



The Virginia Housewife: Or Methodical Cook

By Mrs. Mary Randolph

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Mary Randolph (August 9, 1762–January 23, 1828) wrote *The Virginia Housewife* (1824), the first American regional cookbook. Her recipes used Virginia produce but also showed influences from African, American Indian, and European cultures, thereby creating a cuisine unique to Virginia and the South. Randolph's influential housekeeping book was an immediate success and went through many editions until the 1860s. It included both culinary instructions and advice on household supervision. Besides popularizing the use of more than forty vegetables, Randolph's book also introduced dishes from abroad, such as gazpacho, to the southern public.

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Editorial Review

Review

Introduction The Virginia Housewife: or, Methodical Cook By Mary Randolph Baltimore: Plaskitt, Fite, 1838 (1838) This is considered by some to be the first truly American cookbook and by all to be the first regional American cookbook. This work is still in print and still forms the basis of traditional Virginia cooking. It has been praised by many culinary authorities both for its delineation of authentic Virginia foods and its careful attention to detail. Upon its first appearance in 1824 it was an immediate success and it was republished at least nineteen times before the outbreak of the Civil War. In addition, copies appeared in the late nineteenth century and modern Southern authors often reference it. The recipes in The Virginia Housewife are simply splendid. It contains a number of Southern specialties, some appearing in print for the first time: Ochra Soup, Catfish Soup, Barbecued Shote ("This is the name given in the southern states to a fat young hog"), Curry of Catfish, Ochra and Tomatoes; Gumbo ("A West India Dish"), Chicken Pudding ("A Favourite Virginia Dish"), Field Peas, Apoquiniminc Cakes (a form of beaten biscuits). Clearly we are in the South. But Mrs. Randolph knew about much more than Southern cooking; she includes recipes from England, France, Spain, the East Indies, the West Indies and New England (Dough Nuts - A Yankee Cake), among others. Her Spanish dishes are most intriguing: Gaspacho, Ropa Vieja and Ollo. We find polenta, vermicelli, macaroni and curry. We find recipes for corning, for fricando and fricassee, for haricot and matelote and salmagundi; we have a-la-modes, a-la-daubes and a-la-cremes. We learn how to caveach fish and to pitchcock eels. Mrs. Randolph tells us how to pickle several dozen items, including oysters, sturgeon, lemons, onions, nasturtiums, radish pods, English walnuts, peppers, green nectarines and asparagus. Anyone who doubts that early Americans savored salads and vegetables need only look at what Mrs. Randolph offers. There are recipes for artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, French beans, Jerusalem artichokes, lima beans, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, peas, peppers, potatoes, potato pumpkin, red beet roots, salsify, savoy cabbage, sea kale, sorrel, spinach, sprouts and young greens, squash, sweet potatoes, turnips, turnip tops, winter squash, onions, and tomatoes. Indeed, Mrs. Randolph has seventeen recipes using tomatoes in the various editions of her cookbook. This provides further evidence to correct the misinformation that Americans did not use tomatoes prior to the mid-nineteenth century. We should mention Mrs. Randolph's wondrous ice-cream recipes. There are twenty-two flavors, plus variations, including black walnut, pineapple, quince, peach, pear, chocolate, citron and almond.

Karen Hess, wrote, "The most influential American cookbook of the 19th century was The Virginia Housewife ... There are those who regard it as the finest book ever to have come out of the American kitchen, and a case may be made for considering it to be the earliest full-blown American cookbook. [it] may be said to document the cookery of the early days of our republic."

From the Inside Flap

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About the Author

Born at Amptill, her family's Chesterfield County plantation, Mary Randolph learned how to run an orderly household. She married her cousin, David Meade Randolph, of Chesterfield County, in December 1780. Moldavia, their Richmond home, became a center of Federalist Party social activity. Financial reversals led Randolph in 1808 to open a Richmond boarding house, where she provided accommodations and excellent meals to an elite clientele. Later the Randolphs moved to Washington, D.C., where Mary Randolph began to compile a housekeeping book that provided management hints; directions for preparing sauces, vegetables, preserves, puddings, ice creams, soups, breads, meats, beverages, and cleaning products; and instructions on crafting a home refrigerator. According to Randolph, "The prosperity and happiness of a family depend greatly on the order and regularity established in it." She was revising *The Virginia House-Wife* for a third edition at the time of her death. Randolph's younger sister Virginia Randolph Cary wrote the influential *Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady, on the Death of Her Mother* (1828), the first advice book written by a southern woman for the women of her region.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Harold Martinez:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for us. The book *The Virginia Housewife: Or Methodical Cook* ended up being making you to know about other know-how and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The e-book *The Virginia Housewife: Or Methodical Cook* is not only giving you more new information but also being your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship with all the book *The Virginia Housewife: Or Methodical Cook*. You never feel lose out for everything if you read some books.

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