her housewife-employer.

Oakley's argument contends that women were pushed into the home in the nineteenth century, creating a defined separate sphere. However, Amanda Vickery has challenged the idea that separate spheres were a product of or the definition of the nineteenth century. Vickery has argued that the dominance of literature discussing women and the public/private sphere suggests, rather, that women were clearly visible outside the home, challenging the idea that separate spheres reigned supreme.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, in her study of Isabella Beeton, Kathryn Hughes claims that “the Victorian middle-class home, far from being removed from the public sphere, was intimately connected with it. All those purchases of fans, pianos, and carpets drove the economy forward just as surely as the factory and workshop clattering far into the night.”<sup>9</sup> In defining “housewife,” Oakley comments that one of her main roles was as consumer.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, the concept of the public and private sphere was discussed at length in various texts throughout the nineteenth century, and creating a domestic space was part of the lesson of prescriptive texts

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<sup>5</sup> Oakley, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Oakley, 53.

<sup>7</sup> See, Kathryn Hughes, *The Short Life & Long Times of Mrs Beeton*; Patricia Branca, *Silent Sisterhood: Middle Class Women in the Victorian Home*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Amanda Vickery, “From Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History,” *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993): 401.

<sup>9</sup> Hughes, 248-249.

<sup>10</sup> Oakley, 3.



such as cookbooks; however, creating that domestic space also involved the housewife venturing out into the public. Moreover, in the case of food production, acquiring food became a more public activity than in the past, pre-industrial society. In urban centres, housewives were unlikely to grow their own produce, raise animals, bake bread, brew beer, milk cows, or make butter and cheese. These items were purchased. Cooking still happened within the home, and now within the defined space of the kitchen (usually in dank basements), but the ingredients that filled the kitchen were no longer from the extended domestic space of the backyard. Instead, they came from butchers, bakers, grocers, and markets, places that catered to domestic life, but were part of the public sphere. The housewife was both a consumer, by purchasing products, and, a producer, by turning products into that which was consumed.

The separate spheres debate focused primarily on the middle class and was not seen to fully apply to the working class until the end of the nineteenth century. Despite working class demands for the breadwinner wage, Anna Clark's study of gender and the working class argues that in the early nineteenth century (and earlier), both men and women worked, sometimes together and sometimes at home, demonstrating there was not a clear divide between private and public spheres.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, in their case studies of middle class families in provincial England, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall illustrated how the ability to move the office outside of the home and create a home free of male work was an important aspect to defining middle class life (for example, creating suburban communities and a commute to the office for men).<sup>12</sup> In examining the politics of separate spheres for the working classes, Clark explains that the conflict and ideal of the "breadwinner wage" came from both working class men demanding it

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<sup>11</sup> Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

and the middle class imposing ideas of respectability. In the mid-nineteenth century, working men argued they needed to be paid enough to support their families so that wives did not need to work, while the middle class stated that families could only be considered respectable if men working alone could support them. While this was the ideal, Clark concludes her book by commenting that it was often difficult for working families to live the life of separate spheres; employment opportunities were variable and wives learned to live as frugally as possible and do work at home “to earn some without losing face by going out to work.”<sup>13</sup>

Certainly cookbooks and advice manuals from throughout the nineteenth century focused on living as economically as possible. The historians above discuss married middle and working class women and the change in women’s working status that occurred upon marriage.

Unmarried women had different options; occupations for unmarried middle class women increased as the century progressed, from governesses and teachers to more professional designations, including training and diplomas in domestic subjects. By the mid-nineteenth century, domestic service was the largest category of employment for single working-class women; citing figures from the 1881 Census of Occupations, Davidoff notes that “1 in 3.3 girls aged 15 to 20 was classified as a domestic servant” and in 1891, over a million women were employed as domestic servants.<sup>14</sup> Christine Rinne has commented on the complicated place of the maidservant as an intermediary figure between the private and public sphere. Employed within the domestic space of the home, but not included as part of the family, in many roles, the maidservant acted as “substitute for the housewife and a representative for the family to the

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<sup>13</sup> Clark, 270.

<sup>14</sup> Leonore Davidoff, “Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England,” *Journal of Social History* 7:4 (1974): 410.

public, making her position all the more precarious.”<sup>15</sup> Rinne’s analysis implies that housewives were able to delegate a variety of public responsibilities to their servants, which may have been the case for some, but for families struggling to maintain respectability with one maid-of-all-work, the housewife likely was also involved in public; for example, shopping for food. In 1975, Patricia Branca noted that in the nineteenth century “the work load in the middle-class home demanded full participation from the housewife and a diverse set of skills.”<sup>16</sup> Studying census data and R.D. Baxter’s *National Income* from 1868, Branca indicates that there were not actually enough official cooks in the mid-nineteenth century to work for the upper and middle classes, and the majority of the middle class had an annual income at the lower end of the group, indicating they could not afford a cook.<sup>17</sup>

During the economic and demographic upheavals of the nineteenth century, the household was reformed and the housewife created. The ideal of the housewife dominated discourse for middle class women and filtered into the working class by the end of the century, but was often defined in contradictory ways as the century progressed. Historians have demonstrated that most families could not afford a cook, and yet, advertisements seeking “the good plain cook” appeared constantly from the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth. The ideal housewife and her “good plain cook” were topics that consumed cookbooks, manuals, and periodicals. Empirical evidence, for example the research noted in the above sections, has indicated that most families were not actively looking for a “good plain cook,” and in fact, their cook and housewife were one and the same; therefore, why and how did the “good plain cook” occupy so much of the debate on “bad” English cookery? The cookery

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<sup>15</sup> Christine Rinne, “Consuming the Maidservant,” in *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century: Narratives of Consumption, 1700-1900*, eds. Tamara S. Wagner and Narin Hassan, (Toronto: Lexington Books, 2007), 74.

<sup>16</sup> Branca, 47.

<sup>17</sup> Branca, 54-55.

debate established itself beside and within ongoing discussions about middle-class values, housewives, the home, and the community. Prescriptive texts, such as cookbooks and manuals, themselves discussed perceived ideas of the “good plain cook” and the “housewife,” illustrating that the definition of roles was based on the estimations of ideals. The perception of “bad” English food and cookery helped produce and create a stereotypical middle class housewife. By blaming the cook, who was in reality the housewife, the genre of cooking was intimately tied to perceptions of class, gender, and how the middle class should live. The perception of ideal cooks and ideal middle class housewives helped to create a complicated situation. In authoring cookbooks, middle class housewives introduced themselves as experts and authority figures in print, which separated them from working class “good plain cooks,” even if the middle class housewives were in fact their own cooks for their households. By becoming cookbook authors, middle class housewives could write themselves into a separate, domestic, solidly middle class sphere with servants, which may have been a different picture than reality.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century and increasingly in the nineteenth century, the search for the “good plain cook” filled the want advertisements in *The Times*. Of varying length, these advertisements listed specific requirements for cooks, from age and location, to religion, nationality, and indicators of a virtuous moral character. An advertisement from December 1802 asked for a “good plain cook” who “must have an undeniable character for her honesty, sobriety, cleanliness, civility, and steadiness.”<sup>18</sup> In 1817, an advertisement for a servant requested she be “a steady, active, respectable young woman; must be a good plain cook, cleanly in her person, and her character bear the strictest inquiry.”<sup>19</sup> A later advertisement from the 1830s wanted “as good plain cook, an active young woman, who can be recommended for cleanliness, good

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<sup>18</sup> “Wanted, a good Plain Cook,” *The Times*, December 20, 1802, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> “Servants Wanted,” *The Times*, October 14, 1817, p. 1.

temper, and the management of a family.”<sup>20</sup> These requirements for cooks were mirrored in the positions wanted advertisements posted by the cooks themselves, who advertised as “good plain cooks.” For example, in a positions wanted advertisement from 1836, a woman stated she was “a respectable steady woman, age 35, who perfectly understands her business, and can be highly recommended by the lady she has just left.”<sup>21</sup> Many of the positions wanted advertisements placed by cooks stated that she “understands her business,” implying she was a capable cook, yet the increasing censure of the “good plain cook” and challenge to English cookery questioned whether she actually did “understand her business.” Moreover, it can be argued that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the “good plain cook” was a mythical servant that everyone wanted but no one had. She was continuously advertised for but the position never seemed to be satisfactorily filled. The cooks filling the positions were criticized for not being honest, sober, or clean, and were not “good” cooks. However, another possibility was that it was impossible to fill the position of a “good plain cook” because “plain” had become an unflattering characteristic, and, in asking for someone who was both “good” and “plain,” that is, monotonous and rather humdrum, the qualifications to be a cook became contradictory. The search for the “good plain cook” harkened back to a time when “plain” meant something positive, and, at the same time, signified that there was an issue with contemporary cookery.

So numerous were the advertisements for “good plain cooks” in *The Times* that other periodicals began commenting about them. In 1830, *The Examiner* argued that the first problem with English cooks was that they were too old, and noted that *The Times* help-wanted

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<sup>20</sup> “Wanted, as good Plain Cook,” *The Times*, March 28, 1833, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> “As good plain cook,” *The Times*, January 21, 1836, p. 8.

advertisements continuously requested cooks of an elderly age.<sup>22</sup> *The Examiner* believed cooks should be young women who would be less likely to be addicted to drugs and alcohol and more inclined to be taught how to cook, indicating a belief that the poor cookery stemmed from drunk elderly women with their own strong feelings about how to cook.<sup>23</sup>

### **Male Views on Women & Cookery**

In his 1850 *Household Words* essay, Dickens quoted other articles, and surmised that “good plain cooks” would always exist because their employers, specifically housewives, “remain ignorant.”<sup>24</sup> He commented that “young ladies of the leisure classes” were educated to dress properly and have appropriate authority to discuss clothing and hair with their maids and seamstresses, but did not learn anything about how to instruct their cooks.<sup>25</sup> The reason “good plain cooks” continued to cook poorly was because young wives suffered from “culinary ignorance” and, therefore, they were part of the problem of bad cooking, which led their husbands to flee to their clubs for dinner instead of eating at home.<sup>26</sup> Dickens referred specifically to young ladies and daughters of the “well-to-do,” suggesting that this was a new issue for young people, that perhaps a basic kitchen education used to be part of wifely education, but was no longer being passed down from mother to daughter. Cookery manuscripts from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries illustrate how ladies were involved in specific areas of the kitchen, such as preserving, pickling, and the still room (for example,

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<sup>22</sup> My study of want advertisements for “good plain cooks” throughout a variety of nineteenth century newspapers has found the requested age range to be from 25-40. For example, see advertisements from *The Times*. (“Wanted, a good plain cook...a young woman, age about 30..., *The Times*, January 3, 1840, p. 1.)

<sup>23</sup> “Cooks,” *The Examiner*, August 28, 1836, p. 551.

<sup>24</sup> Dickens, p. 139.

<sup>25</sup> Dickens, p. 140.

<sup>26</sup> Dickens, p. 140.

creating homemade wines, liquors, medicines). At the time Dickens was writing, there was a transition from making items at home to buying them in stores, especially in the city, where home-grown produce was less practical and accessible. It is possible that at the same time as people stopped making their own items at home, they also stopped passing down the knowledge in an oral tradition on how to do so.

Dickens's article also commented on the situation of cooking and the lower middle class, where the wife was the "good plain cook." He argued that their husbands were also "doomed" because their wives were "in utter darkness to economising, and rendering palatable the daily sustenance of their families."<sup>27</sup> According to Dickens, an unsatisfactory dinner led to drinking gin to satisfy the appetite. Furthermore, Dickens implied that cooking was not a matter of wealth, but skill; to live frugally and consume good food was better than to buy expensive ingredients and have them be poorly cooked. Dickens recommended that cookery be required education, especially for women, but until it became so, society would continue to suffer from "good plain cooks."<sup>28</sup> At the very least, Dickens suggested middle class women should know enough about cooking to know when it was bad and be able to instruct their cooks in the same way they were able to instruct their maids to dress their hair.

The suggestion that upper and upper-middle class women ought to learn about cooking was echoed in other articles and cookbooks in the mid-nineteenth century, helping to create an opportunity for some of these women to become self-appointed "experts" in the field. In 1851, celebrity chef Alexis Soyer dedicated his *The Modern Housewife* "To the Fair Daughters of Albion," and he wrote the entire cookbook as a correspondence between housewives, Mrs B— (Hortense) and Mrs L—(Eloise). Mrs L was visiting Mrs B, and the book began with a dialogue

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<sup>27</sup> Dickens, p. 140.

<sup>28</sup> Dickens, p. 141.

between the two women about their circumstances. Mrs B remarked that at the beginning of her marriage her “pecuniary resources were but small, but even then I managed my kitchen and housekeeping at so moderate an expense, compared with some of our neighbours, who lived more expensively, but not so well as we did,” and in return her neighbours referred to her as the “Model Housekeeper.”<sup>29</sup> Mr B joined their conversation to praise his wife’s accomplishments and noted their household consisted of three children and two female servants;<sup>30</sup> Mrs B spoke multiple languages and could play the piano, but most importantly, her parents had believed “household knowledge to be of the greatest importance, made her first acquainted with the keys of the store-room before those of the piano.”<sup>31</sup> Soyer’s Mr and Mrs B were echoing Dickens about the importance of a household education and that it must be passed from mothers to daughters. Mrs L returned to her own home, her husband, and her “plain cook” and decided she needed to reform her household and provide her daughter with a household education. She immediately wrote to Mrs B asking for help with cookery and recipes to begin her domestic reformation.<sup>32</sup> Mrs B agreed, and replied with her first recipe, how to make toast, thus beginning the lengthy correspondence between the two fictional housewives and the recipes that Soyer believed Mrs B would give Mrs L.

Having already written four cookbooks, Soyer directed *Modern Housewife* at middle class women. His creation of the accomplished housewife Mrs B and her protégé Mrs L helped popularize the idea of the middle class housewife as expert. Mrs B explained how she managed to cook well and economically, while Mrs L complained of her “plain cook.” Mrs B was the model housewife not just within Soyer’s cookbook, but as an example for the many cookbooks

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<sup>29</sup> Alexis Soyer, *The Modern Housewife*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1851), ix.

<sup>30</sup> Soyer, xi.

<sup>31</sup> Soyer, xiii.

<sup>32</sup> Soyer, xv-xvi.



to come, written by real Mrs B's—Mrs Beeton would be a notable example. As part of his celebrity chef persona, Soyer was concerned with the food of the nation; as we shall see in the next chapter, he offered his services and equipment during the Irish famine and the Crimean War, and presented himself as the French chef to save English cooking. His soup recipes for the poor may have been criticized as lacking in nourishment, but his cookbook for modern housewives sold in the thousands.

Soyer was not the only popular male chef writing for a female audience in the 1850s. Frederick Bishop, chef to nobility, wrote two cookbooks in the mid-nineteenth century that illustrated the differences between male chefs and female cooks. The frontispiece to his *Illustrated London Cookery-Book*, published in 1852, presented two female cooks in the kitchen, surrounded by a variety of produce and dead animals (particularly game—birds, deer, etc.). The preface began with a discussion about the role of the “professed *cuisinier*” and his relationship with the lady of the house in creating menus.<sup>33</sup> Bishop, himself a *cuisinier*, could comment on cooking for large wealthy establishments. However, his preface turned to discuss smaller homes without the benefit of male *cuisiniers*, and how the ladies of these homes suffered, wondering what to have for dinner. Bishop stated that his book was illustrated to help instruct “inexperienced cooks” because this would “prove [the illustrations] to be advantageous to her,” implying that inexperienced cooks were female.<sup>34</sup> Bishop’s *The Wife’s Own Book of Cookery*, published in 1856, was almost a direct copy of his earlier book, although in this version the title clearly indicated its intended audience. In both cookbooks, Bishop tried to help both the lady of the smaller household and her “inexperienced cook.” In large establishments, the cook provided the lady with the day’s menu and she adjusted accordingly, which suggested that an experienced

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<sup>33</sup> Frederick Bishop, *The Illustrated London Cookery-Book*, (London, 1852), iii.

<sup>34</sup> Bishop, iv.

cook (that is, a male chef) did the lady's job for her; she had to approve the menu, but she did not have to create it, and had the option to contemplate it as much as she wanted. Bishop's text implied that in a wealthy home, a male chef had control over the kitchen and what came out of it (although any changes the lady might make were followed); in a smaller home without a male chef, the lady was responsible for instructing her female cook. In creating menus and answering the (dreaded) question "what's for dinner," gender trumped class—the male chef could instruct his employer, but the female cook could not. As Bishop discussed in his books, part of the problem with inexperienced cooks was inexperienced employers because ladies of smaller means had to create their own menus, and constantly ask "what's for dinner?" According to Bishop, the bills of fare provided in his cookbooks would answer this question for housewives and the recipes would help their cooks produce them.

### **Housewives & Cookbooks**

Soyer's and Bishop's cookbooks and the Dickens article from the 1850s demonstrated that at around the same time as anxiety over the perceived quality of English food was growing, women's education was seen as an area that needed to be addressed. These works suggested a household education was necessary for both the middle class housewife and her working class cook, insinuating that "bad" English food was not only created by working class cooks, but by ignorant middle class employers. Middle class housewives wrote cookbooks before the 1850s, and middle class evangelical improvement literature was prevalent before mid-century. However, a connection can be made between the rise in discourse on "bad" English food and the growth in female experts publishing within this genre. Earlier works were less connected to

solving a problem and were prescriptive texts for the sake of being a prescriptive text—not with the expressed purpose of joining the discussion on “bad” English food. For example, Esther Copley wrote many works of fiction, children’s books, and works of domestic economy, of which *Cottage Comforts* (1825) was the most famous example. It went into multiple editions. *Cottage Comforts* began with a chapter on “moral character” and continued to address issues related to cottage life—from establishing a home to maintaining it, and included a chapter on cookery. Its introduction stated its purpose to help the “labouring classes” to be “respectable and comfortable in their circumstances.”<sup>35</sup> The introduction does not imply a negative aspect to working class life, but rather the intention to be instructive and useful. Published after her death, *The Complete Cottage Cookery* from 1855, included an introductory chapter by Copley’s daughter, which lamented that “many young persons...should be allowed to grow up in utter ignorance of all that is likely to render a future home comfortable, and without any knowledge as to how wisely to spend what the husband may have toiled very hard to earn.”<sup>36</sup> Women, it seemed, were wasting the hard-earned breadwinner’s wages. The Copleys argued that it was necessary for wives to be educated about multiple household topics, rather than a few recipes. This was a similar sentiment to that expressed by Soyer, Bishop, and Dickens—that young women were no longer learning domestic management. Copley’s work also included a chapter on “Frugality and Cheap Cookery” and “Charitable Cookery,” which contained leftover recipes and suggestions for how “young housekeepers” could help “their poor neighbours.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Esther Copley, *Cottage Comforts*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1834), 1.

<sup>36</sup> Esther Copley, *The Complete Cottage Cookery*, (London: William Wesley, 1855), xi-xii.

<sup>37</sup> Copley, *The Complete Cottage Cookery*, 98.

Many historians<sup>38</sup> have written about Mrs Beeton and her famous cookbook, first published in 1861 by her husband, Samuel Beeton, and called *Beeton's Book of Household Management*—not “Mrs Beeton’s.” Isabella Beeton died in 1865 and her husband lost the publishing rights to Ward, Lock, & Co., who created the expert “Mrs Beeton,” the authority figure that dominated cookery in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nicola Humble has commented astutely that the *Book of Household Management* instructed both the mistress of the middle class household and her cooks and servants, and did so in separate chapters to indicate a division of labour that likely did not exist in reality. Even in Beeton’s own house, the mistress, housekeeper, and cook were usually the same person. Humble notes that Beeton’s book helped support “the polite fiction that middle-class women need not soil their hands with physical work, while actually providing them with copious instructions for how to do such work well.”<sup>39</sup> Humble also has observed that Beeton’s text was “delicately poised between modernity and nostalgia,” with recipes that allowed for cooking over an open fire as well as ones that included modern conveniences, such as bottled ingredients.<sup>40</sup> According to Humble, Beeton’s book was an act “for social change.”<sup>41</sup> However, this social change was enacted by the publishers who helped create the persona of Mrs Beeton and promoted various editions and volumes as crafted under the expertise of Mrs Beeton, long after her death. In its first publication, society was at a crossroads, between using older cooking methods and mixing in

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<sup>38</sup> For example, see: Margaret Beetham, “Good Taste and Sweet Ordering: Dining with Mrs Beeton,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36(2008): 391-406; Helen Day, “Mobial Consumption: Stability, Flux, and Interpermeability in ‘Mrs Beeton’,” in *Consuming Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century: Narratives of Consumption, 1700-1900*, eds. Tamara S. Wagner and Narin Hassan, 49-62, (Toronto: Lexington Books, 2007); Kathryn Hughes, *The Short Life & Long Times of Mrs Beeton*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2006); Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food*, (2005); Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1985).

<sup>39</sup> Humble, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Humble, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Humble, 14.

purchased preserves; in London, this transition from old to new was rapid, but the process of change was not nearly as fast throughout the rest of the country.

The majority of the *Book of Household Management* was copied by Isabella Beeton from other sources. Beeton expert Kathryn Hughes has argued that that does not mean the book should be dismissed as merely a copy that became surprisingly successful. Hughes claims that even though “there is scarcely a line in the book that can be said to belong to” Mrs Beeton, she created an order out of the copied material, the “thing most beloved by the mid Victorians, a *system*” of “domestic well-being.”<sup>42</sup> Comparing Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes with Isabella Beeton, Kate Thomas comments that Holmes and Beeton became famous figures for the nineteenth century, both were “attentive to and invested in the elementary and the alimentary as tools that could make a middle class.”<sup>43</sup> Thomas also notes that by following Beeton’s household advice, “any woman could come to be an expert.”<sup>44</sup> For Helen Day, “Mrs. Beeton also fulfilled the need for a figure that was both authoritative and accessible.”<sup>45</sup>

Beeton’s manual was hardly the only text attempting to enlighten housewives. Interestingly, texts often began to address “young ladies and inexperienced cooks” in the same sentence, illustrating how the young lady/wife-to-be and the cook were placed on the same level for cookery instruction.<sup>46</sup> Beeton’s book may have separated the housewife and the cook for appearances, but other books expressly noted that their works were for “ladies and cooks,” which could have indicated that the lady was the cook or that the lady and the cook should acquire the same knowledge. This was evident in Mrs Hart’s *High-Class Cookery Made Easy*, published in

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<sup>42</sup> Hughes, 261. Emphasis in original.

<sup>43</sup> Kate Thomas, “Alimentary: Arthur Conan Doyle and Isabella Beeton,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 36(2008): 378.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, 378.

<sup>45</sup> Day, 55.

<sup>46</sup> Mrs Hart, *High-Class Cookery Made Easy*, (Edinburgh: Lorimer & Chalmers, 1860), preface.

1860 in Edinburgh, a year before Beeton's grand tome arrived. In her preface, Mrs Hart noted that she had held cooking classes in different towns where she had proved that her recipes worked. She commented that she was asked to write this book because most cookbooks of the time were "not suitable for economical households."<sup>47</sup> Mrs Hart instructed cooks on the importance of cleanliness in the kitchen, provided multiple recipes, including a section called "Economical Made-Dishes," but what made this book "high-class" cannot be specifically determined. The recipes in Mrs Hart's cookbook seem similar to the recipes provided in other cookbooks of the day, but with many choices of cookbooks, judging a book by its title might have appealed to its intended audience of "young ladies" and "inexperienced cooks" who wanted to learn how to produce "high-class cookery."

*Cookery and Domestic Economy*, published in Glasgow in 1862, also appealed to the housewife who was housekeeper and cook of her household. Its author, Mrs Somerville, addressed "the Ladies of Scotland" in her introduction and observed the poor state of domestic economy, which she argued was because of inappropriate female education.<sup>48</sup> Blaming fashion for taking precedence over domestic affairs, Mrs Somerville wondered why girls could not be educated in both "the useful" and "the refined."<sup>49</sup> Mrs Somerville focused her attention on young housekeepers, rather than "the thoughtless *belle*" who only cared about "the ballroom."<sup>50</sup> Rather, she saw the young housekeeper as an anxious character, who cared about domestic economy as her first priority. Mrs Somerville compared these housewives with Queen Victoria, for she ruled in her kitchen "as well as in the hearts of her household."<sup>51</sup> The first two sections of the cookbook were on "the young housekeeper and her duties" and then "the cook, her

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<sup>47</sup> Mrs Hart, preface.

<sup>48</sup> Mrs Somerville, *Cookery and Domestic Economy*, (Glasgow: George Watson, 1862), iii.

<sup>49</sup> Mrs Somerville, iv.

<sup>50</sup> Mrs Somerville, iv. Emphasis in original.

<sup>51</sup> Mrs Somerville, v.

qualifications, necessary utensils, &c.”<sup>52</sup> Similar to Mrs Beeton, Mrs Somerville has divided these duties, although recognizing that the housewife was housekeeper, if not also the cook. Mrs Somerville also recommended that housewives learn how to carve at the dinner table, “with neatness and activity,” in order to be able to do so at dinner parties.<sup>53</sup> As an aside, “neatness and activity” were similar terms to those used when looking for “good plain cooks” in advertisements. Mrs Somerville’s notes on carving also suggested that her “young housekeeper” could afford to have enough meat on her table to be able to practice carving.

Anne Bowman’s *The New Cookery Book* from 1867 also provided instruction for the English woman cook and the housewife-cook. In her introduction, Bowman addressed the difficult search for the “good plain cook” and compared English and French cooks. She described the qualities that all cooks must have:

A cook must have genius, or she will feel no interest in her art; cleanliness, or her cookery will be poison; method, or she will never reach the right conclusion; and, above all, she must have the accuracy of a scholastic critic, or her quantities will be false, and the harmony of her composition imperfect. But why should not an English cook, in addition to her experience, feel the enthusiasm for her art, observe the nice points, and acquire the delicacy of manipulation so conspicuous in the French cook? Why should not a quick, resolute Englishwoman succeed in attaining the respectable position and ample remuneration that the French *chef-de-cuisine* can always command?<sup>54</sup>

While earlier advertisements for “good plain cooks” requested cooks to be honest, sober, clean, civil and active, Bowman added intelligence and accuracy to the required list of abilities, and questioned why English cooks were lacking the passion and artistry of French chefs, who were male and formally trained. Bowman stated that the purpose of her cookbook was to instruct the

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<sup>52</sup> Mrs Somerville.

<sup>53</sup> Mrs Somerville, xliv.

<sup>54</sup> Anne Bowman, *The New Cookery Book: A Complete Manual of English and Foreign Cookery on Sound Principles of Taste and Science*, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), 1.

“unskilful or careless woman” and prepare her to be “an intelligent and well-trained cook.”<sup>55</sup>

She also addressed ladies, suggesting they too should be educated in cookery and on how to properly treat their cooks, providing their cooks with enough time to create perfect dishes.

Turning to housewives of more modest families who could not afford to employ a cook,

Bowman instructed these women in proper economy and time management. She also noted that these women needed to teach culinary skills to their daughters.<sup>56</sup> In her introduction, Bowman was able to discuss three different types of women (the cook, the housewife-employer, and the housewife-cook), compare English food with the French, and consider the problems with English cookery (being poorly cooked and creating poor health). Bowman (and on occasion, Mrs Somerville) also referred to herself as “we” and “our” throughout the entire introduction, although there was not any indication that Bowman was working as part of a team. It was possible she was part of a group, although usually that was stated in the title or preface; instead, it was more likely that Bowman was using this language to help establish her authority.

Cookbooks were sometimes used differently than their author may have intended. For example, Mrs Harriet Toogood’s *The Treasury of French Cookery*, from 1866, offered expertise for cooks, although specifically focused on French recipes. Mrs Toogood stated in her preface that she translated recipes from French cookbooks that she had found useful. One copy of this cookbook was signed by Hannah Parsley and dated November 21, 1872, and included loose recipes in multiple handwritings within the book.<sup>57</sup> While Mrs Toogood’s cookbook attempted to present French cookery, the handwritten recipes were not particularly French or foreign. Rather it seemed that Hannah Parsley et al used Mrs Toogood’s cookbook as her/their own

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<sup>55</sup> Bowman, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Bowman, 3-4.

<sup>57</sup> Mrs Harriet Toogood, *The Treasury of French Cookery. A Collection of the Best French Recipes, Arranged and Adapted for English Households*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), British Library Collection General Reference Collection 7954.aaa.26.



manuscript. In her preface, Mrs Toogood commented that food prices were increasing and it was necessary to improve cookery in order to help with this issue. In addition to cake and bread recipes, the loose recipes included preserving, such as “to preserve green gages” and recipes for “pickling onions” and “making green tomato catsup.”<sup>58</sup> These recipes and their placement in Mrs Toogood’s book on French cookery demonstrated that home cooks (whether working class cooks or lower middle class housewives) were interested in French cookery enough to purchase the book (although perhaps it was a present), but they were still involved in creating their own recipes and were not necessarily purchasing bottled preserves when they could still do it themselves. Mrs Toogood presented herself as an authority on French cookery because she had read and tested recipes from French cookbooks, but Hannah Parsley represented an example of a woman who created her own authority in the kitchen by writing down recipes in manuscript form.

In the late 1860s and early 1870s, two male French chefs attempted to address the audience of English cooks, producing cookbooks that were for both domestic cookery and what they deemed “high-class cookery.” Jules Gouffe’s *The Royal Cookery Book (Le Livre de Cuisine)* was translated by his brother Alphonse Gouffe, who was head pastry chef to Queen Victoria (Jules was Chef de Cuisine of the Paris Jockey Club, and another brother, Hippolyte was chef to nobility in Russia). This cookbook comprised of two parts; the first part was for “domestic or household cookery,” which the introduction noted as being “free from complications of any kind on the score of execution or expense.”<sup>59</sup> The second part was devoted to “High-Class Cookery,” specifically written for “culinary connoisseurs” while the domestic

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<sup>58</sup> Loose Recipes in Mrs Harriet Toogood, *The Treasury of French Cookery. A Collection of the Best French Recipes, Arranged and Adapted for English Households*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), British Library Collection General Reference Collection 7954.aaa.26.

<sup>59</sup> Jules Gouffe, *The Royal Cookery Book (Le Livre de Cuisine)*, translated by Alphonse Gouffe, (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1869), viii.

section was for “true housewives.”<sup>60</sup> Gouffe stated that the domestic section should appeal to and serve the needs of “any middle-class household.”<sup>61</sup> The second part was considerably longer, more detailed and included more “ornamented dishes” than the previous half.<sup>62</sup>

Another French chef, Urbain Dubois, who was chef to the King and Queen of Prussia, wrote two cookbooks with similar purpose as Gouffe. Published in 1870, *Artistic Cookery: A Practical System Suited for the Use of the Nobility and Gentry and for Public Entertainments* clearly stated its intended diners in its subtitle. In his preface, Dubois noted the success of English cookery at the tables of the aristocracy, stating that dishes were “varied, abundant, luxurious, and delicate,” and he commented that the kitchens were “admirably organized.”<sup>63</sup> He also stated that the large number of cookbooks demonstrated how England encouraged “culinary art” more than other countries.<sup>64</sup> In adding to the already numerous collection of cookbooks on the market, Dubois endeavoured to appeal to both chefs (“practitioners to the artistic part of the profession”) and wealthy diners (“those who are in the habit of giving grand dinners”).<sup>65</sup> *Artistic Cookery* was a very large, encyclopaedia-sized cookbook, that really could be considered a textbook of cookery, which, for the purposes of instructing chefs, might be appropriate, especially if the goal was to replace all other cookbooks in the field. However, it seems less likely that it would serve as a text for the upper classes to read for planning a dinner party. The subtitle implied it was for the “use of the nobility and gentry,” but a more appropriate subtitle would be for the “use of chefs de cuisine of the nobility and gentry.” The cookbook did include many illustrations, which may have appealed to the casual reader as examples of fancy dishes

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<sup>60</sup> Gouffe, 217.

<sup>61</sup> Gouffe, 213.

<sup>62</sup> Gouffe, 220.

<sup>63</sup> Urbain Dubois, *Artistic Cookery: A Practical System Suited for the Use of the Nobility and Gentry and for Public Entertainments*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), viii.

<sup>64</sup> Dubois, *Artistic Cookery*, viii.

<sup>65</sup> Dubois, *Artistic Cookery*, viii.

that could impress at a dinner party. More practically, the illustrations helped readers to create these complicated dishes. For example, the recipe for “Pine-Apple, A La Creole” included an illustration (along with nine other fancy moulds); the recipe involved making an imitation pineapple using a mould, moulding rice pudding into pineapple shape, then garnishing the dish with fresh pineapple.<sup>66</sup> Pineapple was an expensive ingredient often served as a status symbol, and Dubois demonstrated how chefs could create an even more impressive version of pineapple. Dubois brought attention to the illustrations specifically in his preface, noting they were all based on actual dishes made for the King and Queen of Prussia. Moreover, it seemed that Dubois included the illustrations and used them to prove his abilities to his English audience, since he felt obligated to comment on the fact he was not English but wanted to contribute to English dining.

The following year, Dubois published *The Household Cookery-Book. Practical and Elementary Methods*, which had a very different intended audience than his previous work, although the frontispiece was a display of fruit trees and angels with a woman giving an angel a pineapple. The preface of this book indicated that Dubois wrote this cookbook to provide “culinary instruction to the smallest kitchen, of the most modest housekeeping.”<sup>67</sup> He also appealed to both middle-class housewives and their cooks, stating that it was necessary that housekeepers, cooks, and mistresses all were instructed in cookery, because they all shared the same goal of maintaining a healthy, close family.<sup>68</sup> In both Gouffe’s large two-in-one cookbook and Dubois’s two separate books, one has to wonder how royal male chefs were able to present themselves as experts in domestic cookery. Dubois’s *Artistic Cookery* was the type (or he

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<sup>66</sup> Dubois, *Artistic Cookery*, recipe no. 233, 160.

<sup>67</sup> Urbain Dubois, *The Household Cookery-Book. Practical and Elementary Methods*, (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1871), v.

<sup>68</sup> Dubois, *The Household Cookery-Book*, vi.

implied it was the type) of fancy, complicated, ornamental cooking he created on a regular basis; these dishes were creations that were supposed to be impressive and imaginative. Everyday cookery in middle-class households, even those that were able to afford a cook, likely did not need instructions for creating moulded pineapple. Dubois's household cookery recipes seem to be a "dumbed down" version of his presentations in *Artistic Cookery*. Middle-class families were not moulding rice to look like pineapples, but Dubois offered another version in *The Household Cookery-Book*. "Pine-apple with rice" was a mound of rice with syrupy pineapple, which would not produce the same response as the fancier version—although perhaps Dubois realized his two cookbooks would not be read by the same people so the domestic cook would not know of the original dish.<sup>69</sup> Comparing the recipes between Dubois's two cookbooks, many of the dishes were similar, with the household recipes seeming to be lesser versions of the artistic dishes. The copy of *The Household Cookery-Book* at the British Library contained pencil and blue pen markings throughout, suggesting that someone did use this cookbook at some point. In the section called "Elementary Methods," parts of the "how to" recipes have been underlined, such as "how to roast on the spit" and "how to pass sauces through the tammy."<sup>70</sup> It is difficult to know whether cookbooks by male chefs were considered more authoritative than the same by middle class women, but it does seem that cookbooks written by men were used by women in their own cookbooks—at home in manuscripts and in cookbooks written for the mass market.

## **Women & Cookery Manuscripts**

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<sup>69</sup> Dubois, *The Household Cookery-Book*, recipe no. 946, 441.

<sup>70</sup> Dubois, *The Household Cookery-Book*, recipes no. 27 & 137, British Library General Reference Collection 7942.i.6, 27, 137.

Cookery manuscripts took many forms. As indicated above with Mrs Toogood's and Dubois's cookbooks, mass-published cookbooks were sometimes used as manuscripts for their readers. Readers added in their own notes and markings, and they also copied recipes from mass-publications into their own cookery manuscripts. In addition to the modification of published books, most cookery manuscripts found in archives consist of bound journals, sometimes with loose notes and letters, and they represent a form of diary, written at home, usually by women, and passed down from generation to generation. Cookery manuscripts are an important link in analyzing the use of cookbooks of the time because they illustrate the involvement of middle class women in the kitchen, and they were also a component of community cookbooks, which will be discussed in greater details below. Cookery manuscripts contain recipes that demonstrate use, more so than a mass-publication, through the inclusion of notes, markings, and food stains, and the fact that the recipes were recorded and preserved for family usage. The phrase "good plain cook" was not generally mentioned in manuscripts, but recipes were often donated by cooks and housekeepers. Cookery writers from the mid-nineteenth century, such as Dickens's article in *Household Words*, argued that "ladies" were no longer learning how to cook at home and mothers were not teaching their daughters an appropriate cooking education. Cookery manuscripts have survived in archives dating to the early modern period and continue to exist in families today (although in slightly different form due to the internet), and demonstrate that not all families ignored cooking or passing down family recipes. While it is often difficult to know who the authors of manuscript cookery books were, many of the surviving manuscripts in archives belonged to women of the middle and upper middle class and country elite. This does not mean that other women did not record their recipes. However, especially in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the immaculate

handwriting and recipes attributed to members of the nobility indicated that manuscripts were more likely to belong to a wealthier woman—and not her cook (who may not have been literate) or her chef (who may have been more likely to write in French and not record these types of recipes). Given that these women had cooks (or male chefs depending on their status), the fact that they kept recipe books perhaps suggested that women were more involved in the kitchen than previously assumed.

Historian Rachel Rich has contended that “manuscript cookbooks demonstrate bourgeois women’s willingness to involve themselves with household chores, in terms of the creation of a body of knowledge, if not in the actual labour.”<sup>71</sup> Studying early modern manuscript and published cookbooks, historian Sara Pennell argues that specific cooking skills, such as “pasty- and confectionery-making, distilling,” contributed to the definition of the gentlewoman and her necessary attractive female characteristics, “self-sufficiency and the maintenance of distinctively English habits, notably frugality, and domestic (in explicit contrast to commercial) expertise.”<sup>72</sup> The majority of nineteenth century manuscript cookery books still included baking, preserving, and distilling recipes, sometimes multiple recipes for each. Pennell also has commented that the act of wealthy women sharing recipes might be part of the charity work they were already assumed to do, by kindly providing tips and notes to things to which they might have privileged access.<sup>73</sup> While Rich suggests that manuscripts helped illustrate how women involved themselves at home, Pennell maintains that women’s involvement in certain kitchen activities was a function of their role as female head of house. The fact that gentlewomen participated in

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<sup>71</sup> Rachel Rich, *Bourgeois Consumption: Food, space and identity in London and Paris, 1850-1914*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 86.

<sup>72</sup> Sara Pennell, “Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England,” in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, eds. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson, (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 239.

<sup>73</sup> Sara Pennell, “Introduction,” *Women and Medicine: Remedy Books, 1533-1865 from the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine*, London, Primary Source Microfilm, 2004.

specific acts of cookery in the early modern period facilitated the definition of housewife for a broader group of women into the modern era.

Other clues in cookery manuscripts assist in understanding each book. Unlike mass-published cookbooks by one author, manuscripts had multiple authors—usually passed down from generation to generation—and multiple recipe donors (indicated beside the recipe). Handwriting changes throughout a manuscript signified different authors, although it is not always clear if the change reflected a new generation or not. Pennell has noted that annotated recipes that specified who donated them aid in determining the geographical region and social networks of the author.<sup>74</sup> Recipes were also donated from family and servants, which Pennell argues challenges previous assumptions that servants were entirely ignorant of cookery, and that female servants were involved in girls' household education process.<sup>75</sup> The authors of cookery manuscripts, as well as the donors of recipes, created authority by writing their recipes in manuscript books. The authors gave the donors authority, "authorized"<sup>76</sup> them, by attributing the recipes to a specific person; labeling a recipe as from someone specific also demonstrated her (or his) expertise. Other than perhaps familial/friendly duty, there was nothing specific that compelled the authors to write the name of the donor in their manuscripts. Providing the name from whom a recipe originated, implied trust that the recipe might work, and therefore, attributed a sense of authority that it would work. Pennell has also challenged the assumption that if a recipe was written down it had to have been tried and found to be good, since some manuscripts stated a different purpose, such as use as a handwriting exercise.<sup>77</sup> However, the placement of

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<sup>74</sup> Pennell, "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England," 243.

<sup>75</sup> Pennell, "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England," 243-245.

<sup>76</sup> Pennell discusses the idea of "authorizing" recipes, see "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England," 243, 251.

<sup>77</sup> Pennell, "Introduction."

checkmarks, food stains, and crossed out words could imply that a recipe was at least tried, if not necessarily found to be tasty.

While there are many cookery manuscripts in the archives, two manuscripts will be discussed here to demonstrate the community network of sharing recipes, the type of generational manuscripts that existed in many similar households, and the significance of sharing recipes in written form rather than an older oral tradition. In Sarah Alice Ede's cookery manuscript from the mid-nineteenth century, almost all of the recipes have a name written beside them and in some cases a location.<sup>78</sup> Many of the recipes were provided by members of the nobility, in this instance the Earl of Hardwicke's family. Unfortunately, it is unclear from the manuscript what relation to the family or what position Ede may have held; the census records from 1841 list the Earl of Hardwicke's household, but Ede was not included, nor was she easily found in searches through the same census. The connection to the Hardwicke estate was determined from Ede's references to Tyttenhanger, the Hardwicke home in Hertfordshire. A recipe for removing paint was titled "The manner in which the paint was removed from the beautiful old staircase at Tyttenhanger in 1835[36?]." A later cure was written as "Winter treatment of milch cows, Tyttenhanger August 3, 1850." A medical recipe near the back of the book called "Eye water for inflammation" was donated by Lady Hardwicke and two other medical remedies, "For acidity and weak digestion" and "For feverish cold and cough" were noted as from Dr Josephson for Lady Hardwicke (which might also provide a clue as to Lady Hardwicke's health). Recipes were also donated by Lord and Lady Stuart de Rothsay, such as "To pickle Russian cucumbers," "breakfast cakes or scones," and "yeast cakes." Lady Stuart de Rothsay was the Earl of Hardwicke's cousin, which further indicated a connection between Ede and the Hardwicke family. There were also recipes from the Honorable Mrs E. [?] Yorke, and

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<sup>78</sup> Sarah Alice Ede, *Cookery Manuscript*, Wellcome Library, MS 2280.



Yorke was the Hardwicke family name. Other members of the nobility were represented in Ede's cookery manuscript. Recipes were attributed to Lady Sarah Lindsay, Lady Dougal, the Duke of Burleigh, Earl Stanhope, Lord Somerville, Lady Warwick, and Lady C. Beresford Armagh.<sup>79</sup> Recipes were also noted as given from certain people; for example, "To make grouse souffle" was noted as "given by William Alexander Esq.' to Lady Sarah Lindsay."

Ede's manuscript also references recipes from servants. "To have a succession of young potatoes in winter" was provided by "Mr Murray—Gardener at Methley," which could imply that Ede was responsible for a home garden, or at least lived in the country where produce was still grown at home. The most notable servant listed in Ede's manuscript was the "Queen Dowager's cook." When William VII died in 1837 and Victoria became queen, William's wife Adelaide was considered the queen dowager and split her residence between Marlborough House and Bushy Park at Hampton Court. Adelaide died in 1849, another clue for dating Ede's manuscript. Adelaide was of German heritage and one of the recipes from her cook was for "dampfnudels," a type of fried doughy bun. The instructions for this recipe read the same as recipes for it today. Another recipe from the queen's cook was for "pains de cerise;" the recipe title was in French, but the actual recipe was written in English. The majority of the recipe titles in this book were in English, but this one stood out as an exception—perhaps an example of the more cosmopolitan cookery of the nobility. By the end of the nineteenth century, in published cookbooks, many recipe titles were written in French, in an attempt to present themselves as superior. This practice does not appear regularly in cookery manuscripts; possibly because there might only be a few readers of the manuscripts, the author and family members, and it would be less important to impress oneself versus the masses. Ede's manuscript did include one recipe written entirely in French, donated by Lady Warwick. The recipe for "Coquilles de Volaille—

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<sup>79</sup> The handwriting was unclear for some of the names; for example, Burleigh was unclear.

Pour deux personnes,” was dated Milan, June 29, 1856, which might suggest that Lady Warwick sent this recipe in a letter from Milan and it was copied into the manuscript. Ede’s cookery manuscript also included a recipe from a family member, listed as “Aunt Mary’s Pudding.”

With regard to recipe donations, Ede’s manuscript represented all categories that Pennell discusses—friends, family, and servants, including a selection of dates and geographic locations. The recipes in the manuscript also followed the typical pattern. The book began with three “chitnee” (chutney) recipes and seven pickling recipes, from onions to oysters to meat. It contained recipes for curries and kedgerree, marmalades, jellies, preserves, multiple gingerbreads, cakes, puddings, and buns. Ede’s manuscript also included medical remedies, which was a standard characteristic of cookery manuscripts since the kitchen was commonly the place to prepare at-home cures. In her introduction to *Women and Medicine: Remedy Books, 1533-1865*, Pennell reflects that in early modern manuscripts, the combination of culinary, medical and household recipes or cures demonstrated a “pre-modern domestic ideal for women.”<sup>80</sup> She explains that as medicine became a more established profession, the recipes found in manuscripts became more random and were for more common and actually curable ailments, for example, the common cold, rather than complicated procedures.<sup>81</sup>

Ede’s manuscript also came with loose notes and clippings, some of which were newspaper articles dated from 1889, referencing Hampton Wick (a suburb of London in the same area as Bushy Park) and the *Evening News & Post*. These may have belonged to Ede or potentially a relative of the next generation. Some were local news stories, but many were recipes, menus, and there were multiple clippings of an article called “for wives and daughters.” These articles provided menus with recipes for “small dinners,” and then separate recipes for

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<sup>80</sup> Pennell, “Introduction.

<sup>81</sup> Pennell, “Introduction.”

cooking for invalids, children, and artisans (these recipes usually stated they were “poor man’s” or “economical”). Another newspaper article recounting the Hampton Wick “Annual Venison Dinner,” including the menu of at least twenty-one dishes, a list of some of the attendees, and all of the toasts given at the dinner. There were also a series of newspaper articles on “The Sunday Dinner—How to Select It, How to Buy It, and How to Cook It,” which could suggest that Ede, or her descendent, was interested in cooking for her family. In the loose items with the manuscript was the inside cover of *Warne’s Model Cookery and Housekeeping Book*, and on the back, in a different handwriting than Ede’s, someone has written a list of “food for one person weekly,” dividing men and women separately. Included in the list of food were coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, cheese, butter, milk, bread, meat, beer, potatoes, and a note that stated “a large supply of vegetables, fish, or puddings will reduce the amount of these articles.”<sup>82</sup> This list of food could be an indication that this person was in charge of food supply and possibly of cooking and was in a sense making a budget to be aware how much food was necessary for the household each week.

Another cookery manuscript from the mid-nineteenth century by Jane Freestone also contained recipes from family, friends, newspapers, and other cookbooks.<sup>83</sup> A recipe for “Cabinet Pudding” was dated September 22, 1849, Northampton, Mrs Carls, and throughout the book there were many recipes noted as from “Overstone Rectory” or just “Overstone,” which was in Northamptonshire. Compiled at roughly the same time as Ede’s manuscript, Freestone’s represented a different community geographically, but followed a similar pattern. Freestone’s manuscript contained more evidence of use than Ede’s, including “x’s” beside certain recipes and food stains on certain pages. Freestone mixed medical and culinary recipes together, and

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<sup>82</sup> Loose notes, Sarah Alice Ede, Cookery Manuscript, Wellcome Library, MS 2280.

<sup>83</sup> Receipt Book of Jane Freestone, Cookery Manuscript, Wellcome Library, MS 8207.

there does not seem to be any specific order to the recipes (although there is an index at the back of the book). Multiple recipes were noted as “Mamma’s,” with “To make Mincemeat” receiving a pencil “x” beside it and parts of Mamma’s recipe for “Apple Cheese” from October 1846 were scratched out and additional instructions written in parentheses at the end of the recipe. A recipe for “Roasted Tongue” has a note in parentheses beside it “not to be salted.” One of the recipes for gingerbread in Freestone’s manuscript was donated from “Mrs Hammer’s Housekeeper,” a note that further illustrated Pennell’s argument for mixed sources in domestic education.

Reference to someone else’s housekeeper might also confirm that Freestone (and other manuscript authors) was not a housekeeper herself; if she was, it would then be odd to refer to her social contemporary and possible friend as someone’s housekeeper and not by her own name. The two pages containing recipes for “Frumenty Pudding,” “Lemon Cheesecakes,” “Sago Pudding,” “Orange Marmalade,” “Rolled Gingerbread,” “Almond Cakes,” and “Peas Soup without Meat or Bones,” were heavily stained. None of these recipes were noted as donated by anyone particular, which could mean Freestone herself created and used these recipes.

Freestone’s manuscript also contained recipes from cookbooks and newspapers. A recipe for “Cucumber Preserve” was recorded as from September 1846, “Dom’ Cook by a Lady.” This could possibly be Mrs Rundell’s *A New System of Domestic Cookery*, which was first published in 1806 as “By A Lady” and was subsequently printed in multiple editions. Another recipe was documented as “Soyer’s Plum Pudding,” and at the end of the recipe, Freestone wrote “Modern Housewife, Jan 9, 1850.” Freestone’s copy was a shorthand version of Soyer’s cookbook recipe, but was basically the same, without any obvious changes from the original published recipe. There were no additional markings beside the recipe (no lines crossed out or pencil markings) so this recipe might never have been made, but this was an indication that Soyer’s *Modern*

*Housewife* was at least read and recipes deemed interesting enough to be copied down. It could be argued that finding a copied recipe from Soyer's *Modern Housewife* demonstrated the success of his cookbook, considering its purpose was to educate housewives and share recipes between them. By copying a recipe from Soyer's cookbook in amongst recipes from her mother, friends, and newspapers, Freestone illustrated how she learned from Soyer's Mrs B and how the authority of Soyer and Mrs B were part of her community of recipes. Earlier in the manuscript, Freestone included another recipe for plum pudding, this one from the *Cambridge Chronicle* from Christmas 1847. "Poached Eggs with Cheese" was copied from the *Family Herald* on Jan 9, 1850 and another recipe from the *Family Herald* for "Casserole of roast or boiled mutton" was copied in 1854.

## **Cooks & Education**

Written over a number of years and sometimes by multiple authors, cookery manuscripts represented life at home, and provided insights into the potentially important useful recipes used in the home. Offering instruction for society rather than indicating practice, mass-published cookbooks from the 1870s increasingly discussed education and the growing expertise of the female authors. The National Training School of Cookery opened in London in 1873, and it administered tests and granted levels of diplomas to its graduates; other cities soon followed with their own cookery training schools. As well, in the 1870s (and going forward), the government was reworking its elementary education curriculum, and included "domestic economy" as a subject for girls. Teaching cookery, needlework, and household cleanliness to girls in elementary schools helped continue and promote ideas of female domesticity and separate

spheres.<sup>84</sup> Training schools educated women to be teachers, offered courses for women who were already cooks (or “good plain cooks”), and specific classes for ladies. In his study of the growth of professionalism in the nineteenth century, historian Harold Perkin has argued that education and training professionals to be “experts” was part of the growing ideal of professional society.<sup>85</sup> The opening of training schools for cookery teachers and the increasing publication of cookbooks by women with diplomas indicated one way in which women came to assert their own expertise and place in the development of professional society. Cookery teachers published cookbooks and specified they were educated at cooking schools, illustrating another level of expertise. Commenting on cooking schools in London in 1879, *Dickens’s Dictionary of London* reported that Miss Mary Hooper of the Crystal Palace classes offered instruction “designed for ladies, from a lady’s point of view, and not for the training of servants. It includes all that is necessary to make home comfortable and attractive, and a lady accomplished ruler of her own house.”<sup>86</sup> Cookery was being taught for all ages at all levels: in elementary schools to girls, to adult women who wanted to teach cookery, to cooks, and to ladies who also wanted to be in control of the kitchen, if not actually cook in it.

However, the new curriculums and training schools did not stop criticism of English cookery or the “good plain cook.” Discussing the idea of economy, and the English lack thereof, *The Dover Express* quoted *Cassell’s Dictionary of Cookery*, which compared the English “good plain cook” to French chefs, stating “what your so-called good plain cook throws away, an

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<sup>84</sup> See Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), chapter 5; Jane Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England*, (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History*, (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), chapter 6.

<sup>85</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 1989), xiii.

<sup>86</sup> “Cookery and Cooking Schools,” *Dickens’s Dictionary of London*, 1879, <http://www.victorianlondon.org/education/dickens-cookingschools.htm> (accessed July 1, 2013).

ingenious French *artiste* will make in *entrees*.”<sup>87</sup> The unflattering comparison with French chefs was common practice, but more unusual was the phrase “so-called” challenging the terminology and quality of the “good plain cook,” and further demonstrating the confusion over the ideal of a “good plain cook.” The *Dundee Courier* reported on the “servant difficulty” with which Scotland and even more so England were dealing. The article stated that “advertisement after advertisement may appear in the papers for help—for ‘a good plain cook,’ or ‘an efficient general servant’—but often does it happen that there is no response to the piteous appeal.”<sup>88</sup> Advertisements for the “good plain cook” still appeared, but as earlier articles discussed, the position was never satisfactorily filled.

In the newspaper article “Pleasant Homes Make Good Husbands. A Story of the Cooking School,” published in 1877, the story began with a mother lamenting that her daughter could not find a place to work as a cook. The daughter, it seemed “cannot cook enough dishes...though I call her as good a plain cook as one needs to have, and I taught her myself.”<sup>89</sup> The mother’s friend responded by commenting that “our sort of plain cooking don’t go down with the gentry now-a-days” because “since the ladies have started their Cooking School nothing will do but a girl must have been trained there to all the new-fangled notions.”<sup>90</sup> After this conversation, the mother decided to send her daughter to a cooking school. The story continued with the daughter’s success at school, followed by her obtaining a position as a kitchen-maid, which she held for a few years, until she was to be promoted to cook in another establishment. Before she could accept this position, however, a local miller, hearing that cooking school graduates made excellent dinners, asked her to be his wife instead. The daughter married and

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<sup>87</sup> “Economy in Cooking,” *The Dover Express*, November 12, 1875, p. 4. Emphasis in original.

<sup>88</sup> “One Solution of the Servant Difficulty,” *Dundee Courier*, December 4, 1875, p.2.

<sup>89</sup> “Pleasant Homes Make Good Husbands. A Story of the Cooking School,” *The Royal Leamington Spa Courier*, February 24, 1877, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> “Pleasant Homes Make Good Husbands. A Story of the Cooking School.”

kept a comfortable home for her husband, and in return, “when she hears of young girls unable to find places, or wives, whose husbands spend their wages in drink, she always advises them to go and take lessons at the Cooking School.”<sup>91</sup> In summary, the Cooking School would not only train daughters to be able to cook and find acceptable positions in service, but it would also find them husbands and help them create happy homes.

This story also demonstrated the issue with the terminology of the “good plain cook” as the mother commented that she had been advertising her daughter as “good a plain cook” even though when tested, the daughter was lacking in cooking knowledge. It would be easy from this article to blame the mother (or mothers, to make it more general)—it was her responsibility to teach her daughter to cook, which she felt she had done adequately, but it seemed society did not agree, and, it was the mother’s fault for adding confusion to the term “good plain cook” when it was clear her daughter did not have the qualifications. However, even though this was a morality tale of the success of cooking schools, the mother’s friend provided an interesting glimpse into changes the school caused when she observed that the cooking school was to blame for the daughter not receiving a position in service. It was due to the cooking school that employers wanted “new-fangled” cooking and “plain” cooking would no longer serve. While education policy and cookery schools were established to combat the poor state of cookery and provide cooking knowledge because daughters were not learning it at home, the cooking school also seemed to change what was being accepted as cookery from “good plain cooks.” The cook now needed to have qualifications beyond a reference from a previous employer (or her mother as the case may be), and have proof of her expertise from a cooking school.

The blame for the poor cookery produced by “good plain cooks” was often still being placed on their mistresses. In “Household Economics,” published in 1879, the author “C.L.”

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<sup>91</sup> “Pleasant Homes Make Good Husbands. A Story of the Cooking School.”



provided a menu for a dinner party for ten people, and stated that “a *good* plain cook ought to be able to send up such a dinner.”<sup>92</sup> Yet the author continued to observe that dinner parties involved instruction from the mistress of the house and it was necessary that she, a lady, teach her cook, and allow her cook to try dishes repeatedly so the cook would feel comfortable making them for dinner parties. To the lady of the house, the author remarked, “your ‘plain’ cook may not have such an extensive *répertoire* of dishes as her more accomplished sister, but with trouble and patience you may drill her into cooking a few dishes very well.”<sup>93</sup> “C.L.” recommended “inexperienced housekeepers” should read Mrs Beeton’s book as a starting point for a culinary education, and commented that “every lady should understand cooking theoretically if not practically. She will be far better served if her cook is aware that she is working under a discerning mistress.”<sup>94</sup> Therefore, without instruction by a mistress and a useful cookery book from which both the mistress and the cook should learn, “good plain cooks” were left making the same few dishes repeatedly, afraid to try anything new. If a lady wanted her dinner party to be a success and offer appetizing dishes, it was imperative she be involved in the kitchen, at the very minimum to direct her cook. The lady of the house also needed to be patient and provide her cook with time to practice the “high-class” dishes she wished prepared.

In “Home Lady Helps,” published in *Kinds Words* in 1876, the author “L.B.” also recommended girls learn to cook, in case their “good plain cooks” decided to leave unexpectedly. Informing the reader that she, the author, was without a cook for three months, she and her sister learned to cook, and while they were pleased to hire a cook and be free of their

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<sup>92</sup> “C.L.,” “Household Economics,” *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, August 1, 1879, p. 100. Emphasis in original.

<sup>93</sup> “C.L.,” “Household Economics.” Emphasis in original.

<sup>94</sup> “C.L.,” “Household Economics.” Coincidentally, this article was published in *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*, first started by Samuel Beeton, Isabella’s husband, although at this point published by his partners/rivals, Ward, Lock & Co.

“Lady Helpdom,” they felt they had proved they “were capable of filling a place of Good Plain Cook, at the same time not wishing to go out as such.”<sup>95</sup> Unlike “C.L.”, this author criticized cookery books, and told her readers not to trust them because they “exaggerate greatly both the quantities and ingredients.”<sup>96</sup> “L.B.” addressed her “Lady Help” article to girls helping their mother at home, that is, girls in training to be ladies. She concluded that by following her advice girls will become “Lady Helps” and would be able to cook a meal for “the tired father” if the cook left without warning.<sup>97</sup> This article inferred that it was possibly common for a cook to leave rather quickly and that it was important that the daughters of the house learn to help in case this happened. Cooks were just as likely to leave their position as their employers were to decide their food was not “good” enough.

The upper-middle class Goring-Thomas family of Carmarthenshire, Wales kept a detailed record of servants in their employ from the 1820s-1890s (with gaps for some years and different residences).<sup>98</sup> Initially, most of their cooks stayed with the family for less than a year at time. Some cooks returned to the family after a few years, but the majority only cooked for the Goring-Thomases for short periods of time. The record indicated whether the cook left on her own accord or was discharged, sometimes with an explanation. A cook named “Harris” was discharged after six months and noted as “not efficient.” Another cook and housekeeper, “Vale,” was discharged after less than five months and beside “discharged” was added “in no way to be depended on for work.”<sup>99</sup> At the family’s Ferryside home, documented from the 1860s-70s, cooks seemed to last longer. Elizabeth Davies was cook from 1864-1877, and her wages were raised four times in that period, but she eventually left to get married. Over the years, roughly an

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<sup>95</sup> “L.B.,” “Home Lady Helps,” *Kind Words*, February 1, 1876, p. 52.

<sup>96</sup> “L.B.,” “Home Lady Helps.”

<sup>97</sup> “L.B.,” “Home Lady Helps.”

<sup>98</sup> Goring-Thomas Family of Llannon, Carmarthenshire, National Library of Wales, Minor Deposit 565B.

<sup>99</sup> Emphasis in original.

equal number of cooks left as were discharged by the family (slightly more left than were let go). There were instances where the family was left without a cook, although in many cases the new cook started the same day the old cook left, so the family might have had a bit of notice in advance. This also meant that someone in the Goring-Thomas household might have needed to learn to cook in the interim periods between cooks, or the kitchen-maids (who earned roughly one-quarter of a cook's wages) might be required to cook the main meals. Unfortunately, the Goring-Thomases did not provide an explanation for every cook discharged or who "went away," so it is impossible to know if the family had curious tastes, did not like "good plain cooking," cooks found other positions as cooks, or chose another line of work, or got married. However, the record does illustrate the transient service life of a cook and that this upper-middle class family with multiple servants continued to retain female cooks and did not employ male chefs or foreign chefs. The record lists the names of servants, their wages, who recommended them, when they started working and the date they left. Most women who proposed cooks were from the area, although, in the 1840s, one cook was recommended by Lady Palmerston, who was not Welsh. The Goring-Thomas family were an example of a family that seemed constantly searching for a new cook. It is difficult to know if the Goring-Thomas family example was unique or representative of the majority of upper middle class families, but their reliance on female cooks rather than male chefs demonstrated that not all wealthy families hired male chefs.

Cookbooks written by training school graduates and school board members also addressed the situation of cooks and the education of girls in cookery at school and at home. Catherine M. Buckton, the only "lady member" of the Leeds School Board wrote *Food and Home Cookery* (1879) to be used by elementary school students and as representative of the

lessons learned at schools under the Leeds School Board.<sup>100</sup> Buckton stressed the importance of girls practicing their cookery lessons at home, and that this cookbook would help them continue their cookery education both at home and in school. Furthermore, Buckton stated that this cookbook would help girls throughout their lives and act as a “testimonial” when applying for a position in domestic service.<sup>101</sup> She also pointed out in her preface that the schools did not have separate cooking facilities, but cooking classes were taught in ordinary classrooms. Rather than regret this and hope to establish independent kitchens, Buckton thought the lesson would be more practical if the cooking facilities at school reflected the fact that working class students would not have had a fully equipped kitchen at home. She reminded her readers that Board Schools taught “the poorest of the population, the class above all others that need instruction and help” and therefore, it was essential for these students to learn how “to preserve cleanliness, neatness, and order” in small spaces.<sup>102</sup> The first lesson, “Kitchen Arrangements for a Cottage,” discussed the best type of cooking pans, noting that both “an excellent cook” and a “French cook” recommended iron pans, and this section was marked with a pencil line by a former reader.<sup>103</sup> Later in the book, in the sixth lesson, Buckton wrote of the great cooking qualities of the French, made more commendable by the poverty of English cooking:

the French people are the best and most economical cooks in the world; the first lesson a French girl is taught by her mistress is to cook every food gently and well. The English are the most wasteful and worst cooks in the world, because they do not understand anything about the nature of the food they cook, and because they think that if a saucepan with food is put on the fire and boils away they have done all that is necessary.

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<sup>100</sup> Catherine M. Buckton, *Food and Home Cookery: A Course of Instruction in Practical Cookery and Cleaning, for Children in Elementary Schools, as Followed in the Schools of the Leeds School Board*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1879), v. British Library W5/9544.

<sup>101</sup> Buckton, vi.

<sup>102</sup> Buckton, vii.

<sup>103</sup> Buckton, British Library W5/9544, 3.

In her attempt to teach working class girls cookery, Buckton indulged in the common assumption that French cooking was far superior to English cooking. Her cookbook was not just an instruction manual that was produced because of new government regulations, but it was also part of the literature that recognized English cookery as “bad” and French cookery as “the best.” Upper class families with French chefs had embraced French cookery, but Buckton’s comments suggested that working class girls, in their one room homes (as she claimed in the Preface) should also learn from the French.

*The Girl’s Own Cookery Book*, published in 1882, contained a preface by Sir J. Risdon Bennett, M.D., F.R.S. and one by the author Phyllis Browne. In his preface, Bennett began by stating that this book was specifically for the middle class, not only so that they could be healthy and happy, but also so that they would be able to help others, “especially the poor.”<sup>104</sup> He stated that England suffered from “prejudice and ignorance” regarding cookery, and the work of the school boards and elementary classes should be celebrated for helping the working classes.<sup>105</sup> Bennett concluded his preface with religious overtones, hoping that the cookbook would make girls “both better housekeepers and more useful as Angels of Mercy” helping those less fortunate.<sup>106</sup>

In her preface, author Phyllis Browne (pseudonym for Sarah Sharp Hamer) declared that the book was restricted to “economical cookery” because it was important the “every-day food of ordinary people” be cooked better.<sup>107</sup> In her introduction, Browne insisted girls who wanted to be cooks should practice cooking the recipes in her book. The next sections detailed different methods of cooking, and immediately compared English with French cooking. With regard to

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<sup>104</sup> Phyllis Browne, *The Girl’s Own Cookery Book*, (London: “The Girl’s Own Paper Office,” 56 Paternoster Row, [1882]), iii.

<sup>105</sup> Browne, iii.

<sup>106</sup> Browne, iv.

<sup>107</sup> Browne, v.

roasting, Browne said that the English could pride themselves because the French were not good at roasting, but when boiling, the “English have the character of being the most wasteful cooks in the world.”<sup>108</sup> In her efforts to fix this wastefulness, Browne also provided a chapter called “Cookery for the Poor.” Most of this chapter described how working class women did not know how to cook and were not interested in learning, and while there were some poor women who were “clever” in their household management, according to Browne, they were the exception to the rule.<sup>109</sup> Browne continued by lamenting that even more unfortunate was that the working classes refused to introduce new foods into their diet, and did not eat many of the nutritious grains that were available. She concluded this section with recipes, admitting that it was unlikely that the poor would read her cookbook, so the information was for middle class women who might try to help working women learn new cooking methods and eat different foods.

A series of letters to *The Morning Post* published in London in December 1889 discussed the issue of finding a “good plain cook.” A letter, signed “A Parson” asked why the demand for cooks seemed so much higher than the supply, citing the numerous advertisements in newspapers as evidence.<sup>110</sup> In response, one “parent” answered that it was the responsibility of parents to teach their daughters how to cook, which used to be the case in the past, and would solve the problem of the supply of cooks. This letter was signed “A Parent Who Has Done So.”<sup>111</sup> Another letter, written by an Anglo-Indian woman, explained that she taught herself how to cook after returning to find the servants in England incompetent. After three years, she was skilled enough to teach others how to cook, including her own daughters and believed that she was able

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<sup>108</sup> Browne, 22.

<sup>109</sup> Browne, 125.

<sup>110</sup> “Cooks,” *The Morning Post*, December 11, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> “Cooks,” *The Morning Post*, December 12, 1889, p. 3.

to “train any girl of ordinary intelligence to be worth her wages as a ‘good plain cook’.”<sup>112</sup> “A Perplexed Matron” also responded to the parson’s letter, arguing for compulsory cooking education in elementary schools and the establishment of cookery training schools in smaller towns. She also stressed the importance of teaching “cleanliness and thrift” because her experience was that most servants who considered themselves cooks were lacking in cooking skill as well as these necessary attributes.<sup>113</sup>

The parson observed that the demand for cooks never seemed to meet the supply, a point which was not new in 1889. However, at the end of the nineteenth century, the worry became not just that cooks were bad, but that they did not want to be cooks anymore. Despite efforts to teach cooking in schools and establish training schools for cookery teachers, the role of cook (and domestic service more generally) was losing its appeal, especially with new career options in the workforce. In 1897, Mrs C.S. Peel, later a cookbook author, wrote in the periodical *Hearth and Home* that it was difficult to understand why a cooking career had become so undesirable. She stated that “it may be partly the fault of the mistress class, and partly that there are other occupations now open to young women, which appear more desirable.”<sup>114</sup> Mrs Peel noted that this was a new problem as at least fifteen years previously (that is, in the 1880s), “it was the ambition of many a girl to ‘go into the kitchen’,” something she remarked as a “rare” occurrence in 1897.<sup>115</sup> Mrs Peel also commented that girls were calling themselves cooks with little to no experience cooking in order to receive high wages, with the hope of learning a few things from their mistresses and then call themselves “good plain cooks.” Mrs Peel’s remarks suggested that girls still wanted to be known as “good plain cooks,” but that the title had become

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<sup>112</sup> “Cooks,” *The Morning Post*, December 14, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> “Cooks,” *The Morning Post*, December 14, 1889.

<sup>114</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, “Help for Incompetent Cooks,” *Hearth and Home*, April 1, 1897, p. 847.

<sup>115</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, “Help for Incompetent Cooks.”

one of deception, used by servants to receive a higher income. Mrs Peel also challenged the mistresses, recommending they try to find a girl willing to learn how to cook and then teach them how to cook, although with the full awareness the girl might leave as soon as she has acquired some experience. Unfortunately, Mrs Peel believed very few housewives competent to teach cooking, and set out her weekly column for education purposes, for both mistresses wanting to educate their cooks and for women who wanted to learn to cook themselves.

### **Community Cookbooks**

At the same time as Mrs Peel was writing on the “Great Cook Question” as she called it, there were women cooking for themselves and for their communities, producing community or fundraising cookbooks. The community cookbook was an American invention, but became popular in Britain in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (and these types of cookbooks are still produced today). Community cookbooks were an extension of what was first written at home, and, therefore, represented a way for individuals to publish a small portion of their home recipes for a broader audience. Community cookbooks occupied a space between the home recipe manuscript and the mass publication. Published by community organizations, these books did not always offer as many obvious “lessons” as mass publications, but the selection of recipes illustrated what dishes were perceived to be appropriate for the community itself. Usually compiled by a group of women, community cookbooks were another way for middle class women to demonstrate their authority and expertise at a local level. Having already exhibited their cooking expertise to their families in manuscript cookbooks, women compiled their best recipes in order to support their community. *My Favourite Recipes for Dainty Dishes*,



*Cakes, and Confections—Original and Selected*, published in 1896, hoped to benefit the Cripples' Home in Gosforth (an area in Newcastle-on-Tyne). In the preface, the compiler stressed that this cookbook was not “a mere marrowless gathering together of shreds and patches, cuttings and pastings, but a collection of *bona-fide* recipes for dainty dishes, formed by the compiler and friendly helpers, and based on their practical experience.”<sup>116</sup> This cookbook listed the names of contributors before the recipes (as opposed to beside the recipe, the more common practice) and included recipes from well-known cookery writers and chefs. Edith Clarke, Lady Superintendent of the National School of Cookery, Helen Dabbs, also from the National School of Cookery, and C. Herman Senn, a chef trained under Charles Elmé Francatelli and a leading member of the Universal Cookery and Food Association, were all listed as contributors, which indicated the fundraising efforts for the Cripples' Home extended outside of the Gosforth community. The connections to the National School of Cookery might also imply the compiler of the cookbook was a graduate or somehow involved with the school. Alternatively, the compiler could have taken the recipes provided by these contributors from other publications. In either case, the addition of somewhat famous names added prestige and authority to the cookbook and were likely added to help sell it.

Yet, while including recipes from authors who wrote for the broader public, the *My Favourite Recipes* cookbook stressed it was different and better than a publication aimed at the masses. It was not a cookbook that was copied and pasted from elsewhere, but original, and with recipes that were full of heart and proved to be successful. Other community cookbooks emphasized the same sentiment, especially noting they were not the same as mass-produced cookbooks. The *Dunnottar Parish Church Bazaar Cookery Book* (Stonehaven, Scotland) from

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<sup>116</sup> *My Favourite Recipes for Dainty Dishes, Cakes, and Confections—Original and Selected*, (Newcastle-on-Tyne: Mawson: Swan, & Morgan, 1896). Emphasis in original.

1902 stated that its first goal was to help the church bazaar and its second goal was to offer a “collection of *tried* recipes and useful hints.”<sup>117</sup> The compiler, E. Farquharson, noted that the cookbook was not trying to rival “scientific” cookbooks, but still hoped that it would be a useful book at home.<sup>118</sup> In her preface to the Scottish *Milngavie Cookery Book (Proved Recipes)*, Nellie Grant Edgar stated that “this little book of homely recipes” was not trying to be a “Cookery Book,” but instead a “collection of cookery recipes, proved and known to be good by each contributor.”<sup>119</sup> Inherent in this statement was a veiled insult to published cookbooks; by stating that the community cookbook was “homely” but included good, tested recipes, Edgar implied that mass-produced cookbooks were the opposite, containing untested, not very good recipes that were less authentic. “Homely,” a synonym for “plain,” also indicated that, possibly in smaller provincial communities, “plain” was still something that was a positive characteristic, rather than the negative one found in London-published cookbooks.

*Lindfield Fare*, compiled by Blanche Cumberlage (and published in multiple editions into the 1930s) also contained a comparison with great chefs and published cookery books. It began with a satiric poem by Dudley Sampson, who also wrote the foreword for the cookbook, mocking the great chef Escoffier and his new recipes for “Fraises Sarah Bernhardt” and “Pêche Melba.” One stanza of the poem satirically indicated nothing was as important as Escoffier’s dish—not the Insurance Act, Home Rule, or the suffrage movement.<sup>120</sup> In her opening statement, Cumberlage wrote that *Lindfield Fare* was not pretending to be a “High-Class” cookbook, but offered “help to those who want economical yet good food,” once again implying that other cookbooks did not offer these types of recipes (even if they professed to do so in their

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<sup>117</sup> *Dunnottar Parish Church Bazaar Cookery Book* (21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1902), (Stonehaven: John M. Taylor & Co., 1902). Emphasis in original.

<sup>118</sup> *Dunnottar Parish Church Bazaar Cookery Book* (21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1902).

<sup>119</sup> Nellie Grant Edgar, *Milngavie Cookery Book (Proved Recipes)*, 1904.

<sup>120</sup> Blanche Cumberlage, *Lindfield Fare*, Second Edition, 1912.

own prefaces).<sup>121</sup> Sampson's foreword restated that the cookbook had "no pretensions to compete with...Cookery Books, handed down for the enlightenment of a grateful posterity, by such past masters as Careme, Francatelli, Soyer, Ude...or even with...Mrs Beeton."<sup>122</sup> However, Sampson affirmed that the book was strong enough to "stand on its own merits."<sup>123</sup> Mostly comprised of recipes from local women, with a few contributors from farther afield, the community cookbook usually stated it was filled with tried recipes—something it felt it had a stronger claim to than mass publications. Similar to cookery manuscripts, the addition of the name of the recipe contributor affixed authority to the recipe on a larger scale. Everyone who purchased one of these cookbooks in aid of the specified cause knew where the recipes originated, and it implied that recipe donors, who often were known to the readers, had endorsed the recipes they had donated.

Many community cookbooks contained a poetic epigraph; "Lucile" by Owen Meredith (pseudonym for Robert Bulwer-Lytton) and "Stella" by Stirling were common and appeared in multiple cookbooks.<sup>124</sup> *The Northampton Cookery Book. Favourite Recipes Tested by Well-*

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<sup>121</sup> Cumberlage, *Lindfield Fare*.

<sup>122</sup> Dudley Sampson, *Lindfield Fare*.

<sup>123</sup> Sampson, *Lindfield Fare*.

<sup>124</sup> "Lucile," by Owen Meredith (See: *Chapelshade United Free Church Bazaar Kinnaird Hall, Collected Cookery Recipes*, Edited by Mrs D. Williamson, (Dundee: W. & D.C. Thomson, Courier Office, 1901), preface.):

We may live without poetry, music, or art;  
We may live without conscience, and live without heart;  
We may live without friends, we may live without books;  
But civilised man cannot live without cooks.  
He may live without books—what is knowledge but grieving?  
He may live without hope—what is hope but deceiving?  
He may live without love—what is passion but pining?  
But where is the man that can live without dining?

"Stella," Stirling. (See: *British Women's Cookery Book*, Compiled By Mrs Eben. Maclean, (Glasgow: James C. Erskine & Sons, 1905); *The Modern Cookery Book Containing 500 Practical and Favourite Recipes*, Revised Edition, Compiled and Edited by Mrs. G. Anton, (Kidderminster: G.T. Cheshire and Sons, [1911]).):

I guessed the pepper; the soup was too hot!  
I guessed the water; it dried in the pot!  
I guessed the salt; and—what do you think?  
We did nothing else the whole day but drink!

*Known Ladies* included a poem by Marianne Farningham (pseudonym for Mary Anne Hearn), who was a teacher, religious writer, poet, and a member of the Northampton School Board in the 1880s.<sup>125</sup> The poem expressed hope that the readers of the cookbook would enjoy the dishes and help with fundraising money for the church. It also was addressed “To British matron, and to maid” putting both housewives and maids in the same line of the poem and together in enjoyment of the recipes.<sup>126</sup>

### The Twentieth Century & “Good Plain Cooks”

Maids and cooks were still a focus, and mass-published cookbooks began directing their attention to the lack of domestic servants, none more so than the aptly titled *One Maid Book of Cookery* from 1913. While housewives had been suffering with their one “maid-of-all-work” throughout the nineteenth century, it was not until the early twentieth century that having only one maid became acceptable and something that society and housewives needed to accept as the norm. That is, what had been the reality for many lower middle class families actually became the established norm throughout and after the war, and this was reflected in cookbooks and their recommendations for how to make the transition to the new modern lifestyle. The action song, “Dainty Domestics” from 1911, which suggested school girls dress up as domestic servants with aprons and dusters included the line “When we’re in our best Sunday costume array’d,/ You

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I guessed the sugar; the sauce was too sweet!  
And so by my guessing I spoiled our treat!  
And now I guess nothing, for cooking by guess  
Is sure to result in a terrible mess.

<sup>125</sup> Rosemary Mitchell, “Hearn, Mary Anne [Marianne Farningham] (1834–1909),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/article/33789>, (accessed 26 July 2013).

<sup>126</sup> Marianne Farningham, “Preface,” *The Northampton Cookery Book. Favourite Recipes Tested by Well-Known Ladies*, Edited by Mrs G. Jeffery, (Northampton: Archer & Goodman, 1908), 5.

can't tell *maid's mistress* from *mistress's maid*.”<sup>127</sup> During the chorus, the girls sing of their accomplishments—they can sing, dance, play the piano, read, “cook, by the book,” speak French, golf, and fence—a list that seemed equal to the requirements of their mistresses.<sup>128</sup>

*The One Maid Book of Cookery*, written by A.E. Congreve, First-Class Diplomée, in 1913, stressed that society was changing and more “gentle people” were living in smaller houses with only one maid or without any help.<sup>129</sup> In her foreword, Congreve specified that her book was a “book of Cookery” and “not a book of recipes,” which almost appeared to be a similar comment and differentiation as the compilers of community cookbooks, although in this instance a cookery book was better than just a book of recipes.<sup>130</sup> The book began with a section titled “The Art of Cookery,” which explained the importance of method and common sense in cooking. Congreve remarked that it was “unpardonable that girls of all classes should not be able to cook” and she proposed that bad cooks and inexperience stemmed from lack of interest.<sup>131</sup> At the end of the book was an essay by Mrs M.A. Cloudesley Brereton called “The One Maid House,” which was in part an advertisement for using gas fuel for cooking and heating, as gas was marketed as “labour-saving,” and therefore necessary in homes with only one maid.<sup>132</sup> Brereton wrote that the “modern tendency” to hire as few domestic servants as possible was partly because of the “dearth of domestics” and partly because of the cost of rent; however, she believed that having only one maid, provided the maid “knows her work” (or “understands her business” as previously advertised) was “the ideal domestic scheme.”<sup>133</sup> Brereton continued to explain how gas cookers helped save energy and created efficiency in the home, and

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<sup>127</sup> J.B. Tomlinson, “Dainty Domestics,” (London: J. Curwen & Sons, Ltd., 1911). Emphasis in original.

<sup>128</sup> Tomlinson, “Dainty Domestics.”

<sup>129</sup> A.E. Congreve, *The One Maid Book of Cookery*, (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1913), foreword.

<sup>130</sup> Congreve, foreword.

<sup>131</sup> Congreve, 10-11.

<sup>132</sup> Mrs M.A. Cloudesley Brereton, “The One Maid House,” in Congreve, *The One Maid Book of Cookery*.

<sup>133</sup> Brereton, “The One Maid House.”

especially made the “indifferent servant orderly, regular and effective.”<sup>134</sup> According to Brereton, the gas-fuelled home also allowed the housewife to remove herself from the “domestic grindstone” and live more comfortably.<sup>135</sup> With this reasoning, homes without gas contained inefficient maids and likely required multiple servants, in addition to a tired, hard-working wife, whereas the modern home with gas cookers introduced the efficiency that had been desired throughout the nineteenth century and were able to subsist with only one maid and a happy housewife. Nonetheless, the mistress still needed at least one maid, as Brereton concluded that with gas “the anxious mistress of only one maid need not be too anxious lest she should be left for a short period without any maid at all.”<sup>136</sup> But, Congreve likely felt she provided for that instance with her cookery book.

Cookbooks published during World War I generally addressed food saving techniques and how to cook “without” various ingredients. However, they also discussed women as cooks and living without maids. *The Bachelor Girl’s Cookery Book* by May Henry, who held a certificate from the National Training School of Cookery, and Jeannette Halford, published in 1915, featured three women on its cover: one dressed for hunting, another woman holding a tennis racket, and a third woman at the stove, stirring something in a pot. Hunting and tennis were upper and middle class activities, which implied this cookbook was not directed at the working class, but at middle class women. In her preface, Henry stated that “many girls now live independent lives in their own rooms in College, in tiny flats, and also in week-end cottages in the country” but do not know how to cook.<sup>137</sup> Henry, a practical cook, and Halford, an experienced week-end cottager, wanted to “come to the rescue of girls who have to do their own

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<sup>134</sup> Brereton, “The One Maid House.”

<sup>135</sup> Brereton, “The One Maid House.”

<sup>136</sup> Brereton, “The One Maid House.”

<sup>137</sup> May Henry and Jeannette Halford, *The Bachelor Girl’s Cookery Book*, (Letchworth: Garden City Press, 1915), vi.

cooking” and provided recipes that were tried and guaranteed to succeed.<sup>138</sup> She also noted that each recipe fed three people, which might suggest that bachelor girls tended to live in groups of three. The existence of this cookbook, specifically written for single women living independently, demonstrated a change not only in society, but also in the discourse on cooks and cooking. Henry and Halford still indicated that girls were not learning how to cook and that this was an ongoing issue that they hoped to solve with their cookbook, but they wanted girls to be able to cook to support themselves only and not because they needed to learn to be housewives. While working class girls were no longer choosing either domestic service or the cooking profession as enthusiastically as the previous generation, middle class girls were also adventuring into different territory (while still playing tennis and visiting the country on the weekend).

In her memoir, cookery writer Florence White recalled working as a cook-housekeeper for Catholic priests during the war. She believed “that no occupation was so good as domestic service, and no service so valuable to the nation as good cooking.”<sup>139</sup> White wrote that “we were told to keep the home fires burning; but they were in danger of going out because girls and women were leaving domestic work to make munitions.”<sup>140</sup> She continued to stress in her memoir that she truly felt that domestic service was women’s best service to the nation and wished girls saw the merits of working in service.<sup>141</sup> After working for the priests, White moved to work with a widowed lady, whom she felt was “unreasonable.”<sup>142</sup> White did not feel she was “doing any good to the nation by serving her” so she left her position for other cooking

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<sup>138</sup> Henry and Halford, vi.

<sup>139</sup> Florence White, *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1938), 276.

<sup>140</sup> White, 275.

<sup>141</sup> White, 277-279.

<sup>142</sup> White, 281.

opportunities.<sup>143</sup> White strongly emphasized her belief in the importance of being a good cook and the profession of domestic service, but as a lower to middle class woman who was not in domestic service her whole life (she had worked in various occupations), she had more opportunity to be selective about which service made her feel she was doing her part for the war effort. Reflecting on the immediate post-war period, White wrote that she became more and more assured that “the home” was the most important aspect of life, “the kitchen fire the hub of the universe, far more important than any mere parliamentary vote, which might well be left to men.”<sup>144</sup> She wrote how she tried to start a “house for training domestic servants,” but was unsuccessful, because “every woman of importance was too full up with political or municipal work to have time for it.”<sup>145</sup> White’s memoir, statements, and working life pose contradictions that reflect the many paradoxes of the female cook, cookbook author, and housewife. White’s life was an example of someone not living the prescribed stereotype for middle class women: she never married, having been blinded in one eye as a child and told by her stepmother she would need to find a way to support herself, and she supported herself (with some family help) throughout her life. Among her many jobs she worked as a teacher, cook, journalist, and later in life, English food activist, but her position on the role of women was clearly the opposite of May Henry and Jeannette Halford, who wanted to help bachelor girls. White’s statement about wanting to train domestic servants indicated she wanted a specific type of girl to become a domestic servant, a “woman of importance,” and it was clear she believed a woman’s place to be in the home.

After the war, Mrs C.S. Peel’s *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book* reflected on post-war society and cooking, and the first chapter focused on “labour saving” and kitchens. Mrs Peel

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<sup>143</sup> White, 281.

<sup>144</sup> White, 283-284.

<sup>145</sup> White, 286-287.



wrote that labour-saving devices were now necessary items because women were “so disinclined to become domestic servants.”<sup>146</sup> Before the war and in the nineteenth century, servants were the “labour savers,” but without servants, new kitchen innovations needed to be created to help the housewife with domestic duties, and Mrs Peel described a dream kitchen of the future, without any dirt and run by gas or electricity.<sup>147</sup> An article from 1923 on “The Servant Problem and Domestic Cooking” recommended using an oil cooking stove to help the “modern woman...to simplify the work of her home.”<sup>148</sup> An article from *The Yorkshire Evening Post* found in the manuscript of Dorothy Mary Leak recommended the “half-time maid” and the author called it “a war-time economy that came to stay.”<sup>149</sup> This maid did not live with the family, but arrived each day to help with the household chores. The author stated that even in the post-war period she was continuing with this arrangement, “not only for the saving of electricity, coal and gas in the kitchen, or for wages, food, etc., but for the resulting restfulness and quiet in the home, and that delightful privacy not experienced before.”<sup>150</sup> This author tried to present the situation that occurred due to the circumstances of the war as positive change, and while there were some disadvantages, she remarked that the advantages were far more significant. According to an article from 1929, by this time, “the emancipation of the servant girl [was] nearly complete” and it was necessary for daughters of the “well-to-do” to learn household work, because it would help them be able to keep a maid if the mistress knew how to do domestic work.<sup>151</sup> The fault was still placed on the mistress and her lack of knowledge, even when it was becoming more obligatory for the mistress to do the work of the servant in her household.

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<sup>146</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, Third Edition, (London: Associated Newspapers, Ltd., 1919), 1.

<sup>147</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, 1-3.

<sup>148</sup> “The Servant Problem and Domestic Cooking,” *The Hull Daily Mail*, June 23, 1923, p. 2.

<sup>149</sup> “My Half-Time Maid. A War-time Economy that Came to Stay,” newspaper clipping in Recipes & Household Hints collected by Dorothy Mary Leak, 1920-1939, Leeds Special Collections, Brotherton Library, MS 899.

<sup>150</sup> “My Half-Time Maid. A War-time Economy that Came to Stay.”

<sup>151</sup> “The Art of Keeping a Maid,” *The Evening Telegraph*, September 23, 1929, p. 8.

The “good plain cook” did not disappear in the 1920s; the position continued to be advertised in newspapers. While many advertisements asked for only a “good plain cook,” an advertisement in *The Western Morning News* specified “experienced cook, wages £45-£50; if only good plain cook, £40-£45” per year.<sup>152</sup> This illustrated how the negative connotation of “good plain cook” remained; the prospective employer assumed that a “good plain cook” was not experienced, and yet this terminology stayed and also persisted as the terminology cooks used to describe themselves. However, despite the countless advertisements, in cookbooks and other articles it did seem that the “good plain cook” and the housewife were becoming accepted as the same person.<sup>153</sup> The decrease in domestic servants in the beginning of the twentieth century led cookbook authors and newspaper articles to reflect on a new society, one where the housewife needed labour-saving devices to help her with her work because working class women were no longer available to be employed as servants. Nevertheless, the state of English food and the women who cooked it were still discussed regularly, and the emphasis on cooking economically was still as important as it was in the previous century. Cookbooks were targeted directly at housewives who cooked rather than housewives who might cook, and continued to stress the need for a strong relationship between housewives and their food suppliers. Cookery manuscripts, community cookbooks, and the margins of mass publications continued to be places where women could demonstrate their authority by preserving recipes for family and friends. Economy and efficiency, qualities that were always a part of the Victorian discourse, continued after the war. The subject matter may have altered to reflect changes in society, from “good plain cook” to housewife-cook, but the focus on the role of the housewife, cookery, and

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<sup>152</sup> “Experienced Cook,” *The Western Morning News*, September 19, 1924, p. 10.

<sup>153</sup> See Mary Evelyn (pseudonym for Florence White), *The Young Wife’s Cookery Book*, (London: Loxley Bros. Ltd., 1925).

innovations to save time and money demonstrate continuity throughout the period rather than a major change in the perceptions of cookery and its challenges.

### Chapter 3: National Identity, English Cookery, and International Comparisons

“In one word, we don’t either know how to eat or how to live in England; and unless we endeavour to copy from our neighbours, we fear we shall always be subject to the same charge, viz., “That God sends us meat, and some one else the cooks.”

*Household Cookery, Carving and Dinner-Table Observances*, (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1855), 60.

“Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are,” wrote nineteenth century French lawyer and food writer Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.<sup>1</sup> His work was translated into English by the mid-nineteenth century, and in their criticisms of their own cookery, the English followed Brillat-Savarin’s advice. In the nineteenth century, national English cookery was criticized and judged based on moral values, and the fact that it was poorly perceived was often connected to broader ideas of an English national identity. Food writers condemned the English for being insular and prejudiced, and suggested that these characteristics were harming their cookery. “Bad” English cookery was claimed to be “uncivilized,” challenging English notions of being a “civilized” nation. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Britain was at the height of its evolution as a global power, and it is unlikely that critics actually believed the English to be uncivilized. However, the state of their cookery led to embarrassment and concerns that the great English nation no longer had a great cuisine to match its other accomplishments. In their criticism of English cookery, commentators in Britain connected cookery to the nation’s identity, using the language of being uncivilized to reflect their disappointment in themselves. It was seen as a scandal that a nation *so* civilized could have such a bad cuisine that stood in stark contrast to its other achievements in culture and power.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, English cookery was regularly compared unfavourably to French cuisine, French modes of cooking, and ingredients. Imports from the Empire also increased during this time period, which both helped and hindered ideas of a

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste Or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. M.F.K. Fisher, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2009), 15.

national English cookery. Significantly, criticism of English cookery and comparisons with other nations came from English sources, specifically newspapers and cookbooks. This chapter explores how the criticism of English cookery was also a criticism of English characteristics, and how international comparisons led to internal criticism, unease, and embarrassment. It also contends that part of the perceived problem with English cooking was an issue of processing; the raw materials were considered wholesome, but it was the processing of those raw materials into packaged foodstuffs and/or the preparation of the ingredients into meals that gave rise to perceptions of inferior quality. The English often claimed they had the best ingredients, furthering the belief that they were the best and most “civilized,” but in their critique of their cookery overall, writers argued that the ingredients were wasted and led to unwholesome dishes unworthy of a “civilized” nation.

The Victorian emphasis on the value of economy played a significant role in defining a food identity, as the middle-class critique of “bad” English food celebrated other nations’ food for being economical, while nineteenth century English cookery was deemed wasteful. Most writers agreed that the English had the best produce in the world, which contributed to their sense of importance, but the cooked outcome was the worst, especially because it was the least economical. They argued that the English needed to learn from the French, who had allegedly poorer quality ingredients, but somehow always seemed to make a hearty, healthy, and inexpensive meal. Specific dishes were used to represent nations as a whole; a good dish meant the nation was championing the desired values through food and that the nation was successful at processing its raw ingredients into good cookery. In examining the perception of national identity, this chapter will analyze the concept of a “national dish,” the role of soup in defining national cookery, the vast array of seemingly foreign dishes in English cookbooks, and the

middle-class anxiety about “bad” English cookery. Rather than celebrate the “island nation” for self-sufficiency, food writers criticized the English for their narrow-mindedness and recommended English cookery embrace other cuisines, specifically the French. However, an analysis of cookbooks from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries will demonstrate that English cookery was much more international than its critics perceived. In the eighteenth century, English national cookery revolved around the celebrated roast beef, but, by the twentieth century, a distinctive English national cookery could no longer be identified by cookbook authors. Throughout the nineteenth century, English cookery absorbed and adapted, especially Empire products, and was also challenged as prejudiced and suffering from ignorance. These perceptions contributed to a confused and conflicted sense of English national identity, one without a clear national cookery.

Nineteenth century English food identity was constructed and imagined against both an internal and an external “other.” Within the British Isles, English cookery was often compared to Scottish cookery, while Welsh and Irish cookery were rarely mentioned. “English” and “British” were increasingly used interchangeably as the century progressed, but in reference to food, “English” was the more common descriptor, and “British” usually denoted “English.” Therefore, there was not a harmonious “four nations” British national food identity in the nineteenth century, and perhaps not even until 2001, when then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook declared “chicken tikka masala” to be a “true British national dish,” although this declaration could also be challenged.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century, the “at home” food rivalry mainly pitted England against Scotland, with both English and Scottish cookbooks declaring Scottish cooking

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<sup>2</sup> Robin Cook, “Robin Cook’s Chicken Tikka Masala Speech,” *The Guardian*, April 19, 2001, (accessed online January 20, 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/apr/19/race.britishidentity>.

more nutritious, more economical, and overall better food. Scottish cookery was different from English cookery, and served a different public than Scotland's southern neighbour.

The regional divide within Britain was further emphasized by how other nations were homogenized; for example, "the French," "the Italians," or "the Chinese" were nations with which English cookery was compared. While there were many regional varieties in French cooking, from the English perspective it was always perceived as one, with French cooking considered the cooking the English needed to learn from the most. Throughout the nineteenth century, the idea of French cookery infiltrated English cookbooks and discussions on food. Wealthy households demonstrated their status by hiring a male French chef rather than the female "good plain cook." French chefs, like Alexis Soyer, wrote English cookbooks and became the first celebrity chefs. The French language became the preferred choice for use on menus or recipe names, even if the dishes themselves did not seem particularly "French." Even the word "menu" originated in France and eventually surpassed the English expression "bill of fare" as the chosen phrase to list the items at the table. The appeal of French cuisine extended beyond the upper classes. The middle class embraced French cookery for reasons linked to middle class values, perceiving French cooking to be the most economical, and suggesting that the English could even learn from the French peasantry. Aristocratic families may have helped to establish French chefs within England, but the middle class chose to support French cooking because it fit with their values for the home. While presenting economical dishes was the goal, by the end of the nineteenth century, French terminology appeared in the majority of cookbooks and articles on food, often unnecessarily. Cookbook authors included menus written in French,

although the dishes were English, which represented how French dishes were tied to perceptions of “wealth” and superiority rather than just “economy.”<sup>3</sup>

English cookery was criticized for being insular, but nineteenth century cookbooks contained both ingredients and recipes that did not originate in England. Mass publications often indicated where certain ingredients originated and which countries produced the best. Manuscript cookbooks also included “foreign” dishes. Thus, some items were made at home, and were not just the offerings of a cookbook author trying to seem cosmopolitan. The number of imported items that appeared in both published and manuscript cookbooks challenged the idea that the English were pretentious, insular, and narrow-minded. Some cookbooks noted a recipe’s background, for example, stating they were “American” or “Dutch.” Other cookbooks claimed to be the best and most useful English cookbooks and happened to include these items without any special reference. In the same way that foreign words entered into the English language, through travel and absorption into everyday speech, ingredients and dishes also arrived, were printed in cookbooks, and adapted to become part of (middle class) English cookery. By the 1880s, ingredients and recipes were noted as specifically from the British Empire and considered useful additions to English cookery.

Before English cookery was criticized in the nineteenth century, there already existed an idea that nations had specific dishes they could claim as their own, generally referred to as the country’s “national dish.” In *Beef & Liberty*, Ben Rogers analyzed the eighteenth-century development of “roast beef” as the English national dish. Rogers explained that both English and French cookery shared similarities in the early modern period, but in the eighteenth century,

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see Allison Wright, *The Wright Cookery Book*, (London: Gay and Hancock, Limited, 1911), 20-21, and recipes throughout with French and English names.



French cooking changed, becoming more “refined” and including new, complex sauces.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, English cookery continued to focus on “roast meat and gravy, fiery condiments, hearty puddings and pies” and while the French considered English cookery “backward,” the English perceived their food to be “honest.”<sup>5</sup> Even in the eighteenth century, English cookery was judged using moral values rather than simply a question of taste. English cooking was celebrated as “traditional” and “plain” in contrast to new trendy French cooking. Rogers has argued that, in the eighteenth century, the English had a developed national identity, and the perception of their food as plain was defined in reaction to French luxury. However, Stephen Mennell noted that the idea of English “plain” food has been inflated; while English “plain” food was cooked differently than the French, “plain” in the eighteenth century did not mean it was inexpensive but merely referred to the mode of cooking.<sup>6</sup> The English “plain” meal of roast beef and plum pudding was still lavish in expense and quantity, if not in presentation. According to eighteenth-century English critics, French cookery was accused of being “snobbish” and expensive, and Rogers argued that at this time, French cooking was believed to provide poor nourishment.<sup>7</sup> According to Rogers, roast beef was so intrinsic to eighteenth century English middling society that it was a character/caricature in theatre. Henry Fielding wrote a song in praise of it, *The Roast Beef of Old England*, and men founded clubs based on roast beef. Most famously, the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks, established in London in 1736, was “a patriotic, anti-French association,” that for the first thirty years sang *The Roast Beef of Old England* at every meeting, until a member composed a new, more patriotic song.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ben Rogers, *Beef & Liberty*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003), 31.

<sup>5</sup> Rogers, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1985), 107.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers, 62.

<sup>8</sup> Rogers, 82.

In 1747, in her cookbook *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, Hannah Glasse scolded the English for employing French cooks, stating that “if gentlemen will have *French* cooks, they must pay for *French* tricks.”<sup>9</sup> She further bemoaned that it was the “blind folly of this age, that they would rather be imposed on by a *French* booby, than give encouragement to a good *English* cook!”<sup>10</sup> It has been suggested that Glasse wrote her “English” cookbook to contrast with French cooking, while still borrowing some French recipes and influences throughout her work. Mennell has called Glasse a “professed Francophobe” and Rogers has suggested she “went out of her way to insult French chefs.”<sup>11</sup> Mennell emphasized that in the eighteenth century, the French food trend was limited to a small and wealthy part of English society.<sup>12</sup> However, another interpretation of Glasse’s comments might be that, at the same time as insulting French cooks, she was also insulting English gentlemen for employing them, insinuating that the English were partially to blame for their lack of economy. Both Mennell and Gilly Lehmann have discussed the connection between French cooks and “Whig grandees,” with Lehmann’s research illustrating how elite Whigs were satirized for their “Frenchified tastes” compared to the English cookery of the Tories.<sup>13</sup> Glasse displayed animosity toward the French, considering French cookery to be uneconomical, but she also chided English gentlemen for allowing the infiltration of French cooking.

The eighteenth century cemented the idea of “roast beef” as England’s “national dish.” In the nineteenth century, the concept of “national dish” was increasingly used in describing other nations. The English repeatedly discussed the French national dish as the “pot-au-feu”

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<sup>9</sup> A Lady [Hannah Glasse], *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, (London: 1747; new edition, 1774), iv. Emphasis in original.

<sup>10</sup> Glasse, iv. Emphasis in original.

<sup>11</sup> Mennell, 98; Rogers, 67.

<sup>12</sup> Mennell, 127.

<sup>13</sup> Gilly Lehmann, “Politics in the Kitchen,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23:2 (1999): 73.

(sometimes just referred to as “soup”), which will be analyzed in detail below. Scotland had a few national dishes; haggis has survived as the most common, but oatmeal porridge and “Scotch broth” were also considered national dishes in the nineteenth century and remain so.<sup>14</sup> The authors of *Wholesome Fare or the Doctor and the Cook* stated that the “pillaw” was the “national dish of the Persian,” a dish they noted was “of world-wide reputation.”<sup>15</sup> Travellers also mentioned the national dishes of the regions they visited in their letters home and diaries. Writing from Madeira in 1881, Ellen M. Taylor described a dish of fowls and rice that she noted as “a national dish, and excellent” and asked for the recipe, which she then provided in the letter.<sup>16</sup> In her diary covering her travels throughout the British Empire and America, Lady Ethel Gwendoline Moffatt Vincent wrote of her excitement at trying a dish called “poi” in the Hawaiian Islands, which she found “to have no particular taste,” but pronounced it “the great national dish.”<sup>17</sup> In a diary from 1888, Lady Mary Rhodes Carbutt described the labour intensive process involved in making tortillas in Mexico, “the national dish.”<sup>18</sup> She also wrote of another dish, “the favourite national dish, frijoles or beans, without which no Mexican meal is complete.”<sup>19</sup> These women documented their travels and what they experienced, including the food they ate, sometimes commenting whether they enjoyed the food, but regardless describing

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<sup>14</sup> See *Cookery and Domestic Economy*, (Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1838), 52.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund S. and Ellen J. Delamere, *Wholesome Fare or the Doctor and the Cook*, (London: Lockwood and Co., 1868), 327.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Ellen M. Taylor, May 1, 1881, in *Letters, excerpt from Madeira: Its Scenery, and How to See It: With Letters of a Year's Residence, and Lists of the Trees, Flowers, Ferns, and Seaweeds*, (London: E. Stanford, 1882), (accessed online January 27, 2014), <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwld/getdoc.pl?S5162-D005>.

<sup>17</sup> Diary of Lady Ethel Gwendoline Moffatt Vincent, September 1884, in *Forty Thousand Miles over Land and Water: The Journal of a Tour through the British Empire and America*, vol. 1. (London: Sampson, Lowe, Marston, Searle & Rivington Ltd., 1885), (accessed online January 27, 2014), <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwld/getdoc.pl?S5196-D004>.

<sup>18</sup> Diary of Lady Mary Rhodes Carbutt, November 3, 1888, in *Five Months Fine Weather in Canada, Western U.S., and Mexico*, (London: Sampson, Lowe, Marston, Searle & Rivington Ltd., 1889), (accessed online January 27, 2014), <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwld/getdoc.pl?S4440-D005>.

<sup>19</sup> Diary of Lady Mary Rhodes Carbutt, December 2, 1888, (accessed online January 27, 2014), <http://solomon.bwld.alexanderstreet.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bwld/getdoc.pl?S4440-D006>.

the items they were presented with as national dishes. For Carbutt, beans were the “favourite” and a national dish because they were served with every meal, rather than being something extraordinary. National dishes were stereotypical dishes served on a regular basis, rather than something unique or saved for special occasions.

Nineteenth century cookbooks, writers, and critics continued to present roast beef as the English national dish, but they did not celebrate it. English food writers were no longer anti-French, but anti-English cookery and the belief that French food was unhealthy had been reversed, suggesting English cookery was the least nutritious of all nations. On the one hand, French cookery conveyed exclusivity, which was demonstrated by English menus written in French in attempts at sophistication. On the other hand, the French cookery celebrated by middle-class writers (often the same ones who used French words and phrases) was not one filled with extravagant sauces, but was based on the national dish “pot-au-feu” and the belief that soup was the most economical and nutritious meal available—a dish in which the French excelled. While soup had the potential to be accessible to all classes, the English national dish of roast beef did not. Roast beef was inherently an expensive dish, and despite seeming “plain” because the absence of sauces highlighted the meat’s quality, roasting used the most expensive cut of meat. Many cookbooks presented the act of “roasting” as specific to the English, and referred to it as the English method of cooking, whereas braising or stewing belonged to other nations, such as the French. Braising and stewing were cooking methods that used lesser quality cuts. Roasting, and roast beef, celebrated the prosperity of England and its superior product. But while English cookery was criticized from the mid-nineteenth century, the method of roasting was not specifically challenged until the 1870s. Roast beef was too intrinsic to myths of national well-being to be displaced by the new realities of consumption.

## English vs French Cookery: At Home & Away

According to chef Charles Elmé Francatelli, England was home to excess rather than economy. Francatelli was born in 1805 in London of Italian heritage, but trained in France under Antonin Careme, *the* French chef of the early nineteenth century. Francatelli returned to England as the chef for various noblemen, and briefly was chef to Queen Victoria in the early 1840s.<sup>20</sup> Published in 1846, his cookbook, *The Modern Cook*, claimed that previous authors on cookery and economy in England knew nothing of the art and therefore provided poor information on the subject. He commented that while England had “a greater abundance of all kinds of food, generally of far better quality than is to be found elsewhere...our cookery in theory and practice has become a by-word of ridicule...that we should be compelled to have recourse to foreigners...to prepare our feasts.”<sup>21</sup> Nearly one hundred years after Hannah Glasse criticized English gentlemen for their French chefs, an Anglo-Italian-French chef criticized the cookbook authors in return. The following year, Albany Fonblanque, editor and political commentator of London’s *The Examiner*, published an article on “French Wines and English Cookery,” which offered a criticism similar to Francatelli. Fonblanque wrote that “the misfortune of English cookery is the excellence of the materials,” and that the French were “good cooks because they have to dress what John Bull would turn up his nose at as carrion.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, it was now the English who were snobs, and, to a degree, lazy in the kitchen, because they were used to their product being acceptable with little manipulation, whereas other

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<sup>20</sup> Anne Pimlott Baker, “Charles Elmé Francatelli,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/article/10064>, (accessed January 22, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Charles Elmé Francatelli, *The Modern Cook*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), vi.

<sup>22</sup> Albany Fonblanque, “French Wines and English Cookery,” *The Examiner*, May 15, 1847, p. 307.

nations developed creative dishes because of poorer ingredients. English cookery in the nineteenth century suffered from the legacy of its prosperous rural past and, perhaps more accurately, its mythologized country living. Consequently, later generations were challenged to learn resourcefulness in the kitchen. Furthermore, what Francatelli and Fonblanque were noting was an issue with processing; individual ingredients in England were considered of superior quality, but when prepared into meals, the dishes were believed to be wasteful and poor nourishment.

In the 1840s, discussions of home economy continued, although the primary concern was applying economy to the famine crisis in Ireland. Francatelli's contemporary, Alexis Soyer, a French-born chef who worked for English nobles and politicians at the Reform Club, took it upon himself to save the Irish with his new ideas for soups and soup kitchens for the poor. Soyer first offered his services in letters to *The Times*, and, with the support of the government, went to Dublin to set up his soup kitchen. Soyer's system for serving soup to the poor was different from previous charitable soup kitchens, with the goal of reducing "waste and disorder" and working as an "efficient kitchen."<sup>23</sup> However, as Jillian Strang and Joyce Toomre argue, there was a difference between Soyer's inventive soup kitchen and the soup for the poor he was serving. After much publicity in the press, many criticized his "Receipt for Soup No. 1," which was published in *The Times* in February 1847, in his cookbook, *Soyer's Charitable Cookery or the Poor Man's Regenerator*, and subsequently copied in other cookbooks.<sup>24</sup> It proposed adding a few ingredients to two gallons of water. Soyer wrote that the soup had "been tasted by numerous noblemen, members of Parliament, and several ladies who have lately visited my

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<sup>23</sup> Jillian Strang and Joyce Toomre, "Alexis Soyer and the Irish Famine: 'Splendid Promises and Abortive Measures,'" in *The Great Famine and the Irish Diaspora in America*, edited by Arthur Gribben, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 70.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, *Cheap Receipts and Hints on Cookery Collected for Distribution Amongst the Irish Peasantry*, (Armagh: J M'Watters, 1847).

kitchen department, and who have considered it very good and nourishing.”<sup>25</sup> While many challenged this claim, Soyer remained enthusiastic in his efforts to help “the whole laborious and industrious population of the country, and produce economy in all charitable institutions, and comfort in every cottage.”<sup>26</sup> The idea of economy, even if not in practice nutritious, was the goal.

Soyer made no mention at this time about the quality of English cookery. The focus stayed on Ireland, and Soyer acted as a celebrity source of relief. Soyer had humanitarian motives; others had more commercial sense and noted an opportunity in the famine. *Cheap Receipts and Hints on Cookery*, which was printed in Ireland for “the Irish Peasantry” in 1847, offered multiple recipes for soup, including Soyer’s recipe, and a soup recipe from Doctor Kitchener (another cookbook author).<sup>27</sup> In providing soup recipes, the author of *Cheap Receipts* commented that it was not enough to distribute soup (as per Soyer), but it was more worthwhile to teach people how to make soup themselves. “The time lost in waiting at a Soup Kitchen might be occupied in some useful employment,” the author declared, demonstrating how economy of time was also an influence in cookery.<sup>28</sup> This cookbook also emphasized cooking with “maize or Indian corn,” noting (erroneously) that “the Canadian Voyageurs” survived on Indian corn, and recommended its use in Ireland.<sup>29</sup> Strang and Toomre have suggested that Soyer’s inventive soup kitchen distracted the focus from the real issues of the famine.<sup>30</sup> In addition to the discussion of soup in the context of the Irish famine, properly prepared soup was

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<sup>25</sup> A. Soyer, “M. Soyer’s Kitchen and Soup for the Poor,” *The Times*, February 18, 1847, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Alexis Soyer, *Soyer’s Charitable Cookery; Or, the Poor Man’s Regenerator*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1847; 1884 edition), 15.

<sup>27</sup> *Cheap Receipts and Hints on Cookery Collected for Distribution Amongst the Irish Peasantry*, 59-81.

<sup>28</sup> *Cheap Receipts and Hints on Cookery Collected for Distribution Amongst the Irish Peasantry*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Cheap Receipts and Hints on Cookery Collected for Distribution Amongst the Irish Peasantry*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> Strang and Toomre, 70.

also considered the saving grace of English cookery, and was continuously commented upon from the 1850s onward.

During the Crimean War (1853-56), Soyer surfaced again as the celebrity helper in a time of need; after reading about the horrors of life for English soldiers in the Crimea, Soyer went to the site of conflict with his “mobile kitchen” to save military cookery. Throughout the war, the French and English armies often were compared, and reporters frequently detailed the camp cookery of each army. The legacy of the Napoleonic Wars persisted well into the 1850s, and the French were known as the soldiers to respect and model; cooking was another area in which the French army excelled. While both armies experienced harsh conditions and a lack of resources, the English reporters presented the French army as more efficient because of superior cooking skills. The English army did not cook poorly because of the Crimean War, but the war did highlight the English army’s lack of cooking knowledge. The reports published in England about the army and cooking also demonstrated that writers were willing to accept the idea that the English had a problem with their cookery, and present this perception to the public. The Crimean War was another avenue for comparing French and English cookery, and for criticizing English cooking.

English newspapers published reports from war correspondents and “letters from the Crimea” detailing the poor conditions and quality of cooking over the winter of 1854-55 when the allied armies camped at Sevastopol. In an excerpt from Marianne Young’s *Our Camp in Turkey*, the *Westmorland Gazette* wrote of the “Cleverness of the French Soldiers at Cookery.” This article stated “the culinary talents of the French soldiers astonished our people” and the “English soldier was half-starved upon his rations, because he could not...convert them into



palatable food.”<sup>31</sup> An article on “Camp Cookery” in *The Blackburn Standard* questioned whether the English soldiers should starve just because they were “certainly awkward” and did not “display any remarkable talents for camp cookery.”<sup>32</sup> This article also stated that “though our culinary arrangements have been wrong for a very long time, it is never too late to mend.”<sup>33</sup> It was possible this article was only referring to the poor quality of food for the length of the war, but it could also be illustrating a deeper sense of inadequacy. The article reinforced the idea that there was a problem with English cookery, at home and abroad. On February 1, 1855, *The Morning Post* wrote of the suffering of the British soldiers, arguing they needed to be taught how to survive in harsh conditions. The article maintained that of all things, the British soldier must “be taught the most rigid economy,” and that “he should be taught to cook whatever food he can get in that manner which will leave the most nutriment in it when it is cooked.”<sup>34</sup> The article recommended an instructor of cookery be added to each company, which would help save the country money and soldiers. To conclude, the article stated that “our gallant but sensible allies know better...assuredly there is no nation under the sun knows what a soldier ought to be better than the French.”<sup>35</sup> Not only were the English soldiers perceived as starving and incompetent at taking care of themselves, but the French were the soldiers to admire.

American journalist and war correspondent, Richard C. McCormick, Jr., published his account, *A Visit to the Camp Before Sevastopol*, in 1855. McCormick compared the French and English armies, stating that the English were “overworked, poorly fed, and suffering from a complication of maladies,” whereas the French were “well-provisioned, well-clad, and

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<sup>31</sup> “Cleverness of the French Soldiers at Cookery,” *Westmorland Gazette*, December 30, 1854, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> “Camp Cookery,” *The Blackburn Standard*, January 24, 1855, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> “Camp Cookery,” p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> “In the fierce demand...,” *The Morning Post*, February 1, 1855, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> “In the fierce demand...,” p. 4.

comparatively free from sickness.”<sup>36</sup> He wrote that the French had a baker attached to each regiment, so soldiers were able to have fresh bread on a regular basis, unlike the English camps. The French were “well-organized” while the English were not.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, “where the Englishman eats his salt beef and biscuit in the same style day after day, the Frenchman has a half-dozen palatable dishes from the same monotonous components.”<sup>38</sup> Whether the French soldiers dined as well as these journalists implied was irrelevant; they were perceived to be eating and cooking this way and, by comparison, the English were poorly fed and identified as inept. Historian Orlando Figes has written that British officers ate French cuisine in much more comfortable settings than their soldiers, and officers were often in a position to buy expensive specialty foods (e.g. chocolate and champagne) and “hampers from Fortnum & Mason.”<sup>39</sup> The fact that Soyer, a French-born chef, appointed himself to help the English in the Crimea with his portable stoves added to the perception that the French were better cooks. Figes commented that Soyer changed the system of the British army to be in line with that of the French, using “mobile field canteens” and instructed cooks for each company.<sup>40</sup> Soyer’s specialty was soup, which was already the foundation of the French army, and soup was believed to be the foundation of French cookery.

At the same time as the English soldiers were undernourished in the Crimea, the editors of the *Family Economist* published *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery for the Working Classes*. In its introduction, this work compared French, English, and Scottish cookery, stating that the “Scotch, who learned the art from the French in former times, prepare savoury and

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<sup>36</sup> Richard C. McCormick, Jr., *A Visit to the Camp Before Sevastopol*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1855), 101.

<sup>37</sup> McCormick, 102.

<sup>38</sup> McCormick, 102.

<sup>39</sup> Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 283, 290.

<sup>40</sup> Figes, 355.

nourishing meals from very scanty materials—materials which many English people would cast aside as worthless.”<sup>41</sup> This cookbook focused on the importance of soup, and emphasized many areas where the English could learn from their northern neighbours. In other words, *British* food and cookery was not the problem, *English* food was. This book made it clear that the “labourer of South and Mid-England attaches too high importance to the meat and bacon part of his cookery, to the neglect of the cooked vegetable, the milk and grain diet of the north of England and of Scotland.”<sup>42</sup> The author went on to claim that northern men were “a taller race” than men from southern England, demonstrating a perceived national difference between Scotland and England.<sup>43</sup> Scottish men were stronger and taller because of their diet, and therefore, comprised a healthier nation. There was a distinct divide between the poor of the south and the poor of the north; those in the south were attempting to cling to the “roast beef” of old England, whether they could afford it or not. Despite the fact that the roast beef may have come from cattle raised in Scotland, odes were not written to the roast beef of bonnie Scotland. Rather, in the mid-nineteenth century, there was a growing awareness of the power of soup, the French “pot-au-feu” or the “Scotch broth.” *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery* stressed the importance of soup, and that soup was the main difference between the good cookery of the Scots and the French and the poor cookery of the English. Furthermore, even if the English were to make soup “when they do it is a miserable washy apology, very different from the well thickened, nourishing mess of Scotland or France.”<sup>44</sup> Echoing Soyer’s advice for the Irish, soup continued throughout the nineteenth century to be the proposed cure for English cookery, because soup was perceived to be nourishing and economical.

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<sup>41</sup> Editors of the *Family Economist*, *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery for the Working Classes*, (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1854), 5-6.

<sup>42</sup> *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery*, 25.

<sup>44</sup> *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery*, 17-18.

*Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, published in 1855 as one of Orr's Household Hand Books, also presented a pro-French cookery point of view. The authors of this cookbook "insisted" that soup was crucial for a "good dinner" and that "no class dine in France without soup."<sup>45</sup> Soup was not only perceived as a potential main dish for the working classes, but also indicated France had a civilized dinner service because soup was served as the first course. In contrast, "English soup" was similar to "glue," "unwholesome," and wasted meat.<sup>46</sup> The waste of English soup offended the authors because "domestic economy" was fundamental for the proper management of a household.<sup>47</sup> Providing a recipe for Mulligatawny Soup, the authors wrote that the soup was "so completely Indian and English," but they did not think it was suitable for foreigners because it was specific to English tastes.<sup>48</sup> They concluded that in India the soup was probably "excellent," but were not confident it was made as well in England.<sup>49</sup> A recipe for "White Haricot Soup" was claimed to be enjoyed by a "perfect John Bull," who was otherwise against everything French.<sup>50</sup>

*Household Cookery* claimed soup was not the only dish at which the French excelled, and at which the English suffered in comparison. The English were fortunate to find inexpensive and good fish, whereas in France it was much more expensive—"yet the French prepare fish in perfection; while in England it is tasteless and insipid."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the authors commented that English poultry was of high quality, but the English method of "boiling fowls is almost an act of absolute barbarism and want of civilization."<sup>52</sup> They stated boiled poultry tasted terrible and

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<sup>45</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1855), 27.

<sup>46</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 64.

<sup>47</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 64.

<sup>48</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 73.

<sup>49</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 74.

<sup>50</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 75-76.

<sup>51</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 82.

<sup>52</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 29.

indicated an “utter ignorance of the culinary art.”<sup>53</sup> Other sources claimed English cookery was barbaric because it was perceived to be dirty, but *Household Cookery* believed the methods of cookery were the true shortcomings. It was not a problem with the ingredients, but one of processing. As Francatelli and Fonblanque stated earlier, English produce was regarded as the best (until the scandal over adulteration developed in the 1850s), but it was cooked poorly and in a wasteful manner. *Household Cookery* believed cookery to be a “question of civilization,” and despite declaring England the “richest nation” with the “finest, meat, fish, poultry, game, and vegetables,” there were no English cooks capable of cooking properly.<sup>54</sup> As the reputation for bad cookery became part of the representation of the nation, the implied question was thus: how could the English consider themselves truly civilized if their food was not?

Comparisons with other national cuisines brought home the importance of cookery in national representation and civilizational status. For instance, the Special Correspondent for *The Times* in China reported that Chinese cookery was above English, but below the French. In China, cooks believed there was “an especial connection between cookery and civilization” and considered the English “low in the intellectual scale, and must hold their high rank only by brute force.”<sup>55</sup> The article advised its readers that rather than insult the Chinese as “filthy feeders” and question their ideas of civilization, the English should “glance homeward, lest we try them by a wrong standard.”<sup>56</sup> This report discussed Chinese, English, and French cookery in China and reprimanded the English not only for previous criticisms of Chinese cookery, but also for considering themselves civilized, when apparently their poor cookery indicated they were not.

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<sup>53</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 29.

<sup>54</sup> *Household Cookery, Carving, and Dinner-Table Observances*, 52.

<sup>55</sup> “Chinese Food,” *The Times*, February 2, 1858, p. 9. This article was also published in other newspapers, such as *Liverpool Mercury*, February 5, 1858.

<sup>56</sup> “Chinese Food,” *The Times*, February 2, 1858.

### ***The English Cookery Book, Economy, and Inferiority***

*The English Cookery Book* by J.H. Walsh, published in 1858, attempted to present an English cookbook with a positive perception of English cookery. Throughout the cookbook, Walsh compared French and English cookery, often conceding that the French method was superior, or stating that the French learned from old English methods. For example, when describing frying and the oil used in the frying pan, Walsh acknowledged that “in point of economy, therefore, the French beat us here.”<sup>57</sup> Walsh devoted an entire chapter to French cookery, and tried to reverse the idea that English cookery was “in a barbarous condition.”<sup>58</sup> In this section, he admitted that English cookery had learned from French cookery, but believed that French cooks were using English “principles...dignified with high-sounding French names.”<sup>59</sup> He challenged whether certain French dishes were more economical or more wholesome than English dishes and declared they were not. He then stated that “French cookery can only claim a superiority in point of flavour,” but because this was a selective matter of individual taste, a definitive decision about which cookery was superior could not be resolved.<sup>60</sup> Walsh made similar comments as those before him, asserting that the “English mistake has been, not so much in the poverty of their cookery, as in the abuse of its abundance of good things.”<sup>61</sup> He continued to state that if the French had better quality meat, they would be more likely to serve plainer dishes, but instead they needed to create recipes that used poor quality ingredients. In his attempts to dispel notions of uncivilized English cookery, Walsh reproached the English:

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<sup>57</sup> J.H. Walsh, *The English Cookery Book*, (London: G. Routledge and Co., 1858), 52.

<sup>58</sup> Walsh, 287.

<sup>59</sup> Walsh, 287.

<sup>60</sup> Walsh, 288.

<sup>61</sup> Walsh, 288.

The English of the last century were bigoted in thinking themselves superior to all other nations; but in the latter half of this they seem determined to run into the opposite extreme, and come to the conclusion that they are only fit to wash the dishes for their neighbours' *chefs de cuisine*.<sup>62</sup>

Walsh concluded by admitting that the French were more creative, but denied that their “national cookery” was better than the English.<sup>63</sup>

Walsh's long discussion of English and French cookery made some similar arguments to those of his contemporaries, but the section quoted above seemed to address the real issue. It was not only about economy, but a sense of inferiority with regard to food had developed in the nineteenth century that was not present in the previous century. Walsh wanted the English to consider their cookery and themselves as equals to the French, denying French superiority. He admonished the English for thinking so little of their cookery when he hoped to prove it was on par with the French. His comments illustrated how poor English cookery was damaging to an English sense of superiority. However, it seemed that the criticisms of English cookery as barbaric, uncivilized, and uneconomical, called attention to larger fears about the whole of the English nation and society. Walsh suggested that in the hierarchy of cooking, the English had become used to self-criticism as the dishwashers, the bottom of the ladder.

A study of the recipes in *The English Cookery Book* illuminates what Walsh considered “English” cookery. In his preface, he wrote that the recipes in the book were collected by a group of women who gave their own family recipes, and that almost all of the recipes had been tried (it was then common for cookbooks to print untried recipes). Within the recipes, various cooking methods were discussed, again comparing French and English cooking, although usually concluding that the English method was still better. The cookbook contained recipes for a variety of curries, “American” dishes, ten different plum pudding recipes, French, Spanish, and

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<sup>62</sup> Walsh, 289.

<sup>63</sup> Walsh, 289.

German recipes, and a mix of recipe titles in French and English. This array of recipes was fairly standard for most cookbooks aimed at the middle classes in the mid-nineteenth century, but Walsh called it “a most complete system of English cookery,” and he thought it could be adapted “to the wants of all families throughout the United Kingdom and the British Colonies.”<sup>64</sup> Walsh also included some recipes that perhaps were not regular dishes at middle-class dinners, such as the recipe for “Pommes A La Hollandaise,” which called for the use of “Eau de Vie de Dantzig.”<sup>65</sup> If this liqueur was not available, the recipe recommended using “gilder’s leaf of gold” to create the “elegant” dish that was seen on “the dessert tables of continental dinner-givers of celebrity.”<sup>66</sup> While trying to promote his celebration of “English” cookery, Walsh’s collection of recipes also seemed to take a broad definition of what constituted “English” cookery, demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of, and the confusion surrounding, the English food identity.

The reviews of *The English Cookery Book* were mixed. Most significantly, the reviewer from *John Bull and Britannia* wrote that Walsh’s “arguments against French cookery are simply absurd” and that the recipes in the book suffered because they were not as good as Soyer’s.<sup>67</sup> That a magazine titled “John Bull,” with the header “For God, the Sovereign, and the People!”, criticized Walsh and *The English Cookery Book* for not agreeing to French superiority was rather surprising. Other reviews were not as critical. The review in *The Examiner* referred to French dishes as the “offspring of bad meat” and recommended English cooks study Walsh’s cookbook.<sup>68</sup> The reviewer for *The Leader* began by stating that *The English Cookery Book* “condescends to make the admission” that the “French are our masters in culinary science,” but

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<sup>64</sup> Walsh, iv.

<sup>65</sup> Walsh, 284.

<sup>66</sup> Walsh, 284.

<sup>67</sup> “*The English Cookery Book*,” *John Bull and Britannia*, October 23, 1858, p. 682.

<sup>68</sup> “*The English Cookery Book*,” *The Examiner*, October 16, 1858, p. 660.



continued to discuss that the English do know “a thing or two” in the kitchen.<sup>69</sup> This review quibbled about some recipe choices in the book, but recommended its large number of recipes for those with a modest income.<sup>70</sup> A review in *The Morning Post* stated that “it would be impossible almost to have a more complete English cookery book,” which would indicate that “foreign” dishes were not actually so foreign after all and were considered part of nineteenth century English cookery.<sup>71</sup> Walsh issued a new edition of *The English Cookery Book*, now titled *The British Cookery Book*, in 1864, although the only change was the switch from “English” to “British.”

Despite Walsh’s efforts, English cookery continued to be criticized. In 1859, a year after Walsh’s publication appeared, an article in *The Hull Packet & East Riding Times* declared that English cookery was the “rudest of barbarous devices” and that the English were on the same level as “the ape.”<sup>72</sup> Another provincial newspaper article from 1859, “English Society and English Dinners,” recommended improving social manners within English society; for example, the article noted the English were scared that if they became too friendly with acquaintances, they would feel forced to invite them to share a meal.<sup>73</sup> English dinners would only be improved by “the better cultivation of the art of society,” but improving cookery would only partially help improve society.<sup>74</sup> A national newspaper article from 1864 also suggested English cookery suffered from a lack of English “sociability,” something at which the French excelled.<sup>75</sup> This article, from a French author’s point of view, suggested that the English ate too quickly because

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<sup>69</sup> “*The English Cookery Book*,” *The Leader*, October 16, 1858, p. 1093.

<sup>70</sup> “*The English Cookery Book*,” *The Leader*, October 16, 1858.

<sup>71</sup> “*The English Cookery Book*,” *The Morning Post*, October 9, 1858, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> “English Cookery and Intemperance,” *The Hull Packet & East Riding Times*, June 24, 1859.

<sup>73</sup> “English Society and English Dinners,” *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, April 28, 1859, p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> “English Society and English Dinners.”

<sup>75</sup> “France,” *Daily News*, September 26, 1864.

they were “business people, always in a hurry.”<sup>76</sup> The Frenchman also believed that plain dishes stemmed from English societal beliefs—“the doctrine of respect for individual liberty” meant that each person should be able to choose what to put on his or her plate without the dish already being covered in sauce.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, it seemed the belief in individual choice had extended to the kitchen, but perhaps too far, since the author did not think liberty was helping English cookery. Lady Harriett St Clair, compiler of the cookbook *Dainty Dishes* (1866), declared in her preface that “*English* cookery is the worst,” especially the “horrible attempts at entrees, dignified with some high-sounding French name” made by English cooks.<sup>78</sup> Using French terminology did not improve English cookery, rather it covered up something already perceived as bad. Advising travellers to London in 1866, Baedeker’s London guide warned readers that “coffee, soups, vegetables” were “unrecognizable abominations” and “the dark side of English cookery.”<sup>79</sup> The guide recommended finding a German doctor after arriving in London because of the terrible English food situation.

In the *Daily News*’s report on the International Exposition held in Paris in 1867, the newspaper’s “special correspondent” detailed the food exhibition and the displays of the British Food Court. The correspondent began the report by noting the statistics that appeared in the British food catalogue for the exhibition, which indicated that produce and meat were much cheaper in the eighteenth century than they were in the nineteenth. The writer agreed with the statements of contemporary “great food authorities” that the English people were malnourished and “that the race is consequently deteriorating.”<sup>80</sup> Commenting that the quality of English produce was the “finest,” it seemed this was not well-represented at the exhibition. Huntley and

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<sup>76</sup> “France.”

<sup>77</sup> “France.”

<sup>78</sup> Lady Harriett St Clair, *Dainty Dishes*, (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1866), vi. Emphasis in original.

<sup>79</sup> “Baedeker’s London,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, Friday, November 16, 1866.

<sup>80</sup> “The Paris Exhibition,” *Daily News*, May 3, 1867.

Palmer, biscuit manufacturers, and Crosse & Blackwell, makers of condiments and preserves, were the best exhibitors in the British Food Court, with exciting displays of the variety of their products. However, a large section of the exhibition space was covered with posters on the wall and black boards, which the writer stated was a “useless confusion of knowledge,” and there should have been a great display of “all the varieties of English food.”<sup>81</sup> The writer noted that visiting the French food exhibition demonstrated “the greatness and the gravity of our error” as the French displayed a wide variety of produce, fresh each day.<sup>82</sup> The report concluded by stating that the English food department was small, poorly represented, and illustrated that the English were “overwhelmed, not only by our neighbours, but by other and second-rate countries.”<sup>83</sup> While English cookery was discussed negatively at home, it was a larger problem to be perceived foolish and not celebrated at an international fair that occurred in France, perhaps the one place where the English would want to triumph. The French were not only defeating English cookery at home, but the English were apparently making it easy for the French to win the food battle in Paris.

Back in England, criticisms of English cookery continued, now focusing more specifically on monotony, waste/economy, and ignorance. The French pot-au-feu was repeatedly mentioned for its variety and economy, while beef and mutton were problematic because they were seen as monotonous and wasteful. Large joints of meat were considered wasteful because they used a lot of fuel and it was believed that middle class families were trying to uphold the tradition of roast meat by purchasing more than could easily feed their family and then they were stuck serving cold meat for the rest of the week—leading to the dietary tedium. Cold meat was usually found to be boring after a few days and then the meat was wasted because it was thrown

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<sup>81</sup> “The Paris Exhibition.”

<sup>82</sup> “The Paris Exhibition.”

<sup>83</sup> “The Paris Exhibition.”

out. Writing on “Cookery” in 1868, *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post* reported that in France, people always found what to eat in the “*pot-au-feu*,” in Italy, the “*pignatta* is ever simmering,” while in England, “the Englishman in ignorance wastes and wants.”<sup>84</sup> Scottish oatmeal was also recommended as a nutritious dish, although the authors of *Wholesome Fare* from 1868 commented that the Scottish diet would “never be adopted in England” even though it “has produced some of the finest specimens of humanity.”<sup>85</sup>

In the early 1870s, the critique of English cookery persisted, even though organizations were established to help reform both kitchen practices and lifestyles. The first publication of the short-lived periodical *Knife & Fork* from July 1871 included a long poem dedicated to the editor of the magazine, “Fin-Bec,” for his good work in helping English cookery. The poem began with “Fin-Bec! Mon ami! You have made an advance/ In the march of civilization;/ And England soon will outdo France/ As a gastronomic nation.”<sup>86</sup> Through clever rhyme, this poem emphasized both the significance of being a civilized nation, and one that would be superior to its rival, France. But a few issues of the *Knife & Fork* were not enough to save English cookery. An article published in *The Graphic* in September 1871 discussed English food and referred to it as belonging to the “barbarous British race.”<sup>87</sup> The article also believed that because of a boring diet overwhelmingly of mutton, the English suffered from a “monotony of ... opinions.”<sup>88</sup> Repetitive, dull cookery was creating a society that was not creative or adventuresome, but instead, prejudiced and predictable. The perceived poor quality of English cookery led to an unfavourable perception of the English as a nation. Improving cookery was part of a civilizing project at home, to compete with other “civilized” nations, especially France. The author of the

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<sup>84</sup> “Cookery,” *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post*, Wednesday, January 29, 1868. Emphasis in original.

<sup>85</sup> Edmund S. and Ellen J. Delamere, *Wholesome Fare*, 694.

<sup>86</sup> “To Fin-Bec,” *Knife & Fork*, Vol. I—No. 1, Saturday, July 1, 1871, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> “Eating and Cooking as Fine Arts,” *The Graphic*, Saturday, September 16, 1871, p. 275.

<sup>88</sup> “Eating and Cooking as Fine Arts.”

article in *The Graphic*, as well as the other critics of English cookery, likely did not really think the English were uncivilized, but they did believe in the connection between cookery and the nation as a whole, and were disappointed and embarrassed by the poor perception of English cookery. The English commentators were concerned with their cuisine because it suggested a lack in civilization that was inconsistent with the clear power and status of Britain in other realms. The article in *The Graphic* suggested its readers examined their meals to make sure they were “conducive to a wise and agreeable development,” demonstrating the relationship between food and health as well as food and civilization.<sup>89</sup> It was a scandal and an embarrassing blemish on English society that a nation that considered itself the best in other areas of society could suffer from the worst cuisine.

### **Wasteful Meat-Eaters vs Economical Soup-Savers**

Agricultural depression in the 1870s and a decline in the availability of meat led to serious criticism of England’s national dish. While new sources of meat, such as tinned imports from America and Australia, were beginning to be accepted in the 1870s, food writers stressed that the middle-class insistence on enjoying large quantities of meat, as part of upholding “the time-honoured” tradition, was leading to greater problems.<sup>90</sup> Roast beef was still assumed to be the English national dish, but it was no longer celebrated, and many people were not even eating home-grown meat. Part of the success of roast beef was due to the high-quality cattle raised in Scotland and England. With agricultural change and cheaper foreign meat on the market, it was difficult to promote England’s national dish. The large cut of meat needed for roasting was

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<sup>89</sup> “Eating and Cooking as Fine Arts.”

<sup>90</sup> “Literature,” *The Leeds Mercury*, Thursday, Feb 13, 1873.

unrealistic for the majority of society, and writers criticized middle-class households that did not change with the times. Articles recommended the only cure for the poor English cookery was to “sacrifice” roasting large pieces of meat.<sup>91</sup> The persistence of serving roast beef and mutton was considered “the fundamental blunder” of English cooking.<sup>92</sup> An article in *The Graphic* stated that “good dinners” were not “a national institution in England,” and that “good English food” was not affordable for a large portion of the population.<sup>93</sup> The English were wasteful and needed to observe the French for their soups and stews, dishes the English ignored. The article noted that the French pot-au-feu was perceived to be “kickshawy” and challenged this idea.<sup>94</sup> A “kickshaw” was an English term for a small, decorative, foreign dish that was the opposite of plain English dishes; ironically, the word was an Anglicization of the French phrase “quel-quechose,” which referenced a “little something” for the table.<sup>95</sup> Originally used in the sixteenth century, the nineteenth century usage implied an insult—the English were accusing French soups as being something “kickshawy” and not hearty enough for their tables.<sup>96</sup> Considering French food to be “kickshawy” recalled the earlier eighteenth-century perception of French food as frivolous.

*The Scholars’ Handbook of Household Management and Cookery* by W.B. Tegetmeier, written for the School Board for London in 1876, was one of the early cookbooks to comment on the uneconomical nature of roasting, recommending baking and stewing as better cooking

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<sup>91</sup> “Literature.”

<sup>92</sup> “Literature.”

<sup>93</sup> “Reform in the Kitchen,” *The Graphic*, March 23, 1872.

<sup>94</sup> “Reform in the Kitchen.”

<sup>95</sup> See “Kickshaw,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed online (February 4, 2014), <http://www.oxfordreference.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100036165>.

<sup>96</sup> Later articles continued to note English resistance to “kickshaws.” For example, the article “Gastronomics,” *The Nottinghamshire Guardian*, December 30, 1893, p. 3, stated that “foreign kickshaws are to the masses anathema, nay, even unpatriotic, and are spoken of with an amount of scorn which they are supposed to deserve.”

methods.<sup>97</sup> The cookbook praised the French pot-au-feu and the Scotch broth as economical dishes, but noted that English “prejudice or ignorance” stopped the English from making these soups.<sup>98</sup> Another school board cookbook, *Food and Home Cookery* by Catherine M. Buckton, member of the Leeds School Board, believed ignorance to be the problem with English cookery. Buckton declared that the French were the “best and most economical cooks in the world,” while the English were the “most wasteful and worst cooks,” because the English did not understand or learn proper cooking methods and assumed that food would cook itself without attention.<sup>99</sup> Whether it was prejudice or ignorance or both, cookbook authors and newspapers agreed that English cookery was, unfortunately, the most wasteful and did not subscribe to middle class values or represent the nation positively.

Scottish cookbooks furthered the distinction between Scottish and English cookery, presenting Scotland as a superior nation because of its cookery. Jenny Wren’s *Modern Domestic Cookery*, published in 1880, ranked the greatness of nations based on their ability to produce excellent soups, listing France as first, Scotland second, and Wales third.<sup>100</sup> Wren defended the French pot-au-feu, stating that the English accusation that it was a “kickshaw” was misguided.<sup>101</sup> She recommended Scotch Broth, and also recommended Cabbage Soup, which she considered Russia’s “national dish,” as “excellent” meals for families.<sup>102</sup> Wren tried to dismiss English judgement of various soups, especially the pot-au-feu, and stressed the importance of soup as a nourishing and economical meal for a family. Andrew Stewart, editor of the weekly magazine *The People’s Friend*, published two cookbooks which illustrated the differences between English

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<sup>97</sup> W.B. Tegetmeier, *The Scholars’ Handbook of Household Management and Cookery*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876), 20-26.

<sup>98</sup> Tegetmeier, 26. Also see p. 129, “Pot-au-feu.—The French national dish, and a most economical one.”

<sup>99</sup> Catherine M. Buckton, *Food and Home Cookery A Course of Instruction in Practical Cookery and Cleaning, for Children in Elementary Schools*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1879), 31-32.

<sup>100</sup> Jenny Wren, *Modern Domestic Cookery*, (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1880), 31.

<sup>101</sup> Wren, 33.

<sup>102</sup> Wren, 34, 36.

and Scottish cookery, and implied a sense of Scottish superiority as a nation. Stewart's cookbooks celebrated Scottish dishes, promoting them as the best, nutritious, and thrifty. In addition to soup, Stewart emphasized the good qualities of Scottish porridge, noting that English cookbooks did not provide accurate instruction for making porridge properly.<sup>103</sup>

Stewart's cookbooks contained multiple remarks about the quality of English food, people, and the nation as a whole, in comparison with Scotland. Similar to the observations made in *The Art of Good and Cheap Cookery for the Working Classes* from 1854, Stewart believed there was a "wide distinction" between English and Scottish recipes because of a difference in "national tastes."<sup>104</sup> English cookbooks, Stewart argued, were unsuitable for people in Scotland because of different lifestyles, kitchens, and customs. He also believed that Scottish recipes were unsuited to the English population, and observed that the English might read his recipes with "supreme contempt," whereas any new information for Scottish readers would be welcome since they did not suffer from a "natural aversion" to learning something new.<sup>105</sup> According to Stewart, it was only the English who were judgemental and insular, whereas the Scottish were practical and adaptable. However, even with the perceived differences between Scotland and England, Stewart published *The Scottish Cookery Book* because he felt Scotland also needed a cookbook to help expand its cookery—albeit in relation to England. Stewart included a statement from the Laird of Macnab, who wrote why he believed there was a problem with Scottish cookery. Written in a Scottish dialect, the Laird of Macnab blamed the "effects o' the Union" and criticized the Scottish for being influenced by the "pock-puddin' Southron tykes"

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<sup>103</sup> Andrew Stewart, *The Scottish Cookery Book*, (Edinburgh: John Menzies & Co., 1878), 10.

<sup>104</sup> Andrew Stewart, *The Thrifty Housewife*, (Dundee: "People's Friend" Office, 1882), viii.

<sup>105</sup> Stewart, *The Scottish Cookery Book*, iii.



whose stomachs turned at the sight of haggis and the staples of the “auld gusty Scotch diet.”<sup>106</sup> Scottish cookery was hearty and strong, while English cookery was for those with weak stomachs. The Union was blamed for the infiltration of English dishes into Scottish cookery. Generally, Scottish cookery was promoted as better nutritionally and economically, but if there were any problems, then the English were to blame. Four years later, Stewart’s *The Thrifty Housewife* specifically claimed that because of soup, the Scottish people were “decidedly ahead of their English neighbours in knowing what is good for them,” and created the most economical dishes.<sup>107</sup>

In its critique of a new cookbook in 1881, *The Pall Mall Gazette* joined the French-versus-English cookery debate. The article challenged the idea that French pot-au-feu was always the best option, recommending other nations’ soups, such as the Italian “minestra” or Scotch broth, instead.<sup>108</sup> However, even if these soups were the most nutritious and economical, the article believed that they would never be popular in England because the English working man was not “a soup-eating animal.”<sup>109</sup> The English preference for meat, even cold beef, was more suitable to the English disposition and was an example of the “difference of race and nationality” between the English and French.<sup>110</sup> The article remarked that one culture was not better than the other, merely observing that society should stop insisting the English eat the same soup as the French. Soup-eating was, therefore, perceived as a national characteristic, and meat-eating, at least to *The Pall Mall Gazette*, still was an important indicator of what made a true Englishman. In the 1888 article, “English Cookery and Cheap Food,” the Cardiff newspaper the

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<sup>106</sup> “The Laird of Macnab on the Degeneracy of Scotchmen and Scotch Cookery,” in Stewart, *The Scottish Cookery Book*, vi.

<sup>107</sup> Stewart, *The Thrifty Housewife*, 29.

<sup>108</sup> “The Cupboard Papers,” *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Tuesday, July 12, 1881.

<sup>109</sup> “The Cupboard Papers.”

<sup>110</sup> “The Cupboard Papers.”

*Western Mail* also commented on the meat-eating English and their aversion toward soup. The article pronounced that the amount of meat consumed by the English was “one of the first strange things” noticed by visitors to England and the belief that all meals needed to include meat was a “delusion” from which the English suffered.<sup>111</sup> The article also recommended soups of other nations, especially the Scottish, French, Italian, and German soups, although it noted that the English working family had “an extraordinary prejudice” against all soups, demonstrating that this perception was still an issue at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> English cookery and English identity were connected, as food writers defined part of being English as being wasteful meat-eaters, rather than economical soup-savers.

### **International Cookery**

Cookbooks and newspaper articles declared the English to be prejudiced, wasteful, and, despite decades of soup promotion, that it simply was not within the English nature to eat soup. English identity was tied to eating meat, and even when purchasing meat was difficult and other dishes were more economical, soup was not perceived to be a tolerable alternative. Other nations considered the English culinary habits to be “strange,” as the *Western Mail* observed. The Scottish looked down upon English food customs from their northern location, believing their soup and porridge to be factors in creating a strong and thrifty Scottish population.<sup>113</sup> While the majority of nineteenth century cookbooks focused on domestic economy and cookery, there were some cookbooks with a more specific national emphasis, such as the Scottish cookbooks mentioned above. The Scottish cookbooks easily made comparisons with their

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<sup>111</sup> “English Cookery and Cheap Food,” *Western Mail*, March 28, 1888, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> “English Cookery and Cheap Food.”

<sup>113</sup> See “English Cookery and Cheap Food,” *Western Mail*, March 28, 1888, p. 2.

southern neighbours, but other nations were represented in cookbooks as well. French, German, and Anglo-Indian cookbooks were also sources of comparison with English cookery.

Mrs Harriet Toogood's *The Treasury of French Cookery* from 1866 was a translation of recipes she copied from French cookbooks. Some of the recipe titles were written in French and English, and included English recipes with French names, such as "Pommes de Terre a l'Anglaise."<sup>114</sup> A later cookbook, *The Profession of Cookery from a French Point of View*, by Lucy H. Yates, compared English and French cookery throughout the book, referring to the French as a "nation of cooks."<sup>115</sup> In the first chapter, "Economy as the Soul of Cookery," Yates explained the significance of soup for the French diet, and challenged English notions that soup "disagreed" with the English constitution.<sup>116</sup> She argued that countries should be influenced by each other and learn different methods for cooking, but that the English still needed to be educated in economical cooking.<sup>117</sup> Echoing the earlier argument for sociability, Yates commented that the English ate their meals, particularly breakfast, in "too hurried" and "too business-like" a manner to allow for any sort of pleasantness.<sup>118</sup> The French, on the other hand, understood that "sociability" during a meal helped with digestion.<sup>119</sup> The French were not only more economical cooks, but they were also more civil company during a meal than were the English. Since they did not rush their meals, the French were healthier overall due to better digestion. If the English learned from the French and let French soups and mannerisms "agree" with them, English cookery would be better and the English more civilized.

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<sup>114</sup> Mrs Harriet Toogood, *The Treasury of French Cookery*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), 188.

<sup>115</sup> Lucy H. Yates, *The Profession of Cookery from a French Point of View*, (London: Ward, Lock & Bowden, 1894), 1.

<sup>116</sup> Yates, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Yates, 4.

<sup>118</sup> Yates, 178.

<sup>119</sup> Yates, 187.

*French Cookery for Ladies*, a series of lectures given by Madame Emilie Lebour-Fawssett and published as a cookbook in 1899, furthered the comparison between the two cuisines, and offered French recipes to help change the “monotonous fare” of the English.<sup>120</sup> Her goals included eliminating the wastefulness of English cookery, improving English meals, and educating ladies so they were not entirely dependent on their cooks.<sup>121</sup> Soup was so integral to French cookery that Lebour-Fawssett discussed making soup in multiple lectures, including devoting an entire lecture to pot-au-feu, the dish she referred to constantly as the French “national dish.” She hoped her talks would challenge and remove all of the pre-existing English “wrong notions and prejudices” about French cookery.<sup>122</sup> Without specifically calling the English barbarians, Lebour-Fawssett outlined how “good cookery” was the divider between the civilized and uncivilized “savage.”<sup>123</sup> The savage man ate only because he was hungry and “like an animal,” while civilized men with good cookery enjoyed “pleasant and artistic” meals.<sup>124</sup> The French possessed good cookery, which she hoped to impart in her lectures to English ladies. As other articles had already indicated that the English nature hurried and required meat, while the French dined with sociability, Lebour-Fawssett added to the perception that wasteful and ill-prepared dinners were making the English barbarians.

Cookbooks specializing in German food also presented perceptions of English cooking and offered comparisons between the two nations. *German National Cookery for English Kitchens*, published in 1873, two years after German unification, stressed the importance of not translating German recipe names into English. The author believed that using English names

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<sup>120</sup> Madame Emilie Lebour-Fawssett, *French Cookery for Ladies*, (London: H. Virtue and Company, Limited, 1899), v.

<sup>121</sup> Lebour-Fawssett, 7.

<sup>122</sup> Lebour-Fawssett, 125.

<sup>123</sup> Lebour-Fawssett, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Leour-Fawssett, 6.

would rob the German dishes of their German nature and that English translations could not be found for many of the recipes, which were felt to be particularly German.<sup>125</sup> The cookbook also commented on English prejudice against trying new things, noting that more than other nations, the English were prone to judge anything foreign and were hesitant to try “strange flavours.”<sup>126</sup> An article from 1891 wrote that “a German friend” was always complaining about “our English cookery, which she characterise[d] as insipid and wanting in variety.”<sup>127</sup> Perhaps increased competition between the two countries was also played out through recipes and a comparison of national cookery. Published in 1906, *German Cookery for the English Kitchen* also provided German recipes adapted for English use, with the author, Ella Oswald, suggesting the cookbook would be useful for those who had spent time in Germany or for German immigrants in England. Oswald included certain ingredients that needed to be purchased at German grocery stores, such as sauerkraut and pumpernickel.<sup>128</sup> Rather than promote German cooking for judgemental English readers, Oswald believed her readers to be those who had already tasted German delicacies. Oswald was not trying to compare English and German cuisines, but wanted to make German recipes available to the public.<sup>129</sup>

Anglo-Indian cookbooks were written from a different perspective than the comparative nature of the other cookbooks, which were nation versus nation. As part English, part Indian, Anglo-Indian cookbooks offered an opportunity for comparison within the Empire. (Unless otherwise noted, the term Anglo-Indian used here refers to the English who spent time in India, rather than people of mixed English and Indian heritage.) Cookbooks written for an Anglo-

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<sup>125</sup> *German National Cookery for English Kitchens*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1873), v.

<sup>126</sup> *German National Cookery for English Kitchens*, vi.

<sup>127</sup> “Germans are Extravagant with Butter,” *The Newcastle Weekly Courant*, Saturday, Feb 28, 1891.

<sup>128</sup> Ella Oswald, *German Cookery for the English Kitchen*, (London: A. Siegle, 1906), preface.

<sup>129</sup> As an aside, the copy of Oswald’s cookbook at the British Library looked used, and included multiple recipes which were marked with pencil.

Indian readership illustrated the imperial relationship between England and India and offered their own perception of an English national food identity. An early Anglo-Indian cookbook, *Indian Cookery*, was published in 1831 as part of the London Oriental Institution and the Oriental Translation Committee. The preface to the book recognized that due to the relationship between England and India, many people had visited India and immersed themselves in the Indian culture, but upon returning home to England could not bring any of that unique culture back with them. The cookbook offered recipes as one way to take the Indian culture back to England and remind “old Indians,” of their favourite dishes.<sup>130</sup> The cookbook was written by a native cook in India and translated by Sandford Arnot, a member of the London Oriental Institution. In Arnot’s preface, he not only described the need for an Indian cookbook—to offer Indian recipes for the English returning from India—but he also commented on the state of cookery and the need for women to be properly educated in cooking. Had this cookbook only indicated its purpose as a chance for “old Indians” to reminisce and enjoy eastern cuisine, it would still be useful as an example of a foreign cookbook, but not as remarkable. Significantly, in his preface, Arnot reflected on a past era when women were educated in cookery and would have taken note of the recipes of the dishes they were served in India. Instead, Arnot believed that in “these degenerate modern days,” the Englishwomen in India did not enter the kitchen, discuss recipes with the cook, or learn anything about the specific dishes they were consuming while in India.<sup>131</sup> Upon return to England, the women were unable to help with making rice or a curry, and Arnot assumed that ignorance in the kitchen did not bother these women, because that had become the new norm.

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<sup>130</sup> *Indian Cookery, as Practised and Described By the Natives of the East*, Trans. by Sandford Arnot, (London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund, 1831), iv.

<sup>131</sup> *Indian Cookery*, iv.

The cookbook was published in 1831, well before others were referring to English cookery and the cookery situation as barbaric or “degenerate” and it was likely that the audience for this cookbook was fairly limited. It was printed for a specific institution that concerned itself with England’s affairs in India and the returning “old Indians” back to England. The cookbook was also published as part of a group of documents titled “Miscellaneous Translations from Oriental Languages.” *Indian Cookery* seemed particularly targeted at the English who worked in India, and yet, Arnot used the opportunity to criticize the Englishwomen for not paying attention to the food served while they were there. While an early example, Arnot’s comments in *Indian Cookery* demonstrated how the Empire, in this case India, acted as its own source of comparison for the English, particularly through cooking. The Empire brought the English into contact with different ingredients and dishes that were foreign, but cookery was also a way for the English to have a safe encounter with the “other.” As evidenced by Arnot’s critique and *Indian Cookery*, as well as later Anglo-Indian cookbooks, Indian cookery contributed to the growing confusion over an English food identity by providing a location for comparing both English and Indian cookery, by adding to the growing uneasiness about English cookery and the ability of English cooks, and by allowing for the creation of hybrid dishes back in England that added another source of uncertainty about English cooking. The example of Arnot and India as a source of comparison also demonstrated how the English anxiety about their cookery did not match the presumed superiority of British culture and civilization in general. Rather than only offer comments on the supremacy of the British Empire, Anglo-Indian cookbooks continued to highlight concerns with the inferiority of English cookery that were being felt at home in England.

Significantly, *The Wife’s Help to Indian Cookery*, published in 1888, offered many comparisons to the much earlier *Indian Cookery*. *Indian Cookery* was written at a time of

informal Empire in India, before the Indian Rebellion of 1857, and before the increased presence of the British in India that occurred later in the nineteenth century. *The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery* was very much a product of its time, both with regard to the Anglo-Indian relationship and the criticisms of English cookery at home in England. The editor, W.H. Dawe, hoped that the cookbook would be used by Anglo-Indians in India, Anglo-Indians who had returned home to England, and the English in England. Dawe's cookbook was directed at women, but he specified that women's role was as "the chief promoter of man's happiness" and that the cookbook should be used by women who cared about economy.<sup>132</sup> Dawe also provided information about the various castes in Indian society, ranking them by cleanliness and ability to cook. Dawe tied his cookery rhetoric into a discourse about economy and cleanliness. He specifically addressed his cookbook to "female economist[s]" and stressed the importance of cleanliness.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, a comparison of the recipes in these two cookbooks illustrated the differences in imperial relations in fifty years, and how by later in the nineteenth century, Anglo-Indian recipes offered a mix of both cultures. The recipes in *Indian Cookery* were originally written by an Indian cook in India and then translated in England. The authors of the recipes all tried to be authentic and included Indian measurements. The recipes in *The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery* were a mix of seemingly authentic Indian recipes and English recipes to be made in India. Rather than a celebration of Indian recipes that the "old Indians" had enjoyed in India and now wanted to eat at home in England, Dawe's cookbook catered to the new Anglo-Indian population, who were trying to be English in India. Amongst a variety of curry and chutney recipes, Dawe's cookbook also included recipes for haggis, roast beef, plum puddings, and Scottish oatmeal.

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<sup>132</sup> W.H. Dawe, ed., *The Wife's Help to Indian Cookery*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1888), ix.

<sup>133</sup> Dawe, ix.



The recipe for “Scotch Oatmeal Porridge” described it as “wholesome and nutritious” and as an essential dish in Scottish diets.<sup>134</sup> The recipe indicated that Scottish oatmeal was often difficult to acquire and noted that “common oatmeal” was not as good quality as the Scottish oatmeal.<sup>135</sup> Scottish oatmeal was recommended as a nourishing meal in England, in Scotland, and in India for Anglo-Indians. The description of the Scottish dish in an Anglo-Indian cookbook was the same as in its English counterparts, further demonstrating how the author of an Anglo-Indian cookbook was trying to adhere to the conventions of English cookbooks. The drinks section of the cookbook included a recipe for a drink called “Delicious Cup,” which was recommended for “Tennis, Polo, Rackets, or after a Hot Ride,” all activities of the English upper middle classes<sup>136</sup>. Essentially a beer-based punch, “Delicious Cup” stated that if the “correct brand of beer” was used, then those who drank it would “forget all care.”<sup>137</sup> Despite the various spice possibilities in India, the recommended sauce with the roast beef recipes was horseradish, the typical accompaniment to roast beef in England.<sup>138</sup>

Dawe’s cookbook also included recipes that were neither “English” nor “Indian.” Some may have been hybrid recipes; for instance, some of the recipe titles were written in English and Hindi. Dawe included a recipe for “Pulao” in his cookbook, and based on his description, the recipe seemed somewhat out of place in an Anglo-Indian cookbook. The recipe described “Pulao” (or pilau, pillaw, pilaf—a rice-based dish) as a Turkish dish. As mentioned previously, an earlier cookbook had referred to “pillaw” as a Persian “national dish.”<sup>139</sup> Dawe explained that “Pulao” was “essentially an Oriental dish.”<sup>140</sup> Recipes for pillaus (with various spellings) were

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<sup>134</sup> Dawe, 196.

<sup>135</sup> Dawe, 196-197.

<sup>136</sup> Dawe, 202.

<sup>137</sup> Dawe, 202.

<sup>138</sup> Dawe, 288.

<sup>139</sup> Edmund S. and Ellen J. Delamere, *Wholesome Fare*, 327.

<sup>140</sup> Dawe, 54.

not uncommon in nineteenth and early twentieth century cookbooks, so the recipe's appearance in a cookbook from 1888 was not out of the ordinary. Dawe's cookbook highlighted dishes for an English audience, stating it was for those who had been to India (or were still there), but the focus on an English readership dictated the recipe selection and followed contemporary English cookbook constructions.

The cookbooks examined above were published in England and were (mainly) for use at home in England. Historians have discussed the relationship between "Englishness" and Anglo-Indians, who rejected Indian culture while in India, but upon returning home, became Indian experts.<sup>141</sup> Susan Zlotnick has argued that when Englishwomen returned from India, they "domesticated" curry and removed its "otherness."<sup>142</sup> While there were other cookbooks published for the Anglo-Indian community, many were for use in India and published there, as opposed to at home in England. For example, *What to the Tell the Cook* (1877) and *Culinary Jottings for Madras* (1878) were two collections of recipes specifically for the English in India. The author of *Culinary Jottings for Madras*, "Wyvern," pseudonym for Colonel Arthur Robert Kenney-Herbert, criticized English cookery, English prejudice, and emphasized the importance of eating soup—even in India.<sup>143</sup> The author decided to compile his own cookbook after finding that nothing seemed to exist on the market for the English in India. He wrote that after reading one cookbook, he determined it must have really been intended for people who had returned to England rather than for use in India, because it contained many pages of curry recipes, as well as

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<sup>141</sup> See for example, Nupur Chaudhuri, "Shawls, Jewelry, Curry, and Rice in Victorian Britain," in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, ed. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Stobel, 231-246, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 241.

<sup>142</sup> Susan Zlotnick, "Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 16 (1996): 54.

<sup>143</sup> "Wyvern," pseudonym Arthur Robert Kenney-Herbert, *Culinary Jottings for Madras*, (Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1878), chapters vi-vii.

other recipes for dishes that were “purely oriental.”<sup>144</sup> Therefore, cookbooks intended for use in India needed to be similar to English cookbooks, whereas cookbooks for Anglo-Indians in England could include Indian recipes. With regard to *Culinary Jottings for Madras*, what was more significant was not that the author was calling attention to the differences in the English at home versus in India, but that his cookbook was an English cookbook for use in India that followed the same patterns and represented the same concerns as that produced for use at home. Therefore, if the Anglo-Indians in India tried to be as “English” as possible, it was necessary to chastise their habits and cuisine as though they were back in England, further demonstrating the connection between cookery and identity. If the community was to be the epitome of Victorian values, then a concern over English cookery needed to be included. *Culinary Jottings for Madras* discussed the love of roast beef, compared English and French cooking, expressed concern about using tinned products, and included all of the common critiques of English cookery. If the few points on how to obtain specific ingredients from England in India were removed, the cookbook could just have easily been printed in England for the English readership there. Clearly, by the late nineteenth century, an unfavourable view of English cookery was ingrained in the middle class. It was necessary to continue criticizing English cookery while in India, and to continue the campaign for improved European cuisine even in an Asian environment. The object was not to adapt to the setting but to carry on the reform of wasteful practices.

Henrietta Hervey’s *Anglo-Indian Cookery at Home*, published in London in 1895, attempted to provide the Anglo-Indian community in England with its favourite recipes from India, despite the previous cookbook implying the Anglo-Indian community in India would not have eaten these recipes at all. Hervey was the wife of a retired officer in India and lived there

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<sup>144</sup> “Wyvern,” 2.

for twenty-three years. Hervey also used her cookbook as an opportunity to criticize English cooks and kitchens.<sup>145</sup> The recipes included in her cookbook implied she was an expert in Indian cuisine and in the cuisine of the Empire. She claimed that she and the Anglo-Indians in England were “inveterate curry eaters,” but that it was difficult to make curry powder at home.<sup>146</sup> She recommended Crosse & Blackwell’s brand as the superior provider of curry powder. Crosse & Blackwell was also the brand to represent England at the Exhibition in Paris. Hervey’s chapter on rice contained three recipes for “pullo,” including one called “English” Pullo. She described the recipe as what was “generally seen on Anglo-Indian tables” and claimed that the same version was used “throughout the empire.”<sup>147</sup> Similar to Dawe’s description of a “pulao” as “Oriental,” Hervey demonstrated both the hybridization of dishes and her belief in the spread of the Empire. Hervey’s recipes for “English” Pullo implied it was a dish that mixed “eastern” methods with English tastes.

While the above cookbooks attempted to represent one nation or specific group of people, other cookbooks attempted to offer recipes from many nations, such as *National Viands à la Mode* by Harriet A. De Salis, published in 1895, which was part of her series of “à la mode” cookbooks. In her preface, Mrs De Salis stated that her cookbook of foreign recipes was necessary because there were many tourists coming to England and it would be nice if it was possible to offer them dishes from their respective nations. She also commented that because of new technology, especially refrigeration, the English were able “to procure almost *any* thing from other climes.”<sup>148</sup> Without specifically using the phrase “national dish,” Mrs De Salis’s cookbook assembled supposed “national dishes.” The cookbook was not long, yet covered

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<sup>145</sup> Henrietta A. Hervey, *Anglo-Indian Cookery at Home*, (London: Horace Cox, 1895), 1.

<sup>146</sup> Hervey, 10.

<sup>147</sup> Hervey, 20.

<sup>148</sup> Harriet A. De Salis, *National Viands à la Mode*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895), v. Emphasis in original.

cuisines from across the globe. Her belief that “anything” could be purchased in England both indicated a belief in the triumph of English technology and imports and also an idea that something “foreign” could easily and authentically be made at home. At the same time as supporting the idea of a national cookery, cookbooks like Mrs De Salis’s also offered a way to make “foreign” approachable, and, therefore, less “foreign.” She grouped some nations together and the contents listed the nations alphabetically, starting with “African (Cape of Good Hope, Numidia, and Tenerife)” and concluding with “West Indian, &c.”<sup>149</sup> Her chapter titled “Oriental” included “East Indian, Arabian, and Chinese” all under one chapter heading. In this chapter, some recipes were further identified if they belonged to one of these groups, but some were not. For example, “Dhal Curry” was noted as “Indian” in parentheses, but the recipe for “Bobotee” did not have a specific nationality attached to it.<sup>150</sup> “Bobotee” was usually considered a South African dish in other cookbooks, but had roots in the Dutch East Indies, so Mrs De Salis could have included it in either the “Oriental” or “African” section.<sup>151</sup>

### **Bananas: Accepted Ingredient**

Mrs De Salis’s chapter on West Indian recipes contained an ingredient that was new to England and quickly became extremely popular: the banana. As previously discussed, foreign ingredients had been arriving in England since the Roman Empire, and, over time, were adapted to be part of everyday cooking. In the late nineteenth century, tinned products received attention, at first critical, but improved quality led to praise. Other foreign ingredients were found in

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<sup>149</sup> De Salis, contents.

<sup>150</sup> De Salis, 52-53.

<sup>151</sup> In *The “Queen” Cookery Books*, “Bobotjes” was described as “a Malay dish originally, though it is also well known in India and in the Cape.” S. Beaty-Pownall, *No. 4. Entrees, The “Queen” Cookery Books*, Third Edition, (London: Horace Cox, 1911), 137.

cookbooks throughout the nineteenth century; recipes using coconuts and pineapple were regular features in the dessert chapters of English cookbooks. However, due to steam-powered shipping, and refrigeration that slowed the ripening process, bananas went from being a rare find to a common, everyday ingredient in a very short period of time. Mrs De Salis's first recipe in her "West Indian" chapter was for "Bananas (Fijian)," which also indicated a blurred idea of the West Indies.<sup>152</sup>

The banana began to receive considerable notice in the 1890s and by the first decade of the twentieth century appeared routinely in cookbooks. In August 1893, *The Huddersfield Chronicle* reported that the popularity of the banana was quite recent and that earlier banana imports were considered inedible, and "unworthy of the palate of civilised races."<sup>153</sup> The article reported that bananas were becoming more popular in England, although not as much as in the United States, and that the trade was still new. This article suggested bananas were soon to become a staple ingredient, and, unusual among commentaries on English habits, implied flexibility. The article concluded that the banana trade confirmed that "the best of everything in the world gradually gravitates towards London," illustrating the perception of London as the centre of the world, or at least the Empire.<sup>154</sup> An article in the *Evening Telegraph* from 1896 also remarked on the speed with which the banana became popular in England. The article noted that bananas were originally from the "eastern tropics," but were now planted all over the world, "in all tropical and sub-tropical countries."<sup>155</sup>

In *The Epicure*, a culinary journal published in London, Colonel Kenney-Herbert, author of *Culinary Jottings for Madras*, commented on the Indian connection to the banana. He

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<sup>152</sup> De Salis, 86.

<sup>153</sup> "The Banana," *The Huddersfield Chronicle*, August 7, 1893, p. 4.

<sup>154</sup> "The Banana," *The Huddersfield Chronicle*.

<sup>155</sup> "About the Banana," *Evening Telegraph*, January, 3, 1896, p. 4.

informed readers that India was the “original home” of the banana, although “English exiles in the East and West Indies” were familiar with it.<sup>156</sup> Kenney-Herbert reported that the increased imports of bananas meant there was a new cheap product for English housewives to use.<sup>157</sup> The banana was a foreign import and new ingredient for the majority of people in England, but as a single ingredient, it did not attract the same contempt as other dishes, such as pot-au-feu seemed to receive, further demonstrating an issue with processing rather than individual ingredients. It was possible that since “English exiles” throughout the Empire were familiar with the banana, it was considered less “foreign” than other ingredients and recipes, and therefore, the English prejudice towards new foods potentially only applied to other European goods rather than ingredients that came from its own Empire. In the same way that Anglo-Indian cookbooks offered a safe means for encountering the “other,” the banana was a single ingredient that was easy to accept as something safe from the Empire. Alternatively, the perceived English rejection of foreign cookery may have only extended to complete dishes, rather than to the produce that could be processed at home within English cookery. Their rapid availability and immediate appearance in cookbooks implied that bananas were actually accepted within English society and did not receive an unfavourable reception.

Another culinary periodical, *Isobel's Home Cookery*, published an article by “Cordon Rouge,” who stated that the banana was originally grown in India and China, but because of “increased demand,” it was now grown in most sub-tropical countries.<sup>158</sup> Previously a luxury item that only a few had tried in England, increased importation led to rise in demand for bananas in England (and Europe, according to the article), which led to the spread of bananas throughout the world. “Cordon Rouge” argued that every “fruiterer” carried bananas and that

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<sup>156</sup> Colonel Kenney-Herbert, “The Banana,” *The Epicure*, December 1894, p. 18.

<sup>157</sup> Colonel Kenney-Herbert, “The Banana,” p. 17.

<sup>158</sup> “Cordon Rouge,” “The Banana,” *Isobel's Home Cookery*, September 19, 1896, p. 7.

they were even accessible for “all classes.”<sup>159</sup> “Cordon Rouge” supplied multiple recipes with his article and commented that bananas should not be eaten raw, unless very ripe, a similar comment made about tomatoes much earlier in the century. Articles and cookbooks reported on where bananas were coming from, comparing bananas from the West Indies, especially Jamaica, with the Canary Islands and other tropical climates. A statement from the “Imperial Commissioner of Agriculture for the West Indies” claimed that bananas from Jamaica were just as good, if not better than bananas from the Canaries.<sup>160</sup> However, an article from 1907 argued the opposite.<sup>161</sup>

A 1908 advertisement for a recipe contest in the *Tamworth Herald* (a newspaper from the West Midlands) suggested that many people did not know what to do with bananas. The recipe contest was part of a “Great National Competition” held in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, for recipes using currants, currants and bananas together, or just bananas; a similar contest using only currants had been held in the previous year. The advertisement explained that while bananas were popular, “banana cookery” was rarely “practised by the majority of people,” and the contest hoped to encourage a new area of banana cookery.<sup>162</sup> It also hoped that the recipes using bananas would highlight the “nourishing and economical” nature of bananas, two values that continued to be stressed in descriptions of recipes and ingredients.<sup>163</sup> The contest also let readers know that after all the entries were judged, they would be donated to the “destitute poor,” adding a charitable element to the banana cookery competition.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> “Cordon Rouge,” “The Banana.”

<sup>160</sup> “The Jamaica Banana,” *Western Daily Press*, September 4, 1901, p. 7.

<sup>161</sup> “The Banana,” *Burnley Express*, March 23, 1907, p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> “£1,500 for Cooking Currants & Bananas,” *Tamworth Herald*, September 19, 1908, p. 2.

<sup>163</sup> “£1,500 for Cooking Currants & Bananas.”

<sup>164</sup> “£1,500 for Cooking Currants & Bananas.”



Cookbooks describing bananas often emphasized that they were a healthy ingredient, calling bananas “nourishing” or “wholesome.”<sup>165</sup> *The Apsley Cookery Book*, which was a vegetarian cookbook that focused on healthy eating, offered a variety of banana recipes, including one it indicated was of Australian origin.<sup>166</sup> In *Pot-Luck or The British Home Cookery Book*, published in 1914, May Byron included a section titled “Simple Recipes for Cooking Jamaica Bananas By A Black Lady.” Four banana recipes were provided, some sweet and some savoury, all recommending bananas as “wholesome” and “fit for the gods.”<sup>167</sup> Where the recipe contest requested English housewives create their own banana recipes, Byron’s inclusion of banana recipes specifically from “A Black Lady” added a different level of authenticity to the recipes. Most cookbooks contained banana recipes that were (likely) from English kitchens, but Byron was letting her readers know how to cook bananas as though they were in Jamaica.

Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century advertisements presented foods coming to England from throughout the Empire and the rest of the world, and the reverse, products going out into the Empire from England. In a series of images published in 1875, Liebig Company’s Extract of Meat (concentrated meat stock) illustrated their product taking over the whole world. Each advertisement card displayed children climbing all over the globe or sitting on top of it. Liebig’s was named after the German inventor of the meat extraction process, but was a London-based company that used beef from South America.<sup>168</sup> One of these images showed two children sitting on top of the world, while a black child stood behind them with a parasol, presumably

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<sup>165</sup> See, “Bananas,” S. Beaty-Pownall, *No. 10. Vegetables, The “Queen” Cookery Books*, (London: Horace Cox, 1902), 24; “Banana, New Fruit,” Mary Davies, *The Housewife’s What’s What*, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, [1904]), 113.

<sup>166</sup> Mrs. John J. Webster and Mrs. F.W. Jessop, *The Apsley Cookery Book*, (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1906), 106.

<sup>167</sup> May Byron, *Pot-Luck or The British Home Cookery Book*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 22?.

<sup>168</sup> Richard Perren, *The Meat Trade in Britain*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978), 72.

offering the other children shade.<sup>169</sup> The image also marked “Liebig” on part of South America. The children covered North America and Europe, sitting directly on top of England. Gender studies scholar Anne McClintock has argued that advertising helped “domesticate” the Empire by placing “images of colonial conquest” on domestic products.<sup>170</sup> Liebig (and other companies) believed in connecting food to the rest of the world, and embraced this as a successful form of advertising. Ingredients were more likely to be imported to England, but upon reaching England, were often manufactured into products that could then be exported. An advertisement for Pink’s Marmalade displayed oranges with wings flying from Seville, Spain to England where a jar of Pink’s Marmalade sat.<sup>171</sup> The oranges may have been Spanish, but the final product was English. Marmalade, a common and successful English preserve, illustrated the complexity of English cookery and processing, as not all of the processed goods produced in England were considered “bad.”

## Twentieth Century Criticism

Food importation and the use of the Empire for advertising did not stop criticisms of English cookery. An article from 1893 in *Reynold’s Newspaper* declared that “English cookery has become a word of reproach throughout the world,” due to it being heavy, boring, and wasteful.<sup>172</sup> The perception of English cookery was pessimistic at home and abroad, giving the English a bad reputation. The cookbooks published by the periodical *Queen* in the early

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<sup>169</sup> “Ask for Liebig Company’s Extract of Meat,” Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: John Johnson Collection: Food 10 (30e).

<sup>170</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 209.

<sup>171</sup> “Pink’s Marmalade,” Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: John Johnson Collection: Food 7 (13).

<sup>172</sup> “The Democratic World,” *Reynold’s Newspaper*, Feb 12, 1893.

twentieth century (also as a 14 cookbook boxed set) commented on the cookery situation, comparing English and French cookery with recipes. The first cookbook, “Soups,” argued that people who discounted a concern for cookery needed to remember that “our national health and strength” depended on “culinary matters.”<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, the cookbook declared that “the cure for our national disgrace—drunkenness” needed to “come from the kitchen.”<sup>174</sup> The author, S. Beaty-Pownall, also implied throughout the cookbooks that English cookery needed help, especially from other nations. English cookery’s unfavourable perception was affecting the health of the nation; if the nation’s food was cooked poorly, the people would be of ill-health. While earlier in the century writers claimed that poor English cookery led to drinking, S. Beaty-Pownall argued that cookery could help stop the “national disgrace” of drunkenness. Fixing “bad” English cookery meant fixing “bad” English habits and implied that good cookery would stop people from turning to various vices, thereby creating a healthier, stronger nation.

The health and strength of the nation was frequently discussed during the South African War (1899-1902). It seemed not much had changed since the Crimean War. In “Camp Cookery for Soldiers,” journalist Annesley Kenealy argued that the cooking materials and utensils of the army were “primitive” and “cumbersome,” and that not enough was done during peace time to ensure a well-fed army.<sup>175</sup> She recommended the system of the German army, referring to Germany as the “ideally domestic country.”<sup>176</sup> She also commented that more soldiers were sick than needed to be in South Africa because of their provisions and army cooking. Furthermore, Kenealy claimed that colonial armies fighting in South Africa were better fed and knew how to handle the conditions better than the British army. For instance, she described how a Canadian

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<sup>173</sup> S. Beaty-Pownall, *No. 1. Soups, The “Queen” Cookery Books*, Third Edition, (London: Horace Cox, 1904), 2.

<sup>174</sup> Beaty-Pownall, *No. 1. Soups, The “Queen” Cookery Books*, 2.

<sup>175</sup> Annesley Kenealy, “Camp Cookery for Soldiers,” *The Morning Post*, November 24, 1900, p. 2.

<sup>176</sup> Kenealy, “Camp Cookery for Soldiers.”

“rancher” did not need new cooking tools, but was able to use any equipment to bake “cookies,” which the “British Tommy” enjoyed eating, “though he could not make them himself till his colonial cousin gave him a few lessons.”<sup>177</sup> The Canadian comparison offered another example of how the English were compared with their “colonial cousins” and how the Empire added to feelings of doubt about English cookery. Kenealy continued to criticize the training of the British army, stating that army cooks were not trained how to cook in the types of environments where war occurred (i.e. rugged terrain), but were only taught how to cook “as though pitched battles were usually fought in the neighbourhood of the Bank.”<sup>178</sup> She recommended the army learn from the United States army and that reforming army cookery should be a high priority, because it was necessary to be properly prepared and efficient for any future wars. The British army, made up of soldiers from across Great Britain, was carrying on the unacceptable traditions of English cookery. It had been unsuccessful cooking in the Crimea, and continued to be unsuccessful in South Africa.

Another article, in *The Morning Post* from December 1900, called for the War Office to change soldiers’ cookery education. The article described the current field cookery training, stating that the army was taught to use big, heavy “stockpot-stoves” to make soup, but they were impractical in actual war.<sup>179</sup> Soup was still the most recommended dish, so the army had at least learned from Soyer’s Crimean example. But the tools the army was using to cook were not realistic in the variety of conditions of war, and the article noted this was why soup was never actually made in South Africa. The article claimed that the recipes the army was provided with took multiple hours to cook and were “pre-historic.”<sup>180</sup> A change to provisions and cooking

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<sup>177</sup> Kenealy, “Camp Cookery for Soldiers.”

<sup>178</sup> Kenealy, “Camp Cookery for Soldiers.”

<sup>179</sup> “British Field Cookery,” *The Morning Post*, December 14, 1900, p. 6.

<sup>180</sup> “British Field Cookery.”

methods needed to be enforced as it was unrealistic for armies to wait for long-cooking meals. Similar to Kenealy's argument, this article's use of the word "pre-historic" illustrated the backward nature of camp cookery—and its parent, English cookery. The ingredients, utensils, and recipes the army learned back at home were out of touch with the practicalities of war and needed to be reformed, just as English cookery as a whole needed to be reformed and updated at home.

In the nineteenth century, English cookery was in constant comparison with the French version, but in the beginning of the twentieth century, other nations' cookery was also compared with the English. Recipes from the United States made their way back to England and Scotland and were noted as "American" in community cookbooks. An article in the *Bedfordshire Advertiser* from an American woman compared American cooking with English cooking, finding the American version to be much more economical and efficient. While wastefulness was a common complaint, she also complained of English cookery tasting bad, saying that the English needed to learn how to season their food properly. She concluded that English cookery was "sadly lacking" the combination of "tastiness" and "economy."<sup>181</sup> In *How to Cook Well and Cheaply* from 1901, Miss Manders commented that Americans were frequently arriving in England and with them their recipes, especially for cakes. Manders noted that dried fruit had risen in price, and, therefore, American cake recipes were becoming more popular because they did not contain any fruit. Specifically, she emphasized "Angel Cake" as an important American recipe, but made a point of stating that American flour was not as high quality as English flour.<sup>182</sup> Her comment illustrated another case of the English having the finest products, but needing foreign recipes to make good dishes. Other recipes that repeatedly were noted as

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<sup>181</sup> "The Defects of Our Cooking," *Bedfordshire Advertiser*, June 20, 1902, p. 2.

<sup>182</sup> Miss Manders in Florence White, *How to Cook Well and Cheaply*, (London: Published at the Office of "Black and White," 1901), 77.

“American” were recipes for lemon pie, doughnuts, and sandwiches.<sup>183</sup> A newspaper article titled “As Others See Us” from 1909 claimed that “the only thing that can be said in praise of English cookery is that one is never tempted to eat too much!”<sup>184</sup> By the twentieth century, English cookery was perceived to be so bad that it was a joke, that the only good thing about it was that diners would never want a second helping.

Early twentieth century cookbooks followed the same pattern as in the nineteenth century, criticizing English cookery for its wastefulness and stressing the importance of using scraps, leftovers, and cooking as economically as possible. Cookbooks published during the First World War emphasized economy on a new level, as part of helping the war effort and saving the nation. Mrs C.S. Peel’s *The Victory Cookery Book* declared that the English “were a terribly wasteful people” and offered economical recipes to “make do” during the war, another indication of how cookery and identity were intertwined.<sup>185</sup> The war also did not stop comparisons between French and English cookery. In December 1914, the *Western Daily Press* reported that it was a “fatal mistake” of the English to continue to rely on meat and to believe that meat created optimum health.<sup>186</sup> The article recommended making soup, especially because of how costly food was during the war, and noted that French soldiers insisted on eating “pot-au-feu” even while in the trenches. The article argued that “the English, as a nation, waste so much valuable foodstuff,” which was an even bigger issue during war when food was more difficult to obtain.<sup>187</sup> In “The War and Hygiene,” Mrs M.A. Cloudesley Brereton wrote that “unhappily for the race,” cookery was “almost a lost art in England.”<sup>188</sup> While she felt bad criticizing

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<sup>183</sup> Frequent reference in early twentieth century community cookbooks.

<sup>184</sup> “As Others See Us,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, April 16, 1909, p. 12.

<sup>185</sup> Mrs C.S. Peel, *The Victory Cookery Book*, (London: John Lane, [1918]), 4.

<sup>186</sup> “Domestic Economy: Cheap Foods,” *Western Daily Press*, December 12, 1914, p. 7.

<sup>187</sup> “Domestic Economy: Cheap Foods.”

<sup>188</sup> Mrs M.A. Cloudesley Brereton, “The War and Hygiene,” *Newcastle Daily Journal*, August 26, 1916, p. 5.

hardworking Englishwomen during the war and daily struggles, she believed it was necessary to point out that French working women were superior cooks whereas English working women were “almost entirely ignorant” of cooking.<sup>189</sup> The war provoked more complaints about English cookery and furthered the connection between English cookery and the English as a nation. An article from 1915 worried about the English soldiers eating the same meals repeatedly. The article quoted the medical journal *The Lancet*, which argued that “monotony” was a threat to “military cuisine” and the health of soldiers.<sup>190</sup> The complaint of monotony was also a common criticism of English cookery, and it seemed that the soldiers fighting in the war could not escape this negative aspect of English cookery, so much so that it was deemed to be detrimental to their health.

While some cookbook authors believed that winning the war meant English cookery had become more economical, criticisms of English cookery continued into the 1920s, compounded by a considerable amount of confusion about what actually constituted English cookery at that time.<sup>191</sup> The first chapter of *Feed the Brute!* by Marjorie Swift stated that there was a wide variety of different ingredients in England, but that English cookery suffered from a “total lack of variety.”<sup>192</sup> Swift argued that because of the monotony of English cooking, it was necessary to either reform it or give up on English cookery altogether. Swift chose the former option, suggesting the English look to their local communities and regional dishes to increase variety in their meals. Similar to earlier criticisms, Swift remarked upon the insularity of the English, who were never open to trying the dishes of other counties. Not only were the English prejudiced against foreign cooking, they were also unwilling to try different regional dishes from within

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<sup>189</sup> Mrs M.A. Cloudesley Brereton, “The War and Hygiene.”

<sup>190</sup> “Too Much ‘Mulligan’,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, January 1, 1915, p. 5.

<sup>191</sup> For example, see Mrs C.S. Peel, *The “Daily Mail” Cookery Book*, Third Edition, (London: Associated Newspapers, 1919), introduction.

<sup>192</sup> Marjorie Swift, *Feed the Brute!* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1925), 12.

their own country. Swift's examples included "the real Scotch scone," which she argued had not traveled farther south than Yorkshire, Scotch broth, and the "Devonshire pasty" which stayed only in Devon.<sup>193</sup> Inevitably, she reflected upon the great English national dish of roast beef. However, Swift relayed a story, which implied that "English dinners" no longer included the English national dish. She wrote how a visitor from Czechoslovakia hoped to enjoy an authentic English dinner during her first trip to London and together Swift and her friend went to a fancy and expensive restaurant. The dinner was excellent, but also disappointed her visitor: it was not an English dinner, but "rather it was cosmopolitan."<sup>194</sup> The visitor sadly commented that she had eaten similar meals all across Europe and had hoped that in London she would enjoy England's national dishes. Hoping to please her friend, Swift offered to make her a true English dinner, and described her anxiety at planning such a meal, because she realized "with horror" that she "too rarely dined off a dinner English from beginning to end."<sup>195</sup> In eventually choosing her menu and having a successful *English* dinner, Swift renewed her love of English cooking and recognized the superiority that true English cooking had to offer, and hoped to provide it through her cookbook.

## Conclusion

While Swift seemed to find examples to create an English dinner, rejecting a soup course and including roast mutton as the main meat course, the fact that her dinner at the London restaurant was "cosmopolitan" and she herself rarely ate authentic English food should not have been surprising. From the middle of the nineteenth century and increasingly with long distance

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<sup>193</sup> Swift, 14.

<sup>194</sup> Swift, 16.

<sup>195</sup> Swift, 17.



transport of foods, the recipes provided in English cookbooks were international. Recipes from all over the world were included in cookbooks of all types, not just mass publications.

Community cookbooks, which one would think would just include local, regional dishes, often included recipes sent from friends who had emigrated and still sent letters home to their community. The insistence that the English learn from other nations to improve their cookery only added to the potential for adaptation and absorption into English cookery. English food writers had clear ideas of the national dishes of other countries but other than roast beef and puddings, English cookery was rarely defined. Rather, English national cookery was a muddled idea with a very negative perception. The second chapter of Swift's cookbook offered "Typical English Dinners," while criticizing the English for wastefulness, monotony, and European influence. Swift's cookbook suggested that "typical" English cookery was simple, that all the English really wanted to eat was simple food, perhaps harkening back to the old idea of "plain" cooking, although now with a view to being economical.<sup>196</sup> Yet, if it was up to Swift to remind or teach the English population what "typical" English cookery was because people were no longer cooking it, it seemed that there was no longer a "typical" English cookery. "Typical" English cookery had changed over time and absorbed foreign recipes into the everyday, something that commentators were still unsure of in theory, but that may have happened in practice.

The pessimistic view of English cookery related to a broader process of defining the English nation. The perception of cookery implied the English were a wasteful people, who were insular, boring, ignorant, and prejudiced. The confused idea of English cookery also demonstrated a confused notion of the English identity. Cookbooks and recipes demonstrated how it was common practice to describe dishes by their nationality and that providing a national

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<sup>196</sup> Swift, 26.

origin often connected the identity of a dish with the identity of the nation. Criticism of English cookery compared it with the cookery of other nations, illustrating the difference in cooking methods, but also how this reflected differences in national character. An English identity as analyzed through its cookery was conflicted and tapped into existing ideas of anxiety, insularity, and waste. At once wanting to present itself as the best, for example in its produce, instead English cookery presented all of the perceived negative characteristics of the English and of the fears of middle-class English society. Comparisons with French cookery also highlighted an area of inferiority and insularity in relation to their long-standing rival. French cookery was celebrated for all the things English cookery was not; the French were praised for their social skills over dinner, the English were not. The English reflected on their cookery with embarrassment and disappointment, connecting cookery to concepts of civilization. In general, the English likely did not see themselves as insular and prejudiced, and so when their cookery was perceived in that way, it created anxiety and concern, since the identity of the English and their cookery were intertwined. Moreover, in practice, the slow absorption of foreign recipes into English cookbooks suggests that perhaps the English were not nearly as insular and afraid of foreign influence as they were perceived (and perceived themselves) to be.

#### Chapter 4: “Good Old Christmas Fare”: The Annual Evaluation of English Cookery

“...the old Christmases, like the old Winters, were better than the modern ones.”

“Christmas Fare,” *The Western Daily Press*, December 18, 1865, p. 2.

In 1865, *The Western Daily Press* tried to convince its readers that the older generation who believed “old Christmases...were better than the modern ones” were wrong, that mid-nineteenth century Christmas celebrations and dinners were just as successful as in the past.<sup>1</sup> Many newspapers reported on town Christmas markets and what they believed to be “traditional” Christmas fare. These articles often gave Christmas dishes historic lineage, noting that English Christmas dinners had included the dishes for decades or even centuries, and that Christmas meals consisted of “good old Christmas fare.” Food writers considered Christmas dinner to be an area where English cookery was “good,” particularly because it was connected to the past. Christmas was one occasion when English cookery could be celebrated rather than be condemned as uncivilized and uneconomical. As a time for celebration, the Christmas meal was something special to look forward to, excesses and indulgence were permissible, and there appear to be multiple choices for a “traditional” Christmas meal. By analyzing past Christmases, nineteenth century food writers connected their current “good old Christmas fare” with historic Christmas dishes, presenting a history for Christmas and “good” English food instead of the food served the rest of the year that was regularly challenged as “bad” English cookery. However, celebrating the past did not ignore criticisms of the present, or that some Christmas dishes might actually be part of the reason for “bad” English food. In effect, by using Christmas dinner to assert how great English food once was, nostalgists for past Christmases reaffirmed that the present nineteenth century cookery was bad and suffering. This chapter will examine the representation of Christmas dinner, through the relationship with town markets, the past, urban

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<sup>1</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Daily Press*, December 18, 1865, p. 2.

and rural environments, and local and imported products, specifically from the Empire. It will be demonstrated that Christmas was used to highlight a positive image of English cookery, but it was only able to do so by invoking images of the past, a time when English cookery was “good.” Christmas dinner also challenged the Victorian moral values that were usually used to assess English cookery—as a special meal, it could be excessive rather than economical. Christmas offered a chance for English cookery to be at its best, and yet, critics still found a way to criticize it.

Historians have debated the origins of Christmas fare, and found that some items developed into “traditional” items only in the nineteenth century. J.A.R. Pimlott has argued that the nineteenth century was “the period in which the Christmas dinner assumed its modern pattern—with a basic menu which included mince-pies, plum pudding, and roast beef or poultry, usually either turkey, goose or chicken.”<sup>2</sup> Mince pies developed in the fifteenth century and grew to be part of the Christmas feast, usually eaten at the beginning of the meal.<sup>3</sup> Plum pudding, the Christmas steamed or boiled pudding filled with dried fruit, evolved from a Medieval era porridge. Pimlott explained that throughout the early modern period, this dried fruit dish was referred to as “plum porridge, plum pottage, and plum broth” and became the “Christmas pudding.”<sup>4</sup> Noting the first record of “plum pottage,” Pimlott describes it as “a very thick soup served at the beginning of the meal and made with beef, raisins, currants and bread.”<sup>5</sup> Pimlott suggests that the transition from soup-porridge to pudding occurred inexplicably at some point between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The porridge variety was the

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<sup>2</sup> J.A.R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Christmas: A Social History*, (Sussex, UK: The Harvester Press Limited, 1978), 67.

<sup>3</sup> Pimlott, 23, 68.

<sup>4</sup> Pimlott, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Pimlott, 47.

main version served throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> By the middle of the nineteenth century, plum pudding was considered tied to Christmas fare and its previous forms no longer served.

Referring to puddings more generally, C. Anne Wilson has suggested that boiled puddings became possible after the seventeenth-century invention of the pudding-cloth, which was a type of cloth used to hold the pudding while it boiled.<sup>7</sup> Wilson also states that batter puddings, such as Yorkshire pudding, became more popular in the eighteenth century and these were baked in an oven or placed under a spit to catch the drippings from a roast.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is possible that the change from the soup-consistency plum pottage to a firmer, steamed plum pudding in the nineteenth century occurred as a result of changes in cooking technology over time. In the nineteenth century, the preparation of plum pudding often combined the use of the pudding cloth and the containers or moulds used for a batter pudding. For example, a cookery manuscript recipe for “(Economical) Plum Pudding” from 1857 said to put the pudding “into a buttered mould to boil 5 hours.”<sup>9</sup> A recipe from the 1880 cookbook *Modern Domestic Cookery* instructed readers to “boil in a buttered shape for six hours and a half, or tie up in a pudding cloth, and boil for the same period,” suggesting both methods were still used near the end of the century.<sup>10</sup> Other recipes combined using cloths and moulds, telling cooks to pour the mixture into a greased mould, but then to tie it up in a cloth.<sup>11</sup> The 1895 *Jewish Cookery Book*, which

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<sup>6</sup> Pimlott, 68-69.

<sup>7</sup> C. Anne Wilson, *Food & Drink in Britain: from the Stone Age to recent times*, (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1973), 316.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, 321.

<sup>9</sup> Cookery Manuscript, 1819-1886, Wellcome Library, MS 7733.

<sup>10</sup> Jenny Wren, *Modern Domestic Cookery*, (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1880), 166.

<sup>11</sup> For example, “Economical Christmas Pudding,” H.A. Jones, *Wanstead School Board*, (London : Darling & Son, 1898), 25. This recipe said to “put the pudding into a greased mould, tie a cloth over securely, and boil the pudding four hours.” Another recipe “Plum Pudding. No. 3. A rich one for Christmas,” Catherine Frances Frere, ed., *The Cookery Book of Lady Clark of Tillypronie*, (London Constable & Company Ltd, 1909), 484, stated “prepare a large pan of briskly-boiling water, put the pudding mixture into a tin mould, and tie a cloth over it.” A recipe from 1910,

included Christmas recipes, instructed cooks to combine both methods, using greased moulds and then tied with a cloth. The author also included a note at the end of the “Christmas Pudding” recipe that said that if puddings were steamed, “then no *cloth* is required, and only sufficient water to come half way up the basin.”<sup>12</sup> The recipe instructions demonstrated a combination of older methods to create a newer dish of plum pudding, and that the mix of cooking technology helped transition the soupy plum dish into the solid plum pudding.

The main proteins enjoyed at Christmas have also been explored by historians, from roast beef to turkey and all manner of birds in between. Newspaper articles during the nineteenth century often reported on Christmas fare and historic Christmas dinners, but from such sources it seems likely that the idea of the traditional Christmas meal consisting simply of “roast beef and plum pudding” was an invented tradition rather than an accurate depiction of the typical meal from the medieval period. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Pimlott describes a Christmas dinner for the wealthy as one that included a variety of meats and wild birds. At this time, a specific Christmas meal had not yet been established as a common tradition.<sup>13</sup> In the fifteenth century, boar’s head and brawn (the cheaper alternative) were served as part of Christmas feasts and Pimlott has argued this was the meat typically associated with Christmas. Brawn, made from boar’s meat, allowed less affluent families to enjoy a special Christmas meal. Antony Miall and Peter Miall have commented that the boar’s head continued to be “part of the traditional Christmas Day menu.”<sup>14</sup> The tradition was replaced by the arrival of the turkey, introduced from America via Spain in the sixteenth century, and turkey has since become a

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“Christmas Plum Pudding,” Kate Emil Behnke and E. Colin Henslowe, *The Broadlands Cookery-Book*, (London G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1910), 117, instructed cooks to “mix the whole thoroughly well together, put into buttered basins, tie down securely with buttered paper or a well-floured cloth, and boil.”

<sup>12</sup> Miss M.A.S. Tattersall, *Jewish Cookery Book*, (London: Wertheimer, Lea & Co., 1895), 85. Emphasis in original.

<sup>13</sup> Pimlott, 22.

<sup>14</sup> Antony Miall and Peter Miall, *The Victorian Christmas Book*, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1978), 132.

popular and “traditional” Christmas staple. Historian Neil Armstrong argues that over time, turkey was used instead of roasted swan as the main bird served at Christmas dinner, and, in the eighteenth century, was the “fashionable Christmas bird of choice in London.”<sup>15</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, turkeys were imported from Europe and North America, making turkey a more affordable choice for Christmas dinner. Still, Pimlott suggests that turkey did not become the “universal” Christmas dinner choice until well into the twentieth century and that chicken was often used as an alternative to turkey.<sup>16</sup> Aside from turkey, another bird also considered traditional to an English Christmas was the goose. Miall and Miall suggest that at the beginning of the Victorian period, “traditional” Christmas meals in England were divided between the people of the north, who typically ate roast beef, and the people of the south, who ate goose for Christmas.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, geese were actually available to all classes of society through an institution titled “The Goose Club.” By donating a small portion of wages throughout the year, “even the lowest paid worker” was able to eat goose with his family during Christmas.<sup>18</sup> The variety of Christmas fare evident in the nineteenth century and the ways in which it was discussed in the popular press offer insight into the evolution of both Christmas traditions and the discursive construction of “good” and “bad” English food.

### **Christmas Markets & Christmas Fare**

Christmas markets were held in towns every year in the days leading up to Christmas, offering a variety of different products for families to include in their Christmas feasts. Local

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<sup>15</sup> Neil Armstrong, *Christmas in nineteenth-century England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 145.

<sup>16</sup> Pimlott, 169.

<sup>17</sup> Miall and Miall, 111.

<sup>18</sup> Miall and Miall, 115.

newspapers often reported in detail the provisions available at the market and listed the produce that each vendor had on offer for the specific year. Tradesmen, such as butchers, poulterers, and game dealers, were often noted, and the proteins they sold further an understanding of “Christmas fare.” Many types of meat were sold, and, therefore, consumed for Christmas dinner, which suggests that in the mid-nineteenth century there was an idea of what contributed to a Christmas meal, but in addition, many dishes may have been served and/or each family had its own traditional choice of dish(es). The items reported in “Christmas Fare” articles about town markets may also have represented the farming community that supplied the town. However, the majority of farming regions practiced mixed farming. Rather than focusing on one aspect such as dairying, growing grains or raising cattle, sheep or pigs, Paul Brassley has argued that “most farms of necessity integrated crops and livestock.”<sup>19</sup> For example, parts of eastern England, such as Cambridgeshire, grazed both cattle and sheep, although by 1850, dairying was no longer a principal aspect of farming in this region.<sup>20</sup>

From the mid-nineteenth century some agricultural regions specialized their output as the railway made communities more accessible to one another and the movement of agricultural products over larger distances more possible. In his analysis of the poultry industry in nineteenth century England, B.A. Holderness notes that “the turkey trade between East Anglia and London was of long standing” and that most of the turkeys were raised on “mixed farms” in parts of Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>21</sup> One East Anglian newspaper reported in 1865 the amount of “Christmas Fare” the Great Eastern Railway delivered to London in the weeks preceding Christmas,

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Brassley, “Farming Systems: Introduction,” Chapter 6 in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Volume VII 1850-1914, Part I, edited by E.J.T. Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 455.

<sup>20</sup> B.A. Holderness, “Farming Regions: East Anglia and the Fenlands,” Chapter 5 in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Volume VII 1850-1914, Part I, edited by E.J.T. Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 376-385.

<sup>21</sup> Holderness, “Farming Systems: Intensive Livestock Keeping,” Chapter 6 in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Volume VII 1850-1914, Part I, edited by E.J.T. Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 493.



including 12,117 turkeys, noting that “the Eastern Counties did their share towards providing the creature comforts.”<sup>22</sup> Across the country, “the mainstay of the south-west’s agricultural economy during the period 1850-1914 was sheep and cattle breeding and rearing, and dairying,” notes Sarah Wilmot, and throughout this time period there was an increase in fattening beef in the area that it was raised and an increase in pig production.<sup>23</sup> An 1869 article in *The Western Times*, from the South West of England, provided evidence of the transportation of Christmas products from all over the country, explaining that geese were raised in the north of England, then “brought down by rail to provincial towns,” and fattened by local farmers until Christmas.<sup>24</sup> The mix of farming across the country and the transportation of goods by rail demonstrated that Christmas markets in a variety of towns had the potential to offer more than just one type of meat or poultry, and may have been able to celebrate a larger region’s mix of goods.

In reporting on Christmas markets from regions across the country, newspapers not only remarked upon the bounty of local produce, but also made references to historic Christmases and Christmas traditions, new and old. In December 1851, *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* noted the displays made by the various suppliers in town, listing oxen, heifers, sheep, “splendid samples of well fed beef,” and pork.<sup>25</sup> The report also detailed the display by Mr Swanger, who sold game and fish, stating Swanger’s exhibit to be “perfectly *unique*” as it contained an arrangement of “plucked fowls, geese, turkeys...hares, rabbits, and all sorts of game...crowned by a peacock.”<sup>26</sup> Surrounding the arrangement of animals were sheep and deer and the entire

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<sup>22</sup> “Christmas Fare and the Great Eastern Railway,” *The Bury and Norwich Post*, January 3, 1865, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Wilmot, “Farming Regions: The South-West: Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall,” Chapter 5 in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Volume VII 1850-1914, Part I, edited by E.J.T. Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 417-418.

<sup>24</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Times*, November 19, 1869, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, December 25, 1851, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*.

display was “illuminated” by gas lighting.<sup>27</sup> For Christmas 1852, the *Norfolk News* highlighted the Christmas market and detailed the supplies from its butchers, poultry providers, and game dealer. After listing the many offerings of beef and sheep by the butchers, the article concluded that “Mr Parker, of St Stephen’s, game dealer, has provided 787 hares, 496 pheasants, 325 partridges, 411 rabbits, 31 turkeys, 28 woodcocks, and 79 snipes.”<sup>28</sup> These two reports of Christmas fare from different parts of England demonstrated that a variety of meats, game, and birds were included in the Christmas meal. Both reports noted the abundant offerings of their towns, rather than focus on only one staple, which might suggest that while there were standard choices for Christmas dinner, in the early 1850s, it was not a uniform or stereotypical menu, with each family choosing its own feast.

In 1853, the *Norfolk News* reported on its Christmas market once again, but included statements about changes in tradition from the past. The article stated that with regard to “Yule Logs, Wassail Bowls, ‘unseasonable’ Christmas Fruit Trees, Christmas Carols, Christmas Candles, and to some extent of Holly and Mistletoe, we have become renegades from the orthodoxy of our forefathers, regarding these as mere details of minor importance.”<sup>29</sup> The article continued that the essence of Christmas as dictated by “our ancestors” was to “eat, drink and be merry.”<sup>30</sup> Based on the report by the *Norfolk News*, Christmas traditions were evolving, or in transition, from previous years. The idea of “eat, drink and be merry” still existed, but what that entailed was up for discussion. The 1853 report also referred to “John Bull’s appetite” in listing the abundant provisions supplied by the butchers, fishmongers, and grocers in town.<sup>31</sup> Once again, many suppliers were noted, including how many animals were slaughtered and how much

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<sup>27</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*.

<sup>28</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 25, 1852, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 24, 1853, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 24, 1853.

<sup>31</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 24, 1853.

of it was fat. Specific providers were recommended for their “first-rate beasts,” and Mr Parker, the game dealer, concluded the column with his plethora of woodcocks, wild ducks, snipes, plovers, turkeys, partridges, rabbits, pheasants, and hares.<sup>32</sup>

The following year, in 1854, *The Cambridge Independent Press* began its “Christmas Fare” column by explaining the important role roast beef played in an English Christmas. The article stated that beef was “ever in season with us; always a welcome dish at any man’s table; but at Christmas, in particular, one would scarcely be thought an Englishman if the glory of beef and plum pudding (the latter owing one of its principal ingredients to the ox) did not decorate his table.”<sup>33</sup> Plum pudding, a dish barely half a century old, was now considered intrinsic to Christmas celebrations in England. The article stressed the significance of beef, claiming that “an Englishman without his Christmas beef would be as fretful as an Irishman without his potatoes; a Scotchman with no oatmeal; a Frenchman sans soup; a German with no tobacco; or a Dutchman without scheidam.”<sup>34</sup> Miall and Miall suggested roast beef to be traditional Christmas fare for the northern part of England, but the Cambridge paper, which represented the areas of Huntingdon, Isle of Ely, Bedford, Peterborough, and Lynn in the East of England, implied that roast beef was necessary for all Englishman to enjoy a proper Christmas meal. After listing the beef and sheep available at the Christmas market, the article concluded that various poultry were expensive and small, and recommended shoppers visit the butcher instead for “prime beef and mutton at a fair and reasonable price.”<sup>35</sup> The article essentially ignored that anything other than beef (or, perhaps, mutton) would be appropriate meat for an English Christmas feast. While the article may have been more of an advertisement for the butchers of Cambridge, it reads instead

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<sup>32</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 24, 1853.

<sup>33</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 23, 1854, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 23, 1854. In the nineteenth century, the city of Schiedam was famous for producing the Dutch liquor jenever, hence the reference to the Dutch and “scheidam.”

<sup>35</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 23, 1854.

as a celebration of the Cambridge community as a whole and the writer seemed proud that Cambridge was able to offer the very best products for Christmas. The writer specifically stated that “in giving our usual history” of the butchers’ variety for Christmas, which indicated this was something the paper did every year, “we wish it to be understood that we would avoid if possible, giving umbrage,” and the list of butchers was provided in no specific order.<sup>36</sup> The paper did not want to offend any of the providers, but also explained that commenting on the Christmas provisions was common practice each year.

In 1857, the same Cambridge newspaper declared that the Christmas market offered “the very best of meat—beef purely English—beef that no other country can ever, in their wildest visions, dream of producing; and other animal food ‘to match’.”<sup>37</sup> The article also noted that the poultry and game displays were “excellent” and listed the prices of turkeys, hens, ducks, fowls, pheasants, partridges, snipes, hares, wild ducks, and teal, demonstrating that all produce in the Cambridge area was marketed as the best, rather than just beef. One provider “had a monster-size turkey,” which sold for £2.<sup>38</sup> Another “Christmas Fare” article from 1857 in the *Norfolk News* considered Christmas birds to be luxury items, but stated that for this year’s market, “turkeys, geese, and other poultry” were available at “seasonable” prices; while not necessarily the same as reasonable prices, the article implied that poultry was enjoyed at Christmastime, at least for those who could afford it.<sup>39</sup> The butchers at the market, the “great providers for all our national and social festivities” also offered their goods, considered by the article as “the more substantial necessities of the table.”<sup>40</sup> According to these papers from the East of England, in

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<sup>36</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 23, 1854.

<sup>37</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 19, 1857, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 19, 1857.

<sup>39</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 26, 1857, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Norfolk News*, December 26, 1857.

1857, poultry was an expensive item for the table, although recognized as part of Christmas feasts, but red meat, especially beef, was seen as the key ingredient for an English Christmas.

However, as reported in “Christmas and Christmas Fare” by *The Royal Leamington Spa Courier* in 1859, fish, game, and poultry were also an impressive and integral part of Christmas meals. The article stated that soup could easily be removed from a Christmas meal, but fish was an important part of Christmas. (The disregard for soup within an English Christmas further demonstrated the perception that soup was not part of the national diet.) Turkeys, ducks, and geese were described as “plump” and “fat,” and a variety of game birds and rabbits were listed as available at the Christmas market.<sup>41</sup> The article also provided the details of the groceries and delicacies offered at the market, including “roasted chestnuts,” an item the author could not imagine Christmas being without. Potatoes were noted as completing an “Englishman’s dinner,” and plum pudding was called “glorious.”<sup>42</sup> The list of items considered significant aspects of the Christmas meal illustrated how Christmas dishes were perceived as higher quality and given special attributes. The article also reflected on the past, suggesting that provided the spirit of Christmas continued and the Christmas market remained a constant, “few will be disposed to think Christmas is less well kept in the days of Queen Victoria than in those of Queen Elizabeth.”<sup>43</sup> By referencing Queen Elizabeth and the Christmas of her time, the article indicated a specific perception of Christmas under Queen Elizabeth and a belief that it should be used as a point of reference for how to celebrate Christmas properly. The article implied that a Victorian Christmas should hope to live up to the expectations from the past, regardless of the fact that potatoes and turkeys were first making their journey to England in the Elizabethan era, and plum pudding did not exist at that time.

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<sup>41</sup> “Christmas and Christmas Fare,” *The Royal Leamington Spa Courier*, December 24, 1859, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> “Christmas and Christmas Fare.”

<sup>43</sup> “Christmas and Christmas Fare.”

Throughout the 1860s, turkeys increasingly were on display at a variety of Christmas markets. *The Western Times* reported in 1862 on Mrs Chamberlain's shop containing "between four and five hundred turkeys" as well as "four hundred geese."<sup>44</sup> Mrs Hooper's store was mentioned as "crammed in every corner with turkeys, geese, ducks," and more game.<sup>45</sup> In January 1866, *The Taunton Courier*, reporting on the past Christmas, listed the quantities of produce at the Christmas market in a train station in London. Each was listed individually, but combined the total number of meats on offer—oxen, sheep, and pigs—was considerably less than the number of birds and game—turkeys, geese, ducks, hares, and pheasants. Granted, the butchers' animals provided many different cuts of meat and supplied dozens of families whereas a single bird would only serve one family. However, the large quantity of turkeys and geese suggested that these birds were becoming more popular proteins for Christmas meals, at least in London.<sup>46</sup>

Remarking on the past increasingly became part of articles discussing Christmas, which frequently referred to traditions and customs. In 1860, *The Cheltenham Chronicle* reported that "according to immemorial custom, the butchers and poulterers of this town made a very creditable display of 'good cheer'," indicating that holding a Christmas market was an age-old tradition, something which both butchers and poultry providers took part.<sup>47</sup> *The Royal Leamington Spa Courier* stated in 1864 that "Christmas Day, although somewhat shorn of its ancient glories, is still the great national holiday of the year."<sup>48</sup> As noted above, the same paper previously had worried about Christmas exceeding the expectations of the past and believed Victorian Christmas had succeeded in this goal. Now, in the mid-1860s, the paper reflected that

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<sup>44</sup> "Christmas Fare," *The Western Times*, December 20, 1862, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> "Christmas Fare," *The Western Times*, December 20, 1862.

<sup>46</sup> "Christmas Fare," *The Taunton Courier*, January 10, 1866, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> "Christmas Fare," *The Cheltenham Chronicle*, December 25, 1860, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> "Christmas Fare," *The Royal Leamington Spa Courier*, December 14, 1864, p. 4.

Christmas was no longer quite what it had been in the past, although still a great holiday. In 1865, the “Christmas Fare” article in *The Western Daily Press* did not list the abundant contents of the Christmas market, but, instead, dealt with the issue of nostalgia and the opinion of older generations on the state of Christmas. The article began by stating that some people believed that “the old Christmases, like the old Winters, were better than the modern ones.”<sup>49</sup> The article referred to these people as “worshippers of the past” and noted that beef and turkeys were better in 1865 than they were at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>50</sup> The article continued to state that the “secret of making excellent plum-puddings has not been lost,” but that members of an older generation who could remember Christmas during the reign of George III believed Christmas to be “the shadow of what it was in former times.”<sup>51</sup> The article attempted to explain this idea by suggesting that perhaps remembering things later in life made things rosier than they had been. It is noteworthy that plum pudding was used as an example of what made Christmas great, in the past and in the present, since plum pudding was a development of the latter part of George III’s reign. It seems unlikely that an older generation would remember plum pudding as part of reminiscing about past Christmases. Rather, it seemed that, by the mid-nineteenth century, plum pudding had been established as a staple dish at an English Christmas feast, to the extent that people celebrating in the mid-nineteenth century believed it to be part of older traditions. An article from 1868, also from *The Western Daily Press*, further demonstrated the belief in plum pudding as a traditional Christmas dish. The “Christmas Fare” article concluded by commenting that the various ingredients needed to make a plum pudding could be found at the Christmas

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<sup>49</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Daily Press*, December 18, 1865, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Daily Press*, December 18, 1865.

<sup>51</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Daily Press*, December 18, 1865.

market; items such as currants, raisins, and candied peel were noted as necessary for “that good old English dish—a plum pudding.”<sup>52</sup>

### **“Good Old Christmas Fare” & Historic Christmas Cookery**

References to “old” or “good old” Christmas were common in articles which detailed various town celebrations of the holiday, from parish organizations to workhouse dinners. The use of the phrase “old Christmas fare” demonstrated that there was a general understanding of what Christmas fare consisted of, and by adding the “old” there was an assumption that this had been the usual meal eaten at Christmas for generations. The combination of “good” and “old” also added a positive view of the past—that Christmas food was both traditional and enjoyable, and that because it was traditional, it would be enjoyable. The phrase “good old days” or “good old times” had been used for centuries, with the *Oxford English Dictionary* finding references in Old English, and consistently from the seventeenth century onward.<sup>53</sup> The *OED* noted that the nostalgic phrase “for old times’ sake” was first used in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup> With regard to “old Christmas fare,” there were a few newspaper articles before 1850 that used the phrase; for example, an article in the *London Standard* from 1829 described how the Earl of Egremont provided his parishes with “the good old Christmas fare of plum-pudding, roast beef, and strong beer, as is his custom every year.”<sup>55</sup> The phrase became more popular as the century progressed, based on comprehensive searching through The British Newspaper Archive, and the

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<sup>52</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Daily Press*, December 23, 1868, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> “Old—9a,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, (accessed online December 28, 2104), <http://www.oed.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/Entry/130955?redirectedFrom=good+old#eid33417984>.

<sup>54</sup> “Old—9b,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, (accessed online December 28, 2104), <http://www.oed.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/Entry/130955?redirectedFrom=good+old#eid33417984>.

<sup>55</sup> “On New Year’s Day...” *London Standard*, January 5, 1929, p. 3.



phrase was used primarily in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> In the majority of examples, “good old Christmas fare” consisted of roast beef and plum pudding, although the articles from the 1850s included beer as part of the definition and some examples also included goose and turkey.

In December 1850, the *Preston Chronicle*, from North Western England, wrote of a Catholic Chapel Christmas dinner, which contained “the usual old Christmas fare of roast beef, geese, plum pudding, &c.”<sup>57</sup> In January 1858, the *Hampshire Advertiser* reported on the Christmas meal served on the *Express* steam ship, which traveled from Jersey to Weymouth on Christmas day. The captain and crew dined on “the good old Christmas fare—turkey, roast beef, and plum pudding.”<sup>58</sup> Reporting on the health of sailors, Dublin’s *Freeman’s Journal* stated that sailors on “her Majesty’s ship Ajax, according to custom” celebrated during Christmas day, with “good old Christmas fare, roast beef and plum pudding, with a fair sprinkling of poultry.”<sup>59</sup> It did not provide further details on how much poultry, whether goose or turkey (or other birds), were eaten at this occasion; however, the following year, the *Kentish Gazette* noted that the sailors on board the Ajax ate “the old Christmas fare of roast beef, with several turkeys and geese, and plum-puddings,” suggesting poultry was increasingly enjoyed as part of Christmas feasts.<sup>60</sup> Similar to the variety of meats offered at Christmas markets, “old Christmas fare” consisted of roast beef and plum pudding, and also potentially a mix of other items, including poultry.

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<sup>56</sup> Searches for “old Christmas fare” in The British Newspaper Archive found only 40 articles from 1800-1849, but 106 articles from 1850-1899. It was a less popular phrase in the twentieth century, with only 33 references from 1900-1949.

<sup>57</sup> “St Mary’s Catholic Chapel,” *Preston Chronicle*, December 28, 1850, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> “The Channel Islands. A Christmas-Dinner on Board the “Express,” *Hampshire Advertiser*, January 2, 1858, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> “Kingstown Intelligence,” *Freeman’s Journal*, December 26, 1860, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> “Christmas-Day on Board Her Majesty’s Ship Ajax,” *Kentish Gazette*, December 31, 1861, p. 7.

In the 1860s, newspapers continued to report town Christmas celebrations. The *Derby Mercury*, in the East Midlands, wrote about “Christmas Cheer at the Workhouse,” where 900 inmates enjoyed “good old Christmas fare—roast beef and plum pudding.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, articles often did not detail what constituted “old Christmas fare,” assuming readers understood what that entailed, and that Christmas fare was served throughout the holiday season, including on New Year’s Day. During the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day, families and charitable institutions may have served multiple dishes belonging to the category “Christmas fare,” mixing beef and poultry or serving one on one day and the other on the next. In 1864, school children in Kirkby Fleetham, a village in North Yorkshire, enjoyed “an excellent tea, cakes, oranges, and other good old Christmas fare,” as well as entertainment at the Kirkby Fleetham Hall on New Year’s Day.<sup>62</sup> Often the accounts of Christmas fare were related in reference to acts of charity by specific people or village communities. In 1865, the *Chelmsford Chronicle* reported that the children in the village of Lexden, in Essex, “were entertained with good old Christmas fare,” but the article did not provide the details of what was served.<sup>63</sup> In 1866, W.W. Cedrington, Esq., from the village of Wroughton, in the South West of England, made it possible for 70 poor villagers to enjoy “a substantial dinner of good old Christmas fare,” another notice which assumed its readers knew what was included in “old Christmas fare.”<sup>64</sup>

However, just as the phrase “good plain cook” became contradictory, “good old Christmas fare” also appeared to be contradictory in practice. For the most part, the Christmas fare referred to was roast beef and plum pudding, but as evidenced by the variety of products on sale at Christmas markets, Christmas fare consisted of more than just roast beef. Poultry, game,

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<sup>61</sup> “Christmas Cheer at the Workhouse,” *Derby Mercury*, January 2, 1861, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> “Kirkby Fleetham. Christmas Treat to School Children,” *Yorkshire Gazette*, January 9, 1864, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> “Christmas and New Year’s Benefactions,” *Chelmsford Chronicle*, January 13, 1865, p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> “Wroughton. Generous Acts,” *Swindon Advertiser and North Wilts Chronicle*, December 31, 1866, p. 2.

and fish were frequently listed as items for purchase each year, and turkey seemed to increase in popularity throughout the nineteenth century. Yet roast beef and plum pudding remained the perceived traditional Christmas dishes and the ones that “old Christmas fare” implied. By linking “good” and “old” together in describing the Christmas dishes, the articles added a sense of nostalgia and a belief that something old meant something good. Perceived traditional English Christmas dishes were considered “good old,” and Christmas was the time to celebrate the past and customs, even if, in reality, the Christmas dishes being consumed were not that old or not even beef. Turkey was often grouped into the “good old” heading, despite being a newer Christmas dish. The historic Christmas dish of boar’s head was not listed as part of “good old Christmas fare” in the second half of the nineteenth century, although it was referred to in articles which discussed Christmas in the “Olden Time.”

In addition to general recipes for roast beef and plum pudding, cookbooks also reflected about Christmas, specific Christmas recipes, and history. In 1852, *The Illustrated London Cookery Book* included a recipe for mince pies by Miss Jane Strickland from the periodical *Home Circle*. The recipe began with the statement that “mince pies are truly English,” and noted that many recipes for mince pies were found in King Richard II’s cookbook, which was assembled by his French chef.<sup>65</sup> (It seems the relationship between French chefs and “English” cookery stemmed from an even earlier period than the nineteenth century.) The recipe for Christmas mince pies contained roast beef, currants, raisins, apples, sugar, lemons, nutmeg, and rum or brandy and raisin wine. The recipe added that “if on conscientious principles the spirits are disliked,” then only raisin wine could be used, but using alcohol acted as a preservative and meant the mince mixture would last longer.<sup>66</sup> The recipe concluded with the note that mince pies

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<sup>65</sup> Frederick Bishop, *The Illustrated London Cookery Book*, (London, 1852), 245.

<sup>66</sup> Bishop, 246.

were “not very digestible,” and that “in giving this old English dainty to children great caution should be observed—in fact, none of the condiments prepared for Christmas fare are particularly wholesome, but the turkey and roast beef.”<sup>67</sup> Strickland’s recipe for mince pies both established a tie to history and tradition, and criticized Christmas dishes as unhealthy, while including turkey, a newer alternative, as a wholesome option. The cookbook also provided a recipe for “The Old English Christmas Plum Pudding,” and a drink called an “Egg Flip or Egg Hot,” noted as served in England during Christmas.<sup>68</sup>

In 1862, Mrs Somerville’s *Cookery and Domestic Economy* offered a recipe for “Yorkshire Christmas Pie.” The Yorkshire pie used turkey instead of the more historic choice, pheasant, although it did call for “a large fowl, and a pigeon,” as well as a hare and “what other game you have” and was filled with gravy.<sup>69</sup> Published in 1865, *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping* also made reference to recipes found in cookbooks from the time of King Richard II. In a section titled “The Art of Cookery,” the author of *The Domestic Service Guide* provided a footnote about a “Game Pie for Christmas,” as proof that the English had excelled at cookery for centuries. The Game Pie recipe included “a pheasant, a hare, a capon, two partridges, two pigeons, and two rabbits,” deboned, and then all the ingredients were put together into pastry shaped like a bird, with “the livers and hearts, two mutton kidneys, force-meats, and egg-balls, seasoning, spice, ketchup, and pickled mushrooms, filled up with gravy made from the various bones.”<sup>70</sup> The author noted that this recipe was made in 1836 and was considered “excellent,” which demonstrated “that our ancestors excelled in Cookery more than four centuries and a half

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<sup>67</sup> Bishop, 246.

<sup>68</sup> Bishop, 263-264, 399.

<sup>69</sup> Mrs Somerville, *Cookery and Domestic Economy*, (Glasgow: George Watson, 1862), 63.

<sup>70</sup> *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping*, (London: Lockwood and Co., 1865), 117.

ago.”<sup>71</sup> Both game pie recipes mentioned in mid-nineteenth century cookbooks demonstrated the continuation of, and belief in, historic recipes, and how Christmas as represented in cookbooks involved more than the standard “good old Christmas fare.” The descriptions of these recipes also provided evidence that mid-nineteenth century cookery was perceived poorly because the cookbook authors felt they needed to look for evidence and proof that English cookery was once good.

Anne Bowman’s *The New Cookery Book* from 1867 included multiple recipes that were specific to Christmas as well as comments within other recipes regarding their use for Christmas. Discussing beef, Bowman stated that during the Christmas season, beef was fatter and juicier; the recipe “To bake a Round of Beef” stated that this dish was “the standing *piece* of the side table at Christmas” in northern England.<sup>72</sup> Another recipe, “Yorkshire Goose Pie,” was also mentioned as a “standing Christmas dish” eaten during Christmas in the north of England.<sup>73</sup> The phrase “standing dish” seemed to be Bowman’s way of saying “good old Christmas fare,” as the dishes that were always on offer. Her discussion of “Wild Boar” included the remark that the head was used for the “ancient Christmas dish,” and the notes on “Turkeys” referred to turkey as “the prime bird for English cookery” that was at its best during Christmastime.<sup>74</sup> As noted earlier in a previous chapter, Bowman often reflected on rural cooking and the benefits of making items at home to avoid food adulteration. Her recipe for “Apple Florentine, an old Christmas Dish” explained that it was still made in “some rural districts,” and, in those areas, it was eaten by all “who love to perpetuate the customs of old Christmas-tide.”<sup>75</sup> While Bowman did remark that

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<sup>71</sup> *The Domestic Service Guide to Housekeeping*, 117.

<sup>72</sup> Anne Bowman, *The New Cookery Book: A Complete Manual of English and Foreign Cookery on Sound Principles of Taste and Science*, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1867), 197. Emphasis in Original.

<sup>73</sup> Bowman, 379.

<sup>74</sup> Bowman, 295, 316.

<sup>75</sup> Bowman, 413.

the dish was “merely an apple-tart or pie of gigantic proportions,” the use of “merely” suggesting it was rather unexciting, it was perceived to be a traditional dish, and therefore was a recipe she could recommend.<sup>76</sup> “Apple Florentine” could also represent a dish that was eaten at Christmas because it was a dish of excess, as Bowman did describe it as very large. Bowman also included a recipe for “Firmity or Frumenty,” explaining that this was “still a common Christmas-eve supper-dish in some of the provinces,” again emphasizing rural environments as able to perpetuate traditions.<sup>77</sup> Not to be ignored, a recipe for “A Good Christmas Plum Pudding” was provided, with the observations that plum pudding was “the pride of English cookery.”<sup>78</sup> Bowman included multiple recipes for it.

Bowman’s references to Christmas combined what she considered historic recipes with newer Christmas dishes that now were deemed traditional. Her belief that turkey, roast beef, and plum pudding were customary fare for Christmas demonstrated that her perception of “good old Christmas fare” matched what was discussed in newspaper articles. Bowman’s examples of rural Christmas fare and remarks on the heritage of specific dishes also demonstrated how her cookbook fit in with the common connection made between Christmas and the past. Her perception that rural communities preserved historic recipes and traditions, implying urban environments did not do so, suggested a nostalgia for rural living that could be experienced during the Christmas season by making these specific recipes. The Christmas recipes, Bowman’s cookbook, as well as the others mentioned above, followed the increasing habit of discussing English history, food, and Christmas together.

In December 1878, *The Burnley Advertiser*, a newspaper from the North West of England, published an article titled “Christmas Fare in the Olden Time.” The article, written by

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<sup>76</sup> Bowman, 413.

<sup>77</sup> Bowman, 471.

<sup>78</sup> Bowman, 453.

William Andrews, F.R.H.S., was copied from the Christmas issue of the *Pantiles Papers* and was also printed in at least one other newspaper, *The Cornishman*, from the south west.<sup>79</sup> Andrews discussed a variety of historic Christmas dishes, in order of their perceived importance, beginning with the boar's head. Andrews quoted Dr Robert Chambers, who explained that the popularity of boar's head decreased after Cromwell's rule because Parliament tried to "put down Christmas," and although they failed, boar's head did not return to its glorified status.<sup>80</sup> Chambers stated that "its memory was cherished in some nooks and corners of Old England long after" and boar's head remained a traditional dish in certain places.<sup>81</sup> Andrews also explained that boar's head was traditionally served with mustard, perhaps a precursor to the custom of serving roast beef with its own spicy sauce, horseradish. Next, Andrews discussed how to make and serve roasted peacock, another important Christmas dish served at aristocratic feasts. Andrews reported that he thought peacock was most recently served at a dinner for William IV before he became king. Furnety, another spelling for Frumenty, also mentioned above in Bowman's cookbooks, was described as "a favourite Christmas dish" that was still eaten in the north of England for Christmas.<sup>82</sup>

Andrews continued with a paragraph on Christmas pies, remarking they were a significant part of "the good old English fare," and provided a recipe from Richard II's era, including pheasant, hare, capon, partridges, pigeons, rabbits, and, similar to the cookbook noted above, Andrews commented that version was made and enjoyed in 1836.<sup>83</sup> He also wrote about how mutton pies were an early version of mince pies, eaten in the sixteenth century. For

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<sup>79</sup> William Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time," *The Burnley Advertiser*, December 21, 1878, p. 6; see also, *The Cornishman*, December 26, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time," *The Burnley Advertiser*, December 21, 1878, p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time."

<sup>82</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time."

<sup>83</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time."

Christmas 1769, Sir Henry Grey enjoyed a Christmas pie containing four geese, two turkeys, two rabbits, four wild ducks, two woodcocks, six snipes, four partridges, two curlews, two neat's tongues, seven blackbirds, and six pigeons.<sup>84</sup> This eighteenth century example demonstrated the blending of the older traditional game pie with newer birds, such as turkey. According to Andrews, people in Northumberland in the far north of England continued to make "excellent game pies" every year and these pies were sent all over the country.<sup>85</sup> To conclude, Andrews discussed the history of Christmas plum pudding, and its earlier versions as plum pottage, porridge, and broth. Andrews noted there was a recipe for plum pottage in a cookbook from 1791 and it was enjoyed at a dinner for the royal chaplain in 1801, but remarked that was the last record of serving plum broth. Andrews observed, "so much for plum porridge, the progenitor of the pride and glory of an English Christmas."<sup>86</sup> Andrews recognized that plum pudding was a fairly modern invention, especially in comparison with the older dishes he discussed, and yet, by 1878, when his article was published, plum pudding was firmly established as a staple item and "good old Christmas fare."

Another article, from 1880, "Christmas Fare in Former Times," published in Guernsey's *The Star*, also reflected on Christmas dishes from the past, or "the good old times" as it referred to them.<sup>87</sup> This article stated that pheasants "drenched with *amber grease*" and pies containing "carps' tongues" were "great delicacies" at former Christmases.<sup>88</sup> "Furmety" was noted as "indispensable," roasted peacock "was a dish of great importance," and boar's head was carried into dinner on a gold or silver serving dish.<sup>89</sup> The article also wrote about the Christmas

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<sup>84</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time."

<sup>85</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time."

<sup>86</sup> Andrews, "Christmas Fare in the Olden Time."

<sup>87</sup> "Christmas Fare in Former Times," *The Star*, December 28, 1880, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> "Christmas Fare in Former Times," *The Star*, December 28, 1880. Emphasis in Original.

<sup>89</sup> "Christmas Fare in Former Times," *The Star*, December 28, 1880.



traditions of different countries, such as the Venetian dish of “*Torta de Lusagne*,” made with onions, pastry, parsley, nuts, raisins, currants, and candied orange peel.<sup>90</sup> As well, the Welsh were apparently known for drinking “hot beer with roasted apples, cakes, sugar and spice in it.”<sup>91</sup> The article then quoted Lord Byron’s poem written about King Arthur’s Christmas feasts that included many birds, game, mutton, alcoholic beverages, and “plum-puddings, pancakes, pies, and apple custard.”<sup>92</sup> Even though people writing about Christmas in the nineteenth century knew that plum pudding was a new invention, Byron placed plum pudding at King Arthur’s Christmas, adding weight to its nineteenth century status as “good old Christmas fare.”

Published in 1883, *Cookery and Housekeeping: A Manual of Domestic Economy for Large and Small Families* by Mrs Henry Reeve offered a Christmas pudding recipe to serve twenty-six people.<sup>93</sup> She also offered a recipe for “Plum Pudding” on the same page. The Christmas pudding recipe instructed cooks to boil the puddings in cloths, while the everyday plum pudding recipe stated that the pudding should be made in a buttered mould that was then tied in a cloth.<sup>94</sup> Mrs Reeve’s examples demonstrated the combination of cooking techniques for plum pudding in the nineteenth century. In her preface, Mrs Reeve wrote that most recipes were appropriate for families of “moderate means,” although some of the menus provided were for “elaborate dinners suited to great houses.”<sup>95</sup> The title of the cookbook and the preface implied that her cookbook was for middle class families hosting smaller dinners, yet a recipe for twenty-six people seemed outside the norm. Mrs Reeve also noted that some of the recipes in the cookbook would work for people living in towns, while others were better for people living in

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<sup>90</sup> “Christmas Fare in Former Times,” *The Star*, December 28, 1880. Emphasis in Original.

<sup>91</sup> “Christmas Fare in Former Times,” *The Star*, December 28, 1880.

<sup>92</sup> “Christmas Fare in Former Times,” *The Star*, December 28, 1880.

<sup>93</sup> Mrs Henry Reeve, *Cookery and Housekeeping: A Manual of Domestic Economy for Large and Small Families*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883), 408-409.

<sup>94</sup> Reeve, 408-409.

<sup>95</sup> Reeve, v-vi.

the country, suggesting there was a difference between urban cooking and rural cooking. In her chapter, “Filling the Larder,” Mrs Reeve explained the difficulties of stocking a pantry in the country, and how housekeepers in rural areas needed to learn how to “take advantage of such exceptional delicacies as circumstances place within her reach.”<sup>96</sup> Mrs Reeve recognized that there were unique circumstances in the country, and, while sometimes certain ingredients were harder to obtain, other local ingredients were special and needed to be enjoyed.<sup>97</sup>

A large, elaborate Christmas plum pudding, such as the recipe provided by Mrs Reeve, harkened back to when Christmas dinners were grand feasts with multiple courses. An article from 1883 copied from the *St James's Gazette* and published in multiple newspapers, “A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time,” wrote that a Christmas Day dinner used to consist of two courses, each containing twenty-one different dishes.<sup>98</sup> The article used Robert May’s cookbook from 1671 as its evidence for what people ate at Christmas in the “Olden Time.” Referring to the reign of James I (1603-1625), May had claimed that these were the “golden days,” when cookery and hospitality were at their best.<sup>99</sup> The Christmas meal began with raw oysters, brawn, a mutton broth, a “grand sallet,” and then “a pottage of caponets.”<sup>100</sup> The 1883 article stated that either the pottage or the mutton broth possibly were “that old national dish of which the plum-pudding is a solid development.”<sup>101</sup> Since plum broth/porridge/pottage was not explicitly mentioned in May’s Christmas menu, the article believed that it was either “so much a matter of course as not to be worth mentioning” or one of the two dishes mentioned above was actually the

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<sup>96</sup> Reeve, 16.

<sup>97</sup> Reeve, 16.

<sup>98</sup> “A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time,” *Freeman's Journal*, December 26, 1883, p. 7. See also, *The Morning Post*, December 25, 1883, p. 6; *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, January 1, 1884, p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> “A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time,” *Freeman's Journal*.

<sup>100</sup> “A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time,” *Freeman's Journal*.

<sup>101</sup> “A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time,” *Freeman's Journal*.

plum soup dish.<sup>102</sup> Just as plum pudding was deemed indispensable to a Christmas meal in the nineteenth century, its ancestor, plum soup, was considered so important a dish that it might not even be noted because it was obviously at the table—at least, according to the nineteenth century observer, who was attempting to create a history for plum pudding.

After the soups, there was a stuffed veal dish, boiled partridge with spices, nuts, and berries, roast beef, and minced pies. In addition, a sweetbreads dish was included, a favourite dish of May's containing "sweetbreads, lambstones, chickens, marrow, almonds, eggs, oranges, biscuit, asparagus, artichokes, musk, saffron, butter, potatoes, pistachio-nuts, chestnuts, verjuice, sugar, flour, parmesan, and cinnamon."<sup>103</sup> The list of ingredients was rather extreme, contributing to the idea that Christmas was a time to overindulge, and the article remarked that "it is impossible, reading of such outrages on taste, not to sympathise with Cromwell's hatred of kickshaws."<sup>104</sup> As noted above with regard to boar's head, many Christmas traditions did not survive the Cromwell era, and this article offered the first mention of an elaborate sweetbread dish at the Christmas meal. After sweetbreads, a roasted swan was served, followed by a venison pastry, "a steak pie, a haunch of venison roasted, a turkey roast and stuck with cloves, a made dish of chickens in puff paste, two brangeese, two large capons, and a custard," which concluded the first course of the dinner.<sup>105</sup> The second course was equally grandiose, including lamb, rabbits, pig, ducks, pheasants, partridges, swan pie, "Bolonia sausages with anchovies, mushrooms, caviar, and pickled oysters," and more game and birds.<sup>106</sup> The article concluded by wondering how many people were supposed to dine at this extreme Christmas dinner. The article's use of the cookbook to study the past offered only a few judgments of the extravagant

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<sup>102</sup> "A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time," *Freeman's Journal*.

<sup>103</sup> "A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time," *Freeman's Journal*.

<sup>104</sup> "A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time," *Freeman's Journal*.

<sup>105</sup> "A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time," *Freeman's Journal*.

<sup>106</sup> "A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time," *Freeman's Journal*.

Christmas meal, such as the remark about “kickshaws,” and reference to the meal as May’s “ideal Christmas banquet.”<sup>107</sup> It seems unlikely that a meal of these proportions was ever served, but presenting a meal from the “Olden Time” did not require a factual account. An exact account of an historic meal was unnecessary for the nineteenth century writer attempting to create a glorious past for its Christmas dishes and to remember a time when English cookery was good. Reading about a large Christmas meal from two hundred years earlier allowed late-nineteenth century readers to perceive the past with rose-coloured glasses.

In the past, Christmas was more involved and more elaborate than just “good old Christmas fare,” especially as later nineteenth century articles about Christmas markets began to report a sad story of poor quality meat and fewer ingredients than usual. In 1882, the Scottish paper *The Fife Herald* reported that “Christmas fare was never dearer in London” than that year, and that both beef and birds were more expensive than in previous years.<sup>108</sup> Also in 1882, *The Portsmouth Evening News* observed that prices were dear at the Christmas markets, and that the meat prices were “enough to appal [sic] the stoutest housekeeper,” but unfortunately, prices were predicted to further increase.<sup>109</sup> The article commented that reflecting on “the good old times” when meat was cheaper only irritated people, but the future seemed bleak and prices were likely to continue to rise.<sup>110</sup> In this case, the “good old times” may have only been a few years or decades earlier, not hundreds of years. Looking back at Christmases from previous centuries was easier and more enjoyable than a more direct comparison within someone’s own lifetime. *The Star* reported that chestnuts were much harder to obtain in 1882 than they were in the

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<sup>107</sup> “A Christmas Dinner in the Olden Time,” *Freeman’s Journal*.

<sup>108</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Fife Herald*, December 21, 1882, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Portsmouth Evening News*, December 13, 1882, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Portsmouth Evening News*, December 13, 1882.

previous year and that game was available, but expensive.<sup>111</sup> The turkeys were not as nice and were more expensive than in the past, but geese were relatively the same. However, unlike the previous reports, beef, “the principal item,” had not “diminished,” suggesting that different places had different availabilities, which was logical, given regional differences and travel times for products.<sup>112</sup> In 1890, an article on Christmas recipes in *The Northampton Mercury* began by reflecting “in these nineteenth century days,” Christmas was not what it used to be: the yule log did not glow at every hearth, the boar’s head was no longer served, and people no longer enjoyed carol singing.<sup>113</sup> Yet, children still embraced Christmas cheer and Christmas celebrations were still on offer at the Christmas market. The recipes provided were primarily for “economical” dishes as well as traditional Yorkshire Christmas fare, Christmas recipes that were regional and conformed to the perception of English cookery as needing to be more wholesome and economical.

Journalists were also interested in royal Christmas dinners, past and present. In 1887, *The Manchester Courier* reported on the “Christmas Fare at Windsor,” where royal chefs attempted to make some historic Christmas recipes. Queen Victoria was not residing at Windsor for Christmas, but instead was at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. The Christmas dishes travelled from Windsor to Osborne. The historic dishes to be made were boar’s head, baron of beef, and a woodcock pie. The article commented that these represented “a survival of a very antique past” to the time of the “old feudal days,” when the lord hosted a great feast and “the wassail-bowl went round more frequently than modern temperance advocates would consider at

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<sup>111</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Star*, December 23, 1882, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Star*, December 23, 1882.

<sup>113</sup> “Christmas Fare: Cookery Hints, with Twenty Original and Specially Prepared Recipes,” *The Northampton Mercury*, December 19, 1890, p. 2.

all desirable.”<sup>114</sup> The conclusion of this article about the temperance movement implied that in the past, there was more enjoyment of Christmas and living to its fullest the phrase “eat, drink, and be merry.” Another article, published in *The Belfast News-Letter* in 1897, explored much older historic feasts, starting as early as the twelfth century with King Henry II. According to the article, King Henry II arrived in Dublin for Christmas, and Irish, Scandinavian, and English customs combined for a great Christmas feast. What was eaten at the feast remained unknown to historians, but the article stated that they could “imagine the lavish plenty and rough splendor of the whole.”<sup>115</sup> Following Henry II, the article noted that Richard II, John, and Henry III also observed large Christmas feasts. The article remarked that during Edward III’s reign (1327-1377), cookery became a “fine art” and that Edward III “was a splendid provider.”<sup>116</sup> The article concluded by commenting that centuries ago, the English knew how to dine, and “our modern feasts sink into insignificance” by comparison.<sup>117</sup> This was yet another example that reinforced the perception that English cookery had historically been good, but could not be considered so in the late-nineteenth century.

### **Criticism of Traditional Christmas Dishes**

While plum pudding was recognized as the key to an English Christmas, not all enjoyed the dish or believed it to be “good” food. An excerpt from the medical journal *The Lancet*, printed in *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* in 1880, asked why people continued to eat plum pudding at Christmas, since it was so difficult to digest and upset their stomachs. The article remarked that

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<sup>114</sup> “Christmas Fare at Windsor,” *The Manchester Courier*, December 23, 1887, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> “Some Royal Christmas Dinner Parties,” *The Belfast News-Letter*, December 28, 1897, p. 6.

<sup>116</sup> “Some Royal Christmas Dinner Parties.”

<sup>117</sup> “Some Royal Christmas Dinner Parties.”

it would be out of line to suggest an “English household” would “have the moral courage to dine without plum pudding on Christmas-day,” but that there must be some way to make it a digestible dish.<sup>118</sup> The article recommended leaving out certain ingredients, such as the candied peel because it never became soft enough to properly digest, and also suggested not using alcohol, or serving the pudding without a sauce.

In a newspaper article, “Mince Pies and Plum Pudding” from 1891, the author began by calling mince pies the “parent of nightmare” and plum pudding “the mighty dyspepsia breeder,” similar to the earlier claims that these two staple items were difficult to digest.<sup>119</sup> The article provided a short history of the items, and concluded by stating that “our ancestors in merrie England were able to digest readily the compounded abominations of mince pie and plum pudding” because they spent most of their time outside and their homes were well ventilated, so they had more oxygen to breathe inside and outside.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, not only were the favourite Christmas dishes “bad,” but the implication was that English society itself had declined. The article perceived homes to be ill-ventilated in the late-nineteenth century (which was often the case in kitchens), the English to be no longer as active or able to enjoy the outdoors (a not-so-veiled criticism of urbanization and industrialization), and mince pies and plum pudding, rather than “good old Christmas fare,” were really just “old,” not “good.”

Criticism of plum pudding as difficult to digest carried into the twentieth century. For example, *The New Cookery of Unproprietary Foods* (1906) referred to Christmas plum pudding as “solid” and “something heavy.”<sup>121</sup> Plum pudding was also satirized in popular songs. The “Plum Pudding Song” from 1887 described making a plum pudding throughout the chorus,

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<sup>118</sup> “Medical ‘Indulgences’,” *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, December 25, 1880, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> “Mince Pies and Plum Pudding,” *Manchester Times*, December 24, 1891, p. ?.

<sup>120</sup> “Mince Pies and Plum Pudding.”

<sup>121</sup> Eustace Miles, *The New Cookery of Unproprietary Foods*, (London: S.W. Partridge & Co., 1906), 83.

telling listeners that they “better watch the Clock/ Don’t have it like a rock.”<sup>122</sup> In “The Cook who Cooks” from 1902, during the “patter” part of the song, the singer recited a recipe for Christmas pudding. The recipe contained “one spoonful of flour, two sacks of Portland cement, three old tram lines, four barrels of white lead” and the method was to “sweeten to taste with turps and treacle, and boil for two years.”<sup>123</sup> Listeners were told that when the pudding was done, they should “carefully remove the tarpaulin and gracefully retire to the nearest cemetery.”<sup>124</sup> The references to cement and lead satirized the heaviness of plum pudding and the reference to the cemetery poked fun at its indigestible nature. In the song, “Ev’rything in its Season” from 1912, the fourth verse on winter added a line about Christmas, singing “Christmas approaches With geese and cockroaches, Roast beef and plum pudding that makes your face slip.”<sup>125</sup> In this song, cockroaches have been added to the “good old Christmas fare” and plum pudding caused “face slipping,” a slang that is unclear, but could have to do with the food causing eaters to gain weight. Even “good old Christmas fare” could not avoid being criticized, and was part of the negative perception of English cookery.

Cookery manuscripts and community cookbooks often provided glimpses into the past with their regional recipes. Occasionally, these recipes were compiled and mass-produced, such was the case with Mrs Willingham Rawnsley’s *An Old-World Recipe Book* from 1908. Mrs Rawnsley offered her grandmother’s recipes to a modern audience, and in her introduction demonstrated her feelings of nostalgia for an earlier time. The oldest recipe of her grandmother’s was from 1784, which suggested that most of the recipes Mrs Rawnsley provided were from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. With regard to Christmas recipes,

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<sup>122</sup> David Braham, “Plum Pudding Song,” (London : Hopwood & Crew, [1887]).

<sup>123</sup> Charles Osborne, “The Cook who Cooks,” (London: Francis, Day and Hunter, 1902).

<sup>124</sup> Osborne, “The Cook who Cooks.”

<sup>125</sup> W.H. Wallis, “Ev’rything in its Season,” (London: Francis, Day & Hunter, 1912).



Mrs Rawnsley wrote that the recipes reminded readers of “far-off days, and of long-gone-by mirth and festivities by which the old-world Christmas used to be celebrated,” implying the Christmas of 1908 could not compare with Christmases of even one hundred years earlier.<sup>126</sup> Christmas was not the only occasion for which Mrs Rawnsley felt a sense of nostalgia. In her introduction, she remarked that not all of her grandmother’s recipes were applicable to the twentieth century, because certain items were no longer made at home, including jam, beer, cured bacon and ham, or bread. She recalled collecting berries and flowers to make homemade wine, asking her readers, “who can remember the delight of the children of the house in being sent out in April and May into the fields to gather cowslips for wine?”<sup>127</sup> Cowslip wine, a recipe that appeared in manuscript cookbooks, rarely was mentioned in mass publications, and Mrs Rawnsley’s memories of gathering cowslip flowers revealed her nostalgia for the past. Gathering cowslips were a “delight” that only a few could remember in 1908. Even in manuscript cookbooks from the mid-nineteenth century, cowslip wine was referred to as a grandmother’s recipe, suggesting it was a much older tradition. In Ann Rose’s early-nineteenth century manuscript from Surrey, she wrote beside the recipe for Cowslip Wine that it was from an old book of her grandmother’s and that it was “excellent,” although there was too much lemon peel to her taste.<sup>128</sup> Another manuscript from 1851 near Leeds included “Grandmama Smith’s receipt for Cowslip Wine,” a recipe that was marked with an X and also noted as “excellent.”<sup>129</sup> Mrs Rawnsley also commented on making elderflower wine and collecting elderberries, harvesting wheat and sifting wheat to make “frumety” for breakfast, recipes that

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<sup>126</sup> Mrs. Willingham Rawnsley, *An Old-World Recipe Book*, (London: George Routledge & Sons Limited, [1908]), 12.

<sup>127</sup> Mrs Rawnsley, 7.

<sup>128</sup> Ann Rose of Croydon, *Cookery and other Recipes*, British Library, MS 74765.

<sup>129</sup> *Cookery Book*, c. 1851, Leeds Special Collections, MS 59.

were also frequently found in other cookery manuscripts.<sup>130</sup> In publishing her grandmother's recipes, first used in country homes with kitchen gardens, she recommended their continued usefulness, especially to "some of those who still live in the country," seeming to hope that people in the country would continue the older methods of distilling and preserving that she remembered fondly.<sup>131</sup>

Reporting on "Old Christmas Cookery," *The Devon and Exeter Gazette* was not as kind to grandmother's recipes or memories. The article stated that the modern housewife, while burdened with preparing the Christmas dinner, was still "happier than her great grandmother, to whom the cooking of the Christmas fare was a task intolerable to modern minds and its digestion inconceivable to a generation of dyspeptics."<sup>132</sup> In judging the past Christmas dinner as "intolerable," the article also referred to the modern readers as always suffering from indigestion. The article continued, saying that "those people who annually bepraise the old-fashioned Christmas and mourn our modern short-comings, do not know what they would have been called upon to devour if they had lived in the good old December days," and then proceeded to list the grand items served at a historic Christmas feast.<sup>133</sup> At first the author seemed to be criticizing those who remembered Christmas fondly and with a sense of nostalgia, but while describing the dishes found at a Christmas meal, the author often complained about the modern Christmas, rather than the past. Providing the history of plum pudding, the author wrote that "the too, too solid pudding which only an Englishwoman can compound and only an Englishman will indigest, was in its first form a soup."<sup>134</sup> Later, discussing the boar's head served with mustard,

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<sup>130</sup> Mrs Rawnsley, 9-10.

<sup>131</sup> Mrs Rawnsley, 6.

<sup>132</sup> "Old Christmas Cookery," *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, December 28, 1903, p. 5.

<sup>133</sup> "Old Christmas Cookery," *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>134</sup> "Old Christmas Cookery," *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

the author referred to readers as “we degenerate moderns.”<sup>135</sup> Concluding the article, the author described the variety of alcoholic beverages consumed at Christmastime, stating that “the proverbial warning against mixing one’s drinks is the invention of this weakly generation.”<sup>136</sup> Whether the author was specifically thinking of the temperance movement is unclear. Rather, it seemed more likely the author was describing a Christmas of excess and luxury that occurred in that past and recognized that this was no longer the case in the early twentieth century. The author seemed to suggest that the readers of the article were weak, degenerate, and suffered from indigestion, and English cookery did not help the situation.

Referring to mince pies, the article stated that not so long ago, mince pies “were held in conscientious abhorrence. By some strange process of reasoning the Puritans regarded the dainty as unChristian, Pagan, and Popish.”<sup>137</sup> While no longer considered unChristian in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, mince pies did not escape criticism. A story recounted in *The Evening Telegraph* in December 1904, described two women discussing an ill relative. One woman commented to the other, “she ate a mince pie last night. That did it!”<sup>138</sup> Her remark indicated a belief that mince pies could make someone sick after eating, rather than feel full of Christmas cheer. On the “Christmas Page” of *The Cambridge Independent Press* in December 1909, one column listed “Christmas Don’ts.” Included in the list were multiple warnings not to overeat Christmas dishes, implying that Christmas was not about excess and indulgence anymore. For example, “Don’t over-eat yourself whatever you do. Uneasy lies the head that is troubled by a nightmare,” or, “Don’t let Tommy overeat himself. Too much plum-pudding to-

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<sup>135</sup> “Old Christmas Cookery,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>136</sup> “Old Christmas Cookery,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>137</sup> “Old Christmas Cookery,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>138</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Evening Telegraph*, December 15, 1904, p. 3.

day will mean a doctor's visit to-morrow.”<sup>139</sup> The list also warned readers not to “tackle your share of the plum pudding with a do-or-die expression. Your hostess will not think you very complimentary.”<sup>140</sup> On the one hand, the “Christmas Don'ts” implied readers potentially could overindulge in plum pudding, while also still implying on the other hand that they might not want to eat it at all. Both “don'ts” signified that Christmas plum pudding was not as “good,” whether nutritionally or because of taste, as “good old Christmas fare” hoped to suggest. However, despite all of the warnings, in the Christmas recipes provided on the “Christmas Page” of the same newspaper, the recipe for “The Plum Pudding” stated that “you simply must have the good old plum-pudding on the dinner table on Christmas Day,” further demonstrating that no matter the implication of eating plum pudding, it was a necessary item for Christmas dinner.<sup>141</sup>

Early twentieth century writers were also in agreement in considering turkey and beef as the appropriate and must-have choices for Christmas dinners. In December 1904, the *Falkirk Herald* declared that “the choice of a flesh food at the Christmas festival seems to lie now between beef and turkey (for no one hears of a leg of mutton, for example, being on the Christmas table).”<sup>142</sup> Mutton, perhaps, was not extraordinary enough to be perceived as Christmas fare. Also in December 1904, *The Western Gazette* reported that turkeys were inexpensive for Christmas 1904 and that it was especially a good year for English turkeys.<sup>143</sup> The report also noted that “the turkey seems to have completely ousted the goose as the working-man's Christmas dish. Ten or 20 years ago very few would have thought of buying anything but a goose. Now the demand is all for turkeys.”<sup>144</sup> *The Cambridge Independent Press* “Christmas

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<sup>139</sup> “Christmas Don'ts,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 24, 1909, p. 7.

<sup>140</sup> “Christmas Don'ts,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 24, 1909.

<sup>141</sup> “Christmas Cookery,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 24, 1909, p. 7.

<sup>142</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *Falkirk Herald*, December 28, 1904, p. 6.

<sup>143</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Gazette*, December 16, 1904, p. 12.

<sup>144</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Gazette*, December 16, 1904.

Page” from 1909 also contained Christmas facts, including comments on Christmas fare. For example, one fact stated that “turkeys, mince-pies, and plum-puddings are now regarded as the chief items in the Christmas dinner; but at one time they were mere side-dishes in an enormous number of courses.”<sup>145</sup> However, not all comments about turkeys were positive. Reporting in December 1907, another article in *The Western Gazette* informed its readers that “the Brighton magistrates on Tuesday ordered the destruction of 266 turkeys, which had been seized as unfit for human food.”<sup>146</sup> A previous chapter examined adulteration and the establishment of food regulation, and this report provides some evidence, albeit small, that at least by 1907, regulators may have been effective at removing food from circulation before it could be sold. The “Christmas Don’ts” from 1909 also included a warning to readers not to “buy a yellow-fleshed turkey,” and told readers that “a fine turkey should have firm, white flesh.”<sup>147</sup>

Cookbooks also noted turkey as part of the Christmas meal. The Christmas dinner in A.N. Whybrow’s *The Day-By-Day Cookery Book* from 1900 comprised of fifteen dishes, including “Boiled Salmon,” “Boiled Turkey,” “York Ham,” “Sirloin of Beef,” “Plum Pudding,” and “Mince Pies.”<sup>148</sup> Whybrow also specified breakfast and luncheon menus for Christmas Day, with the luncheon menu involving “Pigeon Pie” as one of its principal dishes.<sup>149</sup> In *Aunt Kate’s Cookery Book* from 1902, the author listed what she called “A Simple Christmas Dinner,” consisting of “Roast Turkey,” stuffing, and pudding.<sup>150</sup> The remarks made in *The Modern Home Cookery Book*, published in 1910, recognized that turkey was a key component to a Christmas dinner, but suggested that families were often stuck with leftovers. The author commented that

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<sup>145</sup> “Christmas Snowdrift,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 24, 1909, p. 7

<sup>146</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Gazette*, December 27, 1907, p. 12.

<sup>147</sup> “Christmas Don’ts,” *The Cambridge Independent Press*, December 24, 1909.

<sup>148</sup> A.N. Whybrow, *The Day-By-Day Cookery Book*, (London: Sands & Company, 1900), 398.

<sup>149</sup> Whybrow, 398.

<sup>150</sup> “Aunt Kate,” *Aunt Kate’s Cookery Book*, (London: John Leng & Co., 1902), 37.

“the housewife is at her wits’ end to know how to vary sufficiently the continued reappearances of the reminder of the roast turkey.”<sup>151</sup> Similar to complaints about the monotony of English cookery examined in a previous chapter, *The Modern Home Cookery Book* implied that even turkey became unappealing after the Christmas meal. The specialness of the Christmas dinner no longer seemed special served over and over again as leftovers. One could also infer that if housewives were stuck with too much extra turkey after Christmas, they potentially were buying birds too large for their families, which was the argument often posed about mutton and beef when writers complained that the English were wasteful and uneconomical with their food.

However, not all were critical of Christmas fare. An article published in *The Nottingham Evening News* in December 1910 claimed it was in “Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary.”<sup>152</sup> The article commented that Christmas dinner was “a highly cherished institution” and the author declared the ingredients used were “of the most wholesome kind.”<sup>153</sup> The author wondered why “humorists” disapproved of Christmas fare as unhealthy, because the author believed that roast beef, turkey, and plum pudding, represented a nutritious, “complete diet.”<sup>154</sup> The article continued to discuss plum pudding specifically, declaring it “a complete food in itself,” and it was only problematic when people overindulge, but, according to the author, eating excessively was no longer an issue, because “the gospel of temperance, in regard to both eating and drinking, has been preached most effectively by the medical profession.”<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, even if the Christmas meal did place some “demand upon the digestive organs,” the author

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<sup>151</sup> *The Modern Home Cookery Book*, (London: Temple Press, c. 1910), 191.

<sup>152</sup> “Christmas Fare. Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary. The Plum Pudding,” *The Nottingham Evening News*, December 24, 1910, p. 4.

<sup>153</sup> “Christmas Fare. Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary. The Plum Pudding,” *The Nottingham Evening News*.

<sup>154</sup> “Christmas Fare. Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary. The Plum Pudding,” *The Nottingham Evening News*.

<sup>155</sup> “Christmas Fare. Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary. The Plum Pudding,” *The Nottingham Evening News*.

believed that it was a “demonstrated physiological fact that the cheerfulness of the occasion lightens this burden.”<sup>156</sup> Therefore, the article contended that not only did people no longer eat excessively over Christmas and that Christmas dishes were nutritious, but that Christmas cheer would solve all digestive problems. The article recommended “simplicity,” commenting that a simple Christmas was in fashion, and that “sensible” people would not want to “spoil” the simplicity by overindulging.<sup>157</sup> The author’s claims that Christmas dinner was wholesome and that “sensible” people would not overeat fit with the moral values surrounding the broader discussion of English cookery. In order to declare that Christmas dishes were good and did not belong to “bad” English cookery, the author had to demonstrate that they were economical and efficient, and, therefore, sensible choices. Calling the Christmas dinner “simple,” something *Aunt Kate’s Cookery Book* also did, tried to reconnect the Christmas meal to a past English cookery; not necessarily a past Christmas cookery, which writers illustrated as lavish, but to a past when English cookery was celebrated for being “plain.”

### **Christmas Imports, the Empire, and Royal Christmases**

Increasingly in the twentieth century, reports on Christmas fare included information about where products originated and whether they were English, from the Colonies, or elsewhere. The earlier reports mentioned above about the prevalence of turkeys at Christmastime also informed readers where the turkeys were coming from and the price differences among the various foreign birds. The article from 1904 in *The Western Gazette*

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<sup>156</sup> “Christmas Fare. Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary. The Plum Pudding,” *The Nottingham Evening News*.

<sup>157</sup> “Christmas Fare. Defence of Old-Fashioned English Dietary. The Plum Pudding,” *The Nottingham Evening News*.

noted that Italy, Serbia, Hungary, and France supplied a large number of turkeys and that they “always command a good sale.”<sup>158</sup> The article also commented that 1904 was a bad year for frozen turkey from Canada, both because supplies were low and because “the Canadian birds are not very popular with English people, because they have a prejudice against anything frozen.”<sup>159</sup> The article believed the English to suffer from prejudice even in the early twentieth century, despite at least a decade of frozen meat arriving from the colonies (although more often mutton from Australia and New Zealand). The same article also stated that geese mainly came from Ireland, Italy, and Austria, but for ducks, “the East Anglian bird can hold its own against all competitors.”<sup>160</sup> Therefore, certain Christmas products were still deemed better if they came from local sources.

In 1910, *The Western Times* printed an article titled “How many turkeys will London consume?” The article began by guessing how many turkeys might arrive in London, suggesting the number was close to half a million because many turkeys passed through London and then were sent to other areas of the country.<sup>161</sup> The article reported that 8,564 tons of meat and sundries had been accounted for at the Central Markets leading up to Christmas. Of that number, approximately half was for beef, at 4,684 tons, while poultry and game consisted of 1,146 tons. More significant was the information that of the 8,564 tons, 26.8 percent were from the United Kingdom and the other 73.2 percent was made up of imported items from throughout the Empire and other countries.<sup>162</sup> This article indicated that by 1910, almost three-quarters of all of the produce used at Christmas was imported into the country, from both colonies and other countries. As a time for luxury, excess or special items not used every day, it might seem more

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<sup>158</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Gazette*, December 16, 1904, p. 12.

<sup>159</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Gazette*, December 16, 1904.

<sup>160</sup> “Christmas Fare,” *The Western Gazette*, December 16, 1904.

<sup>161</sup> “How many turkeys will London consume?” *The Western Times*, December 23, 1910, p. 9.

<sup>162</sup> “How many turkeys will London consume?” *The Western Times*.



possible to purchase a unique item from abroad, but the report implied that with the volume of imports, it was not just specialty items being imported. Traditional, “good old Christmas fare” was no longer primarily raised or grown at home in England, but imported from other countries.

Articles about Christmas during the next decade focused primarily on economy during the First World War, a topic discussed in Chapter One. In the 1920s, articles specifically mentioned purchasing produce from the Empire when Christmas shopping. For example, an advertisement for Trump’s Stores in *The Western Times* included a “Special Notice” that “All our Christmas Cakes, Puddings and Mincemeat have been made with Empire Fruit.”<sup>163</sup> The advertisement also stated that Trump’s was a place “where strict attention” was “paid to cleanliness,” a remark that further demonstrated the importance of cleanliness and cookery, discussed in a previous chapter.<sup>164</sup> Another article from 1925, in *The Yorkshire Post*, about Christmas shopping in Leeds, commented that even though Christmas dinner was criticized for its “indigestibility,” it “loses nothing of its popularity.”<sup>165</sup> The article reported that “modern transport and the refrigerator on board ship” have helped make Christmas products easily available, and that “most of the fruits, too, know no seasons nowadays.”<sup>166</sup> Hinting at conflict in Syria and Morocco, the article noted that other places in the “new world” were able to provide oranges, such as “the seedless oranges of Antipodean groves.”<sup>167</sup> Ontario or Tasmania sent apples, New South Wales exported “bananas, grapes, pineapples, and such fruits,” and South Africa supplied plums and apricots.<sup>168</sup> The article concluded by stating that “truly the British Empire Christmas dinner has some sense of romantic annihilation of space and time fitting the

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<sup>163</sup> “Trump’s Xmas Display,” *The Western Times*, December 18, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>164</sup> “Trump’s Xmas Display,” *The Western Times*, December 18, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>165</sup> “Christmas Shopping,” *The Yorkshire Post*, December 10, 1925, p. 7.

<sup>166</sup> “Christmas Shopping,” *The Yorkshire Post*.

<sup>167</sup> “Christmas Shopping,” *The Yorkshire Post*.

<sup>168</sup> “Christmas Shopping,” *The Yorkshire Post*.

Twentieth Century.”<sup>169</sup> In the view of this article, the combination of modern transportation and the goods available throughout the Empire created the definition of a twentieth century Christmas. Traditional Christmas fare in the twentieth century belonged to the Empire.

Embracing Empire products was the goal of the Empire Marketing Board, established in May 1926. The creation of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) led to many newspaper articles promoting Empire goods on behalf of the Board, and also separate articles remarking upon the work of the Board and recommending the use of Empire products. The EMB produced propaganda posters, pamphlets, and films, although it is difficult to know how many people in practice purchased Empire goods or believed more strongly in the Empire because of the campaign. More significant for a discussion of Christmas and Empire products was the effort made by the EMB to connect Christmas dishes, especially plum pudding, with the Empire, and how the EMB perceived this to be an effective way to encourage consumers to buy Empire products. Stephen Constantine has commented on the connection the EMB tried to make between the Empire and Christmas puddings, calling the “EMB’s apparent obsession with Christmas puddings” not completely “misjudged,” because the round shape of the pudding and its ingredients from all over the Empire acted as “an appropriate image for the imperial globe they were trying to present.”<sup>170</sup> Plum pudding was also by this time firmly associated with Christmas and a ubiquitous image. One poster offered a recipe for “The Empire Christmas Pudding” with the recipe supplied by the King’s chef. Listed beside each ingredient was the place in the Empire where it could be found. For example, the currants, sultanas, and raisins came from Australia or South Africa, the minced apples from the United Kingdom or Canada,

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<sup>169</sup> “Christmas Shopping,” *The Yorkshire Post*.

<sup>170</sup> Stephen Constantine, “‘Bringing the Empire Alive’: The Empire Marketing Board and Imperial Propaganda, 1926-33,” in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. Mackenzie, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 215.

and the rum from Jamaica or British Guiana.<sup>171</sup> At the bottom of the poster, it said to write to the EMB to receive “a free booklet on Empire Christmas fare giving this and other recipes.”<sup>172</sup> Another similar poster, “The Empire’s Christmas Provisions” listed traditional Christmas products and where they originated. Turkeys, geese, and ducks could be found in the United Kingdom or the Irish Free State, with beef only coming from the United Kingdom, and lamb from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>173</sup> The list of provisions included fruit from other parts of the Empire.

The EMB attempted to use Christmas to help connect the Empire. One poster said “A Merry Christmas to Us All. The Empire is One Large Family.”<sup>174</sup> Another series of posters featured balloons and presents wrapped up representing the exports of individual colonies. The one for Canada included a picture of the Rocky Mountains in the background and a large brown bear. The slogan at the bottom stated “The Produce of the Home Country Crowns the Christmas Feast.”<sup>175</sup> The presents included cheese, honey, and Canadian apples. Another separate poster was an illustration of a woman cooking in a kitchen with Empire ingredients in front of her.<sup>176</sup> Presumably she was making a Christmas plum pudding, as the ingredients were John Bull beef suet, Old English Beer, Jamaican rum, apples, raisins, sultanas, eggs, and the various spices needed to make plum pudding. The poster was titled “Making the Empire Christmas Pudding,” although this was not on the poster itself, indicating that it would have been obvious to viewers what the woman was making.

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<sup>171</sup> “The Empire Christmas Pudding,” Empire Marketing Board poster, Open University, (accessed December 31, 2014), <http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/world-history/selling-empire-introduction>.

<sup>172</sup> “The Empire Christmas Pudding.”

<sup>173</sup> “The Empire’s Christmas Provisions,” Empire Marketing Board poster, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>174</sup> “A Merry Christmas to Us All,” Empire Marketing Board poster, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>175</sup> “The Produce of the Home Country Crowns the Christmas Feast,” Empire Marketing Board poster, Library and Archives Canada.

<sup>176</sup> “Making the Empire Christmas Pudding,” Empire Marketing Board poster, National Archives Image Library, (accessed December 31, 2014), <https://images.nationalarchives.gov.uk/assetbank-nationalarchives/action/viewAsset?id=18072&index=2&total=4&view=viewSearchItem#imageModal>.

The EMB also advertised in newspapers. One advertisement from October 1927 stated that “Empire’s in the air here this autumn...Everybody’s thinking of Empire buying. Lots of people are talking about it. Quite a few are really doing it.”<sup>177</sup> The advertisement closed with a Christmas version of one of the EMB’s slogans: “For all your Christmas presents and all your Christmas fare—Buy Empire Produce from Home and Overseas.”<sup>178</sup> Other companies used the message of the EMB to promote their products at Christmastime. Richings and Son, confectioners, advertised with an acrostic poem, including the lines “Indian spices, Arabian peaches, / Nectar from Asia, and African plums, / Garnered these things are from Empire’s far reaches, / Syrian olives, and sugar in drums.”<sup>179</sup> Richings and Son wanted its customers to know that they carried all of the items needed to make Empire Christmas dishes.

It is difficult to know if the newspaper articles about buying Empire produce were actually connected to the EMB, or if they were separate articles that were influenced by the EMB’s efforts to promote Empire produce. Reporting on “The Christmas Season” in 1926, *The Western Gazette* commented that the royal family was using Empire goods for their Christmas dinner, noting that the Christmas dinner at Sandringham would be “confined to foods produced within the Empire.”<sup>180</sup> However, based on the menu provided, the Empire product used most appeared to be the fruit for the plum pudding. The “braised York ham” and “roast Norfolk turkey” were clearly local products.<sup>181</sup> While the EMB promoted buying British as part of buying Empire goods, it is interesting how plum pudding was highlighted as the triumph of the Empire because it was made with imported ingredients long before it was marketed as an Empire product. In December 1927, *The Grantham Journal* informed readers that the EMB’s campaign

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<sup>177</sup> “The Empire Christmas Mails,” *The Evening Telegraph*, October 27, 1927, p. 6.

<sup>178</sup> “The Empire Christmas Mails,” *The Evening Telegraph*, October 27, 1927.

<sup>179</sup> “Good Christmas Cheer,” *The Bucks Herald*, December 14, 1928, p. 5.

<sup>180</sup> “The Christmas Season,” *The Western Gazette*, December 24, 1926, p. 14.

<sup>181</sup> “The Christmas Season,” *The Western Gazette*, December 24, 1926.

to promote Empire produce “has had a decided effect in stimulating the purchase of such Christmas fare as the Dominions can send to this country.”<sup>182</sup> The article continued, stating that there was a “big demand” for Empire products to make plum puddings and mincemeat.<sup>183</sup> In a letter to the editor of *The Daily Mail* in 1928, a husband wrote that “whenever possible, I know my wife buys Empire goods, as British housewives should,” but he then related an unfortunate tale of receiving a bad rabbit from New Zealand.<sup>184</sup> His comment that the right thing for British housewives to do was to buy Empire products was another way the fate of English cookery was placed in the hands of women, the “good plain cooks.”

Reporting on “Imperial Preference” in September 1929, *The Devon and Exeter Gazette* remarked that even if the public was not ready to think of making Christmas puddings, wholesale providers were starting to import the products needed to make the “great national dish.”<sup>185</sup> The article commented that no matter the recipe, plum pudding needed currants and raisins, which before the war came from “foreign countries, but of recent years there has been a very marked development in their production in the confines of the British Empire, notable in Australia and South Africa.”<sup>186</sup> The article believed that Australia was more significant for imports than South Africa. The article noted that the tax on Empire dried fruits was removed in 1925, although the tax on foreign dried fruits remained, leading to a marked increase in imported dried fruits from the Empire. Comparing numbers from 1925, when imports of currants from the Empire for January to July amounted to 91,000 cwt, the article stated that for the same period in 1929, the number of Empire currant imports was 191,000 cwt, while the imports from foreign countries

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<sup>182</sup> “The campaign of the Empire Marketing Board...” *The Grantham Journal*, December 24, 1927, p. 11.

<sup>183</sup> “The campaign of the Empire Marketing Board...” *The Grantham Journal*, December 24, 1927.

<sup>184</sup> “An Open Letter,” *The Daily Mail*, December 17, 1928, p. 6.

<sup>185</sup> “Imperial Preference,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*, September 4, 1929, p. 4.

<sup>186</sup> “Imperial Preference,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

declined.<sup>187</sup> Raisins from throughout the Empire also increased, “from 297,000 cwt in 1925 to 451,000 cwt” in 1929.<sup>188</sup> The article considered England to be a “great exporting nation” with a strong connection to the Empire that purchased England’s exports and provided England with many of its imports, and recommended continuing this preferential relationship rather than removing preference for Empire products.<sup>189</sup> Without specifically mentioning the EMB, the article seemed to believe its efforts were successful and imperial preference should continue. Significantly, rather than use other Empire products to make the case, the article chose to use Christmas items, the goods required to make plum pudding, to make its argument. By 1929, plum pudding was an established reference point, something everyone was believed to consume at Christmas, and therefore could be used as part of marketing for the Empire.

On November 14, 1929, *The Cornishman* printed a letter from Labour politician Ben Tillett called “Buy Empire Produce: Mr Ben Tillett’s Appeal.” His appeal was to the “workers” of the country, who could do their part to help unemployment “by determining this year to confine their purchase as far as possible to the produce of the Empire.”<sup>190</sup> Offering a similar sentiment to the “Imperial Preference” article from earlier in the year, Tillett wrote that by spending money on Empire products, the money would make its way back when the Dominions and Colonies purchased British goods in return, “whereas money spent on foreign produce too often leaves this country for ever.”<sup>191</sup> Tillett then listed all of the items needed for Christmas that the Empire could provide—from dried fruit to canned food, dairy products, spices, tea, and

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<sup>187</sup> “Imperial Preference,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>188</sup> “Imperial Preference,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>189</sup> “Imperial Preference,” *The Devon and Exeter Gazette*.

<sup>190</sup> “Buy Empire Produce: Mr Ben Tillett’s Appeal,” *The Cornishman*, November 14, 1929, p. 2.

<sup>191</sup> “Buy Empire Produce: Mr Ben Tillett’s Appeal,” *The Cornishman*.

coffee—the Empire could supply it all. His letter concluded with a line that may have been direct from an EMB advertisement: “Let this Christmas be in very truth a British Empire one.”<sup>192</sup>

In addition to a renewed emphasis on Empire products, which was headed by the EMB, articles about royal Christmas dinners also reappeared in the late 1920s. As noted earlier, articles in the late-nineteenth century frequently discussed historic royal Christmas meals, dating back to King Richard II, as well as examined the Christmas dinner of Queen Victoria. Articles about royal Christmas dinners in the 1920s included facts about Queen Victoria’s Christmas as well as the older royal Christmas feasts, demonstrating how every generation looked back to the one before. Writing on the “Royal Christmas,” Henry Benson reported in 1927 that “ever since the time of the Conqueror our monarchs have been accustomed to celebrate Christmas with whole-hearted merriment, profuse hospitality and generous benevolence.”<sup>193</sup> Benson then included the historic dishes served at past royal Christmas dinners, in the “brave old days,” beginning with boar’s head and roasted peacock.<sup>194</sup> He remarked that during the nineteenth century, Queen Victoria’s Christmas was known for its mincemeat, and he was able to provide the massive recipe, because earlier in 1927 the Empire Christmas pudding recipe had also been made public by the royal family. Benson commented that King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra “kept Yuletide at Sandringham in the traditional way,” explaining that the royal couple were happiest when celebrating Christmas there.<sup>195</sup> Turning to examine the royal family in 1927, Benson described the “Festivities at Sandringham,” although did not specifically discuss any Christmas dishes that would be served.<sup>196</sup> In 1929, *The Western Morning News* “Christmas Shopping Supplement” included an article by Benson about “Some Royal Dishes.” Again,

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<sup>192</sup> “Buy Empire Produce: Mr Ben Tillett’s Appeal,” *The Cornishman*.

<sup>193</sup> “Royal Christmas,” *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, December 24, 1927, p. 5.

<sup>194</sup> “Royal Christmas,” *Aberdeen Press and Journal*.

<sup>195</sup> “Royal Christmas,” *Aberdeen Press and Journal*.

<sup>196</sup> “Royal Christmas,” *Aberdeen Press and Journal*.

Benson observed that the royal family had been celebrating Christmas traditions “since the Norman Conquest.”<sup>197</sup> He also discussed the Christmas dishes served during “The Brave Old Days” of the Plantagenets and Tudors, specifically boar’s head and peacock.<sup>198</sup> Benson commented on the festivities of King George and Queen Mary at Sandringham, with similar detail as in 1927. He also noted that beef and pork would be given to the people working on the estate before Christmas.

Beside the article on royal Christmases, the Christmas Shopping Supplement included an article on buying Empire produce titled “Why we should buy our Christmas fare in the Empire Market.” The article was written by “A Special Correspondent,” and easily could have been written by a representative of the EMB. The Special Correspondent wrote how no holiday was quite like Christmas in the hearts and homes of the British. Whether at home in England or at duty throughout the Empire, “overseas, in tropics, or in frozen climes, the Britisher’s thoughts at Christmas always turn to the old home and the family circle.”<sup>199</sup> The article stated that at Christmas, “we are now called...to join, one and all of us, in that bigger family circle known as the British Empire,” especially because the Empire was able to provide the home country with “the major part of our daily needs, and certainly with every single thing that is required to make our Christmas festival a perfect success.”<sup>200</sup> The article provided recipes for “The Empire Christmas Pudding,” “The Empire Plum Cake,” and “Empire Mince Pies,” detailing where each ingredient could be found across the Empire. Examining the proteins served at Christmas meals, the article stated that turkeys “must be of British birth, breeding, and feeding,” but that might not

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<sup>197</sup> “Some Royal Dishes,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929, Christmas Shopping Supplement.

<sup>198</sup> “Some Royal Dishes,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929.

<sup>199</sup> “Why we should buy our Christmas fare in the Empire Market,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929.

<sup>200</sup> “Why we should buy our Christmas fare in the Empire Market,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929.



always be possible to obtain, so turkeys could be purchased from South Africa or the Irish Free State.<sup>201</sup> The article believed that all produce needed for Christmas could be supplied by the Empire, “whether it be geese, ducks, chicken or game, beef, mutton, or pork...groceries and provisions and fresh fruits and vegetables of all sorts.”<sup>202</sup> According to the article, by shopping for Christmas from throughout the Empire, “the British shopper...has the happy opportunity of combining duty, pleasure, and economy all in one,” with the last one, economy, the ultimate goal of English cookery.<sup>203</sup> The article concluded by quoting the EMB’s slogan to ask for produce from the home country first, then from the Empire, and to choose Empire produce instead of foreign goods.

As a special occasion, Christmas was, and will always be, discussed, and can be used to support a variety of messages and perceptions. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Christmas fare was part of trying to save English cookery; as a time for excess and overindulgence, Christmas fare could be seen as “good,” even if the rest of English cookery was considered “bad.” Food writers frequently used history and the past to portray Christmas fare as good food, often describing aristocratic feasts with multiple dishes as a way to demonstrate that at one point English cookery was successful and enjoyed. Unfortunately, these efforts did not stop criticism of Christmas dishes, especially the one dish claimed as the most traditional of all, plum pudding. Plum pudding, an invention of the nineteenth century, was seen as the ultimate of Christmas dishes, always included and considered “good old Christmas fare.” It also was challenged by critics as unwholesome and against economy and efficiency because it led to

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<sup>201</sup> “Why we should buy our Christmas fare in the Empire Market,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929.

<sup>202</sup> “Why we should buy our Christmas fare in the Empire Market,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929.

<sup>203</sup> “Why we should buy our Christmas fare in the Empire Market,” *The Western Morning News*, December 18, 1929.

overindulgence. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the moral values that plagued English cookery as a whole began to attack plum pudding and Christmas fare as well. If English cookery was perceived poorly because it was wasteful, then it was difficult for Christmas dishes to be celebrated for being excessive. Yet the connection to Christmas meant that dishes would continue to be celebrated, although sometimes with another agenda. The Empire Marketing Board's hold on plum pudding transformed it from being an invented tradition served at Christmas to one with a unique purpose of uniting the Empire. Plum pudding's place as traditional Christmas fare made it an obvious choice to represent the spread of the British Empire. From the mid-nineteenth century through to the 1920s, the presentation of Christmas cookery in the press connected it to the past, the royal family, and to the Empire. Christmas dinner was given a history and that history created a perception that eating "good old Christmas fare" united the nation, and then later, also the Empire. Whether people at home eating their Christmas fare thought of any of these broader ideas while enjoying Christmas dinner is unclear, and also not significant—the important point is that the emphasis has always been on the perception of cookery and how writers portrayed Christmas cookery as simultaneously good, old, traditional, and as something to bring the British Empire together.

## **Conclusion: “Putting English Cookery on the Map”<sup>1</sup>**

English cookery was perceived as “bad” beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, and this perception continued throughout the twentieth century, because of a combination of factors and processes: industrialization and urbanization, new food technologies and inventions, the growth of popular media discussing cookery (both periodicals and cookbooks), and prevailing Victorian values. While the majority of English cookbooks from the early twentieth century were dedicated to improving the then current state of English cookery, a number saw the solution in reaching into the past and reintroducing older recipes and older methods. The examples that follow conclude this dissertation in order to demonstrate some attempts to celebrate English cookery, and the relationship between the subject of cookery and the past. They also illustrated how recommending older recipes contributed to a sense of nostalgia for a time when things were believed to be better.

In 1910, Mrs Stuart Macrae compiled *The Ingle-Nook Cookery Book*, which offered old recipes from her grandmother’s generation. In a section of the cookbook titled “Old-Fashioned Delicacies,” Mrs Macrae wrote that it was “astonishing to find that in spite of our boasted nineteenth century progress and our modern inventions our grandmothers were often better cooks than are we.”<sup>2</sup> She stated that some of the older recipes were better than any created in “modern times.”<sup>3</sup> Mrs Macrae continued, remarking that preparing food took longer in the past, but women had more leisure time, and “every woman made it a part of her business to become thoroughly proficient in the domestic arts, consequently cooking attained a higher pitch of

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<sup>1</sup> Florence White, *A Fire in the Kitchen: The Autobiography of a Cook*, (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1938), 313.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs Stuart Macrae, *The Ingle-Nook Cookery Book*, (London: Cassell and Company, 1910), 120.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs Macrae, 120.

perfection than is usual in the average home of to-day.”<sup>4</sup> Mrs Macrae wrote about distilling, home gardens, collecting wild flowers, fruits, and berries, and making preserves. Mrs Macrae mentioned cowslips, dandelions, “purple sloes and juicy elderberries,” noting that in the past they were not left to be eaten by birds, but were enjoyed, especially as beverages, since “in no other brand of the culinary art were our grandmothers more proficient.”<sup>5</sup> She believed that “old-fashioned methods” were still useful for the modern kitchen, and that older recipes were made delicious with spices, herbs, long cooking times, and with grandmothers’ “loving care.”<sup>6</sup>

Recipes in this section of the cookbook included “Old-Fashioned Farmhouse Bread,” “Home-Made Pickles, Relishes, Preserves and Toffees,” and “Favourite Chutney.” Mrs Macrae’s recipes for pickles included the note that some of the recipes were from “a very old cookery book published in the days of long ago...when there was no such thing as running out to the nearest grocer to buy a bottle of pickles or a jar of chutney.”<sup>7</sup> Her celebration of old recipes and the observations she made of her grandmother’s time demonstrated her nostalgia for the past. Her early twentieth-century life seemed hectic in comparison to her grandmother’s and her recipes did not have the same full flavor as those made with home-grown ingredients. While some modern inventions helped in the kitchen, Mrs Macrae wanted to remember a time before industrialization and urbanization, an era that seemed to taste better and run at a slower pace. It was the nineteenth century that complicated and made English cookery “bad,” but a return to Mrs Macrae’s grandmother’s time meant “good” English cookery.

Published in 1914, May Byron’s *Pot-Luck or The British Home Cookery Book* offered old recipes and opinions on regional cooking. Her cookbook was a collection of recipes found in

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<sup>4</sup> Mrs Macrae, 120.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs Macrae, 120.

<sup>6</sup> Mrs Macrae, 121.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs Macrae, 127.

family manuscripts, which she referred to as “chiefly specimens of the ‘good plain cooking’ which was done by our mothers, and grandmothers, and great-grandmothers—the old home cookery before tinned things and preservatives were invented.”<sup>8</sup> According to Byron, even her mother’s generation cooked better and made more items at home than Byron’s generation. She remarked that every family used to have a cookery manuscript that was passed down through generations and shared with neighbours, but the mass production of cookery books had challenged the family tradition of recording home recipes. Byron commented that the recipes were “chiefly country dishes, dating back to the good old days when cities had not claimed the multitudes of the shires,” and that some recipes were even as old as the seventeenth century, when the difference between urban and rural environments was small, and even Londoners had gardens.<sup>9</sup> She explained that “country meals are not as those of the town,” detailing at what time country meals were eaten and how important “high tea,” served at six in the evening, was for a country family.<sup>10</sup> The recipes provided in the cookbook noted either the date or the region they came from, for example, “eighteenth century” or “Hertfordshire.”

In addition to the recipes, Byron included notes throughout the cookbook, with comments often reflecting on the state of cooking, food, or society. In a note about fowl and game, she observed that manuscripts often did not include recipes for these items, and the recipes she found were elaborate and expensive, therefore, “out of place in these hard and hurried times.”<sup>11</sup> Byron’s belief that the twentieth century was “hurried” was similar to Mrs Macrae’s statements about there being more leisure time in the past. With regard to soup, Byron noted that the English were “never a soup-eating nation” and that soup was never good enough for “those

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<sup>8</sup> May Byron, *Pot-Luck or The British Home Cookery Book*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), v.

<sup>9</sup> Byron, vi.

<sup>10</sup> Byron, vii.

<sup>11</sup> Byron, 48.

taught to reverence the Roast Beef of Old England.”<sup>12</sup> Writing on vegetable dishes led Byron to comment that “our great-grandmothers had probably never heard of vegetarian diet.”<sup>13</sup> She noted that in the seventeenth century raw salads were preferred, but now cooked vegetables were more popular.

For the pudding recipes, Byron wrote that “the pudding, from time immemorial, has been an English dish *par excellence*” and she provided a range of pudding recipes from different counties, including Essex, Devonshire, Yorkshire, the Isle of Wight, Hertfordshire, Kent, Shropshire, along with Irish and American recipes.<sup>14</sup> She offered two Christmas plum pudding recipes, one from Hertfordshire and one from Ireland. While both recipes contained the traditional ingredients of dried fruit and candied peel, the Hertfordshire recipe used brandy where the Irish recipe used whisky or sherry, and the Irish recipe did not contain flour or suet, which Byron noted made it “exceptionally light.”<sup>15</sup> When making candy, Byron stated that the home-made version was “so pure, so wholesome, and so attractive, as compared with the manufactured article;” clearly for her, home-made was better and healthier.<sup>16</sup> For the cake recipes, Byron commented that previous generations were “extravagant in the matter of eggs,” stating that “they used eight where we should hesitate over four.”<sup>17</sup> Her comments suggested that eggs were more expensive and harder to obtain in the twentieth century. She also wrote that families used to serve cake at all important events, an old tradition, and so every family and every region had special cake recipes.

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<sup>12</sup> Byron, 59.

<sup>13</sup> Byron, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Byron, 177. *Emphasis in Original.*

<sup>15</sup> Byron, 202.

<sup>16</sup> Byron, 271.

<sup>17</sup> Byron, 288.

Similar to the observations made in the 1860s about adulterated products, as noted in Chapter One, Byron's notes on making jam and bread at home also related to the ability to know exactly what went into the product. Homemade jam was considered a far superior product than the manufactured version. Byron remarked that jam made at home did not contain "carrots, seeds, glucose, or any alien matter in the way of coloratives, preservatives, or sweeteners unknown to the 'home-farm'."<sup>18</sup> She stated that purchased jam left "an acid taste in the mouth" and that it was foolish to buy jam when it could easily be made at home.<sup>19</sup> She also mentioned that there were not as many jam recipes in cookery manuscripts as one would think, and this she assumed was because they were made every year and did not need to be written down. Byron only provided less-common jam recipes, believing the more common recipes to be easily found elsewhere. Also similar to the remarks made seventy years earlier were her comments about making bread at home. She wrote that the fact that people no longer made bread at home was "one of the most lamentable signs of modern so-called civilization."<sup>20</sup> Society now allowed bakers to put "alum, bone-flour, and other unnecessary ingredients" into the "staff of life" and that people thought of homemade bread as an unattainable "treasure."<sup>21</sup> Byron made similar comments on making homemade beer and wine, stating that "aerated drinks have largely superseded these pleasant beverages" and that it was difficult to find "old-time recipes."<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, Byron's point of view was that the nineteenth century had been a better century for cooking than her own. She trusted her mother's generation as well as her grandmother's and great-grandmother's, but not her own. Her comments about making homemade items were almost identical to those made in the 1850s and 1860s, the period in

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<sup>18</sup> Byron, 246.

<sup>19</sup> Byron, 246.

<sup>20</sup> Byron, 343.

<sup>21</sup> Byron, 343.

<sup>22</sup> Byron, 363.

which it could be supposed her mother was writing her cookery manuscript. Byron's observations thus illustrate how each generation believed the previous one to be better. Cookbooks in the mid-nineteenth century expressed concern over adulterated products and offered instruction for making items at home because people were perceived not to be doing so, whereas in 1914, Byron perceived that the items that were not homemade in the twentieth century were still being made at home in the nineteenth. While frequently nostalgic cookery writers remarked about the "good" cookery of the eighteenth century and earlier, twentieth century writers believed their hectic, modern, scientific world to be even worse than that of the nineteenth century.

Florence White also hoped to celebrate English cookery and offered her readers examples of regional and historic dishes made across the country. *Good Things in England* should not be disregarded because of White's nostalgia for the past, but instead appreciated for her attempt to celebrate and reclaim English cookery. With the help of the English Folk Cookery Association, *Good Things in England* "put English cookery on the map."<sup>23</sup> In her autobiography, White, obviously proud of her accomplishment, stated that "there isn't another book like it, but I never consider it mine. It is England's."<sup>24</sup> In her introduction to *Good Things in England*, she wrote that the recipes collected came from men and women across the country, who "have written of good things they remember eating in days gone by, and of things made in their own homes today from recipes that have been in their families for over a century."<sup>25</sup> She remarked on the stories told to her by grandmothers and great-grandmothers about dishes no longer made and

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<sup>23</sup> White, *A Fire in the Kitchen*, 324.

<sup>24</sup> White, *A Fire in the Kitchen*, 321.

<sup>25</sup> White, *Good Things in England: A Practical Cookery Book for Everyday Use*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932; reprinted Persephone Books, 2007), 9.



how “old ladies’ eyes have brightened at the memory” of dishes from their youth.<sup>26</sup> White wrote how sometimes people she addressed were at first shy, thinking only foreign recipes were important, but then were interested once they realized the importance of English cookery. She found that there was a “genuine love of the good old English dishes.”<sup>27</sup> White continued, stating that all countries had their own unique cookery and England should not be overshadowed by its closeness to Europe. Instead of giving her own recipes, White compiled recipes from across England in order to “prove that England had formerly a complete collection of national food preparations—and none better.”<sup>28</sup> White’s collection of recipes used the past to demonstrate that English cookery was a “good thing.” At the end of her introduction, White said English cookery had suffered because it tried to copy from the French. Instead, she believed that if English cookery wanted to learn from other nations, it should look to America and the Commonwealth countries because they have been “developing the cookery of the Homeland in a new setting.”<sup>29</sup> Finally, White explained that the English Folk Cookery Association was not a “commercial enterprise,” but an educational organization, “with the firm intention of restoring and maintaining England’s former high standard of cookery.”<sup>30</sup> White strongly believed that English cookery had been “good” in the past, small pieces of this “goodness” could be found in regional areas, and it was necessary to promote “good” English cookery rather than copy the French.

The chapter on homemade bread included the observation that families were bigger in the previous century, and so recipes made larger quantities, but there was no reason why readers should not make bread at home. White wrote that bread or scones could be made at home, even “in a small town flat” or in the country with an “oil stove” or even just a “wood fire on a

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<sup>26</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 12.

hearth.”<sup>31</sup> Modern circumstances should not stand in the way of baking bread at home. In the chapter on “Luncheon, Dinner and Supper Dishes,” White commented that “there is no doubt that English cookery to-day is not what it should be,” but this was because the English had “neglected the preparation of our traditional dishes” or let them be prepared by “foreigners.”<sup>32</sup> White stated that many people had never experienced “good English cookery,” while others only knew it “in a degenerate form.”<sup>33</sup> That said, proper English cookery, according to White, “is the best and wholesomest in the world, because it is the most simple and retains the delicious flavor of food noted for its excellence.”<sup>34</sup> Her remarks recall the criticisms of English cookery as wasteful and unclean, but White believed that when made properly, English cookery could only be seen positively. She listed roasted meat as part of good English cookery, and also included “English hot-pots, stews, ‘jugs’, pies and puddings” as dishes she considered “excellent.”<sup>35</sup>

The section on appetizers began with a history of English cookery and a description of Gervase Markham’s cookbook, *The English Hus-wife* from 1615. White wrote that while Markham had been criticized, his recipes were mainly from a cookery manuscript and therefore were worthy of study. She noted that his recipes were from “the great days of Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Drake and Raleigh; it was the food eaten by heroes, the men and women who made England and America.”<sup>36</sup> White believed it was possible to trace English cookery even farther back in history, to prehistoric times, and clearly considered English cookery something to celebrate as the food of “heroes.”

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<sup>31</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 63.

<sup>32</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 86.

<sup>33</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 87.

<sup>34</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 87.

<sup>35</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 87.

<sup>36</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 90.

While the entire cookbook was a celebration of English cookery, White devoted a chapter to “Local and National Specialties,” recipes which were unique to each region. Often these recipes included notes on specific customs from the area, especially in relation to the recipe. Under the Cumberland recipes, the recipe for “Rum Butter” was provided by Mrs Irwin, the landlady of the Pennington Arms Hotel and a well-known cook. After the recipe, was a comment on “Old Cumberland Custom,” which stated that rum butter, sometimes called “sweet butter,” was traditionally prepared before a baby was born and given to visitors. White noted there were many “curious folk customs” connected to rum butter, such as giving the newborn baby a small taste.<sup>37</sup> Laver, an ingredient from Devonshire, Somerset, and Wales, was noted as a type of seaweed that was easily found on the Western coast. According to White, it used to be popular but fell out of favour, although now was available in London. She commented that in 1797 it was pickled and exported from Somersetshire.

On July 8, 1932, *The Times* wrote a review of *Good Things in England*. The article stated that it was not just about food for the sake of food, but was about “food as a part of home and a part of England.”<sup>38</sup> The author remarked that sometimes food was forgotten, except in childhood memories, old writing and “ancient English ways.”<sup>39</sup> Listing anecdotes from the cookbook, the author grew “hungrier and hungrier” imagining the feasts and looking for “old favourites.”<sup>40</sup> The article concluded “that English food, in the days when people prepared it for themselves, was very good food, and that the more we can get back to it the more health, and the

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<sup>37</sup> White, *Good Things in England*, 323.

<sup>38</sup> “Good Things,” *The Times*, July 8, 1932, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> “Good Things,” *The Times*, July 8, 1932, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> “Good Things,” *The Times*, July 8, 1932, p. 15.

more fun, we are likely to have.”<sup>41</sup> Even in the 1930s, English cookery was still being evaluated based on specific moral values.

*The Times* review captured a significant argument about the English cookery situation. By remarking that English cookery had been “very good food” when it was still prepared at home, the reviewer succinctly summarized the problems with English cookery. New inventions and technologies changed food production, and the basic foodstuffs that previously were prepared at home increasingly were purchased and traveled much longer distances than in the past. While canning and refrigeration were often celebrated, they were not immediately embraced. Late-nineteenth century food writers needed to convince the English public of their practical usage. Their efforts were a success: by the early twentieth century, canned goods had become commonplace items, and, in 1910, ships brought 760,000 tons of refrigerated meat to England.<sup>42</sup> Industrialization and urbanization also led to food adulteration, and in turn, food legislation, which made purchased food safer by the end of the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, “preserved provisions,” as Dr Arthur Hill Hassall referred to them in the 1850s, dominated the market.<sup>43</sup> Even Mrs Beeton, who supplied a recipe for homemade curry powder, concluded the recipe by remarking that curry powder bought “at any respectable shop is, generally speaking, far superior, and, taking all things into consideration very frequently more economical.”<sup>44</sup> Mrs Beeton’s cookbook was first published in 1861, and despite providing a recipe, she pronounced that the purchased product was not just better, but also “more economical,” the true key ingredient to a successful English dish.

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<sup>41</sup> “Good Things,” *The Times*, July 8, 1932, p. 15.

<sup>42</sup> Australian Farming and Agriculture, Australian Government, (accessed November 3, 2014), <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-farming-and-agriculture>.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Hill Hassall, *Food and Its Adulterations*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855), 428.

<sup>44</sup> Isabella Beeton, “No. 449 Indian Curry-Powder,” *Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management*, <http://www.mrsbeeton.com/10-chapter10.html>, (accessed November 3, 2014).

Mrs Macrae, May Byron, and Florence White all believed that English cookery was once good cookery and that finding recipes to create good cookery was only a matter of looking to the past. Their assurance that, in the past, English cooking led to good English dishes, only added to a notion that there was a problem with English food in the present. These writers believed in the “good old days,” echoing the way that people had written about “good old Christmas fare.” However, the nostalgic attitude toward English cookery was a minority perspective; the majority of food writers criticized English cookery. The point of view of people like Florence White came from a need to counter criticism, to find a way to celebrate English cookery once again. Most food writers reported on what they perceived English cookery to be missing, rather than what it might have been in the past. Stephen Mennell has commented that traditional English cookery needed to be reclaimed because “the social base carrying that tradition had become greatly attenuated,” especially because of industrialization and urbanization.<sup>45</sup> While the movement of people from rural communities to urban centres did play a significant role in the perception of English cookery, Victorian moral values and the advice proffered in cookbooks also weakened traditional cookery. Cleanliness, economy, and efficiency were repeatedly linked to English cookery, as food writers noted that these values were what English cookery lacked and cookbook authors used them as the basis for improvement.

The connection between cleanliness and cookery might seem obvious today, but as cookbooks from the nineteenth century demonstrate, “to clean” was a necessary instruction. Practical issues, such as food adulteration and basement kitchens, helped create the perception that English cooks were unclean and they needed to be taught how to keep clean. Without a perfectly clean environment, the perception of English cookery was a poor one. The placement

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<sup>45</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1985), 221.

of kitchens in the basement was part of a need to keep a middle class home as clean as possible; with the kitchen far removed from the living areas, no “dirty” smells escaped into common areas. Yet, the cooking environment in basements was less than ideal. Reports noted it was dark and dreary and often filled with insects or rodents. Therefore, regardless of the quality of the food brought into the home, it would always be perceived as unclean if prepared in an unclean environment.

Significantly, while English cookery was criticized as whole, there was a difference between ingredients and prepared dishes. Food writers often celebrated the English for their fine products, but then lamented how they were poorly cooked. English cookery was seen to begin with the best ingredients, but conclude with the worst outcome. The issue of processing, whether through industrial manufacturing or through cooking preparation, posed a challenge for the English. Often, it seemed that something was lost in translation, which led to excellent produce turning into a poorly conceived dish. The superior ingredients were also problematic when cookbooks advocated eating economically and efficiently. Food writers stressed the importance of avoiding waste and excess; English meat may not have needed too much embellishment to be tasty, but purchasing large cuts of meat led to monotony and waste. Middle class families were accused of not using leftovers properly, buying too much produce for the size of their family, and for throwing out food because they could only eat the same dish so many times in a row.

Gender also affected the perception of English cookery throughout the nineteenth century. While cookbook historians have indicated how cookbooks gave women a voice and offer insight into women’s networks, the women cooks and housewives of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a complicated topic. The “good plain cook” was a confusing subject, a cook who was supposed to uphold the ideal Victorian values, but who was usually

criticized as inefficient and uneducated. Despite presenting themselves as cooking authorities in cookbooks, housewives were also criticized for not properly educating their cooks, even if they were often their own cooks. Cooking schools in the late nineteenth century led to the professionalization of cooking and furthered the idea of cookbook authors as experts, as many graduates of training schools proudly displayed their qualifications within their cookbooks. The twentieth century offered new specialized cookbooks for women, for instance, cookbooks directed at bachelor women, or for women without any domestic servants. However, despite addressing a perceived new cooking public of women, the perception of English cookery and its relationship to women did not change in the interwar period. Women were still required to cook economically and efficiently, and English cookery was still perceived as “bad.”

In comparing English cookery with French cookery and other cuisines, commentators often did so using the values of economy, cleanliness, and efficiency. Other nations had better food because they were perceived to be cleaner, less wasteful, and more efficient. Soup was promoted as an economical and efficient dish because it could be made with scraps and odds and ends, making it a cheap and healthy alternative to the English meals consisting of large pieces of meat. The idea that the English were meat-eaters, while other countries, especially the French, were soup-eaters, also demonstrated how food offered deeper insights into national characteristics. Indeed, through food, writers were able to express anxieties about the English as a nation, calling themselves insular, ignorant, and prejudiced.

Christmas offered food writers an annual chance to review English cookery and celebrate specific Christmas fare. Throughout the nineteenth century, food writers and cookbook authors created a history for “good old Christmas fare,” one that always contained the newer invention of plum pudding. By using history, commentators connected Christmas food to the past as a time

when Christmas was celebrated properly with lavish feasts and excess. Rather than demonstrate Christmas as good English food, the discussion of Christmas served to demonstrate further that there were perceived issues with cooking in the present; celebrating the past highlighted a problem with cooking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Furthermore, even the great Christmas dishes could not avoid criticism and the star dish of plum pudding was often cited as likely to cause indigestion. Christmas cookery could not escape the Victorian moral standards that governed the criticism of the rest of English cookery. Increasingly, the glorious excessive meal of Christmas was noted as leading to waste and health issues.

As demonstrated in the forgoing analysis, the subject of English cookery found itself in the middle of a “perfect storm,” one where society was transitioning and middle class critics were self-aware of these transitions. Most importantly, the creation of “bad” English cookery as a subject to be discussed and improved was a product of the English. Visitors from other countries may have had their own opinion about English food, but it was the English themselves who created the perception of English cookery as “bad.” Cookbooks, one area of self-improvement literature, allowed the English to continue this perception. Cookbooks were the ultimate middle class vehicle; by supposedly offering a solution, cookbooks helped to establish that there was a problem with English cookery. Mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cookbook authors not only reflected that certain items had been lost because of changes in society, but they also promoted that they had the correct knowledge for the present and the future. Cookbooks embraced the language of cleanliness, economy, and efficiency and made improving English cookery its own Victorian value. It was in the interest of the cookbook industry to perceive English cookery as “bad” in order to promote cookbooks as a way to improve the situation. Each generation felt it necessary to continue to offer ways to improve, to



continue to perceive English cookery poorly, and in these ways, cookbooks helped establish “bad” English cookery as its own subject for discussion.

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