THE MULTIMODAL KITCHEN: COOKBOOKS AS WOMEN'S RHETORICAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

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This study positions cookbooks and their associated discourse as rhetorical, relevant to the field and worthy of scholarly study. I argue that cookbooks are more than a simple collection of recipes; the ways in which the texts construct and are constructed by society establish their significance as rhetorical texts. As women have been historically silenced and prevented from using dominant communicative methods, they have needed to develop alternative practices. Naming cooking as a women’s discourse created out of these alternative practices, I argue this form of communication constructed for women and by women has a powerful rhetorical impact which establishes women as experts within their own (private) sphere. This discourse not only enables women to value their own existence but it also gives them a space in which to perform rhetoric, in effect constructing a feminist practice.

This analysis is based on synthesis between Certeau’s concept of “making do” and multimodal practice, as I argue cookery discourse is inherently multimodal. I develop my argument exploring what I identify as the major modes used in the discourse: social, visual, and performative. As my project works to extend theories of multimodality, making the concept more widely applicable in rhetorical scholarship, it also furthers work begun by Bizzell, Glenn, and others concerning the limited representation of women in the rhetorical canon, and aids in the rewriting of rhetorical history as women’s stories continue to be added. Previously marginalized as a simple, everyday text, the cookbook is reclaimed in this dissertation as a significant rhetorical—and feminist—practice.
To the first woman who realized that half of the human race were not getting a square deal, and who had the courage to voice a protest.

*Washington Women’s Cook Book, 1909*

Polus: What art is cookery?
Socrates: None at all, Polus.
Polus: Well what is it? Tell me.
Socrates: [. . .] a certain habitude.
Polus: Of what? Tell me.
Socrates: [. . .] of production of gratification and pleasure, Polus.
Polus: So cookery and rhetoric are the same thing?
Socrates: Not at all, only parts of the same practice.

*Plato, Gorgias*
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CHAPTER I. APPETIZER: HISTORICIZING THE COOKBOOK

Just the other day, my grandma called me to talk about cooking. We often phone each other to share recipes or cooking tips (even though it’s usually a one-way process as I am the one asking for advice, not giving it). Indeed, this practice is familiar to many generations of women, since the act of sharing recipes is a community-building practice, as Susan Leonardi explains in her *PMLA* article “Recipes for Reading” (340). Labeling it a practice of kinship, Leonardi states that “the recipe’s social context gives it far more significance than that of a mere rule for cooking” (344). Through our conversations about cooking, my grandma and I participate in a practice that has engaged women throughout history, allowing them to connect with other women and validate their own existence in the domestic sphere. Marion Bishop explains that through the process of writing and sharing recipes, women construct a rhetorical situation which affirms their worth not only as cooks but also as people (96). The act of recording recipes and claiming authorship of them (e.g., Aunt Ellis’s Beef Stew) allows women to write their own history, leaving their talents to posterity. My grandma and I engage in this act almost daily, blind to its significance for our history or to our future. We hold the common assumption that such a practical, mundane skill—and its textual representation—cannot be that important.

Existing in the private space of the home, recipes and the discourse they reflect have often been overlooked and forgotten as a women’s cultural text. In her analysis of her mother’s handwritten recipes, Sharon L. Jansen observes that “they were more than ingredients and directions. They were the rich and varied compositions of a writer who had chosen her own form and then pushed beyond the usual limits defining that form” (72-73). Upon closer inspection, these forms of women’s writing carry much significance beyond a list of rules and measurements, hinting at the values and desires of their authors and the communities they lived in.
But back to my story. On this particular day, my grandma called to ask me a question. “Where is my pumpkin pie?” she asked. Querying her for more information, she explained that she had been browsing through the new edition of the *Better Homes and Gardens New Cook Book* I had recently purchased. As it turned out, the new fourteenth edition of the cookbook had tossed out my grandma’s favorite (and most-used) pumpkin pie recipe, one that had served us well through many Thanksgivings and Christmases. In its place was a simpler, easier version of the custard pie containing fewer ingredients. Upon further analysis of the “Pastry and Pies” chapter (now renamed “Pies & Tarts” in the fourteenth edition), much has been revised, not all of it content-related. My grandma’s first edition (1969) includes a few pictures scattered throughout the chapter, some in color, most in black and white. All of these pictures illustrate a specific pie-making technique, in particular how to roll out and shape pie crusts. Two pictures are used to show a mouthwatering picture of a finished pie. In the fourteenth edition (2006), pictures and other forms of visual texts are used on every page, the majority of pictures used to illustrate the beauty of the pies listed. Only two photos are used for visual demonstration of a technique. Other visual aids, such as charts, sidebars, and recipe labels like “Favorite” or “Easy” aid in the chapter’s use and help in quick skimming of recipes.

Each cookbook organizes its chapter differently as well. As the first edition opens the chapter with pastry recipes, technique for pastry making, and pie filling recipes, the fourteenth edition puts pastry recipes at the back, and includes hints and tips as needed throughout the chapter. As the fourteenth edition ironically says in the opening of the chapter, “a pie is just a pie . . . or is it?” (435).
Unauthorized Texts: Recipes and Revision

Much like cooking, the recipe—the written representation of women’s domestic discourse—is a dynamic text. It is constantly reinterpreted and revised, most often on the spot in a woman’s own kitchen. Modifications, deletions, substitutions and experiments enable the cook to reproduce the text in her own way. For example, the pumpkin pie recipe printed in my grandma’s first edition cookbook has been all but obliterated with handwritten changes and substitutions. Other recipes in the cookbook and others bear the mark of my grandma’s pen, her changes added through experience or through observation of her mother. Elizabeth J. McDougall, in her analysis of the discourse of community cookbooks, provides reasoning as to why recipes are dynamic: “the reader of a cookbook brings past experiences of and cultural influences on cooking and eating to the reading process” (113). Leonardi explains that it is the nature of the recipe that encourages revision, arguing that “like a narrative, a recipe is reproducible, and, further, its hearers-readers-receivers are encouraged to reproduce it and, in reproducing it, to revise it and make it their own” (344). Therefore, the act of reading a recipe invites revision, as it calls upon past experience and influence to interpret/reinterpret it. In fact, McDougall argues that all recipes are “unauthorized” (117): that is, they do not come from any one cook but instead belong to the community of women who work together to construct them, an idea also shared by food scholar Colleen Cotter (58).

While these everyday changes aren’t normally noticed as they exist in the privacy of the kitchen, the synthesis of these changes are observable in new editions of print cookbooks, as my grandma discovered. The differences found between the first and fourteenth editions of the Better Homes and Gardens New Cook Book related to changes in both cookery discourse and cultural values over the decades. Cookbooks, as they textually represent an everyday discourse
of domestic life, are reflections of society and can be considered a social text. Marilyn Motz, writing about the cultural value of domestic objects and home decoration in the 19th and 20th centuries, argues that any domestic object has the power to inform the observer about not only the woman who owned or created it, but also the society she lived in. Writing about the use of these domestic objects, Motz explains that “in the decoration of their homes and the selection of the objects to be used within them, women were not simply expressing their own taste but were reacting to—interpreting, adapting, displaying, rejecting—values of the broader culture” (9). Similarly, cookbooks can be viewed as a domestic object which not only reflects but also reacts to the culture of the time period.

Cookbook scholar Janet Theophano compares the cookbook to a diary, explaining how the text describes a woman’s world, being an account of their daily lives (6). Dog-eared pages, marginal notes, newspaper and magazine clippings pasted to the inside covers, and food-stained pages can all give clues to the former owner of the book and what her life was like. Clues found in my grandma’s first edition cookbook make it obvious how the text was used, which hints at my grandma’s likes, dislikes, and prior experience. The majority of recipes she used are clearly delineated by food stains, torn binder holes, and ink annotations. The recipe for popovers has a leftover bit of dried popover batter staining the list of ingredients. Two pages in the middle of the shaped cookies section have creases lengthwise down the page, reminiscent of a time once marked for holiday baking. Dried, brown cherry juice splatters across the page for fresh cherry pie. Page 247—the page with my grandma’s favorite pumpkin pie on it—is nearly torn out of the book, the binder holes worn and ripped, the page wrinkled and splattered with custard, the ink changes and annotations marking up the printed text. Sections such as sauces, appetizers, and meats all are in pristine condition, which attest either to my grandma’s disinterest or to her
ability to memorize most recipes for daily cooking. In these ways, my grandma’s cookbook attests to her existence as a woman, and her expertise as a cook. It reads, as Theophano previously described, like a diary: a diary of daily meals, of special meals, of birthdays, Christmases, and church potlucks. It is precisely the quotidian nature of the cookbook that makes it a significant cultural text. Theophano adds, “despite or perhaps because of their ordinariness, because cooking is so basic to and so entangled in daily life, cookbooks have thus served women as meditations, memoirs, diaries, journals, scrapbooks, and guides” (6). Thus, the cookbook is much more than a compilation of recipes, just as the recipe is much more than a formulaic list of ingredients: “for many of us, reading a cookbook is like following a sensate trail to another world remote in space and time” (6). A cookbook’s allure lies in the stories it tells between the recipes, in the margins, or stuck in between chapters.

Cookbooks as Gendered Rhetorical Practices

Initially viewed as mundane and of little interest to academics (Bower, *Recipes* 7), cookbooks have begun to gain academic notoriety as a currently overlooked form of women’s rhetoric. Jessamyn Neuhaus considers cookbooks a useful primary source because, as everyday texts, they are “not noticed” (531). As historical texts, cookbooks can help historians to analyze the traditions and values of the society through their interpretation of the cultural moment. As social texts, they can demonstrate the ways in which food and food preparation has informed and disciplined the relationships among people within a culture. As rhetorical texts, cookbooks show how they have influenced and continue to influence generations of readers regarding gender roles. In each of these ways, cookbooks demonstrate their multifaceted potential as objects of study. As Anne Bower explains, “cookbooks [...] provide their own kind of nourishment. What each reader does with that nourishment is, of course, up to her” (“Romanced” 42). The
nourishment one can gain from a cookbook can be extended into scholarship, as my grandma’s cookbooks have nourished my academic interests for the past several years leading into this project.

Cooking is and has historically been a gendered practice. Mary Anna DuSablon asserts in her book *America’s Collectible Cookbooks* that “our national cuisine was conceived, developed, penned, and conserved almost entirely by women” (61). From its origins as an apprentice-based oral culture to the preponderance of food blogs and online recipe sharing forums, the authors of and audience for cookery texts is primarily female. Indeed, the discourse of cooking is one exclusive to women, considered “women’s work” and relegated to the private sphere of home life. Since it has existed in the private sphere, it has gone mostly unnoticed, allowing women to construct for themselves a vital, life-affirming community that respects their authority and experience, something most women were unable to have in the public sphere of society for many years. Cooking is one area where women were allowed full reign to compose and produce, without limitations imposed on them by men and patriarchal forces. Similar to other domestic arts such as housekeeping, home decoration, sewing, and crafting, cooking was a way for women to broaden the boundaries of their home and connect with other women, forming a woman-centered discourse. Foodways scholar Carole Counihan explains in *Around the Tuscan Table* how food can act as a voice for women, as they are fully involved in the process of food acquisition, preparation, provisioning, cleanup, and storage (1).

This voice is preserved and perpetuated in cookbooks, which serve to illustrate a literate practice specific to women centering on the preparation of food. This literate practice undergoes many changes from the 18th to 19th centuries in particular, save the influx of machines and advanced print technology appearing in the 20th century. In the 18th and 19th centuries, American
women were beginning to discover their national and communal identity as cooks. Some of the first cookbooks to appear in America were imports from London, such as E. Smith’s 1742 *The compleat housewife; or, accomplish’d gentlewoman’s companion*, first printed in England in 1727. Susannah Carter’s *The frugal housewife, or complete woman cook* (1772), direct from London and reprinted in Boston, evidences the colonists’ ties to their mother country, as it advertises “approved receipts” for English cuisine (Lowenstein 2). Amelia Simmons’s *American Cookery* (1796), the first American-authored cookbook, boasts of its recipes being “Adapted to this country, and all grades of life,” even though a survey of the recipes do not appear to be much different from previous English cookbooks, making one question what was “adapted.” Even so, Simmons’s rhetorical positioning of herself as “an American orphan” effectively establishes her ethos as a woman, as she says in her introduction that “the orphan, tho’ left to the care of virtuous guardians, will find it essentially necessary to have an opinion and determination of her own. [. . .] It must remain a check on the poor solitary orphan, that while those females who have parents, or brothers, or riches, to defend their indiscretions, must depend solely on character.” Simmons wrote this book “for the improvement of the rising generation of Females in America,” thus this positioning sets up Simmons’s logic to only present “more general and universal knowledge”—or, more practical skills in cookery—rather than have “an obstinate preference in trifles”—in other words, the fads of the time. Simmons’s book is important not only because it is the first American cookbook, but it is also establishing an American women’s discourse, written for women by women.

Even so, it took many years for women to establish themselves as named authors of cookbooks. Since the original discourse was one shared between intimate friends and family members, cooking stayed exclusively within the private sphere and within a close-knit
community. As more and more cookbooks began to be printed, the discourse was forced out into the public sphere and into the hands of a vastly wider audience of women. This might help to explain why many early cookbooks are either unauthored or cryptically authored (e.g., “by an experienced housekeeper”). *New American cookery, or female companion* (1805), noting that it is “Peculiarly adapted to the American mode of cooking,” is written “By an American lady” (Lowenstein 9). 1807’s *A New System of Domestic Cookery* is also written “By a lady” (Lowenstein 10). Even the 1814 edition of Simmons’s cookbook leaves off her name, listing her only as “An American orphan” (Lowenstein 15). This trend continues throughout the early 19th century, as women authors either leave off their names, include their title (lady, housekeeper) only, provide their first initials (such as H.I. Harwell’s 1816 *The Domestic Manual: or family directory*) or go by a pseudonym (as in the likely example of *The Universal Receipt Book* (1818) by Priscilla Homespun). The cookbook authors’ fear of overstepping their gender role, or the publishers’ fear of being unable to sell copies of women-authored books, may explain this trend.

Fortunately, by the mid-19th century and onward, with the development of women’s groups in support of suffrage, temperance, child labor, and other social issues, women authors became more widely recognized and respected in the public eye. Towards the 1830s, female authors and speakers began publishing cookbooks, such as the case of Lydia Maria Child, author of the interracial love story *Hobomok*. She published several broadsides and cookbooks regarding practical cookery, as she explained, “Dedicated to those who are not ashamed of economy” (Lowenstein 25). Eliza Leslie and Sarah Josepha Hale, two other authors of the sentimental fiction genre, also published cookbooks under their own names. By this time cookbooks were being written in support of these movements, such as 1841’s *Temperance Cook*
Book and *Total Abstinence Cookery*, which allowed women to have a public voice on social issues while still staying within their approved private sphere of the domestic.

Catherine Esther Beecher and her famous sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, penned the popular domestic treatise *The American Woman’s Home* (1869), a book devoted to hints on how to run the most efficient, economical, and healthful home, with occasional social critique. In an attempt to raise housework to a respectable position, they dedicate the book “to the women of America, in whose hands rest the real destinies of the republic, as moulded by the early training and preserved amid the maturer influences of home.” They believe that domestic training, just like training for any other job, is vital, as they note in their opening chapter:

The authors of this volume, while they sympathize with every honest effort to relieve the disabilities and sufferings of their sex, are confident that the chief cause of these evils is the fact that the honor and duties of the family state are not duly appreciated, that women are not trained for these duties as men are trained for their trades and professions, and that, as the consequence, family labor is poorly done, poorly paid, regarded as menial and disgraceful. (Beecher 13)

Beecher and Stowe take the position that a woman’s job is just as, if not more, important than the jobs men do, and should be respected and treated as equal. With proper training and an understanding of chemistry and nutrition, these women believed they could influence the future of America through their kitchens. Speaking of these female authors, DuSablon asserts that “at best, they saved women’s lives, bestowing positive reinforcement and practical, orderly example” (60).

Not all cookbook authors were women, however. Several specialty cookbooks at the turn of the 19th century were authored by men, such as *The Complete Confectioner* (1807), and *Every
Man His Own Brewer (1796). Other more general cookbooks like Richard Briggs’s 1792 The New Art of Cookery and Thomas Hayes’s Concise Observations on the Nature of our Common Food (1790) established their credibility as professional chefs or nutrition experts, similar to today’s celebrity male chefs like Emeril Lagasse or Jamie Oliver. While there have always been male-authored cookbooks, the discourse community was and still is controlled by women, as the majority of bestselling cookbooks were authored by women. Part of this may have to do with a woman’s already-established ethos as an expert in the domestic sphere: as it was her job to work with food as ordained by her gender, the reading audience would need little convincing of a woman’s expertise in the area. Male authors of cookbooks, on the other hand, felt they needed to establish their expertise outside of the domestic realm. For example, Frederic Nutt’s The Complete Confectioner boasts that the book is “the result of many years experience with the celebrated Negri and Witten,” who are apparently expert cake and candy makers (Lowenstein 10). Richard Briggs’s The New Art of Cookery identifies him as “many years cook at the Globe Tavern Fleet-street, the White Hart Tavern, Holborn, and now at the Temple Coffee-House, London” (Lowenstein 3). Female authors refrain from this identification of authority, and only on rare occasions include the term “housekeeper” or “author” to describe themselves. The fact that male authors felt the necessity to establish their credibility shows that this was a female-controlled discourse, something that those in the public sphere (men) could not fully become part of.

These differences point to larger issues of gendered practices of literacy. Indeed, men and women have had—both presently and historically—gender differences regarding language. Stemming from their differences in socialization, men and women interpret and use language differently for different purposes. Cinthia Gannett, author of Gender and the Journal, explains
how sexual differences have led to linguistic differences. She notes that through socialization into their gender roles as wife, mother, and servant, women are alienated by the dominant discourse of men, which focuses on and values public discourse rather than personal or intimate forms which are more familiar to women and practical for their gender role (47). Gannett explains that women are challenged by this alienation: “thus, in order to speak or write, women must both/either accommodate to this alienation, and/or find alternate modes of expression—ways to subvert the dominant discourse or move outside it” (48). Because women have chosen to communicate via “alternate modes” (that is, modes not considered valuable in patriarchal discourse), their literate practices have been devalued.

In the first place, the prospect of women being able to read and write was threatening to the dominant discourse. Jean Ferguson Carr, in *Girls and Literacy in America*, notes that with the rise of women’s literacy came a rise in warnings to girls and women about “trespassing” into men’s public discourse (59). Anne Ruggles Gere explains that rumors were spread regarding the connection between women’s literacy and disease, including infertility (34). Elaine Hedges passes along a story about Harriet Beecher Stowe’s own concern about women’s literacy, telling how Stowe hid her drafts of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in her sewing box and wrote only in private (341-42). Thus, limitations were put on women’s reading and writing, establishing appropriate topics they could be literate on—in particular, diaries, letters, recipes, housekeeping and parenting advice, and needlework. As long as their literacies supported the duties accorded to them in the domestic sphere, they were more or less free to practice their skills of reading and writing.

Women used their skills of literacy in a wide variety of ways, all of which established themselves as vital and important women with staying power: by recording their talents, future
decades and centuries of scholars can have a way to remember them, whether it is from a recipe, a letter, a poem, a diary entry, or a sampler, women used literacy to establish their own existence and to be remembered for posterity.

Unfortunately, archival work is difficult regarding women’s literate practices. Since the type of texts women were producing were not considered mainstream (books, speeches, essays) by the dominant discourse, many were not archived or were not preserved with equal rigor as were documents produced by men. Arthur Posonby, scholar and bibliographer of English diaries, explains that it is difficult to find women’s diaries to include in his bibliography (29). In his 1923 overview *English Diaries*, Posonby includes one woman diarist for every three male diarists, the ratio he notes “is probably fairly representative” (41). Of women diarists, Posonby concludes that they “must be rare [. . .] the idea of noting regularly insignificant details of daily life does not seem to appeal to the female mind” (29). In Posonby’s argument, egotism is “the mainspring of diary writing,” and includes themes such as travel, social events, books read, work, famous people met, and gossip as important to any “good” diary (6). This is drastically different from many women’s diaries, which focus on themes such as relationships, parenting, home life, domestic duties, introspection, and friendship (Theophano 6, Arpad 15, Gannett 125-128). Gannett notes in her gender-conscious history of journal writing that when we think of diaries, we think of famous men, not women. Gannett describes what Posonby illustrates, which are patriarchal assumptions about the journal being a public form of discourse. Because of this, Gannett explains, it leaves out much description of women’s journal practices (102). This illustrates how women’s diaries have been devalued (and destroyed) over time, in some part due to their alternative approach to the genre.
Marilyn Motz explains that anything considered “women’s work” was devalued and overlooked because of its placement in the private sphere. To men, the private sphere was one of leisure, not of work, thus the dominant discourse hid the reality of housework (2-3). Since it was not in public, the domestic space was not understood or respected as having a valuable literate tradition (Motz 1). Anne Bower explains that up until recent decades, scholarship on foodways traditions—particularly in regard to cookbooks—has been lacking. As it was considered work by women or by servants, it was thought of as “common knowledge” and not worthy of scholarship. Bower explains this denigration through western philosophy, which valued the abstract and mental, and devalued the practical, embodied, and concrete—all of which described the literate traditions in the domestic space (Recipes 7). This is unfortunately apparent in archival research in cookbooks, as Margaret Cook’s excellent bibliography of American community cookbooks (cookbooks published by women’s groups for fundraising purposes) shows. Many of the community cookbooks listed exist only in bibliographic form, as Cook’s only knowledge of them comes from other bibliographies. Skimming through the book, several cookbooks are listed as “Copy not located,” meaning that this group of women’s publication was likely not preserved for history. These books were used privately, shared among friends and family, and passed down from generation to generation, in effect participating in an altogether different set of consumption practices outside of the mainstream publishing world. The text’s location in the private sphere has, for many decades, confirmed its low status.

Gender and Language Use

As mentioned earlier, the difference between men and women is that of language use. Gannett clarifies this point, saying,
While women and men both supposedly use the same language, then, it’s clear that they do not stand in the same relationship to that language. Women have been more like borrowers, or even thieves, than like proprietors of language, [. . .] for men have controlled the manufacture of public semantic resources and the terms of their commerce in public discourse. (61)

Joan Radner and Susan S. Lanser explain that the public/private division separates men and women unequally, as not only are men separate from women, but they are also dominant over women as well. Therefore, any use of the dominant language by women is controlled by men. In Carr’s account of girls’ diary writing, she explains that much of this kind of writing was not kept private. As it was meant to help girls learn both mental and moral discipline, diaries were read, edited, and responded to, in order to “monitor their inner thoughts and desires” (54). In effect, “such literacies allowed girls to ‘compose’ an appropriate—and legible—self” (74). Language, while women have used it to escape their gender constraints, in many contexts has also been used as a tool of domination.

Susan Arpad perhaps gets at the differences in experiences between men and women best by using an example from Susan Glaspell’s feminist play Trifles. In the one-act play, two women inspect the domestic space of their friend, trying to understand her motivations behind the murder of her husband. Unlike the male detectives, the women are able to interpret the messages left by their friend in her housekeeping and needlework, leading Arpad to conclude that women live in a symbolic universe different from the symbolic universe of most men, which is due to differences in experience (12). As consumers and producers of language, women interact with a text in a very different way from men. Jonathan Culler, in his book On Deconstruction, was one of the first reader-response scholars to consider the issue of the
gendered reader. He questions, “if the meaning of a work is the experience of a reader, what difference does it make if the reader is a woman” (42)? He argues that to think of the reader as gendered complicates the notion of experience (43). He also believes that the concept of “experience” ought to be gendered, since when one considers a female reader, one thinks initially of experience as a gendered method of reading. Women often bring their own experiences to bear on a text, rather than consider the text exclusively from a cognitive standpoint (44). Indeed, Lynne Pearce argues that to read as a feminist is to focus on the processes of reading. Rather than only look at the individual role a reader plays, feminist readers need to complicate it by looking at their role alongside their experience and constitution (3).

A major criticism feminism has concerning reader-response theory is that in all reader-response scholarship, it is assumed the reader is either asexual or male. This problem is not surprising, as the vast majority of the literary canon in the 1970s (and still today) is dominated by male authors and male subjects. As men have existed in the public sphere, the sphere of production and distribution, it is not surprising that what is produced and distributed will favor men’s interests and feature male authors. Judith Fetterley observes the state of the American literary canon, saying that “to read the canon of what is currently considered classic American Literature is perforce to identify as male” (564). Thus, the reader has traditionally assumed to be either male or asexual. As women have existed outside of the public sphere, they are (as Gannett argues) a muted group, invisible to the dominant culture.

Ironically, reader-response criticism has not dealt with the role of emotion in reading. Mary Ann Doane, citing Christian Metz, explains that “it is no accident that the main socially acceptable arts are based on the senses at a distance, and that those which depend on the senses of contact are often regarded as ‘minor’ arts” (qtd. in Doane 63). Culler is not surprised by this
lacuna, as he observes that cognitive, not emotional, effects are privileged (39). Since topics like relationships and introspection are not valued in public discourse, they are denigrated. Women’s writing, which often focuses on these kinds of topics, has been denigrated in turn. Lynne Pearce cites Culler, saying that most reader-response theorists are concerned with meaning-production, not emotional feeling (4). In this way, the theory is still highly text-focused: the reader exists to interpret the text. As Wolfgang Iser states, a reader’s “identity can never exceed his agency” (Pearce 5). Pearce explains this characteristic of reader-response theory by noting that to those theorists, any display of feeling is in “bad taste” (8). Interpretation is “made respectable” by being figured as an act of cognition, not of emotion—thus the text/reader interaction is privileged above any account of the reader’s feelings (7). Therefore, because of gender differences, men approach a text with a different set of values than women.

Fetterley characterizes the reading process as a process of identification. Since the majority of canonized literature is male-centered, reading thus becomes a process of identifying as male (564). Because of this, Pearce suggests, female readers are trained to respond not as a woman, but as an asexual (42). Because they are female, forced to identify as male, they end up identifying in a dual position that erases both sexes. Indeed, Schweickart notes that the text influences the reading strategy, as “an andocentric canon generates andocentric interpretive strategies” (620). This erasure of femininity due to andocentric texts causes what Schweickart names “immasculination.” This is forced upon a female reader, as she immasculates herself to construct her position as an other (620-23), thus forcing her into the muted group named by Gannett.

What, then, is a female reader to do? Fetterley, in her 1978 work The Resisting Reader, explains the job of a feminist critic. For Fetterley, the first act of a feminist critic is to be a
"resisting reader," not an "assenting reader" (570). Culler also discusses how a feminist critic might read, which is to read for emotion and read to highlight their own experience. To Culler, this type of criticism is most powerful as a critique of patriarchy (46). The point of being a resisting reader is to become conscious of the male-focused, oppressive tradition in culture. To read as a feminist is to try to break that tradition (Warhol and Herndl 561). Fetterley acknowledges that in resistance, the feminist critic cannot rewrite texts, but she can at least name her reality (571). To be a resistant reader is to begin the process of "exorcizing the male mind" in us (570). The process of reading as a feminist represents the discovery and recovery of a voice.

Similarly, women throughout history have learned to become resisting readers—and writers. Dissatisfied with their low status in society, women have used language in creative ways in order to have control over their reality and free themselves from oppression. Women have succeeded at this resistance through coding. Radner and Lanser discuss women’s use of codes to communicate with other women, saying that "in many, if not most, societies there is a realm of practice that is primarily or exclusively woman’s domain, through which women may develop a set of common signifying practices whose meanings are not necessarily accessible to men of the same group" (2). This practice constructs what Radner and Lanser call a "women’s culture," an exclusive discourse community that engages in coding. Radner and Lanser define coding as "the expression or transmission of messages potentially accessible to a (bicultural) community under the very eyes of a dominant community for whom these same messages are either inaccessible or inadmissible" (3). When the women’s language is coded, they are free to communicate with each other without fearing consequences from those outside the community. Similarly, Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard describe the language of cookery as a coded
practice, saying that “these people have their own language and corpus of reference, as well as their own secrets and complicities—an implicit, well-known knowledge that the most detailed of recipes will not communicate to you” (215). Cooking is itself an exclusive group, containing codes that—unless one is a member of the discourse community—cannot be understood by the general public. Words common to cooking, such as whip, beat, cream, and dice, have very different meanings outside of the context of the kitchen, and are therefore codes used to construct the discourse of cooking.

Often, women have formed relationships with other women via literate practices. Carr’s research has found that literacy, as it manifested itself in the woman’s world of journals, letters, recipes, and crafts, aided women in keeping wider contacts and joining in the outside world. Anne Ruggles Gere writes of 19th century women’s clubs who, having a subordinate political position, aided their creative resistance through literate practices in the form of speeches, pamphlets, banners, and letters (13). These clubwomen saw literacy as a way to change public perceptions about their class, gender, race, and religion, via their accepted literate practices (26). In a similar way, Beecher and Stowe use their knowledge of domestic arts to argue for more respect for women’s work in The American Woman’s Home. This resistance—in the guise of an approved literate practice—is what Radner and Lanser name “appropriation,” a coding practice that allows the woman to “transgress from within.” It involves adapting forms associated with men’s culture or with stereotypic female images for subversive, feminist purposes (10). Feminist scholar Susan Lanser explains that “precisely because it is safe, indeed immensely serviceable as competencies go, domestic performance so validates a woman that it can mark or justify her appropriation of male turf [. . .] surely a woman who keeps cooking and cleaning so dutifully cannot be a threat” (39-40). Appropriation is a powerfully effective method, as it is a form of
subversion in plain view. As long as the woman fulfills her gender role, little attention is paid to the increasing amount of power she gains in both the private and public spheres. Likewise, a woman can be a published author and go on a book tour, giving speeches and conducting training sessions, and not be a threat precisely because her expertise deals with the domestic sphere. This is one way to explain how women, relegated to the home, were able to gain a voice in a world dominated by men. Cooking, originally seen by many women as something to keep them imprisoned, could in fact give them the tools to gain a public voice and establish themselves as worthwhile.

**Multimodal Literacy Practices**

Throughout history, women’s literacy practices have been ones of adaptation and remediation. Women’s texts are often flexible, utilizing a wide variety of modes as appropriate to the situation or context. For example, Gannett explains that (citing journal scholar Blodgett) women have adapted and combined men’s journal traditions to fit their own discursive and social needs (126). With their knowledge of kairos, women have revised men’s genres of writing to work for them. Diary writing, for example, has allowed women to “integrate and confirm women’s perceptions of domestic, social, and spiritual life, and invoke a sense of self” (126). They have been able to accomplish this through adaptation, as women’s diary traditions have come from a synthesis of the daily events log and spiritual journal genres of men’s diary traditions. This constant flexibility and resulting remediation is described by Gannett, explaining how women use their diary, saying “they often start, stop or shift the nature of their diary keeping in response to these changes, so that the diaries themselves begin to take on the shape of women’s lives.” Diaries, and the flexibility they enabled, allowed women a method to organize their life in a positive and meaningful way (127).
These methods of appropriation and remediation help to characterize women’s literate practices as multimodal. Because women’s literacy was devalued, women had to develop a new, useful literacy that would permit their communication practices to continue while fulfilling the duties of their gender role. This type of literacy needed to be flexible and adaptable, with the ability to create and sustain strong networks of women, to “affirm this female sense of self as linked to others” (Gannett 133). Thus, because of gender constraints, women developed literacy practices that relied on a wide variety of modes, creating flexible, open texts which are dialectic in nature and work to maintain bonds with others in the community.

Jacqueline Jones Royster discusses these multimodal aspects of women’s texts in her study of African-American women’s literate practices *Traces of a Stream*. Writing specifically about the author Alice Walker, Royster explains how she engages in “writing across genres” (20). This multi-genre writing, Royster argues, shows Walker’s desire to not let her voice be defined by any single form of expression (20). Royster notes that “in terms of style, Walker does not always remain within conventional boundaries of exposition and argument. She weaves in and out of these modes—at will, as a master storyteller might well do—and operates as if there were indeed a fluid space in which both autonomous and non-autonomous rhetorical choices can be selected” (40). Because Walker and other women writers are able to work within this “fluid space,” they are not limited by the clear boundaries set by men’s genres and in effect ignore convention. As women have been alienated, oppressed, and ignored by the dominant discourse, it is not surprising that women find it easy to ignore convention, as the convention marks a style they never had access to. Multimodality, then, is women’s alternative.

Gunther Kress, in his book *Literacy in the New Media Age*, defines a multimodal text as one which uses any variety of communicative means to express itself. A multimodal text could
involve print text, audio, visual (both static and moving image), hypertext, and others. Specific to women’s literate practices, though, is the wide variety of styles used and genres combined and adapted to construct a similar text, as in the above example of African-American women writers. The way to read a multimodal text is different, as well. Unlike a traditional printed book, where there is a single specific way to read it (left to right, top to bottom, turn the page and begin again), a multimodal text has more flexibility in the way it can be read. There are many points of entry in this type of text (136), just as there are many points of entry in women’s literate practices such as needlework, cooking, and diary writing. Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, scholars representing the New London Group, explain the concept of multiliteracy as coming about from the multiplicity of communications, along with increasing cultural and linguistic diversity (5). They liken the flexibility of multimodal texts to global diversity. Likewise, women’s communities have used these multimodal texts to keep strong ties between each other and build traditions in their muted group. Royster cites Henderson to explain this concept, asserting that “African-American women writers engage in complex discursive practices that mirror the complex social, historical, and cultural positions from which they speak. They engage in a ‘simultaneity of discourse,’ speaking in the creation of a single text both in a plurality of voices and in a multiplicity of discourses” (20).

Multimodal literacy assumes that all modes contribute equally to the overall message of the text, as they all are meaningful and affect meaning (Kress, Literacy 44). Each element, whether it is a letter, word, sentence, image, or size or placement of any of these elements, is focused on with equal attention as a sign (66). Similarly, McDougall names cookery discourse as a set of signs, as the specialized language in cooking constructs these signs which work together to form an image of cooking in history (110). Kress and VanLeeuwen explain that
“language has always existed as just one mode in the totality of modes involved in the production of any text, spoken or written” (39). In *Before Writing*, Kress notes that “multimodality is an absolute fact of children’s semiotic practices,” as he explains that children gain literacy by focusing on the interrelationships between modes, such as in the sound-letter relation and the visual shape of letters (137). All modes aid in gaining literacy, not just language. Women’s use of various texts, named “alternative” by the dominant discourse, attest to this. As women have not been creators or participants in language, they feel more free to use a variety of communicative practices that do not constrict them in the way language can, such as through embodied practices like diary writing, crafting, needlework, or cooking.

Gere’s study of women’s clubs and their literacy practices illustrates what she calls “a more symmetrical literacy” as compared to men’s traditions. Gere begins her discussion by providing background on a 1917 Congressional bill which forced all new immigrants to the United States to prove they were literate; i.e., to prove they could read a sample paragraph. Gere analyzes this narrow definition of literacy, and explains how women’s clubs indirectly reacted to that definition through their own multimodal literacy practices. This “symmetrical literacy” included all forms of literacy, writing and reading and the relationships it fosters. Gere quotes one clubwoman describing the effect these group literacy practices had on her experience, noting that these practices strengthened the bonds of friendship and provided “a stimulating interchange of courtesies and extending fellowship, as well as giving direct benefit by the dissemination of knowledge and the introduction of new elements into club life” (qtd. in Gere 8). These interchanges and resulting friendships came out of the women’s multimodal practices.

Cooking, a literate and embodied practice central to women’s lives, is multimodal as well. The practice parallels many other forms of women’s writing, as it is a flexible form relying
on a wide variety of modes. As with my grandma’s pumpkin pie recipe, it relies on linguistic, visual, typographic, and embodied or experiential modes of literacy in order to understand the text. As Certeau and Giard explain, all recipes implicitly refer back to previous practical knowledge, and this pie recipe is no exception (219). The visual and typographic structure of the recipe gives a clue as to how to read it, to scan for information and recursively switch back and forth between the list of ingredients and paragraph of instructions. The recipe does not bother to explain the details of what crimping is, or how to prepare “slightly beaten” eggs. The recipe doesn’t even say how to make an “unbaked pastry shell,” but requires this knowledge anyway. These codes speak to a specific discourse community, one exclusive to domestic life.

Conclusion(s)

This project will analyze the gendered act of reading as it is applied to the discourse of cooking and its textual representation in recipes and cookbooks. Since cooking is a gendered practice, taking place within the domestic sphere and originally set aside as primary “women’s work,” the preparation of food has always been marked by gender. In fact, I argue that this practice consists of a set of elements: social practices, textual practices, and embodied practices are all involved in constructing gender, enforcing its existence as an exclusive community of women. Each of these elements in the construction of gender also contributes to its multimodality, which provides hints on how to interpret the discourse and “crack” the code. As Radner and Lanser assert, the deciphering of coded messages is the process through which liberation becomes possible (3).

The following chapters, or courses, will work to establish and argue for cookery discourse as a multimodal construction of a gendered rhetorical practice. Through social, textual, and embodied elements, the gendered rhetoric is constructed, enforced, and challenged in
the community. Chapter 2 (the First Course) will provide a more detailed look at the methodology grounding my study of cookbooks and its accompanying discourse. Using Certeau’s concept of “making do,” I establish cookery discourse as multimodal through its use of revision and substitution—in other words, its use of remediated literacy practices.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 each focus on a separate discursive mode that contributes to its multimodality. Chapter 3 (the Second Course) looks at social cooking practices, asserting that communities of cooks use social modes to establish themselves as experts and construct their unique discourse. To do this, I explore the community (or compiled) cookbook text, citing the genre as especially demonstrative of social discourse construction. Chapter 4 (the Third Course) analyzes the visual aspect of print cookbooks, establishing visual rhetoric as an essential mode of cookery discourse. Focusing on visuals found in contemporary basic or “how-to” cookbooks, I explore the mode’s use of the terministic screen in these texts, as they construct screens to define a specific perspective on cooking, as a way of implicitly responding to “women’s work” as drudgery. My final chapter (the Dessert) seeks to explain how the community of cookery texts uses the physical as a key mode in the discourse. As the recipe is a description of an immediate, lived experience, I explore the embodied rhetoric of the recipe in print and on screen. To do this, I analyze embodied performance in current television cooking shows as a way to establish gesture as central to the discourse and key to making social and visual modes work in concert.

As I write this chapter, I had to call my grandma back. I wanted to make her recipe for salmon patties, but it didn’t make any sense. It only had a list of ingredients, but no amounts or measurements written, let alone any indication of method. My grandma’s coding practices are ones I am still learning to interpret, which frustrates me no end. Once I called her to ask my questions (How much? How many? Where? How long?), I thought again about the discourse
community of cooking. Even though I very often feel as if I am an outsider, struggling to figure out the discourse and the codes, I realize my conversations with my grandma in fact perpetuate the discourse, enabling a new generation (me) to participate and be included in the community. Since the community has been created by humans, the skill is not inherent but must be learned—learned through communication, sharing, and apprenticeship—and it is this learning process that constructs the discourse and creates these linguistic, social, textual, and experiential bonds between women that can never be broken.
As I write this chapter, my chicken pot pie is in the oven for dinner tonight. I made it for the first time this afternoon, so I had to look up the recipe in *Joy of Cooking*. Since I’m not completely new to the kitchen, I had a basic idea of what making a pot pie entailed. I knew the dish would involve a creamed filling of meat and vegetables, topped by a crust of some sort. *Joy* gave me a few choices as an alternative to the main recipe: I could make the filling from scratch, or use the “quick” method which called for canned soup instead. For the crust, I could have chosen to make a biscuit (drop or rolled) dough or pie dough. Each of these choices altered the recipe process and cooking time. For efficiency, I chose the “quick” filling with a pie crust but made a mental note to try the biscuit crust another time. I further amended the printed recipe according to my own needs and tastes. Since I didn’t have the raw vegetables called for to go in the filling, I replaced those with frozen cut mixed vegetables. These substitutions also made the preparation process go more quickly, which was another reason why I had made that change. I also like a bit of garlic flavor, so I added a few shakes of garlic powder, despite the fact that the recipe never mentioned garlic. The kitchen smells wonderful right now, so I hope my revisions to the printed recipe make my pot pie better than Rombauer and Becker’s original version.

I provide these details to show the everyday practice of revising recipes as essential to the act of cooking, which will serve as a central argument in this chapter. Recipes call for creative interpretation, allowing for—and even assuming—flexibility within their ingredients and steps. Most cooks know a recipe is not a formula to follow to the letter, but is rather a guide through the process of creation. From oral to manuscript, and from print to digital, recipes remain equally flexible among media. No matter the medium used, recipes encourage improvisation. It
is a textual form that is never permanent; these texts are as dynamic as the act of making a
recipe. As an introductory chapter, this second chapter of my dissertation functions as a gateway
to the rest of my project, as it establishes cookery discourse as multimodal via the concept of
remediation. Women’s remediation of cookery texts allows them to gain agency as an expert in
the domestic space of the kitchen. In this chapter and the ones that follow, this act of
remediation is essentially a feminist rhetorical practice, letting women claim their own expertise
in the discourse.

Revision as Remediation

Recipes are almost limitless in their flexibility. Nowadays even cake mixes, which
initially seem to require no revision, suggest at least three or four different pan shapes and sizes
to try, along with amended directions for low-cholesterol or high-altitude versions. Some recipes
foreground revision by suggesting substitutions or alternative forms. It is quite common to
find—in both manuscript and print cookbooks—recipes whose authors suggest alternatives. For
example, in a 1976 community cookbook recipe for Ranch Style Hash, Emily Shafer makes a
note concerning 1 cup chopped green pepper requested in the recipe: “(less if desired)”
(Farmfolk Favorites). In Mrs. Wilson Cole’s recipe from the 1960s for Baked Limas with Sour
Cream, she notes at the end of the ingredient list: “(sometimes I use an additional ½ cup of maple
syrup)” (Boca de Ratones 49). Hedging is used in this way as the cookbook authors do not
assume their recipes to be perfect as they are written and often encourage the reader to change or
add the amount or type of ingredient listed to their taste. Those familiar with this discourse
community take this practice to be completely normal and even necessary.
DeVault argues that the practice of revising recipes is not only natural, but also a marker of membership in the discourse community. DeVault provides the example of Sandra, who chooses to use onion in a recipe rather than the shallot called for, commenting that:

> Using the discourse does not mean following guidelines automatically or even completely, but rather working with the text as a specialized tool. [Sandra] feels the kind of legitimacy as a discourse user—based on knowledge and familiarity—that allows her to pick and choose from cooking texts, modifying recommendations as she chooses. (220)

Indeed, recipes are tools of a practical discourse, and their quotidian revision parallels the very definition of rhetoric, as recipes call upon an “available means” for fulfilling a message, or creating a recipe’s food. The practice of revising recipes is key to understanding the discourse of cookery as rhetorically significant. Indeed, revision relies on multimodal literacies, as the “available means” for creation may exist in various forms or modes. The practice of revising recipes establishes multimodality as a central feature of cookery discourse, which in effect gives women an alternative space from which to practice their literacies.

The everyday discourse of cooking involves creation. David Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, in their work *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, identify the practice of creation as the rearrangement of existing forms (39). Likewise, creation through cooking often is a “rearrangement,” or re-use, of leftovers. For instance, shepherd’s pie uses leftover meats, vegetables, and potatoes to create a new dish. Croquettes, small meat dumplings dipped in egg and flour and fried in hot oil, re-use scraps of meat. Trifle is created from leftover cake, layered with cream and fruit. Creativity is linked to thriftiness in cooking discourse. Since food has been so central to daily life, these dishes have been created with economics in mind for
generations. Countless cookbooks have been printed concerning thriftiness. During the cookery reform movements of the late 19th-early 20th century, “marketing” was an important concept covered as part of cookery education, which involved food shopping on a budget. In her 1916 cookbook, Marian Cole Fisher admits that “There is no food problem so complex a scientific marketing, complex because so many elements enter into a day’s dietary” (7). Rationing, portion size, fluctuating food prices, nutrition values, and budgeting all affected a cook’s job. Fisher explains the necessary fact of cooking as directed by cost. “Without such knowledge,” Fisher warns, “the dispenser of the budget is like a ship without a rudder” (7). As a rhetorician utilizes the available means of communication in order to persuade his or her audience, the cook is a master of using the available means in the kitchen, giving herself authority relatively unknown to her outside of the domestic space.

“Making Do”: Thrift and Cookery Discourse

Michel de Certeau names this use of available means as “making do.” He describes this act in his work The Practice of Everyday Life, naming it as a kind of action that allows the reader to re-use a social text to his or her advantage. Instead of being a passive recipient of social messages, “making do” lets the actor involve herself by refashioning the social message to work for her. While Certeau notes these actors are regulated by discourse at one level, he argues this “making do” exists at a secondary level, which is “interwoven into the first” (30). Certeau explains this concept with an example of a Kenyan’s experience living in Paris:

[Through the practice of “making do,” he] creates for himself a space in which he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or the language.

Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down
its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of plurality and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation. (30)

Rather than attempting to leave or reject the domestic space, a woman cook practices “an art of being in between” by refashioning the kitchen and its cookery discourse for her own benefit. She finds ways to use her constraints to her advantage, just as the Kenyan re-interpreted the limitations of Parisian society to construct his personal freedom. The art of “making do” depends on the creation of new items from a synthesis of old. Bolter and Grusin echo Certeau’s concept with their definition of remediation, which they define as “reuse,” with an occasional acknowledgement of its origins (44). Similar to “making do,” remediation is the process of creation of new forms out of old via synthesis. As a cook reuses leftovers to make a new meal, remediation uses old objects in a new way, whether through combination or redefinition. While eating croquettes, one can be reminded of yesterday’s roast turkey, as it is reused in a new dish.

As principles of economy and thrift were (and are) essential to a successful home, women have played major roles in provisioning and budgeting. They have become adept at creation through remediation, or “making do.” Women throughout the centuries have mastered the “art of being in between” by becoming masters of remediation, which grants them authority and expert status in their own constructed space.

A vital part of cookery discourse involves its constant improvisation. Throughout history, this discourse is one of thrift and necessity, conscious of cost and saving of goods. For many centuries (and even today to some extent) creating a satisfying meal on a small budget was to be admired. As food was a daily expense for families, a woman’s ability to save on food costs was vital not only to a household’s budget, but also to their health. Using leftovers, scraps, or surplus as part of the next day’s meal was the only way many families could live without going
hungry on their budget. Sherrie A. Inness explains that being economical was of the utmost importance in the 1930s, not only for the good of the family, but also for the good of the nation as well: “By preparing such [thrifty] recipes, the housewife was not only reducing her weekly grocery bill, she was helping to end the Depression—a task more important than any other. [...] The household was transformed into a battleground where the war against the Depression would be won or lost” (118). Inness cites a Depression-era article in Good Housekeeping which states that “A ‘good cook’ is not one who can take the choicest and most expensive of ingredients and from them concoct a delectable dish, but rather one who can combine the cheaper products and make a dish that is ‘fit to set before a king,’ savory and delicious” (119). Thrift, of course, is not exclusive to cooking: for centuries, much of women’s work has been concerned with saving and recycling material goods. Patchwork quilting, for example, was created out of a necessity to re-use old scraps of clothes and leftover fabric. Rag rugs, made from ropes of fabric strips woven, braided, coiled, or crocheted together, were commonplace in homes as a way to recycle old fabric. As most women sewed, it was common to tailor a father’s suit for his son or an older sister’s dress for her younger sister. Domestic life revolved around thrift in all aspects.

Because of this element of “making do,” I argue that cooking is remediated practice. Cooking involves the (re)creation and (re)production of food into new forms. At its most basic structure, to cook is to chemically alter a food into another form. The OED defines the verb “cook” as “to prepare food by the action of heat.” Other related definitions of “cook” hint at remediation, such as “to concoct,” “to manipulate, ‘doctor,’ falsify, tamper with,” and “to present in a surreptitiously altered form.” Cooking does not just refer to the simple preparation of food, but also to the alteration and even remediation of it. Thus remediation—chemical or otherwise—is an elemental practice in the discourse community. This practice is significant as it
invites women to take action themselves and construct a space in which they have a voice and are an expert—their own kitchen. Therefore, the act of remediation is a feminist rhetorical practice, where women use the available means to improve their domestic existence.

Bolter and Grusin’s basic definition of remediation is “the repetition of one medium in another,” claiming it as a defining characteristic of new digital media (45). Digital media highlight and illustrate remediation, thus they serve as particularly good examples to foster discussion and analysis of remediation. However, they admit remediation is not a new practice, as artists and architects have been engaging in this for centuries. Art historian Barbara Stafford looks at a Wunderkammer, a German cabinet, to establish the ways in which material forms are remediated. She observes,

Turning [. . .] to the disjunctive jumble stored in an eighteenth-century cabinet or chamber of curiosities, the modern viewer is struck by the intensely interactive demands it places on the visitor [. . .] Looking back from the perspective of the computer era, the artifacts in a Wunderkammer seem less physical phenomena and more material links permitting the beholder to retrieve complicated personal and cultural associations. Looking forward from the Enlightenment world of apparently miscellaneous pleasures, we discern that scraps of wood, stone, or metal, religious relics, ancient shards, exotic fetishes, animal remains, miniature portraits, small engravings, pages torn from a sketchbook, are the distant ancestors of today’s sophisticated software [e.g., multimedia encyclopedias]. (qtd. in Bolter and Grusin 35-36)

Bolter and Grusin emphasize that new media are not “new” per se, but have developed methods of reusing older media in ways that are unprecedented (15). Thus, remediation is not exclusive
of new media, the Internet, or technology in general: Rather, it is a practice that can involve elements in a variety of forms, electronic or not.

As with cooking, remediation can occur in several ways. Bolter and Grusin note that perhaps the most common type of remediation occurs within media, where a medium is repurposed in the same medium, an example of which would be film remakes (45). For example, the 2000 Michael Almereyda film production of *Hamlet* revises the familiar Shakespeare script, where Hamlet lives in present-day New York City, characters use speakerphones and faxes to deliver their lines, and the title character’s most famous monologue occurs in the aisles of a video store. Taking from previous texts and performances of the play, Almereyda remediates *Hamlet* for a new purpose and a new audience. Concerning the act of cooking itself, remediation within the same medium is most common. Bolter and Grusin speak of degrees of remediation, or the extent to which the new medium absorbs the old. No matter the degree, remediation requires that the old medium still exists in some form, as it is the existence of the old medium that motivated the remediation process. In many cases in cooking, simple repurposing is used. For example, a green salad uses cut raw vegetables, tossed together for a quick lunch. In this instance, remediation is used only as another window through which to experience the old form. The new form attempts to be transparent so as to emphasize the old form. Other times, cooking is used to improve upon the old medium, such as roasting a raw turkey. Repurposing can also be used in more extreme conditions so that the old medium is altered completely or even absorbed into the new medium, such as using leftover cooked steak chopped up into a shepherd’s pie. In these examples, the new form attempts to efface the old, repurposing the original to construct an entirely new dish. The original form (the steak) is almost completely absorbed into the new form (the casserole).
This type of “making do” demonstrates one of the many ways in which cooking involves remediation. Recipes, textual representations of the discourse community, exemplify the practice of repurposing media, as printed forms of recipes have changed quite a bit throughout history. It is highly unlikely—indeed, quite rare—for a recipe to remain unchanged in either content or structure over time. The changes in cookery discourse combined with changes in technology and in society are reflected in a recipe. A recipe, Anne Bower notes, tells a story (“Cooking Up” 49). Often written in narrative format, it includes a cast of characters (the ingredients) and plot (the procedure). It includes an introduction (title), climax (baking time), and denouement (serving size, alternative versions, etc.) (49). This narrative is passed down from cook to cook, mother to daughter, neighbor to neighbor. Each woman involves herself in an act of remediation, casting herself as the expert to revise and improve the recipe. As Certeau and Luce Giard assert, “In a sense, each operator can create her own style according to how she accents a certain element of a practice, how she applies herself to one or another, how she creates her personal way of navigating through accepted, allowed, and ready-made techniques” (156). This “own style” can also involve adaptations by the cook to suit the present needs (such as using what is already on hand) and taste preferences of the family (like when I added garlic to my pot pie). The practice of remediation in cooking allows a woman to gain agency within the domestic space.

Bread Pudding through the Ages: Remediations and Interventions

While there are a great number of oral and manuscript forms of recipes that characterize this discourse, I choose to focus on printed recipes, as they are readily available and also appear to demonstrate best the changes the discourse has undergone in the past few centuries. Following a single recipe—bread pudding—through five centuries of cooking, I demonstrate
how remediation is characteristic of this women’s discourse, as it “makes do” with language and visuals. From this case study, I argue that all recipes are multimodal in that they use a variety of modes of communication—the available means—to perpetuate their rhetoric.

Bread pudding, a frequent cookbook standby, illustrates repurposing. Bread pudding reuses leftover stale bread, which is chopped up and mixed into a custard of egg, milk and spices and is then baked. This dish reinvents the bread into a new form: dessert. While the final product may not have changed from recipe to recipe, the way in which it is communicated has changed. These changes both reflect and perpetuate cookery discourse.

Anyone who has ever tried to follow an old recipe knows it is a unique kind of challenge. One striking observation about early recipes for bread pudding is their relative vagueness in regards to measurements or procedure. Murrell’s 1615 bread pudding recipe in *A New Booke of Cookerie* describes the cooking procedure as “Let your liquor boyle, and throw your Pudding in, being tyed in a faire cloth: when it is boyled enough cut it in the middell, and so serve it in” (37). To today’s cook, this sort of description would be nearly impossible to translate successfully. Murrell’s recipe might seem like an enigma to contemporary audiences, but was considered useful in the 17th century. In the early days of the printing press, print recipes echoed their manuscript or oral counterparts, which were transmitted originally between professional cooks and literate household servants. Before mass publication of cookbooks revolutionized the discourse centuries later, recipes were written with a specific, skilled audience in mind. Cookery discourse, prior to the 19th century, was primarily a professional one. In later years, when cooking was done more by the woman of the house and less by servant help, the recipe author(s) could assume a specific skill set of its readers. Recipes assumed a working knowledge of ingredients, of common kitchen tools, and of common cooking procedures. Most recipes never
ventured far from their origin, and were handed down through generations of families and to neighbors and friends. As Steinberg explains, regarding a vague recipe for bread: “[T]he lack of precise amounts of flour needed implies the writer believed her readers would be experienced enough in bread making to know how much was ‘enough’” (29). Thus, estimated or relative measurements in early print recipes were common, such as “some stale bread” (found in an 1879 recipe), a “penny-loaf” of bread (1742), or just “Bread” (1615). Some relative measurements are highly localized, such as an 1898 description of how much sugar to include in the bread pudding: “shovel & a quarter sugar (size of our shovel)” (qtd. in Steinberg 21). The author of this manuscript recipe assumed only a localized audience would make this recipe, as the reader would have to know how large the shovel in question was and how to use it as a measuring device. Because of the recipe’s localized roots, early print recipes also assumed an audience that knew how to cook.

As industrialization urged America westward, families were split from their roots and young married women often had the task of learning how to cook on their own. Away from their families, these women were unable to apprentice to their mothers or grandmothers in the kitchen. Furthermore, the changing economy and social structure meant that fewer households could keep servant help, and women who had been used to telling a servant what to make for dinner were suddenly forced to learn how to do it on their own. Such social forces motivated a cooking reform movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, which effected change in recipe writing. Print recipes prior to the reform were written exclusively in narrative format, weaving
the ingredients into the process.

**Figure 1 (Tyree 390)**

An 1879 bread pudding recipe (figure 1) shows the one-paragraph narrative format and the estimated measurements ("some stale bread," "light layer of brown sugar") (390). The reform movement standardized measurements, so recipes appear more like scientific formulas. Fannie Farmer’s *Boston Cooking School Cook-Book* (1896) (figure 2) includes a recipe for bread pudding which resembles the format we see today, with specific measurements using standardized cups and teaspoons. With this scientific level of precision, cookbook reformers revised recipes to be used for educational purposes, as they believed women could learn how to cook by following precise lists of ingredients and instructions.

**Figure 2 (Farmer 330)**
An excellent example of “making do” is found in Isabel Ely Lord’s 1924 cookbook recipe for the dish, which emphasizes the infinite varieties available for bread pudding. Noting that “Almost every family has a favorite way of making it,” the recipe invites revision as it provides a series of choices, from what type of bread (crumbs or bits) to baking method (bake or steam), serving temperature (hot or cold) and serving method (with or without sauce; sauces such as Hard sauce, cream, “any creamy sauce,” meringue, “Apple Foam,” or marshmallows). Indeed, Lord is correct when she informs the reader that “The variations are innumerable,” and then proceeds to list nearly twenty different variations of the pudding, usually involving additional ingredients such as bananas or raisins. Betty Crocker’s 1950 recipe for bread pudding takes the precision a bit further, describing for the first time the size of the casserole needed for the dish (1 ½ quart, 7 ½ inches). Betty Crocker is also one of the first to include a master recipe (here called a “key” recipe) and variations. This recipe demonstrates the formulaic simplicity of the reformed recipe: with just a few specific alterations variations can be plugged in to the master recipe.

At this point in recipe history, the ingredients retain their standardized measurements and move on to other sorts of description. Adjectivals are used extensively to describe the type and form of each ingredient. The 1960 edition of the Better Homes and Gardens New Cook Book calls not just for “eggs,” as past versions of the pudding had, but ones which are “slightly beaten” (154). The cinnamon is described as “ground,” and the bread is specified as “1-inch day-old bread cubes.” A 1970 Better Homes and Gardens Dessert Cook Book recipe specifies “seedless raisins, dark or light” (100). This is a radical departure from early recipes that just called for “Bread” or “some raisins.”

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1 This is likely due to increased production of standardized casserole dishes at the time. Recipes often reflect the availability of consumer products, as with the increase of standardized measurements in recipes during the Victorian era, which was also due to the production of the first measuring cups and spoons.
In the past couple of decades, there has been a return to understanding the basic chemical processes of cookery, as the reform movement did a century ago. Many print recipes today include notes to explain how a process works, or why a certain ingredient is necessary. For example, *The How-To Book of Healthy Cooking* (1995) explains the process of pudding, noting that “puddings need eggs to help them set. [. . .] Bake the pudding in a water bath, or ‘bain-marie,’ to keep it from cooking too fast and curdling” (326). A “cooking tip” sidebar reminds readers to “Check the water in the bain-marie during cooking and fill up as necessary to prevent it from boiling away” (327). This is a major revision from earlier recipes which only narrated the immediate process of baking the pudding, not going into detail about why certain ingredients or procedures were necessary or providing reminders or tips.

These findings show that recipes over time have been used for different purposes. Originally, print recipes resembled their handwritten and verbal counterparts, as conversational narratives of cooking. These versions focused on the immediate, fleeting act of cooking, describing (in vague terms) the performance to be done. As time went on and needs changed, recipes were revised to describe the complete process, step by step. Nothing is left out of this type of recipe—from standardized measurements to adjectivals describing the type and form of the ingredients, to explanations concerning the use of eggs and tips for the best water bath—the process from one’s first step into the kitchen to setting the pudding on the table are chronicled and listed and sidebarred and narrated. This makes contemporary recipes not only more precise and replicable but also easier to follow, no matter what cooking skill level a person has. This type of recipe is concerned with addressing beginning audiences, particularly to bring new cooks to the kitchen and make them love cooking. Cookbooks such as *Joy* or Betty Crocker, which attempt to be comprehensive, take cookery education as a main purpose, assuming the reader is
not only using their cookbook for the recipes, but is also using it for how to make them. It reflects a luxury of contemporary society: women can now choose to cook or not to cook, and are not limited to the domestic space. Recipes like these attempt to interest potential cooks and entice them to choose cooking.

Another major change in recipe writing involved the development of a visual structure of recipes. Early printed recipes paid little attention to the advantages of print, keeping with a block paragraph structure. Up to and including the Victorian-era reform movement, print recipes were written in a single paragraph, integrating the ingredients and process description together in a single unit. This 1615 recipe (figure 3) includes only basic functions of typography, such as font styles, and remains in a single paragraph unit. The recipe does not have a structure different from any other printed text, although it functions differently. A 1913 recipe from Mary E.
Williams and Katharine Rolston Fisher’s *Elements of the Theory and Practice of Cookery* (figure 4) demonstrate the spatial structures that began to be implemented during the reform movement.

**Bread-pudding Recipes**

**Plain Bread Pudding**

Scalded milk, 1 quart. Stale bread crumbs without crust, or grated or rubbed, 2 cupfuls,
Sugar, \( \frac{1}{2} \) cupful. 
Eggs, 2. 
Salt, \( \frac{1}{4} \) teaspoonful. Dried crumbs, 1 cupful.

Beat the eggs slightly; beat into them the sugar and add the milk, spice, and salt. When the crumbs become soft, turn into a buttered dish, and bake until a knife inserted in the pudding comes out clean.

**Variations of Bread Pudding.** — 1. Add one cupful of boiled raisins, citron, and currants mixed.

2. Separate the eggs, add only the yolks to the pudding. Beat the whites stiff; beat into them two and a half tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar, spread them roughly over the pudding, and return it to the oven for two minutes, or till a delicate brown.

3. **Queen of puddings.** — Like variation 2, except omit spice, flavor with one and a half tablespoonfuls of lemon juice and spread it over with jam or jelly before covering it with meringue.

Figure 4 (Williams and Fisher 273-274)

At least three different font styles or sizes are implemented in this recipe to denote section headings and units of text. The two-column format for ingredient lists was also common (see also figure 2) at this time, as the reform movement separated the ingredients from the main
process narrative. The 1913 recipe also takes advantage of boldface and italicized text to emphasize certain points and headings. In this way, recipes began to function more and more as visual texts. John Trimbur, in his article “Delivering the Message,” argues for typography as integral in the production of rhetoric. He explains how print text “calls attention to how the look of the page communicates meaning by treating text as a visual element that can be combined with images and other non-verbal forms to produce a unit of discourse” (267). Since “one cannot speak a capital letter” (qtd. in Trimbur 262), the visual structure of a recipe functions as a sign. In *Literacy in the New Media Age*, Gunther Kress argues that textual layout affects the deeper meaning of the text: “The ‘force’ and the ‘feel’ of the text have changed. It has become more insistent, more urgent, and more official. It is now about presenting information” (16). Thus, the printed recipe communicates its message in two ways, via an integration of linguistic and visual properties.

![Cocoanut Bread Pudding](image)

**Figure 5 (Heseltine and Dow 406)**

Heseltine and Dow’s 1933 recipe for “cocoanut” (sic) bread pudding (figure 5) illustrates the print recipe’s progress towards interactive reading. A cursory look at the recipe itself shows a similar typographic spatial structure as earlier, with a boldface capitalized title, smaller font
two-column ingredient list, and single paragraph narrative of the method, interspersed with parentheses and boldface subheadings. The last sentence of the main recipe, “Serve with Hard Sauce (page 225)” indicates a referencing system within the text, asking the reader to flip back to that page to find that related recipe (406). Later, another recipe is also referenced (“meringue (page 441”). These connections parallel those found in digital hypertext, where a hyperlink sends the reader to a different but related text, a process which Bolter in *Writing Space* calls “layered writing and reading,” which “becomes a network of interconnected writings” (27). These recipe references work as printed hypertext, which work to integrate the bread pudding recipe more concretely within the context of the entire book (Landow 4). In effect, this asks the recipe reader to become active and make those referenced connections.

The layout of the entire recipe page becomes more significant in recent decades as cookbooks have been published in larger sizes, enabling a wider array of visual designs. Early cookbooks looked just like other printed books, having equal size, binding, and length. More recent cookbooks have been engineered especially for their practical use in the kitchen, more frequently including spiral or ring binding which will lie flat on a countertop (figure 6). *Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book* (1950) was revolutionary in its layout of the master recipe in a double column, straight across the page, and the variation recipes in single columns underneath and related recipes nearby. This is shown in her “Old-Fashioned Bread Pudding” recipe (figure 7). The layout’s use of icons (such as the key), font sizes, brackets, italics and boldface, as well as decorative line drawings demonstrate an effective use of space. Every bit of space is used for a purpose, from the page heading denoting the “Bread Crumb” subsection of the “DESSERTS” chapter, to the horizontal rules dividing the master recipe from the related recipes. This recipe layout is the opposite of the 1615 recipe, as the Betty Crocker version presents the method at the
same time as the ingredients, but does so in a particular sort of listed/bracketed format. A single-column version of the same format can be seen in the recipe for Spiced Crumb Pudding further down the page. *Joy of Cooking* also has a unique recipe structure (figure 8), here with its recipe for bread pudding. The narrative and list components still exist, but now they are fully integrated into a single unit, listing ingredients using boldface, indented lines only when called for during the process of the recipe. Both of these layouts are highly referential, establishing connections like hypertext at different places on the same page. Thus, the entire page is, as Kress explains, organized by a logic of the visual as it consists of blocks of text, arranged visually, which function in particular ways (*Literacy* 136).

![Figure 6: *The Boston Cooking School Cook Book* (1896) (left) and *Better Homes and Gardens New Cook Book* (2006) (right)](image-url)
BREAD CRUMB DESSERTS

OLD-FASHIONED BREAD PUDDING (¼ Recipe) Rich, crusty, raisin-filled.

Heat to scalding.................................2 cups milk
Pour over.........................................4 cups coarse bread crumbs
Cool and add.....................................1⅛ cup butter, melted
Pour into buttered 1½-qt. casserole (7½”). Bake until silver knife inserted in pudding comes out clean. Serve warm, with or without Hard Sauce or cream.

CUSTARD BREAD PUDDING
Follow 2 recipe above—except increase milk to 4 cups; use only 2 cups bread crumbs. Omit raisins.

CHOCOLATE BREAD PUDDING
Follow 2 recipe above—and melt 2 sq. unsweetened chocolate (2 oz.) in the milk. Flavor with vanilla or cinnamon. (Instead of chocolate, ½ cup cocoa may be blended with the sugar.)

All you have to do...

To make old-time QUEEN'S PUDDING: spread freshly baked bread pudding with tart jelly. Cover with meringue. Lightly brown in oven.

★ SPICED CRUMB PUDDING
Combine . . .
1 cup soft bread crumbs
1 cup buttermilk
Mix together thoroughly . . .
3 tbsp. butter
1 cup brown sugar
2 tbsp. molasses
Stir in the bread mixture.
Sift together and stir in . . .
½ cup sifted GOLD MEDAL Flour
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. soda
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. cloves
Blend in . . .
¼ cup raisins, cut-up
Pour into greased 10x6x2” baking dish. Bake. Serve hot with Satin Sauce.
TEMPERATURE: 350° (mod. oven).
TIME: Bake 20 to 25 min.
AMOUNT: 6 to 8 servings.

DANISH APPLE CAKE
Jean Hersholt's favorite for smorgasbords. Looks like pie. Refreshing fresh applesauce flavor with rich butter crumbs.

Make 3 cups thick tart applesauce.
Sauté gently until evenly browned . . .
2 cups fine dry bread or zwieback crumbs in . . .
3¼ cup butter or margarine
Line bottom of deep 9” pie pan with crumbs. Spread ¾ of sauce over crumbs. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Add 2 more alternate layers sauce and cinnamon-sprinkled crumbs (crumbs on top). Bake. Serve hot or cold with whipped cream garnished with bits of jelly.
TEMPERATURE: 325° (slow mod. oven).
TIME: Bake 30 min.
AMOUNT: 10 servings.

QUICK BROWN BETTY
Delicious version of old favorite.
Mix together lightly in 10x6x2” baking dish
3 cups chopped tart apples
1⅛ cups coarse bread crumbs
1¼ cup butter or margarine, melted
1 cup brown sugar
Sprinkle with . . .
½ tsp. cinnamon or nutmeg
Pour over the top . . .
½ cup water
Bake. Serve warm with cream or Hard Sauce.
TEMPERATURE: 325° (slow mod. oven).
TIME: Bake 45 to 50 min.
AMOUNT: 6 servings.

BLUSHING BETTY
Follow recipe directly above—except use diced unpeeled pink rhubarb instead of apples, white sugar instead of brown, omit water.

Figure 7 (Betty Crocker's Picture 220)
Contemporary recipes, unsurprisingly, integrate more images into the recipe. Before the advent of photography, and before photographs could be replicated in print, engravings or drawings were used. Drawings were most often used to demonstrate a method or show a diagram (such as a diagram of the cuts of meat from a cow). This practical use of drawings in cookbooks has been carried over to some extent in contemporary cookbooks, although more and more are relying on photographic representations. One exception is *Cook’s Illustrated* magazine,
which relies exclusively on drawings to demonstrate a cooking method or illustrate an ingredient. However, the magazine’s choice to use drawings rather than photographs is a rhetorical one, as the writers attempt to align their work with science and precision, much like the cookery reform movement of the Victorian era.² For most recent cookbooks, photographs are used rather than drawings in a variety of ways. Most often, a photograph illustrates the finished product, as in the 2005 update of the Betty Crocker Cookbook (figure 9). In this recipe for bread pudding, the final product is shown on a plate, ready to eat. These “glamour shots” of food are meant to advertise the recipe and attract the reader, images foodie bloggers name as “gastroporn” (DeSolier, “Cookery Books” 1). Flipping through a book full of pictures like these is a favorite pastime of many, which has led to a different sort of cookbook use—as entertaining reading. The layout of cookbooks like these is eye-pleasing and serves a dual purpose of practicality and entertainment.

Photographic images are used to illustrate not just the dish itself, but also the ingredients and methods as well. In this recipe for bread pudding from Joachim’s A Man, A Can, A Microwave (2004) (figure 10) each ingredient is pictured: a can of Hershey’s chocolate syrup, Pepperidge Farm bread, eggs, and a half gallon jug of milk. While the printed text that captions the photographs does not name the food brand, the visuals chosen are significant since they function as effective advertisements for the label. The spatial arrangement of the visuals indicates their relation to each other, as they are placed vertically with plus signs and an equals bar between each ingredient and the picture of the finished product. The process is explained in more detail in the sidebar to the right, but the layout of the page privileges the images. This

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² Cook’s Illustrated aligns their work with science by frequently including expert (nutritionist or food scientist) advice in their articles, and by constructing their kitchen space as a lab for experimentation as they discover the “perfect” or “fool-proof” recipe. Most often their recipes and articles include detailed explanations as to why a recipe works, or how ingredients interact, done in an attempt to explore the science behind everyday recipes.
reliance on informational visuals aligns the recipe with television cooking shows that put more emphasis on “showing” rather than “telling.”

Figure 9 (Betty Crocker Cookbook 204)
Chocolate Bread Pudding

HOW TO MAKE IT: If the bread crusts are thick, cut them off. Stack the bread, cut it into bite-size squares, and dump the squares into a 1½ quart microwave-safe dish (such as an 8” x 8” dish). In a medium bowl, beat the eggs, then mix in everything else. Pour the egg mixture over the bread, squashing the bread with a spoon so it gets completely soaked. Nuke on medium power for 10 to 12 minutes, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out almost clean (the edges will be a little firmer than the center). Set aside for 2 minutes—the still-hot pudding will finish cooking as it sits there.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS.

Per serving: 240 calories, 5 g fat (19% of calories), 2 g saturated fat, 8 g protein, 40 g carbs, 1 g fiber, 203 mg sodium

Extra credit: Top with a few squirts of canned light whipped cream.

It won’t go to waste: Save the leftover canned chocolate syrup to make Hot Mocha Dunk (page 40) or Liquid Bliss (page 41).

1/2 cup canned chocolate syrup

5 slices bread (white, raisin, or oatmeal)

3 eggs

2 cups 1% milk

Also: 1/4 cup packed brown sugar, 1/2 tsp vanilla extract, 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

Figure 10 (Joachim 39)
Perhaps the most striking use of photography remediating the recipe format is in a recipe from the blog ThePioneerWoman.com. On her welcome page, the creator of the blog explains that “I’m a desperate housewife. I live in the country. I channel Lucille Ball and Scarlett O’Hara. Welcome to my frontier!” She is a photographer/country wife who likes to cook, and integrates her identities into the recipe texts of her blog. In this recipe for bread pudding, the entry begins with an appetizing close-up photo of the finished pudding. She includes a few paragraphs on her likes and dislikes of the food in order to introduce the process, situating it in a narrative context. Each step in the process is photographed and captioned, from pictures of each step.
ingredient to every visual change that occurs while making the recipe (figure 11). As with television, this photo-recipe privileges the image over language.³

The photo-recipe format demonstrates the process of remediation from early printed recipes to today. As this chronology shows, the recipe text has come almost full circle: from its beginnings out of an oral tradition, the recipe has been remediated via print to return almost entirely to its oral roots, as it emphasizes the visual properties of text and image over the recipe’s linguistic properties. These varied recipe formats demonstrate the gendered discourse community’s use of available means, of “making do” in their own kitchens, families, and communities; with their own talents, experience, or handicaps; and for their own needs, wants, and desires. The women who constitute this discourse community work with a broader notion of literacy: as these recipes demonstrate, literacy is not reducible to linguistic elements. In turn, neither is cooking. Certeau and Giard characterize the discourse as consisting of “multifaceted activities” (157) which they name as “doing-cooking.” To Certeau and Giard,

‘doing-cooking’ is the medium for a basic, humble, and persistent practice that is repeated in time and space, rooted in the fabric of relationships to others and to one’s self, marked by the ‘family saga’ and the history of each, bound to childhood memory just like rhythms and seasons.” (157)

The practice of “doing-cooking,” then, is a combination of physical action and memory, of past experience and literate knowledge, of sights and smells and tastes and feeling. In this context, literacy has a broader scope.

³ This is not a new format, as the best-selling Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book (1950) also included many photographs to represent the recipe process. Karal Ann Marling observes that the layout of the Cook Book and its emphasis on visual over text “link the enterprise to the television set which, by 1950, was as much a desirable feature of the suburban home as the washer, the dryer, the electric range, or the General Mills pop-up toaster” (214).
Bread pudding has been, over the centuries, reinterpreted to reflect and respond to changes in society. As society has evolved, so have the recipes. Their basic functions—of “making do,” of thrift and saving, change to reflect different ideas of economy. The earliest recipes for bread pudding assumed the cook would be using a leftover, stale loaf, but the Joachim recipe assumes the cook will purchase a fresh loaf (and a Pepperidge Farm specialty loaf at that). The later recipes all seem to assume the cook will buy the ingredients to make the recipe, rather than recycling leftover bread. This also reflects the new idea of cooking not as a chore, but as a choice—a pastime, a hobby, a novelty skill. In fact, the entire concept of “making do” has largely changed into a discourse of entertainment. Nowadays, bread pudding is made not to use up stale bread, but instead to have fun trying out a quaint old recipe. Even so, the discourse of thrift and economy still exists, though now to a minimal extent. Interventions into the discourse community have altered the discourse of cooking radically from even a few decades ago. Even with these changes, all recipes exist as alternative modes of discourse no matter their notion of economy.

Using the “Available Means”: Women’s Communities and Alternative Discourses

Women’s communities, as discussed in Chapter 1, prefer alternative methods of communication. Since they have existed in an undervalued space—the domestic—women’s communities seek to use modes of communication alternative to dominant forms. Just like needlework, journaling, and dress, cooking is an alternative mode of communication, one which constructs rhetoric via the available means. Using this mode, women are encouraged to be active participants in their rhetoric creation, as cooking calls for a dynamic response. Cooking names action, thus any participation in the discourse must be active and engaged. It is difficult and likely impossible to passively follow a recipe. Even with the extent to which recipes have been
standardized, a reader must engage in multimodal literacies in order to understand what actions must be done: it fulfills Anne Ruggles Gere’s definition of clubwomen’s practices as “a more symmetrical literacy,” as it defines literacies not only in linguistic terms, but also aural, visual, and spatial as well (24). As a subversive coding practice, women’s use of remediation becomes a method for them to gain agency within the domestic space. These alternative methods of communication fostered in women’s communities have led to a unique, effective rhetorical practice that allows women to validate their own existence as experts in domesticity, and to name themselves as active participants in literate practice. This creation of agency is vital, particularly as women have been historically portrayed as passive, unwitting receivers of action. In reality, women have constructed their own agency via their alternative rhetorical practices, allowing themselves to become masters of their craft. I have only begun to explore this concept here, and as I go further in the dissertation I will address this point more.

Constructing Broader Literacies: Physical vs. Mental

Establishing literacy as a broader concept than just writing is not new, as many scholars have argued against narrow definitions of literacy. John Trimbur explains that the alphabetic literacy narrative founded perceptions about literacy, as it privileges writing as literacy by ignoring any visual properties, thus aligning writing with speech (261-2). The myth of alphabetic literacy ignores the reality that writing is ultimately visual: it is a visual coding system which communicates through non-phonetic elements such as spacing, punctuation, and frames (262). Trimbur names writing as “a typographical and rhetorical system of sign-making” (262). W.J.T. Mitchell characterizes the interaction between the visual and verbal when he explains that
Writing is thus the medium in which the interaction of image and text, pictorial and verbal expression, [...] seems to be a literal possibility. Writing makes language (in the literal sense) visible (in the literal sense); it is [...] not just a supplement to speech, but a ‘sister art’ to the spoken word, an art of both language and vision.” (113)

Rather than assuming that writing has different and separate properties from other modes, writing in fact engages in multiple modes of communication, both verbal and visual. Challenging the alphabetic literacy narrative’s distinction between visual and verbal, Maureen Daly Goggin argues that “written verbal rhetoric is visual rhetoric” (88).

Lester Faigley, in “Material Literacy and Visual Design,” reminds us of the materiality of writing. He notes that the alphabetic literacy narrative is paradoxical, claiming a “cognitive divide between oral and visual cultures,” as it overlooks the material tools used for writing and the visual cognition of the practice (180). Jack Selzer shows this material aspect of rhetoric when he notes that “language and rhetoric have a persistent material aspect that demands acknowledgement, and material realities often (if not always) contain a rhetorical dimension that deserves attention: for language is not the only medium or material that speaks” (8). Indeed, rhetoric “acts on the whole person—body as well as mind” (Blair, Carole 46). This bodily aspect to rhetoric is critical to understanding cookery discourse, as the physical is one of the many modes involved in its communication processes.

Hugh Blair, in his essay on “Taste,” deals with these same issues when he asks if taste is an “internal sense, or [...] an exertion of reason?” (10) Just as Blair struggles with this question of the aesthetic as physically or mentally produced, art historian Martin Jay claims that the question is an either/or fallacy. Jay argues through his history of aesthetic response that over
time, the type of response has become increasingly “cerebral” and abstract, ignoring the physical experience (15). Jay explains that “aesthetic experience, in short, cannot be entirely freed from a consideration of which objects and events may justifiably evoke it” (19). Similarly, Blair comes to the conclusion that taste comes from a balance of sense and reason, as aesthetic response is learned through practice and gaining knowledge which “holds both in our bodily, and in our mental powers” (12). Blair provides an example from a person who enjoys the *Aeneid*: the person finds pleasure internally, while also having that pleasure explained by knowledge (reason) (13). Similarly, cookery discourse involves both the body and the mind, as physical actions as well as knowledge are integral. In this way, cookery discourse—and all recipe texts—are multimodal practices.

While multimodal literacies have been more widely discussed since the birth of new media, multimodal texts are not exclusive to the genre. In fact, Gunther Kress explains that spatial navigation issues have always been a factor in literacy, and have not existed only since the Windows desktop (*Literacy* 2). He notes that we have always been conscious of a “reading path,” a sort of spatial arrangement of text and image that determines the mode and purpose of reading (3-4). Whether the path has been linear—as in reading a novel—or open like navigating a USA Today infographic, each type of reading is determined by the arrangement of text or image on a page.

New media, to Kress, is unique because it “facilitates, supports, and intensifies” the preference for the visual mode above other modes (*Literacy* 5). He contrasts new media texts with print texts, showing the literacy required for each. He explains that print forces the reader into one-way communication with the text, but the dynamic nature of new media texts allow dialogue, which promises for greater democracy—one of the many early naïve hopes of the
medium (6). Clearly, new media texts are categorically different from print in many ways. When considering print texts within cookery discourse (recipes), however, this sub-genre of print is in fact quite similar to new media.

In fact, the birth of new media has allowed a closer inspection of our assumptions about print texts. New media highlights the parallels between itself and print and demonstrates the ways in which all texts can be multimodal. Speaking of the recent change in perceptions about multimodal literacies, Kress and Theo VanLeeuwen note that “the multimodality of written texts has, by and large, been ignored whether in educational contexts, in linguistic theorizing or in popular common sense. Today, in the age of ‘multimedia,’ it can suddenly be perceived again” (39). To Kress and Carey Jewitt, the act of writing is a “multimodal practice that draws on visual and actional modes” (2). They argue that there is no monomodal communication, which challenges the assumption that speech and writing are sufficient for learning. Each mode is partial in relation to the whole of the meaning. Language, for Kress and Jewitt, is just one mode of many (2). Multimodality focuses on modal resources that are brought into meaning-making (5). Similarly, the New London Group argues that “all meaning-making is multimodal” (29). To explain children’s path to literacy, Kress argues that all signs and messages are always multimodal in his book *Before Writing* (10). Thus multimodal texts are not exclusive to new media.

**Multimodal Recipes and the Active Reader**

Recipes, from the 1615 example of bread pudding to the photo-recipe version currently online, are all multimodal texts. No matter the medium used—orally given across a kitchen table, scribbled on a cocktail napkin, typed onto an index card, printed in a newspaper, book, or magazine, or Googled online: because of the interaction between body, experience, knowledge,
and memory, multimodal literacies are needed. As the recipe has been remediated over time to account for changes in history, society, and technology, it has consistently remained multimodal. From the very first oral recipe, these texts have relied on an interaction between the visual and verbal modes to be communicated. The process of food preparation is complex, relying on multiple external and internal factors, as Certeau and Giard explain:

By carefully following the same recipe, two experienced cooks will obtain different results because other elements intervene in the preparation: a personal touch, the knowledge or ignorance of tiny secret practices [...], an entire relationship to things that the recipe does not codify and hardly clarifies, and whose manner differs from one individual to another because it is often rooted in a family or regional oral tradition.” (201)

In the same way that cooking requires substitutions for whatever is on hand in the kitchen, the women of this discourse community have “made do” with rhetorical modes, applying whatever was on hand to communicate what was needed. Women have sought the available means of communication throughout history in order to construct their unique rhetorical practice and establish themselves as experts in the kitchen.

Although people complain that the increase in new media texts has caused us to read less, in fact we are not reading less, but if we listen to Kress, we are reading differently (Literacy 138). Because the reading space is now on the screen rather than on the page, the move from page to screen changes the traditional notions of reading, as Jewitt argues. For Jewitt, this change alters reading from interpretation work to design work (187), which puts equal weight on visual and linguistic aspects of the text, as demonstrated in the earlier recipe examples. The New London Group, a community of new media scholars of which both Kress and Jewitt are
members, similarly argues for thinking about literacy as design. The design concept is important because it emphasizes the conscious construction of meaning-making and posits an active reader (Kress, *Literacy* 152). Design focuses not on the “what” of reading, but on the “how” (Kress and Jewitt 17). Perhaps most importantly, the concept of reading as design attempts to accurately describe the way in which image and writing work together in multimodal texts (Kress, *Literacy* 154). This type of literacy practice is not new, but now has access to a language first developed by new media scholars. Even as recipes have always been multimodal, they have not been able to be discussed in this fashion, as the technical language has not existed previously.

Kress explains the design concept of literacy through examples of new media texts, since the screen is reshaping the left-right, top-down organization of the printed page. Screen design is now dominating print layout (*Literacy* 6, 21). New media texts have put greater emphasis on the visual aspects of texts, which help to inform multimodal literacies. Kress observes that layout is constructed by “blocks,” which is an interrelationship between the modes of image and text (or “imagetext” as Mitchell calls it (Bolter and Grusin 39)) (136). These blocks are then arranged, and are defined not by content but by function (137). For instance, images are often grouped with captions, and blocks of text can be illustrated by a chart or a graph. These blocks enable Kress to observe that “writing is becoming ‘assembly according to designs’ in ways which are overt, and much more far-reaching, than they were previously” (6). As in the 1950 Betty Crocker recipe for bread pudding, the page is clearly assembled according to visual properties, with blocks constructing the page layout. These blocks include the introduction (title and opening blurb), the ingredient list, the method, the additional information, and the variation options. From observations of the entire cookbook, it is apparent the creators designed the book visually according to block arrangement.
Kress describes how one reads a multimodal text, which is again based in the concept of design. The main way one reads is called modal scanning, when a reader scans the text for the various elements to see which is dominant and interprets how each are related (Literacy 159). Recognizing the relationships between modes is important, as the layout impacts the deeper meaning of the text (16). As a reader of these texts, we can group parts of texts into “blocks” of design, and label these blocks by the function they play in the text or the relationship they have with the other blocks. For example, in the earlier examples of recipes that were published during the reform movement, the spatial arrangement of blocks into a familiar design of title-ingredients-method demonstrates how vital visual design is to the effective communication of the text. Each aspect of each design block is equally important, from word to letter to image to size and placement, and all are considered to impact the meaning of the text (136-7, 66). As compared to the single-paragraph narrative structure of early print recipes, the visual blocks of text work together to represent the interactive process of cooking. Cookery discourse is not a recounting of a past event, a form which early narrative recipes used; instead, the discourse involves a wide variety of modes interacting with each other and with the reader to communicate its message and involve the reader in the experience of the text. Therefore, the multimodal reader is active, social, and design-oriented—all literacies which have not been explored in depth until the birth of new media.

Like new media texts, reading recipes requires an active, social model of reading, where the reader/viewer determines his or her own route through the text (Jewitt 187). Speaking of new media texts, Kress describes the reading process as a reader imposing their order on a text. This perceived power which the reader has in the process resembles more contemporary theories of reading, mentioned in a previous section. Ultimately, reading is a process of sign-making,
where the reader doesn’t just interpret the sign but reconstructs the sign him or herself, in response to their own experience and social expectations (*Literacy* 144). Kress and Jewitt describe the process: “hypotheses people make about signs they receive are based on their interests, just as much as they are in the outward making of the sign” (13). Since multimodal texts often have many points of entry, the reader is encouraged to establish their own reading path through the text, which Kress describes as “(relatively) open” (*Literacy* 4). The goal of new media in general, and hypertext in particular, is to make the reader a producer of text (Landow 4). This is seen in the prevalence of user-generated “Web 2.0” technologies like YouTube, Google Docs, and MySpace. The amount of freedom granted to the reader of these texts (“freedom” being relative to more traditional print-based texts) asks the reader to participate in the text’s own construction and design. This is analogous to a cookbook’s tendency to include “notes” pages in the back for a woman’s own recipes and tips. Margins are also made larger than in other print text layouts, to encourage modification. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, recipe authors will often suggest alternatives or modifications according to the reader’s desires, allowing the reader freedom to choose and substitute at will. In Rachael Ray’s cookbook *365: No Repeats*, two checkboxes are included to the side of each recipe, labeled “Try This Later” and “It’s A Keeper,” assuming the reader will evaluate and code the recipes accordingly. In these ways, the woman reader can construct herself as co-author of the text and participate in the development and remediation of the recipes within.

**Conclusion**

Literary theorist Roland Barthes explains in *S/Z* that reading is not a reaction, it is a form of work (10). Instead of assuming a passive reader, Barthes and new media scholars argue that reading is an act, thus it requires the reader to interact with the text. This model of reading is
useful for analyzing cooking literacies, as recipes call for an act to be performed. The representation of the performance includes visual, aural, textual, linguistic and physical modes, working together with the reader, leading to a unique interactive process of reading. Similar to Umberto Eco’s theory of the “open” text, the recipe is at once complete and unfinished, needing interaction to communicate its message (49). In this way, all recipes are “open” texts, calling for perpetual revision and interpretation to shape its unique meaning for the reader. Therefore, the members of the cookery discourse community are active agents of meaning-making, gaining their agency through their interaction in the domestic space. Interaction with other women, with texts, and with their bodies will supply the remainder of this project, as I argue these women make meaning—and construct agency—by “making do.” These forms of interaction with the text require a variety of different modes of communication, thus the cookery text is multimodal, formed via interaction and remediation in various modes. As I will continue to explore in the following chapters, women use multimodal aspects of cookery discourse to their advantage, constructing a space for their own voice and expert status in the kitchen. In this way, remediation is a feminist practice. These women “make do” through using their multimodal literacies, actively establishing their authority as a cook. Remediation, whether it means substituting frozen vegetables for fresh or revising discursive practices, is found to be subversive, validating a woman’s existence within the domestic space.
CHAPTER III. SECOND COURSE: “FROM OUR BEST COOKS”: “COMMUNITY”

RHETORIC IN COMMUNITY COOKBOOKS

In the second course of this scholarly meal, I want to share a recipe with you. I haven’t given you a recipe yet, and it’s about time: sharing is at the heart of cooking. Many women feel that cooking itself is sharing, as food preparation is a sort of gift they give daily to their families. A housewife explains: “Cooking for others is a gracious thing to do—a giving of yourself. Cooking is sharing” (Meyers 133). Just as food nurtures, so does the preparer of the food. A poem found in a cookbook describes the daily bread as “Baked with love / an offering to my family,” which implies the sacred nature of the dinner table (Farmfolk Favorites). Mealtime, to many families, is sacred in particular for the time it allows people to come together and share their lives as they share their food. Much has already been written discussing the social nature of food itself, and the ways in which food brings people together as a culture and as a community. As Mary Douglas describes, “the taking of food has a social component” (61). Miriam Meyers describes mealtime as a time for community building, as it is a ritualistic form of sharing (12-13).

Just as food is shared between people, so are recipes. Before I forget to give it to you, here is my recipe:

Rosemary Meatballs

1 lb. ground beef

1 1/2 cups breadcrumbs

1 egg

1 garlic clove

1 tsp. fresh or 1/2 tsp. dried rosemary
1 Tb. lemon zest plus 1 Tb. lemon juice
salt and pepper
1 Tb. olive oil
4 cups tomato sauce

Combine first seven ingredients, form into meatballs (or patties). Cook in skillet 10-12 minutes. Pour in tomato sauce, bring to a boil, simmer 8-10 minutes. Serves 4.

Normally, I make the recipe without the tomato sauce, as that’s just a topping to serve if I make it in meatball format. Most often I’ve made them into hamburgers instead. It’s the rosemary that makes this taste so good; I highly recommend using fresh rosemary. Every summer I grow rosemary on my balcony, and this ends up being the perfect summer recipe. I hope you enjoy it at your next picnic.

As this demonstrates, the practice of recipe sharing is gift-like, as the sharer is giving an item of some importance and value to the receiver. Indeed, many homemade gifts of food—such as jams or jellies, quick breads or cookies—include the recipe in the package. Most shared recipes are treasured, as valuable as Great-Grandma’s pearls or Aunt Oril’s silver service. Family recipes are handed down through the generations, memorializing a mother, sister, or cousin. Friends, too, share recipes. Recipe sharing is not just giving of an item, but a giving of the self, as recipes are personal documents that attest to the expertise of the giver. To be able to share a recipe demonstrates a certain skill level attained in cooking, and to be asked for a recipe is often a compliment.

This is also true for recipes not original to the giver. In fact, even though I call the previous recipe “mine,” I found it in an issue of Everyday Food. Still, I call it “mine” since I discovered it on my own, using my expertise to evaluate if the recipe was worthwhile or not.
Recipe sharing is rarely mindful of copyright laws. The issue of copyright as applied to recipes even sounds strange, as recipes are often considered public domain or authorless. It seems to go against the principle of the recipe, as it implies sharing or exchanging. The word “recipe” is derived from the Latin root *recipere*, meaning “to receive.” Less than a century ago, what are now referred to as recipes were called “receipts,” a word more closely related to the concept of giving and receiving. In this way, sharing a recipe is a natural and necessary part of the discourse community of cooking. To Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster, recipes “exist in a perpetual state of exchange,” as they are always being shared, evaluated, and modified between women (6).

While food is often prepared by an individual alone in her kitchen, the process is communal. The kitchen has for centuries been a place of community, a site of exchange. Meyers explains: “as the communication center for the entire household, the kitchen serves as the locus of communication between mother and daughter” (37). Women’s relationships are created and maintained in the kitchen, the central domestic space of the home. My grandma and I always have long conversations in the kitchen, whether or not food preparation is occurring at the same time. The kitchen seems to be “our” space, a space in which women can congregate as a community to share their lives. Even though a kitchen is often home to only one woman, it is still a social space. While the woman may cook alone, she uses skills taught to her by her mother, recipes given to her by a neighbor, ingredients recommended to her by a friend. The communality of food and the dinner table may be enjoyed by everyone, but the social aspects of the kitchen and of food preparation are gendered.

At the heart of this community is multimodality. As explained in the previous chapter, this discourse community uses a variety of modes, “making do” with what means are available
and practical. This chapter will focus on a vital mode used by the discourse—social communication. Laura Schenone, in her book *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove*, chronicles these social aspects of women’s work. She explains that “cooking helps us find a secret language of women because it has been communicated entirely outside the usual accounts of history” (xv). Again, this gendered discourse is an alternative rhetorical practice, enabling women to find support and companionship in their domestic work. I identify this “secret language” as a discourse community relying on multimodal communication, in order to name cookery discourse as a vital component in the rhetorical tradition. In this chapter, and the ones that follow, I take a critical look at the modes essential to the discourse of cooking. In this chapter, I discuss cooking’s social aspects, as it is manifested in recipes and recipe collections, and identify this mode as part of the discourse’s multimodal nature.

As I write about community cookbooks in this chapter, I do acknowledge the limitations of my study in regards to diversity of the genre. All of the cookbooks I have used in this chapter to support my argument were chosen, in part, based on their availability and quality. As discussed in Chapter 1, availability is a major issue for the researcher. Cookbook archivist Jan Longone has noted in an interview that there are countless community cookbooks that only a few dozen people will ever see—for every cookbook listed in Margaret Cook’s exhaustive bibliography of community cookbooks, Longone can name at least five more missing from the list. In choosing the texts to use for this chapter, I read many cookbooks in the library archives and out of my own and my friends’ collections, selecting ones which I felt to be worthwhile and significant, while at the same time representative of the genre. Of course there are obvious limitations with this practice, as a wider variety and number of community cookbooks would help to establish a more accurate picture of the genre. The fact that most of my cookbook
choices come from the northwest Ohio region from religious groups composed of mostly white, middle class members. My attempt in my choice of these texts is not to be comprehensive—especially with this sort of text, that is impossible—but to begin to establish the rhetorical potential of the genre. In future scholarship, using a wider selection of texts from more diverse populations will be essential. Indeed, community cookbooks vary widely depending on region, ethnicity, and class, in the same way that social communication does. What follows is my analysis of a collection of community cookbooks from mainly white, Midwestern, middle-class groups. While it is not meant to be comprehensive, it is at least a useful starting point for further research.

Recipes as Social Narrative

Like Schenone’s identification of cookery discourse as a “secret language of women,” Susan J. Leonardi identifies a recipe as “an embedded discourse” which functions as a dialogue between giver and receiver (340). This dialogue, embedded within the structure of the recipe text, communicates much more than just how to prepare the food. Floyd and Forster explain that “the recipe, in its intertextuality, is also itself a narrative which can engage the reader or cook in a ‘conversation’ about culture and history in which the recipe and its context provide part of the text and the reader imagines (or even eats) the rest” (2). The recipe is simultaneously a set of instructions, a conversation, a story, a gift, and a historical document. It identifies a discourse that is much more complex than the food it describes: as I will argue, the shared recipe is a social text which perpetuates gendered discourse through its construction of women’s community. Linda Berzok explains that the concept of reciprocity, of giving and giving in return, binds members of a group together. She explains it in terms of similar women’s rhetorical practices, saying that the practice of recipe sharing “involved and defined a vast
community of middle-class women [. . .] all together in a kind of free-floating recipe quilting bee” (97). The practices surrounding the shared recipe are perhaps even more rhetorically significant than the content of the recipe itself, as these sharing practices work to not only build community but also to create a voice for women in public spaces.

This dialogic characteristic of recipes is echoed in another literary practice often engaged in by women: diary writing. As Cinthia Gannett explains in *Gender and the Journal*, women wrote in their diaries not merely to record events, but more to reflect and respond to their own thoughts. Diary writing allowed women to participate in a recursive dialogue with themselves, allowing them to construct their own sense of self and find meaning in their lives (136). In this way, women who kept diaries “found ways to inscribe themselves” in a positive way through textual practices (136). Just as the journal allowed for flexibility and response with one’s self, recipes encourage revision and dialogue with other women. These multimodal practices work to create an alternative discourse, allowing women to establish their own authority.

Recipes are written stories, whether intentional or not. Leonardi explores the narrative components of recipes, as she admits the telling of a story aids in getting readers to pay attention and remember the recipe or the advice (340). Anne Bower describes the recipe as a narrative, as it employs traditional literary devices within the context of the recipe. Elements such as setting, characters, and plot can be found through an analysis of the recipe’s context within a cookbook (“Cooking Up” 32). While Bower looks at the larger work of the cookbook to discover narrative properties, Colleen Cotter breaks down individual recipes linguistically to uncover their narrative components. She explains that “[a recipe’s] transmission, as with all forms of exchange, is grounded in social interaction” (71). From title to orientation to instructional action to evaluation to coda, Cotter uses Labov’s narrative framework to analyze a recipe. According to
Cotter, the title of a recipe functions as an abstract to briefly let the reader know what it is about. Orientation clauses are used—either in the printed text or sometimes handwritten by a previous cook in the margin—to explain what is needed to begin. Phrases that describe the history of the recipe, or the possible uses for it, are intended to orient and introduce the topic to the reader (59-60). Once the reader gets into the heart of the recipe, the instructions, they find the main plot which explains what happened. In line with the instructional clauses—the “what” of the story—are the evaluation clauses—the “how” of the story. These are used to identify helpful hints or suggestions. The coda concludes the narrative, which may explain serving methods or tell how many the dish will serve (63). In this way, the recipe itself is a narrative, describing a practice via social transmission.

As a social text, a recipe simultaneously constructs and perpetuates community. Through its transmission, as well as through its content, recipes function as the currency driving the discourse of cooking. Their content provides the subject of the community, and their methods of transmission build the gendered community into a unified whole. When I gave you my recipe for rosemary meatballs, the story of how to make the meatballs was the content of the communication practice. The way I gave the recipe to you—printed on paper with some explanation as to how I use the dish and where I got it—helps to build our relationship as a giver and a receiver. Even if you never make my recipe, the interaction that took place helped to perpetuate the discourse community. This discourse community is constructed daily via letters, emails, index cards, newspaper clippings, and verbal exchanges. Women use all the available means of persuasion to build a community via a multimodal network of textual and verbal interactions.
Women’s Talk and Community-Building

Women’s talk was the original method of recipe exchange. Its influence is still felt today in the discourse, as much of the act of recipe exchange parallels characteristics of women’s verbal interaction. One primary feature important to both women’s talk and the act of recipe exchange is relationship-building. Lyn Brown and Carol Gilligan explain in *Meeting at the Crossroads* that unlike men, women see themselves in relation to others: “an inner sense of connection with others is a central organizing feature in women’s development” (2-3). Jennifer Coates similarly finds that the primary function of women’s talk is to strengthen and affirm friendship and bonds (98). I use these theorists not to essentialize characteristics of women’s talk, but to aid in my construction of an argument that uses these diverse approaches to women’s communicative practices. I do this to establish a more in-depth understanding of women and their rhetorical choices, choices which are less biologically determined and instead are much more a reaction to their culture, in conjunction with the availability of literacy practices.

Printed cookbooks are prime examples of women’s relationship-building. Bower observes that “in the cookbooks too, one finds explicitly stated or subtly implied links to family, friends, and community” (“Cooking Up” 31). Most cookbooks, whether mass-marketed or sold regionally, illustrate women’s relationships with other women. From explaining where a woman got a recipe, to titling a recipe with the name of its creator (such as “Aunt Gertie’s Drop Biscuits”), recipes are full of relationship stories.

Coates also identifies a feature of women’s talk as multilayered. Often when women talk with each other, their talk builds on each other’s topics and comments, to implicitly support the other women in the group. Rather than having one woman talk at a time on a separate subject, women often talk together, building on each other’s points. Like women’s talk, recipes also
build upon themselves via revision, where in parentheses or in side notes to the reader the author explains her preferences or her substitutions to the given recipe. For example, at the end of a recipe for “Mystery Cake” by Marcelle Forsyth, Marion Webb notes “To the above [recipe], I add an icing made of powdered sugar mixed with lemon juice, and cut into cookie size. Very good!” (Heavenly Cookery 41). Coates asserts that “women’s frequent use of minimal responses and epistemic modal forms, their way of developing topics progressively, and their preference for all-together-now rather than one-at-a-time discussion, all serve the function of asserting joint activity and of consolidating friendship” (120). This textual “support” given in the side notes of the recipes aids in strengthening the relationships between the women of the discourse community.

This overall notion of cooperativeness, Coates argues, characterizes female interaction (95), which parallels the main features of recipe sharing. Cooperativeness, similar to Berzok’s earlier concept of reciprocity, implies a practice of sharing, a joint participation between women for a single cause. To reach their goal, the participants know they must work together to unify themselves as a community, building upon and supporting each other’s ideas. This practice exists most commonly in the exchange of recipes between women. From newspaper columns, to magazines, to website discussion forums, to plain old kitchen table talk, women continually perpetuate this community through the exchange of recipes. As always, the point of their exchange does not just deal with food. While food is the subject of the exchange, the practice itself is what is most important. As I will explore, women participate in the act of recipe exchange as a networking opportunity, as a way to build up their position in society and be acknowledged as an expert in their art. As curator Jan Longone argues, these women make up an “old girl network” which supported women professionally in their goal to achieve equal
rights. I discover this “old girl network” in the community cookbook, as this type of compiled cookbook best illustrates the networking and generally social practices inherent in all recipes, which work to build social community through textual interaction. This interaction is undeniably multimodal, as this network “makes do” with alternative forms of communication outside dominant discursive methods, in order to further and promote women’s social and political goals.

“This Novel Method”: Community Cookbooks

The community cookbook, also referred to as the compiled, fundraising or charitable cookbook, is a collection of recipes selected by one woman or a group usually for raising money. Women in the group would canvass the community, asking for recipe donations to their book. The community cookbook was then a representation of the foodways traditions of a particular community. A popular women’s publication from the mid-19th century to today, Laura Schenone asserts the community cookbook is “a greatly underestimated force in American history” (127). As a historical document, the community cookbook is fascinating to read, for it shows what women served on their tables, whether it was daily bread or the once-a-year Christmas pudding. The reader of a community cookbook can learn not only about the community as a whole, but about these individual women. Writing of community cookbooks, Bower notes that “these cookbooks tell stories [...] the discourse of the discrete textual elements and their juxtapositions contribute to the creation of these stories, which quietly or boldly tell of women’s lives and beliefs” (“Bound Together” 2). As a social document, relationships are mentioned throughout with references to other women’s friends and family members, immortalized in their recipes. The community is constructed in paper and ink, a symbolic

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4 While these texts are referred to by many different names, for the sake of consistency I choose to call them “community cookbooks,” in order to further my point that these texts constructed and perpetuated a community of women. They were created for fundraising and charitable purposes, but their true purpose was that of community construction.
unification of the traditions of each club member. Bower reminds us that “community cookbooks do more than reflect—they demonstrate participation of the women who wrote them in the creation of that society” (“Our Sisters’” 138). In these recipe collections, the women’s bonds are strengthened through food and domestic hints. Their participation in a public document discussing a domestic issue is rhetorically significant. As a rhetorical document, these women’s groups use all the available means to persuade readers to buy their cookbook—and buy into their existence as a community of women. Bower explains, “we consider the community cookbook as a text that enacts within it a group of women’s mental, theoretical, thoughtful positions or statements” (“Bound Together” 7). These women were more than a social group, and accomplished more than serving teas and potlucks—they found a way to validate their existence as women through their unification as a group. By focusing on a charitable cause, these women were able to help their own position as well as help the position of those for whom they raised funds. This multimodal practice—constructed in a private, hidden space—allowed women to use alternative rhetorical means to publicly accomplish their goals.

Schenone observes that “the scope, quirkiness, and simple beauty of these local creations are compelling” (127). What is most compelling is their studied success. Even today, organizations across the United States sell community cookbooks to raise money for their own group or for a charitable cause. Vanity presses now cater exclusively to printing community cookbooks, such as the popular Morris Press. Some community cookbooks are printed on a home computer and stapled together, some are bound at a print shop, and yet others are professionally published, complete with ring-bound cover and glossy color photographs. Many have hand-drawn pictures, and yet others have professional photographs. Most are thin volumes, but maximize the use of space so as to fit in several hundred recipes. Many include texts in
addition to recipes, such as poetry, song lyrics, reprinted newspaper articles, bible verses, and advertising. Of the innumerable organizations that publish cookbooks, some of the most common include ladies’ church organizations, the temperance movement, the suffrage movement, the Junior League, hospital organizations, ladies’ guilds, farmers’ unions, the Jaycees, school organizations, local sports teams, and so on. While these organizations have changed over the decades, as charitable causes have changed and men have been included in the groups, their impact has remained the same.

Built by Recipes: Women’s Organizations and the Community Cookbook

Women’s organizations only began to form around the mid-19th century, in a response to the stricter division of labor between men and women (Epstein 79). Before the industrial revolution, both men and women worked at home, in the fields and in the house. They had strong family bonds as a result of working together. Women, as they saw their husband and children all day, had a (limited) voice in family decisions, particularly financial matters. Once industry created jobs outside the home for men (but not for women), and once public schools were organized for children to attend class, women were left at home by themselves every day (DuBois 16). Barbara Epstein describes the struggle women had with these changes:

Nineteenth-century middle-class women were confined and constrained by domesticity and by the extreme imbalance of power between the sexes that domesticity created. Within that situation women did what they could [. . .] these women’s accomplishments and the limitations of these accomplishments helped to shape women’ lives in the 19th century and since. (9)

Women were dissatisfied with their lives and thus turned to other women for support and friendship (Schenone 126). They wished to have a voice in public issues, but were not allowed
to join men’s groups, so they chose to organize their own (Walters 46). The shared literacy practices these women engaged in by constructing their own groups had a transformative impact on their lives as well as the lives of those they sought to help, as Anne Ruggles Gere asserts in her book *Intimate Practices*. She explains that

> Clubwomen wanted different things, depending on their social locations, but for all clubwomen literacy connected with social and political struggles to transform the goals and conditions of their lives. The ideologies of literacy they adopted, in other words, included the belief that their own production and consumption of texts could change material circumstances, and they articulated their belief in their own capacity to effect transformations. (53)

The textual exchanges that came out of membership in these groups—speeches, pamphlets, banners, conferences, and protests, among others—strengthened women’s friendship bonds (Gere 8). As a result, this sort of literacy produced what Gere names as “intimacy” (39).

Using their intimate literacy practices, women’s groups were especially interested in supporting movements for human rights, such as abolitionism, as they could relate to the helplessness and futile struggles of the slaves (Epstein 6). They supported temperance, as they found women and children would suffer the most from the alcoholism of husbands and fathers. Women gained awareness of their place in the world through their encounters with these movements. These movements gave women a space to vent their frustrations about their injustices (106). Epstein says that “in large part within these movements, these women gained the ability to understand the world in new terms, from a standpoint that was centered in women’s experience and critical of society as it was” (6).
According to Charlotte Perkins Gilman, author and leading feminist of the mid-19th century, women’s clubs were “one of the most important sociological phenomena of the century—indeed, of all centuries, marking as it does the first timid steps towards social organization of these so long unsocialized members of our race” (qtd. in Rothman 64). Once women discovered the power of talking to other women, of bonding with them to achieve a greater cause, the club movement was born, forever changing women’s place in society. Gere notes that these women used an impersonal medium—public address—to construct intimate space (10). By working together for social change, clubwomen transformed their literacy and their lives. As Gilman observed, “the sense of human unity is growing daily among women” (“Old Girl Network”). These organizational bonds, Schenone argues, were more basic than just having similar interests and goals—these were “bonds of womanhood,” which she asserts “gave them strength to organize and extend their own influence into church groups, mutual aid organizations, charitable leagues, and women’s clubs that ultimately gave American women a stepping stone into public life and careers” (126-127). Women had a vision of political activity, of their voice being represented in government for change. Ellen DuBois explains their vision in this way: “driven by their relegation to a separate, domestic sphere, which had always been marked by inequality, especially their own, women were also drawn, like the men of their time, by the promise that political activity held for the creation of a truly democratic society” (16). They began with a goal to help their own organizations, then extended their reach to help others, and finally envisioned using their organizational power to change American society as a whole (“Old Girl Network”). These political visions led to many new laws passed involving women’s rights and children’s rights, culminating in the 1919 passage of the woman’s suffrage amendment to the Constitution. While the vast number and political power of these
organizations diminished after suffrage, changes had been made to society that could never be undone by any patriarchy.

Women’s clubs were masters of using multiple communicative modes to meet their goals. Instead of being limited by their lack of access to the public modes of communication, these clubwomen invented alternative modes which highlighted and reinforced their social organization. Since they shared recipes casually, they felt that publishing their best shared recipes would help to gain support, both moral and financial. The earliest recorded community cookbook was *A Poetical Cook Book*, written by Maria J. Moss in 1864 for the Philadelphia Sanitary Fair. This became a popular time for women to organize, as most women were alone with their children, waiting for their husbands to return home from war. From this time on, women’s organizations realized the potential power a collection of recipes could have for their organization, for their charity, and for their political future. These savvy women used their own available means—recipes—to reach out to other women and some men to gain validation in the public sphere and in politics as well. Jan Longone explains that “[clubwomen] concluded that many who had never thought of the message of the women’s rights movement came to hear of and consider it” as they represented themselves and their cause through the community cookbook. Observers called the selling of community cookbooks a “novel method” to raise money and awareness (“Old Girl Network”). Cookery discourse, as represented in these recipe collections, used multimodal techniques to become a political weapon.

Community cookbooks “provide, as have diaries, letters, meeting minutes, and church records, an exciting ‘challenge to [the] traditional sources’ previously used by historians and students of culture,” as they resist definition or generalization (Bower, “Our Sisters’” 137). Even in my descriptions of community cookbooks, many stand outside the trends and were not
intended to support a charity, to represent a community, or to unify a group of women. Many were used as scrapbooks, to memorialize a community’s food traditions or a family’s favorite recipes. Even so, cookbooks for fundraising purposes were and are still the most common type of community cookbook, though most of the community cookbooks published after suffrage abandoned their feminist tone. Each community cookbook, no matter its purpose or financial success, has a story to tell of women gaining a voice and a foothold in public society and public politics. Some stories are implied, while others are discussed directly, concerning women’s place in American society.

Cookbook Scholarship

Much recent scholarship has studied the community cookbook, focusing on the stories they tell. Lynne Ireland was the first to consider the community cookbook as a scholarly subject. Naming the community cookbook as an autobiography, Ireland explains that food studies scholars can dissect the narratives found in these cookbooks to discover the true nature of that represented community (112). Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster support Ireland’s view, noting that recipes aren’t just about food: they can also provide information about the culture and history of a society in a specific time and place (2). Undoubtedly, in all of this scholarship, these cookbooks are not just collections of recipes, but rather symbolize something larger in society as a unified text. Labeling it a practice of kinship, Susan J. Leonardi states that “the recipe’s social context gives it far more significance than that of a mere rule for cooking” (344).

Scholarship also has explored the narrative potential of these cookbooks, as I have explained earlier concerning Bower and Cotter’s work. Goldman calls community cookbooks “opportunistic autobiographies,” noting that these women took the fund-raising opportunity to write their own autobiographical narrative to memorialize their identity (Theophano 122). In her
extensive study of cookbooks, *Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote*, Janet Theophano posits that not only do cookbooks tell personal, autobiographical stories, but also that women construct them with a purpose: “women inscribe themselves as testimonies to their existence” (121). As the recipe is a collection of individual narratives, their compilation effectively constructs a larger, unified narrative of women’s identity.

However, little has been written on the rhetorical effectiveness of these community cookbooks. Anne L. Bower explored the implied messages behind a Jewish-American cookbook in “Our Sisters’ Recipes,” noting the hidden messages available in the selection and arrangement of recipes, vocabulary, tone, graphics, and advertising (140). Beyond Bower’s scholarship, no one has studied in any depth as to what constructs “community” in a community cookbook. This, then, is where my contribution lies. In this section of my chapter, I want to explore the various rhetorical strategies these clubwomen employ to construct the “community” of the text. What strategies make a community cookbook successful at invoking community? What sort of role is the reader encouraged to play? Is it a different role from reading a single-author or commercially-produced cookbook? Finally, what messages are communicated within these texts? What are the effects of these messages? Each of these research questions work to uncover the motivations and strategies behind the community cookbook.

In an interview, Jan Longone, curator of culinary texts in the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, explained that there is no specific set of criteria to judge a community cookbook. As an official judge for the annual Tabasco Community Cookbook Awards, Longone mentioned a few criteria necessary for a potential community cookbook to be eligible for an award. First, the cookbook must clearly identify itself as having a charitable purpose. Next, the cookbook should include some background on the community, organization or region, in order to
characterize itself as representative of that group. The cookbook must be unified in some way so as to show “community.” Lastly, the recipes must have been edited and tested before being put in the cookbook, so any recipe found in the book would be guaranteed to work. This way, the text is not only representative of a community but is also usable by the consumer. These broad criteria describe the past winners of the Tabasco award, and also describe the majority of bestselling community cookbooks (those which have sold over 100,000 copies). While these may be useful criteria for judging a winner, they don’t aid in answering questions concerning multimodal rhetorical strategies in community cookbooks.

To make my observations, I have read more than two dozen available community cookbooks lent to me by friends and family, and have accessed the online and physical archives of several libraries. Anne Bower notes that we often take community cookbooks for granted because of their ubiquitousness, but I have found that the books’ omnipresence makes research more interesting (“Our Sisters’” 137). Everyone, it seems, owns a community cookbook. Many own several, representing their past memberships, interests, or financial goodwill. Each cookbook is unique, a testament to the women (and men) who came together for a greater good. They vary widely in quality, some being no more than a tossed-together document of untested recipes with no organizational structure or communal voice. Some of my grandmother’s community cookbooks I know for a fact she has never used, most of them staying in pristine condition, gathering dust in the kitchen. A small handful are valuable family heirlooms, each page splattered with food stains, reminiscent of delicious meals. As the cookbook is more than its recipes, I make no qualitative judgments concerning the cookbooks I study here. In this work, I consider the relative merits and faults of these cookbooks’ methods in achieving “community,” as I make no distinction between cookbooks with “good” recipes and those without: each
cookbook, regardless of its recipes, functions as a tool for women to organize and mobilize their
gender to campaign (directly or indirectly) for validation. Confined to the domestic space,
women found a way to use their prison—the kitchen—to work for them and access the political
and public arenas. It is curious that such a little recipe could affect such great change!

Authenticity, Ethos, and the Communal Voice

Perhaps one of the most noticeable characteristics of community cookbooks is the
try on at achieving a communal authorial voice. As many different women come together to
create a cookbook, the text must be rhetorically unified to give a sense of community. At the
same time, the communal voice must not obliterate individuality, for fear it may come off as
inauthentic. This delicate balance the cookbook is forced to negotiate makes for a complex
rhetorical situation. In order for the community cookbook to succeed as both a cookbook and as
an argument in support of a charitable cause, it must be authoritative and trustworthy. But in
order for it to succeed as a representation of community, it cannot claim too much authority, as
the authors’ ethos is not of professional chefs, but instead of housewives. They must relate to the
reader, as they are (likely) of the same social position, but also claim enough authority so that the
reader feels she is learning something new, that these housewives have something to teach her
about cooking and about community.

Trust is a vital part of this ethos construction. Anne Patterson Dee observes in her
introduction to a collection of recipes from the best community cookbooks that readers of these
cookbooks “swear by the recipes that women contribute for publication in their own home
towns. They trust the recipes in these books for one simple reason: they know that a proud and
confident cook would share only her best recipes with the rest of the community” (6). Susan J.
Leonardi explains that the cookbook authors should “creat[e] a persona readers could identify
and trust, in hopes of creating readers who would, therefore, willingly suspend for a few pages not so much disbelief” (347). The assumption that a contributor would only provide her best, foolproof recipes for inclusion is logical, as the community cookbook uses many strategies to build this sense of trust between readers and authors.

One main way this is done is by the inclusion of the contributor’s name with each recipe. As Anne Bower notes, “names ‘own’ each recipe” (“Our Sisters”” 141). The vast majority of community cookbooks observed include a contributor’s name alongside the given recipe, sometimes at the beginning of a recipe with the title (Our Good Beginnings), sometimes at the end (Farmfolk Favorites), and yet other times as part of a list at the beginning or end of the book (Housekeeping in the Blue Grass). Rarely does a cookbook not list contributor’s names, but if it does it explains its omission, as in Nantucket Receipts, as an editing choice. Names are often given in full, first and last names, sometimes secondarily identified by region or town, other times identified by address as well: “Mrs. Edwin Kohl, Rt. 1, Alvada, O” (Farmfolk Favorites). Sometimes recipes have abbreviated names or are mysteriously anonymous, as in “Mrs. B,” or “a friend” (Practical Recipe Book 33). To attach a name to a recipe makes that woman responsible for its outcome, thus implying the author’s expertise. This ends up building a sense of trust between the reader and the contributor. Often names are attached to recipes even more directly, as part of the title: “Mrs. Clay’s Premium Cake” (Housekeeping in the Blue Grass 100) or “My Grandma Bishop’s Doughnuts (the late Mrs. Henry D. (Martha Ellen) Bishop)” (Farmfolk Favorites). This type of ownership of a recipe validates it as historical, as being of such quality that it is known to be attributed to a woman. This is a sign of respect, as having a woman’s name as part of a recipe’s title memorializes that woman in print. Indeed, attributing a name to any
recipe aids in the cookbook’s attempt to build a trustworthy ethos, as every recipe included is accounted for by an individual cook.

Browsing a community cookbook, frequent key words include “tried” (as in “tried receipts”), “reliable,” “choice,” and “trustworthy.” Using any of these terms is a way for the cookbook authors to persuade potential consumers to buy their book. As Dee notes, “testing and retesting has long been a point of pride among community cookbooks” (9). Jan Longone agrees, explaining that any decent cookbook must have recipes that work. Naming the recipes as “tried” or “tested” showcases this ability by the authors and helps advertise their book. Most frequently in the mid to late 19th century, common titles for cookbooks included the phrases “best tested recipes,” “recipes tried and tested,” “choice and tested,” and “tried and true” (Cook 20-33). All of these phrases point to the ethos the authors were trying to construct—one of a cook whose recipes the reader could trust.

The complicated balance negotiated by this communal ethos opens up the question of its authenticity. Stephanie Almagno, Nedra Reynolds, and John Trimbur analyze the questionable authenticity of community as presented in Italian-American cookbooks. They ask, “are these cookbooks an ‘authentic’ account of Italian-American cookery and ways of life, or are they appropriations by the publishing industry that amount to niche marketing of the exotic in a cosmopolitan consumer culture that is hungry for novelty” (185-86)? It is true that many cookbooks exist which falsify their communal voice, appearing to the reader in a certain way mainly for show. Instead of representing a true community of women, many cookbooks are only compilations of recipes tossed together to try and raise money. In these cases, the communal ethos is never constructed, and the texts themselves function only as recipe collections, without personality or voice. Almagno et al. find that popular cookbooks, even those considered to be
appropriated by consumer culture, retain authenticity by what they call their “sense of intimacy.” This “intimacy” functions as effective resistance to cultural appropriation, thereby validating their ethos as authentic (188).

A “sense of intimacy” is often found in community cookbooks through its often chatty tone. Even while the cookbook attempts to establish itself as trustworthy and expert, community cookbook voices never talk down to a reader, or assume the reader knows nothing about cooking. The tone of many community cookbooks is friendly and kind, like a trusted friend. A closer look at one cookbook in particular demonstrates this authentic ethos built via intimacy. *Heavenly Cookery*, a cookbook published by the women of St. Alban’s Episcopal Church, demonstrates intimacy through the chatty, interesting side comments the recipe contributors provide about their recipes. Even though there is no introduction to the cookbook (and also no date or place of publication), the friendly talk throughout the recipes construct an authentic community of expert cooks. Helen B. Sterner says of her pickles that “it sounds fussy but is not, and well worth the work” (4) Margaret LePage says (almost in bragging) of her scones recipe: “only complaint I hear is that it is hard to stop eating them” (7). About her eggplant casserole, Violette Sibilia simply says, “Good Luck” (32). These examples of phrases tacked on to the beginnings or endings of recipes do not directly impact the food preparation itself, but are vital to the ethos of the communal authorship. Other kinds of comments include those that recall a history. Regarding deviled crab, Marcelle Forsyth notes that “This is an old recipe, given to me 30 years ago” (13). Forsyth also says of her minced clams that “This is very good and one of my specialties for luncheons” (13). Still other comments attempt to extoll a recipe’s virtues: “delicious,” “very, very good,” “perfectly delicious” (4-21). Myrtle Bryan tells us that her string beans and mushrooms are so good “they’ll ask for more” (32).
Hints and tips are perhaps the most common type of side note to a recipe. Helen Lou Reasoner notes that in her Choir Easter Breakfast Coffee Cake, “biscuit mix may be used” (5). Catherine Peters’s salmon loaf explains that “(we use cream of chicken or cream of celery soup)” (14). In a recipe for Swedish Meat Balls, May Ellis Olson advises readers that “(It is a simple trick to keep a small jar of flour, ready-browned, handy to the stove. You will find many uses for it in thickening sauces and gravies. It saves time and tastes better, too)” (14). These comments are ones that sound like the voice of a friend or relative, passing on cookery knowledge from one generation to the next. These community cookbooks perpetuate the authentic, intimate ethos of a face-to-face talk across the kitchen table that was so prevalent in the era before mass media. While it is of course the women’s goal to make a profit from the sale of their text, the way each woman maintains her individual voice—while also supporting the voices of the women surrounding her—illustrates a strong, authentic communal voice.

The mere fact that a cookbook is chatty does not always imply a community, nor does the lack of chattiness or friendly tone mean a lack of authentic community. Bower brings up this point in her close reading of the community cookbook Our Sisters’ Recipes, noting the apparent lack of textual chat or side comments: “the tacit message,” Bower explains, is this: “‘we’re sisters; we don’t need to chat about this food. Here’s the recipe if you want it?’” (146). A community cookbook’s tone is only one of many aspects that work to construct an authentic ethos, as there are a variety of rhetorical methods women have used in building an ethos which validates their existence and communicates their goals.

Colleen Cotter asserts that “the co-creators of the community cookbook—author and audience—mutually influence each other” (70). Aligned with reader-response theory, Cotter points out that the reader has an active role in the text’s construction of community, as the reader
may dialogue with the author in order to construct the text. This concept of “dialogue” is especially relevant to community cookbooks, especially considering the previously mentioned point regarding chatty side comments in recipes. Dialogue implies that the reader and author are on the same level, that neither one is asserting her expertise or education over the other. Instead of a lecture, a dialogue allows each woman to participate equally. Within the community cookbook, reader and author are peers. This is not often true in commercially-produced single-author cookbooks, and even less so on a television cooking show. The assumption that the reader is a peer is virtually always assumed in a community cookbook.

This treatment of the reader as a peer aids a community cookbook in its construction of a communal identity. In fact, a common rhetorical move is to implicitly invite the reader to become a community member by including her own recipes in the book. Nearly every community cookbook includes blank pages in which a reader can write or paste additional recipes, thus constructing herself as a co-author of the text. Often times community cookbooks will become scrapbooks, as women will paste notes and newspaper clippings inside the covers and in blank spaces in between. While only some commercially-produced cookbooks offer additional pages for notes and recipes, this is a common—almost required—feature of community cookbooks.

This invitation for the reader to participate in the construction of the text is also illustrated through hedging statements. These types of statements are often in side notes or parentheses, providing additional information to the reader regarding preferences or alternatives to the given recipe. “If desired” is the most frequently used hedging phrase, as in “½ cup nuts, if desired” (*Altrusa’s Favorites*). Rather than assuming their recipes perfect as written, the contributors use hedging statements to qualify their cooking as only one of many potential
methods in making the dish. Sue Moyer’s recipe for Chicken Oriental includes this example of
hedging: “Add water chestnuts, tomatoes (fresh or canned), ginger, garlic (if a strong garlic
flavor is not desired you can run a toothpick through the clove before it is crushed; after cooking
the garlic will be easy to find to remove before serving).” For Old Fashioned Sugar Cookies,
Mary Van Gorden suggests that they “(May be frosted when baked, rather than sprinkled with
sugar.)” Ethel Hedman’s recipe for Sugar Cookies hedges on the type and amount of
ingredients: “1 tsp. vanilla (can use almond) [. . .] 4 cups flour (may need a bit more).” While a
recipe for Shrimp Hot Dish warns the reader “No salt or pepper, don’t overbake,” it also allows
the reader a choice of shrimp “(frozen or canned),” estimates the size of casserole dish needed
“(about a 9 X 13’’ baking dish),” and suggests the meal “Maybe served with a mushroom sauce”
(Altrusa’s Favorites). Instead of asserting their recipe as the one way to make the dish, they
allow for alternative tastes, budgets, and diets. The use of hedging statements in these recipes
encourages the reader to experiment with the given instructions, to try an alternative ingredient
or process. It allows the reader a freedom within the text: while the recipe is immortalized in
print, these statements prevent the reader from being confined to any proscribed formula.

Similarly, McDougall claims that “a recipe belongs to its readers, it is a reader who determines
the future of the recipe, immortalizing it by passing it on or rewriting it to accommodate a food
processor, a low-fat diet, or time restrictions” (117). This sort of participation in the text allows
the reader to become a member of the community, constructing the text and the community as
the reader explores the cookbook. Hedging as a rhetorical move effectively equalizes both
author and reader, helping to engage them in dialogue within the text. These hedging statements
dismiss the idea of the author as an expert, instead positioning the author as an equal to the
reader.
Second-person pronouns are often used in community cookbooks, in order to rhetorically engage the reader within the text through direct address. While pronouns are scarce in any cookbook, community or commercial, both first and second-person pronouns are often included in community cookbooks. Recipe instructions are usually written as commands, such as “Stir a little of the broth with the cornstarch. Combine with remaining broth. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly with a fork. Season to taste. Makes 6 servings” (*Farmfolk Favorites*). This format is certainly more efficient in getting the instructions across, which can help to explain its prevalence in recipe writing. The inclusion of pronouns in a recipe indicates the presence of real women in the process of food preparation. This is illustrated in a recipe by Helen Ziegler for Low Calorie French Dressing, when she advises the reader to “Use herbs and seasonings you like most (or have on the shelf) or—use all of them” (*Farmfolk Favorites*). An 1880 recipe for “Mrs. S’s Raised Biscuits” notes that “if you cannot conveniently bake the bread as soon as it is light, knead it over, and set it to raise again” (*Presbyterian Cookbook* 8). In Maxine Kohl’s recipe for Chop Suey, she explains that “if you want to do it the quick way place in the pressure cooker with enough water so that it does not go dry.” Mrs. Edwin Kohl says of her recipe for Sukyaki, “Once you try it you will like it” (*Farmfolk Favorites*). Writing about a traditional recipe for Maine Clam Chowder, the unnamed contributor explains that “for a change, I quite often add a can of cream style corn before I add the milk” (*10th Anniversary Cookbook* 74). Command-type instructions may imply women’s presence, but using personal pronouns such as “I” and “you” explicitly acknowledge the real women who participate in the recipe’s creation and re-creation. These pronouns perpetuate a dialogue between the reader and the contributor, as if the writer were speaking to the reader personally. The use of direct address emphasizes the active participation necessary on the part of the reader to interact with the text.
In addition, the reader’s active participation is encouraged through the cookbook’s inclusion of multiple similar recipes. Instead of editing and choosing only the best recipe for meatloaf, the clubwomen often choose to include all of their voices, respecting the fact that some women make their meatloaf with ketchup, others with barbeque sauce, and still others with chili sauce. Rather than dismissing this feature as a mistake or editing oversight, these women had a purpose in including these recipes, so as to value all perspectives. In *Cook Book: Favorite Recipes from Our Best Cooks*, compiled by the United Methodist Women, there are three recipes in a row for tomato pudding. Anita Mason’s recipe is the easiest—just open up a can of Hunt’s sauce, mix it with the other ingredients, and stick it in the oven for a half hour. Harriet Cunningham and Jo Bichsel’s recipe is from the local paper, and thus calls for a more elaborate preparation process, including stovetop and oven preparation. Fern Harger’s recipe is perhaps the most time-consuming, as it first asks the reader to peel and slice five pounds of fresh tomatoes to make the puree from scratch (53-54). These three recipes make the same dish, yet each is quite different in the way it completes the task, illustrating the diversity of women’s experiences, finances, and skill levels within the community. Instead of naming a single method as the “correct” way to make tomato pudding, the clubwomen choose to value each women’s perspective and include all of the best recipes for the dish. The inclusion of multiple similar recipes allows the reader the freedom to choose between the possibilities, thus encouraging her to participate as an editor of the text.

When one reads a community cookbook, it is much like sitting down with a friend for a chat. To read a community cookbook is to talk face to face with each of these contributors, to see them vividly as real women, as masters in the kitchen. Whether or not the cookbook incorporates a conversational tone, the rhetorical moves the contributors make to establish their
communal ethos work to impart an intimate, friendly style. Dee explains that “the real heart and soul of these community cookbooks—a warm feeling that their recipes have been shared with you by a friend, and that they deserve to be shared again” (9). Even if the reader is not a member of the community (or, indeed, even knows anyone who is a member), the style invites the reader to become a part of the community by becoming a part of the text.

The effect of these rhetorical strategies is to make the community cookbook relatable to the reader. Unlike *Gourmet* magazine or a Martha Stewart cookbook (where the reader might be intimidated with the professional discourse of cooking or lack years of experience cooking for a family on a daily basis), a community cookbook represents the voices of real women who happen to cook. This positioning of the authors as regular, everyday cooks encourages the reader to trust their recipes, and to identify with them. This aids in the construction of an ethos which establishes the authors as experts in their craft. Ann Romines explains that

> Nothing I cooked and nothing I did to myself was going to resemble the flawless photographs in *Seventeen* and *Home Beautiful*. But the black-bound Methodist cookbooks of my childhood were something else. Serious, unillustrated and enduring, they printed and preserved the names of women I knew, whose food I had seen and eaten and might reproduce—women who had managed to survive and even to thrive in Houston, Missouri. (86)

Here, ethos is established individually and collectively. With each author’s recipe, a woman gains ethos situated as a member of that specific community. In this context as part of a community of experienced cooks, she is also established as an expert. It is through this establishment of individual ethos that informs and perpetuates the communal ethos of the community cookbook as a quality reference for fellow home cooks. Recognizable names in a
community cookbook—such as my own grandmother’s fruit salad recipe published in a 1980 Methodist cookbook—carry additional significance for the reader. Knowing my grandmother and experiencing her fruit salad at countless Methodist potlucks establishes her situated ethos as an experienced cook through this text. This recognition helps the reader become a part of the group’s communal identity.

Advertising in community cookbooks adds another dimension to the communal rhetoric involved in the text. For example, the *Home Town Recipes of Defiance Federation* cookbook asks the reader to “Please patronize our Advertisers” at the bottom of each page, which directs the reader to advertisements scattered throughout the text for local restaurants, groceries, repair shops, banks, and hardware stores. While more clues can be uncovered about the community from the advertisers listed, these ads also showcase the clubwomen’s strategic use of advertisers to gain more support for their charity, both financially and rhetorically. The book’s support by local businesses helps validate the women’s work as worthwhile and useful, as it has become the vehicle through which public advertisements are communicated. Including advertisements for businesses rhetorically positions the text as much more than a collection of recipes, and transforms into a public text rather than a private, hidden discourse. These women adopt the language of the public sphere—advertising—in order to validate their work existing in the domestic sphere.

This type of transformation highlights the hidden messages that exist in community cookbooks. As curator Jan Longone was putting together a display of these cookbooks for the Clements Library, she was stumped as to how to focus the exhibition, as she spoke about in an interview. She explained that she knew these books were trying to tell her something, but she couldn’t figure out what at first. Upon further study, she realized they were potentially powerful
rhetorical texts in a variety of ways. Some of the most deliberate rhetorical strategies occur in their themes, as in cookbooks especially for suffrage or temperance. These cookbooks’ purpose was to raise money for the cause, but an underlying purpose was that of propaganda. Bower acknowledges this fact, noting that community cookbooks created for fundraising purposes have been ideologically motivated in both form and content (“Bound Together” 7). As the dedication goes in the Washington Women’s Cook Book of 1909: “To the first woman who realized that half of the human race were not getting a square deal, and who had the courage to voice a protest.” These community cookbooks included articles and poems regarding their cause, and many recipes fit the theme of pro-suffrage or temperance: in WCTU cookbooks, not only was no alcohol used in the recipes, but tips were provided for ingredient substitutions. Advertisers also explicitly supported the cause in their ads, as in this ad from the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company: “You have been fighting many years to secure Equal Rights! This Company gives you Equal Rates!” (“Old Girl Network”). These strategies help to further the club’s cause, as it aids in raising awareness alongside providing useful information for women. In this way, women were able to target other women outside their club or community through these books, and thus were able to network with their readers in order to build support for their causes.

Longone identifies these cookbooks as useful networking opportunities, as they are “an integral part of the history of the women’s movement” (qtd. in Gardner). In her exhibit “The Old Girl Network,” Longone argues that community cookbooks have played an important role in the development of many social movements in America, as one of many types of club texts exchanged between women. Women’s clubs of the mid to late 19th century would circulate texts among groups, via methods such as newspapers, bulletins, magazines, conventions, and speaker
visits. Anne Ruggles Gere explains that the circulation of texts from one community or club to another “gave clubwomen a sense of connection with one another,” helping them to see themselves as part of a larger whole (9-10). This is likely the impact these community cookbooks had on women initially, as Longone notes that “no matter what the specific cause for which the women raised funds, the underlying purpose began as women helping other women to help themselves and the outside world” (qtd. in Gardner). Once women saw the potential for the community cookbook to help achieve their goals, women eventually used the books to campaign for causes larger than their own communities, ones which would call for statewide and nationwide change. In support of Longone, Gere explains that “the exchange of texts had both affective and practical implications. Embedded in networks of friendship among clubwomen, textual exchanges strengthened bonds among women separated by distance and/or time, adding an affective dimension to their literacy practices” (8). These practices culminated in what Longone names as the “Old Girl Network,” illustrating the ways in which clubwomen used these texts to push their agenda and form new contacts, broadening their support base. In effect, these recipe collections functioned as a vehicle for spreading the clubwomen’s agenda for social change.

Through advertising space in the community cookbook, women were able to interact and support other women’s clubs and businesses. Like the 19th century Women’s Exchange, a cooperatively run store by women selling goods made by women (which also raised funds for charities), women’s clubs and women-owned businesses purchased advertising space in these cookbooks in order to support their causes. While the advertiser was able to promote their business, club, or school, they were implicitly promoting the cookbook’s charitable cause as well. Reading the advertisements in these community cookbooks is to see the multimodal
networking system of women at work: through this text, women construct a space for themselves to be accepted in the public sphere, where they can advocate for change and for a better quality of life. These texts allowed women to step out of their kitchen and speak in a society in which they were otherwise silenced. This illustrates only some of the potential power of these community cookbooks. As Longone notes, “there was always opposition to women organizing. But men probably thought, ‘it’s only a cookbook’” (qtd. in Gardner). The cookbook’s harmless façade hides the skilled rhetorical strategies at work, as it is more than what it appears.

Conclusion: Effects of Community Rhetoric

Laura Schenone notes that “what’s most wonderful [about community cookbooks] is that they befuddle the historian who wishes to generalize about American food, American women, or American life” (127). These are complex, multilayered texts which change depending on the community, charity, region, or time period. I mean in no way to characterize all community cookbooks as rhetorically savvy, yet have culled my observations together from archival research into what I hope are representative texts of the genre. Clearly, not all of these texts are political. Very few include advertising. However, the rhetorical strategies that are employed in these texts construct implied messages concerning women’s place. Even though women did not reject their domestic role, they were able to expand their role by rhetorically entering the public sphere through their cookbook. Schenone observes that “earlier in the century, cookery had confined them to the kitchen. Now, it was possible for women to use cooking to meet their own ends—transforming the world as they saw fit” (133). They are not considered professional cooks by any traditional definition of the term, but instead are masters of their domestic space. Instead of remaining confined to that title, these club women represent themselves in print
through their expertise—their recipes. They choose their best potluck casserole, their favorite birthday dinner, or their prize-winning dessert recipes to be compiled with other women, and represent themselves by putting their name to the recipe. It is a language they know, that they have developed alongside other women, as a way to form community with each other. They use the available means of persuasion, occurring in multiple communicative modes, to validate themselves and their work.

Schenone argues that “During the 19th century, women changed cookery, and in the process, cookery transformed women” (133). This transformation allowed women a better place in society, and a better quality of life. Women used cookery discourse as a social space to validate their identities and their craft rhetorically. Romines reminisces: “As the central domestic texts of our household, the Methodist cookbooks encouraged my sister and me to recognize that domesticity and professionalism were not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, I grew up knowing (although often unconsciously) that these cookbooks were texts that empowered women and made their work—domestic and otherwise—an important, acknowledged resource of our community” (86). Not only were these texts resources for the local community, but they also had the potential to affect change in the larger society by starting with its textual validation of individual women. Andrea Newlyn explains that this type of recipe exchange “enabled women to become agents of their own histories” through their perpetuation of recipes, memories, and texts (44). As social texts, community cookbooks—like alternative multimodal practices of diary writing, letter writing, and needle crafting—have functioned as tools of women’s empowerment from the 19th century to today. They are “rich historical texts that give today’s readers intimate glimpses of the lives of women—their conviction, anger, sense of humor, wit, and political savvyness” (Leung). Reading a community cookbook allows one to
enter a woman’s world—a space in which the language, format, tone, purpose, and ideology are all women-centered. Even though these texts were located in the public space, the messages regarding self-validation and community empowerment were expertly hidden from view—unless the reader knows where to look. In any case, I hope you haven’t forgotten the recipe for rosemary meatballs I gave you a while ago. It’s very easy; perfect for tonight’s meal if you’re still looking for something. I hope you’ll let me know what you think of the recipe—especially if there are any improvements you can offer. And if you still are unsure about the rosemary: As a fellow cook once said, “once you try it you will like it” (Farmfolk Favorites).
CHAPTER IV. THIRD COURSE: RHETORIC(S) OF VISUAL DESIGN IN BASIC COOKBOOKS

Just a few days ago, I received a new cookbook in the mail. I’ve been ordering more cookbooks lately—particularly since working on this project—and I now have a nice variety lining my bookshelves. The first thing I do when I get a new cookbook is to sit down and read it from cover to cover. I love reading cookbooks. New or old, well-used or never opened—all are fascinating to me. One of the things that makes cookbooks entertaining for me is their eye-catching style. When I “read” a cookbook, what I really mean is that I like to look at the pictures. More often than I care to admit, I choose a recipe based on the appeal of its attached photograph. Photographs of mouthwatering dishes leap out at the viewer from every shiny, full-color page. Sometimes, reading a cookbook is like browsing through a gallery of tempting photographs. This is especially true for my new cookbook, *Everyday Food: Great Food Fast* (2007). Published by Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, the book is full of beautiful salads, glorious roasts, and delicious stir-frys—photographed close-up in such detail as if the reader could smell the garlic, roasted tomatoes, and fresh basil emanating from the pages. Full pages are devoted to display of a single dish, a visually informative and entertaining complement to the recipe opposite.

As I place my new cookbook on the shelf with the rest of my collection, I notice how many of the cookbooks are visually oriented. The fourteenth edition of *Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook* (2006) advertises “more photos” in this revision, which adds up to over 800 photographs in all. *Taste of Home’s Winning Recipes* (2007) boasts of a “color photo with each recipe.” Many also advertise the number of photos in the book—30, 85, 300+. *The Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook* also claims a cleaner, easier to follow page design with new
icons and sections. Editors and book designers know that visuals are a vital mode of communication in cookery discourse. To put it simply, pictures sell: they attract potential book buyers, they encourage readers to try out new recipes, they inform cooks on how to master a technique, and so on. Pictures construct an ethos, vouching for the cookbook’s efficiency, attractiveness, and level of professionalism. These texts include many more visual components than only photography, too: sketches, charts, tables, icons, sidebars, and typographic design are all used as well. These visual features interact with the text to more effectively communicate the recipe and attract potential readers. As one mode important to the multimodal characteristic of cookery discourse, visuals are yet one more way for women to remediate the text through their “making do,” communicating their work through a combination of visual and textual elements.

Visuals are an integral component of cookery texts, as they are used to illustrate, to inform, to navigate, to train, and to entertain. Visual design is becoming more important in today’s cookbooks, as Lynette Hunter notes in her work on the historical function of illustrations in English cookbooks (141). While the majority of the page in many contemporary cookbooks contains printed text, it is frequently broken up with photographs of completed dishes, pictures of relevant cooking skills, charts, and sidebars. The reading process has been made more efficient with the use of multiple font sizes and boldface type to indicate recipe titles and subheadings, as well as ingredients. These visuals work together with the text to code communicative processes, which function to convey more highly complex concepts more efficiently.

The visual trend found in cookbooks is widespread throughout other types of texts: Gunther Kress observes that in general these days, written text is accompanied more frequently by images (Literacy 65). Knowledge is communicated as much through images as through words (Hocks and Kendrick 1). Donis A. Dondis notes that “our language-dominated culture has
moved perceptibly toward the iconic” (7). Nowhere is this truer than within the pages of a cookbook, which uses a grammar of visual elements to construct its discourse.

While these moves have come about recently since the rise of new media, it is important to note that they have not been caused by the shift in technology. Visually-dominant cultures have existed before, in the times of cave paintings, hieroglyphs, and even illuminated manuscripts. Technology is not the cause—we must avoid what Raymond Williams calls “technological determinism” (qtd. in Bolter 20)—but instead technology is the catalyst for changes in how we use and interpret visual texts. With the birth of the internet and digital technologies, we have been able to see the possibilities images have to remediate texts. Design is key to discovering these possibilities. Therefore, a study of cookbook design is essential to uncovering the ways cookbooks communicate rhetorically via multiple modes. Design is more than the efficient or attractive use of page space—its visual codes carry messages to the reader about what, and how, to “see” cooking. This chapter argues that cookbooks function as terministic screens, as the visual/textual components work together to construct and re-construct rhetorical seeing. This analysis contributes to establishing cookery discourse as a multimodal text reliant on remediation for its success as a feminist rhetorical practice, since the visual mode is an alternative communicative practice used by women to establish their voice and authority in the domestic space.

For this chapter, I have chosen to focus on a single genre of print and digital cookbooks to make my argument—what I call the “basic” cookbook. These cookbooks, with titles like *How to Boil Water* (2006), *Anyone Can Cook* (2007), *Betty Crocker’s Cooking Basics* (1998),

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5 Using the term “basic” is, admittedly, problematic, as it implies that any culture or ethnic group would identify these skills as the main concepts and techniques in the discipline. My use of this term is not to essentialize cooking—or to define all cultures through the perspective of only one—but to describe a sub-genre of cookery texts that, in the context of a white, middle-class American culture, is defined as “basic” or “introductory.”
and *Cooking for Dummies* (2000), indicate their functions as educational, how-to-cook books. These cookbooks form a particular genre separate from other cookbook types, as they focus exclusively on training potential home cooks. This genre first appeared during the cooking reform movement in the late 19th-early 20th century as a way to train young wives in the most efficient and affordable ways to keep house. Today, these cookbooks attempt to entice anyone interested in cooking, regardless of gender. They are mostly conservative in range of recipes, sticking with traditional, familiar dishes (grilled cheese, egg salad), and generally avoid gourmet ingredients. They usually have separate sections devoted to basic skills, which include knife safety, how to refrigerate/freeze foods appropriately, common utensils, and other generally applicable cooking skills. All of the books studied assume the new cook will usually be cooking for no more than 4 or 6 people, and will only once or twice a year hold a large feast, such as Thanksgiving. These cookbooks emphasize simplicity, speed, and affordability, all which attempt to “sell” the reader on cooking at home. Different from children’s cookbooks (which show kids how fun it is to help grownups in the kitchen), basic cookbooks teach adults to cook on their own and for others. I have chosen this genre because I feel the basic cookbook more fully integrates word and image than other cookbooks. Design drives these texts—this genre has been able to make great strides in visual design, and is more visually fascinating than most other cookbooks. This chapter will look at the influences on basic cookbook design as it multimodally composes itself through word and image.

For my analysis, I selected a variety of commonly-available basic cookbooks, published within the last five years. While the label “basic cookbook” is my own invention, I selected cookbooks for this category based on the text’s readership, how much of the cookbook focused on simple, beginning skills, and how visually-oriented the text was. While I realize there are
many cookbooks of other sub-genres which contain a section on “the basics” (that is, how to use a knife, how to measure dry and wet ingredients, etc), I focused on texts which concentrated exclusively on beginning skills. Furthermore, my choice of texts is narrow in scope, as only the authors or companies with the most financial backing are able to produce a visually-oriented text. No one other than Martha Stewart could publish a 500+ page tome on basic skills, in full color, for upwards of $50 and have it be a bestseller in today’s economy. Name recognition and commercialism impact these texts, and potentially influence my analysis as well.

The Rhetoric of Design

With more of a concern for design, Kress explains that “the written text now has to look good” (Literacy 65). Design is now not a secondary feature of a text. It does not just affect content—it is content, echoing McLuhan’s famous statement that the medium is the message. Visual components are essential to textual meaning, as they are complex syntheses of social and cultural codes, carrying a message about the sender, receiver, and context. While they may seem transparent, it is our familiarity with the codes that allows us to interpret them with little effort (Kress and VanLeeuwen 32). In fact, the act of seeing is not passive at all, as Rudolf Arnheim explains in Visual Thinking. He explains that perception is active, using the mind: “perception involves problem solving” (37). Arnheim acknowledges that seeing is a daily activity, but even so “one must not fail to notice how much true intelligence it involves” (50). Even as we are entertained, educated, and informed by pictures, we actively work to decode the visual texts and analyze their messages. Cookbooks, then, with their frequent use of visuals and design components, function at a higher level of thinking than just a set of pretty pictures. The act of seeing relies in large part on intelligence.
Perception is linked to comprehension in our society, even as we try to make ourselves understood: “Do you see my point?”, “I see what you’re trying to say” and other similar phrases indicate our tendency to relate understanding in visual terms. In their conclusion to *Reading Images*, Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen argue for the importance of seeing, asserting that “seeing has, in our culture, become synonymous with understanding” (168). Thus, Dondis argues, “what you see is a major part of what you know” (19). Some of the most effective cookbooks—particularly basic, or how-to, cookbooks—make a concerted effort to utilize visual components as a way of communicating information about the recipe to the reader. In many cookbooks the reader can “watch” the dish being made by interpreting the visuals on the page. As we believe our eyes cannot lie, we thus learn through the visual, engaging in perception as a method of understanding.

With these new, visually-oriented texts, we must learn to read in new ways. Kress, in his book *Literacy in the New Media Age*, reminds his readers that “old” literacies—written text-based literacies—are ineffective used to read visual or digital texts. As written texts gain authority through their static nature (c.f. Ong), multimodal texts must be approached differently. Kress calls for a new sort of literacy to interpret these texts: multimodal literacy. This literacy is reader-centered and flexible, since “the form as interpreted by the reader is always a transformation of the maker’s meaning” (39). Reading a visually-integrated text asks more of the reader than interpretation, as reading is becoming more of an analysis of design (152). Kress’s multimodal literacy is productive, generating analyses which work to inform a reader’s understanding.

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6 This may seem to explain the popularity of television cooking shows, as nowadays those are exclusively visual with no (or only secondary supplemental) written text. However, these shows are constructed within a context of entertainment, as the more popular Food Network shows (*Emeril Live, Paula’s Party*) revise the traditional Julia Child-style cooking show into a mix of talk, stand-up, and audience participation that function exclusively as entertainment: as fun with food. As I will discuss further in Chapter 5, television cooking shows are food performances, yet do not intend to teach cooking skills.
future interpretations. Multimodal literacy is organic, as it is flexible, continually shaped and re-shaped by social, cultural, and personal influences (24). In keeping with Kress’s theory of literacy, Dondis defines visual literacy as “more than just seeing, more than just making visual messages. Visual literacy implies understanding, the means for seeing and sharing meaning with some level of predictable universality” (182). Dondis’s definition implies the practical application of a common language of the visual, which articulates the reason for any cookbook’s success or failure—the text’s use (or lack) of shared terms and codes familiar to the discourse community of cooks. From abbreviations (“t” for teaspoon and “T” for tablespoon) to structure (list of ingredients needed) to photographs, charts, and drawings, these function as codes to define and focus the message.

The Interplay Between Word and Image

An important component of multimodal literacy is an acknowledgement of the relationship between verbal and visual modes. Historically, written and visual components have been treated as separate entities, or even as opposites. This dichotomy, as Maureen Daly Goggin explains, comes from a privileging in the field of logocentric approaches to interpretation, even as the range of texts studied continues to extend far beyond the written text (87). In fact, the written word is more than just visible speech—it has visual components as well, as Stephen A. Bernhardt asserts that “the graphic quality of writing, in contrast to the flow of speech, underscores the discontinuity, the boundaries, and the order which is possible in visual organization” (66). Goggin argues that the rhetoric of the word, rather than divided from the rhetoric of the image, is in fact visual: “both images and words on script, print, or digital pages engage the eyes [. . .] In this sense, written verbal rhetoric is visual rhetoric” (88). Thus
multimodal literacy treats verbal and visual modes as dialogic components of a text to emphasize their integration and resulting synthesis.

Figure 12 (Stewart 102)

An illustration of this dialogic relationship is in a cookbook’s meat diagram. Most cookbooks that deal with meat dishes—like in roasts or grilling—will include a diagram of a cow, lamb, and pig with lines denoting how each animal is butchered. In Martha Stewart’s Cooking School (2008), the cow is reduced to a single black outline, with yellow sections denoting the areas for beef cuts (see Figure 12). Written text verbally defines each yellow area, labeling the sections “Shoulder/Chuck,” “Rib,” “Flank,” and so on. Dotted black lines radiate from the labels to the perimeter, where more details about the types of cuts and common names are located, such as “Rib roast / (also called prime rib) / Rib steak / Rib eye” (102). Reading this textual component requires integration of word and image, as each mode contributes equal amounts of information to the viewer. The visual communicates spatial and symbolic information, while the verbal communicates language: names and common terms. While it is
true each component could exist without the other, the diagram would not communicate the same meaning as it does with the integration of visual and verbal modes. Each mode is dependent upon the other, as the visual mode provides information impossible to communicate verbally, and vice versa. When reading this diagram, the reader takes in the visual and verbal components at once, rather than separately. The reader comprehends the diagram by analyzing the relationship between the two modes.

The way one reads a meat diagram demonstrates the shift in the way multimodal texts are read from the way written texts are interpreted. Writing has a determined, set reading path, which (in Western culture) orders the reader to follow the text in a top-down, left to right format. Other cultures with logographic systems also follow a clear reading path. When we read a written text, we do not need to guess how to read it—this has been determined for us (Kress, Literacy 152). Spatial navigation is determined in a written text, as well as comprehension within that space: we read by comprehending sentence units, one at a time (158-9). This works well for texts like Figure 13, in which the 1615 recipe for Cambridge Pudding is written in paragraph format. This text is meant to be read like a narrative, and is very simple in its linear style.
However, with a text like the recipe in Figure 14, the reading pattern changes drastically. Kress explains that here, there is no set reading path (*Literacy* 153). In fact, a reader’s efforts to distinguish an inherent reading path from this would be cause for much struggle on the reader’s part. Here, “reading” is broadly defined, as it is part of the reader’s job to determine for herself how to make her way through the text. Kress names this method of reading as “modal scanning.” In modal scanning, the reader first scans the text for separate elements, then determines the relationship between those elements as a way of analyzing their relative functions (159). In this recipe from *Anyone Can Cook: Step-by-Step Recipes Just for You* (2007), there are several elements to alter the reader’s reading path. The olive green tab at the left indicates it is in the “Slow Meat Dishes” section, and the orange dot at the top left denotes a skill level of “3” is needed, the meaning of which is presumably explained in an introductory section of the cookbook. There are several sidebars, including a note about the high cost of beef tenderloin,
cross-references to other sections, a cooking tip, and suggestions for serving the roast. Each sidebar is placed according to importance (cross-references are in small type at the bottom of the page; the cooking tip is in larger font at the top of the opposite page), and all are either implicitly or directly elaborating on a point mentioned in the narrative. There is a photograph of the finished dish, plus the list of ingredients, numbered steps, notes, alternatives, and nutritional information. As compared to the reading path of the recipe in Figure 13, this path allows the reader more freedom, or room for interpretation. Bernhardt explains that in this sort of design-conscious text, “the goal is to call the reader’s attention visually to semantically grouped information, focusing the reader's attention on discrete sections. [. . .] Unconstrained by linear presentation, the reader can move about, settle on certain sections, read some sections lightly, some intently, some not at all, and still have a good idea of what the text is about” (73). In this recipe, the reader is free to skim over some sections, carefully read others, and ignore other sections completely, treating each section differently according to its function.
Even so, written text is dominant in this recipe. Visuals help to classify, organize, and inform or decorate in this example, though the majority of the content exists in written form. Unlike the earlier example of the meat diagram, visual and verbal modes are not equally balanced. Very few recipes attain this balance between the modes, though the example in Figure 14 demonstrates the influences visuals have had on contemporary recipe design. As Kress reminds us, just because a multimodal text affords a reader an open reading path, that does not imply that multimodal texts are completely open to interpretation, with no determined content or purposes. While it is true that a written text strictly determines a reading path, a multimodal text is not simply its opposite. Reading a multimodal text requires a dialogic, fluid relationship.
between reader and text. Neither reader nor text contains or determines meaning; it is only through their working together that a meaning is created for that reader.

In fact, multimodal texts contain more parameters and boundaries than one might initially consider. Kress explains that much of what determines a reading path is the reader’s socialization: “A reading path is nearly as much a matter of the social as of the semiotic” (159-160). The reader is not limitless in their potential for interpreting a text—they are bounded by their socialization. John Berger explains in *Ways of Seeing* that social factors heavily influence our perceptions (and thus, our understanding), saying that “we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (9). Kress and VanLeeuwen assert that not only do all semiotic modes represent relationships, but they also project social relationships between producers and receivers of signs (40-41). Therefore, social relationships are integral to shaping the way we read multimodal texts, like cookbooks. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, an important component of cookery discourse is its function as a social communicative system. The discourse encourages sharing and revising recipes with its members, forming community through textual interaction. While in many ways this discourse is an open, flexible practice, encouraging unlimited possibilities and remediations within its community of women, this chapter will discuss the changes to the discourse as a result of its remediation into text. While the practices engaged in by the discourse community are open and flexible, when remediated into print or other visually-integrated text, parameters must be defined. The following sections will explore the ways readers are asked to “see” cooking as defined through the integration of visual and verbal modes.
Cooking Screens

These definitions, I argue, work to construct terministic screens. The terministic screen, as coined and defined by Kenneth Burke, is a linguistic action that filters a perspective based on the sort of language, or terminology, one uses to describe it. As Burke explains, “[e]ven if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (1341). For Burke, it is the choice of language that defines and filters a perspective:

Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another. Also, many of the “observations” are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made. In brief, much that we take as observations about “reality” may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms. (1341)

In this way, the basic cookbook can be a terministic screen. Its use of visual and verbal modes works to filter a particular perspective of cooking especially suitable for the new home cook. It is this text/visual integration that is used in various ways through the book’s design to form screens and construct the reader’s way of seeing cooking. While I am using Burke’s concept of “terminology” broadly, to include visual components and visual/textual syntheses, its effect is much the same as the way a linguistic term filters and impacts one’s perceptions.

Prelli names this practice “verbally-directed ‘seeing,’” explaining that our lives are mediated by language. He notes that “without verbally-directed attention, much of what we do see would remain unseen” (12). This describes the act of following a recipe. If we didn’t know how to talk about the way to scald milk, then doing so would be a rare skill among cooks. Of
course, through trial and error (or accident) many cooks would be able to figure out through experience how to properly scald milk, but without a place in cookery discourse this technique would not be referred to in a recipe, and likely remain a secret technique of the masters—or at least an unknown phenomenon of the new cook who left the milk on the stove too long.

This is because, even though cooking is a physical act, the discourse came out of an oral culture. Sharing recipes and explaining techniques was a common form of communication before print media. Language has always been attached to cooking, for cooking has always been an act of sharing as much as it is an act of producing. Language, whether verbal or written, has always had an important place in cooking. In the same way, physical action is essential to the discourse as well. There is much in cooking that must be shown, or enacted, to fully comprehend its message. Cooking is a fully multimodal discourse, then, as the act balances the use of visual and verbal modes to communicate. Basic cookbooks demonstrate this balance, unlike many cookbooks which still rely on text-dominant methods of communication. Like the earlier example of the meat diagram, both modes are needed to successfully communicate. As terministic screens, both modes work to define and filter our perceptions about cooking.

Basic cookbooks construct these screens for several reasons. As a basic cookbook, the text functions as an encouragement to those who don’t like to cook or who have never cooked before. As a recruitment tool, the basic cookbook works to entice and attract new potential home cooks, making them understand that truly, like the title claims, “anyone can cook.” The text is simple and streamlined, the recipes clear and unfussy. Photography is used in these books more than in any other sort of cookbook (other than children’s cookbooks), as a way to visually demonstrate the skills. In order for these cookbooks to be successful in recruiting new home cooks, terministic screens must be used to filter the reader’s perceptions about cooking. Because
cooking is traditionally more of an art rather than a definite science, boundaries need to be set to avoid making the reader overwhelmed. Although cooking may afford endless possibilities of flavor combinations and experimentation with techniques, the beginning cook cannot learn successfully without clear rules and definitions. Therefore, terministic screens function in basic cookbooks as beneficial to the text’s purpose—as an aid in cookery education. In the following sections, I will explore the ways in which basic cookbooks construct these screens to successfully communicate the basics of cooking.

The Domestic Science Movement and Design Reform

Perhaps the most important function of a basic cookbook is its emphasis on definition. These cookbooks implicitly believe that definition—from explaining a term to standardizing a measurement—is the basis of cookery education. As a way of enabling a new cook’s competency level, definition helps to train newcomers to the discourse. Additionally, definition serves to enforce community boundaries, as it explicitly determines its discourse. For example, the glossary is an important section in basic cookbooks. The glossary, in which all cooking terms are defined and explained, is a valuable resource to new home cooks just learning the discourse. For example, one needs to know the word “mince” before one can perform the skill when called for in a recipe. Learning the vocabulary of cooking is essential to becoming a successful home cook, according to basic cookbooks. Because they believe definition is so important to cookery education, terminology is everywhere. While the basic cookbooks avoid specialized terminology (such as French cookery terms or other professional cooking terms), they do make sure to clearly label and define skills. Thus, screens are created in basic cookbooks to filter “cooking” as “a set of definitions to remember.” Instead of having limitless
possibilities and complete freedom in experimentation with ingredients, beginning cooks are rigidly guided in basic cookbooks.

These beliefs about cookery education are left over from the cookery reform movement during the late 19th-early 20th century in America. During this time, changes in social makeup and the economic system altered home life, making it exclusively a woman’s domain. With these changes came the concept of the “domestic space,” which dictated specific gender roles to women, particularly that of food preparation. While some women were overwhelmed by the amount of seemingly monotonous housework they were required to do (as there were few appropriate jobs for women outside of the home), others were motivated by these problems. Some women saw the domestic not as a prison, but as a venue for female agency. Thus was born a social movement, which allowed women to band together publicly for a common cause—to improve their lives. This movement—called the domestic science movement—allowed women to validate themselves as worthwhile and validate their roles as vital to the nation.

The goal of the domestic science movement was feminist in nature, as it worked to uplift housework by the use of science. They believed definition—and its result in precision and standardization—was the most effective way to teach new housewives how to cook. *The Boston Cooking School Cook-Book*, written in 1896 by the school’s president Fannie Farmer, was one of the most popular cookbooks of the time (and is still popular today). Embracing scientific principles and nutrition along with precise measurements, these recipes were much easier than ones in the past to reproduce without guesswork. Scholar Laura Shapiro explains that Farmer wrote the cookbook “to free its readers as much as possible from any moments of hesitation or uncertainty in the kitchen” (116). Farmer and other cooking schools increased their control over the task of preparing food by developing once-creative, artistic recipes into scientific formulas.
Compare the structure and content of the following recipe (Figure 15) for Queen Cake, written by Farmer, to the earlier 1615 example (Figure 13):

![Recipe Image](image.jpg)

**Figure 15 (Farmer 431)**

Farmer’s version of the same recipe standardized measurements for each ingredient, eliminating guesswork for the cook. Her instructions are simple and precise, attempting to make the recipe foolproof and easily reproducible. Furthermore, the new structure of the recipe takes advantage of the print medium, as the recipe lists ingredients in two columns above the narrative instructions. Farmer’s cookbook regulates the action of cooking through the use of specific measurements as well as a structured format.

Farmer, in her preface to the cookbook, outlined the beliefs of the domestic science movement, a reform movement for the standardization of cookery. Farmer explains that “during the last decade much time has been given by scientists to the study of foods and their dietetic value, and it is a subject which rightfully should demand much consideration from all.” She, along with other reformers, believed that the scientific focus could help to solve health issues of the day, resulting in a time when “mankind will eat to live, will be able to do better mental and physical work, and disease will be less frequent.” This moral and spiritual goal of the reform movement echoed other women’s movements of the time, which viewed women as the spiritual
centers of the home. Equated with spirituality was simplicity, the major goal of the domestic science movement (Shapiro 206).

This movement was created not only to standardize cookery practices, but also to change women’s beliefs about housekeeping. Domestic science reformer Catherine Beecher along with her sister, author Harriet Beecher Stowe, wrote that domestic work should be studied in order to dispel the common assumption that it was drudgery (Shapiro 29). In Beecher and Stowe’s 1869 book *The American Woman’s Home*, they attempt to raise housework to an honorable place, dedicating the book “to the women of America, in whose hands rest the real destinies of the republic, as moulded by the early training and preserved amid the maturer influences of home.” Beecher and Stowe, along with other domestic science reformers, believed women sealed the fate of the nation exclusively through their housework. In the authors’ introduction, they connect illness and evils to an ill-prepared housewife:

The authors of this volume, while they sympathize with every honest effort to relieve the disabilities and sufferings of their sex, are confident that the chief cause of these evils is the fact that the honor and duties of the family state are not duly appreciated, that women are not trained for these duties as men are trained for their trades and professions, and that, as the consequence, family labor is poorly done, poorly paid, and regarded as menial and disgraceful. (Beecher and Stowe 13)

Therefore, the authors believed, more attention needed to be paid to properly training women to keep house, as this would lead to happier and healthier lives for everyone, producing women who enjoy their labor and who feel their jobs are equal in importance to men. Education was emphasized in this reform movement, as it explained that women who relied on tradition without
understanding the basic principles of keeping house were ignorant of potential dangers and health hazards. One quote from the reform movement characterizes their belief about the importance of education: “the woman who boils potatoes year after year, with no thought of how or why, is a drudge, but the cook who can compute the calories of heat which a potato of given weight will yield, is no drudge” (qtd. in Shapiro 42). Farmer and others believed that if women were to understand the scientific principles of cookery, they would have a happier and healthier home, enjoying their job as a homemaker. DuSablon writes of the movement’s influence on housewives of the era, saying that “at best, they saved women’s lives, bestowing positive reinforcement and practical, orderly example” (60).

These principles of the domestic science movement still impact cookery discourse today. From the turn of the century cooking schools, we have standardized measurements: before this movement, amounts were described in relative terms, such as “pinch” or “handful.” Success was by chance; mastery was only gained through trial and error. The reform movement created screens to standardize and clearly define recipes, in order to eliminate guesswork. Standardization—which is now seen as stifling individuality—was enforced in all aspects, from terminology to format to measurements, as a way to make cooking simpler to learn. Thus, the basic cookbook relies on a standard format, clear definitions, and specific measurements today to teach new potential home cooks.

Perhaps the largest contribution to cookery discourse by the domestic science movement was the standardized recipe format. This movement pioneered the visually appealing structure as a response to the traditional narrative format. Arguing that the narrative format was difficult to use, with its relative measurements and vague explanations of processes, Farmer and fellow reformers chose to use the principles of design in combination with defined terms to develop a
more effective way to communicate a recipe. Thus, this movement constructed terministic screens in order to make cooking easier and more foolproof, simply by paying more attention to design. One of the biggest changes the new recipe format caused was the change in reading path. As the new format integrated visual and verbal modes, the reading path was now up for negotiation between reader and text. The reader could skim through the list of ingredients first, or skip to the process description, read it top to bottom and left to right, or begin reading at the final step. The spatially-conscious structure of the new format allowed for a different kind of reading, as the design encourages skimming and selective focus on sections rather than sentence-by-sentence reading. In this way, recipes became more useable through this reform, as it is easier to consult a recipe with separated sections for ingredients, steps, and tips, as compared to a recipe written in a narrative format.

Residue from the domestic science movement is still seen today in basic cookbooks, in their use of visual design. Taking after the reform movement’s emphasis on precision, most basic cookbooks include a set of photographs or drawings, demonstrating a cooking skill or process. Rather than relying on verbal details alone, basic cookbooks depend heavily on photography or detailed drawings to visually illustrate the process. The set of images is not merely supplemental to the text, but frequently communicates through physical demonstration what words alone cannot. Take, for example, a photo set on how to carve a turkey from Martha Stewart’s Cooking School (Figure 16). As a training manual, the purpose of MSCS is to introduce the potential home cook to common cooking skills, giving her a foundation from which to branch out to the more advanced skills called for in other cookbooks. Many of these basic skills are ones that cannot be defined solely in words: they must be visually demonstrated.
MSCS takes advantage of their large available publishing budget, creating 500 glossy, full-color pages with descriptions and illustrations on nearly every page.

**How to Carve a Turkey**

The best way to hold the turkey steady on a carving board is to use your hand instead of the carving fork. A carving fork, while useful for arranging the meat once it is carved, will pierce and tear the flesh and doesn’t provide the same grip. Do not use a serrated blade to cut, as it will also tear the flesh. With scissors, cut through the trussing, taking care to remove all of the string.

1. Remove the legs. Holding the tip of the drumstick with one hand, slice down through the skin between the leg and breast.
2. Pull the leg away from the breast, popping out the joint that attaches. Insert knife at joint, and cut to sever leg. Repeat on other side.
3. Separate drumstick from each thigh, cutting through joint.
4. Slice the thigh meat from the bone to remove.
5. Slice the thigh meat into pieces of desired thickness.
6. Split open the neck cavity with an oval incision that allows you to

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Figure 16 (Stewart 152)
The turkey carving photo set is a two-page spread, with captions running across the top that correspond to the ten 2-inch square photos running across the center of the page. Small red numbers pop out against the white background and black text, allowing the reader to easily find the corresponding caption to each photo. Photo sets in other basic cookbooks arrange their design differently, attaching the written caption directly to each picture. In this arrangement, the eye is drawn to the photographs first, with the written text secondary to the visual. The reader gains visual understanding, then may (or may not) refer to its caption for confirmation of what they saw. The amount of visual detail and breakdown of the process into brief, manageable steps aid in the recipe’s ability to use the integration of text and image to construct terministic screens. In this book, carving a turkey is a set of clear, definable steps, implying a single carving method with few options or alternatives. For the purposes of teaching new home cooks, providing clearly-defined and standardized processes helps with confidence.

As Hunter remarks in her article on English cookbook illustration from the 19th to mid 20th centuries, “pictures tell the story better than words” when demonstrating a skill (143). This principle developed out of the domestic science movement, as the women reformers often relied on engravings, charts, diagrams, and graphs to visually represent information. As the quantity and detail of cookery knowledge grew, these reformers turned to alternative page designs, motivated by finding more efficient and effective ways of conveying information (Tebeaux 177).

This is evident in basic cookbooks, as they always include a separate section on essential kitchen utensils, pots, and pans. All basic cookbooks begin with this section, as it was commonly included in most cooking school cookbooks of the domestic science movement. Page design to communicate this information is radically different with each cookbook. Working from the reform tradition of definition and clarity, photographs are most often used in this
section. Each photo or drawing is accompanied by a label, with a sentence or two of explanation about what the item is and how it should be used. Some books, such as *How to Boil Water* and *Betty Crocker’s Cooking Basics*, line up their photos or drawings, and include their labels and captions directly to the side or underneath the visual. *Anyone Can Cook* takes a spatial approach to design, as the photos appear in the background and in inset photos around the page, with attached captions nearby. *MSCS* includes a full-page photo of all the items, including labels superimposed upon the photograph to define each item. The opposing page includes detailed captions, discussing what the item is, what it’s used for, what kind to buy, and alternative items to purchase as well. Each of these page designs effectively define “essential” in the context of cooking equipment. This section is placed at the beginning, on the assumption that the reader—a new home cook just starting out—will consult this section for what to buy. Planning ahead like this makes the process simpler for the new home cook, so (it is hoped) they don’t get halfway through a recipe and realize they don’t own the right size of casserole dish.

It is important to note that these books have constructed screens to the extent that there really is a “right” size of casserole dish—most recommend the 9x13 and 8x8 glass pans for a first purchase, and say hold off buying a 8x11 until you find you like to bake—and do not take into consideration alternatives (which would be implicitly “wrong”). The definitions created by the domestic science reformers and perpetuated by contemporary basic cookbooks use the verbal and visual modes to construct a screen that essentializes cooking into a narrow, focused set of methods. Unlike cookery discourse, in which women constantly remediate recipes by revising and making do with what they have in their kitchen, basic cookbooks train new cooks by filtering their perspective into a standardized, defined format. This is not necessarily negative; as a teaching strategy it functions as a way to make cooking simple and accessible to people of all
skill levels. However, the rhetoric of basic cookbooks is much different from that of the shared verbal discourse of cooking.

Accessibility and Design

Food writer M.F.K Fisher, writing about proper recipe design, explains that “a recipe is supposed to be a formula, a means prescribed for producing a desired result, whether that be an atomic weapon, a well-trained Pekingese, or an omelet. There can be no frills about it, no ambiguities . . . and above all no ‘little secrets’” (20-21). For Fisher, recipes must be as simple to understand as possible. This aids not only in efficiency and usability (as described earlier), but also makes the recipe and discourse accessible to a wider audience. Accessibility is a major motivating factor in basic cookbook design. The discourse community, while made up of select members, is far from exclusive. Unlike the quasi-related discourse of professional chefs, the discourse of domestic cookery is open to all who may be interested. This characteristic is emphasized more often in basic cookbooks, possibly as a way to invite more people into the kitchen. As statistics often show, Americans have used their kitchens less and less over the decades. People are more apt to eat out, order fast food, or buy prepared dinners than ever before. While this is more directly related to changing economics and changes in mass food production and distribution, cookery discourse has reacted to these changes in eating habits. Many contemporary cookbooks advertise quick, easy, and inexpensive recipes, recipes made in the microwave, crock pot, or other time-saving appliance, or recipes made using prepared food. All of these are responses to the concern that people are not cooking anymore, or are not interested in cooking. Basic cookbooks show evidence of this sort of rhetoric in their emphasis on accessibility.
How do I measure things?

Although it's crucial to measure ingredients precisely when baking, learning to accurately measure for any kind of cooking helps ensure optimum results.

The first step to proper measuring is having the right tools. Check out page 11 for the specifics, but here's the most fundamental thing to know: Use dry measuring cups for dry ingredients and liquid measuring cups for liquids.

It's especially important when measuring flour to fluff it a little by gently stirring it with a spoon before spooning it into the cup. Use a spatula/spreader or a knife to level it rather than shaking off the excess. Shaking compacts the flour and you'll have too much.

Eventually—except for when you're baking—you won't have to measure everything. You'll have a feel for how much oil to add to the skillet when sautéing or how much salt to add to the soup to season it.

Measuring Math:
- 3 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon
- 16 tablespoons = 1 cup
- 1 tablespoon = 1/2 fluid ounce
- 1 cup = 1/2 pint = 8 fluid ounces

Flour
Before measuring, stir through the flour in the container to loosen it. Lightly spoon flour into a dry measuring cup, then level it off with a spatula or knife.

Brown Sugar
Spoon brown sugar into a dry measuring cup. Pack it firmly into the cup until it is level.

Shortening
Spoon shortening into a dry measuring cup. Pack it firmly into the cup and level off the top.

Liquids
Measure liquids into glass measuring cups. Get at eye level with the cup and fill just to the measuring line.

Butter
Butter sticks have tablespoon markings on the wrapper—8 per stick. Just cut off what you need.
A frequent type of visual characteristic to basic cookbooks is the action still, a single picture meant to represent a step or technique in the cooking process. As it is representing action, the photo (as in Figure 17) most often focuses close up on the bowl, measuring cup, or pan involved, with a person’s hands showing. These hands involved in the action are usually unidentified, and appear unattached to any body. The visual focuses on the action performed, the object encompassing the majority of the space with the hands at the perimeter. From a reader’s standpoint, it is as if the reader is facing the actor and peering closely at the action performed. Kress and Van Leeuwen analyze photos with similar layouts to these in their book *Reading Images*, explaining that in any visual narrative, a message is being communicated. They analyze vectors in visual narratives, noting the angle and direction of action. In this sort of visual narrative, the viewer is implicitly present in the narrative, as the invisible onlooker and learner. The motivation for these action stills is the reader, thus the reader is implicated in the action of the visual narrative. Through this implication, the reader is asked to participate—by synthesizing the visual with the related verbal description, the reader gains the required knowledge and mentally completes the remainder of the (frozen) action. Kress and Van Leeuwen describe this kind of visual narrative as an “offer,” which “offers participants to [the] viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally, as though they were specimens in a display case” (124). This offer, as it is set in the context of a recipe, asks the reader to do more than observe—it is an invitation to action. The invitation is open to any reader, with no exceptions, allowing the reader access through visual interpretation and involvement.

This invitation by the visual narratives throughout basic cookbooks aids in making the information accessible to people of all skill levels and backgrounds, economic classes and races.
Basic cookbooks imply, as the title of one states, that “anyone can cook.” This implication is borne out in their use of human participants in visuals. While some basic cookbooks choose to use a single model’s hands (or a celebrity, such as Martha Stewart) to demonstrate techniques in their action stills, a few basic cookbooks use these photos rhetorically, as a way of creating wider accessibility. In the texts *How to Boil Water* and *Anyone Can Cook*, visual action narratives show hands and bodies of a wide range of people—young, old, Black, Latino, Caucasian, male, and female; some are dressed casually (football jersey and jeans are visible in the background of one action narrative), some wear button-down shirts, others wear jewelry or watches, many wear aprons. A review of both basic cookbooks indicates that their models are widely diverse in age, gender, and race. While the models still remain anonymous (faces are rarely shown, except in eating poses), their diversity in these texts adds new strength to the invitation to action offered by the visual narrative. Readers of most cookbooks see white, young, female hands demonstrating cooking actions. In contrast, readers of these basic cookbooks see middle-aged, football-jersey-wearing men and young Latino women demonstrating techniques. To have these bodies in these roles sends the message to readers that, truly, anyone can cook. The people in these action narratives, even though their faces are hidden, are just like us. As we identify with the person in the picture, cooking in turn becomes more accessible to us. We can relate to them on a personal level, which encourages us to try cooking—hey, if that guy can do it . . . .

The most common type of visual found in any cookbook is a photograph of the completed dish. If a recipe includes only one photo, it is normally of the dish either in a serving bowl/platter or served on an individual plate. These photos are most often the most detailed and largest of any other visual component. While they most often serve to illustrate a dish, these photos rhetorically address the viewer in similar ways as the action stills do. Hunter, writing
about *Good Housekeeping’s Picture Cookery*, notes that the pictures present in that text help the reader to “gain confidence and knowledge only after they have seen exactly how to carry out a process, and what the finished product should really look like” (143). Similar to the precision emphasized by the domestic science reformers, these photos of completed dishes aid in making the text accessible by demonstrating results ahead of time for the reader. The reader then is more comfortable with the recipe, knowing what to expect. This interplay of visual and verbal modes work as screens to define cooking as easy and accessible.

The “New Economy” and Design

As I began this chapter, I explained what I like best about reading cookbooks—the pictures. I often browse through a cookbook, stopping just long enough on each page to admire the juicy roast, the perfectly tossed salad, the glossy chocolate candies, or the brightly colored steamed vegetables. Frequently, I choose recipes based on the appearance of the final dish. (This works best when I’m hungry.) Rather than get into too much technical detail of the written recipe itself, the strongest messages come from the photographs nearby. For example, in *Martha Stewart’s Cooking School*, the photographs of completed dishes are printed on glossy, full-color pages. In one recipe for grilled leg of lamb (Figure 18), the finished photograph takes up the entire 8x10 page, in extreme close up, so that the slices of crusty, juicy lamb are life-size. They sit on a white oval platter on a marble countertop, with a sprig of rosemary for garnish and glass cup of herb/garlic marinade on the side (170). The photograph is in such intricate detail, juicy and delicious, that the reader can almost taste it. Photographs like these do more than demonstrate for the reader what they should expect it to look like when finished—they glamorize cooking. The glorious, tasty details urge the (now hungry) reader to want to make the dish and
experience it for themselves. In this way, these photographs are pornographic, vividly transforming food into gastroporn simply by eliciting desire from the reader.

Figure 18 (Stewart 170)
Appearance is everything in basic cookbooks. Visual narratives reflect the precision and definition of the written text, demonstrating perfect, idealized dishes. Nothing is out of place in these photographs—the food is clean, neat, and perfect. Though the home cook can never hope to achieve the same visual appearance with their food as in the book, this reality is forgotten. What is more important is the illusion the book perpetuates for the reader. As the food is idealized, screens are constructed to connect cooking with glamour. As an illusion, the photograph “must be constructed to conform to the viewer’s perceptions of what food should look like” (Hunter 153). Therefore, cultural expectations of food appearance dictate the design of food photography. Hunter notes that in early cookbooks photographs were taken of the real dish—no decorations or glamorizing involved. In recent decades, professional photography and food design have advanced cookbook visuals, enticing the reader to try the recipes. As Hunter observes:

An inquiring eye notes the lacquered shininess of a roast, the too-bright-to-be-cooked vegetables in the Scotch broth, the more subtle message of exquisitely decorated petit fours on an ordinary wire rack telling you that you too can carry out this delicate task. The sophistication of approach, despite its illusions, conveys more about the delight in the taste and smell of the food than the naïve representation of many earlier photographs. (144)

The beautiful, idealized visuals function as an invitation to the reader. The reader is encouraged to enjoy the beauty further by participating in the cooking process and creating their very own good looking dish. The food offers itself to the reader as a visual experience, inviting them to take a bite. Very often in photographs of completed dishes, the food is served on an individual plate, such as a slice of cake or a square of lasagna. Utensils are nearby, as if urging the reader
to reach through the page and steal a taste. Enticing and pleasurable, food photographs equate food with desire.

In his essay “Ornamental Cookery,” Roland Barthes describes the unnatural beauty of food photography in magazines like *Elle*, which use ornamentation rhetorically as a distraction from reality. Barthes describes “this persistence of glazing”—the use of garnishes, sauces, dressings, and decorations—as a cookery “based on coatings and alibis…disguise” (78). The ornamentation and beautification of food, Barthes posits, recreates reality (79). With its focus on garnishings, this sort of ornamental cookery distracts the reader from the real problems concerning food, such as affordability or access. For Barthes, this is “dream-like cookery [. . .] a cuisine of advertisement” (79). Similarly, contemporary basic cookbooks use appearance to advertise and attract readers, to distract them from reality (high prices, hard to find ingredients) and “sell” them on cooking.

*Martha Stewart’s Cooking School* in particular attempts to distract the reader from reality through its use of screens in the form of appearance. As a book by Martha Stewart, it is expected to be a visual representation of perfection—the best utensils, the highest-quality ingredients, the top-of-the-line kitchen. A reader can fantasize about their dream kitchen while reading this book. She always has the perfect pan and right ingredients—and the skills to match. Rather than discouraging readers from trying to attain perfection, the sheer beauty of *MSCS* makes the reader desire and even covet what is shown in the book, which encourages her to at least attempt the desired recipe.

This sort of fantasy, or Barthes’s “dream-like cookery,” is upheld particularly in the photo sets involving how to work with meat. In one photo set instructing the reader how to cut up a chicken, the implausible cleanliness of the photos is noticeable. The model demonstrates
how and where to cut a chicken for use as individual pieces. The chicken is completely clean and dry—most noticeable is the lack of blood. The model wears a white apron and cuts the raw chicken on a light-colored wood chopping block—and both stay surprisingly spotless throughout the process. Only the smallest specks of raw chicken meat stuck to the chef’s knife indicate that the food is real, and not plastic. These violent actions called for by the text (“Pull the leg outward until the thighbone pops out of its socket”) are not reflected in the photographs (110). Everything is clean, and neat, and in order. This gives the appearance of simplicity, which encourages the reader to try cutting a chicken herself. As these photos are all advertisements, they succeed in sending the message that working with raw meat is simple and not too messy—all of which are important for a beginning home cook.

All of this relates to the changing nature of cooking in our society. As Catterall observes, “[cooking] is already changing from an everyday skill to a specialist weekend activity” (32). Instead of assuming that home cooks will be preparing meals three times a day as their livelihood, spending all day in the kitchen, basic cookbooks share the general consensus of contemporary cookery discourse that cooking is a choice. With the incredible variety of fast food, sit-down restaurants, frozen dinners, and takeout, cooking at home is only one choice out of many options in today’s economy. Unlike the assumptions held by the domestic science movement, which expected their tutees to use the skills they learned every single day as a way of life, today’s basic cookbooks present cooking as an interesting hobby to take up. Cooking food for ourselves is not a necessity—there is always someone else to do it for us. Rather than stressing the importance of effective food preparation as a way of survival, cooking is now merely a fun activity, like quilting or needlework has become. Food is entertainment—and nowhere is this clearer than in these basic cookbooks. Terministic screens filter out the messes,
the blood, and the mistakes, leaving for the reader only beauty. As pornography replaces real intimacy with fantasy, cookbook visuals substitute for the act of cooking, allowing the reader to fantasize beautifully prepared dishes in graphic, explicit ways. This use of gastroporn makes cooking into a fantasy, allowing the reader to be satisfied with visual substitutions for the real thing. Indeed, appearance is not everything, it is the only thing.

Conclusion

Basic cookbooks, as they construct screens to define and create a specific perspective on cooking, generally function as arguments in support of home cooking. Their arguments, created in word and image and focused through terministic screens, attempt to appeal to a wide audience of readers, who are all potential home cooks. Through their use of visual narratives, basic cookbooks emphasize definition, accessibility, and appearance to encourage readers to cook. As an invitation to the reader, these narratives use multimodal techniques to inform and entice the reader into cooking. Instructions are clear and precise, photographs attract, inform, entice, and offer to the reader membership in a community. Bright colors and pretty pictures decorate the narrative. Reading a basic cookbook makes cooking (or fantasizing about cooking) fun.

“Fun” is a key goal to these cookbooks, as the visual narratives implicitly respond to the cultural rejection of “women’s work” as boring, miserable drudgery. Similar to the motivations of the domestic science movement, basic cookbooks also attempt to take the drudgery out of domestic work and uplift it. In the way these books present cooking, it is bright, beautiful, colorful, and active. Through their rhetoric of accessibility, they attempt to divide the negative connotation of “women’s work” from cooking, making cooking appealing and fun. To do this, though, the basic cookbooks forget their roots. Cooking is visually and verbally lacking gender, despite the fact that women have been masters (and prisoners) of the kitchen for centuries. The
original oral culture of cookery was that of women, sharing food, ideas, and friendship with other women around the kitchen table. The basic cookbooks take up the call put out by second-wave feminist Jenefer Coates, who in her 1974 essay “Shared Housework,” where she argues that all people should be responsible for domestic work, not just women. She explains that “the only way to avoid being cast in the traditional role of household drudge is to refuse to play the part: women must withdraw, Lysistrata-style, their domestic favors. [. . .] The kitchen must become [. . .] neutral territory” (qtd. in Forster 161). In these basic cookbooks, women are present equally with men, and no assumptions are made regarding the gender, or gender role, of the reader. While this may be seen in some ways as “progress,” it also ignores an entire tradition and community founded by women. To uplift women’s work by taking the women out only hurts the discourse community, as ignorance of a tradition does not address the real problem still present in society—the devaluing of women’s communicative practices. While basic cookbooks must be applauded for making cooking so accessible and attractive to the reader, their ignorance of women’s contributions to this discourse—contributions which made these publications exist—only serves to devalue women’s work further.

This is not to say that basic cookbooks are without merit—they are, as strong arguments in support of home cooking. It is indeed true that anyone can cook, and the way these cookbooks send this message through screens constructed by verbal/visual synthesis is fascinating. However, to share and teach this discourse without acknowledging past influences is detrimental to the larger community of cooks. Even so, there are many alternative discourses intervening in the discourse community today, particularly since the birth of Food Network and the rise of the celebrity chef. Food is becoming associated more and more with entertainment. It is also a boon to capitalism, as products and shows have made millions of dollars. In my final chapter, I will
explore some of the current discourses intervening on the traditionally female discourse community, and how they each are remediations of what I believe is the most important characteristic of cookery discourse—bodily rhetoric.
CHAPTER V. DESSERT: ACTS OF COOKING: FOOD DEMONSTRATION AND TELEVISION SPECTACLE

... And this is how I too learned to make biscuits from my mother:

‘Let me show you how to make breakfast biscuits from a recipe handed down by your grandmother. First, you throw a dab of flour into a bowl and…’

‘How much is a dab?’ I interrupted.

‘A dab is about a handful or two.’

‘My handful is bigger than yours.’

‘Okay, a dab minus a pinch!’

‘What’s a pinch?’

‘Here, let me put in the flour. You add a smidgen of shortening.’

‘Give me a hint. Is a smidgen bigger than a bread box?’

‘A smidgen is a smidgen’ she said, plopping in a lump. ‘Get the salt.’

‘A pinch?’ I asked.

‘No, no, just a dash. Now a speck of baking powder, a hint of parsley and a speck of parmesan before you dot each one with a sliver of butter.’

‘How much water did you add?’ I asked.

‘Only a particle...if you put in a morsel, it’ll be too sticky to roll out. Got it?’

I slowly nodded my head and said it had all been very interesting. But I hadn’t fooled her for a minute. She knew I hadn’t written down one ingredient she told me that her mother had told her...etc. (Farmfolk Favorites)

The above anecdote, printed between recipes in my Grandma’s well-loved community cookbook, recalls an event familiar to many learning to cook: cookery training by family members, home cooks who have never written a recipe or consulted a cookbook. While this anecdote finds the humor in the arbitrary measurements of home cooking, it does communicate the set of skills involved when engaging in the act of cooking. This learning process, handed down orally through generations of cooks, is decidedly material. Each of the measures given in the above example is relative, lacking the standardization available in cookbooks today. Instead of relying on widely-available measures like cups, teaspoons, tablespoons, and the like, the measures used here assume experience, as these measurements cannot be described in written text—only through physical gestures. In this example, the learner must see and feel the
ingredients to fully understand the measurements. As a result, this embodied knowledge is learned through action, rendering need for a written text obsolete. Even though in the above story the narrator is stymied by the ingredient amounts and instructions, the reader may infer that the narrator will never record the recipe. She has been taught more by experience than by language, and will continue to pass the recipe along orally as an embodied text.

To a new cook, this embodied literacy is frustrating to adopt. Because the measurements and steps are unable to be communicated in precise language, remembering how much salt is in a “pinch” or flour in a “dab” requires the body as well as the mind. Amounts are estimated, and phrases like “to taste” and “cook until golden brown” are frequent, a type of embodiment sometimes found in print recipes. Skill is obtained through sensory experience, of feeling the dough in one’s hands, smelling the caramelized sugar with one’s nose, or watching the turkey roast with one’s eyes. For centuries, cooking has been done with the body. Even now, with scientific precision and ingredients measured to the 1/8 of a teaspoon, recommended practice is still to taste the dish intermittently as it is being prepared. Tasting, smelling, looking, touching, or generally engaging with the food is essential to successful cooking. As multimodal texts, cookbooks and the surrounding discourse community rely on bodily rhetoric, as gesture is a key discursive mode. The gestural act of food preparation is a grammar of sorts, as it uses bodily movement to communicate its process. The body has been a key component in the kitchen throughout the history of cookery discourse. The body has continued to remain an important presence from its origins in oral instruction to its remediation into print and, currently, television programming. In this final chapter, I explore the physical act of cooking and the ways in which the body has been remediated—or excised—from act to page to screen. I argue that the body is central to cookery discourse, even as gestures are being lost to developments in literacy and
standardized cooking practices. I also analyze the role of the body in cooking on the screen, as television has adopted and adapted the cooking act. I then conclude this project, summarizing my findings and exploring possibilities for future scholarship in this area. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter is to establish physical action as an important mode in cookery discourse.

Cooking as Physical Act

We cook with our bodies. This statement may seem apparent and even unnecessary, as clearly we must use our bodies to function in a kitchen space, to sort our ingredients, combine them, and cook them into a dish. Even so, our bodies are in fact much more deeply engaged in the cooking process. To say that “we cook with our bodies” does not just refer to the use of our hands and eyes to follow a recipe and complete a task, but it instead refers to the gestures required in food preparation. The act of cooking—and I use the word “act” intentionally here, referring to a performance—engages all of our senses. Our eyes, nose, ears, hands, fingers, tongue, arms and legs are fully responsible for the preparation of a dish. When our whole bodies are involved, questions of “how much” and “how long” are irrelevant: our bodies and our senses tell us the way to cook.

Few cooks can truthfully say they learned to cook entirely from reading a cookbook or training manual. For the majority of home cooks, skills are learned not through language but through bodily experience. Even for those who “learned” from a printed page, much of this learning process came from the activity of cooking itself. While texts supplement the learning process, training comes through action. No one can be a cook exclusively in theory. Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard explain that cooking is equally mental and manual, a balance between mind and body. Cooking, according to Certeau and Giard, is a series of learned gestures. These gestures are developed through action, through engaging the body in cooking. Cooking gestures
are learned through imitation, such as direct apprenticeship of another cook, as in the earlier anecdote. Gestures are also learned through memory, such as remembering a technique after an observation. Trial and error is another frequent way to learn the act of cooking, which involves experimenting with gesture to achieve a desired result.

Debra Hawhee elaborates on the link between training of the mind and of the body in her work on the connection between athletic and rhetorical training in ancient Greece. She explains that their pedagogical strategies are parallel, as the manner in which athletic and rhetorical skills are learned and described via movement (145). Similarly, cookery training is a blend of mental and manual approaches, connected through their foundations in physical action. Hawhee notes that in ancient Greece, a persuasive encounter “is more than perception—mind meets (and masters) matter—instead, it is a bodily production, a mutually constitutive struggle among bodies and surrounding forces” (150). In this way, the body complicates the communicative process, as physical gesture extends beyond the boundaries of language.

Carole Blair, in her scholarship on the material rhetoric of memorial sites, works to interrogate the role of the body through a re-valuing of the material. According to Blair, rhetoric is often understood narrowly—as appealing only to the minds of an audience. Blair explains that in fact:

Rhetoric of all kinds acts on the whole person—body as well as mind—and often on the person situated in a community of other persons. There are particular physical actions the text demands of us: ways it inserts itself into our attention, and ways of encouraging or discouraging us to act or move, as well as think, in particular directions. (46)
In this way, analyzing texts from a material perspective can help to develop a more accurate definition of rhetoric. Realizing this fact will work to broaden the scope and possibilities of rhetoric—once rhetoric is brought back into the material domain, what new potential might be unlocked? This question, I believe, can be explored through a re-establishing of the material aspects in cookery discourse. Cooking is rooted in material culture and cannot be separated from its materiality. No matter how the body may be devalued in favor of the mind, physical and material aspects are vital to the discourse. Re-valuing the body will work to establish cookery discourse as multimodal.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, this discourse is perpetuated by social practices. Recipes and techniques have been shared among women for centuries before writing. Even today, recipes are shared between friends and family, neighbors and strangers using a variety of technologies. Much of this sharing involves oral practice, recipes verbally communicated between women. Originating from oral culture, cooking relies on memory to be able to successfully hand down each recipe from mother to daughter or neighbor to neighbor. These memory practices depend on physical action. Walter Ong explains that in primary oral cultures (cultures which lack a standardized writing system), language relates directly to action—words are dynamic (32). In the same way, cooking memory aids involve action. Before women had the ability to write down specific measurements and instructions for a recipe, this communication was exclusively in the realm of action. Knowledge and understanding were relayed through gesture. Recipes were instead a series of bodily gestures, involving the senses and invoking physical action.

From these roots, cookery discourse still relies heavily on gesture. As communicated in the opening anecdote, this fact makes it difficult to learn for those unfamiliar with the discourse.
I also remember being frustrated with my Grandma’s tendency to memorize all her recipes. After all, she cooked every day, making the same 50-60 recipes in rotation according to needs, economy, and availability. As she would say, in response to my requests for her written recipe, “Elizabeth, you don’t need to write it down.” And she rarely did. She recalls learning how to cook from her mother (who also rarely wrote down a recipe or consulted a cookbook), who described measurements as relative to her own pots and pans. When pestered into recording her recipes on note cards, her mother would use frustratingly vague statements such as “bake until done” and “enough to fill my granite pan” which, to an inexperienced cook, were not helpful.

The discourse’s reliance on gestures actually impedes literate communication, as much of what constitutes gesture resists language. Krishendu Ray explains that “cooking is mostly about the body doing stuff that is unarticulated” (59). Bodily actions resist language. Thus, any written text of a recipe is only an approximation of the act, and cannot fully describe it. From this perspective, written recipes do not constitute the discourse, but only recall performance. Certeau and Giard note that cooking involves a “relationship to things” that the recipe does not communicate (200). From the way one flips an omelet to finding if a loaf has raised sufficiently, from testing a cake’s doneness to crimping a pie crust, much of these skills rely on bodily practice rather than written knowledge. As a result, this interaction between the body and food is left out of written recipes, reducing the physical experience to concrete, standardized descriptions and measures. As the late food and wine critic Richard Olney wrote, “I often feel guilty when writing recipes. To capture what one can of elusive, changing experience—a fabric of habit, intuition, and inspiration of the moment—and imprison it in a chilly formula composed of cups, tablespoons, inches, and oven temperatures, is like robbing a bird of flight” (Johnson 11).
The body’s role in cooking, while centrally important, is largely forgotten. Since they are mostly unarticulated, cooking gestures are frequently overshadowed by linguistic descriptions of the action. In this way, cooking becomes more text-based. As a literate culture emerges, the physical gestures and sensual actions of cooking have been ignored in favor of concrete, specific, written descriptions: a privileging of mind over body. While this came about in a culture that—because of increased division of labor and demands on women’s domestic roles—valued simple, quick, and easily replicable dishes, this shapes the way we think about cooking. Rather than a set of gestures and embodied knowledge, cookery discourse becomes a standardized formula. This impacts cookery discourse by narrowing what is valued as literacy. Cooking is rarely considered multimodal, because it is almost exclusively represented in writing. As I intend to argue, cookery discourse entails rhetoric that deals equally with the mind and body. I explore this rhetoric in an attempt to re-form the role of bodily gesture in cooking, as it is communicated in both print and television.

**Gestures in Print**

While the printed recipe text may seem far removed from bodily gesture and embodied experience, there is actually quite a bit of the physical and sensual act relayed in the standardized print format which remains as residue of oral culture. While recipes are unable to convey the entire cooking performance with any degree of accuracy, they do position themselves as part of the cooking process. According to Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, a recipe is a composition in the form of instructions which, when followed, its performance creates a separate culinary composition on its own (21). While the recipe is not the act of cooking itself, it is a prompt for action. Recipes call on the reader to engage her body through gestures imitated, remembered,
and improvised in a performance of creation. The recipe, as a set of instructions, uses writing to bring forth the body.

Recipes function as prompts for future action. While they do not constitute acts on their own, by virtue of their existence, recipes position themselves in the cooking process. As the standardized format of recipes includes a title, list of ingredients and their amounts, and process, the majority of the information provided in the recipe is most useful prior to cooking or right at the beginning of the cooking process. When using a recipe for an omelet, for example, the majority of its function is in the first step: the ingredients. Less attention and detail is paid to the method or the process, particularly because this is often where gestures lack written translation. Most of the recipe deals with the precision of the ingredients, their amounts, and when they are used in the process. This information is easier to convey in language than other parts of the cooking process, such as the method. The “what” or “where” of a recipe is focused upon, since getting into explanations of “when” or “how” becomes quite fuzzy in linguistic terms. Because of this inherent limitation of language, recipes position themselves early on in the cooking process, focusing on their strengths of listing ingredients, relative amounts, and a basic sketch of the process. Recipes are an initial guide, calling the reader to future action, yet are rarely able to walk the reader completely through the cooking process. Positioning themselves in this way, recipes implicitly acknowledge the physical act involved in cooking.

Recipes also acknowledge the role of the body in the cooking process through its use of language. Since they are prompts to action, the kind of verbs used in recipes assumes physicality and names gesture. Chop, slice, tap, beat, stir, spoon, whip, combine, pack, flip, fill, sprinkle—each of these verbs communicate bodily movement. An engagement with utensils and ingredients is described in terms of gesture, while at the same time calling on the body to
perform. Recipes do not just suggest action, either. By using the imperative form of action verbs, recipes become more like requests or even commands for physical performance. Action is demanded by a recipe, implicitly acknowledging its own limitation to convey gesture and create the dish. The body is invoked through a recipe’s language, as it works to enact performance by commanding action.

Possibly the most obvious way gesture is recognized in the act of cooking is through a recipe’s measurements. As discussed earlier in this chapter, bodily measurements have been used and continue to be used to communicate ingredient amounts. Handful, pinch, touch, shake, palmful, and other descriptors connect the process of measuring to the body. Phrases like “the size of peas,” “until golden brown,” or “enough to fill a large stockpot” describe visual cues in relation to objects or physical concepts of size and color. Before measuring cups and spoons were invented, the question of “how much” needed to be relayed in a useful way, thus these descriptions were connected directly to the physical action of cooking, as it engaged the body and its senses.

However, measurements like these lack precision. One person’s “pinch” might be larger than another’s, and the definition of a “large stockpot” changes from kitchen to kitchen. Seeing these relative measurements as discouraging and confusing to new cooks, domestic scientist Fannie Farmer worked with members of her Boston Cooking School in the late 19th century to standardize recipes. At this same time in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, accurate measuring devices such as cups and spoons began to be mass produced, further fueling the desire for standardized measurements. Farmer, known in her time as “the mother of level measurements,” created a system of measuring ingredient amounts that was relatively foolproof. It was at this time that science began to be esteemed in regard to cooking, as its precision took
the guesswork out of cooking. At the same time, gesture began to lose favor, and fewer recipes describe measurements as “handfuls” or “enough to taste,” instead using specific amounts such as “1/2 cup” or “1/4 teaspoon.”

In a preface to her bestselling cookbook, Rachael Ray asks that readers use “Rachael’s Way” of measuring: “Don’t measure with instruments, use your hands. You’re not baking or conducting experiments for the government—just feel your way through” (Ray, Classic). Even so, Ray includes an equivalency chart, equating “handful” with “3 tablespoons,” effectively privileging scientific measurement over gesture again.
Recipes, as they exist currently in written and print format, reflect their influences throughout their history. Traces of their oral roots are still apparent, as the physical body is called to action through language. Changes in formatting and standardization are reflected, as measurements erase the bodily-estimated amounts in favor of scientific precision. It is this focus on precision in recipe writing that has increased the mind/body split in cookery discourse.

Figure 19 shows a cake diagram, a type of recipe format discussed by food studies scholar Laura Shapiro, which was created by food companies in order to advertise and sell their products. Used only briefly in the early 20th century, Shapiro remarks that those using these diagrams “were continually being misled by the magic of charts, as if the imposition of headings, subheadings, ruled lines, and neat boxes really could subdue all that remained stubbornly uncontrollable in the kitchen” (Perfection Salad 206). These diagrams attempt to erase all traces of the human element in cooking, reducing the dynamic physical process into a quasi-chemistry formula. Shapiro explains that recipes such as these were attractive to home cooks, as they implied an easy perfection and constant success in the kitchen, something gesture and sense alone could not guarantee. Even as these recipe formulas rely on science and standardization to sell home cooks on foolproof methods, their spatially-conscious format acknowledges the reality that cookery discourse does not exist exclusively on paper, but has a third dimension. Here, too, printed recipe texts show traces of physical gesture and the active space of the kitchen, demonstrating the ways in which the discourse exists beyond the limits of language.

All of this is evidence to the point that recipes are difficult, if not impossible, to translate entirely into print. As demonstrated through the examples in Chapter 2, centuries of print have continued to revise the recipe to make it more effective, efficient, attractive, and accessible. Even now, recipes are being revised in order to create texts which are more accurate—though
accuracy is a relative concept. As Ong explains, the nature of print is to standardize and make final, “enforcing a feeling of closure” (130). Indeed, the medium of print enforces control and implies an end product. Print is created once, and copied over and over again, gaining a sense of closure and security with each run of the press. From the previous discussion, though, the goals of print are at odds with the nature of cooking. Rooted in the body, cooking gestures are dynamic and flexible, inviting revision. Through its social, visual, and physical properties, cookery discourse undergoes a constant process of “making do.” In contrast, print works towards finality, privileging product over process. This creates a dilemma: how can cookery discourse be represented as a literate text? When so much of what goes into the cooking process is gestural and sensual, how can a recipe attempt to use literacy to convey its process? To some extent, the answer might lie in the visual texts of Chapter 4, located within the increasing trend of photographs, charts and graphics in contemporary cookbooks. However, even visuals in these recipes are mediated, labeled, and interpreted through print, effectively re-establishing the split between mind and body as printed factual information is privileged over visuals. To attempt to solve this dilemma, remediation must go further.

Food TV: From Page to Screen

In the past half century, cookery discourse has been revolutionized with the birth of a new medium: television. Currently on television, there are cooking shows available for any interest: grilling, baking, cake decorating, Italian, French, Chinese, Mexican, Indian, American South, quick cooking, cooking with processed foods, cooking with children, and so forth. One cable station is devoted to food programming, many of which primarily involve cooking: the Food Network. Begun in 1993, the cable channel has gone on to produce incredibly popular shows, making celebrities out of their chefs and bestsellers out of their cookbooks and DVD
collections. In this study, I limit my analysis to a particular sub-genre of food programming, the television chef show. This kind of program is characterized by a chef in front of the camera, preparing a dish for the home viewers or studio audience. The main goal of this show is to demonstrate the cooking process, though the host may also be concerned with presentation, meal planning, ingredient quality, and cooking technique. Some examples of this sub-genre are *The French Chef*, *30-Minute Meals with Rachael Ray*, and *Martha Stewart Living*. In this chapter, I look at the progression of the television chef show from its origins with Julia Child in the 1960s on PBS to the current plethora of entertainment-focused chef shows on cable TV, looking at how gesture is used and remediated for rhetorical impact.

Though it would seem that the medium of television would be exclusively visual and lack the necessary physical components of cooking, in fact television works to construct feelings and senses that it is unable to directly provide through its screen. John Ellis, in his work *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, explores Williams’s theory that television constructs a sense of the viewer as witness. Ellis notes that television, unable to convey the senses of smell and touch, substitutes feelings of presence and proximity to make up for this lack, in effect constructing the TV viewer as a witness to screen events (35). Berenstein explains that since the early days of television, the medium has been associated with liveness, immediacy, and intimacy (26). These characteristics work together to make viewers associate television with reality. Even though television is only a screen through which viewers can see news reports, comedies, or educational training, it works to construct feelings in the viewer to make up for its own limitations. Food television remediates cookery discourse in order to construct the viewer’s sense of witness.
One important part of this construct is the sense of liveness on television. This comes from television’s beginnings as a live medium, where all shows were performed or reported live, similar to the radio. Even so, this construct still exists without live programming, as the vast majority of television is pre-taped, including cooking shows. This impression of liveness as created by television makes the viewer/witness believe she is seeing reality, which thus imparts a truth-value to the medium. While news reports are perhaps the best illustrations of this construct, as they use their reports, location shots, and timing to create a sense of liveness and reality, cooking shows also exhibit this element. Back in the early days of cooking shows when Julia Child began demonstrating her recipes for viewers, television was live. Julia taped her episodes in a single take, and was broadcast to thousands of homes at the same time. This meant that the process for creating the dish needed to be timed down to the second, so as to fit everything in the allotted time without editing. From this format came a conscious sense of timing in the cooking program. Even today, with pre-taped and edited cooking programs, hosts still construct a sense of immediacy by performing the recipe as we watch. The effect of spontaneity is still evident, as most shows are ad-libbed (or appear to be so) by the host, who casually talks to the camera, audience, or assistant. Mistakes happen, and are handled by the host without editing. Julia’s mythical dropping of the chicken during a taping of The French Chef constructed liveness for her viewers, making them as witnesses to a real event.

These feelings of liveness are also related to television’s construct of proximity (Berenstein 31). Particularly in cooking shows, the viewer/witness feels as if they are part of the performance. Most often, cooking show hosts speak directly to the camera, in an attempt to connect personally to the audience. Even if the host has an assistant or guest, the host will dialogue with them as well as speak directly to the audience. Conversation is the most
important—and constant—part of a cooking show, as it is used by the host to fill the silences during the cooking process, when nothing truly exciting (at least, not by television standards) is happening in the pot or oven. During these times, hosts will provide additional information about the ingredients, suggestions for variations on the recipe, ideas for presentation and menu planning, personal stories, or recommendations concerning proper technique. In this respect, television cooking shows can resemble real-life cooking demonstrations, as the viewer/witness feels like they could be observing a friend preparing a dish in their own kitchen.

Camera angles also aid in giving the viewer/witness a sense of proximity and, in turn, reality. Most of the time, the camera is looking directly at the host, positioned on the other side of the countertop. In traditional cooking shows, which are taped in a studio on a set, cameras are fixed in one general direction towards the host, so as not to disturb the construct of the fourth wall of the “kitchen.” 30-Minute Meals with Rachael Ray, The French Chef, and others use this technique, which is similar to camera work on situation comedies. Cooking shows such as Ina Garten’s Barefoot Contessa, Boy Meets Grill with Bobby Flay and Robin Miller’s Quick Fix Meals are taped in real, home kitchens or outdoor spaces, and the cameras here travel around the space, giving a sense of the space’s dimension. In either type of kitchen set, cameras often use close-ups to illustrate details about the process, such as the proper way to hold a knife for chopping. These close-ups are prompted by the host, as they offer a technique or point out a slight nuance in the cooking process. Close-ups like these seem natural during the program, as if in response to the viewer/witness’s wish to see more. Cameras also use different kinds of close-up angles, such as a shot from above when looking into a stockpot or pie crust. Camera angles play a large part in Boy Meets Grill, where host Bobby Flay never addresses the camera, preferring to direct his commentary towards his guest. Handheld camera work, with odd angles,
quick cuts, and shaking make the viewer feel as if they are spying on a private space, an effect which only heightens the perceived immediacy and proximity of the performance. Camera work on Flay’s show parallels the sort found in documentaries and investigative journalism, both genres in which proximity and reality are esteemed. In an episode devoted exclusively to omelets on Julia’s *The French Chef*, the camera is positioned straight down over Julia’s shoulder as she demonstrates the proper method of frying an omelet, as if the viewer/witness were taking her place, embodying Julia for a moment in order to fully understand the technique. This kind of camera work constructs an intimacy between the host and viewer, as they occupy the same kitchen space.

This sense of intimacy is the ultimate goal of any cooking show, as personal sharing is such a major part of cookery discourse. Discussed in Chapter 3, cookery discourse is perpetuated through intimate relationships among women, as they share recipes and discuss techniques with each other. In a sense, television cooking programs are a remediation of intimate kitchen table discussions between women. This is seen most clearly in Julia’s cooking shows, as Julia herself was able to use her personality and mannerisms to construct what Krishendu Ray calls an “intimate domestic space” on screen (54). She spoke to the camera as a confidante, as a fellow home cook who wanted to learn from her. Julia was able to construct this intimacy to such an extent that she is now posthumously referred to as just “Julia,” as if every writer and viewer knew her personally (Ray 51).

Laura Shapiro explains Julia’s popularity as coming directly from her real, accessible personality, noting that “Julia was the only professional on screen whose appeal sprang directly from her own personality, unmediated by scriptwriters or guests” (*Julia Child* xiv). Describing her as “larger than life,” Shapiro observes that “[t]here was nothing dainty about Julia Child and
nothing stereotypically feminine about her kitchen” (*Something from the Oven* 230). Kirschenblatt-Gimblett describes Julia’s actions as “legendary for their robust gestural style” (22). Julia’s performance of cooking was to fully engage her body with the food and with the process of demonstration. Wurgaft explains that Julia’s mannerisms and frequent slip-ups (such as when she burns the tarte tatin or loses the box of salt) only worked to make her more human to the viewers, and in turn less threatening. Rather than constructing an image of perfection (like in Martha Stewart programs), Julia called upon her body to convey the cooking process, and viewers embraced her for it. As a 1960s fan wrote in her letter to Julia:

> We love her naturalness & lack of that TV manner, her quick but unhurried action, her own appreciation of what she is producing. By the time she gets to the table with her dish and takes off her apron, we are so much ‘with’ her that we feel as if someone had snatched our plates from in front of us when the program ends.

(Shapiro, *Julia Child* 105)

Watching an episode of *The French Chef* is to experience a personal conversation between Julia and the viewer/witness. The way she uses her body to enact discourse is so intimate that it seems real, as if the viewer/witness could walk from her television into her kitchen and see Julia standing there in front of the stove. Julia’s passion for cooking is demonstrated through her performance, as viewers/witnesses feel a real intimacy with her—the same sort of intimacy as described between women in the community cookbooks of Chapter 3.

For the medium of television, however, this perception of “real intimacy” is constructed. Berenstein posits several potential reasons why the medium is associated with intimacy. First, the medium’s presence in the home—often the living room, where families congregate—is important in this construction. Even though televisions are located in public spaces, TV is
mainly a private, home-based technology. Families curl up on the couch together and watch television as a way to relax and possibly also spend time together. The machine’s relatively small screen size is another factor, as it is contrasted against the larger-than-life screens in movie theaters. Also in comparison to film, television shows generally have smaller production values; this is especially true for cooking shows. Furthermore, intimacy is constructed through what Berenstein calls the “assumed bond” between viewers/witnesses and television, as all of these constructs work together to create an intimate bond between the viewer/witness of a cooking show and the television screen (32).

Food TV and Spectacle

It is this construct of intimate witness that makes cooking television programs so complex. Though cooking shows can be considered remediations of the discourse’s oral culture, or physical performances of the recipe text, cooking television is much more than these direct identifications assume. Cooking programs are not merely simple, pure performances of “real-life” cooking, but rather are far removed from the intimate kitchen space. Ray explains that television has allowed food to be constructed as a public image, ready for mass consumption (59). In this rhetorical construction of public image, food is now more than just food, and cooking is certainly symbolic of more than it may suggest. Joanne Finkelstein names food television programs as “foodainment,” where food is a product of capitalism, located within the entertainment industry (130). She describes food as influenced by fashion, like a status symbol: it is a form of mass entertainment (131). Cooking programs draw us in, making us to function as an intimate witness, but instead are feeding us only hollow constructs full of spectacle and devoid of action. As Chan observes, “these programs only tease us” and are not, in fact, real cooking (47).
There is a fine line between spectacle and action, as both are related to performance, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett explains. She identifies three sites at which food and performance converge, as food is itself a tool and agent of performance. First, to perform is to do, which relates to the basic actions involved in preparing and serving food. Next, to perform is to behave, which (citing Goffman) parallels the way a cook follows rules and techniques involving food preparation. Finally, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett defines performance as “show” which, she admits, can move from demonstration into pure spectacle (1-2). Action, as located within cookery discourse, is performance of food preparation that enacts and produces discourse, relying on bodily gesture to create food. Spectacle, however, is performance without content, made entirely for entertainment purposes. In my own kitchen, the method of flipping a pancake is done not for entertainment purposes. On the television screen during a program of *Emeril Live!*, however, pancake flipping is made into an entertaining spectacle. These differences between cooking action in a private kitchen as compared to cooking spectacle on a television set deal mainly with the role of the body. While the body is fully involved in the cooking process in a private kitchen as discussed earlier, the active body is missing from much of food television programming.

In contrast to Julia and much of early television cooking shows, contemporary food programming is less education and more pure spectacle. Tuschman, VP of programming for the Food Network, explains the goal of the station is to bring cooking shows into the 21st century. To the Food Network, a show focused on a host making a dish is considered “old-school,” a format that “never evolved stylistically” (Kaufman). Shows on the Food Network have hosts with personalities and shows with story lines. Rather than being recipe-driven, the channel
focuses on personality-driven shows, where viewers tune in to watch the host’s performance rather than the recipe’s (Adema 115).

On the Food Network, recipes take a back seat to entertainment. Wurgaft observes that on the Network, cooking is a site of play (124). Everything about the programs on the Network conveys food as fun, which encourages the viewer to sit back and watch, rather than participate in an intimate relationship of sharing and consider making the recipe. Most recipes, as they are performed on these programs, are only alluded to briefly, while the focus is on the fun and entertainment of the spectacle. Many hosts do not provide ingredient amounts or necessary details for reproducing their recipe, but quickly refer the viewer to their website or book for more information before getting back into the fun of food play. For many viewers, Adema notes that “being a couch potato, a consumer of food television, becomes more pleasurable than actually cooking and eating” (116). As television scholar Thompson explains, “It’s really about watching the dance. You don’t really intend to make the food any more than you come away from ‘E.R.’ expecting to perform CPR” (Adema 117). Thompson’s association of food programming and popular dramatic television illustrates the tendency of contemporary food programming to be a diversion rather than educative.

As spectacle, food programming has no practical considerations. Adema explains that “Food Network has little to do with food as nutrition and survival, and everything to do with pleasure” (114). A Food Network show is not only fun, but also pleasing to watch, as it stimulates the viewer’s senses. Isabelle DeSolier argues that food television aestheticizes food, transforming it into a sensual, delectable image that is meant to be enjoyed visually (“TV Dinners” 467). Kirschenblatt-Gimblett names these food programs as a “feast for the eyes” which, by engaging the eyes, works to stimulate the other senses as well. Explaining that the
eyes are important in stimulating appetite, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett argues that “visual aspects of food are no less essential to it” (3). Like the cookbooks in Chapter 4, images function as a way of eating for the viewer to enjoy, where the viewer can visually consume the glorious food created during the episode. It is in this way that “food [...] becomes an idea and a social force designed to be consumed without being eaten” (Finkelstein 136).

Chan observes the sensory cues throughout any episode of food programming—the sizzle of the skillet, bubbling of the stockpot, and the chopping of vegetables on the counter contribute to the viewer’s heightened sense of sound as well as sight (47). Since television can only stimulate a few senses directly, programs privilege those senses above all others to construct the feeling of pleasure and entertainment. Unsurprisingly, many food studies scholars have made the link between food programming and pornography, with its focus on visual pleasure as a substitute for physical pleasure. Indeed, these shows emphasize the image—and an idealized image at that—to make up for the lack of the active body. In these programs, the body is no more than a beautiful image, as the chefs on the Food Network are each quite attractive (yet another reason that some viewers find to tune in), and gesture is done in the name of entertainment.

“Dream-like cookery”: Food TV and the Idealized Body

Food programming takes advantage of the television medium as it focuses attention on image as a substitute for physical senses. Like most television programs, food programming is an idealization of its topic. Chan observes that food programming is an “idealization of cooking,” as it separates itself from the realities of the kitchen. Martha Stewart’s kitchen is pristine, as if it has never been used. Martha’s antique Fire-King green opaque glass collection is displayed behind her in cupboards, where plates and cups might otherwise reside. Even though
Martha Stewart’s kitchen is meant to resemble a country home, she is outfitted with the latest in stove and oven technologies, gleaming stainless steel from every angle. On Food Network’s Everyday Italian, Giada DeLaurentiis’s kitchen is so notably white, it literally glows. Rachael Ray’s kitchen on 30-Minute Meals is almost technicolor, in bright red, orange, yellow, green, and blue, with coordinating dishes and utensils—as if the entire kitchen and supplies were purchased at the same time. It is outfitted with the perfect tools and technologies, complete with a suspiciously small kitchen “pantry.” In these kitchens, food is something to decorate the space, not to mess it up. Dirty dishes and trash are nowhere to be found, as they are covertly hidden underneath the counter when not in use. Rachael Ray uses a bowl to hold her trash, which makes cleaning up not only simple but also pretty for television. Chan observes this idealization of the setting across all cooking programs, from supposedly “home kitchen” sets to real professional restaurant kitchens: “In the TV program’s fantasy kitchen there is copious space and ventilation; there also are no dishes to wash, no mounds of trash to throw out, and no impatient waiters checking on orders” (47). In short, food programming values appearance above everything. It is this focus on appearance that drives the spectacle of food TV.

Unlike Julia Child, who used her program to engage viewers in cooking, contemporary food programming relies on spectacle to reach viewers. As Julia attempted to bring French cooking to the American housewife, making the skills and ingredients more accessible to inexperienced home cooks, today’s food television pays little attention to accessibility. Rather than encouraging viewers to try the recipes demonstrated, food programming constructs cooking as a spectacle to witness and visually enjoy. Pauline Adema explains that people watch the Food Network “because it feeds a hunger for emotional and physical pleasures vicariously gratified by watching someone cook, talk about and eat food” (114). As discussed earlier, people don’t
watch food programming for the recipes anymore, in contrast to Julia’s time. Viewers watch food programming for its entertainment value, for the ability to visually consume and enjoy idealized food from a pristine space by a beautiful chef. In this way, Chan argues that food television is deceptive, as it is a true example of the “dream-like cookery” Barthes observes in women’s magazines (Chan 47, Barthes 79).

Certainly, food television is “dream-like,” as its unrealistic perfection comforts the viewer, allowing her to enjoy the fantasy of a perpetually clean kitchen, fabulous meals (in just 30 minutes!) and beautiful people to surround her. In these programs, lifestyle is privileged over the recipe itself, showing people how to enjoy food rather than how to cook food. The enjoyment of food and life is the goal of food television’s spectacle, as it functions as pure entertainment. True action in cooking and engagement of the body in food preparation is far from the ideal these shows construct. Watching Martha Stewart prepare a dish without actually making a mess or getting her hands dirty (because, of course, all of her ingredients have been pre-measured and placed in a row of tiny prep bowls), all the while moving around her beautiful kitchen in lovely clothes, is not meant to engage the viewer in the cooking act. With only the visual and aural sense to offer, television cooking programs cannot fully participate in cookery discourse, as gesture cannot be communicated through a screen. Working within its limitations, television constructs intimate spectacle through its use of the visual, leaving it up to the viewer to act upon it as they will.

Of course, many people do watch food programming for the recipes: I too have witnessed a recipe prepared on television and gone on to try it myself. After all, it’s much more attractive and engaging than reading a cookbook. The host provides the basic guidelines necessary to reproduce her recipe, even if she doesn’t give specific measurements, as everything
can be witnessed through the visual presentation. Depending on the viewer, food programming may be a prompt to future action, instead of a hollow spectacle. In this way, the home cook can use the visual text for their own purposes—enjoy its performance or enact it herself. The television cannot directly command, but only entice. As an invitation, cooking programs can be positioned like written recipes: as only part of the process. When a cooking show ends, normally the host (and occasional guest) enjoys the food, proclaiming their recipes fantastic. To the home cook, this is not necessarily an end, but a beginning which leads to her own performance of the recipe. She may read the program as offering her the opportunity to adapt the recipe for her own uses, making do according to her needs and desires. She is able to add gesture into the recipe, using her body to bring a recipe into existence. The home cook becomes not merely a passive witness to food, but an agent of it, taking spectacle and imparting physical movement.

Conclusion(s): Taking the Last Bite

Throughout this project, I have argued for cookbooks as multimodal texts. From this final chapter, it is the rhetoric of gesture that brings my argument together. Cookery discourse—including oral and written recipes and cookbooks—depends on the physical performance of cooking as a mode, alongside other modes like the social and visual. These modes work together, integrated and overlapping, to construct the discourse community of cooking. I chose to focus on these three modes in this project because of their relative importance and uniqueness to the discourse. While I may have studied each of them as separate units, focusing on a different sub-genre of cookery texts in each chapter, by no means do I intend to imply that these are either the only modes relevant to cookery discourse or that they work independently of each other. Each of these modes needs the other to fully exist, as the discourse is dependent on its
multimodality. Cookery discourse is complex—more so than what I can represent here, as it is a network of women’s voices, experiences, actions, memories, relationships, and language. While cookbooks may have been overlooked in the past as unworthy of scholarly consideration, with this project I can prove they are truly relevant as nuanced rhetorical texts.

As I began to establish in my first chapter, cookery discourse is a significant rhetorical practice unique to women. As a gendered practice, it has been undervalued in public culture as well as in academic culture. I look historically at print cookbooks in America to demonstrate the remediation of the recipe format. In this way, my study attempts to make connections between past and contemporary practices in cookery discourse to show its viability for rhetorical study. This historicizing of the cookbook also identifies the discourse it comes out of as communal, as a unified group of women sharing their expertise. As I elaborate in Chapter 2, the ways in which cookery discourse is remediated into oral and literate modes describes how the everyday act of revising recipes is essential to the cooking process. Certeau’s concept of “making do” identifies the tradition of re-use, or using leftovers, to create a new dish. As the practice of revision relies on multimodal literacies, I establish multimodality as a central feature of cookery discourse. This argument helps us to understand the presence of multimodal discourse in everyday life. Additionally, to identify cookery texts as multimodal also values them as complex rhetorical subjects worthy of further academic study. This helps to create a space for them in academic scholarship and in the rhetorical tradition.

Chapter 3 explores the act of sharing recipes as a rhetorical practice among women. As food has already been established in previous scholarship as inherently social and a catalyst for community building, I work to analyze the community rhetoric of recipes via their use as a shared text. The social properties of recipe texts are an important communicative mode, as it
helps to further establish the communal act as multimodal, building on work begun in Chapter 2. From this study of community cookbooks and the women’s groups who author them, it has aided my work in theory-building, as I identify the value of studying an everyday practice with a rhetorical lens. I have been able to establish the personal connection people can have with cooking, as it has traditionally mediated women’s relationships with other women.

I have also been able to explore how the rhetorical moves within the printed text impact (and are impacted by) its discourse community. In Chapter 4, I focused on the basic cookbook to study the visual codes at work in a printed recipe text, as it implies messages about what, and how, to “see” cooking. This study of the remediation of rhetorical seeing (as it is re-constructed via the terministic screen) allows me to observe the ways in which rhetorical discourses can act upon the viewer. This remediation enables me to explore the changing literacy practices at work in this discourse, which can be broadened to apply to other visual discourses as well.

In this final chapter, I have explored the concept of the multimodal recipe text yet further, as I have established gesture as a rhetorical act, essential to cookery discourse. Looking at the embodied act of cooking helps to draw together my conclusions, as I argue that gesture works alongside the social and visual modes as a key component to establishing cookery texts as multimodal. Both the social and visual modes of communication rely on the act of cooking, or gesture, to exist; just as gesture is equally dependent on both of these modes as well. As mentioned earlier, looking at these modes in conjunction can help to describe and explore a more nuanced and in-depth portrayal of cookery discourse. Furthermore, by studying the progression of the cooking gesture through oral instruction, to print recipes, to food television, this helps us to see the ways in which written literacy can be re-embodied via technology. In fact, this study has come full circle, as it has progressed from the oral culture of women sharing recipes across a
kitchen table, to the Victorian standardization and precise measurements in mass-produced print cookbooks, to finally the physical act in conjunction with the precision of print literacy, as it is represented in a food television performance.

This project has allowed me to broaden the boundaries of rhetoric, as this study has impact both within rhetorical studies and outside of the field. Within rhetorical studies, I have been able to systematically explore an alternative, previously “othered” discursive practice in terms of its rhetorical potential, thus expanding what is defined as rhetoric and adding another type of textual practice to the rhetorical tradition. I have also been able to establish this practice as a gendered discourse, thus also making a larger space for women’s contribution to the canon of rhetoric. Additionally, I have been able to use new media theory—such as the concepts of remediation and multimodality—broadly to be applied to an “old” medium. This establishes the flexibility of these concepts, as they can be applicable to a variety of texts, and are not exclusive to new media. Outside of rhetorical studies, I have been able to contribute to research on cookbooks that began in the areas of food studies, thus broadening the possibility of the text to other disciplines as well as demonstrating the interdisciplinary nature of rhetorical study.

Perhaps the most frequent question I have been asked during the research for this project has been, “but what about men?” I have chosen in this project to focus exclusively on the cookbook as a women’s rhetorical practice, but I do admit that men too are active producers and consumers of these texts. This is particularly true today, with the number of popular male hosts on the Food Network who appear to be attracting male viewers and readers, to encourage more men to cook. Men’s cookbooks are a burgeoning sub-genre, most texts beginning with the assumption that men do not know how to cook. Stereotypes are frequent, as many cookbooks for
men include grilling steak and microwaving mac and cheese. This is an excellent potential topic for future scholarship, and I believe it is relevant after a project such as mine.

I also believe that there is much more to be discovered in the real-life interaction between women concerning food. Further study of the process of sharing and revising, perhaps in ethnographic format, would be useful. This project was only meant to function as a work of theory-building, and I admit it is limited in its depth of study. There are many possibilities for empirical research to aid in this area. Furthermore, I realize my self-imposed limitations for what types of cookbooks to study also impacts my project. I chose cookery texts which were available to me, whether in nearby libraries, archives, or private collections of those I knew. This severely limits my findings, as my texts were limited by region, class, and race. I am certain I could develop and deepen my study by selecting a greater number of texts, from a wide variety of cultures, economic levels, and ethnic groups. Finally, more should be explored concerning the rhetorics that are changing cookery discourse. While I have explored some of what impacts cookery discourse (such as on television), there are more significant changes as well that I only alluded to, concerning the hyper consumerism of food programming and its presence in all forms of media (Adema 116). I believe that these issues are revolutionizing cookery discourse for the 21st century, as they continue to revise cookery texts.

This project was a heartfelt attempt to bring together my love of cookbooks with my interest in women’s rhetorics. I fully believe that cookbooks—despite the fact that we use them so infrequently, leaving them on the shelf for decades to collect dust—are a significant part of the rhetorical tradition. Not just women’s rhetorical tradition, the rhetorical tradition as a whole. After all, we interact with each other through food. Food comforts us, relaxes us, and helps us celebrate. Food is central to our lives not just as a nutritional substance but as a valued cultural
object. When I have told people I’m writing my dissertation on cookbooks, they always smile and often tell me about their favorite cookbook. Who doesn’t love talking about food? As a student of rhetoric, I can’t help but to see the significant gap in scholarship regarding the gendered preparation of food. This discourse comprises a critical part of our social history, and this project is my attempt to remedy that gap. As Julia would say, _Bon appétit!_
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