



DEVELOPING ENGLISH 118F: FOOD POLITICS & FOOD CULTURES

S. CALEY HALL (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA GLOBAL FOOD INITIATIVE FELLOW)

INTRODUCTION

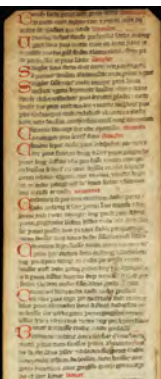
As a Global Food Initiative Fellow, I worked with Allison Carruth, a professor in UCLA's English department, to build the syllabus for *English 118F: Food Politics & Food Cultures: Historical Perspectives*, one of several recently developed courses created by faculty with UCLA's new food studies minor in mind. Professor Carruth, whose research focuses on food cultures and environmental movements, is designing a class that will bring together cultural, historical, and scientific approaches around four modules: 1) the recipe as form; 2) vegetarianism as a utopian eating scheme; 3) chocolate, sugar, and colonialism; and 4) the rise of the restaurant and food professionalization.

PROJECT GOALS

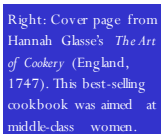
Professor Carruth had an initial plan for the units – and some of the texts – she wanted to teach, but she was still honing the syllabus and the focus of each unit. I worked on researching and writing annotated primary and secondary bibliographies for each unit. I highlighted potential texts for inclusion on the syllabus, but also included a much wider and richer array of background material. Additionally, I built a digital repository of relevant images, with an emphasis on the recipe and chocolate units.

UNIT FOCUS: THE RECIPE AS FORM

The majority of critical literature on the history of the cookbook and the recipe focuses on Anglo-American foodways, especially those of the middle and upper classes during the last few centuries. In part, this is because these texts are closer to home and easier to read. And we didn't want to neglect the rise of French cuisine, or the development of Western domesticity.



Left: Portion of the earliest extant copy (in scroll form) of *Le Viandier*, usually attributed to Guillaume Tirel, aka Taillevent (although it is unlikely that he was the original author). Composed in the second half of the 13th century, this French recipe collection is considered one of the earliest European cookbooks.



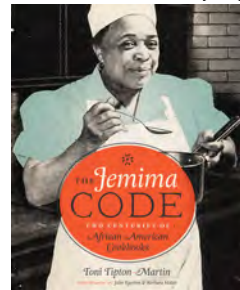
We also wanted to represent a wider geographical and historical array. Recipes and cookbooks show up in a variety of places and forms: on clay tablets in ancient Mesopotamia; in the 18th century gastronomic manual, *Suiyuan Shidan*, written by Yuan Mei, a Qing dynasty scholar; and in Arabic manuscripts in medieval Baghdad, among many other places.



Left: Clay tablet of recipes from Mesopotamia, c. 1750 BCE.
Below: The *Kitab al-tabikh* (*Book of Dishes*), compiled by Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq (10th century CE).



At the same time, we wanted to “consider the recipe” as Kyla Tompkins puts it in her essay of the same name, as a formal device and as a narrative, one that is both “embed[ed] in the temporality of the everyday” (Tompkins 442), and capable of transcending time and place. The recipe can resurrect forgotten peoples and histories, as in Toni Tipton-Martin's *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African-American Cookbooks*, a scholarly survey of more than 150 African-American authored cookbooks. Beginning with Robert Roberts's 1827 *The House Servant's Directory*, Tipton-Martin unearths



the numerous sophisticated – and all too often overlooked – contributions that African-Americans have made to American foodways, recuperating their culinary and cultural authority.

UNIT FOCUS: CHOCOLATE, SUGAR, AND COLONIALISM

To illustrate the past history and current state of global food production and consumption, Professor Carruth wanted to focus on chocolate, both as an indigenous product of Mesoamerican cultures, and as a luxury item introduced by European colonialism. In *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, Sidney Mintz documents how Europe's ever-growing desire for sugar fuelled colonialism, slavery, and global trade.

Antonio de Pereda's "Still Life with Ebony Chest" (1652) depicts various colony-derived luxury goods, including a chocolate pot (on the left) and a cacao bean and sugar (center, right).



By focusing not just on sugar, but also on chocolate, the product of cacao and sugar, the course considers the history of cacao in Mesoamerican culture before, during, and after European imperialism.



Left: The "Princeton vase," a Maya chocolate drinking cup (c. 700), depicting a woman frothing chocolate for drinking. Right: Detail from Bernardino de Sahagún's 12 book *Historia general de las cosas de nueva España* (*General history of the things of New Spain*). Sahagún, a Franciscan missionary in Mexico, compiled an encyclopedic work of ethnography about Mexican life, written in both Spanish and Nahuatl (an Aztec language). This image is of a woman making drinking chocolate.

FUTURE GOALS

As the year winds to a close, we are working on honing the syllabus and developing assignments for the class that will allow them to engage with archival holdings at UCLA's Young Research Library, and the Clark Library.

LITERATURE CITED

- Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking, 1985.
- Tipton-Martin, Toni. *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African-American Cookbooks*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.
- Tompkins, Kyla. "Consider the Recipe." *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1:2 (Fall 2013): 439-445.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the UC Office of the President, the UC Global Food Initiative, Professor Allison Carruth, and the UCLA English Department for their generous funding of – and support for – this project.