



The First American Cookbook: A Facsimile of "American Cookery," 1796

Amelia Simmons

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This facsimile of the first American-written cookbook published in the United States is not only a first in cookbook literature, but a historic document. It reveals the rich variety of food Colonial Americans enjoyed, their tastes, cooking and eating habits, even their colorful language.

Author Amelia Simmons worked as a domestic in Colonial America and gathered her cookery expertise from firsthand experience. Her book points out the best ways of judging the quality of meats, poultry, fish, vegetables, etc., and presents the best methods of preparing and cooking them. In choosing fish, poultry, and other meats, the author wisely advises, "their smell denotes their goodness." Her sound suggestions for choosing the freshest and most tender onions, potatoes, parsnips, carrots, asparagus, lettuce, cabbage, beans, and other vegetables are as timely today as they were nearly 200 years ago.

Here are the first uniquely American recipes using corn meal — Indian pudding, "Johnny cake," and Indian slapjacks — as well as the first recipes for pumpkin pudding, winter squash pudding, and for brewing spruce beer. The words "cookie" and "slaw" made their first published appearance in this book. You'll also find the first recommended use of pearlsh (the forerunner of baking powder) to lighten dough, as well as recommendations for seasoning stuffing and roasting beef, mutton, veal, and lamb — even how to dress a turtle.

Along with authentic recipes for colonial favorites, a Glossary includes definitions of antiquated cooking terms: pannikin, wallop, frumenty, emptins, and more. And Mary Tolford Wilson's informative Introductory Essay provides the culinary historical background needed to appreciate this important book fully.

Anyone who uses and collects cookbooks will want to have *The First American Cookbook*. Cultural historians, Americana buffs, and gourmets will find this rare edition filled with interesting recipes and rich in early American flavor.

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