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. The majority of critical literature on the history of the cookbook and the recipe focuses on Anglo-American foodways, especially those of the middle class that will bring together cultural, historical, and scientific approaches around four modules: 1) the recipe as form; 2) vegetarianism as an aesthetic and cultural authority; 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.

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 “embedded 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 exploration of more than 150 African-American-authored cookbooks. Beginning with Robert Roberts’s 1827 The House Servant’s Directory, Tipton-Martin uncovers 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.

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, Sajjam Shaik, written by Yuan Mei, a Qing dynasty scholar; and in Arabic manuscripts in medieval Baghdad, among many other places.

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.

**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**


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