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## INTRODUCTION

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### Taste and the American Cookbook

There are few subjects on which men talk more loosely and indistinctly than on taste; few which it is more difficult to explain with precision.

HUGH BLAIR, “LECTURE II: TASTE”

Cultivate a taste for *intellectual* pleasures, *home* pleasures, and the pleasures of *benevolence*.

CATHARINE BEECHER, *MISS BEECHER’S DOMESTIC RECIPE BOOK*

TASTE IS an elusive concept. It is at once a sensory perception and an expression of reason. It is informed by cultural associations yet is often asked to provide empirical truth. Taste is present in all people from birth and, in eighteenth-century rhetorical tradition, is improvable by means of persuasion. Despite its complex philosophical history, taste remains, as Hugh Blair notes, imprecise. While it is “founded on a certain natural and instinctive sensibility to beauty, . . . reason . . . assists taste in many of its operations, and serves to enlarge its power.”<sup>1</sup> The belief that taste has power and the rhetorical acts that derive from this view are central to the domestic texts under examination in this study. Taste simultaneously indicates an individual preference and a cultural standard, as well as physical and intellectual labor. For women in the nineteenth century, this space between self and body is a particular point of contest. While the “pleasures” Catharine Beecher describes are largely consistent with domestic ideology, the fact that she is talking about women’s pleasure at all is significant, as it suggests an emphasis on the desires of the individual, which were viewed as a threat to social order. When women engage this discourse, then, they must acknowledge and publicize the physical body, define and promote cultural standards, and expand the power and value attached to domestic acts. The complex definition of taste in the nineteenth century makes such statements possible.

Taste as an intellectual pursuit rose to prominence in the mid-eighteenth

century, as empiricists sought to determine standards of aesthetic beauty and their relationship to moral action and civic virtue. Their theories informed styles of European and American rhetorical education throughout the nineteenth century and were popularized through newspapers, periodicals, lectures, reform associations, and domestic manuals, a genre that includes the cookbooks under examination here. As taste increasingly came to indicate middle-class morality and identity, it was American women in the nineteenth century who were charged with promoting and preserving the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of the nation. Yet their capacity to speak or act publicly was constrained by the very ideal they were charged to protect: the belief that they should behave *tastefully*. In response, many domestic experts turned to perhaps the most obvious yet least expected genre: the American cookbook. These women combined the power of taste with the authority of the cookbook to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the civic value of domestic performance. As both an individual experience and a cultural standard, taste was uniquely poised to inform the civic function of domesticity.

*Tasteful Domesticity* examines the public significance and pervasive power of taste discourse as it is used by cookbook authors in the nineteenth century. Vast social changes accompanied the transformation of women's domestic identities from the republican era to the turn of the twentieth century. This book argues that women used the cookbook as a rhetorical space in which to conduct public discussions of tasteful domestic practices.<sup>2</sup> That rhetorical space assured their participation in evolving discussions of American citizenship and virtue. While domestic rhetoric in the nineteenth century is largely a product of the white middle class, by the turn of the century, cookbooks allowed women marginalized by race, ethnicity, and class to evolve domestic discourse to influence a national citizenry. By examining cookbooks' introductory text and recipes, I trace the progression of taste discourse in American women's domestic writing, from its origins as a means of promoting virtue in the early republic to its disappearance as a cultural standard when a multiplicity of voices challenge the middle-class status quo. Through their commentary on cookery and consumer practices, women played a vital role in forming an ever-changing national body.

My project responds to Cheryl Glenn's now famous call for scholars to re-map the rhetorical tradition by continuing the project of recovery and analysis.<sup>3</sup> Scholars of nineteenth-century women's rhetoric such as Nan Johnson, Carol Mattingly, Jane Donawerth, Shirley Wilson Logan, Lindal Buchanan, Lisa Shaver, and many others have built a growing body of research of American women's public participation through their "available means of persuasion."<sup>4</sup> This project builds on their work by taking as its premise the significance of women's domestic activity and its rhetorical practices. Despite general agreement on this scholarly point of departure, particularly in nineteenth-century

studies, rhetoric in American cookbooks has yet to receive a study of its own. This book adds to a growing body of scholarship another tradition or *topoi* of women's rhetorical practice: discourses of taste as they appear in the American cookbook. This examination includes women orators and activists whom male-dominated anthologies have omitted; it also considers women's rhetorical works deemed far more subtle or conservative.

As Carol Mattingly has pointed out, researchers tend to overlook those marginalized voices who do not appear to speak against the gendered hierarchies of their culture.<sup>5</sup> In a 2002 article, "Telling Evidence: Rethinking What Counts in Rhetoric," Mattingly cites an ongoing conversation in the field of women's rhetoric: What should we study, and how should we study it? She argues that up to that point many studies of women's rhetoric employed a "great women" approach, meaning that scholars looked to women whose rhetorical acts were public, visible, and most resembled men's. This actually reinforces the idea that only a few women were rhetorically active, while often ignoring the radical nature of even conservative women's rhetorical acts.<sup>6</sup> Since her 2002 article, the scope of works studied has expanded significantly, yet scholars such as Charlotte Hogg still have some concerns. Hogg writes in 2015 that scholars should not study presumed conservative rhetorics only to show that they are, in fact, radical. She asks scholars to think about those who aren't. Ultimately, Hogg warns us not to allow our efforts to dismantle binaries to result in the creation of new ones.<sup>7</sup>

*Tasteful Domesticity* engages these conversations in its recovery and analysis of women's cookbook writing in nineteenth-century America. While some women certainly used culturally acceptable domestic writing as a means to challenge dominant gender discourses, many believed in the ability of their advice to give women's domestic authority national and global significance. While the former claim is in keeping with a long tradition of scholarly examination of women's writing, this study also views the latter claim as one worth examining. How did these women, generally viewed as maintaining a class and racial status quo, make their advice so appealing, so convincing, so *natural*, that women and men alike supported their depiction of domestic authority? My answer first recalls women's knowledge and adept manipulation of taste discourse as taught and practiced in the nineteenth century. It then reveals women's ability to disseminate that discourse in popular form, so that readers received both the content and delivery of their advice as intellectual, spiritual, and scientific education. This book examines how these domestic experts accomplished those goals.

In addition to their perceived conservatism, cookbooks have yet another strike against them: they are often assumed to be collections of recipes rather than rhetorical documents in which women describe and persuade readers to

adopt their domestic philosophies. To many readers' surprise, there is no shortage of prose in these texts. Cookbooks do not merely contain lists of ingredients and instructions. The author engages the ideology that informs the recipes in an often extensive introductory narration. In this introduction, women describe their domestic philosophies and establish an authoritative ethos. They reference cultural authorities that range from the Bible to nutritional science. They often cite other domestic authorities, creating a network of domestic advice that contributes to the development of a collective gendered identity. Cookbooks and their accompanying domestic manuals not only represent a large portion of women's publication history but also constitute one of the most popular genres among readers.

Cookbooks satisfy Aristotle's famous definition of rhetoric as locating "the available means of persuasion."<sup>8</sup> Domestic publishing in the nineteenth century offered one of the most consistent and one of the only socially acceptable means of speaking to a large audience of women simultaneously. Roxanne Mountford's study of rhetorical spaces allows scholars to understand more fully how one can define cookbooks as persuasive texts. Mountford describes rhetorical spaces as "the effect of physical spaces on a communicative event" and suggests that scholars too often ignore the influence of materiality on communication.<sup>9</sup> The space of the pulpit, she argues, conveys a long institutional history and authority, and this history is communicated when the pulpit is invoked in nineteenth-century novels. I apply Mountford's discussion of the materiality of space to the materiality of texts themselves, as they too are "a physical representation of relationships and ideas" and convey gendered institutional histories.<sup>10</sup> Women treated cookbooks as meaningful spaces in the home, often keeping important or sentimental documents within their pages.<sup>11</sup> By the eighteenth century, cookbooks had come to be perceived as feminine spaces that conveyed women's authority and agency, albeit within a cultural framework that emphasized domesticity as women's primary role.

The space of the cookbook, however, significantly allowed women access to an important cultural conversation from which they were formally excluded. Taste in the nineteenth century was a pervasive social ordering system. To abide by principles of "good taste" could indicate anything from food choices to spiritual pursuits. Denise Gigante refers to this power as the "gustatory metaphor," characterized by its "internal dialectic of taste and appetite" or communal standard and individual experience.<sup>12</sup> Its ability to unite material and representational experience and distinguish classes and communities that had the leisure time and capital to enjoy both led to a flourishing discourse that made its own rhetorical constructions appear natural.<sup>13</sup> Taste discourse shaped the lives of American citizens, though few were able to access a formal education and

participate directly in the formation of standards that would determine their actions and roles. The creation of standards of taste was primarily a masculine pursuit that took place in philosophical and rhetorical treatises and lectures on both sides of the Atlantic. The gendered space of the cookbook, however, associated with the discussion of food, allowed women to have a socially acceptable venue where they could participate in the rhetorical construction of American tastes. As one of the primary publishing venues available to women, cookbooks provide a space for private and public discourses, and the relationships they represent, to engage and resist the social order imposed by taste discourse.

What is perhaps most intriguing about the study of taste in domestic rhetoric is that, in a cookbook, taste is typically perceived as a benign topic. Cookbooks discuss food; of course they engage taste. Yet cookbook authors do not focus only, or even primarily, on physical tastes. The domestic experts who composed these cookbooks engaged larger discussions of cultural taste, circulated through educational curricula, public lectures, and print media. Indeed, their very experiences and livelihoods were shaped by their ability to regulate their public personas, manage their own tastes, and circulate these ideas to a reading audience in the form of recipes and domestic advice. Taste discourse governs the philosophies that inform their texts, as well as the curated sets of recipes that form the physical bodies produced by their texts. The circulation of power in the form of taste discourse does not check its influence at the kitchen.

While many rhetorical devices led to the cultural impact of the published cookbook, none blended public and private concerns like the rhetoric of taste. Domestic and civic discourses were not as much at odds as ideologies of separate spheres might have us believe. Eighteenth-century social philosophy often “presumed the women, naturally deficient in reason and incapable of abstract thought, were inescapably buffeted about by the immediate and the contingent, the sensory and the sensual, excluded from the poise of reflection and the transcendental constancy of rationality.” At the same time, feminine domestic practices such as shopping were being “legitimated as civilizing social processes.”<sup>14</sup> The nature of women’s civic participation, however, was a constant subject of debate. As a primary publishing venue for women, cookbooks were uniquely positioned to take up this conversation. Discourses of taste are rooted in the desire to manage an individual’s instinctual pleasures for the collective good of the social body. Women’s participation in those discourses gave them the cultural agency to promote national standards of behavior and define community by the practice of proper or “tasteful” domesticity. The published cookbook thus played an intimate, integral role in the lives of American citizens by creating American bodies, physically and ideologically.

## THE AESTHETIC FOUNDATIONS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY TASTE DISCOURSE

The relationship of civic engagement to rhetoric and taste has been an ever-present theme in histories of rhetorical education, though certainly a contested one. In the collection *Essays on Classical Rhetoric and Modern Discourse*, editors Robert Connors, Lisa Ede, and Andrea Lunsford suggest that the decline of rhetoric by the end of the nineteenth century is the result of an increased emphasis on style and writing, rather than qualities of classical rhetoric most often associated with oratory. In particular, they cite Blair's emphasis on belles lettres as a movement away from public discourse and its focus on the role of rhetoric in creating an active citizenry.<sup>15</sup> Sharon Crowley agrees, arguing that "the demise of rhetoric as a field of study" occurred when the focus shifted from civic virtue to "the bourgeois project of self-improvement."<sup>16</sup> Their arguments are compelling, and necessarily focus on higher education and the role of rhetoric in preparing students to be public speakers. Until the late nineteenth century, colleges and universities were largely closed to women, and thus they did not have access to the type of formal rhetorical education that Crowley and Connors, Ede, and Lunsford describe. Nan Johnson argues that the classicist model of rhetorical education actually "obscures" the goals and function of nineteenth-century rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, recent scholarship suggests that the "New Rhetoric" that formed the foundation of nineteenth-century belletristic practices was more accessible to women, as it often emphasized sentiment and experience in its discussion of perception and judgment, and its movement away from oratory did not require women to be public speakers in order to be rhetors. In short, understanding the rhetorical and philosophical traditions of New Rhetoric gives us a lens through which to understand women's rhetorical contributions to the development of taste through domestic publishing.

Civic virtue, morality, and benevolence were common themes in women's domestic writing throughout the nineteenth century. These were also the ultimate outcomes of the eighteenth-century study of taste and aesthetics. The field of aesthetics typically refers to judgments regarding objects of beauty, such as art or music. It also has important implications for the study of rhetoric, as nineteenth-century rhetorical education was largely informed by empiricist philosophers such as John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith.<sup>18</sup> Taste is the central metaphor for this era in both philosophy and rhetoric, serving as a bridge between individual experience and communal value. Discussions of the sensory understanding of beauty can, and often are, easily applied to food. Moreover, food writing serves as a unique illustration of the complexity and breadth of taste discourse as well as its potential misinterpretations. When a recipe uses the phrase "sweeten to taste," for example, the reader is forced to

negotiate her personal preferences with cultural standards that dictate appropriate levels of sweetness for particular communities and class structures. The modern critic must consider the rhetorical function of taste in that particular community as well as the introductory remarks set forth by the author herself to understand the parameters of its usage. In order to properly understand the role of taste in nineteenth-century cookbooks, we must first understand the strong relationship of sense, taste, and civic virtue in the minds of nineteenth-century Americans, as well as the eighteenth-century philosophy that informed their rhetorical practices. A major question for these philosophers was the role of taste as a cultural standard. How could one's individual perceptions function on a communal scale? In order to answer this question, the empiricists Francis Hutcheson and David Hume, among others, developed theories of taste based on their understanding of the operation of mental faculties and sensory perception, the relationship of aesthetic judgment to moral and civic virtue, and finally the ability of those judgments to form a cultural standard.

Carolyn Korsmeyer writes in *Making Sense of Taste* that philosophers "have generally concurred that pursuit of taste for pleasure alone seems an unfit preoccupation for a being whose higher capacities require the efforts of rationality."<sup>19</sup> However, she notes that "by the eighteenth century, physicality provided access to cognitive dimensions of human experience, such as epistemology, morality, aesthetic pleasures and pains; the umbrella term for this new mode of embodied cognition was taste."<sup>20</sup> Hutcheson and Hume drew from a body of philosophical writing on taste and perception that begins with Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle, for example, recognized the relationship of sense and consciousness and created a hierarchy of the senses based on which ones he considered the most discriminating. For Aristotle, touch was the most discriminating faculty, and taste was a modification of touch. His work is foundational to later aesthetic philosophy: when taste becomes a metaphor for judgment during the Renaissance, "its powers as a discriminating and 'delicate' faculty are [already] central."<sup>21</sup> Delicacy of taste, a common phrase in both the philosophy and rhetoric of taste, is defined by Hume in "Of the Standard of Taste": "Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them, and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the literal or metaphorical sense."<sup>22</sup> The concept of "delicacy" would become central to both philosophy and rhetoric in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When Francis Hutcheson took up this conversation in the late seventeenth century, he asserted that humans naturally had a sixth "aesthetic sense" that allowed an individual to discern the beauty of a particular object. He defined beauty as both objective and subjective, arguing that the subjective measure—our associations with the object under consideration—could lead to disagree-

ments and potential errors in judgment.<sup>23</sup> Hume likewise argues that beauty is not inherent to the object but, like sweetness, belongs “entirely to the sentiment.”<sup>24</sup> Sentiment indicates the mental faculty that interprets and extends taste beyond its initial fleeting sensory perception and thus can allow it to serve as a metaphor for mental or reflective judgment. Hume’s emphasis on sentiment allows him to argue for the existence of a standard of taste in a way that Hutcheson’s emphasis on the subjectivity of taste could not.

This is not to say that Hutcheson did not see civic value in aesthetics. He argued that benevolence and public utility were the function of a moral sense, which like his aesthetic sense was natural to every individual. Defined as the basis of moral and civic virtue, benevolence and public utility, according to Hutcheson, were unmediated by self-interest and instead sought to promote public good.<sup>25</sup> While Hume also asserted a link between aesthetic judgment and moral virtue, he did not believe, as Hutcheson did, that a moral sense acted prior to reflection or self-interest.<sup>26</sup> Instead, he argued that one’s passions, which are the outward display of one’s impressions and can be either calm or violent, direct or indirect, can serve as the foundation of moral character, but only if one can learn “to feel strongly those passions that provide a moral foundation.”<sup>27</sup> Hume uses “character” to mean what today would be referred to as a character trait, or a propensity toward a specific type of action as recognized by others, though he can shift its meaning to include the whole of a person’s collective traits.<sup>28</sup> Character can be a source of moral and civic reform, Hume argues, in that we can educate and train our passions and motivations to derive pleasure from that which is moral.<sup>29</sup>

Hume’s discussion of taste, reason, morality, and sentiment can inform our understanding of women’s relationship to civic virtue and the ways in which they used taste discourse to assert this role. Particularly applicable to women’s studies are recent feminist interpretations of Hume that suggest, as Annette Baier writes, that he can be considered “women’s moral theorist.”<sup>30</sup> Baier argues that Hume “naturalizes reason,” meaning that he accounts for cultural forces that ascribe value to particular epistemologies.<sup>31</sup> Genevieve Lloyd notes that “reason” in Humean philosophy is a function of imagination and passion.<sup>32</sup> Annette Baier refers to Hume’s “realism constraint,” what we might call a pragmatic turn in moral philosophy to set tasteful behavioral standards that derive from one’s ability to harbor “character for virtues and vices simultaneously.”<sup>33</sup> Hume recognized morality as both contextual and universal, as a function of individual character and community standards. He even remarks that taste and reason share the same faculties: “the same clearness of conception, the same exactness of distinction, the same vivacity of apprehension.”<sup>34</sup> In this way, women could participate in the intellectual and civic function of taste discourse through its application in cookery writing.



In order for aesthetic judgments or domestic advice to have cultural value, a cultural standard of taste must exist or be able to exist. Hume asserts the existence of a standard, arguing that it is necessary for critics of taste to function.<sup>35</sup> Rhetorical education and training, as well as popular usage of taste in periodicals and public lectures, would seem to support his assertion. Yet the connection of sentiment to standard can seem tenuous. Dabney Townsend explains the distinction: “A sentiment is felt immediately. It forms a standard when it is given an authority that extends one person’s taste to others.”<sup>36</sup> Hume does not articulate a specific standard, though he does indicate the role of sentiment in judgment. Once again, Hume returns to the concept of “delicacy,” a term he uses to indicate discriminating taste, sentiment, and imagination. Hume uses the phrase “delicacy of sentiment” to indicate sensitivity to the good qualities of an object or text. Hume defines “good” as that which is traditionally appreciated or accepted across generations, that has the “durability of reputation,” rather than that which is “temporarily vogue.”<sup>37</sup> He writes that to ascertain a delicacy of taste, one must “appeal to those models and principles, which have been established by the uniform consent and experience of nations and ages.”<sup>38</sup> His argument presumes the value of the classics as a point of reference that trains our judgments. “Proper” tastes, then, are constituted based on what is considered socially acceptable.<sup>39</sup>

Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste” reveals that his discussion of perception is inevitably connected to his discussion of taste.<sup>40</sup> This connection is particularly relevant to understanding how cookbooks promote taste as both a personal and cultural value. Cookbooks are often overlooked in applied aesthetics because they would seem to promote a sense of taste that is divorced from a cultural standard or even a discussion of moral or aesthetic judgments. When we consider their role as rhetorical creations, however, we begin to understand that they are taking part in these conversations, even if they overlap with a more colloquial or idiosyncratic usage of taste.<sup>41</sup>

Due in part to these philosophical movements, the field of rhetoric began to transition from a classicist model that emphasized oratory to what is commonly termed New Rhetoric. New Rhetoric derived in large part from eighteenth-century conversations of aesthetics and ethics, or the study of value typically located in the branch of philosophy called axiology.<sup>42</sup> New Rhetoric “applies to all major forms of communication” and was “an aesthetic/ethical commitment to the critical study of rhetorical theory and the development of taste.”<sup>43</sup> In this context, taste combines individual perception with cultural expression to form the basis of intellectual and moral education.<sup>44</sup> Training in rhetoric typically meant exposure to the works of Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and Richard Whately. Each author emphasized the cultivation of taste as a form of civic participation that was central to the study of rhetoric. Blair in particular

is often maligned by historians of rhetoric as a figure whose powerful influence defined rhetoric as “an external reflection of a preexisting value system” and emphasized individual sensibility over civic responsibility.<sup>45</sup> While later practitioners often reduced Blair’s methods into a focus on style and form, Blair himself participated in the larger discussion of “taste as the cultivation of civil commitment.”<sup>46</sup> Women’s use of taste discourse thus implies a public function. The type of rhetorical training they received, however, often obscured this goal.

Women often received less formal training in rhetoric than men. The training they did receive was given to cultivate epistolary skills rather than public speaking or published writing. In *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life*, Nan Johnson describes the tradition of parlor rhetoric, or the nonacademic study of rhetoric, often performed in the home and informed by both rhetoric and domestic manuals. This tradition was intended to cultivate women’s character and domestic communication needs. Even oratorical education, common in women’s seminaries, promoted the cultivation of the tasteful subject as their end goal. The structures and function of New Rhetoric, as applied to taste and social interaction, often appealed *specifically* to women, as it was generally believed that “society benefits from taste not because it promotes the discussion and delivery traditionally associated with rhetoric, but because it leads individuals to become more virtuous through an indirect process in which the intuition is sharpened and enhanced by practicing aesthetic appreciation.”<sup>47</sup> George Campbell, for example, contributed new categories of acceptable evidentiary forms: direct experience, analogy, and testimony.<sup>48</sup> Arguing that the classical syllogistic structure no longer fit the needs of argument in the modern world, Campbell instead emphasized the need to appeal to the passions and engage the imagination, which requires an audience member to connect personally to the rhetor.<sup>49</sup> Women’s association with sentiment allowed them to adapt this element of Campbell’s philosophy of rhetoric for their own use. The cookbook genre, in which a domestic expert narrates instructions and advice in the first person, immediately satisfied the need to connect to one’s audience. As Nan Johnson explains, Blair, whose devotion to a belletristic approach to rhetoric informed his theories, believed that rhetorical style could elevate reason to “higher thought and emotion, a state synonymous with the exercise of taste.”<sup>50</sup>

Blair sought to understand how reason affects and informs taste and how those in turn affect composition and literary studies. Blair argues that “nicer organs” and “finer internal powers” create natural distinctions in “men’s” abilities to distinguish good and bad tastes, yet education can allow one to cultivate the tastes necessary to reflect a nation’s civilization and refinement.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, however, this certainly places an emphasis on class in the promotion and execution of good taste. Sharon Crowley argues, in fact, that pedagogies of taste “operated according to the principles of discrimination and exclusion.

[Their] object was to create a community whose members could easily discern, and hence exclude, nonmembers.<sup>52</sup> This is accomplished through a twofold emphasis on Delicacy, which Blair associates with one's natural abilities to perceive beauty, and Correctness, which requires education, reason, and good sense.<sup>53</sup> The proper use of rhetoric in civic discourse depends on the cultivation of both faculties. While this enforces middle-class status, it also allows for the potential of gendered divisions in the use and performance of taste, as well as the power and agency permitted its subject. While nineteenth-century writings often described women as having the necessary sensibilities to perceive beauty and thus "consume" tastefully, those same writings debated women's ability to reason and regulate their actions.<sup>54</sup>

Women's academies and seminaries in the early republic and antebellum America promoted "reason" and the "affections" as "equally important" to a proper rhetorical education.<sup>55</sup> Yet, gendered discussions of taste would most certainly be perceived differently despite the integral role of taste in rhetorical education. A demonstration of taste from a woman rhetor might reinforce the cultural perception of her inability to regulate her appetites and desires, though the same performance by a man would suggest his nuanced understanding of complex rhetorical principles and virtuous self-restraint. In the gendered space of the cookbook, however, a space in which women had the most authoritative voice, taste could represent intellectual standards as well as physical labor and experience. Individual bodies consume, digest, and excrete; cookbook authors suggest that these bodily functions relate directly to one's performance of race, gender, class, regional, intellectual, and even spiritual status. Moreover, they suggest that women's cultivation of taste—their own and that of others—is a form of civic participation.

This discussion shows an evolving understanding not only of the cultural work of taste but also of the complex, somewhat paradoxical interplay of body and mind in taste discourse and performance. In some ways, it seems the discourse set women up to fail. Charged with promoting and protecting national virtue but denied full access to the intellectual discussion of taste in public discourse, women lacked the cultural authority to promote communal standards based on the most common and effective rhetorical tool for this task. Despite these odds, many women chose the most paradoxical path yet: they turned to cookbooks, perhaps the genre *most* associated with physical tastes, to explore its communal potential. By writing to an audience composed primarily of women, domestic experts could exercise taste's ability to define community values and translate abstract concepts to one's lived experience.

Yet, taste's association with the body persists in both useful and perplexing ways depending on the rhetorical situation. By connecting taste to instinct and appetite or, at times, by making them synonymous, rhetors suggest that the ma-

terial and behavioral choices one makes are in fact “natural” and thus can serve as cultural standards. This function of the gustatory metaphor gives taste its cultural power: this metaphor represents taste not as the outcome of desire but instead as the basis of desire. In this formulation, taste can support and maintain cultural hierarchies of race, class, and gender by hiding its very education and cultivation and appearing as a natural ability in those destined to lead.

For women rhetors, however, taste can be a far more complicated rhetorical device. Women’s tastes were not typically viewed as discriminating or objective, though they were paradoxically conceived of as central to their roles as mothers. As Karlyn Kohrs Campbell notes, “the qualities associated with successful rhetorical action—cogent argument, expertise, and skill in rebuttal—are qualities associated with masculinity, whereas defects in rhetorical presentation—sentimentality, weak logic, and timidity—are traits that have stereotypically been linked with femininity.” When women were successful rhetors, they were deemed unsuccessful or “unsexed” women.<sup>56</sup> This results partly from the physiological functions of women’s bodies—menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding—all of which historically have been interpreted as detracting from the ability of the mind to reason. Women’s bodies also have been associated with domestic labor, such as child rearing, interpreted as distinct from contributing directly to economic and political progress. Finally, women’s bodies historically have been figured as objects of beauty for male contemplation and reflection, from which men develop discriminating tastes, rather than as rational beings with equal ability to reflect and reason. Thus, a series of sensory associations leads to pervasive cultural ideologies reflected and challenged through women’s use of a rhetoric of taste.

The American democratic experiment and its emphasis on human potential through education further challenge the complex interplay of gender and taste. How do women figure in a system that requires them to labor alongside men to settle a new world, to contribute to its ongoing efforts to achieve independence based on Enlightenment ideals, and then to produce, physically and ideologically, its citizens? Moreover, how are European rhetorics of taste adapted to an American political system based on promoting equality and individualism rather than maintaining the perceived inevitability of a landed gentry? In short, taste retains its rhetorical power through its simultaneous, cyclical interpretation as instinctual and cultivated, private and public.

#### THE AMERICAN COOKBOOK IN THE ACADEMY

Discourses of taste, which work to represent in print the social implications of a perceived experience, allow us to better comprehend the methods by which food bridges the gap between represented and real bodies. Arjun Appadurai writes in “How to Make a National Cuisine” that “cookbooks appear in literate

civilizations where the display of class hierarchies is essential to their maintenance, and where cooking is seen as a communicable variety of expert knowledge.<sup>57</sup> Domestic writing and its deployment of taste are central to the process of group definition. As both a physical and aesthetic quality, taste can imaginatively unite bodies into a cohesive group. Donna Gabaccia writes that food “entwines intimately with much that makes a culture unique, binding taste and satiety to group loyalties. Eating habits both symbolize and mark the boundaries of culture.”<sup>58</sup> Cooking literature, then, not only reflects a culture but also marks its boundaries and *produces* that culture. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that print allows people to imagine nations because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”<sup>59</sup> Because food is both a material and cultural necessity, its representation in American cookery texts is a “fundamental system of communication” that allows for the dispersion of a representative national, regional, or class culture that participants can reproduce bodily by eating or consuming.<sup>60</sup>

*Tasteful Domesticity* is the first book-length study of women’s rhetoric in American cookbooks. It is informed by a long interdisciplinary history of academic scholarship on cookbooks, food history, and domesticity. Jessamyn Neuhaus’s *Manly Meals and Mom’s Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* and Janet Theophano’s *Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* are two of the most comprehensive and expansive histories of American cookbooks. Janice Longone, curator of the University of Michigan Culinary Collection, has organized a vast trove of historical American cookbooks and published several exhibition catalogs, including *American Cookbooks and Wine Books, 1796–1950*. Anne L. Bower’s *Recipes for Reading* offers a collection of interdisciplinary essays on the community cookbook, a popular genre that appears during the American Civil War. Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster’s edited collection, *The Recipe Reader*, provides methods of reading and critical and reflective interpretations of particular recipes. Carol Fisher’s *The American Cookbook: A History*, Sandra Sherman’s *Invention of the Modern Cookbook*, and Margaret Cook’s *America’s Charitable Cooks: A Bibliography of Fund-Raising Cookbooks Published in the United States (1861–1915)* all provide bibliographic surveys of many American cookbooks.

Cookbooks often appear in American food and domestic histories. Several foundational works include Harvey Levenstein’s *Paradox of Plenty* and *Revolution at the Table* and Sidney Mintz’s *Sweetness and Power* and *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*. Trudy Eden’s *Early American Table* is an in-depth exploration of the role of the food in the New World and American settlement. Sarah Leavitt’s *From Catharine Beecher to Martha Stewart: A Cultural History of Do-*

*mestic Advice* demonstrates that cookbooks and domestic manuals were often one and the same throughout much of the nineteenth century. Laura Shapiro's *Perfection Salad* examines cooking schools and their publications in the late nineteenth century. Rebecca Sharpless provides an intriguing analysis of cookbooks and African American domestic labor in an early chapter of *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865–1960*. Studies of American domesticity that engage cookbooks include Sherrie Inness's *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* and Anne Mendelson's *Stand Facing the Stove: The Story of the Women Who Gave America the "Joy of Cooking."* Studies of housework, including Susan Strasser's *Never Done* and Glenna Matthews's "*Just a Housewife*," often invoke the works of nineteenth-century domestic experts such as Catharine Beecher and Sarah Josepha Hale as evidence for their arguments. Cookbooks are also used as supplementary primary sources in studies of food in literature, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and popular culture. Kyla Tompkins's *Racial Indigestion* and Doris Witt's *Black Hunger* explore the role of race in American food and literary culture. Several essays in Monika Elbert and Marie Drews's *Culinary Aesthetics and Practices in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* explore the connection between cookbooks and works of fiction.

To summarize, there is no shortage of scholarly work on food. The works listed above are only a small sample of the available scholarship. Cookbooks, however, often play a secondary or supplementary role in many of these studies. *Tasteful Domesticity* brings cookbooks to the forefront to demonstrate that they are not static documents that represent cultural values, nor are they only useful in academic study as supplemental sources to provide evidence for an argument regarding a more traditional primary source, such as a literary text or a speech. If we are to truly remap the rhetorical tradition, we must explore the sources that are hidden in plain sight. We must seek to understand how these sources function rhetorically as an entity unto themselves.

The history of the Western cookbook genre begins as early as 1475 with the publication of *De honesta voluptate* in Italy, followed closely by the first German and French cookbooks.<sup>61</sup> The first English cookbook, *This Is the Boke of Cokery*, was published in 1500. It was followed by Gervase Markham's manual of household management, *The English Hus-Wife*, in 1615, and Eliza Smith's 1727 *Compleat Housewife: Or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion*. Both, as their titles suggest, catered to elite homes. In 1747 came Hannah Glasse's "culinary blockbuster," *The Art of Cookery, Made Plain and Easy*.<sup>62</sup> Notice the gradual transition in the titles and emphases of these texts. The first gives directions for cookery. Markham's text presents a more holistic approach to the role of an English gentlewoman, whose duties include, but are not limited to, cooking. Glasse's wildly popular cookbook sets a standard followed by many

English and American cookbooks. Instead of writing for the upper class or for court cooks, Glasse writes for the “minimally literate servant.”<sup>63</sup> As such, she reframes cooking not as luxury or labor but as a skill, the teaching of which must be rhetorically situated for its audiences.

The modern cookbook genre emerged in the eighteenth century alongside a pronounced increase in domestic publishing. Sandra Sherman argues that these modern cookbooks were expected to “captivate readers.”<sup>64</sup> Domestic novels such as Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and, later, Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* (1794) were expected to do as much.<sup>65</sup> Yet cookbooks were also required to produce tangible outcomes that placed women’s labor in a larger context of civic participation or “organized benevolence.”<sup>66</sup> As a form of entertainment, education, and public participation, cookbooks had to satisfy various audiences and rhetorical goals. Cookbook authors therefore carefully directed their advice to specific audiences. Published cookbooks catered primarily to the elite until the nineteenth century, when, as Neuhaus writes, the emergence of the American middle class had perhaps the greatest impact on the trajectory of cookbook publishing.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the American cookbook helped define and identify social groups. Nineteenth-century women came to associate themselves within a larger cultural framework of domesticity, even locating themselves within Protestant or Progressive-era reform movements. In such contexts, they could play a greater role in the rhetorical culture created by the cookbook genre.

Throughout this study, the primary texts under consideration are American women’s cookbooks. This term can become muddy, however, when we consider the nature and content of these texts. Many cookbooks, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, also included recipes for family medicine and remedies, advice on the moral and spiritual impact of proper home decorating, and guides for women’s behavior and dress. Women such as Eliza Leslie, who became famous as a cooking expert with the publication of *Seventy-Five Receipts for Pastry, Cakes, and Sweetmeats* in 1828, soon became known as something of a lifestyle expert as well. Other women, such as Lydia Maria Child and Sarah Josepha Hale, who were well known for their fiction and editorial work, also wrote cookbooks. In short, much crossover existed between the genres of domestic manual and cookbook, and it was only later in the century that these became more clearly delineated. Even then, the impact of domestic manuals and, during the Progressive era and beyond, home economics textbooks and manuals cannot be overstated. For this reason, in early chapters I regularly describe both cookbooks and domestic manuals, as to some extent they were often one and the same. Domestic manuals that were published under separate cover were often intended to be used to accompany cookbooks, to provide a theoretical framework for the cookery advice. To further compli-

cate matters, texts were often reprinted under new titles, often in combination with an author's previous works. For example, Sarah Hale's *Ladies' New Book of Cookery*, published in 1852, and her *New Household Receipt-Book*, published in 1853, were reprinted at least eight times in various forms—sometimes combined, sometimes separate, often under various titles—prior to the Civil War.<sup>68</sup> Also, where I use the term “cookbook,” one must keep in mind that most cookbooks during this time period contained far more prose than cookbooks published after the Progressive era. In later chapters, I more clearly differentiate between the two as the genres become more defined, but domestic manuals still play a large role in supplementing my analysis of rhetorics of taste in cookbooks due to their impact on American food culture and women's taste education.

I've chosen to refer to my primary texts as cookbooks throughout my study, despite the fact that the genre often appeared under various names. For early American cookbooks in particular, the language, spelling, and punctuation differ greatly from one text to another. Similar texts might be referred to as a “receipt book,” a “cook book,” a “cook-book,” and so on. (A “receipt” refers to “received rules of cookery.”<sup>69</sup>) This is the result of not only a lack of standardization but also the fact that small changes to the title of a text allowed printers to issue new editions, thus increasing the popularity and profit of particular texts. “Cookbook” became the accepted term by the end of the nineteenth century. For this reason, I have chosen “cookbook” as the standardized term to refer to this genre to aid in clarity and to help readers differentiate among cookbooks and other primary texts that act as supplements or accompanying documents, such as domestic advice manuals and textbooks.

In this study, I argue that cookbooks play an integral part in women's domestic and rhetorical history, yet they often seem to fall through the cracks of various academic disciplines. Indeed, even the term “recipe” has an interesting history in rhetorical scholarship. While some scholars have examined recipes and cookery writing, “recipe” is more often used in a pejorative sense when referring to the history of rhetorical education.<sup>70</sup> William Covino dismisses the use of rhetorical handbooks by calling their instructions “recipe rhetoric.”<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey Walker likewise compares recipes to “algorithms” in his discussion of rhetorical and grammatical approaches to reading.<sup>72</sup> Sharon Crowley gives the example of her mother's cinnamon rolls to suggest that a disembodied set of instructions in a handbook (or on a recipe card) can never produce the same result as a teacher who models the methods for the student.<sup>73</sup> Maureen Daly Goggin echoes these assertions in “Composing a Discipline,” noting that the development of first-year composition programs meant that the philosophical and theoretical discussions of rhetoric were reduced to “rule-governed recipe books” (textbooks) that were divorced from its ethical and moral roots.<sup>74</sup> “Reci-



pe” itself is a contested term, it would seem, as it can refer to a material entity or a set of instructions for any activity. In the history of composition and rhetoric, “recipe” typically refers to an often-maligned moment in rhetorical instruction. The value placed on the civic function of taste and rhetoric, particularly as it pertains to oratory, can lead rhetorical scholars to overlook manifestations of rhetoric often perceived as private or prescriptive.

Rather than functioning simply as didactic structures, recipes have a long history of being participatory. Anne Bower has written that cookbooks function as a means of communication for women, that in this way they perform a constitutive function.<sup>75</sup> This imitates the domestic network created by the word-of-mouth instruction women received, typically from family members, in the American colonies in the seventeenth century.<sup>76</sup> Taste discourse allows women to establish a context for their instructions and a shared goal for their readers. As Lois Agnew explains, Blair suggests that taste “is enacted through producing and evaluating discourse,” so “the rhetor and the audience ultimately share the responsibility for the process of critical judgment.”<sup>77</sup> In her influential study of recipe reading and narrative, “Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Rischolme, and Key Lime Pie,” Susan Leonardi suggests that recipes, like narratives, create and require a relationship between author and reader; they are a system of exchange, advice given by an author and made literal by a reader who often adapts the advice, even writing these adaptations in the margins or more liberally crossing out authorial instructions and replacing them with his or her own. Most important, though, is the initial establishment of a relationship: “like a story, a recipe needs a recommendation, a context, a point, a reason to be.”<sup>78</sup> Women participate in the formation of knowledge and community through their adaptations and revisions of discourses of taste.

The generic components of a cookbook reveal its participatory nature. Colleen Cotter suggests a useful framework for recipe analysis in “Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines Community.”<sup>79</sup> She breaks the narrative structure of the recipe into six components and assigns each a role. First, the title presents an abstract of what follows. Then the list of ingredients and the orientation components (the author’s discussion of the recipe, as well as the reader’s handwritten marginal notes) describe the material needs and context. The actions outline the physical procedures, and finally, the evaluations and coda provide necessary concluding details such as quality, serving size, or yield. When examining a cookbook as a rhetorical performance, one can expand the narrative framework to encompass the title and subtitle of the text as well as individual recipes, the orientation and evaluative components found in the author’s or publisher’s introductions, and the ingredients, actions, and codas of the body of recipes as a whole. Each component—from the title

of the book to the recipes themselves—rhetorically situates the text by indicating group affiliations, intended audiences, discursive modes, and cultural perspectives.

This book focuses primarily on the orientation components or the introductory materials that situate the cookbook author's authority, history, arguments, and, of course, recipes. The author's introduction suggests her cultural perspective and framework, as well as the contribution she believes her text will make. The introduction allows the author, or at times her publisher, to engage cultural discourses of taste intended to guide readers' domestic behaviors. What is more important, though, is that these components convey to readers the public contributions they make within a larger system of meaning. Republican-era cookbooks suggest that proper domestic behaviors cultivate virtue. Antebellum texts emphasize Protestant morality. Southern cookbooks promote hospitality toward members of one's own class; their northern counterparts encourage charity toward those of lower class. These statements convey one of the primary arguments of this study: cookbooks are rhetorical spaces in which women have the authority not only to prescribe action but also to create and maintain community boundaries. The recipes are significant to my study inasmuch as they are consistent (or, at times, inconsistent) with the larger cultural framework the introductory materials set forth.

The introduction also builds an author's ethos, as it allows her to demonstrate her knowledge of the field. Recipes, Cotter argues, are made intelligible through social interaction; shared cultural behaviors lead to variations in the manifestation of individual recipe structure and in its interpretation by its intended readers. Intertextuality is a common feature of nineteenth-century cookbooks. Many authors borrow recipes from one another; a few even recommend or cite a particularly useful source in their introductions as a means of indicating their intended reading audience and a potential companion volume for their instructions. Sarah Rutledge, for example, notes that her book, *The Carolina Housewife* (1847), does not contain basic instruction because Eliza Leslie's *Directions for Cookery* (1837) contains an adequate discussion of this topic. That Rutledge assumes the reader owns or has access to this book suggests the ubiquity and relevance of the genre in women's lives. Other experts rely on higher authorities. Domestic scientists often include government correspondence to justify the scope of their reform goals, while Sarah Hale simply explains her philosophies by including as her epigraph, "Temperance in all things.—Bible."<sup>80</sup> The composition and interpretation of recipes thus reflect and produce cultural tastes and the attendant difficulty in differentiating the aesthetic from the sensory.

When examining cookbooks as rhetorical documents, we must always remember that these were still consumer items, written and printed for the prof-

it of both author and publisher. The nineteenth-century publishing industry, however, was set up to disguise this fact. Susan Coultrap-McQuin describes the ideal of the “gentleman publisher,” which she notes was as culturally accepted for men in the bookselling and publishing industry as “true womanhood” was for women. Publishers were viewed—and viewed themselves—as patrons of the arts who promoted taste and moral character and who were committed to public service.<sup>81</sup> The tastes promoted in a particular text, then, were not those of the author alone but were a product of the relationship between the writer and her publisher, the publisher’s assessment of audience and consumer demand, and, ultimately, what might bring the most profit. And as Kristin Hoganson argues in *Consumers’ Imperium*, domestic consumerism was on the rise as women sought to solidify their class and national status with the accumulation of objects that indicated these ideals. While Hoganson notes that the importation of foreign goods indicated a sort of domestic cosmopolitanism, her study points out the importance of consumerism to domestic identity.<sup>82</sup>

The author’s orientation of her text is an indication of cultural tastes and audience. Many of these components that market to and engage her potential readers appear on the title page of the document. The title is, in fact, perhaps the most important marketing tool for cookbooks, for implicit in the title is the cultural philosophy and intended audience of the text. For example, Lydia Maria Child’s 1829 cookbook, *The Frugal Housewife*, immediately indicates to readers an emphasis on thrift as well as a means to navigate the unsure and often unpredictable economy of the early American republic. It suggests that her cookbook will be useful primarily for those who might consider themselves middle class and below or in need of lessons in domestic economy. Furthermore, it rejects the emphasis on abundance and luxury that Child believed had come to characterize American culture and would lead to its downfall. Also important in the discussion of titles is publication history. In their early years, fewer published cookbooks meant that popular texts remained in print for decades and had to be adjusted for changing social behaviors and cultural tastes. The most common way to accomplish this was to change the title. For example, in 1832, when the eighth edition of Child’s text appeared, it had a new title: *The American Frugal Housewife*. This change occurred because Child attempted to publish her text in Europe and discovered that Susannah Carter, a British cookbook author, had already published a text called *The Frugal Housewife* in 1765, and it was republished in America in 1772. The new title of Child’s book indicates that her text, unlike many then in use in the United States, was written for Americans, using American ingredients and techniques, and as such would help female readers identify as an American community with shared values and domestic strategies. The content of the text, however, did not change. In fact, any mention of the title throughout the text, such as page headings and

references, remained “The Frugal Housewife,” an indication that the print templates were not altered even though the title page had changed. It continued a process begun in 1796 with the first American cookbook, Amelia Simmons’s *American Cookery*.

The subtitle, more so than the title, is subject to trends in writing and publishing. Early American and Jacksonian-era cookbooks such as Simmons’s often include long subtitles that list in detail the types of recipes and/or advice one would find in their pages. Simmons’s title page, for example, reads, “American Cookery, / or the Art of Dressing / Viands, Fish, Poultry and Vegetables, / and the best modes of making Pastes, Puffs, Pies, Tarts, Puddings, / Custards and Preserves, / and all kinds of Cakes, / from the Imperial Plumb to Plain Cake / adapted to this country, / and all grades of life.” This long subtitle is a common feature of British cookbooks from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and its presence in Simmons’s text belies its stylistic and culinary origins despite its use of “American” in the title.<sup>83</sup> This contradiction illustrates one reason why we must view cookbooks as rhetorical documents. While Simmons’s recipes suggest that there was still a strong British influence in American cuisine at the turn of the nineteenth century, her title, subtitle, and preface demonstrate that her intention in writing was to create an American document, to stake her claim to these British recipes in order to create a unified American character. Her recognition of the need for an American cookbook demonstrates the importance of both food and print in early American culture. Child’s text, on the other hand, does not include a long subtitle. It is far more straightforward, reading simply, “Dedicated to those who are not ashamed of economy.” She not only indicates an audience but also introduces a modernized stylistic distinction that many American cookbooks would follow in the succeeding years. Her brief subtitle even illustrates textually and visually her pervading emphasis on economy.

The presentation of the author often indicates genre fluidity and publication history in an effort to connect to the audience’s current literary tastes. For example, the early editions of Child’s *The Frugal Housewife* do not include her name on the title page. It reads simply, “By the Author of *Hobomok*.” This suggests several connected interpretations. The act of representing the author not with a name but with a print document indicates the detached nature, or lack of bodily connection, of early American print culture, suggested by Michael Warner in *The Letters of the Republic*. It emphasizes the importance of print over authorship. It also suggests the connection of physical and aesthetic tastes, as readers assessed the credibility of the domestic expert based on her print history as well as her culinary knowledge. Finally, it is further evidence that genre distinctions are fluid and that the same readership is expected—or perhaps requested—by cookbooks and novels alike.<sup>84</sup> By the 1840s, however, Child’s name was added to the title page, so that it read, “By Mrs. Child, author of ‘Hobomok,’ ‘The

Mother's Book,' editor of 'The Juvenile Miscellany,' etc."<sup>85</sup> In this sense, the authority of the book evolved to rest on the authority of the author, rather than the authority of the printed word. Her textual achievements lent credibility to the text, but now they received placement only after her name. Her cookbook did not go out of print until after her work in abolition made her a more contentious political, rather than domestic, figure.<sup>86</sup> This suggests that public perception of the authorial body is created by her body of printed works and that public taste is an aggregate of these texts.

The components of the title page alone indicate to consumers the context in which the text should be purchased and read. As such, the recipes that follow are understood as culinary representations of the appropriate tastes for the text's class affiliations. While they reflect cultural tastes, they also produce them; one system does not exist outside of the other. Consumers can choose to purchase the text that best designates their class, regional, or national consciousness; the shared sense of belonging perpetuates group identity and connects cultural values to consumption and ingestion. What these relationships—between the title, subtitle, preface, and so forth, or on a larger scale, between content and style—demonstrate is the need to read cookbooks holistically. Cookbooks are not only instructional documents, and they have never been read as if they were. Exactly how they *have* been read, though, is also a matter of literary and historical context.

Women's nineteenth-century domestic print culture was vast and varied and included newspapers, periodicals, short fiction, and novels, as well as cookbooks and advice manuals. The ideals of one era of domestic publishing rarely disappeared as new paradigms emerged. Instead, the movements often continued to exist simultaneously, blending or borrowing ideas and discourse from one another in complex, intriguing ways. It is often difficult to distinguish one discourse from another, as texts often forgo clear distinctions based on those terms. While I pinpoint distinct rhetorical trends based on similarities among the cookbooks themselves, as well as their accompanying print cultures, I do not submit that their authors intended to fit necessarily one highly generalized mold. I suggest, however, that domestic advice in many forms surrounded women in the nineteenth century, as every genre available to them participated, to some extent, in such discourses. Taste, then, ordered their physical and ideological existences, in varying measures.

#### POWER AND RESISTANCE IN TASTE DISCOURSE

American cookbook history is primarily a history of the evolution of an American middle class. Unlike manuscript recipes, kept in private homes and passed through generations of women cooks, published texts require access to print technology. As such, the tastes presented are those of authority and capital, as

well as desire to strengthen group identity and cultural influence. Everyone eats; not everyone writes, particularly in the early years of American development. Cookbooks are essential to a study of American taste discourses precisely because they evolved simultaneously with the American print culture that distributed those discourses to an expanding public of readers.

Discourse creates and promotes knowledge, places value on particular ideas, and thus affects social interactions and power relations. Discourses, however, “are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind, and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.”<sup>87</sup> Discourse thus regulates the body and the senses, inasmuch as it regulates the meanings and value associated with an individual’s experiences and perceptions. Foucault locates both the source and expression of power in discourse, which, according to Chris Weedon, manifests itself as a “dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects.”<sup>88</sup> A study of taste discourse, then, unites the aesthetic and moral philosophy of the eighteenth-century empiricists with the poststructuralist theories of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. This union reveals the cultural basis for the power and persistence of nineteenth-century taste discourse as well as a method by which we can understand its effects.

Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984) is an important examination of taste and its social formation and signification. Bourdieu argues that certain classes represent their tastes as dominant, legitimate, and natural in order to both define themselves and distinguish themselves from other classes. He offers the *habitus*, originally a Latin term that designated the state of the body, as a way to describe the movements of a cultural body. The habitus exists as a shared understanding of cultural values, or a group’s sense of itself; as the combined social actions of a group, or its speech patterns, consumer practices, and the like; and as the sensory or embodied experiences of a group.<sup>89</sup> Bourdieu describes the bourgeois emphasis on refinement and restraint as it opposes the working class’s disposition for immediate gratification and abundance as a reaction to the power of bourgeois cultural dominance. He also perceives refinement as a symbolic representation of one’s ability to provide food when in reality this is often in doubt.<sup>90</sup> Bourgeois tastes are, likewise, constructed to reject the perceived vulgarity of the lower classes, and the cultural capital of the middle classes, based on access to print and opportunities for public social discourse, helps to legitimize or naturalize their tastes, thus characterizing other classes as the “other” in opposition to the dominant “self.” These behaviors are often represented as both one’s preferences for a food item and one’s assessment of the

sensory experience of its consumption. This process is then extended, through patterns of behavior, to represent the aesthetic and sensory preferences or tastes of a group or class.

Roland Barthes offers an illustration of taste and class affiliation in *Mythologies*, originally published in 1957. Barthes discusses *Elle's* presentation of prepared dishes in an essay titled "Ornamental Cookery." He argues that since the magazine's role is to "present to its vast public which (market-research tells us) is working class, the very dream of smartness," its cookery advice is thus "based on coatings and alibis, and is for ever trying to extenuate and even to disguise the primary nature of foodstuffs."<sup>91</sup> Barthes signals the class affiliations of both magazine and food and demonstrates how their contradiction produces meaning to a reading public. The problem is not stuffing the partridge with cherries, he argues of his central image in this section, but rather affording the partridge in the first place. Thus he concludes that *Elle's* is a "cuisine of advertisement," that readers recognize that "ornamental cookery is supported by wholly mythical economies."<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, he notes that a periodical addressed to a middle-class audience, *L'Express*, depicts middle-class cookery with items both familiar and affordable to their readers. According to Barthes, the working class requires a fiction, while the middle class is permitted a reality. His argument suggests two important features of American cookery writing: first, that middle-class tastes are almost always described as natural or standard, a concept suggested by the congruence of cookery advice and reading audience in *L'Express*; and second, that working-class tastes as they actually exist are rarely described but rather are fictionalized, adapted, or critiqued. Lack of access to print technology and education means that the working classes will rarely be afforded the opportunity to address their own members. As such, they will be largely unable to constitute in writing the sense of community and class consciousness developed by the middle and upper classes. Cookery, like class mobility, is presented to them as a fiction.

Taste discourse has the most power when it becomes part of the vernacular of the everyday. It can best perform a normalizing function when attached to the very qualities that are deemed "natural" for a particular individual. For women throughout the nineteenth century, these qualities included cooking and domestic management; nurturing and educating children; and caring for the poor and the sick—those who found themselves outside the realm of the "normal" in middle-class American society. Foucault writes of this normalizing power in *Discipline and Punish*:

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the "social-worker"-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the

normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements. The carceral network, in its compact or disseminated forms, with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of the normalizing power.<sup>93</sup>

Although it may seem odd to compare nineteenth-century taste discourse to the extensive network of prisons and punishment that Foucault describes, consider the language used by Elizabeth Cady Stanton with Lucretia Mott in the “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions” (1848):

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. . . .

. . . In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement. . . .

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could[,] to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.<sup>94</sup>

Stanton and Mott, as well as the men and women at the Seneca Falls Convention who unanimously approved this declaration, recognized that the “social and religious degradation” women experienced effectively imprisoned them by promoting the normalcy of gendered hierarchies that limited their rights and actions.

Lest we begin to fear that women can only figure as bodies oppressed by the social mechanisms of taste, we must remember that Foucault suggests that discourse is not static but is instead an evolving dynamic. In *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (1988), Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby characterize Foucault’s definition of discourse as “a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance.”<sup>95</sup> Despite the many rights and privileges women in the nineteenth



century lacked, they did have access to taste. In fact, not only did they have access to it, but taste was deemed the outward display of morality, the basis of women's cultural authority throughout much of the century. While cookbooks and domestic advice literature can demonstrate many of the patriarchal systems that facilitated taste's most restrictive functions, they can also be read as sites of resistance in which women harnessed its power to promote a variety of agendas, some certainly more progressive than others. More generally, women's use of taste discourse can be read as a means defining American identity and the authority that designation confers. In short, domestic writers recognized the constitutive function of taste, and they worked to place themselves at the center of that conversation.

In the following chapters, I trace women's use of taste as a rhetorical device in American cookbooks. Each chapter describes how the desire to manage an individual's instinctual pleasures for the collective good of the social body is rooted in discourses of taste. Women's participation in these discourses gave them the cultural agency to promote national standards of behavior and define community by practicing tasteful domesticity.

Chapter 1, "Taste and Virtue," examines three early American cookbooks whose authors set the standard not only for the American cookbook genre but for the domestic role of women in the early republic. As a new social order of egalitarianism attempts to redefine republican tastes in opposition to the corrupting forces of European luxury, Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery*, Lydia Maria Child's *American Frugal Housewife*, and Mary Randolph's *Virginia Housewife* use taste to indicate character, economy, and class status, respectively. The beginnings of regional variations of taste discourse are visible in these texts as well. Mary Randolph, writing from a Virginia heritage, engages food and cookery on republican terms, but her adaptation of taste indicates the difference of the South's class and labor systems.

In chapter 2, "Taste and Morality," I examine the cookbooks of two of the mid-nineteenth century's most famous domestic tastemakers: Catharine Beecher and Sarah Josepha Hale. I argue that the shift in gender ideology from the republican mother to the Victorian "true woman" has significant implications for the manipulation of taste discourse in cookbooks. Women are charged with raising a moral citizenry by promoting good taste, yet the threat of the unregulated female body is always front and center when using taste as a metaphor. This complexity allows women writers to resist external definition using the same discourse that constrains them.

In chapter 3, "Taste and Region," I turn to cookbooks published in the American South to examine the regional variations in taste discourse that began with Mary Randolph. Southern cookbooks are unique in American domestic culture, as they remained popular in manuscript form long after the North had

made the transition to print. This reveals what is perhaps most significant about the power of the taste metaphor: its constitutive function. Building on the work of Maurice Charland, I demonstrate how southern cookbooks in the antebellum, Civil War, and postwar periods call into being a southern public that is aware of itself first in local communities and then as a cohesive region and that finally posits itself as a model for a national standard. The use of taste to represent a cultural standard increases as the public becomes aware of itself as a unit.

Chapter 4, "Taste and Science," examines the domestic writing of cooking school teachers and home economists during the Progressive era. As women's educational opportunities improved, domestic experts promoted advancements in nutritional science to redefine the role of the home in an era of widespread reform. Cooking school cookbooks by Sarah Rorer, Juliet Corson, Maria Parloa, and Fannie Farmer worked to integrate science and professionalism to regulate American tastes. Much of their work was reliant upon the research of home economists such as Ellen Swallow Richards, whose textbooks and domestic manuals include *The Chemistry of Cooking and Cleaning*, *The Cost of Food*, and *Euthenics*. This final title in particular indicates the emphasis on taste as a middle-class standard that pervades domestic rhetoric. Experts promoted scientific tastes to bolster middle-class power and authority in the face of increased immigration, industrialism, and poverty. By reforming tastes now, they suggested, domesticity could speed up the process of "race betterment" and create a more efficient workforce and a more stable society.

This theme continues in chapter 5, "Taste and Race," as I explore the competing narratives of "mammy" cookbooks, a popular genre by middle-class white women that emerged around the turn of the twentieth century, and cookbooks by African American women, many of them former domestic servants or slaves, who seek to claim middle-class identity by promoting their literacy and ownership of their domestic skills. These narratives revolve around claims to literacy. The white authors of mammy cookbooks posit the African American cook as a plantation mythology fixture whose tastes are instinctual and irreproducible, as she cannot record them in print. These white authors reveal competing narratives of physical and intellectual tastes by suggesting that they can preserve her memory through literacy practices; only they can write down her recipes. African American authors counter this narrative by composing texts of their own, recording their own recipes, and claiming literacy skills that they were denied in domestic writing throughout the nineteenth century. By demonstrating intellectual and physical manifestations of taste, these African American domestic writers participate in the complex discourse of taste, along with the middle-class status and authority it confers. Taken together, these chapters illustrate taste as a powerful and evolving discourse. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the race and class roots of taste are invisible, as its very pow-

er is in its ability to posit something cultivated as natural and to exclude groups of people based on this construction. By the turn of the twentieth century, these marginalized groups begin to expose taste as a rhetorical construction by challenging its pervasive narrative of normalcy and thus its effectiveness as a cultural standard.

For nineteenth-century women, consumption was a necessity and cooking was a duty. Food representation, however, was a form of social discourse. Women used cookbooks publicly to fulfill their domestic duties to teach and safeguard American character and virtue. They accomplished this task in an evolving understanding of the rhetorical function of taste in American cookbooks and culture. While discussions of taste certainly reflect women's contemporary social milieu, scholars can also view them through the methodological lens of the recipe, as prescriptive rhetorical practices intended to suggest an ideological salve for the perceived problems plaguing society. Viewed in this way, the recipes become the methods whereby women can participate, through the culturally acceptable privacy of the domestic sphere, in public discourses regarding issues of race, class, gender, region, and religion. As a rhetorical space, the cookbook thus straddles the psychological boundary between public and private. This twofold interpretation of taste—as the sensory experience of the individual and the cultural standard achieved through the rational reflection on these experiences—makes the cookbook a popular and powerful social tool.