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LIT 6936

Dr. Logan

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Undergraduate Study Guide for Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery* –

AML 3286 (Early American Women's Words)

Foodways definition from *Merriam-Webster* online:

n. pl. the eating habits and culinary practices of a people, region, or historical period

Why examine food in cultural and/or literary studies?

“Food touches everything. Food is the foundation of every economy. It is a central pawn in political strategies of states and households. Food marks social differences, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions. Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family, and community relationships.” (Counihan and Van Esterik 1)

Early American Foodways – Ingredients and Preparation

Read the following items

- Simmons, Amelia. *American Cookery* (1796) from Evans Digital
 - Read the title page, preface, and the advertisement/errata in the back; select 1-3 recipes in each section that interest you and read them
- Glasse, Hannah. *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy* available from Google Books <http://books.google.com/books?id=xJdAAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>
 - Due to the length of Glasse's book, you will not be required to read the entire text. Read the title page and table of contents, then locate one or two recipes that overlap with Simmons' book and compare them.
- Levenstein, Harvey. *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet*. New York: Oxford UP, 1988. 1-9. Print. (Available as a PDF in Webcourses)
- Plante, Ellen M. *The American Kitchen 1700 to the Present: From Hearth to Highrise*. New York: Facts on File, 1995. 7-20. Print. (Available as a PDF in Webcourses)
- Ulrich, Laura Thatcher. *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*. New York: Vintage, 1990. 80-2, 189, 210-11, 309-314. Print. (Available as a PDF in Webcourses)

Go to the following web pages to view the images, and watch the two videos. You do not need to take notes on these, but they should provide additional visual context to the readings.

- “American Heritage Vegetables.” *Center for Digital Humanities of South Carolina*. <http://research.cdh.sc.edu/vegetable/index.php>
- “Museum Objects.” *Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project*. <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/museum.html>
- Griffith Morgan House. “Hearth Cookery at Harvest Celebration 2009.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVB53R6Hoo4&feature=related>
- Rural Heritage Museum. “Hearth Cooking Demonstration at the Rural Heritage Museum 2010.” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUZXP-jtFAw&feature=related>

Discussion Questions

Based on your readings, please come to class ready to discuss the following questions:

What distinctions can you see between Simmons’ American cookbook and the British example by Glasse? How do the recipes you selected and compared differ in preparation style and process?

“...it is difficult for us to understand the harsh reality of the physical labor and constant drudgery the Colonial woman was subject to. In addition to her long hours of work, she constantly had to deal with pregnancy and infant mortality, as well as natural disasters, illness and disease and the adjustments to be made by leaving family and friends behind to venture off to a new country.” (Plante 16)

Women’s domestic duties were numerous, challenging, and took up large amounts of time. How might these demands affect women’s opportunities in areas such as education or employment beyond the home?

Food and Cookbooks in Relation to Politics/Identity

Read the following scholarly articles (available as PDFs in Webcourses):

- McWilliams, James. “‘How Unripe We Are’: The Intellectual Construction of American Foodways.” *Food, Culture & Society* 8.2 (2005): 152-160.
- Ridley, Glynis. “The First American Cookbook.” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23.2 (1999): 114-123.

Activity and Discussion Questions

Be ready to discuss the following questions, and participate in the activity during class.

“The implication couldn’t have been any starker to American cooks: the ‘American mode’ had no time and felt no need to ... pamper the palette Perhaps it would have back in 1750, when Americans were in awe of the British. But not in 1805, when Americans were in awe of themselves and their emerging rustic culture.” (McWilliams 156)

“That an orphan can rise to become a respectable member of society hints at a social mobility and inclusiveness that sees all treated equally” (Ridley 116)

Think about the foodways in your family and community. What connections can you make between those foods or methods of preparation and the political or social ideals shared within that community?

Activity: As part of this discussion of food and culture, please bring a copy of a recipe that is: a family recipe, a particular favorite item you like to prepare and/or eat, or one that is representative of your heritage. Be prepared to share these recipes and discuss them in the context of the question above. We will assemble a class cookbook including all the recipes you bring.

Changing Patterns of Domesticity

Read the following selections (available as PDFs in Webcourses):

- Norton, Mary Beth. *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996. 22-5, 155-163, and bottom of 242 to the end of the first paragraph on 244. Print.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Bonds of Womanhood: “Woman’s Sphere” in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1977. Bottom of 23 to the end of the first paragraph on 30, 101-105. Print.
- Trist, Elizabeth House. “The Travel Diary of Elizabeth House Trist: Philadelphia to Natchez, 1783-84.” *Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women’s Narratives*. Ed. Annette Kolodny. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990. 204-5, 226. Print.

Discussion Questions

“About half of men and a third of the women in the first generation of new England settlers could sign their names but by the end of the colonial period the proportion of men had advanced to 80 percent or more while female literacy (judging by signatures) stagnated during the eighteenth century at the level of 40 to 45 percent.” (Cott 102-3)

“Prior to the Revolution, Americans had paid little attention to the formal education of women. If a girl knew the rudiments of learning, that was thought to be more than sufficient to her limited needs In the new republic, by contrast, the importance of female education was repeatedly emphasized. The Americans’ vision of the ideal woman – an independent thinker and patriot, a virtuous wife, competent household manager, and knowledgeable mother – required formal instruction in a way that the earlier paragon, the notable housewife, did not. Moreover, Americans’ wartime experiences convinced them that women needed broader training to prepare them for unforeseen contingencies.” (Norton 256)

Amelia Simmons is an orphan, and the advertisement/errata at the end of *American Cookery* notes that her work was vandalized by her go-between during publication. How does this connect to the debate about female education at the end of the eighteenth century as described by Cott?

Though *American Cookery* is marketed for “all grades of life” and it evokes a spirit of American egalitarianism, Trist’s diary reveals a sharp divide between her own urban resources and expectations and those of women on the rural frontier.

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Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik. “Introduction.” *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge, 1997. 1-8. Print.

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Plante, Ellen. “The Colonial Kitchen 1700-1839.” *The American Kitchen 1700 to the Present: From Hearth to Highrise*. New York: Facts on File, 1995. Print.

Ridley, Glynis. “The First American Cookbook.” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23.2 (1999): 114-123. Web. 7 Oct 2011.

Further Reading

Secondary / Scholarly Sources

Janowitz, Meta. "Indian Corn and Dutch Pots: Seventeenth-Century Foodways in New Amsterdam/New York". *Historical Archaeology* 27.2 (1993): 6-24. *JSTOR*. Web. 06 Oct 2011.

Kerber, Linda. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1980. Print.

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Newlyn, Andrea. "Challenging Contemporary Narrative Theory: The Alternative Textual Strategies of Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Cookbooks." *Journal of American Culture* 22.3 (1999): 35-47. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 11 Oct 2011.

Strasser, Susan. *Never Done: A History of American Housework*. New York: Pantheon, 1982. Print.

Wilson, Mary Tolford. "Amelia Simmons Fills a Need: American Cookery, 1796." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 14.1 (1957): 16-30. Web. 6 Oct 2011.

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Magaw, Samuel. *An Address, Delivered in the Young Ladies Academy, at Philadelphia, on February 8th, 1787. At the close of a Public Examination*. Philadelphia, PA: Thomas Dobson, 1787. *Evans Digital*. Web. 12 Nov 2011.

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