

CULINARY MEMORY

THE HISTORY OF
FOOD WRITING

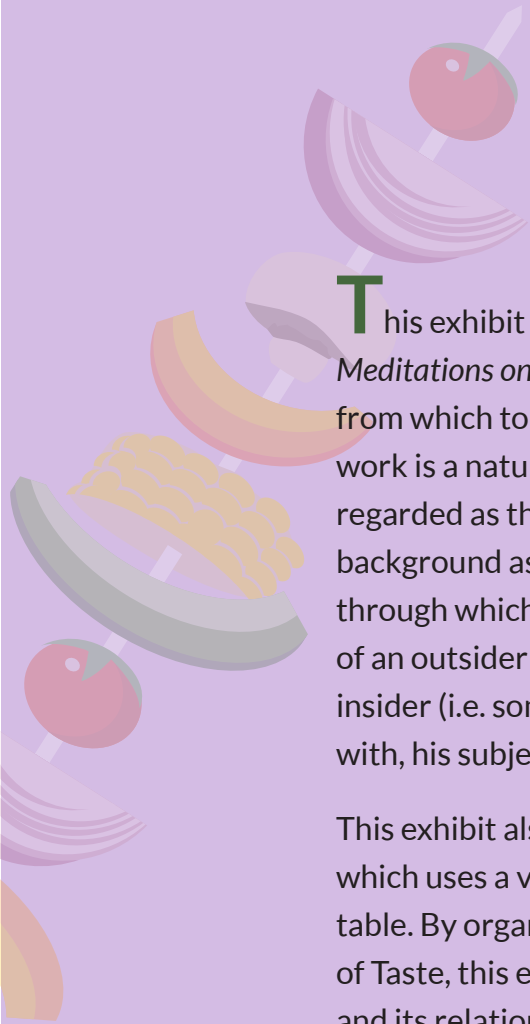
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CULINARY MEMORY

THE HISTORY OF FOOD WRITING



This exhibit uses Brillat-Savarin's *The Physiology of Taste: Or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy* (1825) as a starting point from which to explore the history of the cookbook. Brillat-Savarin's work is a natural place to begin such an exploration, as it is widely regarded as the first book dedicated to the philosophy of food. His background as a lawyer, not as a chef, provides an interesting lens through which to understand food, as he writes from the perspective of an outsider (e.g. not working within the hospitality industry) and an insider (i.e. someone with a passion for, and considerable experience with, his subject matter).

This exhibit also draws upon Dali's *Diners de Gala* cookbook (1971), which uses a very different approach to discuss the pleasures of the table. By organizing both under the themes found in *The Physiology of Taste*, this exhibit walks visitors through the history of food writing and its relationship to our changing cultural understanding of food and cooking.

Culinary Memory does not attempt to cover each meditation in depth or offer an exhaustive list of every book related to a given theme, but instead synthesizes the meditations by situating this brilliant and seminal work at the crossroads between food history and book history, using a sampling of the holdings from the Bentley's growing culinary history and reference collection.

PREFACE

As long as people have written books, people have written about food. It is such a central part of our experience that it seeps into all parts of our lives whether or not we mean it to. Religious texts from Abrahamic traditions¹ include tales of hunger and plenty, alongside instructions for using food as a vehicle of worship through certain restrictions or preparations (Albala, 2014). Folk tales from around the world highlight everything from the most basic porridge to the most elaborate feast. And for centuries families have kept written records of the foods they prepare and share with each other. Printed and manuscript cookbooks are one of our primary vehicles for learning about the foods of our ancestors, and those foods connect us with our families, friends, and neighbors.

In this exhibit, we offer a virtual time machine to give you a tour through the history of food writing. Because the history of food (and writing about food) is such a large and important topic, this exhibit can't list every type of food every made or every book on food that was ever written. Instead, we focus on themes, and hope that you can learn about a few facets of culinary history and will be inspired to learn more. We also focus on European traditions, as these are most heavily represented in our collection, although that collection continues to grow and diversify.

A (VERY) BRIEF HISTORY OF FOOD WRITING

Food appears in materials dating back to our earliest writing systems (the Bentley has a 4,000 year old cuneiform tablet with the inventory for a harvest festival, to give you an example). However, writing that specifically focuses on food preparation was not always prolific, and the cookbook as we consider it today is a much more recent phenomenon.

The ancient Romans are probably the most (in)famous when it comes to food: written accounts are filled with stories of giant feasts and of fanciful meals hosted by emperors, making it possible to learn about the foods they ate (Albala, 2014). This is not the case in the early middle ages, and we see how the rise of the cookbook follows the rise in literacy rates and advances in publishing technologies. Literacy was a luxury that most people did not possess, even in wealthy countries, until modern times.

In the early middle ages in Europe, scribes were in charge of recording official documents, and many kings were not even literate. This meant food writing at this time was limited, with one exception being the Greek physician Anthimus, who visited the Frankish court in the sixth century and wrote a bit about the foodstuffs he encountered there (Albala, 2014). Unfortunately, much classical knowledge about food at this time was not written down, so we have few descriptions (and even fewer, if any, recipes) to help us reconstruct the early medieval diet.

¹ These are monotheistic religions, meaning that they believe in one god. The largest are Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

As the middle ages progress, we find more documentation of what people ate and how it was prepared, supported by a large body of more recent scholarship examining this topic (Albala, 2014 provides examples from the 18th-20th centuries). New food frontiers were explored during the middle and late Middle Ages as burgeoning trade introduced new spices, and as climate change resulted in longer grower seasons and greater harvests, and the resulting dishes are described in fictional accounts as well as historic records.

Manuscript books were incredibly labor-intensive and costly, and because of this only included information considered worthy of that effort and expense. Manuscripts were often produced in monasteries and abbeys, and regularly dealt with either the study or performance of religion (Biblical texts, hymnals, etc.), or with scholarship (e.g. classical texts for students). However, those with the money to afford the materials sometimes would have a cookbook made for them.

After the outbreak of Bubonic Plague in 1348, the drastic decrease in population meant that those who remained had access to greater resources. Spices, formerly a foodstuff reserved for the wealthy, became accessible to the middling classes, and the very wealthy looked for new recipes to distinguish themselves. This aided in the proliferation of the cookbook, as the new recipes were recorded and used to train up and coming chefs. The most famous cookbook of the time was written by Guillaume Tirel, chef to King Charles V of France. The *Viandier* (1326-1395) was published from his manuscripts. While it includes recipes from other (unnamed)

authors, it was still very popular, and the recipes continued to be copied in cookbooks for years to come (Albala, 2014; Pichon & Vicair, 1892).

In 1450, Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany, revolutionized European book history with the introduction of the moveable type press. Manuscript books continued to be produced,² but Gutenberg paved the way for books to be made more quickly and distributed more widely. These early books were printed on rag paper, which is soft and durable and (as the name suggests) made out of fabric scraps. They were also bound by hand, and many were sold unbound so that readers could buy as many sections of the book as they wanted and have them bound together, or have multiple books bound together.

The increased availability of books began to slowly impact literacy rates, although literacy rates were still very low and literacy was often reserved for the wealthy. This meant that even the most user-friendly and humble books were only accessible for those with the means to afford them (Best, 1986). As the renaissance unfolded, scholars (such as Platina, first librarian of the Vatican) revisited older recipes (Albala, 2014), and people continued to record their own in manuscript “receipt” (recipe) books and in the margins of printed books.

During the early modern period, political and economic shifts widened the gap between the rich and poor, and new laws and regulations were created, all of which impacted what foods people could get and how they could prepare them. Food culture at this time was also impacted by the Reformation, with Protestants abandoning

² In fact, early printed books were made to look like manuscripts so they would be familiar to readers, just like how the word processor on your computer is rendered to look like a piece of paper.

the fasting rules of the Catholic Church, with certain sects (e.g. the Calvinists) creating new dietary restrictions. New medical theories also impacted European diets, with the four humors being replaced by four chemicals (see Albala 2014, 36). During this time, European cultures began to divorce themselves from humoral theory, and in so doing also began to create distinctions between diet and health, rather than seeing the two as intertwined. While measurements were less exact than today's recipes, we also see the groundwork laid in cookery books for standardized measurements that became common in the 20th century (Spiller, 2010).

As new bookmaking technologies appeared, books became cheaper to produce and therefore more widely available. The Industrial Revolution saw the rise of labor-saving machines to assist with papermaking and bookbinding, and the availability of cheaper (but also less durable) materials such as paper made from tree pulp (e.g. Barrett et al., 2011; Knops, 1998).

Education and labor reform, such as in the late 19th and early 20th Century in the United States, pushed children out of labor environments and into schools, which dramatically assisted in improving literacy rates. Higher literacy rates meant more readers for publishers to market their books to. This, alongside decreased production costs from industrial bookmaking, meant that a wider variety of books could be produced. Today, we have cookbooks on every ingredient and preparation imaginable, but we also have an increasing

number of scholarly and general interest books that provide commentary about food and its history.

As you might imagine, ingredients also change with region and with time. You probably don't do a lot of cooking with quince, but in early modern Europe (1450-1789, see Dewald, 2004) they were very popular. While some ingredients (like the poor quince) have fallen out of favor, increases in global imports as well as more efficient farming and food production technologies have meant that cooks have many more options than in times past, and can often choose from raw ingredients or packaged food (such as cake mix).

Cookery manuals also deal with subjects beyond food. While some, like Robert May's *The Accomplisht Cook* (1660-1685) focus solely on food preparation guided by an expert,³ others like Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* (1869) or Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife* (1615; the Bentley's copy is 1632) provide guidance in other areas of household management like etiquette, stocking a pantry, and care for minor medical concerns (Best, 1986; Skinner, 2012). We see this reflected in modern cookbooks as well, such as *Fork to Fork* (Don & Don, 2009), which gives us advice for gardening and for preparing meals from the resulting harvests. Commentary about food (such as Brillat's *Physiology of Taste* featured in this exhibit) complements didactic manuals, providing context and food for thought alongside the instructional cookbook.⁴

³ May's book was one of the few written by a professional chef, and its initial publication in 1660 was just after the English Civil War and during Restoration. In the English food world, this was the first time English cuisine was influenced by the French court, and this influence (and May's Parisian culinary training) is evident in the book. See Bell's (1994) reprint for more information.

⁴ The most famous example prior to Brillat-Savarin was François Rabelais (1494-1553), a French novelist and satirist whose work regularly included food as a central theme (Screech, 2015; Tomasik, 2010).

INTRODUCTION

“Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are.”

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

Almost 200 years ago, Brillat-Savarin penned these words as a part of his treatise on food and the pleasures of eating, and it has so thoroughly infiltrated our culture that it appears regularly in everything from cooking shows to advertisements for diet foods (how many times have you heard the phrase “you are what you eat?”) Food is a fundamental force that connects all of us, and sharing food and the pleasures of preparing and consuming it has shaped communities and families since time immemorial. Even those who don’t enjoy cooking or don’t have adventurous tastes still have at least one dish that evokes fond memories (or alternately, unpleasant memories). We are connected to food emotionally and socially, as well as physically, and Brillat-Savarin’s *Physiology of Taste* (1825) and Salvador Dali’s *Diners de Gala* (1973) explore those myriad connections deeply and passionately.

Although many things change in our understanding of food, many others stay the same across time. This exhibit uses two very different books, both of which revel in the pleasures of preparing and sharing food. These books were chosen because they are situated in two very different times and places, but both share a focus on the full experience of food, written by people who are deeply passionate about the subject.

Inspired by Brillat’s meditations (which are prose chapters focusing on different aspects of food and eating, such as the different senses or food as an aphrodisiac), this exhibit is organized thematically. The meditations, like the act of sharing food, often cross borders between different experiences and cultures, and as such are hard to neatly situate into a box. Using Brillat’s meditations as a guide, we’ll journey through the history of food writing. We’ll look at different components of food history, and explore how they appear across items in the Bentley collection. This allows us to think about how we experience food as social and sensory beings, rather than providing an overview of what kinds of dishes are present and how they’re prepared.



Salvador Dali's *Diners de Gala* (1971)

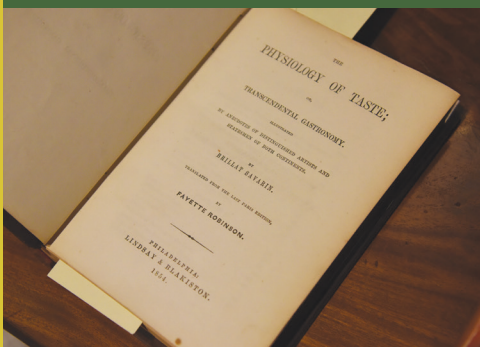
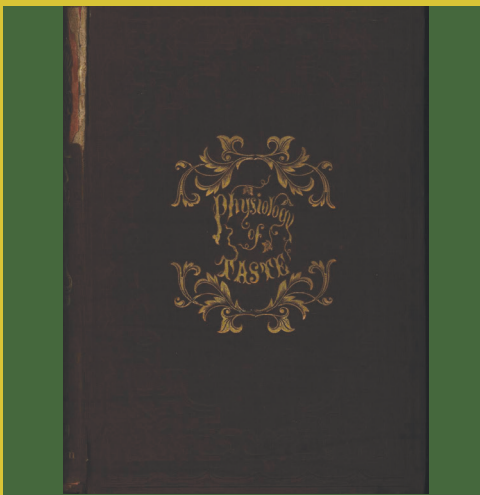
FOOD AS NOURISHMENT, FOOD AS PASSION: BRILLAT-SAVARIN AND DALI

JEAN-ANTHELME BRILLAT-SAVARIN

The Physiology of Taste was written by Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and published in Paris by Sautelet in 1825. The publisher initially rejected the work, and it was only published because Brillat-Savarin paid for it out of his own pocket. 500 copies were made, published under the pseudonym “The Professor.” Brillat outlived his book’s first printing by only two months, before contracting pneumonia while attending the thirty-third anniversary of Louis XVI’s execution (Buford, 2009).

The book was compiled from three decades’ worth of writing in a “secret journal” that touches on a multitude of topics and is simultaneously an autobiography (primarily told in dinner anecdotes), somewhat of a cookbook (it doesn’t focus on recipes, but it does have a few), a historical and philosophical tract, and a science text. The full title of the work is *The Physiology of Taste; or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, and not surprisingly this mouthful of a title has been reworded, partially replaced, or downsized in many subsequent editions (Buford, 2009).

Brillat-Savarin himself (1755-1826) was also difficult to classify. He was a lawyer as well as the mayor of the French town of Belley. Brillat was on the wrong side of the French Revolution, and fled in 1793 to avoid capture. He lived in exile in the United States during the Revolution, later returning home to serve as a judge in the Parisian court of appeals. This was not only a time of political upheaval, but also of culinary upheaval, as fellow Frenchman Antoine Beauvilliers, widely regarded as inventor of the restaurant, moved



The cover of the first American edition of *Physiology of Taste* (1854); The title page of a 1948 edition.

dining from an exclusively private to a public activity. The seminal work on French cooking, Antonin Carême's five volume *L'Art de la cuisine française*, codified national food identity six years after Brillat's death in 1833 (Buford, 2009).

It was in the midst of this incredible upheaval and search for identity that Brillat probed for answers to difficult questions, and seeking to define our relationship with food in a way that had never been attempted to this extent before. He pulled from his interests in everything from chemical processes to social graces as he grappled with the challenge of describing "gastronomy" and its often seemingly-unrelated components. Though he would not far outlive the fruits of his labor, he is still remembered as the father of modern gastronomy, and a central force in changing how we think and write about food (Buford, 2009). His philosophical, multidisciplinary approach and flowery prose have found their way into many respected cookery and food studies texts, and are even mirrored by modern literature, such as *Kitchens of the Great Midwest* (Stradal, 2015).

Searching for books that have referenced *Physiology of Taste* reveal a multitude of translations and printings alongside the ever-increasing number of scholarly articles that cite these different versions. This is one more example of the way Brillat's work has impacted, and continues to shape, our culture. Brillat-Savarin's work has touched a variety of academic disciplines, including Public Health (e.g. Cannon, 2003), archaeology (e.g. St. Jean, 2015), and hospitality and tourism (e.g. Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

Translators of *Physiology of Taste* often develop a fondness for Brillat, and his personable and enjoyable style of writing. Then Bentley holds a copy of the first American edition of Fayette Robinson's English translation, published in 1854. Robinson begins this book by saying that Brillat-Savarin "has described himself, with so much charm, nature, and truth; the principle events of his life have been recorded in such an agreeable and faithful manner that very few words will suffice to finish the story" (pg. xv). Robinson's sentiments were echoed nearly a century later in M.F.K. Fisher's 1949 translation, which is more well-known, and which includes in-depth glosses from the translator that are absent from Robinson's version.

SALVADOR DALI

While Brillat's legacy as a food writer has endured through countless translations and reprints, Dali's gastronomic odyssey has not experienced the same widespread fame. *Diners de Gala* (1971) was produced in a small print run, followed by other small print runs for its translated versions. The book was written to present a feast in honor of his wife, Gala. The Bentley's copy is an English translation printed in 1975.⁵

Salvador Dali's *Diners de Gala* was published in 1971 by Felicie, which published a number of art books. The recipes were written by a 'chef' who wished to remain anonymous, but the book tells us which Parisian restaurants shared their recipes: Lasserre, La Tour d'Argent, Maxim's, and Le Buffet de la Gare de Lyon. Dali mentioned his desire from an early age to work as a chef, and the centrality of food in his

⁵ Dali published another book to accompany it, called *Wines de Gala*.



The introduction to each chapter of Diners de Gala includes a fictitious recipe to excite readers' imaginations

world is evident in this book. It is divided into twelve sections, including one on aphrodisiacs. At a time when photographs were less prevalent in cookbooks than today, Dalí's lush, photo-filled journey through the royal feast he creates feels particularly decadent. Perhaps most interestingly, he fills the book with his own illustrations, and begins each section with a quote from Rabelais (a French author whose work we explore later on) as well as a fantastic illustration.⁶ Sometimes he also includes his own musings on food, with a favorite example being "I only like to eat what has a clear and intelligible form. If I hate that detestable, degrading vegetable called spinach, it's because it is shapeless, like Liberty" (Dalí, 1973, page...; Young, 2013).

Diners de Gala is interesting because it sits at the intersection between a number of worlds, including culinary arts, visual arts, and performance art.⁷ Dalí himself

was a man of many talents and interests, although he is most famously known as a visual artist. Dalí was born in Spain in 1904, and his artistic talents were evident at a young age. He began a career as an artist, experimenting with a number of artistic styles. He was exposed to the newly-formed Surrealist movement in the 1920s, and met his wife Gala (for whom the book is named) around the same time. In the 1930s, Dalí had a falling out with other Surrealist writers and authors, and worked in France until he fled to America during World War II. In America, Dalí's work continued to evolve, and he explored his work through new media, including film collaborations and the construction of a museum in his home town. Dalí continued to wrestle with complex themes in his art and writing for the rest of his life, although he painted less after Gala passed away. Dalí died at the age of 84 in 1989 (see Salvador Dalí Museum, 2016; Voorhies, 2004).

⁶ Young (2013) says these illustrations are details from Hieronymus Bosch's famous painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (early 1500s), which Dalí spent many hours studying.

⁷ Dalí's book, or rather this translated version, is interesting because it is peppered with misspellings that the publisher or translator failed to catch.

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN AUTHORS, A CENTURY IN THE MAKING

Brillat's book is modest-looking, but the meditations inside pull the reader into a world of memorable meals and thoughtful observations on the world of food, including colorful anecdotes of the author's incredible food experiences. Dali's book is large and gaudy, and full of luscious photos that provide a visual representation of sumptuous feasts like those described in Brillat. We see how other food writing echoes and is echoed by these two pieces, both in how food is described and how we visually display a meal.

Both books provide a lens for understanding food writing beyond recipes, because they are organized by ideas about food as well as by types of dishes. By Dali's time, Brillat was well-established as a founder of modern food writing, and Dali recognized Brillat's influence.

The introduction to Dali's book explicitly points to Brillat, and while it seems dismissive of Brillat's viewpoint (describing his work as "Positivist Materialism"), *Diners de Gala* bears many marks of its influence. The book directly mirrors *Physiology's* format and content, by providing a series of meditations (albeit much shorter ones) that outline Dali's food philosophy. The introduction to Dali's book was written by P. Roumequere, and sets up Dali as genius and groundbreaker as an artist as gourmand⁸ (you see much of the same lofty language in the various introductions written for different translations of Brillat's work).

From the introduction, one gets the sense that Dali sees Brillat as someone who describes the experience of being a gourmand, but does not use the book as a medium to explore that identity both visually and with recipes (fictitious and actual) to accompany the prose. Dali moves beyond Brillat by going on a gastronomical odyssey through his meditations, in order to arrive at a gastronomical theology: One where eating food and nourishing one's self (in his case, he describes this as the body he cares for that allows his genius self to continue being) is tantamount to partaking in the Eucharist. The implication is that when we eat, we are engaging in a sacred act wherein we partake of something holy and by doing so nourish the divine (ourselves). This religion, which he called "our Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Rumanian Religion", is referenced several times throughout the book, although the book does not include a clear set of directives or any further clarification, leaving the readers to consider themselves as divine beings, and to wonder whether the point was made in all seriousness or if there is a serious point being shared in a tongue-in-cheek way.

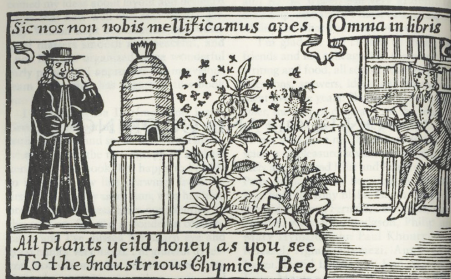
While Dali's book is big and gaudy, Brillat's work still holds up for the power of the language he uses and the depth with which he explores his chosen topic. Dali encourages us to push boundaries and create fantastic new possibilities, while Brillat reminds us that the fantastic can exist in humble objects as well. Perhaps most importantly, both books are introduced as a completely new way to consider food: Both encourage us to pause and consider what the act of eating means and how it is performed, and what about the meal and the eater makes for a transcendent experience versus an ordinary one.

⁸ A gourmand is someone who is passionate about food and finds great pleasure in eating and sharing a good meal. Modern definitions often use it to describe someone who overeats, but Brillat and Dali do not appear to use the definition in this way.

FOOD AND FEELING

“Whenever we cook we become practical chemists, drawing on the accumulated knowledge of generations, and transforming what the Earth offers us into more concentrated forms of pleasure and nourishment.”

HAROLD MCGEE (P XII)



The everyday alchemy of creating food for the body and the mind. This 17th-century woodcut compares the alchemical (“chymick”) work of the bee and the scholar, who transform nature’s raw materials into honey and knowledge. Whenever we cook we become practical chemists, drawing on the accumulated knowledge of generations, and transforming what the Earth offers us into more concentrated forms of pleasure and nourishment. (The first Latin caption reads “Thus we bees make honey, not for ourselves”; the second, “All things in books,” the library being the scholar’s hive. Woodcut from the collection of the International Bee Research Association.)

Harold McGee’s *On Food and Cooking*, first printed in 1984, offers scientifically-grounded discussions of ingredients and preparation, alongside information about food history and folklore.

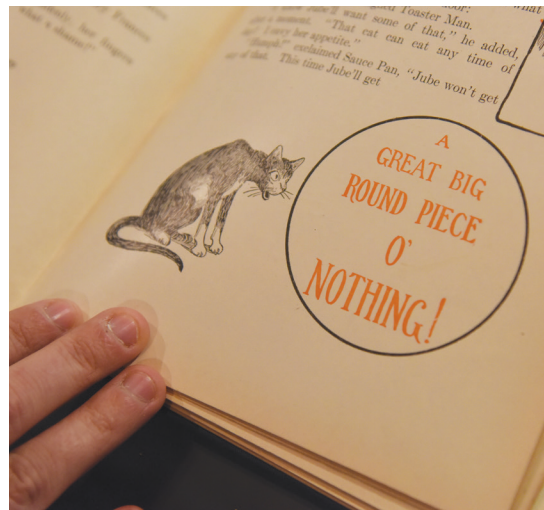
Brillat’s first meditations focus on the interrelationship between the senses and how this impacts our experience of eating. He considers sexual desire to be among the five senses we usually consider (taste, touch, smell, sight, sound), as it is a component of how we physically experience the world.

Both Brillat and Dali acknowledge the importance of the physical experience of food, and the physiological aspects of eating (both describe the act of chewing, for example). Brillat describes these physical experiences in depth, often separating them from the emotional and social aspects of the dining experience. Dali does not list each sense separately, or attempt to disentangle the different personal, social, and political aspects of enjoying a meal. Instead he focuses on the complete experience of eating, and touches on each of these aspects briefly as a part of his holistic discussion. Elsewhere in Brillat’s work we also see this approach, as some of his meditations focus on the pleasures of the table by bringing in his scientific learnings alongside reflections on food and society.

By the time Dali came around, advances in publishing meant that an ever-increasing variety of cookbooks could be produced at an ever-faster pace. However, to Dali, simply providing a recipe overlooked the point of eating. This echoed Brillat's perspective, that to be a gourmand is to fully immerse yourself in the experience of the food and to be overwhelmed by the pleasure of consuming it. Dali hoped to move beyond a scientific understanding of food as a tool for nourishment and to move into the realm of food as a source of ecstasy. Dali both respects and feels stifled by his predecessor, and his book's introduction points to physiology as an earmark of how our understanding of food has until this point fallen short:

“We hope to present here— not only the quintessence of gastronomy signed by the greatest master of the day—but also and particularly [sic] an essentially Dalinesque creation, a work never yet conjured up in the platitudinous field of cookery, that field earmarked by mediocrity and characterised by having been reduced until now to its pure physiological attributes.” (pgs 10-11).

He also expresses frustration with general attitudes towards food, and dismisses the field of cookery as largely mediocre, and shows outright disdain for those who count calories at the expense of enjoying a meal. In his view, to focus solely on food as sustenance or on the physical sensations of consumption misses the point, and keeps one from truly appreciating all that a meal has to offer.



Cookery for Little Girls (1910) includes simple recipes for children, and speaks to best practices for health and diet at the turn of the century as well as perceptions about the role of women in the home.

THE SCIENCE OF EATING WELL

“We would like to state clearly that, beginning with the very first recipes, LES DINERS DE GALA, with its precepts and its illustrations, is uniquely devoted to the pleasures of Taste. Don’t look for dietetic formulas here.

We intend to ignore those charts and tables in which chemistry takes the place of gastronomy. If you are a disciple of one of those calorie-counters who turn the joys of eating into a form of punishment, close this book at once; it is too lively, too aggressive and far too impertinent for you.”

DALI, DINERS DE GALA, P 14



Hannah Glasse’s 1781 household manual includes a fold out menu for planning seasonal meals throughout the year.

Dali’s quote highlights the tension that exists between a desire to eat healthfully and a desire to eat well. This tension plays out in the history of cookery books, as books like Gervase Markham’s *The English Housewife* (first published in 1615) tout methods for treating specific ailments or to support a healthful diet, followed by recipes for rich feasts and a banquet of sweets. At

first glance, this seems confusing: Why tell people to eat for health if you're then going to tell them how to undo those efforts? The answer lies in Brillat's writing, which extolls the virtues of moderation while still enjoying all the pleasures of the table: "Men who stuff themselves and grow tipsy know neither how to eat nor how to drink." (MFKF translation, p. 15).

While cookery books help us prepare delicious meals, a good cookery book encourages us to pause and think about how our bodies interact with those meals. Medicine is perhaps the area of scientific inquiry that appears most regularly in cookery books. Surprisingly, while our approaches to treating illness have evolved over the centuries, our approaches to feeding the ill have changed very little. Albala (2012) found that in early modern cookery books, the foods recommended for convalescent⁹ people remained constant over generations, even though this period saw radical changes in scientists' understanding of physiology. Comforting, easy to digest foods that mirror what one might feed an infant appeared during the reign of humoral theory, and continued to appear in cookery books into the twentieth century (Albala, 2012). The Bentley has a number of modern and early modern examples that showcase this approach to health.

The interplay between scientific discovery and appetite becomes explicit as the field of food writing evolves into the philosophical realm after the Enlightenment (the 17th and 18th centuries). Scientific inquiry is one of Brillat's passions that informs his writing, and he sprinkles his book with anecdotes to show his scientific prowess in areas ranging

from how certain items impact digestion to describing how a broth gets its flavor. Even the title, *Physiology of Taste*, speaks to some yearning to classify the book as a scientific text. In this context, Buford says "'Physiology' was, and remains, a nonsense word, effective for its scientific associations and a vague but irresistible mental static engendered by its almost-appropriateness." (pg. x). Physiology, or the study of how a plant or animal's physical system functions in normal circumstances, is one that Buford finds to be the "science of non-science" in this context, as Brillat combines a number of scientific traditions (including sixteenth century philosophic consolations, the melancholy tone of seventeenth century anatomies, and discourses on love and desire) to frustrating and non-rigorous effect (Buford, 2009).

Brillat lived in a world perched between traditional cooking methods and more modern approaches. In books like *The English Housewife* (England, 1615) and other earlier cookery manuals, the recipe was not always a set of exact measurements, temperatures, and instructions, but instead was used as a reference to remind the reader of processes they had already seen and engaged in previously. It was not until later on that exact instructions became the norm. We see this in Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery* (Scotland, 1781), which begins to offer more specific instructions (and an index!) but still provides less precise instructions for each step than modern cookbooks.

In the United States, Fannie Farmer pioneered this approach in her 1896 *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (The Bentley's copy is from 1927). The book was a revised

⁹ This was used as a catchall term for individuals weakened by age or disease, and does not refer to a therapy for a specific illness.

and updated version of the earlier *Mrs. Lincoln's Boston Cook Book* (1890), and it was under Farmer's revisions that the book saw its widespread success as the most popular cookery book of the day. The book appeared at a time when culinary culture was rapidly shifting: In the late 1800s, coal stoves were being replaced with gas, and modern conveniences like imported fruits and oils and prepackaged gelatin started to come onto the market (Kimball, 2010; LeCroy, 1989).

This shift in our mindset towards food preparation is echoed in Brillat's famous anecdote, where he chides his cook for improperly preparing a dish, saying he has ignored the scientific laws that inform the act of cooking, and thus has ignored how to properly make a dish. According to Buford, this "gets to the heart of how people think about food today: we cook imitating others, without pausing to see the principles of science at work (or, sometimes, not at work) in what we are doing" (pg. xi). In this quote, we see an appeal that speaks to both old and new approaches: The appreciation of process, awareness, and familiarity, as well as to textbook approaches and a more rigid understanding of the world.

Harold McGee's renowned work on science and food, *On Food and Cooking* (2007) helps us dig deeper, and to better understand Brillat's approach. Throughout his book, Brillat refers to different chemical and physical processes that impact how our food looks, tastes, and is processed by our bodies, always using the rich and beautiful language he is known for. While Brillat's scientific descriptions were not always accurate, his willingness to ask "why?" laid the foundation for future authors to

continue that exploration with curiosity and scrutiny (Buford, 2009). McGee takes this exploration seriously, using modern scientific understanding to describe different ingredients and preparations. McGee moves beyond his predecessor by situating his work squarely within the realm of scientific understanding. Just as many cookbooks attempt to make food preparation accessible to the layman, so too does McGee attempt to make the science of food accessible, with everything from simple language to a chemistry primer in the back of the book.

Books from across the history of food writing encourage us to take stock of current scientific knowledge and apply it to our eating habits. Kander's *The Settlement Cook Book* (1930) is an excellent example, providing tables outlining daily nutritional habits alongside recipes.

However, we are also cautioned to balance this with the soul of cooking, and the desire to connect emotionally and socially through food: LeCroy (1989) reflects on twentieth century food culture, noting that "When cookery turned from art to 'science' of nutrition, exact measurement, home ec principles and second-rate imitators of Fannie Farmer, the broader study of the relation between food and humanity disappeared from view. Efficiency, speed, cost, precooked foods, replaced (for many) loving preparation of food, concern for taste, understanding that a plain, simple menu was appropriate for guests as well as family" (p. 23).

OUR EMOTIONAL TIES TO FOOD

“The discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a star.”

BRILLAT-SAVARIN

Food is an inherently emotional topic, and eating an inherently emotional experience. All of us rely upon food to sustain us physically, but we also turn to food to sustain us emotionally, whether we eat comfort foods during times of grief, or eat special occasion dishes during gatherings like weddings and graduations. Certain foods can return us to our childhoods, and the right dish at the right time can evoke feelings of contentment, fulfillment, and joy (and on the flip side, a poorly prepared dish can evoke ire and frustration). Cookbooks have been used to guide us in preparing these dishes, but also serve as an avenue for building emotional connections. The Mary Frances Cook Book (1912) is geared towards children (girls in particular), and uses a storybook format to introduce recipes, helping children build a connection to the book's characters, and by extension to the food they prepare.

Both Brillat and Dali recognized the emotional power of food. Throughout his book, Brillat makes his food experiences relatable to his readers by describing the emotions they evoke. Perhaps the most riveting example is the story of his exile from France during the Revolution. Through his story we understand that food stories serve as a lens to understand most life experiences: By describing the story through food, we can imagine ourselves fleeing our homes, experiencing want and uncertainty, and bonding with strangers as



Barbecue Granddaddy and Big Daddy barbecued on an open pit but Aunt Nannie Lou can reproduce the same flavor by cooking a fresh pork ham in the oven, removing the meat and chopping it in bite sized pieces and saturating with the following sauce:

- 1 gallon cider vinegar
- 4 large bottles ketchup
- 1 bottle Worcestershire sauce
- 1 bottle Heinz 57 sauce
- 1 ounce pepper
- 1/2 box salt

This is enough for a whole pig so, needless to say, you will want to cut it down.

Brunswick Stew At "hog killing time," Monga Ma made a Brunswick Stew that was so good, Aunt Nannie Lou does almost as well. But you won't start off the way they did so I will give you an alternate way. They used a well-cleaned hog head and cooked it till well done. Remove meat from bones and add to stock. You will probably want to make chicken Brunswick Stew. In this case you would boil a hen and remove from bones. Chicken and pork may be mixed. In either case, add 1 large can tomatoes, 1 chopped onion, 2 peeled and chopped potatoes, 1 package home-frozen corn, 1 package butterbeans,okra if desired. Do not grind this up as some modern places seem to do. Season with Worcestershire, Tabasco, red pepper, black pepper, and salt. Serve in bowls.

26

Monga Ma (1974) was written by Monga Ma's daughter for her family and friends, and includes family food stories alongside the recipes.

we struggle to learn whether they can be trusted, with a depth that other approaches lack. Tapping into this emotional experience is also a key part of food advertising, and we see examples of home and family scenes, posh restaurants, and images of farm life frequently used in advertisements as well as in menu design (example images: Quaker world's fair postcards and Pavesic menus).

Even when emotional connection is not a stated focus of a cookbook author, as was the case in many earlier cookbooks, the emotional nature of food means that these authors were still bridging an emotional gap with readers through sharing holiday dishes and comfort dishes. It also means that sometimes a book elicits unintended emotions, something the Bentley staff became familiar with when encountering dishes like Gervase Markham's recipe for wet suckets (which are actually candied orange peels, but the name leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouth).¹⁰

ON FOOD AND LONGING

Our three basic needs, for food and security and love, are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others.

M. F. K. FISHER

Just as the presence of certain dishes can evoke emotions, the absence of certain foods can create emotional turmoil and longing. Authors of cookery books

have dealt with this through providing substitutions for ingredients, alternative preparations, and options for preparing meals that are cost-effective.

Food also can make us long for past experiences or places we no longer have access to. In the *Monga Ma* cookbook, the author writes down stories of her mother's life and food so that the family can recreate the recipes and remember their ancestor well after she is gone. Unlike the glossier cookbooks put out by large publishers, *Monga Ma* was locally published and meant to enjoy a small, local readership. This is the same tradition in which church cookbooks, a familiar Southern staple, are published. *Monga Ma* in particular bridges a gap between these self-published compilations and the family recipe book or recipe box, by adopting their format and including family recipes and personal anecdotes.¹¹

Food fosters longing and produces emotional fulfillment in other ways as well. Both Dali and Brillat saw food as an erotic experience, and tied the pleasure of eating to the pleasure of sexual intercourse. Dali viewed food as an aphrodisiac, which evokes pleasurable feelings and sets the stage for erotic encounters. Brillat believed this as well, but also viewed the pleasure of eating itself as an extension of the erotic. For him, sexual desire is a 'sixth sense,' and is the vehicle through which we experience pleasure in the world. All these examples remind us of the complex emotional interactions we have with food, but also by extension with each other. As we move forward, we consider how our individual food experiences intersect with our experiences as social creatures.

¹⁰ For more on the connection between food and emotion, see Evers et al. (2013) and Canetti, Bachar, and Berry (2002).

¹¹ A good example for those wishing to learn more about the history of household recipe books is *Ladie Borlase's Receipt Book*, which was the household recipe and account book kept by an Englishwoman in the 1700s (Schoonover, 1998).

THE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE OF FOOD

“To invite people to dine with us is to make ourselves responsible for their well-being as long as they are under our roofs.”

BRILLAT-SAVARIN

Just as eating certain foods evokes certain emotions in us as individuals, sharing those foods with others is a pivotal part of our bonding as social creatures. Using food to build community and strengthen bonds is nothing new: anthropologists have been focusing on food rituals as long as the field has existed, and have studied rituals from the ancient times to the present (e.g. Mintz & Du Bois, 2002).

While there are as many types of people in the world as there are dishes, all of us eat, and all of us can come together at the table to learn from and share with each other. Food connects us in fundamental ways, and not surprisingly stories of people coming to the table to celebrate, settle disagreements, or just enjoy each other's company are as old as time. The power of communal dining has been explored throughout our literary history, perhaps the most famous being Shakespeare's rich descriptions of certain dishes, and of lively dining scenes (see Scarpa, 1995). Many cookery books from early modern to Victorian times include at least some information on entertaining, while today's cookbooks often focus on more specialized audiences (e.g. certain cuisines or types of entertaining). However, even in these, the sharing of food is a key component.



Advertisements draw heavily on our emotional connection with food to sell a variety of products, such as this 1948 Coca Cola ad in Ladies' Home Journal

Even authors who seem to be in a league of their own turn to the sharing of food as a pivotal part of the full culinary experience. The first recipe in Dali's book is Bamako soup (pg 34), described as "a dish which is in itself a perfect meal and has its place in the center of a circle of friends." Even though Dali's book initially seems to focus largely on the sacred and transcendent experiences of the individual eater, once he begins introducing recipes to his reader, he turns to the idea of community and kinship as a central part of the eating experience.

<p>2 tablespoons of oil 1 tablespoon of butter 1 lb of onions 2 1/2 lbs of round steak 1 lb of top ribs 1 marrow-bone 2 quarts of water 2 beef bouillon cubes 4 cloves 3 teaspoons of ginger</p>	<p>10 oz of calf's lungs 10 oz of minced pork meat 1 lb of chick peas 1 lb of carrots 1 lb of turnips 1 bunch of leeks 1 green cabbage 6 eggs 2 small red peppers 6 tablespoons semolina</p>
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1

Bamako Soup

Here is a dish which is in itself a perfect meal and has its place in the center of a circle of friends.

In a very big pot, fry the onions in oil and butter until they are nice and golden. Remove the onions and use the same fat to brown the round steak and the top ribs.

When the meats are golden brown and crisp, put back the onions and add the water, marrow-bone, bouillon cubes, ground cloves and ginger.

When it begins to boil, skim off the fat and simmer on low flame for 5 hours. Taste for seasoning and add salt if needed.

After 2 hours, add to the broth six meat balls made with a mixture of calf's lungs and minced pork meat. Then add the chick peas.

After the third hour, add the diced vegetables (carrots and turnips). The bunch of leeks and the cabbage go in without being cut.

After the fifth hour, remove meats and vegetables, and keep them warm. Poach the eggs in the broth for 5 minutes, and put them, one by one, on the meats, keeping everything warm.

After skimming off the fat, separate the broth into two equal parts.

In the first half, crush the red peppers. Keep it warm. In the second half, throw the semolina to thicken the broth. Boil for a few minutes.

In each plate pour the semolina, then arrange a few vegetables, a piece of each type of meat, a meat ball, a slice of marrow on the poached egg. As to the broth that has been spiced with the red pepper, pour it into 6 bowls. Each bowl is put next to a plate so that, from time to time, your guests will be able to take a sip of this explosive mixture.

Dali's Bamako soup

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

“The pleasures of the table are for every man, of every land, and no matter of what place in history or society; they can be a part of all his other pleasures, and they last the longest, to console him when he has outlived the rest.”

BRILLAT-SAVARIN

We're familiar with tabloids about the latest celebrity gossip, but books have existed for centuries that show us what the rich and famous are eating. Sir Hugh Plat's *Delightes for Ladies* (1609) is one such example—showing the newest trends in foods for entertaining, with an eye towards impressing guests. In contrast to books like Markam's *The English Housewife* (1615), which is geared towards middling households and providing guidance for a frugal existence (although there is certainly some attention paid to lavish entertaining), or Glasse's *The Art of Cookery* (1781). Interestingly, while the book was focused heavily on providing the trendiest dishes, the book itself looks no more ornate than the others. Even though it was geared towards upper class tastes and lifestyles, Plat's book was still considered a practical use item (rather than ornamental), so lacks the flourishes and decorations we might see on a book used for display some place far away from the kitchen.

Other books exist that provide their own perceptions of diners beyond the rich and famous, and these can be seen throughout *Culinary Memory*. Brillat and Dali both



The title page of Gervase Markham's *The English Housewife*, first published in 1615, lists the many household subjects covered in the book.

describe gourmands, and elevate them above less passionate eaters, who might focus on sustenance more than pleasure. While both argue for the importance of pleasure and passion in food, Brillat diverges somewhat by pointing to the need for moderation. In Brillat's world, meals last for hours, and one is expected to eat and drink slowly, so as to savor the host's offerings and to keep from getting too full or too drunk. In Dali's world, there does not appear to be any such restriction made, and instead the reader is encouraged to go forth and dive into the feast with abandon. Perhaps this divergence is part of the reason why Dali's book criticizes Brillat-Savarin as not going far enough.

The gourmands most often described by Brillat were often rather well-to-do, such as doctors or lawyers, although Brillat also mentioned other professions (particularly clergy). Interestingly, the European nobility, who had access to all the finest foodstuffs, are not described as being inherently more appreciative of those foodstuffs than their non-noble peers (this is true among many cookery books). Perhaps it is the middling classes who had the ability to afford some luxury ingredients but were not so inundated with them as to take them for granted, that were best able to savor these luxuries. Doctors and lawyers also had social access to dinner parties where fine foods would be served, as well as other trappings of a higher socioeconomic status (such as transportation to such events and the ability to hire child care) that would allow them to participate.

The perception of the eater also appears in descriptions of other cultures, as seen in Theodore de Bry's *Dritte Buch*

Americae (1593), which uses descriptions of cannibalism as a way to demean the cultures of First Nations people. De Bry created images of very European-looking native people to describe their barbaric practices, and uses eating practices as one example. Othering practices exist throughout many genres, including literature and travel books, and often attempt to make cultures appear violent, barbaric, and unintelligent (e.g. Rickard, 2007). Including this othering practice in this exhibit showcases how writing about food may appear in a book that otherwise is not focused on the topic. Often, travel books will identify a culture's foods and eating habits as a way to help readers understand a place and relate to the experience of existing within that place, and the Bentley has numerous examples that showcase this. However, De Bry's treatment of native peoples explores the darker side of that part of travel writing, by applying his own moral code and misunderstanding of a culture to its members in order to dehumanize them.

The books in this exhibit also offer insights into how the author might perceive the reader. Each book has its audience, but in the case of cookery books, that audience may not be as straightforward as it appears. Cookery books were not always published solely for the person doing the cooking, and often times older cookery manuals were also used by those managing servants and running a household, and who may not be preparing every single dish that is set on the table. Books geared towards household management include information about all aspects of the subject (growing food, cleanliness, and even manners), although not surprisingly they focus on cookery as a

central part of the home (Skinner, 2012).¹² Household management books were used by women and girls who did not have servants as well, and in some cases offer simplified recipes for times when servants are not around to assist (e.g. *Cookery for Little Girls*, 1910 or *The American Woman's Home*, 1869).

Many books blur the lines between the eater and the reader, as there seems an implicit assumption in most books that one would partake of the food they prepare. However, the value of the cook's experience is often overlooked in favor of pleasing others. Sometimes this is done explicitly, as in *Cooking to Please a Man* (author; year), where the focus is squarely placed on food as a tool for courtship or relationship maintenance. However, elsewhere the focus appears to be on creating the highest quality dishes that are delicious enough for all to enjoy, without an explicit indication of who the audience for said dishes might be.

FOOD AND SOCIAL CLASS

Class distinctions in food are a relatively recent development in human culture, with much of human history being concerned with securing a sufficient quantity of food for survival. As societies became better able to secure larger quantities of food, its availability and presentation became tied to social inequality. Those with more resources and higher prestige were able to not only command larger quantities

of food, but also prepare that food more lavishly (Fernando-Armesto, 2002). Prior to modern times, richer foods were not often accessible to the poor, and it has been argued that food has been at the core of maintaining social inequality, as "food sharing is a fundamental form of gift exchange" and "chains of food distribution are social shackles." (Fernando-Armesto, 2002, p. 105).

The development of middling cuisines was a major innovation in early modern Europe. Middling cuisines bridge high and low cuisine, and offer elements of both in ways that were accessible to the middling classes. This new approach brought a range of spices, sauces, sugar, and sweets to an ever-increasing number of European tables, and marked the transition from a largely grain-based diet for many Europeans to one more heavily composed of oils, sugars, and meat (Laudan, 2013).¹³

These middling cuisines would continue to develop and disseminate through larger segments of the population in the coming centuries, accelerating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to bring this diversity of flavors to the salaried-middle class and urban working class. Those who lived in Europe also brought their middling cuisines to their many colonies, and thus spread this way of eating to wealthier populations worldwide (Laudan, 2013).

Just as different foodstuffs and cuisines have spread with trade and colonialism for

¹² As a response to centuries of media depicting women in the home, second-wave feminists created art pieces, parodies, and engaged in scholarly exploration to push the woman's role in society beyond the home's four walls (see Brundson, 2005, Rosler, 1975). Recently, the home arts have experienced a resurgence, as women argue that knowing and honoring domestic activities becomes a subversive act, by focusing attention and value on activities that have traditionally been highly undervalued and calling those valuing hierarchies into question (see Greer, 2007; Pohl, 2011).

¹³ Laudan (2013) argues that early modern European cultures began to shift to new cuisines with the rise of Protestantism, which gave all believers access to the divine, regardless of social status or what they ate. With this new perspective came new high cuisine, particularly in France, and this shift also impacted the development of middling cuisine as political and religious changes throughout Europe relied more upon leadership by consent (rather than the divine right of kings) and through a direct connection to the divine. As all people were given greater autonomy politically and religiously, it became harder to argue that they should eat different foods, and so more preparations and ingredients were brought into the common diet (for those who could afford them).

RACE, FOOD, AND FOOD WRITING

Many of the books in this exhibition are in the European tradition because of our focus on English language history and culture. This can make it challenging to dive deeply into the fraught and complex relationship between race and food, a topic which deserves its own separate exhibition, as well as continued acquisitions in this area to begin to unpack.

Race and the documentation of food in the English-speaking world have a complex relationship. The legacies of colonialism and slavery have privileged white voices and cuisines, while all other traditions are pushed to the side in attempts to coerce native cultures worldwide into adopting English customs and cuisines. While these traditional foodways live on, sometimes quietly for fear of annihilation or because they were ignored by the discourse of those in power, others were appropriated into national cuisines in ways that divorce them from their original preparers and make them palatable for those in power (soul food, a term itself riddled with controversy, is a good example).

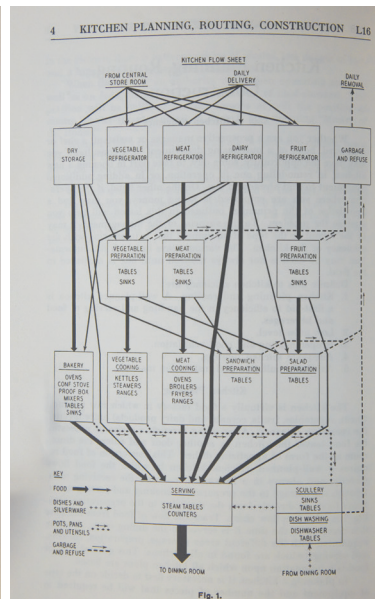
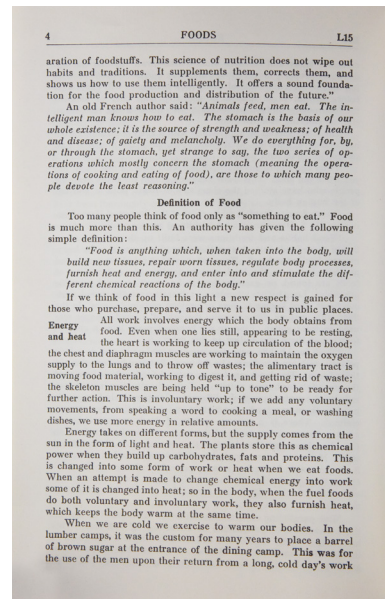
Pioneering chefs and researchers have fought for the inclusion of these texts, and authors like Michael Twitty remind us that many aspects of our national food identity come from co-opted slave foodways. More chefs and authors are challenging assumptions about what it means to be an author and a cook, by asking us to consider who is preparing the food, who is passing on traditions, and how those are being recorded. This raises other questions as well: How do we share food traditions today? Whose traditions are we acknowledging, and whose do we ignore? When we look to the future of food publishing, do we expect to see more voices, or do we expect it to look as it does today?

millennia, present-day cuisines worldwide bear the marks of centuries of middling cuisines, and their rich fats, meats, and sugars. In the U.S. we would be most familiar with a certain fast food burger chain, whose golden arches can be found in most parts of the world, although another prevalent example would be the rise of instant ramen (Laudan, 2013). As a result of modern farming practices, these fat- and sugar-rich ingredients are more plentiful, providing global cultures access to foods that would have been unavailable year-round even 100 years earlier.¹⁴

You can see evidence of the rise of middling cuisine throughout our exhibit, as cookbooks showcase a variety of rich ingredients, including an array of spices, alongside preparations that range from the simplest dressing of a salad to complex desserts and main courses. While in the past, this variety and complexity was reserved for the very wealthy, the presence of cookbooks targeted towards a middling housewife or her servants (not towards a wealthy housewife, who would not be working in the kitchen—see Skinner, 2012) charts the spread of this diet. We see books like Markham’s *English Housewife* (originally 1615) and Hannah Glasse’s *Art of Cookery* (1781) serving to bridge gaps between classes, as both attempt to make wealthier dishes and customs widely accessible.¹⁵

As we move forward through time, we reach Brillat’s world, which is suffused with rich flavors and a wealth of gastronomic experiences. Brillat enjoys meals at some of the most well-appointed tables in France and abroad, and his story serves as a testament to Europeans’ continued desire

for variety and richness at the table. As we move forward through time, we see authors taking this middling cuisine in a variety of directions, perhaps most interestingly with Dali’s surreal and visually-driven approach to food writing. Even with books like Kephart’s *Camp Cookery* (1923), we can see attempts to bring the comforts of middling cuisine (and by extension, the comforts of home) with us even when we travel. Our exhibit also showcases training materials, such as the *Lewis Hotel School courses* (1920s-1960s), which teach hospitality professionals how to serve diners in a variety of environments. Today, we have cookbooks that speak to every dietary niche, showing our continued acceptance of the middling diet and its fusion of wealthy and simple cuisines.



This binder for Lewis Hotel School’s back of the house training courses (1967) shows the breadth and depth of hospitality instruction, and the variety of workers whose labor goes in to putting food on guests’ tables.

¹⁴ Although food production has increased, that does not imply that these cuisines are accessible to everyone: The fact that this exhibit is studying publications that deal with cookery means that inherently those who are without access to cookery books (or to food at all) are left out of the conversation.
¹⁵ Markham’s work is geared towards middling country audiences, while Glasse’s work seeks to bridge gaps with the working classes, as seen in her introduction to the reader.

THE VICTORIAN DINING TABLE: AN ENTHUSIASTIC EMBRACE OF EXCESS

BY CURATOR EMERITUS ROBERT WILLIAMS



The Victorian dining table was filled with serving and dining implements of all sorts, from pickle forks to punch bowls (image source: <http://livinghistorylectures.com/taste-through-time/trial-by-fork-formal-victorian-dining-demystified/>)

Victorians embraced their age with an enthusiastic excess of all things new. Theirs was the world of the Industrial Revolution and the all good and bad that would bring. The Victorians found themselves in an era of expanding wealth and social classes. With those changes came new styles, customs, and fashions, all of which they took to with delight.

Nowhere would this be best understood but in the dining room. A newly prosperous society needed new and inventive ways and means to show off their new station. Science and industry made new and expanded furniture, dishes, crystal and silver-all which would impress any and all who came into the modern dining room.

Large, richly covered tables, chairs, cabinets were designed to impress on both owner and guests that here were people to be reckoned with. Add to the new interior decoration the presence, plentitude and cheap help would make a spanning and impressive table the necessary element to their station in life.

The Industrial Revolution brought heretofore unheard of exotic luxuries to do the dinner table. Foods from around the world, the finest linens and furnishings, the most costly chinaware, glassware and silver became the norm for the dining room. No longer just a glass, a plate, a knife, fork and spoon would suffice. Now the best and finest of foods required implements for every conceivable delicacy. Where eating utensils did not exist they now were invented. All of it was to be put on the table at the same time.

Now it was necessary to be knowledgeable in the new rule of what to use to eat new dishes or foods. All the while never letting the fingers touch the food. To serve sliced cucumbers, there would need to be a cucumber server and a special fork to eat them with; to eat lettuces (small individual leaves) there would need to be a lettuce fork to serve it with and a small fork to eat it with.

It would be taken further with half a dozen types of soup spoons, each with special shapes and dishes all different from one another.

Fish would be served with special fish servers and eaten with special knives and forks. Cheese would its own implements as would fruit, roasts used new and different knives and forks, poultry and game would hall have the appropriate equipment.

Desserts, there would always be more than one, had their own special equipment, preserved fruits had one kind, flakey pastry another, plain cake another and fancy cake another.

An orange, cut in half and then cut in segments would be eaten with a small spoon.

Coffee, chocolate and other drinks had their own spoons and heaven forbid that one could mix them up. There were rules!

Dining was an act, both for the host and hostess and the guests. A long meal and the best foods and drinks required the best and finest table equipment and only those knowledgeable of the rules would endeavor to partake. To be able to do so would admit a person to the ranks of proper society.

FOOD IS MORE THAN ITSELF

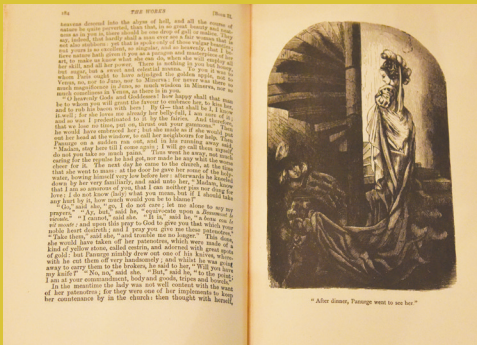
“Everywhere the same message: food is more than itself. It is not everything, but it is touched by almost everything: memory, weather, dirt, hunger, chemistry, and the universe.”

BILL BUFORD

Contemporary chefs, food historians, and everyone who interacts with food can learn a lot from turning to the history of food writing. It reminds us how pivotal the sharing of food has been across all cultures, and helps us see threads of food history woven throughout our music, literature, art, and cultural traditions. By looking at culinary history books, we are focusing a mirror on ourselves as a community, and this in turn can inspire us to consider how we might write and think about food in the future.

While contemporary food writing does not always directly reference those histories (e.g. Food Network folk cookbooks), it is informed by them. We see this in how ingredients are used and how dishes are prepared, to how we serve our meals and when we gather as a family and as a community to break bread. But we also see this in the way we publish and use cookbooks themselves.

Looking at the physical books also reminds us of the range of experiences we can have with food. From workhorse books made with simple, sturdy bindings that were made to withstand the rigors of being in a working kitchen, to ornate and lushly illustrated



Our copy of The Works of Rabelais (1890) includes illustrations by Gustav Dore. François Rabelais (1494-1553), was a French novelist and satirist whose work regularly included food as a central theme, and was the most well-known food writer prior to Brillat-Savarin.

books made for display (but whose fanciful decorations would probably be kept away from actual food). It is in this world that the intersection of book history and food history exists, and part of this intersection's power is that both histories are so central to our lives that they are often overlooked. Even though food writing, particularly philosophical pieces like *Physiology of Taste*, can feel inaccessible and intimidating (Buford, 2009), we all have our own ways of engaging with meals.¹⁶ Because of its capacity to be everything, sometimes the world of food buckles under the weight of its own grandeur, seeming inaccessible to those who wish to skirt its edges. Contemporary food writing gives authors (professional chefs or not) the opportunity to explore and compare their own food experiences, through formally published media or through blogs and social media, helping to break down perceived barriers between an expert chef and someone who just wants to cook a good meal for their family.

Finally, modern food historians encourage us to reexamine our relationship with food, both past and present. "The ancient Greek city-states spreading in search of fertile arable land on which to grow wheat, medieval merchants carrying spices grown halfway around the earth, or Portuguese colonists manning their sugar plantations in Brazil with African slave labor—all of these can be told as food histories. When examining these topics through the lens of food, what might have seemed to be familiar terrain suddenly seems new, and new vistas are opened both for teachers and for students." (p. 21 of *Food in Time and Place*, 2014). Through this perspective,

we are encouraged to look back on this tradition as we continue to add our own voices to culinary memory, as scholars, cooks, or simply those who can recognize the magic hidden in a well-prepared meal.

Note: all Brillat-Savarin's translated quotes from MFK Fisher's 1949 translation

¹⁶As Buford reminds us when talking about food, "It is the most important matter in our lives. It is more than its ingredients. It is transcendent. Brillat understood this. But it is also just dinner. It means nothing. And Brillat understood that, too. It is serious, and not." (pg xiii).

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¹⁶ As Buford reminds us when talking about food, "It is the most important matter in our lives. It is more than its ingredients. It is transcendent. Brillat understood this. But it is also just dinner. It means nothing. And Brillat understood that, too. It is serious, and not." (pg xiii).

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