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THE SIGNIFYING DISH: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY IN TWO BLACK WOMEN'S COOKBOOKS

RAFIA ZAFAR

The Black woman cook—overweight, decked out in snowy apron, undisputed genius of the American kitchen—is an image too well inscribed on the collective American unconscious. One southern culinary historian, John Egerton, concisely describes this difficult-to-eradicate stereotype:

They [Black women chefs] were "turbaned mammies" and "voodoo magicians" and "tyrants" who ruled the back rooms with simpleminded power; they could work culinary miracles day in and day out, but couldn't for the life of them tell anyone how they did it. Their most impressive dishes were described as "accidental" rather than planned. Their speech, humorously conveyed in demeaning dialect in many an old cookbook, came across as illiterate folk knowledge and not to be taken seriously.¹

These buffoonish characters were the fictive counterparts of legions of unknown culinary workers, African Americans whose legacy and labor shaped much of what we eat to this day.² Yet these historical chefs continue to be overshadowed by the long-running specter of the mammy-cook.³ As folklorist Patricia Turner asks, in her analysis of the production and reproduction of "mammy" kitchen artifacts: "What price has been exacted from the real black women who have been forced to make their way in a culture that pays homage to a distorted icon?"⁴ This disjunction—between the spurious worship of an unlettered genius Black cook⁵ and that figure's long absence within what I call the "kitchens of power"—leads to still another question, posed by Quandra Prettyman: If "Black cooks are familiar figures in our national mythology as well as in our national history . . . [why is it] so few have produced cookbooks?"⁶ The beginnings of an answer lie in the difficulty of writing a book that engages simultaneously with the shadows of Black slavery, servitude, and oppression, the per-

sistence of stereotypes, and the practicalities of cooking.⁷

To write and to cook—to participate in a national discourse about food and eating—leads the Black woman into territory loaded with conflicting meanings: for a twentieth-century African American female publicly to announce herself as a cook means that she must engage with the reigning ghosts of American racism; she must tackle literally visceral ideas with metaphor, individual agency, and historical memory. The Black woman cook must always engage with these sites of memory—or *lieux des memoires*—when writing about specific foods. As Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally observe, such African American *lieux des memoires* "prompt both the processes of imaginative recollection and the historical consciousness . . . [they] stand at the nexus of personal and collective memory."⁸ Meanings are assigned by people, and those items can be specific places or foods common to many. Each recalled or recreated dish in a community's cuisine signifies mightily, and the multiple readings of a simple dish of rice, greens, and meat reveal past and present worlds in which race and culture define our very taste buds. In this lies the quandary of the Black woman who would write a cookbook: even if Aunt Jemima's image on the pancake-mix box has been updated, has the consciousness of American consumers been similarly revised? Popularly held misconceptions about Black cooks haunt, consciously or not, the African American woman, whether she is a chef or an author. When negotiating the intersections of memory, history, food, and creativity, well might the Black woman author ask: In writing a recipe, can one also right history?

In the 1970s, following the crest of the Black Power movement, two works appeared that take on the figure of the Black woman cook and her problematic heritage, Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's *Vibration Cooking: Or the Travel-Notes of a Geechee Girl* (1970) and Carole and Norma Jean Darden's *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine: Recipes and Reminiscences of a Family* (1978).⁹ These two cookbooks, which have now attained near-cult status, help us understand how a recipe collection functions as an articulation of a personal and/or communal identity. Each text works as autobiography and history in addition to engaging, obliquely or not, the linked issues of Black stereotyping and class. They also operate simultaneously on gastronomic and historical levels. Both illustrate the ways Black culinary traditions can be imagined or inscribed—by the au-

thor, by her readers—as a way of enacting the cultural, expressive, and historical agenda of the African American female. Along with *how-tos*, the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor give us *whys*; presenting these cookbooks to a national audience, Smart-Grosvenor and the Dardens enact a gastronomic Black Reconstruction.

A little background first, for a reconstruction implies a previous edifice. The first cookbook by a Black woman, Abby Fisher's ghostwritten *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking*, appeared in 1881. Despite the straightforward culinary instruction explicit in a cookbook, Fisher's personal life and historical situation as a Black woman intrudes. Autobiographical and historical information comes in the form of asides, as when the former southerner concludes her last recipe with the words "I have given birth to eleven children and raised them all, and nursed them with this diet. It is a Southern plantation preparation."¹⁰ However firmly Abby Fisher tried to keep out the world beyond her kitchen, her life as a Black woman erupted into her professional presentations. In the twentieth century, the setting down of recipes grew beyond Fisher's early efforts to keep it simple to recipes unabashedly presented alongside community histories, family memoirs, and autobiography.

Increasingly, Black cookbooks written after the 1940s function as recoveries or recastings of an African American world. The National Council of Negro Women sponsored a number of such culinary celebrations of community, beginning in 1958 with the *Historical Cookbook of the American Negro*.¹¹ In the post-World War II era, authors find food, politics, and history increasingly hard to separate from one another.¹² The civil rights movement of the 1950s eventually led to the massive civil disobedience and increasingly aggressive activism of the 1960s; this upswing in political activism led to a burgeoning market for Black subjects. The subsequent increase in African American-owned presses after 1960 attests to the growing market for books by and about African Americans.¹³ With this increased number of Black publications overall came a rise in the genres published—and a growing number of African American cookbooks. Latter volumes, such as *A Good Heart and Light Hand: Ruth L. Gaskins' Collection of Traditional Negro Recipes* (1968), often explored and celebrated group

identity through relatively straightforward collections of recipes.¹⁴ But two works that followed *A Good Heart and a Light Hand* encapsulate the era's heady mix of politics and the personal.

The Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor volumes engagingly reflect the creative and political consciousness of the 1960s. The well-worn cliché of the women's movement—the personal *is* political—becomes more than an assertion of *female* rights when in *Vibration Cooking* the forthright Smart-Grosvenor unrestrainedly asserts that for too long Caucasians have been dictating who's in charge of the American kitchen: "White folks act like they invented food and like there is some weird mystique surrounding it—something that only Julia [Child] and Jim [James Beard] can get to. There is no mystique. Food is food. Everybody eats!" (p. 3). At the same time Smart-Grosvenor notes that whites have heretofore controlled the kitchen economy, she points out that all people must eat. Implicit in this leveling observation is her assertion that one group does not "own" a set of recipes, despite the apparent primacy of plantation cookbooks over "soul food" collections. Anne E. Goldman reaches a similar conclusion when she observes that in the kitchen, women of different races and classes do not easily fall into sisterhood.¹⁵ Although less confrontational in approach than Smart-Grosvenor, the Dardens, in *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine*, also do not fail to inform their reader-cooks that the legacy of slavery and racism affects even the foods we remember: despite the numerous family members the Dardens could contact for recipes, they "could not trace [their] family roots past [their] grandparents . . . such was the effect of slavery and its resulting destruction of family ties" (p. xi). But if the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor similarly weave a love of cooking and eating around the markers of slavery, family pride, and the civil rights movement, the differences between the two cookbooks demonstrate generational shifts within the Black community as well as the class divisions that have become more marked at the end of the twentieth century: the Dardens can be seen as showcasing the elegant side of southern cooking along with more informal cooking styles, while Smart-Grosvenor's folksy tone and simplified recipes seem to privilege classic soul food, although her volume is far more complicated than that rubric would imply. These two cookbooks demonstrate that African America was, by the 1970s, quite diversified in terms of class, educational achievement, and region.¹⁶

Yet the class issue remains for Black women cooks and authors, whatever their educational achievement and household income. In a society long arranged around a binary opposition between white and Black, free and slave, the middle-class status of African Americans continues to be contested in any number of arenas. Because of this long-standing link between racial (e.g., Black) and economic (e.g., lower) status in the United States, Black women and their cookbooks come across as less "high culture" than the popular American guides to French or Italian cuisine which crowd the "Cookery" shelves of bookstores and libraries.¹⁷ There are class issues hidden within the very existence of a cookbook, an artifact commonly held to be a "woman's thing" in general. Although such works are said largely to appeal to "women" as a group, women themselves are stratified in terms of race and class as any number of feminist scholars have argued. Individual working-class women (and men), as for many generations were the vast majority of African Americans, are less likely to write, compile, or even read recipe books, if only because their work and financial situations militate against leisure-time activities like "gourmet" cooking.¹⁸ African American women cooks, then, operate within overlapping systems—mainstream, or "white" and culturally specific, or "Black"—that define their class positions in contradictory ways.

Both the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor recognize that there is neither a monolithic Black culture nor a single African American cuisine, although each of their productions play up and against prevalent notions of what "Black" food is (and is not). The subtitles of each book reveal their individual and distinctive agendas: *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine: Recipes and Reminiscences of a Family* invites us into a procession of middle-class homes for fruit wines, hot baked goods, and comfortable living. *Vibration Cooking, or, the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* heralds the author's unorthodox approach to life: Smart-Grosvenor cooks with tradition and intuition together, with a global roster of recipes enhancing her picaresque adventures in the rural South, inner-city Philadelphia, France, and Cuba. The Dardens deliver a gastronomic social history of African America, emphasizing nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ideals of racial uplift in the face of adversity. As Anne E. Goldman has noted that "if the Dardens are intent on providing their own middle-class status with an historical prece-

dent, they are equally interested in providing ignorant readers with lessons in nineteenth-century American history."¹⁹ Smart-Grosvenor offers an idiosyncratic, wisecracking, personal narrative of the changes wrought in contemporary Black America. If *Vibration Cooking's* unabashed first-person narrative creates an autobiography through meals, *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine's* text, with sepia-toned pictures, can better be called a keepsake or an archive. Each set of culinary reminiscences captures a moment in Afro-American history. *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* can, at times, seem an idealized version of Black life—the now-familiar lament that segregation had its positive side, in the enforced closeness of Black community life, comes to mind. *Vibration Cooking*, on the other hand, comes across like a Zora Neale Hurston of the culinary set.²⁰ As the late 1970s arrived, desegregation had been achieved—at least as far as the courts were concerned—and increasing numbers of African Americans entered the enclaves of formerly all-white institutions. *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* and *Vibration Cooking* can therefore be seen as late-twentieth-century Black cultural events, expressions of the prevailing winds of change.

Vibration Cooking, the first of this pair of cookbooks, comes as a high-water mark of the nexus of Black Power and cuisine.²¹ Smart-Grosvenor consciously counterwrites those generations-old images of overweight Black geniuses who presided over generations of southern kitchens with nary a written-down recipe.²² Before she offers a single how-to, the author engages pointedly with these ever-present myths, when she dedicates her work "to my mama and my grandmothers and my sisters in appreciation of the years that they worked in miss ann's kitchen and then came home to TCB in spite of slavery and oppression and the moynihan report" (p. v).²³ Whom the U.S. mainstream would categorize and pigeonhole, Smart-Grosvenor will liberate through scathing commentary, family history, humor, and personal letters. Her recipes, related in a contemporary African American vernacular, place the Black cook in a community of women who like to whip things up—for themselves, for their families, for their lovers. These recipes are not for Miss Ann's kitchen: cooking as domestic service is invoked only to be scorned.

Vibration Cooking impresses upon the reader the necessity to eradicate culinary racism along with other kinds of bigotry. In the

introduction, entitled "The Demystification of Food," Smart-Grosvenor writes:

In reading lots and lots of cookbooks written by white folks it occurred to me that people very casually say Spanish rice, French fries, Italian spaghetti, Chinese cabbage . . . with the exception of black bottom pie and niggertoes [Brazil nuts], there is no reference to black people's contributions to the culinary arts. (P. 3)

The introduction to the second edition extends the above critique to tell us that "the white folks were on my case" about the original edition of *Vibration Cooking*. Mainstream readers seemed puzzled, Smart-Grosvenor avers, by the frank mixing of culinary and political motives. Her cookbook includes a more than ancillary running commentary on Black life in the white United States, whether complaining about "the segregation of ethnic foods in supermarkets . . . [w]hy can't the mango juice be with the tomato juice [and not in] some 'exotic' section" (p. 197) or including an entire chapter about the Black person's inability to hail a taxicab in Manhattan (pp. 95-97). Preceding a recipe for her paternal uncle's corn muffins, Smart-Grosvenor's readers hear why her father was called "a *bad nigger*" by a southern white and how a racial slur can actually amuse, if not left-handedly compliment, the father and his child (pp. 42-43). In a chapter entitled "Name-Calling," she enumerates the culinary imperialism inherent in the renaming of foods like okra (the original African word is *gombo*) or *sucotash* (Smart-Grosvenor uses an Indian spelling, "sukquttash"). Although she includes in that chapter a recipe for "Cracker Stew," whose ingredients perform a veritable culinary dozens, Smart-Grosvenor admits she does not generally "call people out of their name" (p. 85). Her disdain for things "white" is complicated, for she can not simply dismiss European culture. Instead, when and wherever possible, she asserts the superiority of the African American.

That desire to refocus American gastronomic history leads Smart-Grosvenor to invoke and then to discard the legacy of expatriate American cookbook author and memoirist Alice B. Toklas. Both Smart-Grosvenor and Toklas can be termed "unconventional" if we agree they each lived in defiance of white middle-class heterosexual U.S. culture: Toklas as a lesbian whose lifelong partner was the writer Gertrude Stein; Smart-Grosvenor as a Black American refusing to be channeled into either the stuffy re-

spectability of the American Negro middle class or the still-segregated bohemian life of the American abroad. When Smart-Grosvenor mimics white readers asking, "Was I trying to be a black Alice B. Toklas?" she snaps, "the only thing I have in common with Alice B. Toklas is that we lived on the same street in Paris [the rue de Fleurus]. I lived at #17 and she at #27" (p. xvi).²⁴ That backhanded reference to Toklas makes the comparison between two American cooks living on the rue de Fleurus unavoidable: Parisian-dwelling, American expatriates, Smart-Grosvenor and Toklas each record a smart set of renowned visitors and their amusing anecdotes. Despite their differences in social class, both women moved in a vigorous and exhilarating community of expressive artists.²⁵ As opposed to Toklas, whose text often included the sayings of Gertrude Stein, Smart-Grosvenor never alludes directly to her husband or any other long-term partner. In lieu of a famous lover's words she records her own *bon mots* and wisecracks and those of her children, Chandra and Kali ("My daughter said, 'My mamma cook like Aretha Franklin sing!'" (p. xv). Her sense of worth, most decidedly, does not turn on being an observer of the greats and near-greats of U.S. cultural history.²⁶ Yet recipes and commentary in *Vibration Cooking* and *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* invite their readers to be impressed by the writers' creative connections. Both authors make a connection between gastronomy and artistic achievement: meals celebrate novelists, "Chicken Carlene Polite" (*Vibration Cooking*, p. 165); painters, "Oeufs Francis Picabia" (in Toklas); or musicians—Virgil Thompson contributes a recipe for "shad roe mousse" (in Toklas) while Donald Hubbard worries about a "soul food party . . . in Rome" (*Vibration Cooking*, p. 74).²⁷ By writing about African American food in such venues as France and Italy, Smart-Grosvenor implicitly acknowledges European connections and affiliations. Yet like many other African Americans, she tries to keep a distance from "white" ancestry. To affirm "down-home" food in the belly of "Western civilization" thus keeps Smart-Grosvenor's priorities as Black activist clear.

Smart-Grosvenor's reluctance to admit kinship with Toklas stems not from an inability to admit a connection with a white predecessor—she does refer to her, after all—but from her much greater desire to form a chain of Black women forebears.²⁸ When she introduces a "white" dish and then replaces it with a "Black"

analogue, Smart-Grosvenor performs a Black female signifying (or, she might say, a "hurting") on white gourmet foods: her comparisons of crepes with her grandmother's hoe cakes and "Pancakes Smith St. Jacques" exemplify this culinary revisionism (pp. 22, 23). She would have us recognize that it is from *Black* women cooks and writers that she draws her courage and inspiration; the geechee girl's kitchen and life frankly seek out connections with women, with all peoples, of the African Diaspora. Smart-Grosvenor acknowledges those who have come, and cooked, before her. African American culinary colleagues like Edna Lewis and Ruth Gaskins receive high praise; so too does she praise the famous, if less self-consciously aesthetic, *A Date with a Dish: A Cookbook of American Negro Recipes*. A scandalized Smart-Grosvenor notes that few cookbooks by Afro-Americans appeared before the first edition of *Vibration Cooking*—this despite the fact that "Afro-American cooking is like jazz—a genuine art form that deserves serious scholarship" (p. xviii).²⁹ Her assertion that cooking, like other forms of nonliterate artistic expression, merits scholarly attention anticipated scholarship in women's and cultural studies of African America. Still, the multiple genres of *Vibration Cooking*—its letters, its recipes, its narrative excursions—assert Smart-Grosvenor's personal agenda over a strictly academic or historical one.

In *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine*, the Darden sisters take their cooking less autobiographically—or, I should say, more historiographically. If the welter of different texts offered by Smart-Grosvenor presents an individual's unique experiences along with her recipes, the carefully researched and kitchen-tested recipes of several generations of Dardens and Sampsons attest to a belief that the individual is inextricable from the larger community and continuum of Black folks.³⁰ So when a friend of the two sisters inquires, "didn't their black American *family*, deeply rooted in the experiences of slavery and rural life, have rich material on genuine American cookery?" the sisters answer yes (p. ix; emphasis mine). Further realizing that many of the wonderful dishes they "had taken for granted" were more real to them than the relatives dispersed across generations and regions, they decided to put together a cookbook. For these women, a compendium of loved foods would be inextricable from recapturing past African American life; to do so properly would result in a "thick description" of a past age.³¹ Thus, *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* is literal-

ly "a testimonial to those who lovingly fed us and at the same time gave us a better sense of ourselves by sharing themselves" (p. xi).

Unsurprisingly, along with those earliest remembered bites came their identity as African Americans.³² Northern raised and Sarah Lawrence educated, the two sisters must recapture their culinary and familial antecedents through travel to distant relatives, specifically referring to their travels as "our pilgrimage 'home'" (p. xi). They visit neighbors in small southern towns; pick through boxes of photographs; and collect, try out, and standardize old recipe cards. As one might expect from a cookbook cum history, statements from historical personages abound—except here the statements come from surviving relatives and old friends of the family. Rather than Smart-Grosvenor's savory stew of old and new recipes, letters from friends, and bohemian Black arts hobnobbing, the Dardens re-create course by formal course a lived experience they see vanishing with increased social mobility, desegregation, and distance from slavery. Theirs is not an autobiography in the sense of a telling of their own, individual cooking stories, although some of those are included—we have only to compare the number of recipes culled from older relatives with the ones the Dardens themselves contribute to see where the emphasis in *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* lies. As the youngest contributors to the volume, the Dardens subsume their culinary narratives within a larger history, that of their maternal and paternal ancestors—and by extension, within the greater context of African American history.

Within the covers of their cookbook the sisters divide one side of the family from another, mapping out their genealogy and giving credit for each recipe where due (each branch of the Sampsons and the Dardens is neatly delineated). Carefully planned, every chapter refers specifically to a family member; accompanying photographs and reminiscences heighten the succulence and significance of the recipes within. Following a brief biography of the only grandparent they ever knew, the sisters append adaptations of granddad Sampson's honey-based recipes—"Fruited Honey Chicken," "Honey Duck," "Honey Custard," even "Cough Syrup" (pp. 148-51). Memories of their travels in the segregated South as young girls precede a picnic menu; dishes by various friends, old and new, who gave them food and shelter are provided as well—"Hot Crab Meat Salad" and "Edna Neil's Pan-Fried

Blowfish" (pp. 248, 249). That so many of those whose recipes are included, or to whom chapters are dedicated, were elderly or deceased at the time of the book's composition lends an elegiac tone to the cookbook. Although far from a eulogy for a vanished African America, *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* strikes a nostalgic note absent from *Vibration Cooking*.

Thoughts of [our uncle] J.B. conjure up images of big shiny cars, polished two-toned shoes, straw hats tipped to the side, and the continual party that always seemed to be going on around him . . . he was a cook [who] . . . preferred to eat his "dinner" first thing in the morning. . . . (P. 53)

The wistful tone struck in more than one entry could almost lead one to believe that this cookbook was specifically aimed at those who attended northern and/or integrated schools, grew up away from an extended Black family, and who acknowledge an ever-widening gap between the Black working class and the bourgeoisie.³³ Although segregation of a different character remains, the current dilemma leaves African Americans of the poorest families almost as insulated from the middle-class Black world as the two races had once been. That separation leads to a key, if almost prosaic, agenda of these cookbooks. Along with the invocation of time past or a radical manifesto, *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* and *Vibration Cooking* must offer specific remedies and recourse for those readers yearning to [re]create Black community, if not an African American identity, through gastronomic venues.

There are those, however, who have neither the time nor the knowledge to prepare the labor-intensive and classic dishes of African American cuisine with which the Dardens concern themselves. Working parents with attenuated links to an older generation—and restricted free time—might just as soon purchase pre-cooked African American food as prepare it themselves; they might also limit time-consuming, home-cooked meals to Sunday dinners.³⁴ The owner of an Atlanta chain of drive-in chitlins restaurants notes that "doctors, lawyers, all kinds of people . . . remember" this and other foods of their youth and come to buy.³⁵ Others far from Georgia's drive-ins with "the yearning for collard or turnip greens" can now "pick a few cans off the [supermarket] shelf": at least two companies, including a side venture of New York City's famed "Sylvia's" restaurant, offer Black culture in a can.³⁶ Do not such businesses thrive in part not just because busy people appreciate the convenience of prepared foods but also because growing numbers of African Americans no longer know

how to cook chitlins (and other gastronomic relics)? Perhaps, too, the younger members of contemporary Black America do not want to eat foods identified with the past and privation: "I don't know what they are, but they're something nasty."³⁷ As older Black women turn away from the stereotypes of the Black cook, so might younger African Americans eschew meals associated with want.³⁸ Some Black folks turn to takeout, adjusting in that way to the fact that "soul food" and "home cooking" may no longer appear under the same roof. Others, with the time or the inclination, will go to the elongating shelf of Black cookbooks—where *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* and *Vibration Cooking* now have the status of brand names.

The ways the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor treat a traditional African American holiday, New Year's Day, and its signature soul food dish, Hoppin' John, illustrate what each offers to the reader in search of community and cuisine. (Such New Year's celebrations, as expressions of an African American identity, date back to the early nineteenth century.)³⁹ The homely dish of Hoppin' John has been said to be named after a limping New Orleans slave who sold the dish or the children who hopped around the table begging for a taste.⁴⁰ The making of this plain fare sends the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor down parallel memory lanes. The two sisters tell us:

On New Year's Day we always have Open House at our father's home. It is a leisurely day, designed to give us an opportunity to unwind from the frenzy of New Year's Eve . . . Black folklore has it that hoppin' john brings good luck in the coming year, so we always serve this . . . with all the essential trimmings. (P. 223)

As is typical, the Dardens link food, history, and folklore; their Hoppin' John, which they take care to subtitle "Black Eyed Peas and Rice," contains rice, peas, red and black pepper, ham hocks, bay leaf, onions, celery stalk, and salt. By placing the dish in the context of Black American culture, as well as providing exact instructions, the Dardens hope to ensure that their readers' attempts at gastronomic and ethnic revival will turn out successfully.

Smart-Grosvenor also does not fail to connect black-eyed peas and rice with New Year's Day, although the link she forges does not necessarily connect folklore and family. Instead, she recollects

those New Year's open houses I used to have and everyone I loved would come. Even Millie came from Germany one year. She arrived just in time for the black eyes and rice. And that year I cooked the peas with beef neck bones instead of swine cause so many brothers and sisters have given up swine. I had ham hocks on the side for the others. . . . If you eat . . . (Hopping John) on New Year's Day, you supposed to have good luck for the coming year. Black people been eating that traditional New Year's Day dinner for years. That's why I'm not having no more open house on New Year's Day. I'm going to try something new. (Pp. 5, 6)

For this cook, strict adherence to tradition should not overrule the spirit of the occasion. Accordingly, Smart-Grosvenor's ingredients and recipe can be included in four short lines:

Cook black-eyed peas.

When they are almost done add rice.

Mix rice and peas together.

Season and—voilà!—you got it. (P. 6)

So although she gives you a recipe for Hopping John, she prefaces it with her explanation of why she omits the pork (mainly because the prevailing Black ethos eschewed pig meat as the food of poverty and antithetical to a Muslim lifestyle), leaves the seasoning up to her audience (because she and the reader should cook by vibration), and intimates, more or less, that she plans to skip it entirely on subsequent Firsts (because she won't be bound by the past). Smart-Grosvenor wants to ensure continuity, the cook's own sense of integrity, and innovation simultaneously.⁴¹ Still, she will not break with some traditions—nothing so newfangled as Teflon "can't fry no fried chicken" (p. 4). For this cook, only the cast-iron pots, if not the classic dishes, of her girlhood will do.⁴²

Once, in response to an earlier version of this article, a colleague replied testily, "Who ever thought 'African American food' was 'just grits and greens' anyway?" Although there may be some who believe African Americans subsist on corn meal and leafy vegetables, that remark speaks as much to intragroup notions about the food of rural Black southerners (not to mention urban Black northerners) as to that of the Dardens' or Smart-Grosvenor's implied readership. To deny that these items were common because of the poverty-stricken conditions of much of African America is to deny the past. It is also to deny a link with the continent. To identify greens as a cornerstone of Black cuisine doesn't mean that there is one African American culinary tradition. Jessica B. Harris, noted scholar of African diasporic cuisine, has delin-

eated two "major African-American culinary traditions . . . that of the dirt-poor, hardscrabble Deep South . . . [and the one that] harked back to the kitchens of Virginia plantations manned by house slaves who turned spits, put up preserves, and served elegant meals."⁴³ (She would agree that there are further minor and regional variations.) Both major traditions incorporate cooked greens as a standard dish. So although Black American cuisine is certainly more than "grits and greens," those "lowly" dishes signify mightily. The eating of collards has meaning in ways analogous to the eating of parsley from a modern-day seder plate: for Jews and Blacks alike, the ingestion of bitter greens serves as a near-literal taste of slavery. With each group's shared food comes a shared identity, if not a shared fate. As Pierre Bourdieu has observed: "Taste is *amor fati*, the choice of destiny, but a forced choice, produced by conditions of existence which rule out all alternatives as mere daydreams and leave no choice but the taste for the necessary."⁴⁴ Ironically, and sometimes triumphantly, what we have to eat we come to prefer.

For most African Americans, greens have a content beyond B vitamins and iron: "greens are undeniably one of the United States' best known African inspired foods"; they "go into the pot boiling on the back of the stove in a traditional Black American household."⁴⁵ Unsurprisingly, the Dardens present their readers with three headings under greens: Mixed Greens, Collard Greens, and "Pot Likker." Noting that their father "eats greens every day, so he always makes them in quantity and reheats them during the week" (p. 136), the Dardens offer recipes that yield between twelve and sixteen servings. By not dividing the recipe for their readers, the sisters implicitly affirm the foundational place of cooked greens in Black American cuisine. Going on to speak of the value of pot likker, the leftover cooking liquid, the sisters remark: "It is renowned for its nutritional value and can be used as an excellent vegetable stock for soups, as a soup in its own right, or traditionally to dunk corn bread" (p. 137).⁴⁶ Giver of vitamins and representative of folk custom, greens serve as side dish and symbol.

Smart-Grosvenor, who could well be called a gastronomic Afrocentrist, celebrates greens in a mixed message of nutrition and nationalism. In a chapter titled "Collards and Other Greens" she discusses the various aspects of this food. They are, "accord-

ing to the *National Geographic* . . . prehistoric. The Romans took them to France and England. The Romans are said to have considered them a delicacy. I know I consider them a delicacy. They are very rich in minerals and vitamins" (p. 139). Two exchanges occurring during greens-buying expeditions further illustrate her conflation of provender and politics. When shopping in her Lower East Side Manhattan neighborhood, Smart-Grosvenor has an unpleasant déjà vu when the person of color wrapping her greens (in her adulthood it is a Puerto Rican man; in her childhood it was a Black man) does not also take her money. That the white store owner deems this employee good only to wrap vegetables offends his proudly Black customer: she vows to shop in Harlem for her greens henceforth, even if it means taking a long subway ride (p. 141). The echo of boycotts, of lunch-counter sit-ins, would not have been missed by her contemporaries—nor should we. In a second incident, when a white shopper asks, "How do you people fix these [greens]?" Smart-Grosvenor wields humor, not her spending power, as a lance. The woman's patronizing epithet, "you people," provokes a mischievous reply. Our intrepid chef announces, with a straight face, that African Americans make salad with collards using "Italian" dressing. Nearby, "a black woman . . . looked at me as if I had discredited the race" (p. xvii). With eleven recipes given for these common vegetables, *Vibration Cooking* affirms the author's belief in the tastiness, curative powers, and unshakable place of greens in Black American life.

"Black" foods like collards and Hopping John may be prepared differently from year to year, and what might be considered "soul food" has indeed changed from its inception.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the entity known as African American cuisine persists. Put another way, the way anthropologist Fredrik Barth would see it, the "boundaries" of culinary Black America may alter (in this case, foods or styles of preparation), but the site itself remains identifiable, both by practitioners of that cuisine and others.⁴⁸ Ethnographers often depend on a reading of what we eat to understand how we construct a self around the axes of food and other cultural "stuff."⁴⁹ Soul food, that phrase long used by African Americans to refer to their common cuisine, underscores the link between psychic identity and eating. Food habits and tastes comprise some of

the strongest factors of group identity. Their significance in creating a bedrock, ethnic self has been acknowledged by anthropologists: "[F]oodways seem particularly resistant to change. . . . It has been suggested that this is because the earliest-formed layers of culture, such as foodways, are the last to erode."⁵⁰ So if eating "Black" functions as one of the primal determinants of an individual's life, we can see how the productions of the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor take up the task of re-creating that primal, gastronomic entity as their group identity becomes ever more fragmented, stratified, and diverse.

In the end, the simple act of eating cannot be separated from the personal, the literary, or the social. Neither can you remove the preference for, or preparation of, certain foods from a historical context. When the Dardens describe the box lunches with which they and other Black Americans traveled, their memories demand we acknowledge the Jim Crow transportation and hotel industry, which barred African Americans from public-eating places and restricted their movement on common carriers (pp. 245-46). Smart-Grosvenor writes a different kind of culinary history when, fired up by white author William Styron's rewriting of the life of noted slave insurrectionist Nat Turner, she finds evidence that "Nat's last meal [was] roast pork and apple brandy" and creates a new recipe, "Nat Turner Apple Pork Thing" (pp. 182-83). Thus, the Dardens' book works like an encyclopedia of recipes with history, while Smart-Grosvenor's autobiography with recipes regards modern Black cookery as an agent of change. One cannot say that the Dardens enshrine their heritage never to partake of it. Yet because Smart-Grosvenor writes almost exclusively of her own life and the place food and cooking hold within it, while the Dardens record the manner in which their mother, father, and older relatives ate, these two "Black" cookbooks differ remarkably. The three see their roles, if not their dishes, dissimilarly, approaching from complementary angles the "stuff" of African American culture: their gastronomic *lieux des memoires* are in turn personal and communal, individual and historical. Each book places African American cuisine in a political context, records a social history that must not be forgotten, and relates the lived experience of the writer and/or her family.⁵¹ Much more than grits and greens, the signifying dishes of the Dardens and Smart-Grosvenor provide us with a taste of where we've been, who we are, and where we should be going.

NOTES

I would like to thank all who have provided me with encouragement and critical feedback: the editors and readers of *GRAAT* (of University of Tours, France), especially my friend and colleague Claudine Raynaud, as an earlier version of this article appeared in *GRAAT* 14 (1996); the Culinary Historian Societies of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Cambridge, Massachusetts; John Egerton; the Program in American Studies at the University of Texas, Austin; the editors and anonymous readers for *Feminist Studies*; and Doris Witt.

1. John Egerton, *Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, in History* (1987; reprint, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 16.
2. As one historian has written, "the spread of southern cooking to the North in our own day, like the spread of so much else in southern culture, has represented, above all, the triumph of its black component." See Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1974; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 543.
3. The popular Charleston [South Carolina] Junior League's *Charleston Receipts* (Charleston: Junior League of Charleston, 1950), a community cookbook organized by a white women's volunteer organization, has perpetuated these stereotypes for five decades. A "Southern" cookbook, *Charleston Receipts* depends for its renowned gentility on the recipes, ingredients, and labor culled from the Blacks who labored in white kitchens. Cuisine elements deemed simple when offered elsewhere by African American practitioners here become classic when presented by white upper-middle-class employers. Sometimes thanked directly and sometimes not, the Black cooks are demeaned via quaint illustrations and even more quaint dialect; they become, in Patricia Yaeger's words, "edible labor." See her "Edible Labor," *Southern Quarterly* 30 (winter-spring 1992): 150-59, especially her remarks on the effaced Black cook/server (156). I have made an analogous observation elsewhere of how the politically vanquished become the rhetorically cannibalized. See Rafia Zafar, "The Proof of the Pudding: Of Haggis, Hasty Pudding, and Transatlantic Influence," *Early American Literature* 31 (1996): 133-49.
4. Patricia Turner, *Ceramic Uncles and Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 43.
5. Much of culinary tradition and method is handed down orally, whatever the society. That cookery is "embodied knowledge" in Lisa M. Heldke's words, whether practiced by white or Black women, accounts for its denigrated status in a society that privileges pure reason; see Lisa M. Heldke, "Foodmaking as a Thoughtful Practice," in *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, ed. Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 203-29, esp. 218-20. The doubly low status of the Black woman predicts their nearly subterranean level in U.S. society, and by way of a corollary, the belief in their gastronomic labors as unworthy of notice.
6. In addition to the Darden sisters and Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, Prettyman's essay discusses Black women chefs Edna Lewis and Cleora Butler; we arrive at some of the same conclusions. See Quandra Prettyman, "Come Eat at My Table: Lives with Recipes," in *Southern Quarterly* 30 (winter-spring 1992): 131-40.
7. As Doris Witt has remarked, "The cookbook is a privileged textual site among blacks because of their overdetermined over representation in American kitchens, both public and private"; she also discusses the mammy figure with particular reference to turn-of-the-century American culture. See "In Search of Our Mothers' Cookbooks: Gathering African-American Culinary Traditions" [indexed as Doris Smith], *Iris: A Journal about Women* 26 (fall/winter 1991): 22-27.
8. Geneviève Fabre and Robert O'Meally, *History and Memory in African-American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7. In their introduction, Fabre and

O'Meally extend and apply French historian Pierre Nora's term *lieu de memoire* to African American culture.

9. Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking, or, the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* (1970; reprint, New York: Ballantine Books, 1986, 1991); subsequent references (all to the 1991 edition) appear in parentheses in the text, unless otherwise noted. Carole and Norma Jean Darden's *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine: Recipes and Reminiscences of a Family* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1978) is also in paper, but I have used the original hardcover. Subsequent citations to this edition appear in parentheses in the text. The continued popularity of these two works can be attested to by their publication history: *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* has been in print pretty much continuously since its first publication; *Vibration Cooking* is now in its third edition. Much anecdotal evidence indicates hardcover first editions of *Vibration Cooking* are often borrowed from, and never returned to, their original owners.

10. [Abby Fisher] *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking* (1881; reprint, with notes by Karen Hess, Bedford, Mass.: Applewood Books, 1995), 72.

11. The National Council of Negro Women, *Historical Cookbook of the American Negro* (Washington, D.C.: Corporate Press, 1958).

12. Emblematic of a kind of ripple effect, similar celebrations of one's origins, as well as one's political activism, arose in other groups. In terms of cultural origins, the impetus to celebrate one's identity came to be known in the 1970s as the "ethnic revival"; along with this rise in various Americans' perceptions of themselves as "Italian" or "Greek" came a corresponding interest in ethnic cookbooks and restaurants. (Ethnic cookbooks, as such, appeared well before the 1970s.) In terms of a political affiliation expressed through an alternative venue, cookbooks and/or food also became a way to express a certain lifestyle and/or social change. One volume that provides examples of both impulses is Ita Jones's *The Grubbag: An Underground Cookbook* (New York: Vintage, 1971), a cookbook that grew out of a column in the Liberation News Service; Jones refers to her upbringing in Texas and her search for ethnic origins. For discussions of such politically oriented endeavors, see Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989, 1993); and Curtin and Heldke.

13. Fewer than fifteen books were published by Black presses in the first part of the 1960s, while about 160 books by similar firms appeared between 1970 and 1974. Donald Franklin Joyce's research on the Black press demonstrates this sharp rise in the number and output of Black-owned presses post-1960; he also discussed the exchanges and competition between white- and Black-owned publishers. See his *Gatekeepers of Black Culture* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), esp. 78-79, and 147.

14. Ruth L. Gaskins, *A Good Heart and a Light Hand: Ruth L. Gaskins' Collection of Traditional Negro Recipes* (Annandale, Va.: Turnpike, 1968). Although Quandra Prettyman's essay and Howard Paige's *Aspects of Afro-American Cookery* (Southfield, Mich.: Aspects Publishing Co., 1987) each provide bibliographies in their publications, Doris Witt's *Black Hunger: Food and the Politics of U.S. Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) provides the most complete bibliography to date on Black cookbooks (the bibliography was compiled with the assistance of David Lupton).

15. See Anne E. Goldman "I Yam What I Yam': Cooking, Culture, and Colonialism" in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 169-95, esp. 171-73, which takes issue with Susan J. Leonardi's invocation of a female-centered, cross-class recipe exchange. See Leonardi's "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie," *PMLA* 3 (May 1983): 340-47, for the origins of this debate.

16. Despite the growing numbers of Black Americans in the professional and middle classes, the percentage of Black poor remains too large for any American to feel compla-

cent. That there has long been an identifiable "middle" or "upper" class in African America is undeniable: see Jessica B. Harris's "Heirloom Recipes from a Southern Family: A Big-Flavored Meal in the African-American Tradition" (*Food and Wine*, February 1991) for a gastronomic exegesis of this phenomenon.

17. Think, for example, of the "high-class" volumes of Julia Child, with their implication that the cook will spend hours in the kitchen and frequently use expensive ingredients; note again Smart-Grosvenor's above-quoted remark on this implied distinction between "white" and "Black" food—"white folks act like . . . there is some weird mystique [about food]" (3).

18. Exceptions could be found in the collectively authored community or "charity" cookbooks, volumes compiled by a group of women whose initial motives were often financial (to rebuild a church, to raise funds for relief organizations) but whose final product could speak to both individual desires for recognition and an acknowledgment of woman's worth. See Marion Bishop, "Speaking Sisters: Relief Society Cookbooks and Mormon Culture," in *Recipes for Reading: History, Stories, Community Cookbooks*, ed. Anne L. Bower (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 89-104. In the same volume, Ann Romines's essay, "Growing Up with the Methodist Cookbooks" (75-88), attests that such community cookbooks were the most-used texts her family owned. Bower's fine anthology collects a number of essays on community cookbooks—as autobiographies, as cultural histories, as women's alternative media.

19. Anne E. Goldman, *Take My Word: Autobiographical Innovations of Ethnic American Working Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 42.

20. Anne E. Goldman also finds the irreverence and sass of Smart-Grosvenor similar to Hurston's; see *Take My Word*, 47-49.

21. *Black Hunger* discusses the evolution of Smart-Grosvenor's volume over its three editions and two-plus decades.

22. In a well-known moment of gastronomic essentialism, the fictional Chloe of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* exclaims: "look at my great black stumpin hands. Now, don't ye think dat de Lord must have meant me to make de pie-crust, and you [Mrs. Shelby, the slave's "mistress"] to stay in the parlor?" (Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [1852; reprint, New York: Harper Classics, 1965], 27).

23. Doris Witt's "'My Kitchen Was the World': Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's Geechee Diaspora," in *Black Hunger*, refers to other works by Smart-Grosvenor, notably "The Kitchen Crisis" and *Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off: A Domestic Rap* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1972) that are specifically concerned with the status of domestic servants.

24. An expatriate social set and culinary doings are the well-known subjects of Alice B. Toklas's *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* (1954; reprint, New York: Harper Perennial, 1984).

25. Toklas may have had more entrée into French society than Smart-Grosvenor by virtue of being white, but the African American counts wealthy people among her set as well. On the other hand, Smart-Grosvenor was not, early on, immune from heterosexism. In the preface to the second edition (1986) she decides not to excise a homophobic remark; in the most recent printing (1991), the offensive sentence—"I wouldn't pay no faggot six hundred dollars to dress me up like a fool" (page 152 in the 1986 edition)—is expunged.

26. So sure is Smart-Grosvenor of her value as an author and person, rather than as a "mere" cook, that she includes an entire chapter of her correspondence, a move Robert Stepto might refer to as self-authenticating.

27. For the Toklas recipes, see pp. 30 and 230 in *The Alice B. Toklas Cookbook*. Those of us who cook from the books we read will notice at least one divergence in philosophy, if not in method, in the two works. Although Toklas and Smart-Grosvenor share a respect for their audience-cooks' expertise and common sense, Smart-Grosvenor insists: "I never measure or weigh anything. I cook by vibration. . . . The amount of salt and pepper you

want to use is your own business" (p. 3).

28. In this, Smart-Grosvenor can be said to anticipate Alice Walker's well-known claiming of Black women foremothers, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1984); see esp. 3-14.

29. Freda de Knight, *A Date with a Dish: A Cook Book of American Negro Recipes* (first published in 1948; revised and reprinted as *The Ebony Cookbook: A Date with a Dish* [Chicago: Johnson, 1962, 1973]). Thanks to Doris Witt for the dating. References to *A Date with a Dish* and several other Black cookbooks are absent in the 1991 preface, although she does refer to John Pinderhughes. Smart-Grosvenor may not have been aware of the existence of Black cookbooks, in part due to the relative obscurity of many such works; Witt and Lupton's Black culinary bibliography (in *Black Hunger*) lists about forty Black-authored cookbooks before 1970; a good number were published by small presses or brought out by the authors themselves.

30. Although it may not need saying, I'll note it anyway: the positions I sketch out here, between individual and community, between Smart-Grosvenor and the Dardens, are not absolute; elements of each outlook are found in both texts. Perhaps it's best to say that each cookbook emphasizes a different authorial stance.

31. The term "thick description" is Clifford Geertz's; for amplification, see "Thick Description: Toward the Interpretative Theory of Culture" in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

32. Susan Kalcik has explored the transmission of ethnic identity through food, as I will return to shortly. Elizabeth and Paul Rozin have noted that flavor may function symbolically: having ethnic "tastes" places an individual within a specific group; similarly, foods with a particular taste identify themselves as belonging to a particular community. See Elizabeth Rozin and Paul Rozin, "Some Surprisingly Unique Characteristics of Human Food Preferences," in *Food in Perspective: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Ethnological Food Research, Cardiff, Wales*, ed. Alexander Fenton and Trefor Owen (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1981).

33. Irma McClaurin reminds me that the book was published in 1978 and so before the current suburbanization of the Black middle class. That *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine* remains in print, and has even been transformed into a play in the 1990s, may speak to its continuing, *reinvented* appeal as a nostalgia item for the contemporary Black bourgeoisie.

34. The food pages of *Essence* attest to the bind between the need for quick, easy meals and the desire for "heritage" recipes; thanks again to Irma McClaurin, for reminding me of the continuing, if changing, significance of Sunday dinner.

35. Chitlins, or chitterlings, are pig intestines; they "are testament to the down-home doctrine that nothing in the hog is inedible." See Rick Bragg, "Atlanta Journal: A Delicacy of the Past Is a Winner at Drive-Ins," *New York Times*, 10 Nov. 1996, Final edition, sec. 1, p. 20.

36. See Lena Williams, "Preparing Soul Food Can Now Be as Easy as Opening a Can," *New York Times*, 26 May 1993, C3.

37. Quoted in Bragg, 20. Latter-day proscriptions against pork by Muslims and others in Black America wishing to separate themselves from a slave past may also have effected the turn away from pork products.

38. The avoidance of certain foods on the part of younger people speaks in part to a related desire to distance themselves from hardship and social ostracism. See my remarks on Pierre Bourdieu and his concept of the "foods of necessity," n. 44.

39. "[In 1808] Congress finally prohibited the slave trade. Absalom Jones and other black preachers began delivering annual thanksgiving sermons on New Year's Day, the date of the prohibition of trade and also the date of Haitian independence in 1804." See Gary B. Nash, from *Forging Freedom*, quoted in Ntozake Shange, *If I Can Cook/You Know God Can* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 6.

40. Howard Paige, "African American Emancipation Day Celebrations," informal talk, August 1991, Greenfield Village Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.
41. Compare my observation with a similar one of Doris Witt's, on the handling of greens by the same cook: "Grosvenor manages to recreate the social context of recipe exchange, yet she simultaneously refuses to give us anything but thoroughly imprecise and unscientific suggestions on what to, and not to, do with greens. She offers a nuanced analysis of the social forces which come into play in the economy of recipe exchange." See "In Search of Our Mothers' Cookbooks," 25.
42. Surprisingly, although intent on recapturing the exact tastes and smells of the past, the Darden sisters show less resistance to modernization.
43. Harris, "Heirloom Recipes from a Southern family," 50.
44. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 178. His discussion of "the paradoxes of the taste of necessity" (177-79) has relevance beyond his original control group of French women and men.
45. Jessica B. Harris, *Iron Pots and Wooden Spoons: Africa's Gifts to New World Cooking* (New York: Atheneum, 1989), 15, 11.
46. That the practice is fading I surmise from the few student hands raised in response to my query "Do you know what pot likker is?" I, on the other hand, having lived with a grandmother who was raised in part in a southern Black community, was frequently admonished to drink my pot likker.
47. Cookbooks in the late 1990s regularly suggest smoked turkey wings as substitutes for pork in various dishes; baked macaroni and cheese, a staple at Black American family functions, can not be traced back to West Africa.
48. For a discussion of how ethnic groups persist as such and yet change in composition and style, see Fredrik Barth, introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969), 9-30.
49. For example, Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), notes that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (15). Although Anderson goes on to write of the ways groups construct themselves around print media, one can extrapolate his ideas to the manner in which a Black cultural identity is re-created, or created, through cookbooks.
50. Susan Kalcik discusses this phenomenon in her essay, "Ethnic Foodways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity," in *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, ed. Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 37-65, esp. 39.
51. The writings of Jessica B. Harris, John Pinderhughes's *Family of the Spirit Cookbook: Recipes and Remembrances from African-American Kitchens* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), Cleora Butler's *Cleora's Kitchens and Eight Decades of Great American Food: The Memoir of a Cook* (Tulsa: Council Oak Books, 1985), and other, more recent books all display similar literary/historical/culinary instincts. Although each presents food and its role in the author's life differently, all cooks choose to collect, compile, and record recipes taken from family, travels, friends, or an individual career as chef and caterer. All take care to explain why one might want to conflate a cookbook with a historical or personal narrative.