

Eating Across Borders: Reading Immigrant Cookbooks

MARLENE EPP*

The cookbook has recently been analysed as a source for historical understanding beyond instruction for preparing a particular culinary dish. This essay surveys culturally thematic cookbooks in Canada as documents for understanding Canadian immigration history through the foodways of ethnic groups. In reading cookbooks for their social, cultural, and political meaning, we can learn how ethnicity is performed, imitated, or practised as individuals of the past and present eat across borders. Ethnic cookbooks examined in this study enabled newcomers to learn how to “eat Canadian” while they also taught Canadians how to “eat ethnic.” I argue that the cookbook is a significant source by which ethnic groups maintain a public connection with homeland culture, reinforce ethnic identity, integrate into a new culture, and form new hybrid identities.

Le livre de recettes a récemment été analysé comme source pour comprendre l’histoire par-delà les instructions relatives à la préparation de tel ou tel plat culinaire. Dans le présent article, l’auteure étudie des livres de recettes reflétant des particularités culturelles en usage au Canada comme documents pour comprendre l’histoire de l’immigration au pays par le biais des habitudes alimentaires des groupes ethniques. L’examen de livres de recettes sous l’angle de leur signification sociale, culturelle et politique renseigne sur la façon dont se manifeste l’ethnicité ou dont elle est imitée au moment des repas, de part et d’autre des frontières, aujourd’hui comme hier. Les livres de recettes des communautés culturelles examinés dans cette étude permettent aux nouveaux venus d’apprendre comment manger « à la canadienne », mais ils enseignent aussi aux Canadiens comment manger des mets étrangers. Selon l’auteure, le livre de recettes est une source importante par laquelle les groupes ethniques maintiennent un lien public avec la culture de leur pays d’origine, renforcent leur identité culturelle, s’intègrent à une nouvelle culture et façonnent de nouvelles identités hybrides.

HABEEB SALLOUM was a small child when his family immigrated to Canada from Syria in the early 1920s—his father in 1923 and his mother with two children a year later. They were among a very small number of Arabs who settled in southern

* Marlene Epp is professor of history and peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo. The author is grateful to the editors of this special issue, Lisa Chilton and Royden Loewen, and also to the two anonymous reviewers of her article.

Saskatchewan at this time. Salloum recalls that, as these early Arab settlers worked to integrate themselves in Canadian society during a time that was not hospitable to non-Western newcomers, much of their culture disappeared, except for their collections of “family recipes.” During the hardship of the Depression, his family subsisted through his parents’ ingenuity, inherited from “thousands of years of civilization,” that led them to plant large gardens and improvise the preparation of traditional dishes.¹ In fact, their experience with growing chickpeas and lentils in dry, desert-like climates meant that they may have survived better than other folk during the many years when rain did not come to southern Saskatchewan.²

In the days well before official multiculturalism, early Arab settlers in Canada tended to conceal their foodways—burghul, chickpeas, lentils, yogurt—because they considered them inferior to European foods. Consequently, they made little effort to pass their food traditions to other Canadians. Not until 80 years later when Salloum published a cookbook—*Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead*—did his family’s food traditions and thus their immigrant story come to light. In this compilation are recipes for dishes like the familiar *Taboula* (burghul and parsley salad) and the less familiar *Shawrabat Hindba wa ’Adas* (dandelion-lentil soup). Salloum’s cookbook, along with many others that are culturally specific, reveals much more than how to follow instructions to prepare a certain dish. In fact, in Salloum’s volume one can see the cookbook “as inheritance. As memoir. As resistance. As life force. As testimony.”³ The cookbook is Salloum’s chronicle about the immigrant experience in Canada, as he remembers his family’s arrival and settlement, their struggle to overcome environmental obstacles and also discrimination from the host society, and his own effort to offer resistance to those obstacles by publishing inherited Arab recipes. It is an excellent entrée into this study, which explores the cookbook as a historical document for understanding Canadian immigration history.

Immigration, Ethnicity, and Foodways

The manner in which immigrants uproot, transplant, adapt, acculturate, assimilate, integrate, or are othered and excluded has long been a question of inquiry for migration scholars. Only recently, however, has this question been explored through the lens of foodways. In the United States, Donna Gabaccia’s *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Foodways and the Making of Americans* led the way in linking eating practices to the identity-making of immigrants.⁴ Hasia Diner, in *Hungering for America*, uses food as a lens to consider the migration experiences of Italian, Irish, and Jewish newcomers in the early twentieth century.⁵ Well-

1 Habeeb Salloum, *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead: Recipes and Recollections* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2005), p. vii.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

3 Rona Kaufman, quoted in Eric Mason, “Cooking the Books: Jewish Cuisine and the Commodification of Difference” in Kathleen LeBesco and Peter Naccarato, eds., *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 106.

4 Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

5 Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

known American food theorist Sherrie A. Inness has explored the intersection of ethnic food and gender.⁶ In Canada, comparable work but encyclopaedic in style is Thelma Barer-Stein, *You Eat What You Are: People, Culture and Food Traditions*.⁷ Analytical literature in the Canadian context is gradually emerging: for instance, Franca Iacovetta's chapter in her *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* and her contribution in *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History* are examples of how food was at the centre of immigrant reception and self-perception in the mid-twentieth century. Several other chapters in *Edible Histories* similarly explore food, immigration, and ethnicity from varying vantage points: Sonia Cancian on gender and food preparation across generations in Italian-Canadian families; S. Holyck Hunchuk on Ukrainian food sculptures on the Prairies; Stacey Zembrzycki on memories of Ukrainian foodways during the Depression; Julie Mehta on the hybridity of South Asian cuisine; and two ethnic cookbook studies that I will address later.⁸

New published work is on the horizon as scholars from various disciplines are drawn to research linkages between ethnic identity and foodways.⁹ While not explicitly about immigration or ethnicity, other food studies publications offer theoretical frameworks and case studies that help us think about the role of food and eating in past lives and that illustrate the significance of the cookbook as historical source.¹⁰ One of my favourites, which has fed my thinking for this article, is folklorist Diane Tye's *Baking as Biography* in which she "reads" her mother's life through the recipes and food practices that shaped her middle-class life as the wife of a United Church minister in the Maritimes.¹¹

Following in the tradition of Gabaccia, much of the new food studies literature is exploring the centrality of foodstuffs and foodways to ethnic and cultural identity. It has become almost a truism to say that one's cultural identity is reflected in and reinforced by the act of eating. In the context of a many-cultured nation such as Canada, those linkages are even more obvious, if under-analysed.

6 Among her other writings, see Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001).

7 Thelma Barer-Stein, *You Eat What You Are: People, Culture and Food Traditions*, 2nd ed. (Willowdale, ON: Firefly books, 1999).

8 Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006); see noted chapters in Franca Iacovetta, Valerie J. Korinek, and Marlene Epp, eds., *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). See also Alison R. Marshall, *The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011); Lily Cho, *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

9 A few examples include Laurie Bertram on Icelanders, Jennifer Evans on ethnic diversity in the Ontario north, Nadia Jones-Gailani on Iraqi refugee women, and Emily Weiskopf-Ball on French-Canadian foods in northern Ontario.

10 Nathalie Cooke, ed., *What's to Eat? Entrées in Canadian Food History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); Steve Penfold, *The Donut: A Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Cho, *Eating Chinese*; Ian Mosby, *Food Will Win the War: The Politics, Culture and Science of Food During Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014). See also the numerous good articles in the journal *CuiZine: The Journal of Canadian Food Cultures* and Ian Mosby's bibliography on Canadian food history at <http://www.ianmosby.ca>.

11 Diane Tye, *Baking as Biography: A Life Story in Recipes* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), p. 35.

Habeeb Salloum, a Canadian food writer whose cookbook story began this essay, remarked that the presence of “foods of the world,” especially in larger cities, contributed to the “making of the modern Canadian.”¹²

Foodstuffs and foodways have often functioned as important identity markers for immigrant, ethnic, religious, and otherwise culturally specific groups. A community’s food customs are frequently enhanced through the process of migration, as individuals and families cling to familiar patterns in the midst of environments that, in their unfamiliarity, challenge those patterns. The persistence of traditional and historic foodways in new national settings is common among immigrants. For the first generation of immigrants in Canada, regardless of the historic era in which they arrived, foodways were often the site at which the old and new worlds met. The preparation of ethnic foods was one means for newcomers to “survive psychologically”¹³ as they made other difficult transitions in climate, language, and host society environments. This was true for the family of Habeeb Salloum, even while they were “othered” by established Canadians because of their “strange” foods.

Indeed, sometimes so-called traditional foodways experienced a renaissance in new world settings as producers and consumers of those foods sought “authenticity” in a context where the survival of ethnicity appeared under siege. An example is Icelandic *Vínarterta* (a torte-like cake), which, while no longer eaten in Iceland, is an icon of Icelandic ethnic identity in North America, according to historian Laurie Bertram.¹⁴ Another can be seen in the efforts of various Toronto South Asian restaurants to make “authentic” rotis, as described by Julie Mehta.¹⁵ A review of the 1992 compilation *Ethnic Cookbooks and Food Marketplace* observes that “people who once took their foods for granted, find that when forced to leave their homeland, those foods and traditions become much more valued, and the result is a renewed interest, revitalized business and services.”¹⁶ Equally likely, however, is the transformation of immigrant foodways as they interact with multiple food cultures in settings where diverse ethnic groups are together creating a new society. This intercultural engagement creates hybridity in eating behaviour for people moving across borders.

Borrowing from historian Barbara Lorenzkowski’s framework regarding “sounds of ethnicity” and emerging work on sensory history, I propose that new perspectives on the immigrant experience might be gleaned from the “tastes of

12 Habeeb Salloum, “Do Nations Express Themselves in Their Foods?” *Contemporary Review*, vol. 287, no. 1621 (February 2001), pp. 107-111 (accessed through *Literature Online*, May 28, 2013).

13 Anne Harder, *The Vauxhall Mennonite Church* (Calgary: Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta, 2001), p. 13.

14 See Chapter 2 from Laurie K. Bertram, “New Icelandic Ethnoscapes: Material, Visual, and Oral Terrains of Cultural Expression in Icelandic-Canadian History, 1875-present” (doctoral dissertation, Department of History, University of Toronto, 2010). See also Matt Kwong, “Don’t Ask Icelanders How to Make their Traditional Christmas Cake,” *Maclean’s*, December 24, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca> (accessed July 25, 2014).

15 Julie Mehta, “Toronto’s Multicultural Tongues: Stories of South Asian Cuisines” in Iacovetta *et al.*, eds., *Edible Histories*, pp. 156-169.

16 Review in *Choice* by B. C. Swain of Hamo B. Vassilian, ed., *Ethnic Cookbooks and Food Marketplace: A Complete Bibliographic Guide & Directory to Armenian, Iranian, Afghan, Middle Eastern, North African, and Greek Foods in the U.S.A. & Canada*, 2nd ed. (Armenian Reference Books, 1991).

ethnicity.”¹⁷ In her study of German immigrants in nineteenth-century Ontario and New York State, Lorenzkowski analyses the language usage and music traditions of these communities to describe a performative ethnicity based on sound rather than words. One could extend this analysis to the sense of taste. The tastes of ethnicity are not just about an ethnic group preserving, promoting, or performing traditional foodways. The concept also extends to many others—in this case resident Canadians—participating in that ethnicity by tasting and eating. By eating across borders, individuals perform, imitate, or practise ethnicity. In fact, the hybridity, so-called fusion, and cultural exchange that is central to understanding the evolution of ethnicity and foodways makes borders and boundaries transitory and ephemeral. Of course, tasting “the other” also has dimensions of “cultural colonialism,” as Lisa Heldke points out in her critique of the common phrase to “eat ethnic.”¹⁸ Tasting ethnicity occurs in the very act of eating, but sometimes this does not occur without an instructional medium—which brings me to the document at the centre of this essay.

There are many food-related sources through which one might explore the immigrant experience in Canadian history. Food stores, household and community gardens, restaurants, and food availability in a given locale all might reveal the evolution of immigrant populations in a particular community over time. The site at which foodways—and thus identity—were simultaneously maintained and transformed can be understood through the medium of cookbooks, which offer a literary window into the preservation of foodways within a community. As already noted, “foodways serve as ... powerful metaphors of group identity,”¹⁹ and cookbooks have a pivotal role to play in explicitly shaping that identity. Cookbooks, associated with the mundane, with the material, and with women’s work, have not always been regarded “as having any serious historical value.”²⁰ Nevertheless, the study of cookbooks as a genre of writing and their usage as historical source is increasing. Barbara Wheaton defines them as “cultural artifacts” and proposes that they are “peculiar documents” because they “are the exceptional written records of what is largely an oral tradition.” The writing down of recipes is a relatively modern phenomenon as, prior to the nineteenth century, even professional cooks may not have had the literacy to document cooking instructions.²¹ Carol Gold, in her study of Danish cookbooks over three centuries, says: “Cookbooks tell stories, as do all books. Perhaps the stories are not linear; they do not have a beginning, a

17 Barbara Lorenzkowski, *Sounds of Ethnicity: Listening to German North America, 1850-1914* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010). On sensory history, see, for instance, Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

18 Lisa Heldke, “Let’s Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism,” in Inness, ed., *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai*, pp. 175-93.

19 Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, “Introduction” in Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell, eds., *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), p. 8.

20 Matthew Bailey-Dick, “The Kitchenhood of all Believers: A Journey into the Discourse of Mennonite Cookbooks,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, vol. 79 (April 2005), p. 155.

21 Barbara Wheaton, “Finding Real Life in Cookbooks: The Adventures of a Culinary Historian” in Leslie Howsam, ed., *Food, Cookery and Culture*, Working Papers in the Humanities, no. 7 (Windsor: University of Windsor, 1998), p. 2.

middle, and an end, but they are stories nonetheless. Reading ... cookbooks, one can learn about changes in the economy, in the social makeup of the society, in women's roles, and in what it means to be a nation state and to be a member of that nation state."²² Similarly, Nathalie Cooke, in her longitudinal study of Canadian food patterns as recorded in and shaped by published cookbooks, proposes that cookbooks "tell us the diverse stories of the lived history of a people."²³ Elizabeth Driver is even more comprehensive in assessing the meaning of cookbooks when she proposes, "No other category of book evokes such an emotional response across generations and genders and is freighted with so much cultural and historical meaning."²⁴

Cookbook theorist Janet Theophano suggests, "There is much to be learned from reading a cookbook besides how to prepare food.... The cookbook, like the diary and journal, evokes a universe inhabited by women both in harmony and in tension with their families, their communities, and the larger social world."²⁵ Cookbooks, as a literary exhibit of women's culinary labour in particular, provide a glimpse into the relationships among gender, foodways and community identity. Analysts of community-based cookbooks suggest that, in such volumes, women tell of their "lives and beliefs" and "present their values."²⁶ As "culinary writing," published cookbooks were a means for women to "define themselves and their cultural groups, to preserve the past, and to shape the future."²⁷ The same may be true for immigrants or others within distinctive cultures. Women, especially in ethnically distinct communities, were often viewed as cultural carriers, with responsibility for maintaining traditions, customs, language, and other group practices across generations. Thus one can view cookbooks as a feminine culinary genealogy of sorts; as Diane Tye proposes, "Recipes remain one means by which women can commune with earlier female kin."²⁸

Cookbooks also, as Theophanos remarks, "served as a place for readers to remember a way of life no longer in existence or to enter a nostalgic recreation of a past culture that persists mostly in memory."²⁹ Such may have been especially the case for migrant groups who left their homelands abruptly and involuntarily and with a sense of loss and displacement. For people who were wrenched from places in which rich cultural traditions and memories had been formed, the collection of recipes representative of those traditions are described by Carol

22 Carol Gold, *Danish Cookbooks: Domesticity and National Identity, 1616-1901* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), p. 176.

23 Nathalie Cooke, "Canada's Food History Through Cookbooks" in Mustafa Koç, Jennifer Sumner, and Anthony Winson, eds., *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 45.

24 Elizabeth Driver, *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1828-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. xvii.

25 Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 6.

26 Anne L. Bower, "Bound Together: Recipes, Lives, Stories, and Readings" in Anne L. Bower, ed., *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 2.

27 Theophano, *Eat My Words*, p. 52.

28 Tye, *Baking as Biography*, p. 35.

29 Theophano, *Eat My Words*, p. 8.

Bardenstein as “nostalgia cookbooks” or “collective memory cookbooks.”³⁰ By “reading” the recipes for meaning beyond culinary instruction, and by analysing the intent and presentation of the volume itself, I argue that the cookbook is a significant source by which ethnic groups maintain a public connection with homeland culture, reinforce ethnic identity, integrate into a new culture, and form new hybrid identities.

As both a text-based source and, one could argue, material artifact, the cookbook provides glimpses into the experience of ethnicity-formation for immigrant groups in Canadian history. They are primarily text-based, yet lead the reader, if he or she chooses to follow the instructions, to taste ethnicity. In this essay, I offer a selective survey of immigrant cookbooks and what they reveal about that experience in various eras and contexts. After embarking on a quest to find Canadian-based, non-Anglo and non-French cookbooks with an immigrant/ethnic focus—other than the many glossy books one can find at contemporary bookstores on Thai cooking for instance—I found that sources did not appear as readily as I had expected. This study therefore represents an ongoing exploration. Among many ethnic groups, recipes were rarely written down until a process of institutional formality or professionalization had developed. Elizabeth Driver’s amazing 2008 bibliography of Canadian cookbooks, which covers 1825 to 1949, contains about 2,200 entries, but my search revealed very few that were obviously non-Anglo “immigrant” cookbooks: most of the few in this category were Ukrainian, Jewish, or German.³¹ Not a critique of Driver’s work, this finding suggests that very few existed in print prior to 1950.

In the discussion that follows, I explore immigrant cookbooks on these themes: how written cookbooks offered messages that encouraged and instructed immigrants to adapt their recipes and eating customs to become “Canadian” even while those culinary instructions were also adapted to encourage “Canadians” to “eat ethnic”; how ethnic cookbooks enabled newcomer groups to practise and reinforce their own cultural identity, especially when the survival of distinctiveness may have been in decline; how cookbooks helped to create a non-threatening and benign, if somewhat simplistic, multiculturalism in the latter decades of the twentieth century; how immigrant narratives themselves found a voice in cookbooks nationally and locally; and how cookbooks both reflect and reinforce food and thus ethnic hybridity in Canadian diets. While these related themes are utilized to frame my analysis, most of the books described could easily be situated in multiple categories. Cookbooks are thus not just instructional manuals for food preparation; they are valuable historical sources that provide insight into the immigrant experience in Canada.

30 Carol Bardenstein, “Transmissions Interrupted: Reconfiguring Food, Memory, and Gender in the Cookbook-Memoirs of Middle Eastern Exiles,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2002), p. 357.

31 Elizabeth Driver, *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1828-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

Cooking to Become Canadian

Among the earliest immigrant cookbooks, though not often defined as such, is Catherine Parr Traill's well-known *The Female Emigrant's Guide and Hints on Canadian Housekeeping*, which first appeared in 1854/1855 and is also known as *The Canadian Settler's Guide*.³² The recipes in this unique source demonstrate how newcomers to Canada had to adapt old country recipes for the "backwoods" environment. Elizabeth Driver points out that Traill's guidebook represents the first English-language cookbook that is clearly written from within and for a Canadian context.³³ In her chapter in the collection *Edible Histories*, Alison Norman demonstrates how crucial Traill's writings were in helping early British immigrants adapt to the North American environment. In part, this meant substituting or incorporating indigenous foods into their habitual diets; for settlers important new foods included maize, maple sugar, wild rice, teas, fish, and venison. Not only does Traill's guidebook provide detailed instructions on how to prepare unfamiliar foodstuffs, but this source, as Norman argues, reveals a process of cultural exchange between newcomers and indigenous peoples that created hybrid diets for both peoples.³⁴

Another early and rare example of a guidebook to becoming Canadian, cited in Driver's bibliography, is Shiro Watanabe's *An English-Japanese Conversational Guide and Cookbook*, first published in 1900. One copy, which is housed in the Japanese Canadian National Museum, was owned by Yotaro Kosaka, who settled in Vancouver in 1914. According to his children, Kosaka's wife Kisa made use of the guidebook's recipes for "western style meals"; each Sunday she prepared a meal of roast beef, potatoes, and apple pie.³⁵ In the book is a complete menu for a week's worth of breakfast, lunch, and dinner entrees, as well as so-called "western" recipes that include Strawberry Shortcake, Veal Croquettes, and Scrambled Eggs. While the instructions are in Japanese, the recipe titles are in English.³⁶ This format is an important contrast to cookbooks, which I will discuss later, that aim to preserve ethnic eating and have instructions in English but titles in a different language. The cookbook therefore also serves as a tool for language instruction for newcomers to Canada. Interestingly, Kosaka hand-wrote his own recipes into the book for dandelion wine, root beer, and Japanese sweet bean jelly; a hybrid diet thus evolved through the written dialogue between the guidebook's author and its owner.

While these guidebooks were written from within an ethnic group to help immigrants adapt to a new cultural environment, other cookbooks were published by so-called "gatekeepers" to impose an identity through food. Helen MacMurphy's 1922 booklet *How We Cook in Canada* is one example.³⁷ MacMurphy, whose

32 Catherine Parr Strickland Traill, *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1969).

33 Driver, *Culinary Landmarks*, p. 295.

34 Alison Norman, "'Fit for the Table of the Most Fastidious Epicure': Culinary Colonialism in the Upper Canadian Contact Zone" in Iacovetta *et al.*, eds., *Edible Histories*, pp. 31-51.

35 Sakuya Nishimura and Susan Michi Sirovyak, "A Guidebook to Living in Canada—1906 Style!" *Nikkei: Japanese Canadian National Museum Newsletter*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 10-11.

36 Driver, *Culinary Landmarks*, p. 1162.

37 Helen MacMurphy, *How We Cook in Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Health, 1923).

promotion of eugenics has been widely documented, offers straightforward advice on Canadian methods of cooking, with—probably useful—lengthy descriptions on stove types. In a sense, her advice was practical in its generality: she writes, “If you can bake bread, make porridge, cook eggs, fish, meat and vegetables and make good soup, tea and coffee, you are ‘off to a good start’.” Yet she imposes her Anglo normativity by emphasizing the importance of pie, since “pies please people—especially apple pies.”³⁸

The theme of adaptation and modification of entire diets exists within early settlers’ guides, but certainly the modification of individual recipes is present in many more recent ethnic cookbooks. Such changes serve to make the ingredients easier to procure and the recipes less challenging for “Canadians” to prepare. In a sense, these transnational recipes—if they can be called that—are saying we will change, but not too much. A good example is Lannie King Yee and Shirley B. P. Yee’s 1964 publication *Let’s Cook the Chinese Way: The ABC’s of Chinese Cooking*. In their introduction to the cookbook, the Yees proposed that, by not referring to “Chinese cooking,” but instead “cooking like the Chinese do,” their traditional Asian foodways would be less “mysterious” to North Americans.³⁹ Interestingly, they noted that the main purpose for writing the book was their belief that many of the stresses and illnesses current in North America resulted from improper eating. Chinese foodways were better for people, they said, as recipes included lots of mushrooms, more vegetables and less meat than was typical in a Canadian diet.⁴⁰

On the one hand this cookbook contains many complexities about the techniques, ingredients, and traditions surrounding Chinese cooking—even discussing the cold versus hot air effect of foods and menus—but it is also simplified and explained for a North American audience. In their eagerness to see Canadians learning to cook as Chinese do, the authors offer suggestions for substituting ingredients, because of availability but also preference. “Many authentic Chinese dishes are not readily acceptable to Western tastes,” they say, suggesting that celery might be substituted for water chestnuts, finely cut cabbage for bean sprouts, and parsnips for bamboo shoots. As well, instead of rice flour, the cook could combine cornstarch and all-purpose flour, and even soy sauce could be replaced with a mixture of salt plus “Accent in beer.”⁴¹ A centre section of the cookbook provides hand-drawn illustrations of common Chinese ingredients, with descriptions of colour and dimensions, so that Canadian cooks would know exactly what to look for when shopping. There are also diagrams and explanations for how to read prices on foods in Chinatown in Vancouver. This cookbook crosses borders of understanding without apologizing for what some might view as a loss of authenticity. On the one hand, the Yees’ book “Canadianizes” traditional Asian

³⁸ Quoted in Driver, *Culinary Landmarks*, p. 589.

³⁹ Lannie King Yee and Shirley B. P. Yee, *Let’s Cook the Chinese Way: The ABC’s of Chinese Cooking* (Saanichton, BC: Shirlann Industrial Co. c1964), p. 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

cooking, but it also serves as a guidebook for non-Chinese to explore their world and taste their ethnicity.

Cooking to Practise Ethnicity

Community cookbooks, which arise from an organization or locale, as opposed to an individual or a business, can be read, again to quote Driver, as a “small-scale manifestation of the larger subject.”⁴² The inspiration might come from women asserting themselves professionally in the activities of a community, however that is defined, or an associational group pursuing specific self-defined goals. Many community-based cookbooks have the important purpose of reinforcing—perhaps reintroducing—culturally-specific foodways within an ethnic group itself. My own work on Mennonite cookbooks has demonstrated the ongoing importance—one might argue resurgence—to group and gender identity of foodways as presented in published cookbooks. Witness the huge response to the 2011 publication of *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*, a glossy cookbook by ten middle-aged “girls” that combines the nostalgia associated with traditional Mennonite ethnic dishes such as *borscht* (cabbage soup), *wareniki* (cottage cheese pockets), and *rollkuchen* (fried bread) with contemporary cooking trends that include gluten-free recipes.⁴³ This cookbook has sold 30,000 copies, and a sequel was published in 2013. Numerous Mennonite community cookbooks include a section on “Mennonite dishes” alongside more generic cooking. Alberta-based Anne Harder’s short collection simply titled *Mennonite Ethnic Cooking* was compiled explicitly to “preserve a record,” to “maintain an identity,” and to “honour the ingenuity of Mennonite women of past decades.”⁴⁴ These two books are examples of how a certain celebratory ethnicity—some have said symbolic⁴⁵—is put forward even while “assimilation” is otherwise almost complete. While these two are twenty-first-century examples, cookbooks with a distinctive “Mennonite foods” section emerged already in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁶

This trend was similar for other ethnic groups whose main immigration era was also half a century earlier. In her 1957 edition (the first) of *Traditional Ukrainian Cookery*, Savella Stechishin points out that the “enthusiasm [of Ukrainian Canadians] for their own native dishes never wanes.” The book was a project of the Ukrainian Women’s Association of Canada to mark 65 years of settlement in this “fair and free land of their choice.” As justification for her 500-page book full of pencil drawings of life in the Old Country, Stechishin says: “With the rapid process of assimilation and integration of recent years, it has become necessary to make a compilation of these treasured native recipes in the English language and to make them readily accessible to those who have lost their mother tongue.” The

42 Driver, *Culinary Landmarks*, p. xxix.

43 Lovella Schellenberg, *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* (Waterloo, ON; Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2011).

44 Anne Harder, *Mennonite Ethnic Cooking* (Alberta, by the author, 2006).

45 The idea of symbolic ethnicity was put forward by Herbert J. Gans and taken up by other scholars of immigration and ethnicity. See “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1979), pp. 1-20.

46 See my chapter “More than ‘Just’ Recipes: Mennonite Cookbooks in Mid-Twentieth Century North America” in Iacovetta *et al.*, eds., *Edible Histories*, pp. 173-188.

author was clearly motivated by her desire to “preserve for posterity” Ukrainian food traditions and thus identity. At the same time, she acknowledges that Old World recipes for dishes like *Holubtsi* (stuffed cabbage) and *Kolach* (braided circle bread) had to be adapted and “modernized,” which proved to be a “laborious task.”⁴⁷

Even while recognizing the need to Canadianize recipes, the author presents some thinly veiled critiques of Canadian ways within the book. In her discussion of *lokshyna*, noodles that are “rich in eggs and of a delicate yellow color,” she notes that the Ukrainian Canadian homemaker seldom relies on commercial egg noodles but prefers to make her own, even though in Canada “short cuts in food preparation are favored.”⁴⁸ As well, she implies that the many recipes for tortes will not be as popular since, while they are “truly gastronomical delights and masterpieces in themselves . . . unfortunately, they are far too rich for a Canadian generation of bathroom-scale watchers.”⁴⁹ Shortly after her death in 2002, it was noted that Stechishin’s cookbook had been reprinted 18 times, had sold over 80,000 copies, and, interestingly, was being “discovered” in Ukraine where younger generations were said to be interested in their heritage.⁵⁰ In this case, the homeland sought ethnic food authenticity in the diaspora.

It is perhaps because, as Frances Swyripa has observed, “food formed a particularly significant bond and aspect of Ukrainianness”⁵¹ that there are so many Ukrainian cookbooks published in Canada. In the roughly 14,000 volumes in the substantial Canadian cookbook collection at the University of Guelph, the largest non-Anglo “ethnic” representation, as far as I can determine, is Ukrainian; 15 entries include Ukrainian as a keyword. What some of these reveal, while reinforcing ethnic food practices, is an “institutional completeness”⁵² or professionalization that helps to solidify their place in Canadian middle-class society. For example, a 1965 publication of a Ukrainian women’s group, simply titled *A Book of Recipes*, focuses on traditional Christmas and Easter recipes; yet many of the pages are devoted to lists of donors, greetings and acknowledgements from associations, and advertisements for businesses (not all obviously Ukrainian) in Vancouver and elsewhere in British Columbia.⁵³

Jewish cookbooks serve a similar function—as a philanthropic tool for women, as a way to display the Jewish community’s place in Canadian society, but also as instructional manuals to reinforce Jewish identity and cohesion. In the collection *Edible Histories*, Andrea Eidingger combines textual and social historical analysis in her essay about a popular Jewish cookbook, *A Treasure for my Daughter*:

47 Savella Stechishin, *Traditional Ukrainian Cookery*, 1st ed. (Winnipeg: Trident Press, 1957), pp. 9-10.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 195.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 371.

50 “Savella Stechishin, 1903-2002,” *The New Pathway Ukrainian Weekly* (2002), http://www.infoukes.com/newpathway/Page228_2002.htm.

51 Frances Swyripa, *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity, 1891-1991* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 245.

52 Raymond Breton, “Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants,” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 70, no. 2 (September 1964), pp. 193-205.

53 *A Book of Recipes to Mark the 30th Anniversary of the “Lesia Ukrainka” Branch of the Ukrainian Women’s Association of Canada, 1933-1963* (Vancouver, 1965).

A Reference Book of Jewish Festivals with Menus and Recipes.⁵⁴ Originally published in the 1950s in Montreal, it holds a place of honour in the home of many Canadian Jewish women. Eidinger's essay provides a valuable analysis of how cookbooks, far from simply being "just recipes," provide a critical entry point into how group efforts to create tools for shaping a community ethnic identity target women, in this case Jewish women. It demonstrates how, by promoting food customs through their cookbook, women were actively involved in shaping the ethno-religious identity of their community and were doing so by targeting their daughters. The text itself also goes well beyond the culinary; the carefully constructed conversational exchanges and reflections by a mother and daughter reveal much about prescribed gender roles as well.

Other Jewish cookbooks have a similar tone and purpose. The 1952 *Toronto B'nai B'rith Women Cookbook* appears to serve philanthropic and celebratory purposes; it lauds the charitable work of Jewish women on behalf of such projects as a home for "maladjusted children" in Israel and education programmes against anti-Semitism in Canada, as well as their roles, as homemakers, to preserve the "myriad of tasteful nostalgic and meaningful dishes that have been handed down to us through the centuries."⁵⁵ Similar to other 1950s ethnic cookbooks, this B'nai B'rith example exhibits a curious mix of the traditional and the modern, with its front cover illustration of a Jewish menorah and back cover advertisement for T. Eaton's Co. The recipes themselves also suggest this transitional space, with many Yiddish-language recipes alongside quintessential 1950s items like "Carrot and Pineapple Mould" and "Cornflake Macaroons."

This blend is common to a few mid-twentieth-century Mennonite cookbooks I have analysed, as well as the 1950 *Tried and True: Favorite Recipes Published by the Dorcas Society of the Gimli Lutheran Church, Gimli, Manitoba*, which presents Icelandic recipes—like the classic *Vinarterta*—together with odd things like Peanut Butter and Bacon Canapés, Vegetable Pie with Peanut Butter Crust, and Strawberry Marshmallow Whip.⁵⁶ A similar mix occurs in what appears to be the oldest Ukrainian cookbook in the University of Guelph collection. *Tested Recipes*, as it is called, was likely published during or shortly after the Second World War, given the interesting section on War Time Recipes. There are Old World glimpses in this book—an advertisement by an Edmonton tailor for "Buffalo furcoats made to order" for instance—alongside recipes for Checkerboard Sandwiches, produced through a laborious construction of layering and cutting white and brown store-bought bread.⁵⁷

These "nostalgia cookbooks" were directed both inwards and outwards. They reinforced—actually "instructed"—ethnicity for women within the cultural group or who were descendants, but they were also declarations of ethnic pride and

54 Andrea Eidinger, "Gefilte Fish and Roast Duck with Orange Slices: *A Treasure for My Daughter* and the Creation of a Jewish Cultural Orthodoxy in Postwar Montreal" in Iacovetta *et al.*, eds., *Edible Histories*, pp. 189–208.

55 *Toronto B'nai B'rith Women Cookbook* (Toronto: Toronto Chapter of B'nai B'rith, 1952).

56 *Tried and True: Favorite Recipes Published by the Dorcas Society of the Gimli Lutheran Church, Gimli, Manitoba* (Gimli: Dorcas Society, Gimli Lutheran Church, ca 1950).

57 St. Josaphat's Ladies Auxiliary, *Tested Recipes* (Edmonton: St. Josaphat's Ladies Auxiliary, n.d.).

success to the Canadian public. In that sense, they fit well into the uncritical celebrations of pluralism that emerged with, indeed prompted, the adoption of official multiculturalism in 1971. The growing number of ethnic cookbooks in the 1950s and 1960s may well have provided impetus to the development of that policy, as the varied ethnic cuisines being “tasted” across the nation helped to challenge Canada’s bicultural identity. A genre that became especially prominent in this era, and an important dimension to the national immigrant narrative, consists of what one might call “fusion” cookbooks that reflect the cultural plurality of Canada as a nation of immigrants. Half a century ago, as Franca Iacovetta has demonstrated, such cookbooks were introduced to emphasize immigrant “gifts” that brought an exotic flavour to, but did not threaten, Anglo superiority. The 1963 multi-ethnic Christmas cookbook that she analyses served to “mainstream” and celebrate the food traditions of postwar newcomers, even while maintaining assumptions of Anglo normativity.⁵⁸ In subsequent years, immigrant voices themselves emerged in such writings.

Reinforcing a Benign Multiculturalism

Two community cookbooks that could be described as products of this benign multiculturalism are *Ethnic Cuisine for Everyday Cooking* (1975) and *The Polish Touch: Creative Cooking* (1982). I use the word benign in juxtaposition with contemporary critiques that portray multiculturalism as a less than benevolent integration of residents and newcomers. As scholars of multiculturalism in Canada have noted, the policy and practice of this seemingly inclusive pluralism frequently veiled (and continues to do so) a “vertical mosaic” characterized by racism and unequal opportunity among Canada’s ethnic groups.⁵⁹ Cookbooks are one source that illustrates what some decry as multiculturalism’s emphasis on “dining, dance, and dress”—a celebration of non-Anglo cultural customs that masks exclusion. Yet, given a generalized interest and openness to “tasting” the ethnicity of the other, one could argue that food and recipe exchange may sometimes (if not always) be a site for positive, non-threatening encounters. Kristine Kowalchuk, in her study of community cookbooks in the Prairies, describes the recipe exchanges among multiple ethnicities as “a kind of intercultural Prairie cuisine” that resulted from the need to share and adapt food traditions in a difficult growing environment.⁶⁰

The first example is a pluralist cookbook that includes many ethnicities, while the second is specific to one culture. The former is a collection of 500 recipes from 23 national groups, compiled by the St. Martin’s Catholic Women’s League in Regina, Saskatchewan. The brief foreword says: “Canada is ‘The Melting Pot’ of the world. Saskatchewan’s population is comprised of people from many lands, and

58 Franca Iacovetta, “Food Acts and Cultural Politics: Women and the Gendered Dialectics of Culinary Pluralism at the International Institute of Toronto, 1950s-1960s” in Iacovetta *et al.*, eds., *Edible Histories*, pp. 359-384.

59 See, for instance, the collection by May Chazen *et al.*, eds., *For Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2011).

60 Kristine Kowalchuk, “Community Cookbooks in the Prairies,” *Cuizine: The Journal of Canadian Food Cultures / Cuizine: revue des cultures culinaires au Canada*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2013), <http://www.erudit.org/revue/cuizine/2013/v4/n1/1015493ar.html>.

Regina is particularly cosmopolitan.... This book is dedicated to the pioneer cooks of this province who, without the help of micro-wave ovens, frost-free refrigerators and electric mixers, kept body and soul together in a pleasantly gastronomic way.”⁶¹ The cookbook was funded by the Carling Community Arts Foundation, established in 1974 to contribute to “the preservation and expression of Canada’s multi-cultural traditions”; 18,000 applications were received in the first year. The recipes are preceded by photos, insignia, and folksy, congratulatory messages from five dignitaries, including Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Saskatchewan’s Lieutenant Governor Stephen Worobetz, and Premier Allan Blakeney. Blakeney is the most thoughtful of the group, acknowledging, “Cookbooks tell us a lot more about a society than its eating habits. ... They serve as a common bond to bring us together, while at the same time emphasizing the unique differences in our cultures which are worth preserving and keeping distinct.” Here, perhaps, was the essence of multicultural policy. The Mayor of Regina, H. H. P. Baker, was more focused, saying he was sure the cookbook would be “of great value to the ladies in the preparation of meals for their husbands and families.”⁶²

The rationale behind the organization of the recipes in *Ethnic Cuisine* is not clear. Nine ethnic groups have separate sections, each preceded by a title page with caricatured drawings of ethnic images: the German with large loaves of bread and tankards of beer; the Ukrainian with the recognizable *pysanka* (decorated egg); the French with multiple glasses of wine and a picture of the Arc de Triomphe. Brief introductions to each section include stereotypical descriptions of ethnic traditions and characteristics. For instance, “German people ... enjoy good food in large quantities [and] love their sausage.”⁶³ Yet there is also an attempt to provide accurate information about Saskatchewan’s immigrant past. The text documents the number of Italians from southern Italy who settled in Regina in the previous 20 years; explains the French-Canadian presence as resulting from a return migration of Québécois who had been employed in factories in the northeastern United States; and nuances the regional dimensions of Chinese cooking.⁶⁴ The portrayals of ethnicity both recall J. S. Woodworth’s benevolent racism in *Strangers within our Gates* (1909) and revise ideas about ethnic inclusion in the context of a more embracing era.

The last section, entitled “The Melting Pot,” includes recipes from the 14 remaining groups. No explanation is given as to why these groups are given lesser prominence, but I can only surmise that it represents lower levels of immigration or fewer recipes. Most curious and problematic is that “Indians”—that is, Canada’s indigenous peoples—are included in the melting pot. In the two pages are recipes for such foods as pemmican, rabbit soup, and bannock. While the five-line introductory statement does not claim Indians to be immigrants, it says that “they”—the Indians—“were here to meet them”—the Europeans,⁶⁵ ostensibly the

61 “Foreword,” *Ethnic Cuisine for Everyday Cooking* (Regina: St. Martin’s Catholic Women’s League, 1975).

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-9.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 61, 99.

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

indigenous peoples' purpose was to wait and serve as greeters to newcomers from the Old World. In multiculturalism's worst-case scenario, they are cast as just one of Canada's diverse ethnicities, with curious cultural traditions and foodways.

In a similar vein of celebrating Canadian pluralism is *The Polish Touch*, published in 1982 by the Ontario-based Marie Curie Sklodowska Association to mark its 25th anniversary. Like the Mennonite and Ukrainian cookbooks discussed earlier, this project saw as its goal to preserve Polish foodways for future generations, but the compilers also hoped that "other Canadians will benefit by this book which is but a small reflection of the rich Polish heritage dating back over one thousand years."⁶⁶ This book too acknowledged the need to adapt traditional recipes for the current time and place. For example, the project coordinator said, "Tedious methods practiced by the efficient and hardworking Polish women have been modified with modern conveniences such as mixers and blenders," the inference being, of course, that Canadian women were neither efficient nor hardworking! It does, however, suggest a certain superiority of traditional food customs over modernized ones. Like other multicultural cookbooks, *The Polish Touch* is celebratory of Polish culture while taking care to explain in simple terms the feasts and festivals in which food plays a central part, such as *barszcz z uszkami* (beet soup with mushroom dumplings) at Christmas or *Paski* (egg bread) at Easter. The book has clear instructional agenda beyond the culinary. Some of the rituals are plainly "Canadianized" such as descriptions for a "Polish-Canadian Bridal Shower" adapted for an immigrant context, when "many of the young brides were without means or family," or the "Polish-Canadian Wedding," also "adapted to the Canadian lifestyle."⁶⁷

Another brief example of "tasting ethnicity" in the context of a non-threatening multiculturalism is a small 22-page typescript booklet titled only by the table of contents, which begins, "Delicious Canadian West Indian Treats for Everyone." The title page says: "A Dedication to CANADIAN UNITY, UNDERSTANDING AND MULTICULTURALISM FROM The Canadian West Indian Community of Kingston and District."⁶⁸ The pages with recipes for Trinidad Rum Punch and Montego Bay Rum Punch were the only pages that had any "spatters" on them, which looked like drops of liquid. Were these the recipes used most by the owner of the cookbook? A sensory historian might imagine what this touch and sight evidence means. These are only a few examples of a spectrum of cookbooks published in the 1970s and 1980s that reflect and present an uncritical and perhaps simplistic multiculturalism.

In the case of the book published by the Catholic Women's League, the tone reflects Franca Iacovetta's description of postwar efforts by the International Institute of Toronto, whereby ethnic food practices were part of a "mosaic discourse in which Canada emerged as benevolent brewer of enriching cultures."⁶⁹

66 Marie Curie Sklodowska Association, *The Polish Touch: Creative Cooking* (Toronto: Imperial Press, 1982).

67 *Ibid.*, pp. 21-24.

68 *Caribbean Recipes* (Kingston, ON: Canadian-West Indian Association, 1981).

69 Iacovetta, "Food Acts and Cultural Politics," p. 360.

Indeed, one could argue that a focus on ethnic foodways masks the persistent “vertical mosaic” that existed in Canada. Critics might suggest that foodways only reinforce caricatures of official multiculturalism as dining, dress, and dance, as well as perpetuate the “othering” of non-Anglo immigrants when we talk about “eating ethnic.” They might also “commodify difference” by presenting an “excessive celebration” of that difference, which is void of representation on a group’s own terms.⁷⁰ Yet one could argue that, for some immigrants, the preservation of distinct foodways and their public presentation in cookbooks and food festivals was, and is, a meaningful, if non-threatening, way to put forward ethnic identity in the midst of assimilation or even exclusion. Again to reference Iacovetta, in the postwar era, foodways became a “safe site” at which to acknowledge Canada’s growing ethnic diversity,⁷¹ a scenario that became even more prominent in the 1970s and onwards.

Creating National and Local Newcomer Narratives

The multi-ethnic and single ethnic cookbooks of the twenty-first century are documents that offer yet another manifestation of the immigrant narrative. Habeeb Salloum’s *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead*, on the one hand, contributes to a mainstreaming of Arab cuisine in order to preserve it. On the other hand, coming from the “immigrant voice” itself, it uses food stories to unsettle the past. The narrative that accompanies the recipes in this cookbook clearly depicts the “othering” that Salloum and his family experienced as non-white immigrants on the Prairies in the early twentieth century. In this case, recipes demonstrate the process of and assumed need for integration, whereby recipes are adapted based on new climatic and cultural environments. Salloum also notes, however, that, while early Syrian settlers became “almost totally assimilated” and “melted into the Canadian mainstream” in response to exclusionary attitudes, their attachment to the Old Country lies mainly in their memories of Arab food.⁷² The production of the cookbook itself and the presentation of the recipes in 2005 serve as a kind of redemption and vindication of the past for Arab homesteaders of a century ago.

In a similar but multi-ethnic tone, a 2002 cookbook entitled *Tasting Diversity: A Celebration of Immigrant Women and their Cooking* is reminiscent of *Ethnic Cuisine*, but written for a new era. With a foreword by British Columbia politician Rosemary Brown, the compilation contains recipes from 46 contributors, all women from diverse cultural backgrounds, some who are well-known Canadians—Olivia Chow, Joy Kogawa, and Isabel Bayrakdarian, for example—while others are collectives from community centres. Brown’s introductory words reflect the core of transnational identities in Canada as she talks about the shared pleasures of eating “no matter what the circumstances of our journey to this land, or our reasons for coming here” and expresses the tension between love of adopted homeland

⁷⁰ Mason, “Cooking the Books,” pp. 105-125.

⁷¹ Iacovetta, “Food Acts and Cultural Politics,” p. 360.

⁷² Salloum, *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead*, p. 19.

and the knowledge that the “tastes of our childhood linger in our memories and remain a part of the magic that we cling to.”⁷³

The narrative here is not unlike that of Habeeb Salloum, in which food holds a central place at the table in creative new national cuisines and thereby identities. Like Salloum’s cookbook, *Tasting Diversity* recognizes “culinary heritage as the keeper of memory”⁷⁴ and thus presents personal histories of hardship, isolation, discrimination, and exclusion that are core to understanding the immigrant experience in Canada. One contributor, an immigrant from Africa, wanted to reach out to her new neighbours in keeping with her tradition by offering 20 cups of tea. However, in her Toronto apartment building she received only one visitor—a police officer responding to a complaint.⁷⁵ Another personal history records the “shocking” experience of City of Toronto bureaucrat Shirley Hoy whose family arrived from Hong Kong in North Bay in 1958. Hoy’s family was supported by a French-Canadian family who, ironically, helped them pick out “English” names in order to fit in.⁷⁶ Such stories are made more palatable, one could argue, because they are in a cookbook rather than the exposé of a journalist or academic, yet perhaps they were also more widely read. The common denominator that is “love of food” also created a context—one might say “safe space”—for women to tell their gender-specific stories. Such cookbooks may also offer a way to be “anticolonialist” in our eating, to quote Lisa Heldke, in a manner different from that presented by the benign multicultural cookbooks discussed earlier.⁷⁷ One could thus approach cookbook analysis as documents of a national newcomer narrative.

It is also intriguing to explore what cookbooks can document regarding immigrant history at a local level. In my own local community—the Region of Waterloo, encompassing the cities of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge—one can find all the food representations and cookbook genres that I have addressed thus far. For instance, the 1906 *Berlin Cook Book* reflects the largely Germanic population in the cities of Berlin (which became Kitchener in 1916) and Waterloo at the time. Indeed, the German ethnicity in the cities was so normative that the recipes are only implicitly German, yet the contributors’ names are predominantly Germanic.⁷⁸ Conversely, just across the 401 highway in present-day Cambridge, Ontario, the Scottish immigrant presence comes through in recipes for Scotch Potato Soup and Highland Scones in *The New Galt Cookbook* of 1898.⁷⁹ Edna Staebler’s various iterations of *Food That Really Schmecks* celebrates and stereotypes the area’s Pennsylvania German Mennonite heritage,⁸⁰ while numerous

73 Working Women Community Centre, *Tasting Diversity: A Celebration of Immigrant Women and their Cooking* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 2002), p. 11.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

77 Heldke, “Let’s Cook Thai,” p. 190.

78 *The Berlin Cook Book* (Berlin, ON: News Record Print Shop, 1906).

79 Margaret Taylor and Frances McNaught, *The New Galt Cook Book: A Book of Tried and Tested Recipes* (Toronto: George J. McLeod Ltd., 1898).

80 Edna Staebler produced a lengthy line of cookbooks on the theme of food that “schmecks,” beginning with *Food That Really Schmecks* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968).

Mennonite community cookbooks display that identity in different ways. These particular cookbooks document the immigrant presence in a localized space up to the 1960s or so.

The multi-ethnic community cookbook—a regional version of the *Tasting Diversity* project above—called *Focus on Cooking: Recipes from Around the World*—was produced in the early 2000s by a local organization, Focus for Ethnic Women, the goal of which is “to enhance participation of immigrant and visible minority women in Canadian society.”⁸¹ There is little narrative in this project, but the book includes recipes from 47 national cultures; most recipes are attributed to individual names, suggesting they were created or used locally. Indicative of the high percentage of immigrants from South Asia in Waterloo region by the late twentieth century is Bharti Vibhakar’s book *Spice of India*. Vibhakar immigrated from what was then called Bombay, India, in 1980. She quickly became a downtown icon in Kitchener, where she opened an Indian food store called Spice of India, held vegetarian cooking classes, and in 1993 produced her own cookbook of Indian dishes. Vibhakar was born in Yemen, though her family was from Gujarat in the west of India, where the “food is fragrantly spiced rather than searingly hot.”⁸²

In a delightful reversal of Helen MacMurchy’s much earlier advice on “how to cook Canadian,” Vibhakar’s book begins with explanation for “Eating Food the Indian Way,” in which she understatedly argues for the “fun” and “authentic” manner of eating with one’s fingers: “it adds human feeling to the food, and is far more sensual and emotionally satisfying than using a cold metal or plastic utensil. Try it.”⁸³ At the end of the book, she provides a brief glossary of Indian food terms, a short list of remedies for common ailments, and a half-apologetic short discussion on Indian “practical philosophies” such as the science of Ayurveda, vegetarianism, hygiene, and respect for cows.⁸⁴ The intent in Vibhakar’s book is not only to teach Canadians to “eat Indian,” but also to help them gain understanding—and hopefully inclusion—of south Asian culture more broadly.

Food Hybridity in Cookbooks—A Mennonite Example

One population group that is increasingly visible and growing in number in the Waterloo and surrounding area are Mennonites who are migrating to Canada mainly from Mexico but also from elsewhere in Latin America. Primarily referred to as Low German-speaking Mennonites because of a distinct language dialect assumed in eighteenth-century Prussia, they are often described as “returning” to Canada rather than immigrating because their ancestors left the Prairies for Mexico in the 1920s, after immigrating to North America from the Russian empire in the 1870s. Their food traditions and cookbooks are an especially good example of food hybridity that results from eating across borders. Food businesses

81 Rachele Allin, ed., *Focus on Cooking: A Collection of Recipes from Around the World* (Waterloo: Focus for Ethnic Women, n.d.).

82 Bharti Vibhakar, *Spice of India* (Kitchener, ON, by the author, 1992).

83 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 97-99.

in southwestern Ontario display the transnational identities of these Mennonites well, but they are also exhibited in an increasing number of cookbooks, some published in Mexico, others in Canada, that are multilingual and multi-culinary. Mennonites from Mexico have a sense of multiple homelands—Russia, Canada, Mexico—all imagined initially as utopias yet none of which met those promises. For this group, diaspora is a present reality, as families migrate north or south, depending on their leanings, or develop transnational identities as temporary migrants.⁸⁵ The evolution of food cultures is ongoing.

The Mexican government itself, in a series of cookbooks about the ethnic culinary styles in the country, published a Spanish-language Mennonite cookbook in 2000—*Recetario Menonita de Chihuahau*. Most of the recipes derive from the “Russian Mennonite” tradition, so that *Paska*—a decorative Easter bread of Ukrainian origin—becomes *Pan de Pascua*.⁸⁶ Recipe books produced by Mennonites themselves include *Mamas Kochbuch*, published in 2005 in Chihuahau, Mexico, a fundraising project on a school’s 30th anniversary. Though the informal compilation is entirely in High German—official written German as opposed to the Mennonites’ spoken Low German—many of the recipes are for Mexican foods.⁸⁷ A 2010 recipe collection, called *Farmer’s Kochbuch*, also printed in Mexico, was produced by the women of El Valle Colony (Mexico) to raise money for their missions projects, such as “helping the poor and so on.”⁸⁸ This particular book is the epitome of cookbook hybridity with its combination of English, Spanish, and German languages and recipes, ranging from a variety of Hispanic salsa recipes, to traditional German *Rollkuchen* (deep-fried fritters), to a recipe for “Kentucky Fried Chicken” (perhaps these women solved the secret spice mystery!).

While these cookbooks deviate from my search criterion of publication in Canada, they are used in Canada by Low German-speaking Mennonites and perhaps others. One Canadian publication is by Helen Funk, a Manitoba-based radio personality who published a collection of her radio recipes aimed at Low German-speaking Mennonites in Canada and Latin America. According to Funk, it is the only Low German-language cookbook in the world⁸⁹—this language being historically oral, not written. I purchased it at a social service office in Aylmer, Ontario, where I was told that one purpose of the cookbook was to enhance literacy among Low German-speaking women. With numerous photos of Funk cooking with her grandchildren, the cookbook was also meant to strengthen the bonds between mothers and daughters.⁹⁰

An even more direct example of food hybridity in cookbooks eliminates the English language altogether, but, like the examples above, it is used in Canadian

85 For a history of this migratory group, see Royden Loewen, *Village Among Nations: “Canadian” Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

86 Katherine Esther Emilia Renpenning Semadeni, *Recetario Menonita de Chihuahau* (Conaculta, 2000).

87 *Mamas Kochbuch* (Chihuahau, Mexico: Escuela CETA, 2005).

88 *Farmer’s Kochbuch* (Mexico, 2010).

89 Angeline Schellenberg, “Cooking up a Low German blessing,” *Mennonite Weekly Review*, June 18, 2007, <http://www.mennonworld.org/2007/6/18/cooking-low-german-blessing>.

90 *Ibid.*

kitchens. In 2011, an entirely bilingual—German and Spanish—cookbook was printed in Mexico that again included a mix of Mexican, Mennonite, and miscellaneous foods. The German title is translated as *Come Eat: With Mennonite Women from Durango, Mexico*, while the Spanish is *Enjoy Delicious Mennonite Recipes Among Others*.⁹¹ The shift to a full Spanish translation may indicate the increased acceptability and absorption of Hispanic culture into the historically separatist Mennonite communities. While the early Mennonite settlements in Mexico were isolated, and members were discouraged from interaction with the Mexican people, language, and culture, close to a century later that has changed. It may in fact be at the culinary table where such evolution and adaptation occurs most benignly, even while tradition endures in other areas of daily life. The co-existence, especially within a cookbook, of foodways representative of cultures that in other respects remain very distant is indicative of the transformative role of food in bridging cultural divides. Like the Leamington, Ontario, *Family Kitchen* restaurant, which features Mennonite, Mexican, and Canadian food on its menu and invites people to “feel at home,”⁹² the maintenance and merging of multiple food traditions within cookbooks allows this group always to feel at home in their foodways, even while home represents multiple real and imagined places. As a medium that codifies cultural traditions, cookbooks produced by Low German-speaking Mennonites reify ethno-cultural depictions of foodways and thus reinforce Mennonite self-identity as a transnational people. An evolving cultural hybridity, which might otherwise be masked or even denied, is allowed to flourish in the context of the cookbook.

Conclusion

The examples used in the above analysis do not of course represent all of Canada’s many immigrant and ethnic groups. My quest to find more varied cookbooks and any compiled by more recent immigrants was often met with blank stares. A woman from Pakistan indicated that her young adult children who do want to learn to cook “traditional” foods go to the internet for information or are still at the immigrant stage where they can learn directly from their mother or grandmother. My neighbour from Iran said her children are not interested in “cooking Iranian” and her husband is not interested in “eating Iranian.” Others suggest that their recipes are passed along orally or by example, which would also have been true of my first-generation Canadian grandmother who immigrated in 1924. So perhaps my other neighbours—constantly mobile transnational Palestinians from the United Arab Emirates via Lebanon—will produce cookbooks only when oral tradition is in decline or will simply “google” *baklava*. In fact, this research should probably begin to include online blogs. A further limitation to my study is that I looked only at cookbooks in English (except for the German and German-Spanish Mennonite examples); however, thus far I have found few references to Canadian-

91 *Kommt essen: mit den Mennonitischen Frauen von Durango, Mexiko / Disfrutien: las deliciosas recetas menonitas entre otras* (Durango, Mexico: Mennonitische Frauen von Durango, Mexiko, 2011).

92 The phrase “feel at home” is from the restaurant’s menu.

published ethnic cookbooks in languages other than French, which I have not included here.⁹³

There are, of course, limitations to the cookbook as an historical source for immigration history. As my examples reveal, cookbooks are very uneven in purpose, format, content, and outcome, and direct comparison across immigrant groups and time periods is therefore tentative. The actual genre of writing that the cookbook represents may well emerge from a dominant ethnicity that does not reflect food-related knowledge sources in minority or marginalized groups—witness the hundreds of Anglo cookbooks in Canada. Yet, as one of the most prolific genres of formal or informal published writing, they do merit scrutiny from a range of angles. Cookbook analysis has added enormously to our understanding of women’s past lives; perhaps it can do the same for immigrant lives.

On the one hand, cookbooks reveal everyday life, the mundane, and hence were embraced by social historians and historians of women because they offered glimpses into the private and domestic sphere. Yet, at another level, they might be thought of as very public documents, created with the explicit intention of bringing to public view the contributions and cultures of immigrants to Canada. Just as cookbook production served to professionalize women’s perceived intrinsic roles in the kitchen, for immigrants to Canada, the public dissemination of recipes—especially when deliberately adapted to new contexts—can perhaps be interpreted as confident, if also defensive, signs of a group’s permanent place in the Canadian polity. Within a particular cultural fold, in which many practices and signposts of ethnicity had passed into history, cookbooks served to preserve and instruct the tastes of ethnic identity. When those cookbooks were written for and utilized by “other” ethnicities, they prompted a pattern of eating across borders that created the hybrid Canadian diet that is now commonplace.

93 Early French-Canadian and later Québécois cookbooks are a category I have yet to address.

