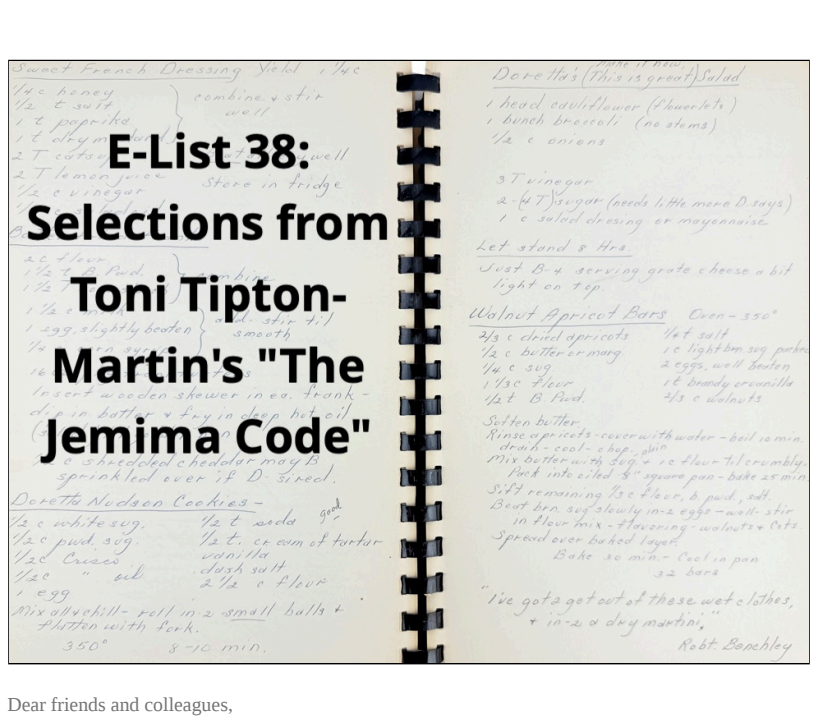
Capitol Hill Books

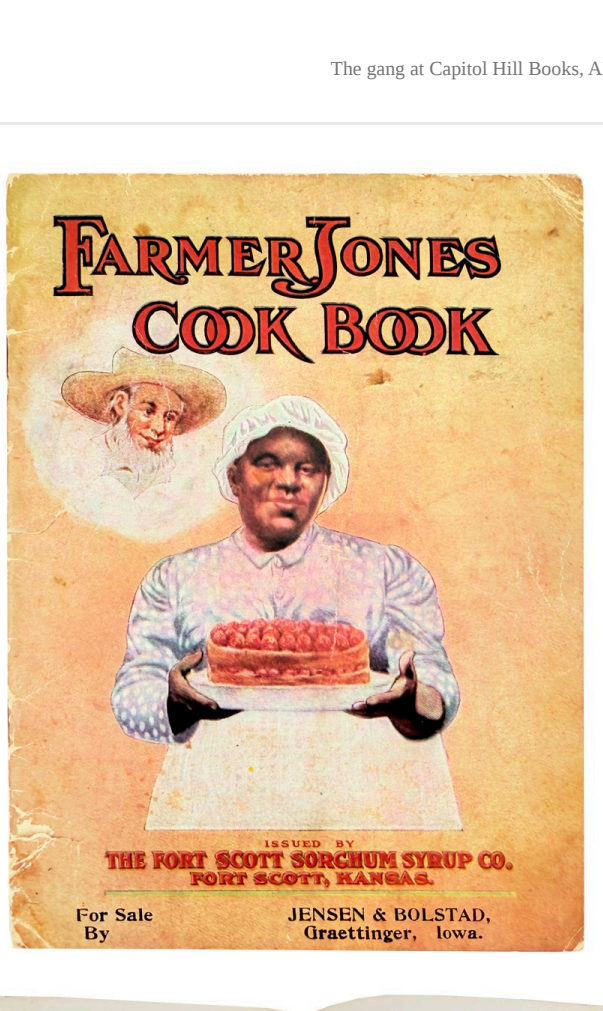


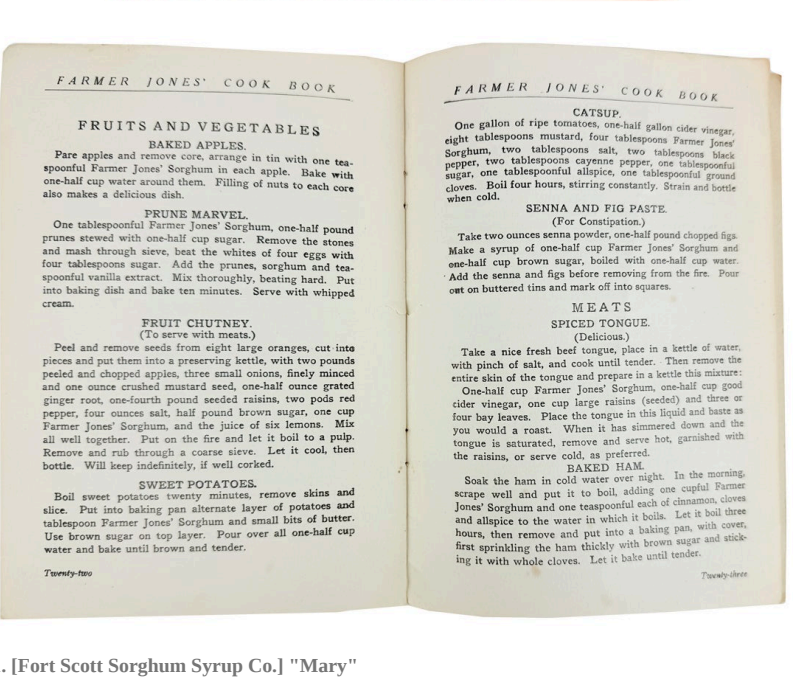
Dear friends and colleagues,

This week we are doing something slightly different and showcasing twelve titles featured in Toni Tipton-Martin's incredible book *The Jemima Code*, the bibliography of her personal collection of more than 150 African-American cookbooks, published by the University of Texas Press in 2015. As well as offering a history of publishing power dynamics and "firsthand evidence that African Americans cooked creative masterpieces from meager provisions, educated young chefs, operated food businesses, and nourished the African American community through the long struggle for human rights," *The Jemima Code* was also the recipient of the James Beard Foundation Book Award for 2016, and remains one of the most beautiful books on books in print today.

Best,

The gang at Capitol Hill Books, ABAA/ILAB





1. [Fort Scott Sorghum Syrup Co.] "Mary"

Farmer Jones Cook Book: Farmer Jones Sorghum Syrup in the home will reduce the high cost of living

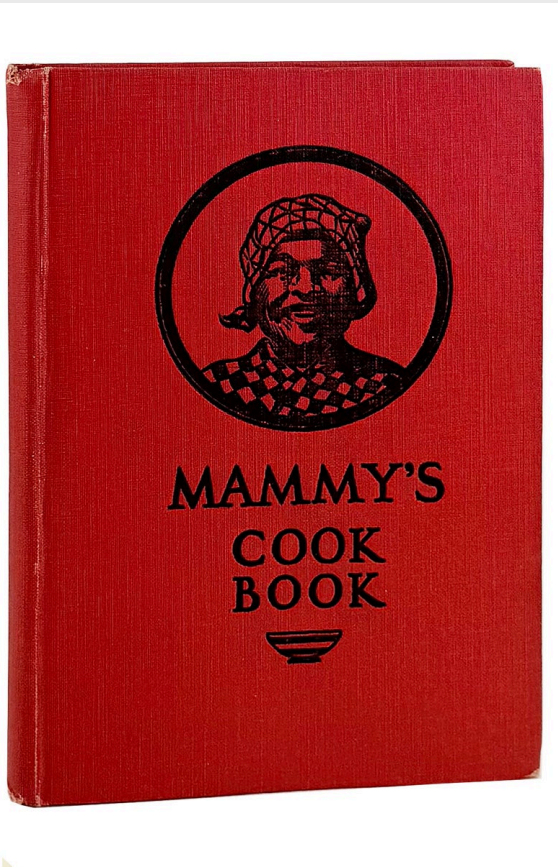
Fort Scott, KS: Fort Scott Sorghum Syrup Co., 1914. First Edition. 12mo (19cm.); publisher's color pictorial staple bound wrappers; 31pp. Wrappers rather worn and soiled, one-inch split at spine foot with subsequent closed tear bleeding into upper cover (not affecting text), old pencil notes to wrapper, later ownership signature to title page. Overall Good to Very Good. Distributor cancel printed to upper cover of Jensen & Bolstad, Graettinger, Iowa.

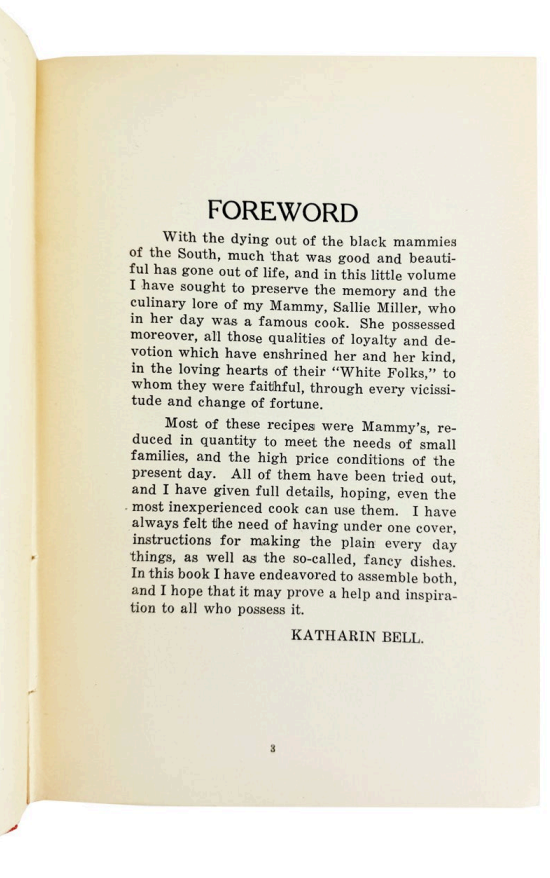
Ephemeral manufacturer's cookbook full of recipes like Ma Honey Bee Cake, Steam Graham Bread, Spiced Tongue (Delicious), and Senna and Fig Paste (For Constipation)—all listing Farmer Jones' Sorghum, an inexpensive sugar substitute, in the ingredients. The upper cover is adorned with the image of the disembodied head of Father Jones looking down on a young Black woman in cap and apron holding up a strawberry cake. "The picture on the front cover is reproduced from life. 'Mary' is employed in the family of the Manager of the Fort Scott Sorghum Syrup Co." Her full name is not given.

Four copies in OCLC as of January, 2025, Colorado College only outside of Kansas.

TIPTON-MARTIN, p. 33 (distributor cancel to upper cover of Norwood Brothers, Ozan, Ark.)

Price: $850





FOREWORD

With the dying out of the black mammies of the South, much that was good and beautiful has gone out of life, and in this little volume I have sought to preserve the memory and the culinary lore of my Mammy, Sallie Miller, who in her day was a famous cook. She possessed moreover, all those qualities of loyalty and devotion which have enshrined her and her kind, in the loving hearts of their "White Folks," to whom they were faithful, through every vicissitude and change of fortune.

Most of these recipes were Mammy's, reduced in quantity to meet the needs of small families, and the high price conditions of the present day. All of them have been tried out, and I have given full details, hoping, even the most inexperienced cook can use them. I have always felt the need of having under one cover, instructions for making the plain every day things, as well as the so-called, fancy dishes. In this book I have endeavored to assemble both, and I hope that it may prove a help and inspiration to all who possess it.

KATHARIN BELL.

3

2. Katharin Bell [but Sallie Miller]

Mammy's Cook Book

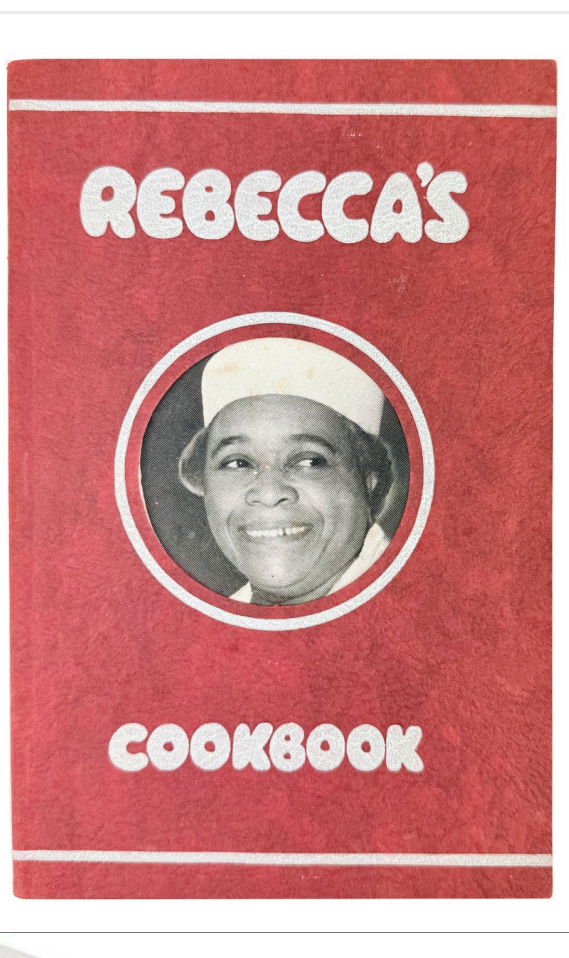
N.p.: [Katharin Bell], [1927]. First Edition. Octavo (20cm.); publisher's red pictorial cloth embossed in black on upper cover; 160pp. Light scuffing to cloth margins, brief fraying at spine ends, corners bumped, textblock a bit toned, else a Very Good, bright and sound example.

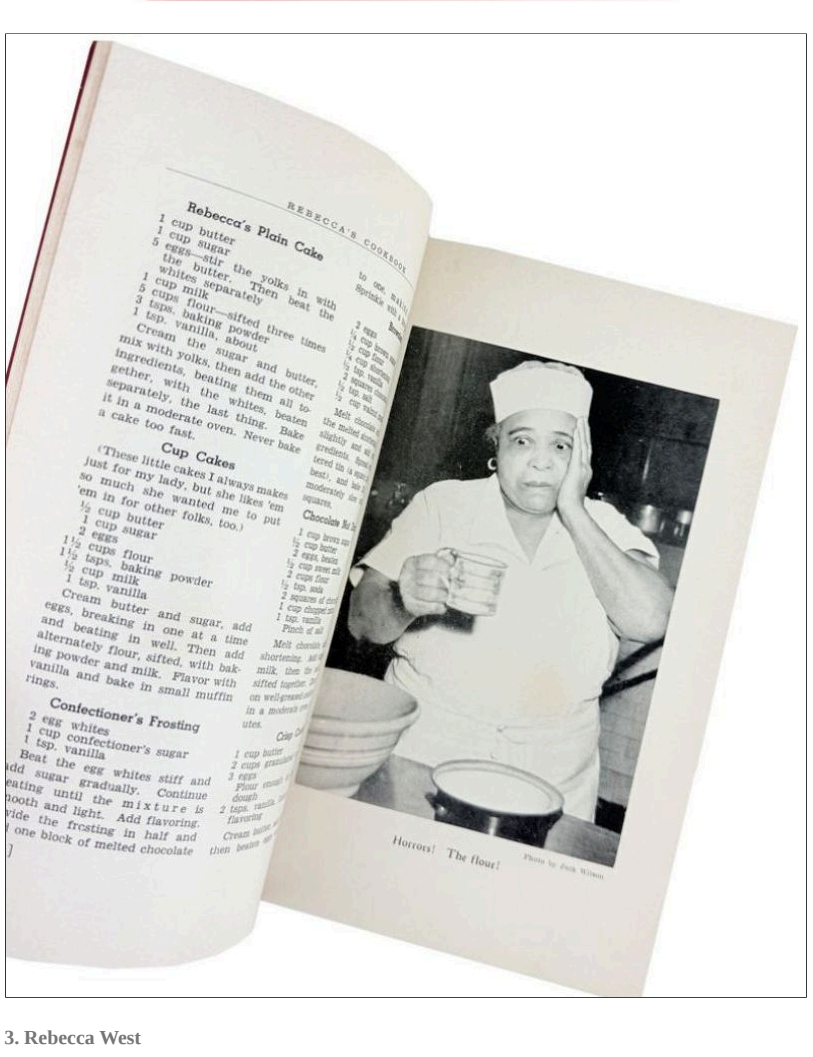
One of the finest examples of a white woman's attempts to memorialize the recipes and food culture of her "Mammy" Sallie Miller, "who in her day was a famous cook" (p. 3). The small volume collects 450 of Miller's recipes as well as the poem "A Recipe to Cure the Blues" and a list of "Things Worth Knowing": adding gelatin to whipped cream to keep the peaks from falling if not served immediately; using raw potato slices to absorb excess salt; slicing onions under cold water to protect your eyes.

The work, as well as serving forth standard Black Southern fare like croquettes and gumbo, also includes recipes for fresh tomato salads, spinach tarts, and cheese straws. "Most of these recipes were Mammy's, reduced in quantity to meet the needs of small families, and the high price conditions of the present day" (p. 3). While the title and the cover illustration signal to the reader that this is a cook book self-published by a white woman, Bell refrains from the standard tropes of condescending stereotyping and colloquialisms and her simple homage to Sallie Miller "unwittingly affirmed the case for African American intellectual property rights" (Tipton-Martin, p. 42).

TIPTON-MARTIN, pp. 42-3

Price: $2,000





3. Rebecca West

Rebecca's Cookbook

Washington, DC: [Rebecca West], 1942. First Edition. Octavo (22cm.); publisher's brown textured wrappers lettered in white, black and white photographic portrait of the author visible through die-cut circular window in center of upper wrapper; [8],69pp.; photographic illus. throughout. Very light wear, spine slightly sunned, else a Very Good to Near Fine copy.

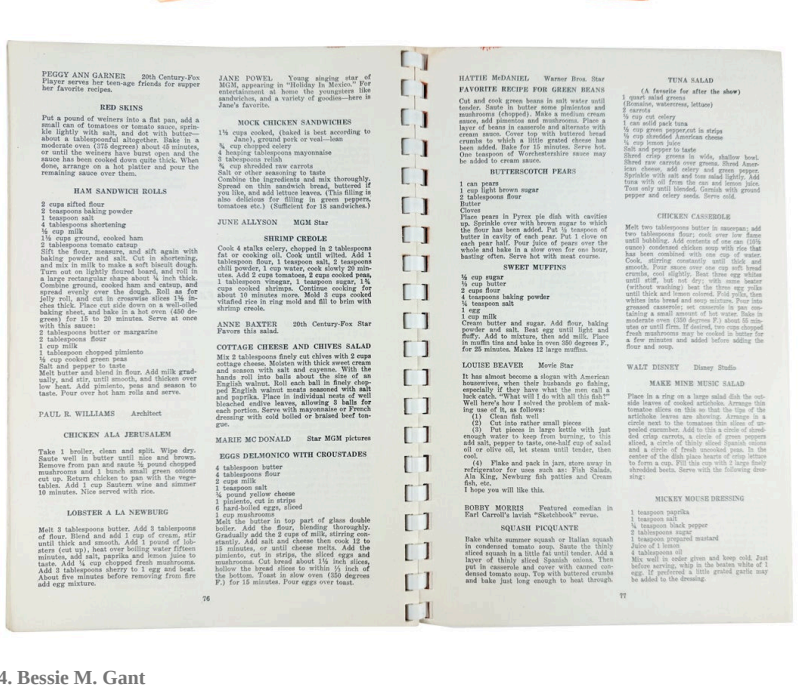
Wonderful compilation of recipes by professional chef Rebecca West. According to research by Bill Holland and Toni Tipton-Martin, the author of the introduction, signed "E.P.," was West's employer Eleanor "Cissy" Patterson, "the first woman newspaper publisher and owner of a major city daily newspaper, the old Washington Herald." West traveled extensively as Patterson's private chef, and her recipes were published as a popular newspaper column.

While Patterson paid for this self-published collection West retained the copyright and the work is adorned with photographs of her in a big kitchen beating eggs, comically measuring flour, or serving up her famed terrapin. Other highlights include her Virginia-style scrambled eggs, served with thin slices of ham and mushroom; cabbage pudding (a hollowed-out head of cabbage filled with spiced chopped meat that is then wrapped in cheesecloth and boiled for 30 minutes); and her "Sandwich rules" (day-old bread, creamed butter on each slice).

TIPTON-MARTIN, P. 58-9

Price: $300

Bess Gant's
COOK BOOK
OVER 600 ORIGINAL RECIPES
PRICE $2.00



4. Bessie M. Gant

Bess Gant's Cook Book: Over 600 Original Recipes

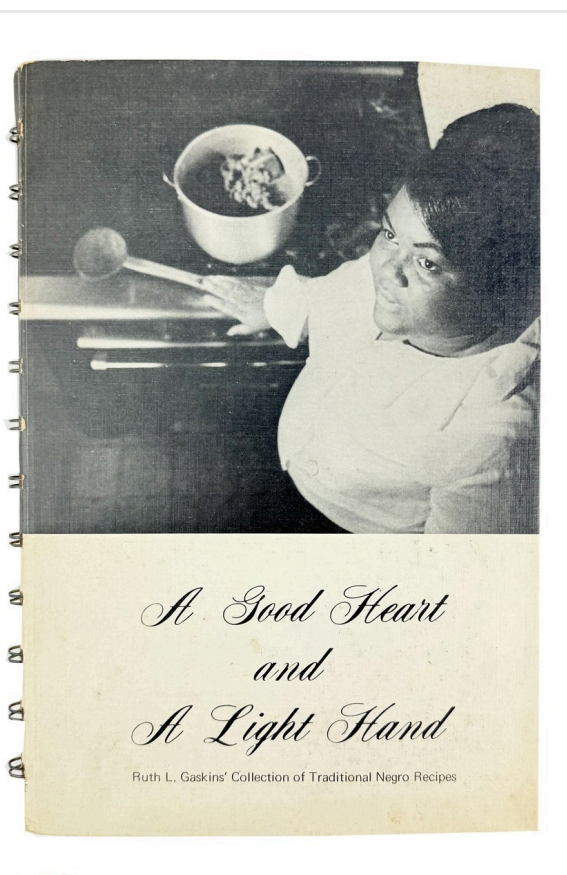
Culver City, CA: Murray & Gee, 1947. "Revised and greatly enlarged third edition." Tall octavo (25cm.); publisher's orange pictorial comb-bound card wrappers; 79pp. Wrappers quite damp stained with orange bleeding to first and final leaves of text, moderate wear from use, else a Good to Very Good, internally sound copy.

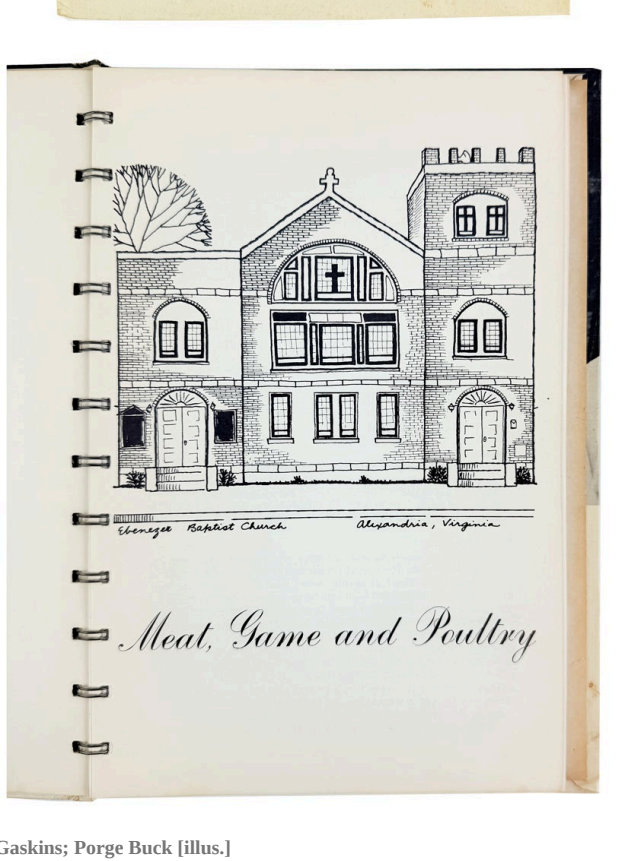
Scarce cookbook by the illusive Hollywood caterer Bessie M. Gant whose introduction to this expanded edition reads simply "Cooking is as simple as ABC. If you follow these recipes perfectly!" As well as her own recipes this cookbook also includes a short section at the very end of "Favorite recipes of famous personalities," among them "MGM Star" Katherine Hepburn, who supplied a prune nut cake recipe; Lena Horne (Chicken Mousse with Avocados); and, from Disney Studio, Walt Disney's "Make Mine Music Salad" with Mickey Mouse Dressing.

More traditionally, the collection also includes recipes for One-Two Meat Roli Poli (like a jelly roll but with ground meat served with mushroom soup); Chicken Timbales; and Afternoon Tea Balls—pecan-flecked butter cookies that need to be placed in a tin box while still hot.

TIPTON-MARTIN, p. 61

Price: $350





5. Ruth L. Gaskins; Porge Buck [illus.]

A Good Heart and a Light Hand: Ruth L. Gaskin's Collection of Traditional Negro Recipes

Alexandria, VA / Annandale, VA: Fund for Alexandria, Virginia / Turnpike Press, 1968. First Edition, First Printing. Octavo (22.5cm.); publisher's photo-illustrated spiral-bound boards; xiii, [1],110pp.; illus. throughout. Boards a bit soiled and bumped at margins, endpapers toned, contemporary ownership signature of a Barbara Talley to front pastedown, else a Very Good, sound copy.

Collaborative cookbook of Black cuisine published to raise money for the Fund of Alexandria, Virginia. Ruth Gaskins provides the full list of twenty locals, many of them professional chefs, who contributed recipes to this volume, all but two of them women. "The author doesn't set out to focus on herself. Instead, she draws readers into the world of African Americans by reclaiming the diversity of their cookery and her own expressions of charity" (Tipton-Martin, p. 86).

The chapters are divided by food groups, many of them opening with line drawings by Porges Buck depicting local landmarks: the Shiloh Baptist Church, the Ebenezer Baptist Church, the Departmental Progressive Club. Though Alexandria was, and continues to be, a bustling outpost of Washington, DC, many of the recipes have roots in the Great Depression and rural sharecropping: Vinegar pie and potato wine, as well as ways to dress muskrat, squirrel, rabbit, and possum.

TIPTON-MARTIN, pp. 86-7, citing the Simon & Schuster reprint

Price: $250

Secrets of a renowned health spa chef
FIRST EDITION
HARMONY McCOY'S
DIET COOK BOOK

PARTY NUMBER ONE

6. Harmony McCoy; Eleanor B. Kahn [ed.]; Marsha Kline [illus.]

Harmony McCoy's Diet Cook Book

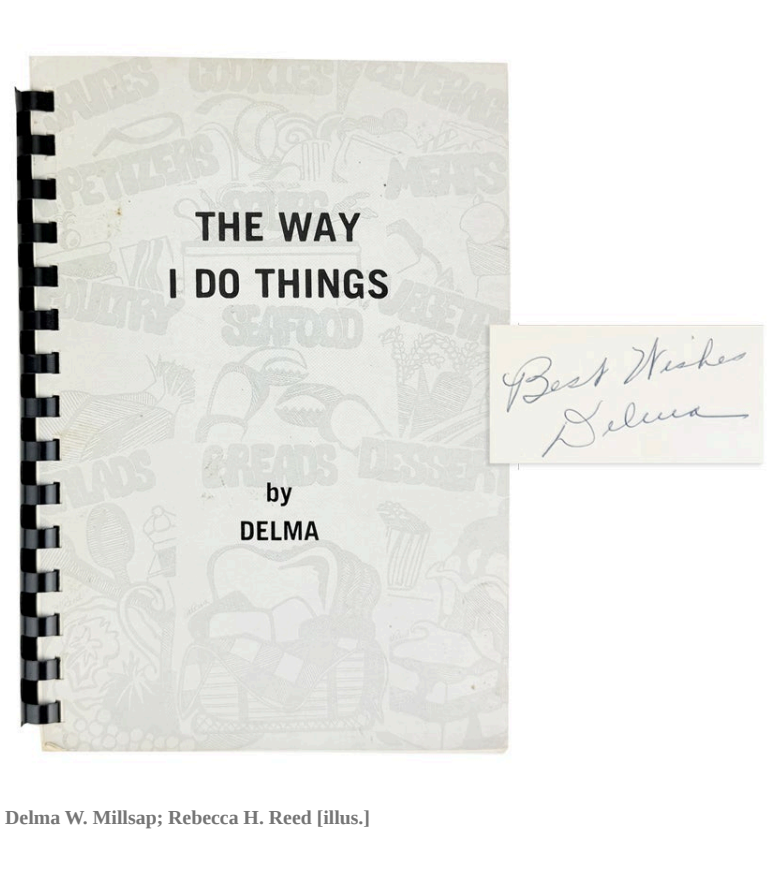
Murietta, CA: Harmon-E-Enterprises, 1972. First Edition. Large square quarto (28cm.); publisher's decorative comb-bound boards in matching paper-covered slipcase; 127pp.; color illus. and photographs throughout. Light wear to board margins, slipcase scuffed and sunned, else a Very Good example.

Oversized flip book-format diet cookbook by health spa chef Harmony McCoy. The book has a built-in stand so the work can sit open unaided on a countertop for easy display. The work guides the reader through a four-week weight loss program, with tips on maintaining diet discipline as well as menu serving sizes and calorie counts—a mere 700 calories a day, adhering to the era's enthusiasm for starvation diets. Nevertheless, the design, with its vibrant colors and cheerful illustrations and photo spreads makes up for the hunger pangs.

Five copies in OCLC as of January, 2025: Alabama, Cal Poly, UCLA, Harvard, and MSU.

TIPTON-MARTIN, pp. 118-9

Price: $350



7. Delma W. Millsap; Rebecca H. Reed [illus.]

The Way I Do Things [Signed by Millsap and Reed]

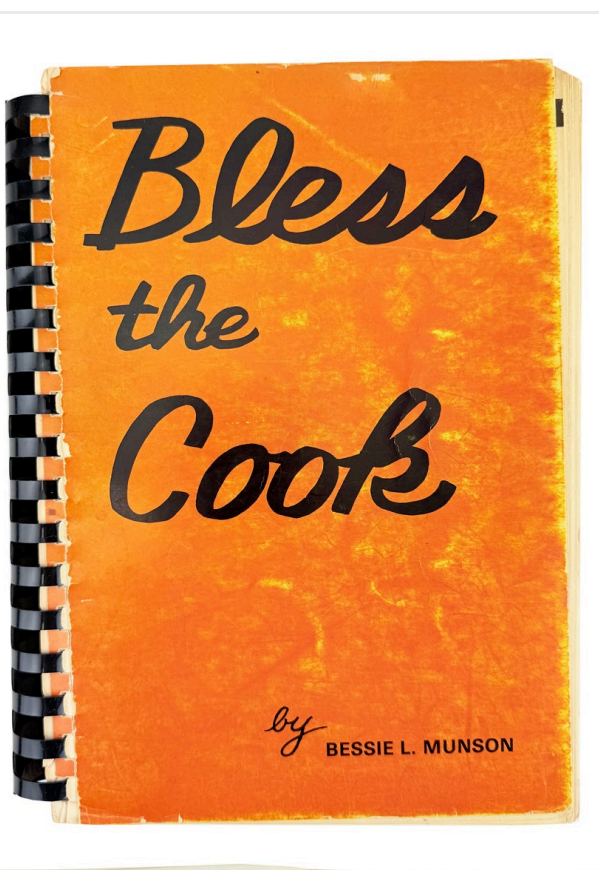
[Columbus, OH]: Delma W. Millsap, 1974. First Edition. Octavo (23cm.); publisher's gray pictorial comb-bound card wrappers; [4],124pp.; half-tone illus. throughout. Light wear and soil to wrappers, inside of rear wrapper rather foxed, else a Very Good, sound copy. Inscribed and signed "Best Wishes / Delma" to title page verso, additionally signed by the illustrator Rebecca Reed on p. 1.

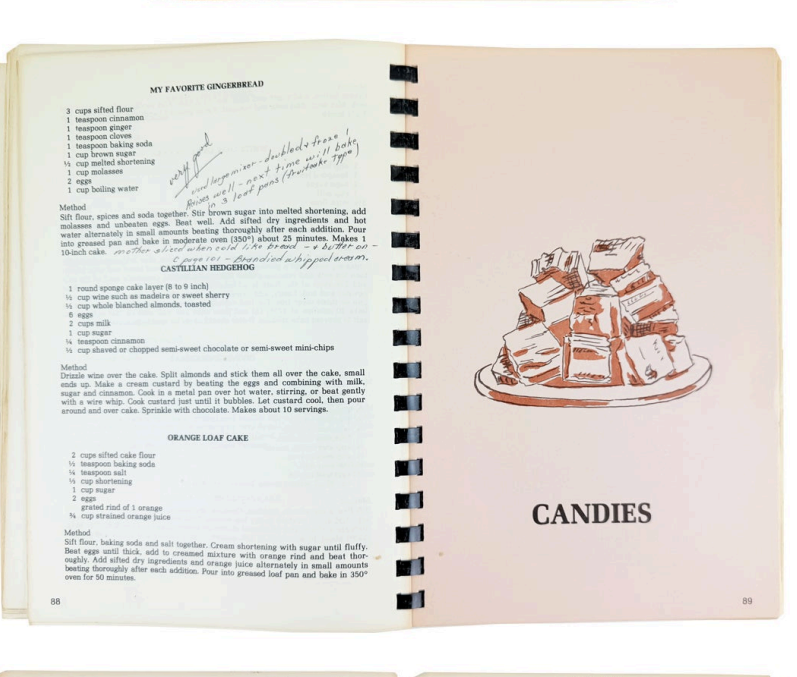
Scarce self-published cookbook by the Black chef whose resume included work at the famed Maramor restaurant in Columbus, which closed its doors in the early 1970s. Millsap also cooked for members of the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity at Ohio State University, the Columbus Beach Club, and eventually ran her own catering company in which capacity "she has proven to several thousand Central Ohioans and their guests that a 'Delma Dinner' is not only a culinary experience but it is truly a conversation piece" (from the introduction by Sally K. Roberts).

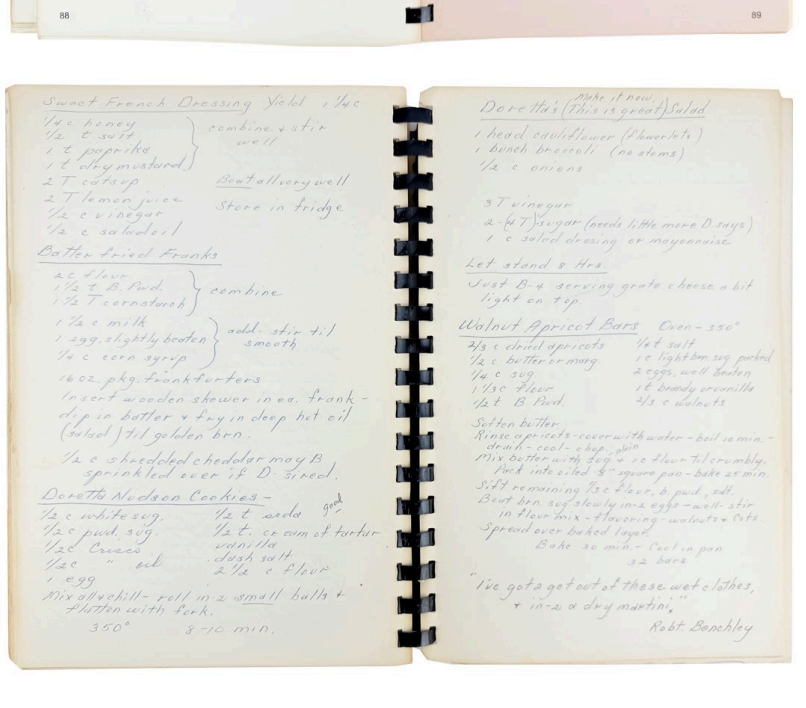
Three copies in OCLC as of January, 2025, at Alabama, OSU, and Virginia Tech.

TIPTON-MARTIN p. 127

Price: $350







8. Bessie L. Munson; Helen Layton [design]; Harry T. Williams, Jr., Kester Conrad [illus.]; Tommy Hawkes and William F. Crane [photography]

Bless the Cook

[Fort Worth, TX?]: Bessie L. Munson, 1978. Presumed Later Expanded Edition. Large octavo (25cm.); publisher's printed comb-bound orange card wrappers; [6],266pp.; color photographic plates throughout, black and white illus. in text. Wrappers rather worn, rear wrapper previously separated and now crudely tape-repaired, cartoon news clipping stapled to title page verso with offsetting to facing leaf, occasional underlining and marginalia as well as extensive manuscript ink recipes by previous contemporary owner Marjorie McCay to first and final leaves, the latter left blank for this very purpose. Overall a Good, extensively used copy.

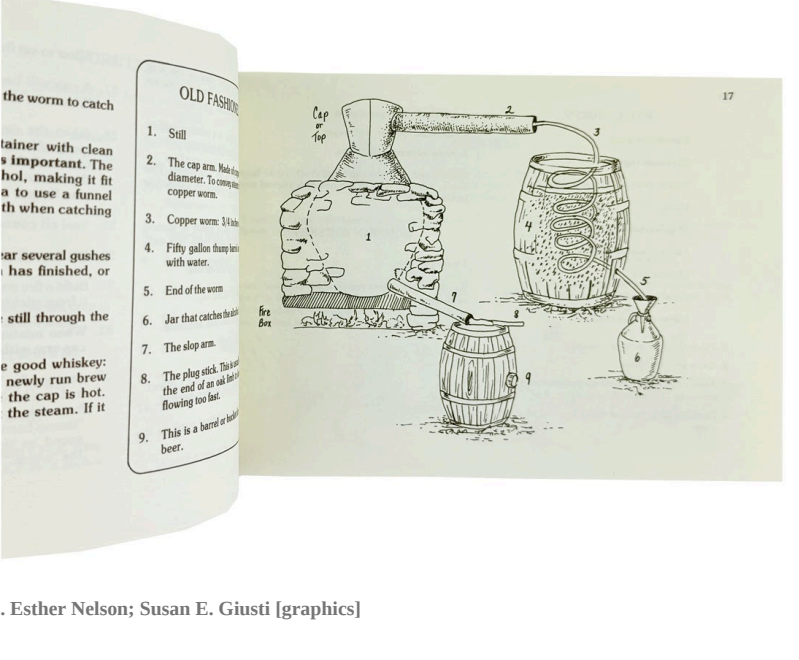
Substantial cookbook by the Texas-based caterer charmingly adorned with illustrations by her pal and publication coordinator Helen Layton. Layton, a white woman, appears in multiple photographs throughout the work as well, and provided the author biography: "Her skin is coffee-with-cream color and her hair is ash blond. She is a photographer's dream with her high cheekbones and expressive eyes and hands. Her eloquent personality and the ample girth of a truly superb cook elicit immediate response from all who meet her" (inside rear cover).

This copy extensively used by its original owner, who has added her own comments on her favorite recipes: to make the Cucumber soup especially smooth she recommends putting all the ingredients except the garnish in the blender; when making the Peanut Butter French Oven Toast, "a little sugar in French toast batter makes it brown well"; regarding "My Favorite Gingerbread" she has added "Very good...Mother sliced when cold like bread" and served it with brandied whipped cream.

TIPTON-MARTIN, p. 144, citing the Arlington Century edition (also 1978 but just 194pp.)

Price: $250

Cotton Patch Cooking
Esther Nelson



9. Esther Nelson; Susan E. Giusti [graphics]

Cotton Patch Cooking [Inscribed and Signed by Nelson]

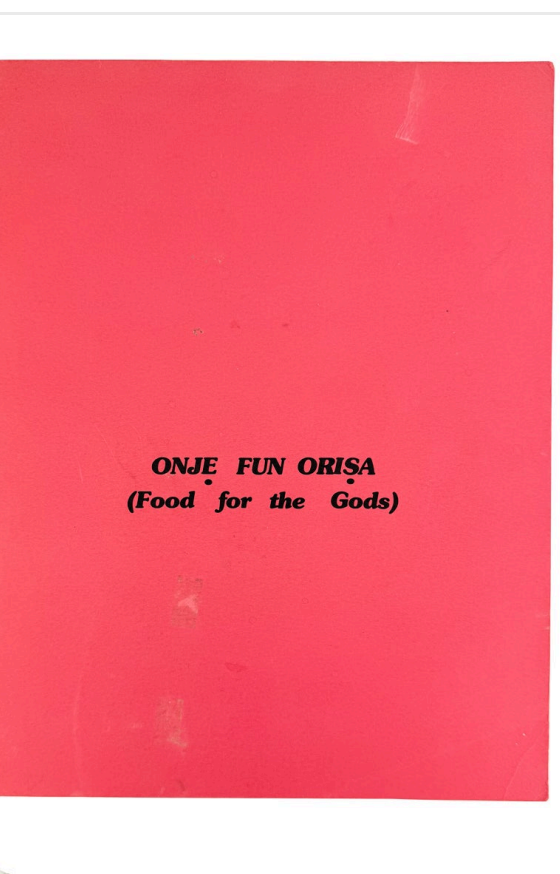
Sacramento, CA: Folks Publications, 1981. Second (1984) Printing. Oblong octavo (14x21.5cm.); publisher's tan pictorial card wrappers; [2],78pp.; illus. throughout. A Near Fine example. Inscribed and signed by Nelson on title page.

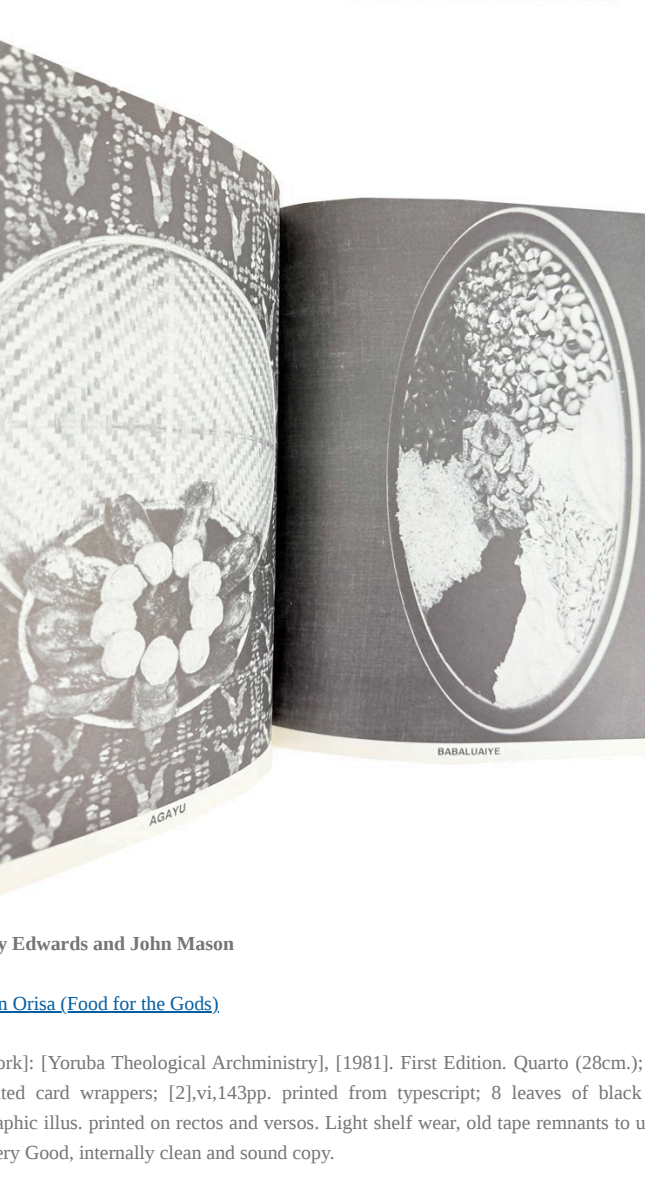
Lively publication "Endorsed by the California Folk Arts Association" by the Kentucky-born author based on interviews of tenant farmers, most of them "black men...born and reared in Tennessee and Arkansas. Their ages range from 84 to 93 years." Helpfully Nelson provides the names and dates of birth of all her collaborators, including Hestella Holmes Byrd (1898-1980), who "sometimes picked 250 pounds [of cotton] a day"; and Jessie Smith (dates unknown), who "did not like to work the field so he learned to cook and make fine spirits."

Indeed, great emphasis is placed on spirits and fermentation, including a 38-step recipe for Corn Liquor: "Before beginning, find a hideout in the woods near a pond" (p. 14). As Tipton-Martin writes, "I can't get enough of it."

TIPTON-MARTIN, p. 162

Price: $150





10. Gary Edwards and John Mason

Onje Fun Orisa (Food for the Gods)

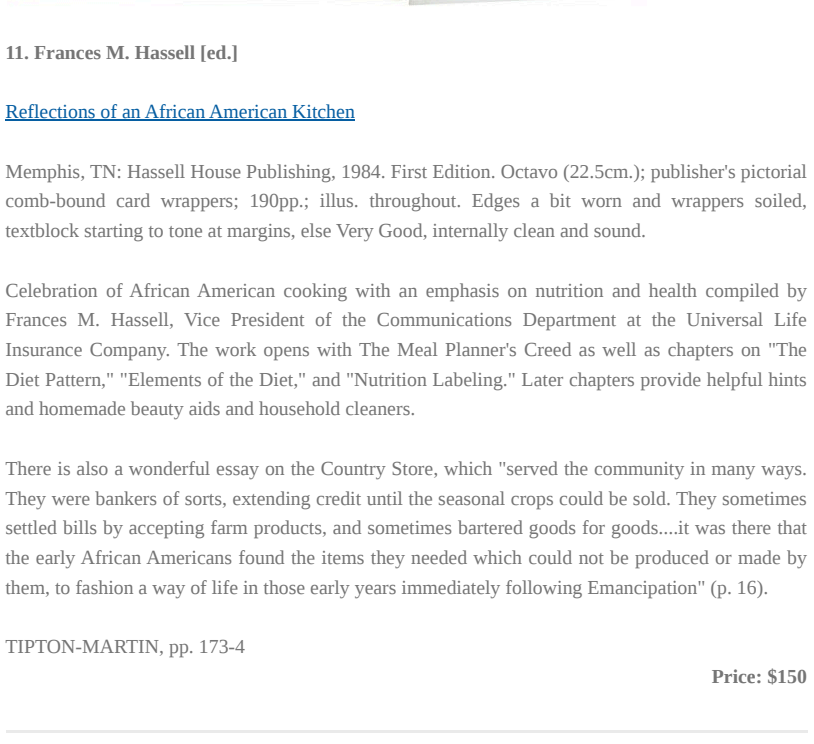
[New York]: [Yoruba Theological Archministry], [1981]. First Edition. Quarto (28cm.); publisher's red printed card wrappers; [2],vi,143pp. printed from typescript; 8 leaves of black and white photographic illus. printed on rectos and versos. Light shelf wear, old tape remnants to upper cover, else a Very Good, internally clean and sound copy.

Fascinating self-published study of the African heritage of Black American cuisine in a search to answer the question, "How were Black people able to hold on to African culture, in spite of the intense cruelty, the brutality, and the cultural oppression of slavery?" (p. 1). The result is a work that is part cookbook, part mythology, part glossary, part bibliography. Nine copies in OCLC as of January, 2025.

TIPTON-MARTIN, p. 163 (yellow wrapper issue)

Price: $200

REFLECTIONS OF AN
AFRICAN AMERICAN
KITCHEN



11. Frances M. Hassell [ed.]

Reflections of an African American Kitchen

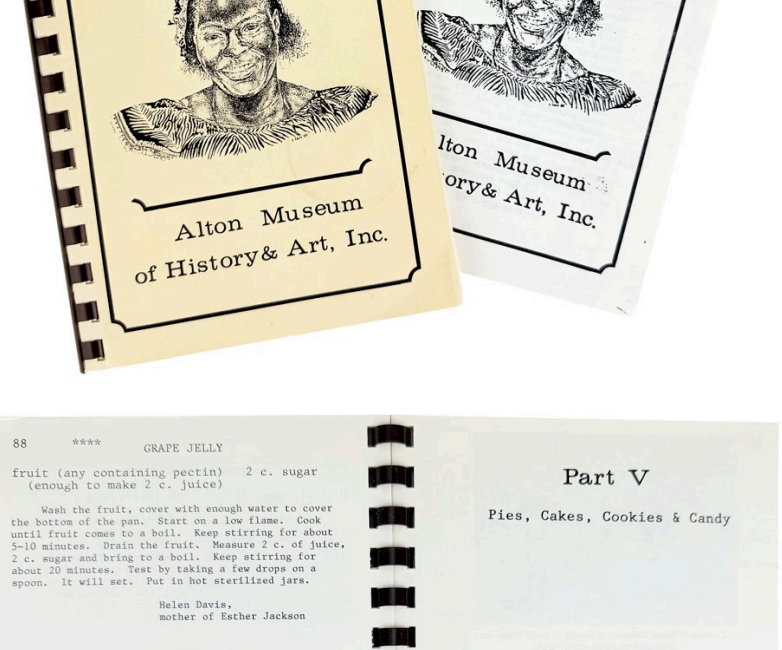
Memphis, TN: Hassell House Publishing, 1984. First Edition. Octavo (22.5cm.); publisher's pictorial comb-bound card wrappers; 190pp.; illus. throughout. Edges a bit worn and wrappers soiled, textblock starting to tone at margins, else Very Good, internally clean and sound.

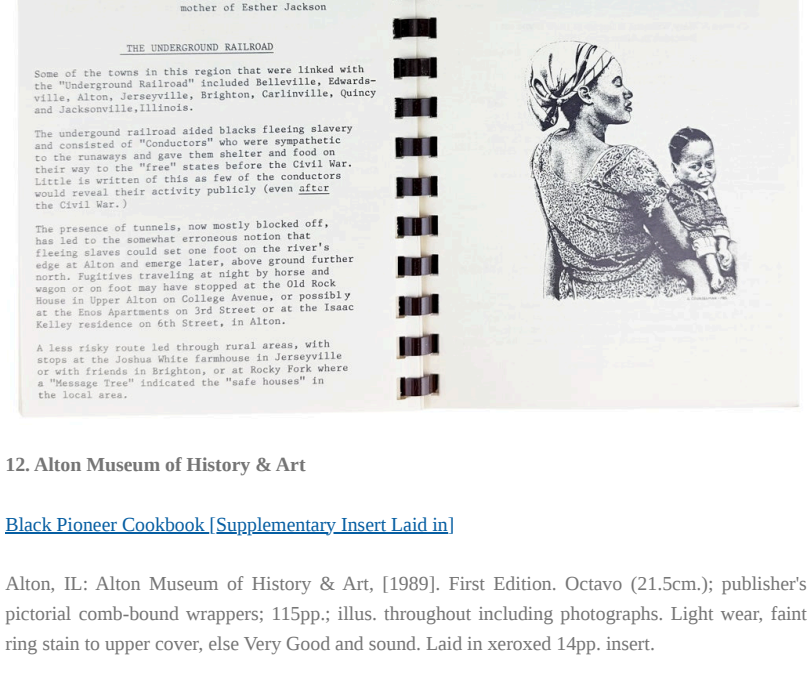
Celebration of African American cooking with an emphasis on nutrition and health compiled by Frances M. Hassell, Vice President of the Communications Department at the Universal Life Insurance Company. The work opens with The Meal Planner's Creed as well as chapters on "The Diet Pattern," "Elements of the Diet," and "Nutrition Labeling." Later chapters provide helpful hints and homemade beauty aids and household cleaners.

There is also a wonderful essay on the Country Store, which "served the community in many ways. They were bankers of sorts, extending credit until the seasonal crops could be sold. They sometimes settled bills by accepting farm products, and sometimes bartered goods for goods....it was there that the early African Americans found the items they needed which could not be produced or made by them, to fashion a way of life in those early years immediately following Emancipation" (p. 16).

TIPTON-MARTIN, pp. 173-4

Price: $150





88 **** GRAPE JELLY

fruit (any containing pectin) (enough to make 2 c. juice) 2 c. sugar

Wash the fruit, cover with enough water to cover the bottom of the pan. Start on a low flame. Cook until fruit comes to a boil. Keep stirring for about 5-10 minutes. Drain the fruit. Measure 2 c. of juice, 2 c. sugar and bring to a boil. Keep stirring for about 20 minutes. Test by taking a few drops on a spoon. It will set. Put in hot sterilized jars.

Helen Davis,
mother of Esther Jackson

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Some of the towns in this region that were linked with the "Underground Railroad" included Belleville, Edwardsville, Alton, Jerseyville, Brighton, Carlinville, Quincy and Jacksonville, Illinois.

The undergound railroad aided blacks fleeing slavery and consisted of "Conductors" who were sympathetic to the runaways and gave them shelter and food on their way to the "free" states before the Civil War. Little is written of this as few of the conductors would reveal their activity publicly (even after the Civil War.)

The presence of tunnels, now mostly blocked off, has led to the somewhat erroneous notion that fleeing slaves could set one foot on the river's edge at Alton and emerge later, above ground further north. Fugitives traveling at night by horse and wagon or on foot may have stopped at the Old Rock House in Upper Alton on College Avenue, or possibly at the Enos Apartments on 3rd Street or at the Isaac Kelley residence on 6th Street, in Alton.

A less risky route led through rural areas, with stops at the Joshua White farmhouse in Jerseyville or with friends in Brighton, or at Rocky Fork where a "Message Tree" indicated the "safe houses" in the local area.

Part V

Pies, Cakes, Cookies & Candy

12. Alton Museum of History & Art

Black Pioneer Cookbook [Supplementary Insert Laid in]

Alton, IL: Alton Museum of History & Art, [1989]. First Edition. Octavo (21.5cm.); publisher's pictorial comb-bound wrappers; 115pp.; illus. throughout including photographs. Light wear, faint ring stain to upper cover, else Very Good and sound. Laid in xeroxed 14pp. insert.

Gift shop community cookbook sold out of the Alton Museum "dedicated to preserving Illinois' black past." Alongside classic recipes, basic cooking lessons, and household hints, are pieces of local history, landmarks, and biographies of the community's notable members, adorned with grainy reproductions of photographs and old documents such as a plat book map of the Rocky Fork landowners of 1873, or a line drawing of Shurtleff College. Of special interest is the insert, which includes recipes hailing directly from Africa: Kusta, African-style shish kabob, Sudanese egg custard.

Four copies in OCLC as of January, 2025, at Alabama, Southern Illinois, Harvard, and the Missouri Historical Society.

TIPTON-MARTIN, p. 207

Price: $250

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