



Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry: Missouri's Cookbook Heritage

Carol Fisher, John C. Fisher

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When is a cookbook more than just a cookbook? When it's a gateway to our culinary heritage. For well over a hundred years, Missouri's cookbooks have helped readers serve up tasty dishes to the state's tables, but these publications also document the evolution of our kitchens and households.

Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry, a treasure trove of anecdotes and nuggets of historical information about cookery in the Show-Me State, draws from more than 150 publications to reveal Missouri's cookbook heritage and to deliver a generous sampling of recipes. Carol Fisher and John Fisher look back to manuscript cookbooks from 1821 St. Louis, then progress through the years and around Missouri before arriving at today's online recipes. Along the way, they dish out servings of kitchen medicine, household hints, and cookbook literature gleaned from the state's cache of culinary gems.

From handwritten family recipe collections and mimeographed publications to glossy color editions, the texts the Fishers have obtained from libraries and historical societies as well as their own extensive cookbook collection include such curiosities as the *Julia Clark Household Memoranda Book* from the William Clark papers, an 1880 production by the Ladies of St. Louis called *My Mother's Cookbook*, Mary Foote Henderson's *Practical Cooking and Dinner Giving*, and *Albert E. Brumley's All-Day Singin' and Dinner on the Ground*. They tell how various ethnic communities raised money by creating cookbooks, how the state's Beef Council and Pork Association put recipes on the Internet, and how restaurants like the Blue Owl in Kimmswick and Stephenson's Apple Farm Restaurant near Kansas City enhanced their reputations with their own cookbooks. Festival cookbooks, company cookbooks, even cookbooks tied to world events—they're all here in one delightful book.

In this vastly entertaining review, readers will learn where to find recipes for dandelion wine, mock turtle soup (requiring a large calf's head split open by the butcher), and vinegar pie—as well as the curative properties of potato water, tips for raising chickens in the basement, and even “how to cook a husband.” An extensive bibliography includes information to help readers track down the books discussed and also those on their own wish lists.

Pot Roast, Politics, and Ants in the Pantry: Missouri's Cookbook Heritage shows how, instead of being just collections of recipes, cookbooks provide history lessons, document changing food ways, and demonstrate the cultural diversity of the state. From Julia Clark's simple frontier recipes for puddings and preserves to Irma Rombauer's encyclopedic *Joy of Cooking*—originally self-published in Missouri—Carol Fisher and John Fisher have laid out a smorgasbord of reading pleasure for cookbook collectors, nostalgia buffs, and gourmands alike.

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