

Compleat Housewife

"American Cookery" by Amelia Simmons. Published by Good Press. Good Press publishes a wide range of titles that encompasses every genre. From well-known classics & literary fiction and non-fiction to forgotten or yet undiscovered gems of world literature, we issue the books that need to be read. Each Good Press edition has been meticulously edited and formatted to boost readability for all e-readers and devices. Our goal is to produce eBooks that are user-friendly and accessible to everyone in a high-quality digital format.

This early work on the complete housewife is a comprehensive and informative look at the subject with much of the information still useful and practical today. Many of the earliest books, particularly those dating back to the 1900s and before, are now extremely scarce and increasingly expensive. We are republishing these classic works in affordable, high quality, modern editions, using the original text and artwork.

Originally published in London in 1727, *The Compleat Housewife* was the first cookbook printed in the United States. William Parks, a Virginia printer, printed and sold the cookbook believing there would be a strong market for it among Virginia housewives who wanted to keep up with the latest London fashions—the book was a best-seller there. Parks did make some attempt to Americanize it, deleting certain recipes “the ingredients or material for which are not to be had in this country,” but for the most part, the book was not adjusted to American kitchens. Even so, it became the first cookery best seller in the New World, and Parks’s major book publication. Smith described her book on the title page as “Being a collection of several hundred approved receipts, in cookery, pastry, confectionery, preserving, pickles, cakes, creams, jellies, made wines, cordials. And also bills of fare for every month of the year. To which is added, a collection of nearly two hundred family receipts of medicines; viz. drinks, syrups, salves, ointments, and many other things of sovereign and approved efficacy in most distempers, pains, aches, wounds, sores, etc. never before made publick in these parts; fit either for private families, or such public-spirited gentlewomen as would be beneficent to their poor neighbours.” The recipes are easy to understand and cover everything from 50 recipes for pickling everything from nasturtium buds to pigeons to “lifting a swan, breaking a deer, and splating a pike,” indicating the importance of understanding how to prepare English game. The book also includes diagrams for positioning serving dishes to create an attractive table display. This edition of *The Compleat Housewife* was reproduced by permission from the volume in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Founded in 1812 by Isaiah Thomas, a Revolutionary War patriot and successful printer and publisher, the Society is a research library documenting the life of Americans from the colonial era through 1876. The Society collects, preserves, and makes available as complete a record as possible of the printed materials from the early American experience. The cookbook collection includes approximately 1,100 volumes.

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This collection of essays provides an overview of new scholarship on recipe books, one of the most popular non-fiction printed texts in, and one of the most common forms of manuscript compilation to survive from, the pre-modern era (c.1550–1800). This is the first book to collect together the wide variety of scholarly approaches to pre-modern recipe books written in English, drawing on varying approaches to reveal their culinary, medical, scientific, linguistic, religious and material meanings. Ten scholars from the fields of culinary history, history of medicine and science, divinity, archaeology and material culture, and English literature and linguistics contribute to a vibrant mapping of the aspirations invested in, and uses of, recipes and recipe books. By exploring areas as various as the knowledge economies of medicine, Anglican feasting and fasting practices, the material culture of the kitchen and table, London publishing and concepts of authorship and the aesthetics of culinary styles, these eleven essays (including a critical introduction to recipe books and their historiography) position recipe texts in the wider culture of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They illuminate their importance to both their original compilers and users, and modern scholars and graduate students alike.

William Ellis, who died in 1758, wrote about domestic economy and cookery and *The Country Housewife's Family Companion*, which he sometimes called *The Country Family's Profitable Director*, is the prime example of his work in this field. To anyone with the remotest interest in the history of English cookery, it is a resource of immense value. He describes a style of cooking far removed from the ragouts and fricassees of the nobility - who loved most things French - and offers unique information on the diet of country-dwellers and farm-workers, particularly in the Home Counties but with a ready interest in other regions too. There is also much about bread baking, not usually very well covered by early cookery books. The work of a country housewife, in Ellis eyes, was never confined to the kitchen, so he tips in plenty of advice on the poultry yard, the pig sty, and the cow shed as well as many medical nostrums for the itch, scald-head, pustules and chilblains and lots of other delightful ailments, human and animal.

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