

# Dining on words: manuscript recipe books, culinary change and elite food culture in Ireland, 1660-1830

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MADELINE SHANAHAN

FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ON, FOOD AND FOOD CULTURE IN IRELAND UNDERWENT a series of profound changes. The medieval diet, based on the staples of beef, dairy and grain, was transformed as new food stuffs from around the British Empire were introduced. These included potatoes, a new range of fruits and vegetables, and expensive commodities such as tea, coffee and chocolate.<sup>1</sup> By the eighteenth century, the upper classes in Ireland, who benefited directly from this new range of ingredients, also enjoyed a new style of cookery, influenced by published authors from Britain and France and an increasingly wide range of techniques and utensils. Indeed, the change to food culture was so pronounced that the elite classes began to dine in a new fashion. They left the communal area of the medieval hall, with its limited range of eating accoutrements, and by the eighteenth century had become firmly entrenched in the more ‘civilised world’ of the Georgian dining room, with its new forms of tableware and a new emphasis on manners.<sup>2</sup> While these changes have already been well established by historians and archaeologists working in the area of food and dining, one area of change which remains relatively unexplored in an Irish context is the introduction of recipe books, both in printed and manuscript form. While the presence of recipe books in the kitchen may seem natural today, they were once a new and fashionable genre, intimately connected to social and cultural change.

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, upper-class women in Ireland began to collect and record recipes in household manuscripts. This practice continued steadily throughout the eighteenth century and became increasingly popular towards the close of

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*1 – Cover of NLI MS 5606 by Mary Ponsonby – an example of a more elaborate decorative manuscript (all photos by the author; courtesy National Library of Ireland)*

the Georgian period. As a result of this recipe-writing activity, archives and private collections around the country contain a fascinating array of manuscript recipe books, which are excellent sources for the study of food, cookery and material culture within the Georgian house and kitchen. Focusing on the collection held in the National Library of Ireland (NLI), this paper will argue that manuscript recipe books can be interpreted as part of the suite of cultural changes which took root in Ireland between 1660 and 1830. It will also consider their physicality, how they were made, and how different types were used, in order to seek a more detailed explanation as to why people started writing about food in this period. In this sense, manuscript recipe books are seen as both excellent sources for the study of food and material culture, but also as important artefacts in their own right, whose presence in houses tells us a great deal about the individual authors and the society in which they lived.

Before embarking upon this discussion, a brief note needs to be made regarding the use of the term 'recipe' in this context. Until the late nineteenth century, recipe books were actually known as 'receipt books', so the use of the word 'recipe' here is somewhat anachronistic. The word 'receipt' referred to medical, cookery and confectionary-related instructions. However, given that the word 'receipt' has a very different meaning in a modern context, and to prevent any misunderstanding, the contemporary use of the word, 'recipe', has been adopted. This has been favoured over other options such as 'cookery book' or 'culinary manuscript', terms which are useful, but which refer to food-related 'recipes' more exclusively.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, as most of these Irish manuscripts actually have titles such as 'Receipt books' or some variation of that name, and that is certainly what they were called at the time they were made, the modernised version, 'Recipe book', has been adopted.

## THE ORIGINS OF DOMESTIC MANUSCRIPT RECIPE BOOKS: IRELAND AND BEYOND

**B**ASED ON A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE NLI'S COLLECTION OF BOTH BOUND MANUSCRIPT recipe books and folders of loose papers, the practice of writing and recording recipes appears to have commenced in Irish houses in the mid-seventeenth century. A steady pace of production was then maintained until the 1780s, when writing activity increased markedly. This study located a collection of forty-one manuscript recipe books which were clearly started in the Georgian period or earlier in the NLI's possession alone. It also located a further seven folders of loose pages or 'recipe collections'. Other manuscripts may contain occasional recipes or food-oriented material, but the forty-eight included in the analysis were deemed to all be substantially recipe-related. A brief survey of the Victorian collection of manuscript recipe books and collections held by the NLI showed that recipe writing became even more common and widespread in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

If we compare this pattern with other countries, namely Great Britain, it is clear that the emergence of manuscript recipe books in Irish households was somewhat delayed. The earliest European manuscript recipe books that survive today date to the late-medieval period, as does the earliest English language recipe book, *The Forme of Cury*, written by Richard II's chef in 1390.<sup>4</sup> However, while it is true to say that these medieval manuscripts are the earliest ancestors of the genre in question, in terms of their scope, purpose and authorship they are somewhat different to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century examples we find in Ireland. For example, although many of the medieval manuscripts are anonymous, they all appear to have been written by men, who were usually professional chefs working in royal or noble kitchens.<sup>5</sup> The Irish collection, which is entirely post-medieval, appears to have been almost exclusively authored by women, presumably the mistress of the house in most instances. They also cover a wide range of household management tasks outside the scope of these medieval court cookery manuscripts. In this sense, while these medieval manuscripts may be seen as the precursors of the post-medieval Irish collection, the genre had changed considerably by the time it arrived here.

From the middle of the sixteenth century, women in Europe and Britain also began to actively exchange and share recipes, which were recorded in domestic manuscript books. According to Gilly Lehmann, a scholar who has worked extensively with British examples, medical cures were generally foremost in these sixteenth-century manuscripts, followed by confectionary and cookery recipes. Furthermore, manuscripts which focussed on cookery rather than on medicine, distillation and preservation appear to have been written by women further down the social scale.<sup>6</sup> These sixteenth-century examples can be seen as the earliest form of the manuscript recipe books produced in Ireland from the seventeenth century onwards.

#### AUTHORSHIP OF IRISH MANUSCRIPT RECIPE BOOKS

LIKE THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH MODELS DESCRIBED ABOVE, IRISH MANUSCRIPT recipe books appear to have been primarily written by women from upper-class, if not necessarily aristocratic, backgrounds. The NLI's collection includes manuscripts written by members of aristocratic, gentry and possibly even wealthy middle-class families. The majority of the families who wrote manuscript recipe books in Ireland were members of the Anglo-Irish and Protestant Ascendancy. Although primarily from 'New English' families of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some were written by members of 'Old English' families of Anglo-Norman origin. Notable exceptions to this are the Inchiquin O'Brien's, who were one of the most important Gaelic noble families in Ireland and who left a valuable collection of exquisite manuscripts.

Although most manuscript recipe books were written by women from the upper echelons of society, many contain more than one person's handwriting and they may also list the original 'authors' of individual recipes. These contributors were sometimes from

more diverse backgrounds, and so we also find the imprint of individuals from outside of the elite classes. For example, although they may not have been penned by servants personally, there are numerous instances where their recipes were both included and attributed to them, such as a recipe for 'Sole' by 'Lord Inchiquin's Cook',<sup>7</sup> a recipe entitled 'To make turnip soup by Mr Rigby's famous cook',<sup>8</sup> another attributed to the cook from Dublin Castle,<sup>9</sup> and a recipe entitled 'A Receipt for Walnut Catsup got by [Grandmother] from Mrs Costello My Uncle Desart's Housekeeper'.<sup>10</sup>

The question of men's input into these manuscripts is even more fascinating. None of the forty-one bound recipe books were found to have been clearly authored by a man. Of the manuscripts from this period which provide authorship information, only women's names are given, and it is fair to say that, based on this pattern, they can be interpreted as objects predominantly associated with women. However, while men may only rarely, or perhaps never, have authored these manuscripts personally, male friends and relations certainly had an input into them. Sometimes they appear to have been shared domestic manuscripts, reflecting the different interests of the wider family and its various members; for example, men and women within a house may have shared a book, or they may have used it at different times for different purposes. Certain manuscripts contain topics outside the scope of the average recipe book, such as estate and agricultural accounts, reports on scientific experiments, and even information on engineering.<sup>11</sup> The inclusion of such subjects is very rare – indeed there are only three manuscripts which contain notable quantities of such material – but where they appear, they may suggest male contribution to at least part of the manuscript. Furthermore, recipes and cures attributed to men are also included on a regular basis. Doctors are frequently listed as the sources for numerous medical 'prescriptions', and clergymen sometimes had their cures and related recipes included too.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the cooks whose recipes are recorded (noted above) may also have been male in some instances. That said, outside of the culinary, medical or clerical professions, men's contributions usually relate to the preparation of alcoholic beverages, such as a recipe for white currant wine attributed to the 'Chief book keeper at the Bank of Ireland', and Lord Pembroke's recipe for port.<sup>13</sup> This pattern is fascinating, because it corresponds to the long-acknowledged gendered distinction between the 'male' dining room, and its association with the consumption of alcohol, and the 'feminine' domain of the drawing room, and its association with tea.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it appears that this engenderment of alcohol carried through to male contributions to manuscript recipe books. In other words, it was acceptable for a man to contribute to this very 'feminine' genre provided that it was about the 'masculine' subject of alcohol.

The significance of recipe attribution goes beyond the subject of gender and gives us a valuable insight into the social networks of the authors. Numerous recipes are credited as being by various friends or family members of the authors of manuscripts. For example, we frequently see recipes with titles such as 'Mrs Gaffney's method of making plumb cake',<sup>15</sup> or 'To make excellent bread Mrs Mason'.<sup>16</sup> Although the identity of many of these women remains largely unknown, there are instances where we are provided with

information about particular individuals. The first instance is when the person who donated a recipe had a title, such as a recipe for ‘A Fine Ginger Bread Dutches [*sic*] of Buckingham’ from the Inchiquin papers.<sup>17</sup> This reference to the Duchess of Buckingham confirms the high status of this family and their connections, and provides us with an understanding of the social networks of the authors. The frequent practice of attributing recipes to titled friends and family members also stems from the role of these manuscript recipe books within the household. These objects symbolised the mistress’ domestic prowess and her literacy, but their value as a prestige item was enhanced further when it was used as a register to record the illustrious connections of the families through attribution.<sup>18</sup>

Another instance in which we are given more information about the identity of the individual recipe donors is when their personal relationship to the author is described. Mothers, grandmothers, cousins, sisters and aunts are the most frequently cited relations. The book of a Mrs A.W. Baker frequently includes recipes by ‘My Grandmother’; one is specifically described as being ‘Recommended in my Grandmother’s book’.<sup>19</sup> This provides information about how recipes were circulated through manuscripts within a family and through generations. In fact, several manuscripts were found to have been used for generations within a family, and some were in use for over a century. Thus, both the individual recipes and the manuscripts themselves became cherished family heirlooms, handed down from one generation to the next.

Finally, recipes are sometimes attributed to various published authors. Famous printed works and recipes found in magazines and newspapers are often cited; the eighteenth-century manuscript by Jane Burton, for example, attributes numerous recipes to food writers such as William Ellis, Hannah Glasse and Mary Eales.<sup>20</sup> References such as these demonstrate that the authors were reading and engaging with published sources and circulating these recipes in their own manuscripts, a process that was both continual and evolving.

The influence of popular printed recipe books, or cookery books, as the printed version is more commonly known, should not be underestimated.<sup>21</sup> Although not uniquely English – indeed French authors led the field for much of the early modern period – it is true to say that the English developed a particular love of the genre. New cookery books were more plentiful in England than in France in the sixteenth century, and became increasingly popular over the following centuries.<sup>22</sup> According to Gilly Lehmann, two clear types developed. The first was concerned with revealing the ‘secrets’ of noble households and focussed on medical remedies, confectionary, and serving meals in courtly circles. The second, now recognised as being distinctively English, was concerned with household management. These household management books covered a broad range of topics, including cookery, candying, conserving and preserving recipes, medical cures, and dairying and brewing instructions, and have a great deal in common with the manuscript recipe books which are the subject of this article.<sup>23</sup>

This ‘household management’ style of cookery book became enormously popular in eighteenth-century Britain, and, unlike in France, was a genre dominated by women. The influence of authors such as Hannah Glasse, and the ‘plain’ British fare they pro-

moted, was also keenly felt in Irish kitchens, based on the contents of manuscript recipe books from this period. The popularity of these published works kept pace with the rise of the middle classes during the eighteenth century and their aspirations towards lives of leisure. Increasingly, the education of young women focussed on ‘accomplishments’ in the form of music, dancing and drawing, rather than on the practical day-to-day skills of housewifery.<sup>24</sup> By the late eighteenth century, this ‘education in accomplishments’ had stripped away knowledge of a practical nature, and women needed household manuals to lay tables, manage the home and cure everyday ailments. Servants, who often lacked such skills themselves, needed guidance and training, which was increasingly provided by printed books rather than by the mistress of the house herself. Gilly Lehmann argues that this change was felt in different areas of Britain to varying degrees, and was most keenly felt in the south of England. In Scotland and the north of England, an older style of female education lingered. Gentry girls there were still sent to cookery schools by the end of the eighteenth century, and they were expected to be able to prepare food at home.<sup>25</sup> Similar research on gendered education in Ireland would be hugely beneficial in order to better understand the experiences and lives of Irish women in this period.

#### MANUSCRIPT RECIPE BOOKS AS OBJECTS: FORM, FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

FULFILLING A VARIETY OF FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE HOME, THE PHYSICAL FORM AND materials used to create manuscript recipe books varied from item to item throughout the period under review. The effort and expense which went into the production of some examples is clear from their elegant bindings and calligraphy, while others reveal the stresses and strains of daily life in the kitchen. These physical clues tell us much about why they were made and how they were used. While the majority have plain vellum, leather or cardboard covers, others, such as that belonging to Mary Ponsonby (Plate 1), have beautifully decorated or embossed covers, which suggests that they were highly treasured objects for the women who kept them. On the other hand, some manuscripts were clearly working documents with simple bindings and the signs of daily wear from the kitchen, such as splashes and stains, torn pages and notes in the margins. Other examples, more accurately described as ‘recipe collections’, are simple folders of loose, unbound pages, letters and newspaper clippings which accrued in a house over time. These demonstrate other types of recipe-writing activity, and such collections may sometimes have been the genesis of later bound manuscripts.

The manuscripts also display varying degrees of organisation. Some appear to be haphazard documents which grew ‘organically’ over years in a house, while others were more obviously planned and organised. Other manuscripts appear to be what are known as ‘fair copies’ of messy originals. These may have been retranscribed by the original compiler, or alternatively they may have been written out by a scribe.<sup>26</sup> A ‘fair copy’ may

have been made for a number of reasons, but studies in Britain and America have shown that they were sometimes made as part of a new bride's dowry.<sup>27</sup> Organisational features like indices and contents lists started to be added to Irish manuscripts in the eighteenth century and became more common in the nineteenth century. This is one of the most obvious patterns of change identifiable across the collection. The growing level of organisation may represent evidence of the influence of print culture and published books from Britain, where such features were becoming the norm. However, while eighteenth-century published cookery books commonly had contents and/or indices to assist in the access of information, such features were not common in Irish manuscripts until the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

Another organisational feature of particular importance in terms of understanding how and why a document was made is the book 'section' or 'category'. In most of the manuscripts, various types of recipes and other types of information such as medical cures are randomly interspersed. There appears to have been little thought given to the structure of the book as a whole. This most likely reflects the tendency of a household manuscript to grow over time, rendering such systems redundant. However, while the vast majority of Irish manuscript recipe books obey little structure, there are a few notable exceptions. A nineteenth-century book compiled by Anna Irvine of Rosebank has titled sections, or 'chapters', dealing with recipes for 'Puddings', 'Bread', 'Salads', 'Wines and Liqueurs' and, finally, 'Preserves'. However, despite the ordered intention here, the structure was not strictly obeyed, and recipes were added at random in the later pages of the volume.<sup>29</sup> This may demonstrate the changing attitude towards the manuscript over time: what was at first a planned volume soon became an 'organic' notebook.

A final feature which can tell us a great deal about how a book was seen and valued by its owners is the title page. While most manuscripts launch directly into the recipes with no title page at all, others have a simple heading like 'Receipts', which is sometimes accompanied by a date and/or a name.<sup>30</sup> In a few instances, such as the stunning manuscript from the Inchiquin papers, a more elaborate title page was designed (Plate 2). This book was clearly a highly prized item, cherished by at least three, and possibly four generations of women within the family. In fact, the title page appears to have been added by Mary O'Brien (née Hickman), who was probably the second owner of the book, as a tribute to her mother-in-law, Catherine O'Brien (née Keightley). Elaborate title pages can be seen as evidence of the value manuscripts held, both to the women who created them and those who became their custodians.

## THE CONTENTS OF IRISH MANUSCRIPT RECIPE BOOKS

**S**URELY THE MOST FASCINATING ELEMENT OF THE MANUSCRIPT RECIPE BOOKS IS THEIR contents, which can tell us a great deal about daily life, food and dining in the Restoration and Georgian house. In addition to food-related recipes, they almost always contain other types of information useful to the running of a house, such as med-





ical cures and prescriptions, beauty and grooming advice, housekeeping and gardening instructions, records of servant's duties, household and estate accounts, and meal and table plans.<sup>31</sup> The use of recipe books to record such a wide variety of topics says much about the way they were viewed by the individuals who wrote and compiled them. They were seen as a flexible and fluid genre, which could adapt to suit the needs of an author at a given point in time, and were therefore very personal objects.

Generally, it is fair to say that the cookery recipes contained within the manuscripts of the NLI's collection reflect the close cultural connection between the authors of these books and the British, or, more specifically, the English upper classes. The food, tastes and fashions are remarkably similar to those represented in contemporary English manuscript and published cookery books, consisting of a basic suite of preserves, pickles and sweet and savoury dishes. Fashionable French dishes and terms were included as well, but this was also the case in Britain at the time, an issue which will be returned to in more detail later. With some rare exceptions such as 'Irish Stew' and 'Cork Butter',<sup>32</sup> very few recipes may be described as particularly 'Irish'. This lack of distinctively 'Irish' recipes says much about how rarefied the culinary culture of this section of society was. The dishes represented within these texts were often for 'every day', but they were by no means for 'every man'. Furthermore, the commonalities with the type of recipes represented in English manuscript and printed recipe books suggests, once again, that manuscript authors from within Ireland had access to and were referencing English texts.

An analysis of recipe types recorded in the Irish manuscripts reveals that sweet dishes were the most common category; a variety of cakes, puddings, syllabubs, possets, blanchmange, biscuits ('biskets'), macarons and confectionary are all frequently occurring recipes for the period under review (Plate 3). The high representation of sweet recipes is interesting given that the English were noted for their love and high consumption of sugar. The close cultural connection between the authors of these manuscripts and the English upper classes can be demonstrated by shared tastes and shared luxury commodities.

After sweet dishes, the next most common category of recipe is for those associated with food preservation. Fruit and vegetables could be preserved as jams, conserves, chutneys, pickles, and even candies and powders. Meat and fish were salted, smoked, potted and pickled. The high frequency of recipes associated with food preservation demonstrates the importance of this task in the Georgian kitchen. The focus on food preservation also provides an important perspective on the economic concerns of even relatively wealthy households. In stark contrast to the stereotypical image of the wasteful absentee landlord, a great deal of time in Georgian kitchens was clearly devoted to provisioning and the prevention of waste. The image rendered is not one of profligacy, but of parsimony.

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2 – Title page from NLI MS 14786, *Inchiquin Papers*  
(courtesy National Library of Ireland)

## To dye Gloves Purple

Take one ounce of fresh chips of Logwood put it into a pint of water and let it simmer on a low fire untill a fourth part is consumed then Strain it & put the Juice of a large Nutmeg of Rook allam into it & let it simmer on the fire untill its a deep Purple dont dip the gloves into it but rub it on with a Brush or sponge. See the gloves at the top & fingers for fear of the getting the insides

~~To make Cardus liq wine~~

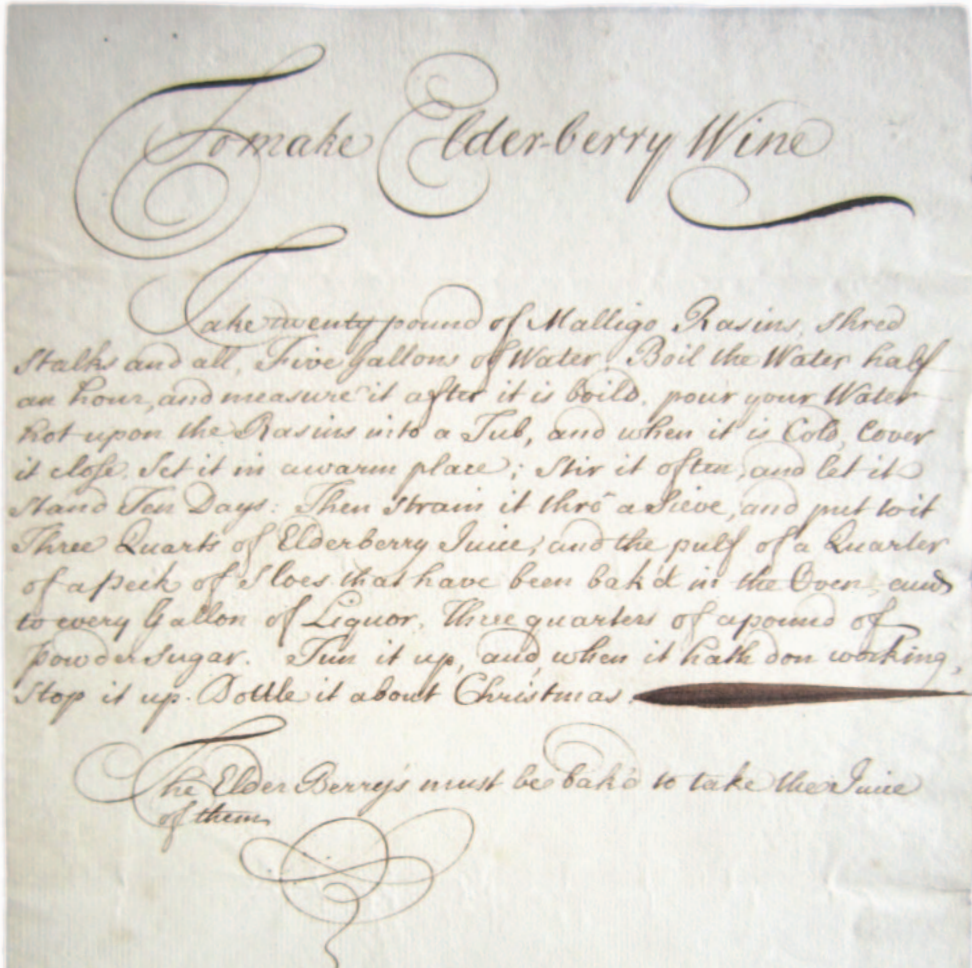
~~Take 20 grains of yellow of wax &~~

## To Preserve Cordons.

When the Cordons are graced let them each lay there on a clean cloth all night & spread. then give them 2 or 3 Coats on at thin & yrup of fine sugar.

## To make a Carraway Cake

Dry a pound of flower & a pound of sugar sift red y<sup>e</sup> Carraway Seeds very Clean great a nutmeg & mix them together then work with your hands a pound of fresh butter & when its come to a froath mix with it 18 yolks of Eggs well beaten by themselves with a little rose water. mix them very well with the flower by degrees till all is in. then butter the pan & flower & when you have beat it & good while after all is mixed put it into the pan bake it on a moderate hot oven two hours & half will bake it.



4 – A recipe for elderberry wine from NLI MS 41603/3, a folder of papers from the collection of the Smythe family of Barbavilla, county Westmeath (courtesy National Library of Ireland)

opposite 3 – A sample page, which includes a cake recipe, from NLI MS 34953 by Miss (or Mrs) Barnewall, late eighteenth to early nineteenth century (courtesy NLI)

The third most frequently occurring category of recipe is for savoury dishes. These are based on a range of vegetables, most of which would have been grown on the estates, and on a wide variety of different meats and fish. As might be expected, based on the elite status of the authors, game meats such as venison make regular appearances. Interestingly, the tables of the upper classes in Ireland had become famous for their abundance of meat by the eighteenth century, and these manuscripts certainly demonstrate that a vast array of dishes was on offer.<sup>33</sup> They include a variety of soups, broths, ‘ragoos’, ‘fricassees’, forced meat, ‘cullis’, roasts, puddings and pies. Amongst the most important

of these in terms of culinary history are the ‘fricassee’, ‘ragoo’ and ‘cullis’, which show a connection to French courtly food fashions. These dishes were some of the hallmarks of French cuisine, although they had been absorbed into the British culinary canon and adapted by English food writers by the eighteenth century.<sup>34</sup>

Other categories of recipes represented include alcohol and other beverages (Plate 4), bread, dairying and substitutes. As there is not room to consider all of these categories at length, that of substitutes alone – rarer than the others but contextually fascinating – will be discussed here. The category of ‘substitutes’ includes imitation ingredients which were used to replicate expensive luxuries such as tea, coffee and chocolate. These recipes are not only curious, but they provide interesting information on the economy of individual households at different points in time. The eighteenth-century manuscript recipe book owned by Jane Burton, described above, records the advice of several published authors regarding some of these most important new ingredients, including recipes for ‘Artificial chocolate Glass’ (by Hannah Glasse) and ‘Artificial Tea’. A recipe for ‘Artificial Coffee’ is particularly interesting. Its instructions – ‘Bake a piece of bread in an oven to a burnt crust afterwards scrape it a powder, and it will have a taste very near coffee’ – indicates a lack of familiarity with the taste of coffee, reminding us of its novelty and expense in an eighteenth-century provincial context.<sup>35</sup> These recipes, in particular, suggest how an individual might satisfy the demands of class and fashion – providing the hot drinks expected in genteel formal gatherings – while simultaneously maintaining one’s household budget.<sup>36</sup> The consumption of these beverages in her house in county Carlow, far from the hub of Dublin, let alone London, also demonstrates that Jane Burton’s family were part of the wider British Atlantic world. In a relatively short space of time, Ireland would become one of the biggest consumers of tea and chocolate, but here we are given a rare insight into how even upper-class households might struggle with the competing pressures of household economy on the one hand, and class and consumer anxiety on the other. By learning how to use these goods through published authors, and recirculating recipes in manuscript form, these modern commodities were incorporated into daily life and social ritual.

The use and imitation of expensive new commodities raises an important point regarding one of the most significant patterns of change observed across the entire collection of recipe manuscripts. Over the course of the eighteenth century, but particularly in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the manuscripts demonstrate an increasingly diverse range of recipes, with culinary influences from the far reaches of the expanding British Empire, namely India and the Caribbean. While dishes like ‘Peppers pot a West Indian dish’,<sup>37</sup> and references to curry, ‘Indian pickles’ and mulligatawny are occasionally found in eighteenth-century manuscripts, such ‘exotica’ became more commonplace by the nineteenth century. The growing consumption of these types of dishes, together with commodities such as tea, coffee, chocolate, sugar and spices, reflects the growing complexity of trade networks, the influence of the Empire at the dining table, and the changing palates of diners.<sup>38</sup>

## CONCLUSION

THE PRACTICE OF COLLECTING RECIPES AND RECORDING THEM IN MANUSCRIPTS, BE they folders of rough notes or more elaborately bound affairs, emerged in Ireland in the mid-seventeenth century and grew in popularity over the following two centuries. Although clearly derived from medieval and European precedents, the manuscript recipe books from Irish households are most strongly connected to post-medieval Britain. If we also take into consideration the fact that the families who produced them in Ireland were typically members of the Protestant Ascendancy, the connection between recipe manuscript culture and Britain becomes more apparent. Furthermore, the cuisine described in these manuscripts is broadly reflective of the food consumed by the upper classes in Britain at this time, recording the same ‘canon’ of dishes, the same modified influences from French courtly cuisine, and the growing impact of imported luxury commodities. In this sense then, manuscript recipe books can be seen as part of the suite of cultural elements which took root in Ireland under British influence.

This paper has outlined just some of the key findings of the analysis of the NLI’s collection of manuscript recipe books and collections. Primarily authored by women from elite backgrounds, they also bear the imprint of both servants and men. Their physical form and organisation provides evidence for how they were made and how they were used, either as status or heirloom objects or as working cookery manuals. The culinary recipes contained within these Irish manuscripts reflect the growing impact of the British Empire and the influence of a burgeoning print industry with its increasingly popular published food writers.

Finally, while these manuscripts are incredibly detailed sources for the study of food history, ultimately it is their sudden appearance and proliferation from the mid-seventeenth century which is perhaps most important. As outlined at the beginning of this paper, food and food culture underwent an unprecedented level of change in Ireland over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the introduction of recipe writing must be interpreted as part of this change. In a relatively short space of time, and at the precise moment when this wave of culinary change began to take hold, people started to write and exchange recipes with increasing fervour. This desire to write about cookery demonstrates a profound shift in terms of people’s attitude to food. Firstly, it demonstrates their desire to adopt the new styles, techniques and foodstuffs, many of which would have been unfamiliar. Recipe manuals, both in printed and manuscript form, were one way in which they learned to grapple with and embrace change. Secondly, recipe manuscripts demonstrate a heightened interest in consumption and an increasing importance placed upon what one ate. They are therefore both excellent sources of information about food preparation and consumption, and important artefacts demonstrating a dramatic change in the culinary culture in Ireland.

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## ENDNOTES

The following abbreviation is used:

NLI National Library of Ireland

- <sup>1</sup> These changes are discussed in Louis Cullen, *The Emergence of Modern Ireland 1600-1900* (London, 1981) ch. 7; Regina Sexton, *Little History of Irish Food* (Dublin, 1998); L.A. Clarkson and E. Margaret Crawford, *Feast and Famine: food and nutrition in Ireland 1500-1920* (Oxford, 2001).
- <sup>2</sup> Changing dining habits and the proliferation of tableware are discussed in James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: an archaeology of early American life* (New York, 1977); Matthew Johnson, *The Archaeology of Capitalism* (Oxford, 1996) 155-78; Toby Barnard, *Making the Grand Figure: lives and possessions in Ireland, 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004) 128-30; Katherine Cahill, *Mrs. Delany’s menus, medicines and manners* (Dublin, 2005) 43-96.
- <sup>3</sup> Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire and Dorothy Cashman, ‘Irish Culinary manuscripts and printed cookbooks: A discussion’, *Petits Propos Culinaires*, 94, 2011, 81-101.
- <sup>4</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: eating and taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the present* (Urbana and Chicago, 1996) 49-50.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 65.
- <sup>6</sup> Gilly Lehmann, *The British Housewife: cookery books, cooking and society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Devon, 2003) 73.
- <sup>7</sup> NLI, MS 14786, Inchiquin Papers, Collection of domestic recipes and medical prescriptions, by members of the Inchiquin O’Brien family, including Catherine O’Brien (née Keightley), Mary O’Brien (née Hickman), and possibly Lady Frances Keightley (née Hyde), started mid- to late-seventeenth century.
- <sup>8</sup> NLI, MS 5606, Mary Ponsonby’s recipe book, early to mid-nineteenth century.
- <sup>9</sup> NLI, MS 41603/3, Papers of the Smythe family of Barbavilla, county Westmeath, a folder of papers including a number of recipes.
- <sup>10</sup> NLI, MS 34952, Mrs A.W. Baker Book Vol. 1st, Ballytobin, county Kilkenny, started in 1810. See also Monica Nevin, ‘A County Kilkenny Georgian Household Notebook’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 109, 1979, 5-19.
- <sup>11</sup> For example, NLI, MS 19702 ii, a notebook containing recipes for cooking and medicines, by the Blake family of Ballyglunin, county Galway, early nineteenth century. This also contains diagrams for a tunnel being built under the Thames, and other material, which suggests that a male contributor was involved.
- <sup>12</sup> Examples of recipes attributed to clergymen appear in NLI, MS 13603, from the collection of Maurice Lenihan Esq., a collection of domestic recipes and medical prescriptions, author unknown, mid-eighteenth century. Also, NLI, O’Hara Papers, MS 36375/1, assorted recipes, including one for making

- 'champaign wine', late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century.
- <sup>13</sup> NLI, MS 42105, Receipt Book, author unknown, started 1811.
- <sup>14</sup> Karen Harvey, 'Barbarity in a Teacup? Punch, Domesticity and Gender in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Design History*, 21, no.3, 2008, 205-21.
- <sup>15</sup> NLI, MS 5102, Cookery recipes, household accounts and diary of Mary Mathew, mid- to late-eighteenth century.
- <sup>16</sup> NLI, MS 5606, Mary Ponsonby's recipe book, early to mid-nineteenth century.
- <sup>17</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Papers, MS 14786, Collection of domestic recipes and medical prescriptions, by members of the Inchiquin O'Brien family.
- <sup>18</sup> Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks they Wrote* (New York, 2002) 8.
- <sup>19</sup> NLI, MS 34952, Mrs A.W. Baker Book Vol. 1st Ballytobin, county Kilkenny, started in 1810.
- <sup>20</sup> NLI, MS 19729, Curious Receipts Vol. 1st, by Jane Burton, probably from county Carlow, eighteenth century.
- <sup>21</sup> For a further discussion on the importance and influence of printed works on food culture in Georgian Ireland, see Alison Fitzgerald, 'Taste in high life: dining in the Dublin town house', in Christine Casey (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Dublin Town House: form, function and finance* (Dublin, 2010) 120-27.
- <sup>22</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 83.
- <sup>23</sup> Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, 38-57
- <sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 66.
- <sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 156.
- <sup>26</sup> Sandra Sherman "'The Whole Art and Mystery of Cooking": what cookbooks taught readers in the eighteenth century', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 28, no. 1, 2004, 115-35: 120.
- <sup>27</sup> Lehmann, *The British Housewife*, 169.
- <sup>28</sup> Barbara Wheaton, 'Finding Real Life in Cookbooks: the adventures of a culinary historian', *Humanities Research Group*, 7, 1998, 2-15: 12.
- <sup>29</sup> NLI, MS 42009, Receipt book, Anna Irvine of Rosebank, in use from early to late nineteenth century.
- <sup>30</sup> For example, *ibid.*, and NLI, MS 34932/1, Receipts 1823, by member(s) of the Pope family of county Waterford.
- <sup>31</sup> For a detailed discussion of table plans from a Georgian Irish house, see Fitzgerald, 'Taste in high life'.
- <sup>32</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Papers, MS 14786, Collection of domestic recipes and medical prescriptions, by members of the Inchiquin O'Brien family.
- <sup>33</sup> Nuala Cullen, 'Women and the preparation of food in eighteenth-century Ireland', in Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd (eds), *Women in Early Modern Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1992) 267.
- <sup>34</sup> The complex subject of French culinary influence in Ireland is discussed in Fitzgerald, 'Taste in high life'.
- <sup>35</sup> NLI, MS 19729, 'Curious Receipts Vol. 1st', by Jane Burton, probably from county Carlow, eighteenth century.
- <sup>36</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the importance of tea and coffee in the eighteenth century, see Cahill, *Mrs Delany's menus, medicines and manners*, 46-49; Harvey, 'Barbarity in a Teacup?'.
- <sup>37</sup> NLI, MS 9929, Leitrim Papers, Recipe book from the late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century.
- <sup>38</sup> Susan Zlotnick, 'Domesticating Imperialism: Curry and Cookbooks in Victorian England', *Frontiers: a journal of women studies*, 16, no. 2/3, 1996, 51-68.