

CORRUPTING COOKS:  
DOMESTIC SERVICE AND EXPERTISE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

by

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A ceux qui y ont regardé avec dégoût certains traits historiques, la cuisine, les modes, etc. qu'ils ont oublié combien ces matières ont engendré d'ouvrages d'erudition; que le plus succinct de nos articles en ce genre épargnera peut-être à nos descendants des années de recherches et des volumes de dissertations.

Denis Diderot, "Encyclopédie"

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## List of Abbreviations

### Abbreviation

AN	Archives nationales de France
AP	Archives personnelles et familiales
ARS	Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal
BHVP	Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
EST	BNF Département des estampes et de la photographie
NAF	BNF Manuscrits occidentaux - nouvelles acquisitions françaises
MC	Minutier central des notaires de Paris
LOC	Library of Congress
NYPL	New York Public Library

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Les Italiens qui peignent agréablement leurs idées, appellent une Préface *la sauce d'un Livre*.

François Marin, *La Suite des Dons de Comus*

Beginning in the 1730s, cooks in France began to promote a new style of cooking, *la cuisine moderne*, which they claimed would revolutionize dining. Based on the principles of chemistry and borrowing liberally from medical theory, *la cuisine moderne* promised to simplify and rationalize the practices of its predecessor, now dubbed *la cuisine ancienne*. But the proponents and practitioners of *la cuisine moderne* were neither doctors nor scientists: instead nearly all cooks labored as domestic servants. Including both women and men among their ranks, these cooks lacked a guild or any other kind of formal training or certifying organization. Nonetheless, they set about fashioning print-based markets for both their services and for the new knowledge of the kitchen that they claimed to exercise.

Despite the audacity of this project, most historians have chosen to ignore cooks, focusing on the food rather than those who created it. To some degree we can attribute this reluctance to the apparent disjuncture between cooks' discourse and their practices. Indeed, at first glance the disparity between what cooks said and what they did appears insurmountable. In cookbooks they claimed to seize control of taste from their elite masters, arguing that they were best qualified to determine the proper order and balance

of flavors. They purported to practice a science of the kitchen which fused a new theoretical knowledge with existing empirical practices. Cooks argued that their ability to manipulate taste and ingredients qualified them to work as medical practitioners, and they even carved out a unique position with respect to physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries.

On closer inspection, however, the circumstances of cooks' work uniquely suited them to undertake the project of *la cuisine moderne*. Contemporaries viewed the site of the kitchen with distrust, even disgust. Thought to infect and corrupt residential space, the setting of the kitchen provided the essential context against which cooks tried to reform themselves. Cooks' practices moreover enabled the project of *la cuisine moderne*. Cooks were overwhelmingly literate, especially in comparison to their fellow servants. This literacy sprang from the particular practices of cooking, which required cooks to keep detailed accounts of their market transactions. Thus when cooks began to write and publish cookbooks, they could target a broadly literate audience. It is no accident that cooks were nearly alone among servants in producing technical literature during the Old Regime. From a social perspective, cooks were in a sense free to assert any kind of authority they wanted because they were not bound by a guild. Already working in the physically and socially marginal spaces of domestic service, cooks inserted themselves into the interstices of medicine, claiming expertise in matters of taste and health.

*La cuisine moderne* extended far beyond the kitchen's walls. Contemporaries commented on the new style (and the cooks who practiced it) in virtually every medium. In theatrical plays, medical treatises, paintings, engravings, verse, and works of fiction, cooks practiced *la cuisine moderne* and diners consumed it – often to comic or tragic

effect. As in so many other facets of eighteenth-century culture, Louis-Sébastien Mercier provided one of the most verbose commentaries on *la cuisine moderne*, devoting a handful of articles in his *Tableau de Paris* to female and male cooks, as well as to cuisine in general.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Mercier emerged as one of the last great partisans of *la cuisine moderne*, long after the pace of cookbook publication had begun to slacken.

Contemporary representations of cooks reflected this tension between cooks' discourse and their practices. While cooks increasingly arrogated power to themselves, contemporaries rarely accepted their claims. Though cooks did persuade some that they practiced a "science of the kitchen," most contemporaries derided *la cuisine moderne* as a threat to physiological, social, and cultural order. According to these critics, cooks jeopardized the health of the individual body as well as that of the body politic. Their irresistibly delicious creations shortened lives while their claims to cultural and medical authority threatened to exceed the circumscribed boundaries of domestic service. The pretensions of *la cuisine moderne* were not without consequence. By creating new public zones of discourse in which masters and doctors freely participated, cooks escaped the private space of the kitchen, flattening their social networks to a more level playing field. Colin Jones has argued that such growing horizontal networks of association and commerce supplanted earlier vertical hierarchies.<sup>2</sup> Steven Kaplan has even suggested

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<sup>1</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788).

<sup>2</sup> Colin Jones, "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change," in *Rewriting the French Revolution: The Andrew Browning Lectures 1989*, ed. Colin Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Colin Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996). Sarah Maza has consequently dubbed Jones a "neo-Marxist." Michael Kwass finds Jones's proposal suggestive. Sarah C. Maza, "Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France," *The Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997), 200, Michael Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 82 (2003), 88, n. 5.

that the collapse of France's "social taxonomy" helped to set the stage for the Revolution.<sup>3</sup> Yet if such horizontal networks represented the future, cooks sought to establish them with an eye on the past. *La cuisine moderne's* claims to cultural and medical expertise could profit cooks only in the context of a hierarchical society where there was something to be gained by appealing to a master's taste or a doctor's authority.

Of course there were French cooks both before and after the eighteenth century, and there were cooks who worked outside of elite households. Indeed there were cooks who were not French or not in France at all. So why focus on these people at this time and place? During the seventeenth century, for example, tastes shifted dramatically from exotic spices to more "natural" herbs.<sup>4</sup> According to Daniel Roche, "everything was changing at the same time" in matters of cuisine.<sup>5</sup> But if changes began during the seventeenth century, they accelerated dramatically during the eighteenth. Fernand Braudel argues that "the Regency and the active good taste of the Regent" may have triggered the development of "great French cooking."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, during the eighteenth century's middle decades cooks began to exploit print to promote themselves as artists, scientists, even medical practitioners. With *la cuisine moderne* they sparked a debate that would spread beyond the kitchen and indeed beyond France's borders. From geographical perspective, Paris sat squarely at the center of this phenomenon of taste.

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<sup>3</sup> Steven Laurence Kaplan, "Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot's "Carnival"," in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, ed. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 177.

<sup>4</sup> Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Distinction through Taste," in *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 242.

<sup>6</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 189. Philippe d'Orléans served as Regent from 1715-1723.

Contemporaries acknowledged that the best cooks either practiced in Paris or had come from Paris. Since so many of the city's servants had provincial origins, Paris moreover functioned as a site of training and refinement for these cooks.

Due to evidentiary constraints, histories of servants have tended to skew toward the wealthiest of households, and to some degree this dissertation will be no exception. According to Bridget Hill, such a focus has only one serious consequence: it has “allowed the stereotype of male servants in large wealthy households to dominate all thinking about domestic service.”<sup>7</sup> By focusing on cooks, however, I hope to avoid this problem of gender bias. Cooks included vast numbers of both men and women, and in the kitchen servants' work in fact intersected (and perhaps for the only time). Indeed, Hill asserts that “[t]he only real point at which the work of male and female servants coincided was in ‘cooks’.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, I would also contend that a study of the wealthiest households also will provide a meaningful intersection of the discourses of *la cuisine moderne* with the daily practices of cooking. These private residences, or *hôtels*, were the sorts of places where the best known cooks and cookbook authors tended to work, and hence the sites most relevant to a study of *la cuisine moderne*. According to Jean-Louis Flandrin, “our sentiments involving the family” first emerged in these noble and bourgeois households, pitting masters against increasingly alienated domestic servants.<sup>9</sup> Finally, even a study of elite residences would necessarily encompass a broad social spectrum. While a kitchen's master might be a wealthy member of *le monde*, its

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<sup>7</sup> Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality in Early Modern France*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 95.

cooks certainly were not; domestic servants generally were *le menu peuple* of the very lowest order. Most important, efforts to organize and police these spaces essentially sought to establish controlled barriers between cooks and their masters; I will argue that *la cuisine moderne* threatened precisely these boundaries.

Cooks were essential to the practices of sociability. Even a critic of fine dining had to admit that meals were “necessary to sustain civil society, nourish friendships, and form relationships among men.”<sup>10</sup> Skills like meat carving reinforced social hierarchy even while advertising cultural refinement. Dena Goodman suggests that “most salon conversation took place over lengthy dinners,” but little is known about the circumstance of these meals, let alone those who prepared them.<sup>11</sup> Given the contemporary fascination with the connection between body and mind, gustatory and metaphorical taste, the configuration of such meals bears reflection. With such importance placed on fine dining, Mercier could easily joke, “A cook is the necessary man, and without a cook what real advantage would the rich have over the poor?”<sup>12</sup> Masters showcased their own sensibility by hosting exquisite dinners prepared by their cooks. Mercier:

*Omnes mercatores sumus*: Infantry, cavalry, and navy officers, people of the church, nobility, of the court, finance and commerce, all work only in order to host a table with the most splendor and delicacy. One only looks for more lucrative employment in order one day to give feasts to one’s neighbors, acquaintances, parents, and friends. He who has no cook has no reason to exist.<sup>13</sup>

Tantalizing evidence suggests that hiring a star cook was perceived to boost a master’s cultural status: one commentator wrote that “More distinguished [cooks] are often to be

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<sup>10</sup> Benigné Lordelot, *Les Devoirs de la vie domestique, par un pere de famille, dediez au Roi* (Paris: Pierre-François Emery, 1706), 293.

<sup>11</sup> Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 84.

<sup>12</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 11:233.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 11:234-235.

found in the houses of lawyers and bankers than in those of people of quality; one thing is certain – they pay better.”<sup>14</sup>

## 1. Literature Review

Sarah Maza has argued that servants were “socially and sexually marginal creatures par excellence.” Indeed, she notes that their liminality was all the more poignant since the Latin root *limen* signifies threshold.<sup>15</sup> Maza has focused mainly on the sexual and social manifestations of this liminality, but servants also worked quite literally between spaces, being neither fully within nor without the household. Cooks shared other servants’ marginality, but also created their own new interstitial spaces. For example, they straddled the worlds of private domesticity and public expertise. Moreover, they proposed an ambitious plan to act not just as cultural intermediaries but as engineers of taste. Cooks operated on the margins of the business of health and sought to exploit their unique relationship to the human body. Because cooks during the eighteenth century operated in so many interstices, this dissertation necessarily draws from and contributes to a wide range of existing literature.

### *Domestic Service*

The 1980s witnessed an outburst of interest in the history of French servants on both sides of the Atlantic. Sarah Maza, Cissie Fairchild, and Jacqueline Sabbattier have

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<sup>14</sup> Duke of Albemarle to Duke of Newcastle, quoted Romney Sedgwick, "The Duke of Newcastle's Cook," *History Today* 5, no. 5 (1955), 315. Translation Sedgwick's.

<sup>15</sup> Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 137.



each combined extensive archival research into the conditions of domestic service with analysis of contemporary prescriptive literature.<sup>16</sup> Claude Petitfrère focuses more narrowly on literary representations, but shares the same general interest in analyzing domestic service primarily as a relationship between master and servant.<sup>17</sup> As a result, all of these works reinforce the ambiguous status of servants as workers. Fairchilds argues that servants' work was not important, proposing that "[i]n the ancien régime the French invested their servants' time in public display, not private domestic comfort."<sup>18</sup> She suggests that in the absence of a *métier*, domestic service instead constituted an *état*, or condition, since a servant was defined "not by the sort of work he did but instead by the fact that he lived in a household not his own in a state of dependency on its master."<sup>19</sup> Sarah Maza argues that one consequence of this attitude toward service was the belief that that domestic servants comprised a sterile class both economically and socially, since they neither produced nor reproduced.<sup>20</sup>

While few new monographs on French servants have appeared in recent years, historians have begun to question the assumptions that underlay earlier analysis. Bridget Hill has criticized scholars for concentrating their research on the wealthiest of

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), Jacqueline Sabattier, *Figaro et son maître: maîtres et domestiques à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Claude Petitfrère, *L'Oeil du maître: maîtres et serviteurs de l'époque classique au romantisme* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 36-37. As we will see, cooks played almost no public role in the sense outlined by Fairchilds.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 291-292. Claude Petitfrère also provides a useful distillation of contemporary worries about the consequences of tolerating such a "sterile" sector of the population. Petitfrère, *L'Oeil du maître*, 174-176.

households, and by extension on the experiences of male servants.<sup>21</sup> Carolyn Steedman has faulted historians for essentially replicating eighteenth-century attitudes toward domestic servants through their reluctance to analyze them as workers.<sup>22</sup> From the perspective of labor history, this reticence has resulted from the perceived lack of organization among servants and absence of productive output. Servants lacked any kind of governing corporate body, in stark contrast to other skilled urban workers, who were generally organized into guilds. According to William Sewell, this division between incorporated and unincorporated labor was “fundamental,” denoting nothing less than “a boundary between order and disorder.”<sup>23</sup> Presumed to lack their own systems of order, servants have remained largely submerged within the domestic space, with histories of the family and household taking precedence.

If servants have integrated poorly into histories of labor, the case of cooks compounds the problem since they themselves fit uneasily into histories of domestic service. Their work involved a measure of expertise that other servants generally lacked, and even their most ardent critics acknowledged that cooks worked with skill. Indeed, while detractors often depicted cooks’ skills as downright threatening, they rarely denied their existence. The fact that some cooks translated their expertise into published cookbooks further complicated the situation. Historians of domestic service have experienced difficulty accounting for such texts, which on the one hand were servant

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<sup>21</sup> Hill, *Servants*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Carolyn Steedman, "Service and Servitude in the World of Labor: Servants in England, 1750-1820," in *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750-1820*, ed. Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> William H. Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 24.

prescriptive literature par excellence and on the other hand were actually produced by domestic servants. Claude Petitfrère, for example, simply ignores cookbooks in his examination of servants' prescriptive literature.<sup>24</sup>

Because cooks' work could involve expertise and because some cooks published cookbooks, scholars have often sought to differentiate between so-called "professional" and "domestic" cooks, a dichotomy that in large part owes its origin to feminist theory. Lois Banner has argued, for example, that "women have not been great chefs because the rôle has not been open to them."<sup>25</sup> Londa Schiebinger juxtaposes "domestic cooking" performed by "wife and mother" with "professional preparation of food" by "the male chef."<sup>26</sup> Nancy Jocelyn Edwards contrasts "the professional cooks of private homes" and "women who cooked for their families," arguing that cookbooks targeted the former nearly without exception.<sup>27</sup> Even the most recent scholarship informed by gender analysis replicates this binary. Jennifer J. Davis suggests that she will avoid "the problematic division between men [sic] and women's cooking" but then proceeds instead to deepen the divide, categorizing "domestic servants, overwhelmingly female" and "kitchen officers [...] primarily male" as two separate groups.<sup>28</sup> Often scholars add the

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<sup>24</sup> Petitfrère, *L'Oeil du maître*, 10-12.

<sup>25</sup> Lois W. Banner, "Why Women Have Not Been Great Chefs," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (1973), 212. Cited in Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 201.

<sup>26</sup> Londa L. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 116.

<sup>27</sup> Nancy Jocelyn Edwards, "Patriotism à Table: Cookbooks, Textbooks, and National Identity in *Fin-de-Siècle* France," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* 24 (1997), 246.

<sup>28</sup> Jennifer J. Davis, "Men of Taste: Gender and Authority in the French Culinary Trades, 1730-1830" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2004), 4, 16.

somewhat anachronistic “chef” to the formula: male *chefs* vied with female *cooks*.<sup>29</sup> Folklorist Janet Theophano claims that some eighteenth-century cookbook writers targeted “professional chefs” while others wrote for “a domestic audience.”<sup>30</sup> In the case of French cooks working abroad, historians have further complicated the binary to include a national element: in England, *English* female domestic cooks resented their *French* male professional counterparts.<sup>31</sup> At least for the eighteenth century, I would argue that analyzing cooks through such a gender-divided lens is neither tenable nor useful.

Such language introduces a misleading anachronism into any subsequent narrative, since no such distinction existed during the eighteenth century. Stephen Mennell concludes that in England at least, “the gap between professional and domestic cookery was little developed.” He suggests instead that Frenchness or French training was a far more powerful determinant than gender.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, cooks worked at cultural, geographic, and financial extremes: cooking at his master’s residences in Paris and Versailles, a certain Olivier earned 1000 livres while in Rodez a woman earned just 48 livres per year.<sup>33</sup> Yet I would argue that such examples suggest diversity rather than disparity. Both of the above cooks were first and foremost servants: neither had a guild,

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 21. During the eighteenth century, “chef” implied merely the presence of subordinate kitchen staff. Indeed, most men preparing food were not known as “chefs,” but instead as *cuisiniers*, *officiers de cuisine* or *officiers de bouche*, or *maitres d’hôtel*.

<sup>30</sup> Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 172.

<sup>31</sup> Gilly Lehmann, "Politics in the Kitchen," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>32</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 202.

<sup>33</sup> AN T 261/3 (1786) and BNF MSS N.A.F. 6580, “Quelques faits se rapportant à l’histoire locale écrits par M. de St. Amans après 1750.”

formal training or certifying institutions, and both worked for a single employer and lived in his household. Compared to the numbers of cooking servants, relatively few cooks worked outside of domestic service. The few restaurants that existed during the Old Regime, for example, could never account for more than a handful of cooks.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, public cooks, or *traiteurs*, comprised only a tiny fraction of all cooks.<sup>35</sup> Cooks in the popular imagination overwhelmingly came from domestic service, with nearly every visual or textual representation depicting a servant cook.<sup>36</sup> Thus to speak of “professional” cooks is to impose an artificial and anachronistic category on the past. This dissertation seeks to restore cooks, male and female, to the context of the eighteenth century.

### *Cuisine*

If studies of domestic service have only awkwardly incorporated cooks into their analysis, narratives of cooking have neglected them even more.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it has been thirty years since Joan Hildreth Owen first proposed the existence of a “philosophy of the kitchen,” but historians have barely scratched the surface of what that philosophy might

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<sup>34</sup> Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Davis points to around 70-120 apprenticeships per year to each of the culinary guilds in Paris, in contrast to the city’s tens of thousands of domestic servants, many of whom performed some kind of kitchen work. Davis, “Men of Taste”, 34-35.

<sup>36</sup> I analyze these representations in Chapter 7.

<sup>37</sup> It must be noted that a great deal of published material on cooks is of exceedingly dubious quality. Thinly sourced (or not at all), such works tend to rehash prescriptive literature like cookbooks without any grounding in the circumstances of the early modern period. Even the journal *Petits propos culinaires* regularly juxtaposes meticulous scholarship with decidedly haphazard material. Although the popular appetite for all things related to “chefs” continues to grow, it bears little relation to scholarly output in the way of serious analysis. Rebecca Spang provides one clue to this phenomenon when she suggests (albeit in the context of the eighteenth century) that food is inherently accessible to broad audiences and provides a “standard reference point, an easily understood comparison.” Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, 52.

have entailed, let alone who articulated it.<sup>38</sup> Instead scholars have tended to focus on the food, not the cooks who produced it. Jean-Louis Flandrin has produced the best studies of the early modern shift in ingredients (particularly during the seventeenth-century) which transformed French cuisine from medieval excess into early modern refinement.<sup>39</sup> Though he has hinted at the role played by cooks in this transformation, Flandrin has preferred to concentrate on cookbooks.<sup>40</sup> His approach has at times bordered on an obsession with recipes: Flandrin's *L'Ordre des mets* essentially involves a frequency analysis of recipes in cookbooks.<sup>41</sup> His characterizations of the apparent shifts in dining have broadly influenced other studies of material culture. Daniel Roche's description of the culinary changes of the period is typical:

The new culinary style was characterised by three main features: a decline in spices, with the use of aromatics and locally produced condiments, shallots, onions, scallions, garlic, capers, anchovies; the choice of good-quality butcher's meat, replacing game (the cuts were hierarchised and the ways of cooking adapted); the rise of vegetables and cooked dishes, which was to lead to increased use of kitchen gardens and of hot-plates set beside the hearth.<sup>42</sup>

Even the most recent scholarship tends to avoid an investigation of cooks as agents of these culinary changes. Beatrice Fink, for example, examines connections among

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<sup>38</sup> Joan Hildreth Owen, "Philosophy in the Kitchen; or Problems in Eighteenth-Century Culinary Aesthetics," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 3 (1977), 77.

<sup>39</sup> Flandrin, "Distinction through Taste." See also Flandrin's articles in his edited volume Jean-Louis Flandrin, Massimo Montanari, and Albert Sonnenfeld, *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> He suggests that "the power to launch new fashions in this and other areas remained with the great nobles – and their cooks." Flandrin, "Distinction through Taste," 304.

<sup>41</sup> Jean-Louis Flandrin, *L'Ordre des mets* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 242.

cookbooks but fails to situate cuisine within the context of the women and men who not only practiced these principles but also elucidated them.<sup>43</sup>

It seems to me that the more interesting question about French cuisine now facing historians is the “how” rather than the “what.” First, the “what” has already largely been answered, at least to the extent that evidence allows. Jean-Louis Flandrin has undertaken the monumental task of serializing and analyzing cookbook recipes, and his research forms the essential starting point for any study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French cuisine. But ascertaining what exactly was cooked (let alone eaten) is of course far more problematic than it seems. What relation (if any) did cookbooks have to foods served? Did cookbooks reflect existing practices? Did they anticipate them? Or did they bear no relation at all to the practices of cooking and dining? Stephen Mennell grapples with this problem in his own work, ultimately deciding that in some cases cookbooks could do any of the above.<sup>44</sup> Second, historians studying cuisine have often succumbed to the relentless normalizing assertions by eighteenth-century cooks that their cooking was “modern” and “natural.” Flandrin even follows these cooks in their rejection of medieval comestibles like “swan, stork, cormorant, and crane, heron, and peacock,” agreeing that such birds had “questionable gastronomic value.”<sup>45</sup>

The case of Catherine de Médicis highlights the fundamental positivism that underlies most of the historiography of cuisine. During the eighteenth century, received wisdom credited de Médicis with bringing fine dining to France in the form of Italian

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<sup>43</sup> Beatrice Fink, *Les Liaisons savoureuses: réflexions et pratiques culinaires au XVIIIe siècle* (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Flandrin, "Distinction through Taste," 282-283.

dishes or the cooks who prepared them.<sup>46</sup> Stephen Mennell, Jean-François Revel, and Barbara Ketcham Wheaton all go to great lengths to debunk this myth.<sup>47</sup> But the fact remains that cooks believed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that they were the heirs of Italian genius. To me, the belief in this story is far more suggestive than evidence of its origins. Viewed in this perspective, the myth sustained the neoclassical fantasy that France was the new Rome, appropriating culture from the Italians just as the Romans had from the Greeks.<sup>48</sup>

### *Taste, Consumption, and Culture*

With the recent interest in the “consumer revolution” of the eighteenth century, historians have increasingly examined the role of taste and fashion in driving consumption.<sup>49</sup> In France the eighteenth century as a whole witnessed an acceleration in

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<sup>46</sup> Philippe Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers* (Paris: P. Fr. Didot jeune, 1773), s.v. "Cuisinier."

<sup>47</sup> Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 43-44, Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 70. Jean François Revel devotes an entire section to the myth: “The Ghost of the Medicis.” Jean François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982). The myth has not died easily. In a recent brief history of Typhoid Mary, Anthony Bourdain praises de Médicis saving French cuisine: “She was, however, smart enough to bring along some Italian cooks when she moved to France. Had she not, the French might still be thickening their sauces with bread raspings – and tearing at their food with daggers and bare hands.” Anthony Bourdain, *Typhoid Mary: An Urban Historical* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), 8.

<sup>48</sup> For Italians, the myth was particularly bitter medicine. When *la cuisine moderne* reached Italy, it continued to claim Italian origins, though supposedly now perfected by the French. Giovambatista Roberti, “Ad un Professore di Belle Lettere nel Friuli,” in *Raccolta di varie operette dell’Abate Conte Giovambatista Roberti* (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1785), vi-vii. Quoted in Piero Camporesi, *Exotic Brew: The Art of Living in the Age of Enlightenment*, trans. Christopher Woodall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 33.

<sup>49</sup> For an introduction to the concept of the consumer revolution, see Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). For a collection of more recent scholarship focused on eighteenth-century consumerism, see John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993).



the consumption of goods, but the period around the time *la cuisine moderne* first appeared has emerged as particularly dynamic. Michael Sonenscher has written of the emergence of “fashion’s empire” during the 1720s.<sup>50</sup> Natacha Coquery has explored how the burgeoning luxury trades orbited around private residences from mid-century onward.<sup>51</sup> Although Braudel suggested that “fashion governs cooking like clothing,” historians have yet to investigate the trends that governed cuisine.<sup>52</sup>

Much of the new history of consumerism relies explicitly or implicitly on Thorstein Veblen’s theory of conspicuous consumption, with emulation of taste providing the motive force.<sup>53</sup> Historians have applied this model to the eighteenth century, where fashion and taste allegedly percolated down from social elites to aping inferiors. In this system, servants are commonly depicted as having functioned as “cultural intermediaries.”<sup>54</sup> Exposed to elite fashion but connected to the masses, servants could thus transmit tastes. Although historians have grown increasingly dissatisfied with this model, it has persisted in the absence of any viable substitute.<sup>55</sup> If we consider cooks as intermediaries, we find that they did not simply transmit taste from their elite masters to their subaltern companions. Instead, cooks spread elite culture among households, by moving from one master to another and by publishing cookbooks.

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Sonenscher, "Fashion's empire: trade and power in early 18th-century France," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in ancien Régime Paris*, ed. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Natacha Coquery, *L'Hôtel aristocratique: le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, 189.

<sup>53</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (London,: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1924).

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 358.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of the failure to replace Veblen’s model, see Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods," 88.

Michael Kwass has recently proposed an alternative explanation to the hierarchical model of vertical emulation. He argues that French luxury apologists suggested a more convincing motive for the boom in consumption, emphasizing “material pleasure and happiness based on Enlightenment notions of sense experience.”<sup>56</sup> Such a model is particularly helpful in our examination of *la cuisine moderne*, where cooks stressed their ability to manipulate the sense of taste to the benefit of individual health. Cooks did not merely make manifest elite taste: they actively participated in its construction. I would thus propose that cooks functioned not just as intermediaries, but as engineers of taste. The function of cooks as engineers of taste is consistent with Leora Auslander’s proposed class of “taste professionals” which during the nineteenth century arbitrated fashion.<sup>57</sup> Yet Auslander’s taste professionals largely came from middling origins and were entirely absent in the eighteenth century; she does not suggest that artisans themselves could set taste, nor that such a function existed outside the court before the nineteenth century. In contrast, cooks during the eighteenth century explicitly seized control over taste from their masters.

The same assumptions that have led historians to pursue emulative models of consumption have also perpetuated the distinction between popular and elite culture. Indeed, despite ample criticism, Peter Burke’s pioneering work on popular culture continues to define the field.<sup>58</sup> Did elites record popular culture or try to shape it? The

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>58</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978). For a concise summary of criticism, see Bob Scribner, "Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?," *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 2 (1989), 175.

intractability of such problems has even led some to question the feasibility of reconstructing anything faithfully approaching popular culture. If we are bound to use such categories, then this dissertation unabashedly targets “high” culture. Yet at the same time it inverts most of the assumptions about high culture since in the case of cuisine much of our evidence comes from servant cooks. Cissie Fairchilds has argued, “However much they might desire to participate in it, servants were not really comfortable in the learned culture of the elite.”<sup>59</sup> In contrast, I would suggest that whether through the publication of cookbooks or the articulation and execution of taste, it is hard to see how cooks failed to participate in “learned culture.”

### *Medicine*

During the eighteenth century diners worried about virtually every aspect of their eating experience. A meal’s time of day, its quantity and quality of ingredients, and the diner’s own present state of health all resonated with physiological import. Our own dining obsessions *du jour* – whole grains, transfats, and carbohydrates, to name just a few – pale in comparison. Contemporary doctors nurtured fears through the publication of treatises detailing alimentary properties which invariably amounted to a minefield of dangers. Despite these seemingly rich opportunities for investigation, the medical history of eighteenth-century France has traditionally focused on surgery, not diet.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the same forces that consigned diet to be medicine’s “poor cousin” during the eighteenth

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<sup>59</sup> Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 118.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew Ramsey, *Professional and Popular Medicine in France, 1770-1830: The Social World of Medical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Toby Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine: Paris Surgeons and Medical Science and Institutions in the 18th Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

century have conspired against its study today.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to the allegedly staid physician, the surgeon supposedly embodied dynamism, scientific method, perhaps even modernity.<sup>62</sup> In this model, surgeons alone challenged the traditional “tripartite, corporative, and hierarchical” organization of medicine that also included physicians and apothecaries.<sup>63</sup>

Recently, however, Lawrence Brockliss and Colin Jones have suggested a more broadly dynamic field of medicine that was moreover anything but closed to outsiders. Describing medicine in terms of a “core” of incorporated physicians and surgeons orbited by a “penumbra” of competing and heterogeneous interests, they argue against any sort of elite/popular medical binary.<sup>64</sup> In recent years, historians have investigated a number of peripheral actors in the medical world.<sup>65</sup> To date, however, cooks have remained a bit too “penumbral.” This dissertation will examine cooks claims’ to medical expertise and the corresponding response of medical authorities.

## 2. Organization of the Dissertation

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<sup>61</sup> Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?* , 113.

<sup>62</sup> For a succinct characterization of the historiography of French medicine, see Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying," 14-15. For a lengthier but more detailed account, see L. W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 1-33. For a characteristically breathless account of dynamic surgeons prevailing over backward physicians, see Kathleen Anne Wellman, *La Mettrie: Medicine, Philosophy, and Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 10-33.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying," 14.

<sup>64</sup> Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, 14.

<sup>65</sup> Nina Gelbart, for example, has examined midwives. Nina Rattner Gelbart, *The King's Midwife: A History and Mystery of Madame du Coudray* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Colin Jones has explored the history of dentistry. Colin Jones, "Pulling teeth in eighteenth-century Paris," *Past & Present*, no. 166 (2000).

I have organized my analysis along three axes: practices, discourses, and representations. The first section of this dissertation explores cooks' practices. Chapter 2 begins by exploring the shifting configurations of kitchen space. During the ancien régime architects employed a number of strategies to isolate kitchens, which were increasingly viewed not only as nuisances but also as dangerous sites of infection and corruption. Chapter 3 introduces the cook's tools and the economy of the kitchen. In addition to utilizing an ever-expanding array of cooking gear, cooks maintained these utensils by keeping scrupulous records of their care. Cooks relied on literacy and numeracy not only to maintain their tools but also to keep meticulous records of their kitchen's transactions. In Chapter 4, I reconstitute the labor practices of cooks. In the absence of formal guilds, cooks deployed a number of strategies to organize their labor. They exploited their literacy skills to post job advertisements to local newspapers and engaged in a complex calculus to secure promotions. Cooks earned wages far above most other servants and indeed artisans, suggesting ambiguity about their social status.

In the second section of this dissertation, I analyze the discourses associated with *la cuisine moderne*. In Chapter 5, I study the genesis of *la cuisine moderne* as an adamantly novel style of cooking which rejected the past. Joining a new theoretical knowledge to existing kitchen practices, *la cuisine moderne* explicitly called for the emulation of the print culture of the liberal professions. Chapter 6 suggests that through *la cuisine moderne* cooks aimed to establish themselves as medical practitioners. Seeking to interject themselves into the body's functions, cooks lobbied to have their work accepted as a science.

In this dissertation's third and final section, I examine ways in which cooks were represented by contemporaries. Chapter 7 surveys a broad range of media from plays to broadsheets to engravings to paintings, all depicting cooks. In nearly every case, cooks are portrayed as somehow corrupt or corrupting. I propose two broad categories of corrupting cooks: the first endangering morals, the second threatening to destroy health. These fears suggest profound unease about the cook's powers and aspirations, both of which jeopardized social order.

As this dissertation moves from practice to discourse to representation, it investigates the various intersections at which cooks operated. It opens with an exploration of cooks' most tangible intersection: the kitchen. Here cooks mediated between public disorder and private comfort in the often disgusting space of the kitchen. Louis-Sébastien Mercier once remarked that one entered the kitchen only at the risk of losing one's appetite, but it is here that we must begin our journey.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 11:233.

## Chapter 2. The Space of the Kitchen

Dans les nouveaux établissements, il faut commencer par fonder, par bastir la cuisine.

*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, s.v. "Cuisine"

In Old Regime France, kitchens for a time quite literally formed the foundations of residences. From the sixteenth through much of the seventeenth century, architects frequently situated the kitchen in the basement under the residence's *corps de logis*, or main living area. In the second half of seventeenth century, however, this configuration came under attack as a potential nuisance to the occupants above; by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had been completely discredited as both outdated and dangerous. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the kitchen's imagined dangers spread beyond the basement. Kitchens in any location became increasingly suspect sites of corruption and disorder; architects urged builders to locate them far from their clients' eyes, noses, and ears. Kitchen waste threatened to pollute the *hôtel*, and cooks could dirty a residential space simply through their presence.<sup>1</sup> In 1780 concerns about kitchens

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<sup>1</sup> Because this chapter focuses mainly the unique segment of residential housing comprised by urban *hôtels*. I avoid the use of general terms such as "house" or "home" which tend to obscure the very different nature of the early modern housing. In this chapter, "domestic space" and "residence" refer to *hôtels* unless otherwise specified.

reached their apogee, with one architect proposing an extraordinarily elaborate system of technical measures aimed at bringing the kitchen and its staff under control.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. Shifting Notions of Residential Space

Norbert Elias's pathbreaking *The Court Society* remains an essential theoretical text for the study of eighteenth-century residences. In his effort to uncover social structures manifested within architectural space, Elias uses the example of the eighteenth-century kitchen to find traces of the relationships between masters and servants.<sup>3</sup> Because servants otherwise left behind little direct evidence, Elias notes that the sites of their labors can act as especially valuable sources to understand the lived experience of those who supplied the essential manpower to maintain aristocratic lifestyles.<sup>4</sup> It is no accident that he selects the kitchen to illustrate his argument. On the one hand, kitchens provided an essential basis of their masters' sociability through the service of meals; on the other hand, servants labored, ate, and even lived in kitchens, making them an unrivaled focal point of servant activity. Natacha Coquery has likewise identified the kitchen as a critical site of interaction between masters and servants; working from Elias's proposal that Parisian elites were "involved in the structure of the city solely as consumers," Coquery has added merchants and suppliers to the equation as she seeks to analyze domestic spaces as sites of exchange.<sup>5</sup> Although interested more in the networks

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<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture, ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (Paris: Le Camus de Mézières, Benoît Morin, 1780).

<sup>3</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 45. Natacha Coquery, *L'Hôtel aristocratique: le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998). More recently, Coquery has extended her analysis of elite housing



extending from residences than in the sites themselves, Coquery implicitly identifies the kitchen as an essential center of commerce; “food” comprises one of her six categories of household suppliers.<sup>6</sup>

In his study of the relationship between the kitchen and the dining room, Claude Mignot concludes that “a new concept of [residential] social space” emerged at the beginning of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Mignot argues that this new space was predicated on the sacrifice of comfort in favor of propriety. According to Mignot, diners in eighteenth-century residences suffered a substantial “decline in comfort” as food arrived cold after its ever-lengthening journey from the kitchen; in exchange, they enjoyed a greater distance separating them from their servants.<sup>8</sup> Like Mignot, Monique Eleb-Vidal also traces the separation – and later marginalization – of servant space; she proposes, however, just the opposite trend, suggesting that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century domestic architecture underwent a transition from utility to comfort.<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, I seek to understand the development of the eighteenth-century’s new domestic “social space,” with its growing barriers between servants and masters. I first argue that architects in the eighteenth century sought to divide domestic space into zones of

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beyond the owners’ personal consumption to the public consumption of these same spaces through their “translation” into sites of public administration. See Natacha Coquery, *L'Espace du pouvoir: de la demeure privée à l'édifice public, Paris, 1700-1790* (Paris: Seli Arslan, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Coquery, *L'Hôtel aristocratique*, “Annexes,” document no. 71, 365-397. Coquery’s categories include *alimentation* (12%), *cheval* (15%), *luxe* (12%), *habitat* (28%), *hygiène* (5%), and *vêtements* (28%). In terms of total household costs, however, kitchens could account for one-third or more of monthly expenditures. I discuss these expenditures in Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> Claude Mignot, “De la cuisine à la salle à manger, ou de quelques détours de l’art de la distribution,” *XVIIe siècle*, no. 162 (1989), 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Mignot’s words: “régression des commodités.”

<sup>9</sup> Monique and Anne Debarre Eleb-Vidal, *Architectures de la vie privée: Maisons et mentalités XVIIe-XIX siècles* (Paris: Éditions Hazan, 1999). Eleb-Vidal notes this shift from *utilité* to *commodité*, but I do not agree with her emphasis on class as the determinant factor in eighteenth-century domestic architecture.

pollution and comfort. Polluted spaces threatened to undermine domestic comfort; to some degree comfort was defined simply as an absence of pollution. Kitchens were a focal point of this domestic partition; they became identified as corrupted sites even while their pollution threatened the comfort of those whom they served. Second I suggest that architects increasingly sought to project order into the space of the kitchen rather than simply isolate it. Because isolation could create its own problems through a lack of oversight, novel design strategies instead attempted to control the threats of pollution and disorder. The fight against kitchen corruption expanded from localized design tactics to encompass a broad campaign which sought to quell domestic chaos.

The separation of servant and master spaces has received only limited scholarly attention, notably by Reed Benhamou, who has dubbed them “parallel worlds.”<sup>10</sup> Far from a late-eighteenth-century or even nineteenth-century innovation, Benhamou argues that “backstairs” servant areas developed relatively early in the eighteenth century as a means to improve the quality of domestic service. As I hope this chapter has shown, the notion of separate servant space has a deeper and more complex history. The seventeenth century witnessed the first tentative references to health and comfort as factors in kitchen design. The language of domestic space then sharpened dramatically in the early eighteenth century, when “infection” and “corruption” entered the architectural lexicon. New organizations of servant space did not serve only to provide greater efficiency of service; they protected residences from the malignant threat of decay.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Reed Benhamou, “Parallel Walls, Parallel Worlds: The Places of Masters and Servants in the *Maisons de plaisance* of Jacques-François Blondel,” *The Journal of Design History* 7, no. 1 (1994).

## 2. The Interior Form of the Kitchen

Kitchen sizes could vary greatly, both in total area and in the number of rooms encompassed. The contemporary locution for “kitchen” was in fact typically plural: *les cuisines*. Some residences did in fact contain multiple distinct kitchens; for example, one would prepare the masters’ food while another would feed servants.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally, for large parties, several kitchens might work to prepare a meal.<sup>12</sup> Most frequently, multiple rooms comprised *les cuisines*; they functioned together as a single kitchen. Such a kitchen consisted of a network of integrated units and could contain ten or more functionally distinct spaces.<sup>13</sup> Architects refined this configuration over time but made no major changes. The seventeenth-century kitchen had typically consisted of one main room and one or two smaller dependencies.<sup>14</sup> Eighteenth-century kitchens displayed a much finer degree of specialization; newer and better kitchens transcended their polyvalent predecessors.<sup>15</sup> For example, in a large residence, a separate bakery might serve the preparation of pastries while specially designed pantries each kept fruit, meat, and fish away from extreme temperatures. Even in these sizeable configurations, a single

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<sup>11</sup> A.C. Daviler, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de vignole, avec des commentaires, les figures et descriptions de ses plus beaux bâtimens, et de ceux de Michel-Ange, etc.* (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1710), tome II, 537. According to Daviler, such configurations were implemented in *palais*.

<sup>12</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 192.

<sup>13</sup> The kitchens were also occasionally known as *les offices*.

<sup>14</sup> Mignot, "De la cuisine à la salle à manger," 20. Mignot identifies four rooms in the typical kitchen configuration: *cuisine*, *salle de commun*, *garde-manger*, and *office*. The *salle de commun*, or servants’ dining area, existed only in “les grandes maisons” where it was “indispensable.”

<sup>15</sup> Sebastian Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," in *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de vignole, avec des commentaires, les figures et descriptions de ses plus beaux bâtimens, et de ceux de Michel-Ange, etc.*, ed. A.C. Daviler (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1710), 185\*11.

room remained designated *la cuisine*, and this largest and best equipped space formed the focal point of the kitchen around which the dependent rooms orbited.<sup>16</sup>

Paved floors and high vaulted ceilings cast the form of the main room in heavy stone, which was both fire-resistant and easy to clean.<sup>17</sup> Occasionally floors could be tiled in terra cotta, or ceilings could be plastered.<sup>18</sup> Both alternatives still facilitated cleaning. Walls and doors painted white or gray underlined the kitchen's stark atmosphere.<sup>19</sup> Wide doorways allowed servants to deliver dishes with ease.<sup>20</sup> Tall casement windows provided both light and ventilation; the ironwork among the panes of glass was likewise painted white or gray.<sup>21</sup> Under one window a long cooking range could accommodate ten or more dishes at once; perhaps painted red, this stove might

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<sup>16</sup> J. Guadet provides a succinct description of the plural *cuisines*: "Je veux seulement vous bien montrer que dans la grande habitation, le mot cuisine est un terme général qui exprime tout un ensemble; c'est en ce sens qu'on disait autrefois 'les cuisines.' Et lors même que votre programme vous dit simplement 'une cuisine,' vous ne lui donnez pas satisfaction par une pièce unique, si grande soit-elle, il vous faut penser qu'on désigne par là tout le service de la bouche qui dans les maison riches, est très compliqué." J. Guadet, *Éléments et Théorie de l'architecture* (Paris: Librairie de la Construction Moderne, 1902), 121-122, quoted in Eleb-Vidal, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 273.

<sup>17</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*11. Briseux, *L'Architecte moderne ou l'art de bien bâtir pour toutes sortes de personnes tant pour les maisons de particuliers que pour les palais* (Claude Jombert, 1728), 56. Jacques-François Blondel, *De la distribution des maisons de plaisance et de la décoration des édifices en général* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1737), 83. Charles-Antoine Jombert, *Architecture moderne, ou l'art de bien bâtir pour toutes sortes de personnes* (Paris: Chez l'Auteur, Libraire du Génie et de l'Artillerie, rue Dauphine, à l'Image Notre-Dame, 1764), 114. Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 191. AN T 208/2, f. 2.

<sup>18</sup> AN T 447/3, f. 3. Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*11.

<sup>19</sup> White, AN T 212/1. Gray, AN T 208/8, f. 140. AN T 261/4.

<sup>20</sup> Louis Savot, *L'Architecture française des bastimens particuliers. Composée par Me. Louis Savot, Medecin du Roy, et de la Faculté de Medecine en l'Université de Paris. Où il est traité non seulement des mesures et proportions que doit avoir un bastiment, tant en son toutet pourpris qu'en chacune de ses parties; mais aussi de plusieurs autres choses concernant ce sujet, utiles et avantageuses, non seulement pour les bourgeois et seigneurs qui font bastir, mais aussi pour beaucoup d'autres sortes de personnes, comme il se verra à al table des Chapitres.* (Paris: Sébastien Cramoisy, 1624), 67.

<sup>21</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 83. Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 192. AN T 208/8, f. 140. AN T 261/4, f. 10.

have provided one of the only highlights against the otherwise muted whites and grays.<sup>22</sup>

Near the range (and often forming an L with it), an open stone hearth dominated the space of the kitchen; here large roasts or cauldrons cooked over charcoal and wood. Throughout the kitchen, shelves and hooks embedded in the walls held utensils and copper and iron cookware.<sup>23</sup> In the center of the room, at least one large wooden table provided space for preparatory work, and a carved stone sink in the corner for washing might also have supplied water through a faucet.<sup>24</sup> To facilitate cleaning, the stone floor gently sloped toward a drain in an exterior wall.<sup>25</sup>

These features varied in scale according to the overall dimensions of the *hôtel*, but generally otherwise remained qualitatively the same. The main challenge facing builders was not the size or internal design of the kitchen but rather its orientation with respect to the rest of the residence. This debate began early in the seventeenth century, when architects started to question the wisdom of integrating the kitchen too closely with the *corps de logis*.

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<sup>22</sup> AN T 261/1. “Le fourneau potager fait en rouge une deuxieme fois contient 12p sur 5p<sup>o</sup> de pourtour 1 1/2 12s.” For a brief history of the innovation of the stove, see Sylvie Girard, *Histoire des objets de cuisine et de gourmandise* (Paris: Jacques Grancher, 1991), 225.

<sup>23</sup> “Plus avoir deposé cinquante neuf crochets a patte sur les planches qui supportent la batterie de cuisine pour les reposer sur d’autres tablettes neuves, en avoir fournis douze crochets neuf, en avoir racommodé douze vieux refait les pattes et les crochets et refait plusieurs pattes et crochets aux trente cinq autre vieux letout posé en place et fournis les clous pour les attacher pour fourniture et main d’oeuvre vaut la somme de 10#” (AN T 261/1). “plus fourny une douzaine de clou à crochet pour la cuisine de 2. p.e 1/2 a 2s pièce pour 1# 4s” (AN T 254.). See also AN T 208/3 (1787). Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l’architecture*, 193.

<sup>24</sup> Work tables appear in several kitchens in Blondel (1752). See for example, Distribution XVI, plate 2, and Distribution XXX, plate 1. “In the middle of the room there will be a long table of beech wood.” Ibid. Sinks are mentioned in a number of architectural treatises; see for example, Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l’architecture*, 193.

<sup>25</sup> Briseux, *L’Architecte moderne*, 56. Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 114.

### 3. Spatial Orientation

Sixteenth-century French residences typically situated the kitchen either in an isolated wing or under the *corps de logis*. Each location had its advantages and drawbacks. Removing the kitchen to a wing reduced the risks of fire, noise, and odors, but such a design also required a considerable amount of space.<sup>26</sup> Alternatively, one could place the kitchen in the basement below the *corps de logis*, saving space and, more important, allowing for easier and faster communication between kitchen and dining areas.<sup>27</sup> Basement kitchens, however, could introduce the kitchen's annoying sounds and smells into the *corps de logis*. Comfort was essentially a function of distance, and designers sought to balance a kitchen's sensory impact with its ability to serve meals conveniently.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, both basement and wing kitchens continued to appear. In 1623, Pierre Le Muet generally placed kitchens far from living areas; when confronted with the issue of basement kitchens, however, he did not rule them out.<sup>28</sup> Rather than eliminate such a configuration from an architect's catalogue, Le Muet instead provided a bit of advice on the design of subterranean kitchens, noting that they might benefit from a partial elevation, leaving just half of their height below ground.<sup>29</sup> Otherwise, though arguably the inventor of the dining room, Le Muet had little say about the source of its delights. Other early seventeenth-century architects were

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<sup>26</sup> Mignot, "De la cuisine à la salle à manger," 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Pierre Le Muet, *Manière de bien bastir pour toutes sortes de personnes. Par Pierre Le Muet, architecte ordinaire du Roy, & conducteur des desseins des fortifications en la province de Picardie* (Paris: Francois Langlois dict Chartres, 1647), 4. Unfortunately, I was unable to consult the 1623 edition.

similarly silent on the topic of kitchen location. Writing one year after Le Muet, Louis Savot recommended the installation of tall and well-built chimneys to protect upper floors from kitchen smoke, but likewise expressed no clear preference for ground floor or basement kitchens.<sup>30</sup>

Around the middle of the seventeenth century, some architects began to advocate a specific configuration, placing the kitchen at ground level, but still below the residence's main living apartments, which were raised to the second floor.<sup>31</sup> This arrangement was allegedly "Roman" in design, leaving room on the ground floor for servants' areas or shops.<sup>32</sup> The wing or basement kitchens were by contrast "French" configurations. Such dialogue between "ancient" and "modern" architecture colored much of the discourse of late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century treatises on domestic architecture, and to some degree "ancient" and "modern" trends in architectural fashion pushed the kitchen from place to place.<sup>33</sup> After two decades of popularity, the "Roman" configuration came under attack in 1673, when one architect suggested that his readers abandon the practice of placing kitchens beneath the *corps de logis*.<sup>34</sup> According to François Blondel, such a kitchen's "noise" and "bad odor" disturbed occupants of

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<sup>30</sup> Savot, *Architecture française des bastimens particuliers*, 66.

<sup>31</sup> Mignot, "De la cuisine à la salle à manger," 16-18. I am numbering the floors according to American convention. In French usage, the *appartement* was moved from the *rez-de-chaussée* to the *premier étage*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>33</sup> This preference for Roman design proved cyclical and was revived in L.A. Dubut, *Architecture civile. Maisons de ville et de campagne de toutes formes et de tous genres, projetées pour être construites sur des terrains de différentes grandeurs; ouvrage utile à tous Constructeurs et Entrepreneurs, et à toutes Personnes qui, ayant quelque connaissances en construction, veulent elles-mêmes diriger leur Bâtimens*. (Paris: J.M. Eberhart, 1803). Dubut placed all kitchens in the *corps de logis*; most were on the ground floor without even a mezzanine to insulate them from the apartments above.

<sup>34</sup> Mignot, "De la cuisine à la salle à manger," 30. Mignot identifies the period 1640-1660 as the height of the popularity of the "Roman" kitchen.

above rooms. Worst of all, residents might dine over such a kitchen, and “nothing [is] as disagreeable as the smell of the kitchen and meats while meals are served.”<sup>35</sup>

Despite a few isolated trends, no general consensus governed kitchen orientation during the seventeenth century. This lack of agreement is perhaps unsurprising, given the general neglect of servant areas during the seventeenth century. For example, though Savot directed builders to construct kitchens appropriate to the overall scale of the *hôtel*, he provided the same general advice for the sizes of ovens and servant dining areas.<sup>36</sup> Describing the last, Savot more clearly expressed his attitude toward servant spaces: “The rest of its proportions are of little concern since this room remains out of sight of visitors and is destined only for servants’ comfort [*commodité*].”<sup>37</sup> While a kitchen might grow in proportion to the grandeur of an *hôtel*, the specifics of its function remained beyond the direct concern of its masters. By matching the residence’s overall size, a kitchen merely followed the dimensions of the other discrete units which comprised the *hôtel*. Nonetheless, in this period the kitchen still constituted a sign of luxury.<sup>38</sup> Thus in an extremely limited fashion seventeenth-century kitchens could help to reflect the status of their owners. Otherwise, any space given over to servants’ labors typically did not merit any special treatment. As late as 1691, Pierre Bullet declined to advocate any particular

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<sup>35</sup> Louis Savot, *L'Architecture française des bastimens particuliers. Composée par Me. Louis Savot [...] avec des figures et des notes de M. Blondel* (Paris: F. Clouzier l'aîné, 1673), 42. quoted in Mignot, "De la cuisine à la salle à manger," 21. Mignot's chronology of the changing patterns of kitchen orientation is likely skewed, since he attributes these remarks to Savot and implies that they are contemporaneous with Pierre Le Muet, *Manière de bien bastir pour toutes sortes de personnes* (Paris: François Langlois, 1623). It is far more likely that they belong to François Blondel, who edited the 1673 edition.

<sup>36</sup> Savot, *Architecture française des bastimens particuliers*, 66, 67-68. “The kitchen will be larger and more spacious, as a whole and in its parts, in proportion to the size of the rest of the residence.”

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 68. The *salle de commun* was typically located adjacent to the kitchen for convenience.

<sup>38</sup> Eleb-Vidal, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 273. See Guadet, 116 and 121-122.



configuration of kitchen space, presenting instead only a short tutorial on the construction of stoves.<sup>39</sup> Little more than a kitchen's overall size and relative isolation usually attracted architects' attention.

By contrast, a well-defined consensus emerged after Sebastian Leblond published his "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans" in 1710.<sup>40</sup> Like his predecessors, Leblond continued to refer to some servant areas as "lost rooms [*pièces perdues*], because their usage serves only domestics."<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Leblond expressed a far greater interest in the design of the kitchen and its internal functions. He sought to eliminate the construction of basement kitchens, arguing that kitchens should instead be placed exclusively in the ground floor wings of an *hôtel*. This position rapidly became the norm, and every architect after Leblond followed his lead.

#### **4. *La Distribution***

Leblond categorically ruled out the use of subterranean kitchens, noting that they were expensive, offensive to the senses, and even dangerous.<sup>42</sup> Later architects agreed with his assessment and sought to limit the practice. In 1728, Charles-Etienne Briseux stressed the undesirability of such a location: "The kitchen and *office* are to be placed

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<sup>39</sup> [Pierre] Bullet, *L'Architecture pratique, qui comprend le détail du toisé et du devis des ouvrages de maçonnerie, charpenterie, menuiserie, serrurerie, plomberie, vitrerie, ardoise, tuille, pavé de grais et impression. Avec une explication de la coutume sur le titre es servitudes et rapports qui regardent les basitmens. Ouvrage tres-necessaire aux architectes, aux experts, et à tous ceux qui veulent bastir.* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1691), 62-63.

<sup>40</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*1-185\*14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 185\*4. "pieces perduës, parce qu'elles ne servent en partie que pour les Domestiques."

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 185\*3.

under the *corps de logis* only when there is absolutely no other space.”<sup>43</sup> In 1764, Jombert likewise suggested building a kitchen below ground only when one was “absolutely obliged by the lack of space at the building site, or for other reasons.”<sup>44</sup>

Yet as early as 1710, Leblond noted that kitchens already were “ordinarily on the ground floor” and only “sometimes” in the basement.<sup>45</sup> Leblond moreover claimed that “at present we are accustomed” to place kitchens above ground.<sup>46</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century, however, architects continued to rail against underground kitchens. I would suggest that they intended to assert their own modernity; to a large extent, they employed the basement kitchen as the representation of an outmoded domestic architecture. Jombert clearly situated basement kitchens in the past, yet continued to worry about their potential consequences: “one *had imagined* placing kitchens underground below the main living area, but even greater inconveniences *resulted*.”<sup>47</sup>

The most “modern” aspect of eighteenth-century architecture was its emphasis on *la distribution*, or architectural site planning.<sup>48</sup> *La distribution* encompassed an entire residential site; as a result, areas outside the *corps de logis* suddenly became far more

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<sup>43</sup> Briseux, *L'Architecte moderne*, 56-57.

<sup>44</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 114.

<sup>45</sup> Daviler, *Cours d'architecture*, 2:537. The *Encyclopédie* states the kitchen's typical location in almost identical terms. See Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1772), s.v. "Cuisine."

<sup>46</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3. "C'est ainsi qu'on a coûtume présentement de disposer ces pieces;"

<sup>47</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 113. Emphasis mine.

<sup>48</sup> I borrow the translation “space planning” from Benhamou, "Parallel Walls, Parallel Worlds," 2 and n. 7. While Benhamou admits that “site planning” is the primary definition given by the *Encyclopédie* for “Distribution,” she chooses instead to focus on “space planning,” the design of interior spaces. I believe such a distinction undermines the fundamental premise of *la distribution*, which apprehended domestic space as an organic whole. The integration of site elements depended on the successful design of interior space, and vice versa.

interesting to eighteenth-century architects. The *Encyclopédie*'s entry for "Distribution" reveals the logic behind the new style:

Because it is not sufficient that the principal body of the building should be distributed advantageously and comfortably, it is also necessary that those which depend on it are not only placed according to their uses, but that they are also properly situated following their ends and the relationship that each has with the building and the different people who inhabit it, such as the buildings of the kitchens, offices, stables, carriage houses, as well as their courtyards;<sup>49</sup>

Architects working in the spirit of *la distribution* could not simply ignore or hide offending spaces within a residence. Moreover, *la distribution* was closely linked to domestic comfort; increasingly architects focused on the design of servant spaces – such as stables, carriage houses and work yards – which could directly or indirectly affect comfort. Among these servant areas, the kitchen generated the most significant challenges.

French architects trumpeted their achievements in the art of *la distribution*, in which they claimed national excellence: "*la distribution* in France is pushed to the highest degree of perfection."<sup>50</sup> Skilled implementation of the tenets of *distribution* also demonstrated the superiority of modern architecture over ancient Greek and Roman designs. According to one eighteenth-century architect, in the organization of interior space, he and his colleagues had "surpassed the Ancients."<sup>51</sup> Ancient architecture remained prized mainly for its external form rather than its internal design. Modern architects were encouraged to emulate ancient exteriors, since "modern architecture is

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<sup>49</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Distribution." Although described in detail in the *Encyclopédie*, the architectural sense of *distribution* did not appear in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* until 1835.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française, ou recueil des plans, elevations, coupes, et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtels et édifices les plus considérables de Paris, ainsi que des châteaux et maisons de plaisance situés aux environs de cette ville, ou en d'autres endroits de la France, bâtis par les plus célèbres architectes, et mesurés exactement sur les lieux* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1752), 21.

only beautiful when it approaches the taste of ancient architecture.”<sup>52</sup> Jacques-François Blondel, a “great theorist” of eighteenth-century architecture and author of the *Encyclopédie* article “Distribution”, expounded on the debt contemporary architects owed to the Ancients; “we are forced to recognize that they are greatly superior to us in the exterior decoration of their buildings: to convince ourselves we need only cast an eye on the fragments which remain from antiquity, and we will be bound to admit that our most beautiful Architecture of the last century is only worthy because it approaches these excellent originals.”<sup>53</sup>

Blondel’s emphasis on the superiority of the Ancients’ “exterior decoration” highlights the perceived chasm separating ancient aesthetics from modern imitations. Yet modern architecture could express its own genius through its focus on internal spaces. This spatial shift from exterior to interior followed the emergence of the new architectural ideal of comfort, which eighteenth-century architects found absent in ancient buildings; “Greek structures and the majority of those of the Romans were more commendable for exterior magnificence outside than for interior comfort.”<sup>54</sup> To be sure, the architectural categories “ancient” and “modern” were hardly polar opposites: in the article “Moderne,” the *Encyclopédie* distinguished modern architecture as primarily defined against gothic antecedents, not ancient forms. In architecture, “modern” was

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<sup>52</sup> Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Moderne.”

<sup>53</sup> Blondel, *Architecture française*, 21-22. According to a handwritten note (likely by the Marquis de Paulmy), “[Blondel] est un des plus grands theoriciens de son art que nous ayons en France.” See BNF Arsenal copy (4° ScA 4144). Eleb-Vidal concurs with this assessment of Blondel’s talents, also calling him a “grand théoricien” (Eleb-Vidal, *Architectures de la vie privée*, 40). Benhamou likewise cites Blondel’s remarkable achievements, which included the contribution of over 400 articles to the *Encyclopédie* (Benhamou, “Parallel Walls, Parallel Worlds,” 1).

<sup>54</sup> Blondel, *Architecture française*, 21.

“not in absolute opposition to that which is old, but to that which was in bad taste.”<sup>55</sup>

Attention to *la distribution* indicated a truly modern architect; moreover, it acted as the modern complement to Classical Roman and Greek orders.<sup>56</sup> Orders could supply external aesthetic beauty while *la distribution* focused instead on the functional needs of each interior room.

If *la distribution* acted as the central element of the new architectural style, the design of the kitchen served as its critical indicator. In 1728, Charles-Etienne Briseux declared, “It is in this section principally that one knows whether an architect is skilled in *la distribution*.”<sup>57</sup> Briseux was not alone in this assertion; forty years later, Charles-Antoine Jombert, would extend this claim.<sup>58</sup> Implicitly these assertions were linked to “modern” architecture; Briseux’s and Jombert’s works were respectively entitled *l’Architecte moderne* and *l’Architecture moderne*. As a one of the most important focal points of *la distribution*, kitchens played a central role in the reconfiguration of domestic space into an explicitly modern form.

While the seventeenth-century kitchen had notably lacked a fixed location, modern architecture’s *la distribution* imposed a strict set of rules on kitchen placement. *La distribution* imagined a system of formal relationships organizing interior space; the fundamental strategy aimed to effect a clear separation of servant and master spaces within the *hôtel*. This act of division required first that “master” and “servant” areas be labeled as such. To some degree, specific terminology already indicated the extent of the

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<sup>55</sup> Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Moderne.”

<sup>56</sup> The eighteenth-century architectural lexicon included five Classical orders: Doric, Tuscan, Ionic, Corinthian, and composite, or Roman. See, for example, “Ordre” in the *Encyclopédie*.

<sup>57</sup> Briseux, *L’Architecte moderne*, 56.

<sup>58</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 113.

master's space. In theory, the *corps de logis* or *appartement* included the master's living spaces, such as salon, bedrooms, dining areas, and library, among others. In practice these delineations could lack precision; the master's space was often understood as simply wherever the master happened to be. "Passages frequented by the Masters" were just as sacrosanct as the *corps de logis* itself.<sup>59</sup> Servants likewise could taint an area merely by occupying it, injecting further ambiguity into the division of master and servant spaces. Even an outdoor courtyard could be "dirtied" or "crowded" by servants' work.<sup>60</sup>

The social implications of such an architectural plan were hardly subtle. By strengthening and redefining the relationships between the *corps de logis* and its dependent spaces, *la distribution* explicitly sought to regulate interactions between masters and servants. Ideally, architects aimed to design a domestic space where "domestics can do their service without troubling their masters."<sup>61</sup> Such a disappearing act required substantial foresight, but its potential benefits were immense: "It is by this arrangement that one finds the comforts of life, which naturally brings us to cherish what is good for us, and to avoid all which can harm us."<sup>62</sup>

In order to separate the comfort of the *corps de logis* from the elements which might threaten it, architects paid particular attention to the relative position of the kitchen within an *hôtel*. On smaller plots, Leblond placed the kitchen along with the stables at the ends of an *hôtel*'s wings, allowing them both to face the street. By grouping kitchen

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<sup>59</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 82.

<sup>60</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3.

<sup>61</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Distribution."

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

and stables together, Leblond underscored their shared nature as breeding grounds of filth. “The best placement of the stables and kitchen is at the extremity of the wings and on the street, in order muck out the former without passing through the main courtyard.”<sup>63</sup> Such an orientation “drained away horse urine” just as one used kitchen sinks to drain the kitchen’s “water and filth.”<sup>64</sup> Waste from both kitchen and stables posed analogous problems to which Leblond offered the same solution: isolation from the interior space of the *hôtel* in favor of proximity to the dumping site of the public street. Such isolation proved a relatively popular strategy. Charles-Antoine Jombert preferred this arrangement of kitchens and stables facing the street, calling it “ideal [...] for the ease of draining water and for convenience of service.”<sup>65</sup>

If an *hôtel* happened to occupy a larger plot of land, Leblond proposed that a kitchen open onto a smaller courtyard distinct from the *hôtel*’s main entrance. This kitchen might share the smaller courtyard with the stables in order to ensure that “the main courtyard is never dirtied or crowded.”<sup>66</sup> Better yet, on the largest of sites the kitchen could have its own exclusive courtyard, resulting in an “extremely convenient” arrangement.<sup>67</sup> Other eighteenth-century French architects embraced this design; in 1728 Briseux offered very nearly the same advice, counseling readers, “When one can place them at will, it is suitable to put them at the end of the wings on the street, but if the site was extremely large, it would be necessary to make a Courtyard for the Kitchen and

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<sup>63</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 115.

<sup>66</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Office, where they could be situated as one wished.”<sup>68</sup> Jacques-François Blondel likewise encouraged the use of separate courtyards to solve drainage problems; such yards ensured that “the evacuation of dirty water and other waste coming from the Kitchen” transpired far from the *corps de logis*.<sup>69</sup> Jombert similarly counseled readers to situate an *hôtel* on “a sufficiently spacious property to make an individual courtyard for the kitchen where one can procure all the advantages it needs.”<sup>70</sup> Of course, granting the kitchen its own courtyard only shifted the problem out of sight. Receipts for having “trash removed from the courtyard” reveal the ongoing problem of kitchen waste.<sup>71</sup>

Nonetheless, *la distribution* aimed to achieve more than simply isolate the kitchen from the *corps de logis*. Kitchens would of course always need to maintain some form of communication with dining areas. Moreover, as kitchens moved farther away, ever-increasing numbers of servants were required to bring food to the table, often relying on cumbersome covered dishes, particularly during inclement weather.<sup>72</sup> *La distribution* sought to integrate the kitchen into domestic space while preventing the invasion of undesirable pollution. The same factors that had concerned seventeenth-century architects motivated those of the eighteenth-century. Worries about odors and noise continued to preoccupy kitchen designers; new threats of pollution now joined them. Meanwhile other fears faded away; eighteenth-century architects, for example, expressed little

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<sup>68</sup> Briseux, *L'Architecte moderne*, 56-57.

<sup>69</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 82.

<sup>70</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 115.

<sup>71</sup> AN T 208/6.

<sup>72</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3. Jombert also recommended “Dans ce cas [kitchen on courtyard] il est à propos de ménager des dégagemens pour arriver à couvert de la cuisine à la salle à manger.” Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 114.



concern about risks of fire.<sup>73</sup> More strikingly, novel concerns about the internal state of the kitchen – and its potential for corruption – complemented and even overshadowed the sensory insults of the seventeenth-century kitchen.

## 5. Comfort and Corruption

Eighteenth-century guidelines for the kitchen's spatial orientation reflected underlying concerns about comfort and corruption. Architects viewed kitchens as potentially polluted spaces which could disturb household tranquility; as a result, shifting locations could minimize discomfort but never fully eliminated it. At stake was domestic *commodité*, a rather broad term which could translate as “comfort” or “convenience.”<sup>74</sup> Depending on whether it involved masters or servants, *commodité* could assume very different meanings. Isolation from the sights, smells, and sounds of the kitchen and other servant spaces largely aimed to guarantee masters' *commodité*. Servants' *commodité*, by contrast, tended to follow functional convenience; for example, a stove built to the proper

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<sup>73</sup> Other than a few cursory remarks regarding the prevention of accidents, eighteenth-century architectural manuals largely ignored the subject. To some degree, the problem had already been solved. Stone vaulting (or at the very least plastering) would prevent most “accidens du feu.” Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 114. Leblond, “De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans,” 185\*11. Leblond is the only architect to suggest an alternative to stone vaulting. and municipal construction laws limited the risk of kitchen fires. Paris and other cities required the “tour de chat,” a half-foot or more of space separating the stove from the wall. Bullet, *L'Architecture pratique*, 307-308. M. Bullet, *Architecture pratique, qui comprend la construction générale et particulière des Bâtimens; le Détail, les Toisé et Devis de chaque partie; savoir, Maçonnerie, Charpenterie, Couverture, Menuiserie, Serrurerie, Vitrierie, Plomberie, Peinture d'Impression, Dorure, Sculpture, Marbrerie, Miroiterie, Poëlerie, etc. etc.* (Paris: Hérisant Fils, Libraire, rue S. Jacques, 1768), 487-488.

<sup>74</sup> The 1762 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* defined *commodité* as “Chose commode, état, situation commode, moyen commode.” *Commode* in turn meant “Qui est aisé, propre, convenable, dont l'usage est utile & facile” Architects also frequently referred to *convenance*, which is often translated as “convenience” or “decorum.” See Benhamou, “Parallel Walls, Parallel Worlds,” 1.

height or a reliable supply of water acted in the interest of servants' *commodité*.<sup>75</sup>

Sebastian Leblond sought to arrange servant space in "*une maniere fort commode*;" in this case, one might best render *commode* as "convenient," giving us "an extremely convenient manner." The essential difference lay in the intended audience of architectural *commodité*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, architects tended to focus far more on the *commodité* of masters than of servants. Yet the design of servant space had a direct bearing on the comfort of masters. Blondel believed that attention to design could join "good taste and elegance to the ease of service of Domestic." <sup>76</sup> To guarantee the masters' *commodité*, architects aimed to effect a separation between servants and masters, essentially dividing residential space into zones of comfort and discomfort. In effect, the boundary between domestic space and the external inconveniences of urban life was joined by an additional internal division between servant space and master space. Yet to preserve comfort in the masters' *corps de logis* or *appartements*, designers increasingly sought to refine the architecture of servant spaces. In this effort to redesign servant space, no room generated as much debate as the kitchen.

### *Comfort*

In large part, domestic comfort was imagined as an absence of kitchen pollution. The notion of the kitchen as a polluting space was hardly new. When in 1624 Louis Savot counseled readers to construct the kitchen's chimney with regard to upper floors,

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<sup>75</sup> Savot, *Architecture française des bastimens particuliers*, 67. Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*11.

<sup>76</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 2:123.

he in turn drew this recommendation from the advice given by the sixteenth-century architect Philibert de Lorme on the management of the kitchen's effluvia.<sup>77</sup> Yet with the emphasis on *la distribution*, architects increasingly worried about the effect kitchen smoke would have on neighboring space. These fumes were particularly pervasive; kitchens reeked of "the odor of Charcoal, which could be communicated to the Apartments."<sup>78</sup> Even when all other chimneys went cold, kitchens continued to belch smoke.<sup>79</sup> Kitchen smoke could also physically damage objects it enveloped; it "spoiled and blackened furniture" in a residence.<sup>80</sup> Whether the kitchen sat in the basement or on the ground floor was increasingly irrelevant; if the kitchen was "too close, the bad odor which it continuously exhales, joined to the harmful odor of charcoal and the smoke of dishes, penetrates the apartments, where it spoils and blackens paintings and gilding."<sup>81</sup> Of course smoke imperiled more than just comfort: the *Gazette de santé* frequently reminded readers of the dangers of charcoal fumes.<sup>82</sup> One cook sought to limit the "accidents to which charcoal smoke frequently exposed him."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Savot, *Architecture française des bastimens particuliers*, 66, Philibert Delorme, *Le Premier tome de l'architecture* (Paris: Federic Morel, 1567), 52-53.

<sup>78</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 38.

<sup>79</sup> Jean Marot, *L'Architecture française, ou recueil des plans, elevations, coupes et profils des églises, palais, hôtels et maisons particulières de Paris, et des Châteaux et maisons de campagne ou de plaisance des environs, et de plusieurs autres endroits de France, bâtis nouvellement par les plus habils architectes, et levés et mesurés exactement sur les lieux* (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1727), 96. The "Veue et perspective de l'Hostel de Bautru, du dessien de Mr. le Veau" shows black smoke rising from the kitchen wing's chimney and none from any of the others.

<sup>80</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3. "d'où cette mauvaise odeur, jointe à celle du charbon et des viandes, s'exhaloit ensuite jusques dans les Apartemens, dont elle gâtoit et noircissoit les meubles"

<sup>81</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 113.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, *Gazette de santé*, 19 January 1775, 26 January 1775, 9 March 1775, 23 March 1775.

<sup>83</sup> Louis Nivert, *Nouveau fourneaux économiques et portatifs, extrait de la Gazette de santé, du dimanche 1er octobre 1780, no. 40*. (Paris: Veuve Ballard et fils, 1781).

The dangers of smoke were completely eclipsed, however, by the kitchen's odor. A 1786 guide to healthful living counseled readers to ensure "the air you breathe is clear, pure, and calm. Flee that which is laden with a bad smell or the emanations of a cesspool."<sup>84</sup> One could hardly write a better description of the eighteenth-century kitchen. If today the kitchen's fragrance signifies welcome domesticity, in the eighteenth century it signaled decay. "Worst was the kitchen," declares Alain Corbin in his history of odors; he identifies the kitchen as the epicenter of the foul stench of domesticity (and in particular its sink) whose fetid exhalations threatened to infect the rest of the household.<sup>85</sup> Such concerns first surfaced in 1673 when François Blondel lamented "the odor of the kitchen and meats."<sup>86</sup> This smell of food played a key role in Sebastian Leblond's attack on kitchen stench; when joined with charcoal and wastewater odors, it invaded the rest of the residence.<sup>87</sup> Contemporary experiments with odors reinforced the notion that the kitchen's food held particularly large potential for foul emanations. Opening one sample of meat and water unleashed a "putrid and cadaverous odor."<sup>88</sup> Fish often acted as another olfactory offender. To remove the "infected odor" of fish that was "a bit off," one cookbook suggested working outside: "There I let all of this unbearable odor evaporate; then I throw this water far away. It smells very bad."<sup>89</sup> Washing any

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<sup>84</sup> *Étrennes aux vivans, ou l'art de vivre agréablement sans nuire à sa santé*, (Paris: Guill. Leclerc, 1786), 2.

<sup>85</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), 166.

<sup>86</sup> Savot, *Architecture française des bastimens particuliers*, 42.

<sup>87</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3.

<sup>88</sup> *Chimie du goût et de l'odorat*, (Paris: P.G. Le Mercier, 1755), xiv.

<sup>89</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens dont le but est la santé, l'économie et la perfection de la théorie. A l'usage des maîtresses de maison qui ne dédaignent pas de descendre jusqu'au détail de leur ménage, soit à la ville, soit à la campagne.*, (Paris, London: Onfroy, 1782), 32.

fish, in fact, would spew foul-smelling water from the kitchen.<sup>90</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier conceded that the street filth of Paris was “necessarily black” thanks to particles of iron flaking off of carriage wheels, “but the water flowing from kitchens renders it stinking.”<sup>91</sup>

The sensory threats did not end with smoke and odors; noise pollution regularly joined them on the list of complaints. Although urban street noise elicited some concern, it could be avoided through careful orientation of the *corps de logis*.<sup>92</sup> Kitchen noise, however, presented a more pervasive threat. Much of the work of domestics took place in the *hôtel*'s courtyards; without sufficient isolation these activities would leave masters “inconvenienced by noise.”<sup>93</sup> The kitchen's location could influence the amount of noise generated; basement kitchens left their masters “extremely inconvenienced by the noise made by Domestics going up and down.”<sup>94</sup> In any case, staircases leading to the kitchen required a design that prevented masters from being “interrupted by the noise of Domestics constantly going up and down.”<sup>95</sup> Far from the “novel feature of domestic comfort” described by one architectural historian, a communicating staircase could admit the nuisances of the kitchen directly to dining and living areas.<sup>96</sup> Chief among the tasks of the *maître d'hôtel* was to prevent, “as much as he can, the noise and tumult in the

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<sup>90</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 193.

<sup>91</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 1:213.

<sup>92</sup> Leblond, “De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans,” 185\*1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 185\*3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Briseux, *L'Architecte moderne*, 56.

<sup>96</sup> Michel Gallet, *Paris Domestic Architecture of the 18th Century* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972), 65.

kitchen and *office*.<sup>97</sup> Kitchens too close to the *corps de logis* left their masters “ceaselessly inconvenienced by the noise made by domestics and the people working to prepare food there.”<sup>98</sup> Annotations to a 1722 plan for the Palais de Bourbon note the “care one had taken” in placing the bedroom above other rooms, “in order to avoid [...] the noise and odor of the kitchen.”<sup>99</sup> In one account of a kitchen brawl, the dispute was settled only after the “noise of their racket” reached the “Master’s ears,” prompting him to investigate “what was happening in his house.”<sup>100</sup>

The sight of the kitchen could be equally offensive. Architects aimed to place the kitchen out of view of its masters and likewise its masters away from the eyes of those who worked in the kitchen. To this end, Leblond suggested that the *corps de logis* act as a barrier between the entrance courtyard and the garden; “there one is less exposed to the noise of the street and to the sight of Domestics and strangers because one is not obliged to cross a Courtyard to go to the Garden”<sup>101</sup> Here Leblond lumped servants, street noise, and strangers into one threatening category: all jeopardized domestic tranquility. These foreign elements threatened to invade and pollute the private space of the household just as kitchen fumes might damage art and furnishings. Kitchens could host an especially dense population of servants whose wandering eyes threatened to disrupt domestic comfort; in addition to their cooks, kitchens often filled with a “crowd” of other

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<sup>97</sup> Pierre Collet, *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques* (Paris: Debure l'aîné, Herissant, Herissant, Tilliard, 1758), 306. The *office* prepared fruits and sweets; it could be incorporated into the kitchen or have its own distinct space.

<sup>98</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 113.

<sup>99</sup> Blondel, *Architecture française*, 269.

<sup>100</sup> *Relation de ce qui s'est fait et passé au sujet d'une Cuisinière qui avoit trois maris vivans*, (Paris: Claude Hérisant, 1775).

<sup>101</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*1-185\*2.

household domestics jostling to take their meals.<sup>102</sup> Porters arriving with deliveries also clogged kitchens with a crowd of outsiders.<sup>103</sup> To curb this sort human pollution emanating from the kitchen, some architects sought to restrain the movement of its laborers.

I have only placed doors at the extremities of its Façade, in order to allow less freedom to the Kitchen staff on the side of the Terrace where it is situated, and which lays in view of the Château. I preferred to limit them to the exits on the Courtyard which is intended for them.<sup>104</sup>

Here the architect exposed the fundamental opposition between comfort and pollution. The kitchen sat at the very intersection of the two spaces. By turning its back to the *corps de logis* and hiding its workers and suppliers from sight, the kitchen would not endanger the comfort of those on the other side. A similar design by another architect gave the kitchen “an exit on the street, detached and distinct from the main entrance.”<sup>105</sup> Masters and their guests could come and go without encountering the kitchen’s exhalations, human or otherwise. By limiting access to the rest of the *hôtel*, architects concealed the spectacle of cooks going about their labors.

In an extreme fantasy of screening the kitchen from sight, it might remain completely invisible, as suggested in Jean-François de Bastide’s novel, *La Petite maison* (1753). Sitting down to dinner, a guest was surprised to find an absence of servants lurking about.

–“But where are the servants?” she asked. “Why this air of mystery?”

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 185\*10. Leblond urged the use of separate dining areas for servants “pour y servir à manger au Domestiques, et empêcher qu’ils n’embarrassent la Cuisine en s’y rassemblant.”

<sup>103</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l’architecture*, 201.

<sup>104</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 79.

<sup>105</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l’architecture*, 202.

-“They never come in here,” he responded, “and I thought that today it was even more prudent to banish them. They’re gossips – they would give you a bad reputation – and I respect you too much...”<sup>106</sup>

The host had engineered his house to become a site of unbridled seduction, hidden from the wandering eyes and wagging tongues of servants. This feat required the application of some ingenious technology. When the time came for dessert, “the table dropped into the kitchen – which operated in the basement – and from upstairs another table descended instantly filling the opening created in the first floor, which was protected by a balustrade of gilt iron.”<sup>107</sup> Thanks to this contraption, dishes came and went without human intervention, underscoring the disjuncture of servant and master space. According to Michel Gallet, such “ingenious devices introduced into the house were an expression of a twofold anxiety: to alleviate the drudgery of servants, but also to avoid their presence as far as possible by multiplying the means of serving oneself with the least effort.”<sup>108</sup> No humans moved between the two areas of the household; clever engineering established an impermeable barrier between *corps de logis* and kitchen.

### *Corruption*

Separation of the *corps de logis* and kitchen could protect domestic comfort from sensory insults, but did little to eliminate the actual sources of pollution. As architects became interested in the organic whole of domestic space, they began to question the salubrity of maintaining such polluted areas within residences. Pollution became not just

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<sup>106</sup> Jean-François de Bastide, *La Petite maison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 57.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>108</sup> Gallet, *Paris Domestic Architecture of the 18th Century*, 114.



a threat to comfort but also a sign of a deeper and more insidious problem: corruption of the kitchen space.

The typically identified source of infection was rather mundane; most examples of kitchen corruption could be traced ultimately to water. All kitchens required a steady water supply which was essential for food preparation and cleaning; according to one architect, “the greatest convenience a kitchen could enjoy is to have water in abundance.”<sup>109</sup> Another urged builders to situate a kitchen’s washroom “in the vicinity of a well or fountain, in order always to have water in abundance.”<sup>110</sup> A third suggested each kitchen ought to have “a tap with a basin underneath to receive water and also to wash fish.”<sup>111</sup> Unfortunately, most water entered the kitchen already bearing the germs of corruption.<sup>112</sup> To combat these impurities, some Parisian kitchens cleaned their water with sand filters; by 1750, these devices had become “indispensable for purifying water destined for drinking and for preparing food.”<sup>113</sup> Yet while sand could remove most silt and other macroscopic deposits, it supplied only an imperfect solution. One engineer suggested the addition of a sponge-based filtration system in order to remove further impurities. Even so, some water proved irredeemably foul; to his evident disgust, the

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<sup>109</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*11-185\*12. “whether through pipes coming from reservoirs or otherwise through the proximity of a well placed in one of its corners.”

<sup>110</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 114.

<sup>111</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 193.

<sup>112</sup> Daniel Roche, "Le Temps de l'eau rare du Moyen Age à l'époque moderne," *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 39, no. 2 (1984), 384-385.

<sup>113</sup> Joseph Amy, *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l'Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 4. According to Amy, such devices had been in use for “nearly two centuries.” Joly de Fleury’s household records indicate repairs to his sand-filtered fountain, MSS Joly de Fleury 2490, 111. Two such fountains are listed (in poor condition and without sand) in the notary record of the sale of a kitchen’s tools. MC ET/CV/1274 (19 April 1761).

engineer discovered that well-water, when filtered through a sponge, left behind “a rather thick and sticky snot – sensible to the finger and to the eye – like an egg white.”<sup>114</sup>

Whatever the risks of its supply, water drainage posed an even greater danger. Water flowing from kitchens typically was “greasy, unclean, and of bad odor.”<sup>115</sup> Architects concentrated their attention particularly on the issue of wastewater in subterranean kitchens, which “having no escape other than cesspools and sumps, becomes corrupted and infects the Kitchen.”<sup>116</sup> Any of these drainage systems generated complaints; Jombert lamented “the stench of cesspools and sumps which one was obliged to install in the vicinity of the basement for the drainage of kitchen water.”<sup>117</sup> Most alarming, no amount of engineering could fully eliminate the risks of infection. Any technical solution was both expensive and dangerous; moreover, it inevitably failed.

The notion of the kitchen as an infected space was genuinely novel. Prior to the eighteenth century, the kitchen may have been loud and malodorous, but it was certainly not diseased. François Blondel in 1673 had cautioned against the construction of kitchens below the *corps de logis* because they could offend the sensibility of those present above, not because they threatened their health. Otherwise architects had remained nearly silent on the relationship of health and kitchen design.<sup>118</sup> In 1710, however, the novel image of an infectious kitchen emerged, when Leblond employed it to

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>115</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 202.

<sup>116</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3.

<sup>117</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 113-114.

<sup>118</sup> Among seventeenth-century architects, Le Muet alone discusses kitchens in the context of health. In his section “Quant à la santé des appartemens,” he recommends that builders situate subterranean kitchens with half of their height above ground level. Le Muet, *Manière de bien bastir*, 4.

argue for the elimination of any underground kitchen, regardless of the rest of the residence's design. To be sure, kitchens continued to threaten the noses and ears of their masters as they always had, but now they posed the new danger of corruption. Because underground kitchens "lacked air, [their] humidity corrupted meats."<sup>119</sup> Wastewater could not drain from them easily; it too "became corrupted and infected meats."<sup>120</sup> Other architects shared Leblond's fears; Charles-Antoine Jombert worried that underground kitchens "spoiled meats and infected everything one wanted to store there."<sup>121</sup> Seventeenth-century basement kitchens had threatened merely to annoy the occupants of overhead rooms, but their eighteenth-century successors faced the far greater danger of corruption. No longer did architects worry just about discomfort caused by noise and odors; now corruption threatened to overwhelm the kitchen regardless of its immediate external sensory impact on residents above. The internal qualities of the kitchen and its contents increasingly came under scrutiny.

To some degree, situating kitchens on the ground floor could alleviate most drainage problems and reduce the risk of infection. Here water could exit through any hole in the wall; the main concern was merely a matter of providing some kind of appropriate destination, and either a courtyard or the public street would suffice. Such a system could hardly be simpler to design: in the 1770s, the Maréchal de Mirepoix's rue Saint Domingue *hôtel* had a ground level kitchen with a drainage system consisting of a "a cut and hollowed-out flagstone to drain water in a gutter passing through the thickness

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<sup>119</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Jombert, *Architecture moderne*, 114.

of the back wall; in front of this hole is an iron grate.”<sup>122</sup> Occasionally kitchens were located even higher than the ground floor, but they could likewise easily drain outside. One such kitchen located on the second floor at 36 rue du faubourg Saint Honoré drained through a pipe leading down from its washing stone.<sup>123</sup> In each of these cases, simple gravity did the work.

Nonetheless, any kitchen could spread infection. Although architects initially confined their worries to basement kitchens, even ground floor kitchens eventually developed the potential to become corrupt. Later architects expanded their concerns to any site; in 1780, one recommended that every kitchen drain “immediately outside, otherwise humidity and odor would be disagreeable.”<sup>124</sup> Even though they lacked the technical problems that plagued basement kitchens, ground floor kitchens emerged as other potential sites of corruption.

Moreover, despite the preeminence of water as a threat to a kitchen’s salubrity, other factors could also corrupt kitchen space. In fact, among domestic spaces, the kitchen was uniquely corruptible, and any number of factors could contribute to its infection. Heat, for example, was a frequent worry. Leblond recommended facing kitchens toward the north “to prevent heat from corrupting meats.”<sup>125</sup> He kept pantries far from sunlight, whose heat would also “spoil meats.”<sup>126</sup> Another architect also kept

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<sup>122</sup> AN T 208/1.

<sup>123</sup> AN T 447 (1769).

<sup>124</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 193.

<sup>125</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*2.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 185\*11.

pantries “turned to the north.”<sup>127</sup> A third noted that for kitchens a “northern exposure is favorable.”<sup>128</sup> At the same time, excessive darkness could introduce its own dangers into the kitchen. Kitchens without sizeable windows were especially at risk: “because they were only illuminated by skylights and lacked air, [their] humidity corrupted meat.”<sup>129</sup> To combat this danger, Le Camus de Mézières deemed it “essential that this room is well-lit, that the chimney and stoves receive direct light.”<sup>130</sup> Blondel’s ideal kitchen included “extremely high windows” which illuminated it from both sides.<sup>131</sup> Nonetheless, these recommendations were not always followed. After a 1757 renovation, one kitchen in the Tuileries “only received daylight from the public stair.”<sup>132</sup>

A far more insidious form of corruption could occur among cooks themselves. In the effort to construct kitchens which protected masters’ sensibilities, servant spaces risked the possibility of becoming increasingly unsupervised. Away from the master’s watchful eyes, the kitchen could easily descend into disorder, exacerbating its noise and filth. In a nightmare scenario, servants could run wild with no one to instill moral order. One conduct manual specifically referred to kitchens when it warned, “The more difficult it is for the master to know their embezzlements, the more criminal they become.”<sup>133</sup> Removed from the moralizing oversight of their masters, cooks could rapidly degenerate

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<sup>127</sup> Briseux, *L'Architecte moderne*, 56.

<sup>128</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 191.

<sup>129</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*3.

<sup>130</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 191.

<sup>131</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 83.

<sup>132</sup> AN O 1/1680 (1757).

<sup>133</sup> Claude Fleury, *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques* (Paris: Pierre Aubouin, Pierre Emery, and Charles Clouzier, 1688), 220-221.

into criminals, each risking “his soul for a pound of sugar, a piece of meat, a trifle.”<sup>134</sup>

To some degree, architects sought to impose order on the kitchen through its design.

One tactic aimed to concentrate servants’ living space and working space together. Cooks in particular often lived in or near their kitchens. In larger dwellings, a cook might have a special bedroom near the kitchen and distinct from other servants’ rooms. In the hôtel de Pompadour, for example, the cook slept in a ground floor bedroom adjacent to the main kitchen. Tucked cozily (or precariously) behind the main hearth, the cook could easily supervise the kitchen at all hours (fig. 2.1).<sup>135</sup> In smaller plans, cooks often slept inside kitchens themselves; construction records for an apartment in the Tuileries place the cook’s bed in the redesigned kitchen.<sup>136</sup> Architects admired these sorts of configurations, urging builders “as much possible” to situate the head cook’s lodging “near his work.”<sup>137</sup> If the space was too cramped to place a bedroom adjacent to the kitchen, its staff might sleep in the mezzanine above.<sup>138</sup> Often cooks slept near their kitchens in order to keep constant vigil over their contents; such proximity ensured the safety of both “their provisions and their utensils.”<sup>139</sup> Supervision of the kitchen space always took precedence over other considerations; subordinate kitchen staff thus did not need to sleep nearby. For example, an *aide de cuisine* could sleep just about anywhere; his room could “even be placed under the eaves.”<sup>140</sup> Nonetheless, the kitchen

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>135</sup> Blondel, *Architecture française*, distribution XII, plate 1.

<sup>136</sup> AN O 1/1680 (1757).

<sup>137</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 212.

<sup>138</sup> Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," 185\*12. Briseux, *L'Architecte moderne*, 56.

<sup>139</sup> Blondel, *Maisons de plaisance*, 81.

<sup>140</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 212.

could act as an important site of order for any domestic servant. Most servants were required to take their meals communally, in or near the kitchen. Conduct manuals admonished masters to forbid servants from eating in their rooms; working and eating together they at least lived under each others' gaze.<sup>141</sup>

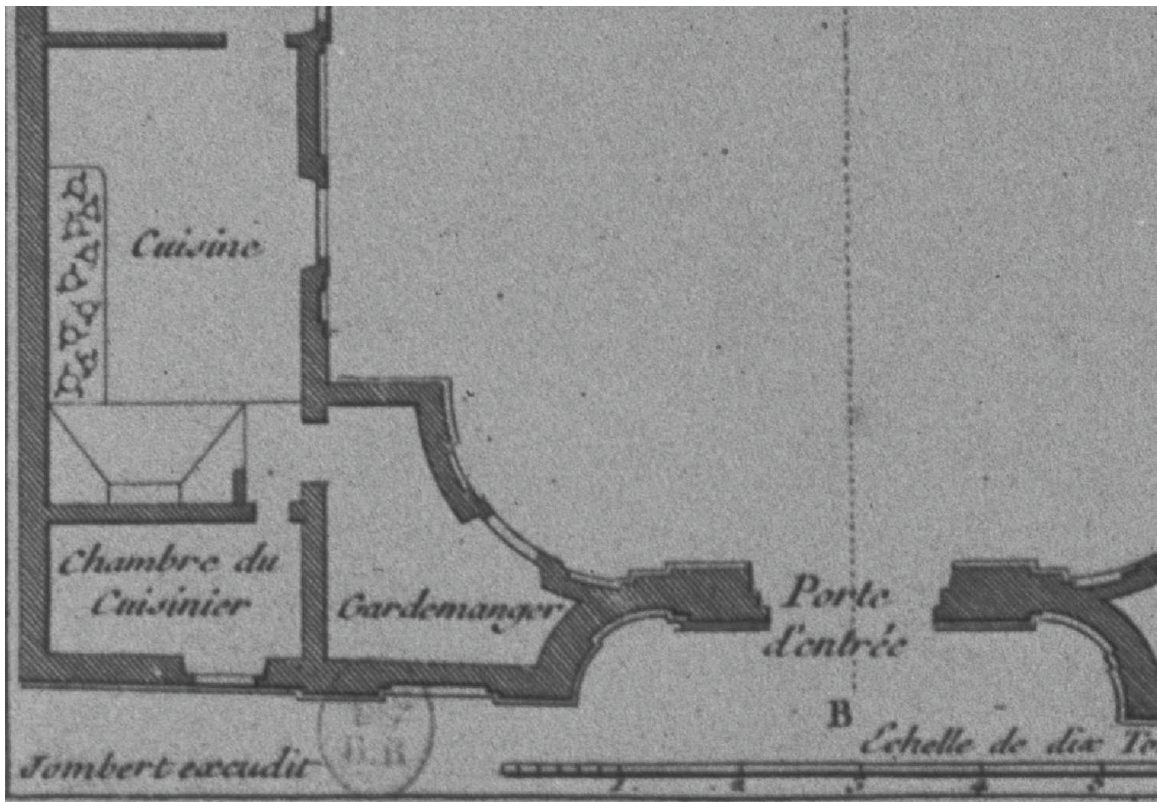


Figure 2.1. The cook's bedroom. Detail of the *Hôtel de Pompadour's* ground floor. Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1752), distribution XII, plate 1. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Such solutions assumed the cook's (or another high-ranking servant's) moral rectitude. Absent a responsible cook, however, they only exacerbated the situation by placing both servants and space out of sight. Though isolation could hide its symptoms,

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<sup>141</sup> Fleury, *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques*, 211. Collet, *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques*, 305.

infection – whether physiological or moral – could only be cured through purification of the kitchen space itself.

## 6. Purification

The myriad causes of kitchen corruption indicate the difficulties facing anyone who sought its elimination. One late eighteenth-century architect, Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, championed cleanliness as the cure. According to Le Camus de Mézières, cleanliness itself served to indicate the qualities and strengths of a kitchen, broadcasting a clear message about a kitchen's intrinsic qualities; a kitchen's cleanliness "seems to announce the excellence of its dishes."<sup>142</sup> Such an announcement was sorely needed, since kitchens naturally gravitated away from cleanliness. Left unchecked, the kitchen and its dependent spaces would rapidly become a "refuge for filth."<sup>143</sup>

To some degree, Le Camus de Mézières tried to limit contagion through assiduous attention to the fine details of kitchen design. Abandoning the precepts of *la distribution*, which had failed to solve the problem of corruption, he turned instead to the specifics of the kitchen's internal appearance. For example, he recommended "well white-washed walls [...] straight and even." Otherwise pits in the walls would "ordinarily" become "stores of filth."<sup>144</sup> Le Camus de Mézières also studied the equipment of the kitchen, which other architects ignored. Here he found ample opportunity to reduce a kitchen's potential for corruption. Work tables detached from the

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<sup>142</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 191.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.



wall to allow for easy and frequent cleaning.<sup>145</sup> Tightly fitting doors kept out rats and mice.<sup>146</sup> Even Le Camus de Mézières's suggestions for fire safety simultaneously conveyed greater cleanliness.

It would perhaps be appropriate for all window frames to be of iron in order to avoid fire accidents; one should likewise agree to make table legs of the same material. A double advantage would be gained: great ease of maintaining cleanliness and the means to avoid fire.<sup>147</sup>

These windows also promoted cleanliness through ventilation; Le Camus de Mézières recommended a tall design which opened only at the top: “several reasons require this: first, heat always rises, and through this means steam dissipates more easily; second, if the casements opened at the bottom, they would ruin dishes on the stove, create dust, and stir up filth.”<sup>148</sup> Construction records indicate that some builders sought to add windows to kitchens; late eighteenth-century renovations to one Parisian residence called for the “piercing of a bay casement window on the street to ventilate and illuminate said kitchen.”<sup>149</sup>

As Le Camus de Mézières delved into the details of kitchen design, he revealed the limitations of architecture – and in particular, of *la distribution* – to handle the problem of corruption. Kitchen architecture could at best provide the tools to achieve cleanliness while limiting the opportunities for infection. Because floors, for example, could become repositories of filth, Le Camus de Mézières recommended that they gently slope to allow

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 192-193. Le Camus de Mézières repeatedly recommends these same iron table legs, suggesting them for each of the kitchen's dependent rooms. See Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 197, 200.

<sup>148</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 192.

<sup>149</sup> AN T 208/1. The new casement window would have twenty panes.

for drainage.<sup>150</sup> Such floors ensured that “water flows easily outside, and that everything dries quickly.”<sup>151</sup> Paving stones further reduced risks of slippage and “the saddest accidents” that came from greasy or wet floors.<sup>152</sup> Responsibility for the actual maintenance of the kitchen space, however, fell to servants. For each section of the kitchen, Le Camus de Mézières recommended a regular cycle of washing to ensure cleanliness. The servants’ dining area required washing “at least once per week.”<sup>153</sup> To prevent a resurgence of pollution, each kitchen required a disciplined staff to perform its regular cleanings.

Because cleanliness ultimately required order, Le Camus de Mézières proposed an ambitious plan to exploit aesthetics to tame the kitchen. Here he most dramatically overcame the limitations faced by other architects. With the kitchen separated from the *corps de logis*, how could one ensure that servants remained under control? By harnessing the power of classical form and the genius of modern design, Le Camus de Mézières tried to project order into every corner of domestic space. For the kitchen, he suggested a distinctly masculine treatment capable of halting its otherwise inevitable slide into disorder and chaos. For its basic contours, he proposed that the kitchen follow the Tuscan order.<sup>154</sup> With its unadorned capitals and unfluted columns, this ascetic style could hardly present a more direct message: “By its proportions, the Tuscan order

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<sup>150</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 193-194.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>154</sup> Benhamou sees Jacques-François Blondel and Antoine Desgodets as making the first major departures from Classical orders in the first half of the eighteenth century (Benhamou, "Parallel Walls, Parallel Worlds," 1). Le Camus de Mézières, however, pioneered the novel use of orders as a means of controlling servant space.

proclaims force and solidity; it symbolizes a muscular and robust man.”<sup>155</sup> The Tuscan order displayed a masculinity far more raw and powerful than that of the Doric, which by contrast represented “a man of noble and becoming height.”<sup>156</sup> Other styles like Ionic and Corinthian, which represented female forms, were out of the question.<sup>157</sup> According to Le Camus de Mézières, the Tuscan order “announces, through its sense of force, the idea of a well-founded kitchen.”<sup>158</sup> Like cleanliness, masculinity was an essential sign of a uncorrupted kitchen. That Le Camus de Mézières equated masculinity with strength and solidity is not especially surprising; the interest he showed in imposing these characteristics on kitchens, however, suggests that he found these areas especially in need of the masculinizing architectural influence.

Le Camus de Mézières never specified the intended recipient of message of the kitchen’s clean and masculine design, but it likely included the servants who worked there. Departing from the more functionalist proposals of his predecessors, Le Camus de Mézières sought to handle “space, or rather a sequence of spaces, to determined sensual effect.”<sup>159</sup> Sensitive to the powerful architectural forms surrounding them, cooks would presumably have bowed to the will of their masters. Le Camus de Mézières implicitly

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<sup>155</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 22. The details of the order were no less masculine: “the base of the column is simple, beautiful; the capital likewise responds: the whole entablement masculine, and however denuded of ornament, its ensemble pleases, satisfies the view; it is a simple beauty designating force and solidity, which are the characteristics of this Order.” Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 31.

<sup>156</sup> Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 22.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>159</sup> Robin Middleton, "Introduction," in *The Genius of Architecture; or, The Analogy of that Art with our Sensations*, ed. Robin Middleton (Santa Monica: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 31. Middleton continues, “The premise of *Le génie de l'architecture* is that particular sensations are aroused by particular forms and that these can be manipulated and arranged to specific effect – that there is indeed a science of the sensations.” Middleton, "Introduction," 54.

expected servants to possess the requisite sensibility to understand his message; for him, a properly executed architectural form broadcast a universally effective sentiment. “The premise of *Le Génie de l’architecture* is that particular sensations are aroused by particular forms and that these can be manipulated and arranged to specific effect – that there is indeed a science of the sensations.”<sup>160</sup> Through the application of this science, Le Camus de Mézières sought to eliminate corruption at its source.

Le Camus de Mézières most clearly reveals why kitchen corruption remained a persistent threat; despite the best efforts of France’s most talented architects, kitchens ultimately could not be tamed by architectural design alone. As architects sought to impose order on the totality of domestic space, household kitchens became critical sites of social contestation. Efforts to purify domestic space attempted to divide servants from masters and to eliminate all signs of the former from the space of the latter. With servants and masters occupying separate spheres, however, the kitchen became increasingly susceptible to corruption. The perils of infection and decay demanded ever greater oversight; otherwise kitchens jeopardized both moral and physiological health.

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<sup>160</sup> Middleton, "Introduction," 54.

### Chapter 3. The Tools and Economy of the Kitchen

Vous ferai une Inventaire de la Batterie de Cuisine que vous mettrai sur les dernier  
Feuilles de ce Livre il est entendue que tout ce qui se perde et remplacée.

Madame de Kerry to her cook

The eighteenth-century cook wielded an impressive arsenal of tools. Stretching from the stoves and ovens embedded in the kitchen's massive stone walls to the tiniest coffee spoon, this equipment enabled the cook to prepare an ever-expanding variety of dishes. The tools, like the space that contained them, belonged to the master of the household, not the cook. This alienation of ownership and the complexity of these tools necessitated sophisticated strategies of organization, yet most studies of cooking tools have tended to ignore the practices of the kitchen.<sup>1</sup> And when kitchen tools have been placed in the context of cooks' practices, analysis has been limited largely to the production of meals.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, I seek to restore kitchen tools to the practices in

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Catherine Arminjon and Nicole Blondel, *Objets civils domestiques: vocabulaire* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1984), Ecole du Louvre, ed., *La Table et le partage* (Paris: Documentations françaises, 1986), Raymond Lecoq, *Les Objets de la vie domestique: ustensiles en fer de la cuisine et du foyer des origines au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1979), Sylvie Girard, *Histoire des objets de cuisine et de gourmandise* (Paris: Jacques Grancher, 1991). These works tend to examine kitchen tools more in the tradition of decorative arts than in the context of the practices of their daily use.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Jean-François Revel has noted the technological developments which facilitated eighteenth-century cooking. Jean François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), 189-190. Barbara Ketcham Wheaton discusses the implementation of kitchen tools throughout her study of French cooking. Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983).

which cooks used them, in particular those of organization and management. Moreover, I would suggest that the cook's primary means of organization, paperwork, constituted an extremely important tool in its own right. Pen and paper enabled the cook to impose order on the kitchen's chaos.

### **1. Mechanical tools: *la batterie de cuisine***

When Nicolas de Larmessin engraved his *Habit de Cuisinier* at the end of the seventeenth century, he depicted a cook cloaked in a dazzling array of dishes and utensils (fig. 3.1). The cook stands rather incongruously out of doors in a pastoral setting; despite this temporary respite from the kitchen, he remains trapped inside the clanging symbols of his labor. Forks and spoons dangle from his breeches; knives buckle his shoes. A sash of sausages drapes across his chest while a ham swings from his belt. Pots and pans encase his body like a suit of armor. Saddled with an enormous frying pan and crowned by a suckling pig, the cook stands poised and ready to serve.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nicolas de Larmessin, *Habit de cuisinier* (Paris: N. de Larmessin, ca. 1695).



Figure 3.1. The tools make the man. Nicolas de Larmessin, *Habit de cuisinier* (Paris: N. de Larmessin, ca. 1695). EST MD 43 fol. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The motif of a cook composed of his tools was not unusual. A sixteenth-century pen and ink drawing, *La Cuisinière* takes the exercise even further; even the cook's face

consists of small utensils.<sup>4</sup> The late eighteenth-century print *Architecture vivante: la cuisinière* portrays a cook actually “built” from the tools of her kitchen. A fiery hearth comprises her torso, and the sort of strong architectural column advocated by kitchen designers replaces her legs. Like de Larmessin’s cook, she carries a long-handled pan intended for use in a hearth. Perched atop her head she wears a broom, bucket, and towel, signaling the cleaning chores often undertaken by women cooks.<sup>5</sup> The selection of utensils in all of these images reveals a particularly mechanical and manual conception of cooks’ work. Each of the tools depicted is limited to the discrete processes of executing the cooking of meal (or cleaning up its debris). We see in de Larmessin’s engraving an imagining of a complete cycle of the preparation of a meal: its material elements (sausages, a ham), the tools used to process them (pans, knives), and finally the finished product (a roast suckling pig, a display of fruits). The cook has been reduced to the sum of his tools, and any evidence of the cook’s own agency is absent. Viewing these images we sense that it is the tools, not the bearer, that transform the raw into the cooked.

Most of the tools worn by these fanciful cooks were known together as the *batterie de cuisine*, a name taken from the beaten (*battu*) copper vessels which originally comprised it. The *batterie de cuisine* typically excluded the installed elements of the kitchen (such as ovens and stoves) and furniture (like tables and cabinets). Though during the eighteenth century, the *batterie de cuisine* came to include tools of other metals – notably iron – it remained composed of instruments “ordinarily of beaten

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<sup>4</sup> The sixteenth-century pen and ink drawing *La Cuisinière* also depicts a cook made of her tools. In this case, even her face is composed of various small cooking utensils. See Sabine Coron and Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal., *Livres en bouche: cinq siècles d’art culinaire français, du quatorzième au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France: Hermann, 2001), 92-93.

<sup>5</sup> *Architecture vivante: la cuisinière*, ([Paris]: Martinet).



copper.”<sup>6</sup> Copper was an expensive material, and the extent of this largely copper *batterie de cuisine* signaled the quality and wealth of a kitchen. In her study of eighteenth-century material culture, Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun invites us to “[i]magine those shining copper pots, with their warm, bright colors, lining the walls on both sides of the high fireplace in the exceptionally fine kitchen which was the realm of the chef, Jean-Baptiste Marchand.”<sup>7</sup> By evoking the sensory experience of entering Marchand’s kitchen, Pardailhé-Galabrun reminds us of the wealth evidenced by the display of such kitchen tools. A single copper cooking vessel, for example, could cost the equivalent of several days of a cook’s wages. The combined value of even a relatively modest kitchen’s pots and pans could easily equal several months’ worth of wages; in 1761 a cobbler’s kitchen equipment sold for over 300 livres.<sup>8</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapter, the physical conditions of most eighteenth-century kitchens were at the time considered anything but charming; nonetheless they hosted a remarkable concentration of wealth within their walls.

### *Complexity and expense*

The tools worn by de Larmessin’s cook date from the late seventeenth century but would have been familiar to any eighteenth-century cook; the tools of the past were not so much replaced as joined by increasingly specialized utensils. The extensive and

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<sup>6</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise*, 3 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1740), s.v. "Batterie". The definition remained the same through 1798. The 1694 dictionary had originally defined the *batterie de cuisine* as “utensils of copper beaten with a hammer.” The “ordinarily” appeared only in 1740. [Possibly 1718 - check]

<sup>7</sup> Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris* (Oxford: Polity, 1991), 85.

<sup>8</sup> MC ET/CV/1274 (19 April 1761).

growing *batterie de cuisine* represented a major capital expense of any eighteenth-century household; the quantity and variety of a kitchen's tools expanded to match its owner's wealth. In the analysis of Pardailhé-Galabrun, "the number and diversity of instruments increase from one rung of the social ladder to the next."<sup>9</sup> In the homes of "humble artisans" one could find a handful of iron utensils and a half dozen copper cooking vessels.<sup>10</sup> Inside the homes of the wealthiest masters, cooks presided over staggering amounts of gear; in one of the more spectacular cases, the kitchen holdings of Calonne, contrôleur-général des finances, exceeded five hundred pieces.<sup>11</sup> More surprising than this correlation between wealth and kitchen equipment is the near-universal ownership of a diverse collection of cooking tools. Pardailhé-Galabrun has found in Parisian residences a "tremendous variety of kitchen utensils," noting that "[both] their abundance and the differentiation in their uses are striking, even in relatively modest households."<sup>12</sup> The kitchen of cabaret-owner Christophe Proust contained "a rich *batterie de cuisine* dominated by copper and tin."<sup>13</sup> Cooking utensils were omnipresent in rural households; in fact, here they tended to double as dining implements as late as the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> A single farm kitchen might contain dozens of tools with a combined value of over six hundred livres.<sup>15</sup> Developments in heating technology had

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<sup>9</sup> Pardailhé-Galabrun, *Birth of Intimacy*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> AN T\* 261/4 (February 1787).

<sup>12</sup> Pardailhé-Galabrun, *Birth of Intimacy*, 84.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Muchembled, *L'Invention de l'homme moderne: sensibilités, mœurs et comportements collectifs sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 428. "une riche batterie de cuisine où domine le cuivre et l'étain."

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 240.

<sup>15</sup> AN T 446/B (1792).

driven much of the expansion of the number of kitchen tools. While the stone hearth had long hosted cauldrons and roasting spits, the much newer stove was the site of far more minute specialization. Each of its heating elements could support a separate cooking vessel.<sup>16</sup> Some of these elements took the shape of the vessel they would support; for example, extended oval elements were designed to heat long fish poachers. A variety of short-handled pots and pans had joined the venerable long-handled pan held by de Larmessin's cook. The introduction of fashionable dishes also necessitated new equipment. *Poupetons* required their own unique tool, the *poupetonnière*.<sup>17</sup> Cooks poached some fish in *poissonnières* while *turbot* merited preparation in a *turbotière*.<sup>18</sup> Small copper moulds allowed cooks to create fanciful edible displays; one kitchen had at least eighteen.<sup>19</sup> Differentiation was the order of the day; toolmakers designed certain sieves for bouillon and others for quenelles.<sup>20</sup> The *Encyclopédie*'s plates for "Coppersmith" illustrate this diversification, showing the creation of a pot, pan, pie dish, fish kettle, and skimmer.<sup>21</sup>

The intrinsic value of cooking utensils combined with a universal demand to create a lively market in used kitchen tools, facilitated through estate sales advertised in the *affiches*, the weekly newspapers of eighteenth-century France. All sorts of people

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<sup>16</sup> The ancien régime's great innovation in kitchen heating was the seventeenth-century *fourneau*, or stove. Girard, *Histoire des objets...*, 225. See also dictionary entries, esp. Antoine Furetière (1690). Jean-François Revel locates its arrival in the eighteenth century. Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 190.

<sup>17</sup> AN T 208/1 (1777).

<sup>18</sup> BNF Joly de Fleury 2490, 262.

<sup>19</sup> AN T 208/1 (1777).

<sup>20</sup> AN T\* 265/2 (15 March 1789).

<sup>21</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1772), s.v. "Chaudronnier." See especially plates I and II.

owned *batteries de cuisine* large enough to merit advertisement and sale; one can count an apothecary and a sculptor among those whose estate advertisements included a *batterie de cuisine*.<sup>22</sup> After the death of her cobbler husband, the widow Bombard raised over 300 livres through the sale of around 50 kitchen tools.<sup>23</sup> A diverse array of kitchen tools was considered banal at any estate sale; in its definition of “Utensil,” the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* used the example “The entire estate inventory only consisted of several little kitchen utensils.”<sup>24</sup> This ubiquity allowed Louis-Sébastien Mercier to make a joke at the expense of men of letters; according to him, their sorry estate sale advertisements “announced neither laces, nor diamonds, nor even *batterie de cuisine*.”<sup>25</sup>

Notably absent from these advertisements are the estates of cooks, who simply did not collect cooking utensils in any quantity. Like just about everything else intended for their use within their masters’ household, cooks did not own the tools they used to prepare meals.<sup>26</sup> Even for personal use, ownership of cooking tools was not an integral part of the occupation; cooks’ death inventories list very few cooking utensils. Jean-René Vaverel, cook to the intendant of Bordeaux, owned only sixteen livres worth of cooking utensils at his death.<sup>27</sup> Marthe-Louise Petit, widowed to one cook and remarried to

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<sup>22</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 May 1751 and *Petites affiches*, 8 February 1773.

<sup>23</sup> MC ET/CV/1274 (19 April 1761).

<sup>24</sup> *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, dédié au Roy*, 1 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694), s.v. “Ustensile.” The same definition appeared through the end of the eighteenth century.

<sup>25</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 5:344.

<sup>26</sup> The furnishings of cooks’ rooms likewise belonged to their masters. For example, see AN T 208/1 (1784, 1788).

<sup>27</sup> MC ET/XCIII/21 (8 January 1751).

another, owned a *batterie de cuisine* worth less than nine livres at her death.<sup>28</sup> Cooks' own holdings of cooking utensils tended to be very small and certainly not on a scale of even a modest bourgeois kitchen. They did, however, purchase cooking utensils on behalf of their masters for use in the workplace. In 1783, one cook bought for his kitchen two earthenware pots, six earthenware pans, and twelve wooden spoons.<sup>29</sup> On 19 October 1787, a cook purchased a single grater for 1 livre 12 sous.<sup>30</sup> Cooks also had to replace any tools lost or broken under their supervision.<sup>31</sup> They were responsible for the integrity of the kitchen's equipment, which had been entrusted to their care.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, kitchen tools were ordinary enough items to generate a discordant atmosphere when they went on sale alongside luxury goods. Mercier describes the awkward scene of coppersmiths gathered to purchase kitchen utensils at an estate sale, finding themselves waiting alongside those who had come to buy the deceased's diamonds, Boulle furniture, and laces.<sup>33</sup> Yet the value of kitchen tools dictated their sale at some point. To avoid any uncomfortable situations, kitchen effects were almost always sold first. Mercier made light of this practice, noting, "In estate sales [...] one begins ordinarily with the *batterie de cuisine*, the deceased no longer needing it."<sup>34</sup> By selling the *batterie de cuisine* either first or separately, buyers of such commonplace

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<sup>28</sup> MC ET/XC/407 (30 July 1761).

<sup>29</sup> AN T 451/7 (3 October 1783).

<sup>30</sup> AN T\* 451/2 (19 October 1787).

<sup>31</sup> AN T\* 451/2. (October 1787).

<sup>32</sup> One mistress explicitly informed her cook of this responsibility. AN T 208/1 (1777).

<sup>33</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 5:341. For an examination of the lively market for used Boulle furniture, see Carolyn Sargentson, "Markets for Boulle Furniture in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris," *The Burlington Magazine* 134, no. 1071 (1992).

<sup>34</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 5:341.

items would not mingle with those gathered to purchase luxury goods. Estate sale advertisements were careful to specify when kitchen goods would go on sale. For example, the duchesse du Maine's estate notice promised the sale of the *batterie de cuisine* from nine o'clock in the morning until one in the afternoon. Only after three o'clock would chandeliers, bronzes, porcelains, jewelry and lacquered items be available for purchase.<sup>35</sup> The late Monsieur Mauclere's *batterie de cuisine* similarly went on sale the morning of 8 February 1773, with the following eight days reserved for the rest of his belongings.<sup>36</sup> Occasionally the *batterie de cuisine* would even merit its own separate sale.<sup>37</sup> When estates contained little in the way of kitchen utensils, advertisements were careful to steer buyers elsewhere; two advertisements began with a warning that their sales would contain little in the way of kitchen utensils.<sup>38</sup>

Many estate sales sold the *batterie de cuisine* along with other household items that, though valuable, attracted the wrong crowd. Secrétaire du Roi Masse's estate sale began with a "beautiful *batterie de cuisine*, sand-filtered and other fountains, iron stove grates, earthenware and cast pans."<sup>39</sup> Another included the kitchen linens along with its "considerable" *batterie de cuisine*.<sup>40</sup> A third combined the *batterie* with ceramics.<sup>41</sup> Servant furnishings often joined the *batterie de cuisine*, underscoring the volatile conditions of domestic servitude. Along with almost certain unemployment, the death of

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<sup>35</sup> *Petites affiches*, 29 March 1753.

<sup>36</sup> *Petites affiches*, 8 February 1773.

<sup>37</sup> *Affiches de Nantes*, 16 May 1760.

<sup>38</sup> *Petites affiches*, 1 February 1773 and 8 February 1773.

<sup>39</sup> *Petites affiches*, 1 January 1767.

<sup>40</sup> *Petites affiches*, 29 October 1767.

<sup>41</sup> *Petites affiches*, 2 April 1770.

a cook's master typically augured the dispersion of a cook's tools and furniture. These items were counted among the possessions of the cook's master, not the cook.<sup>42</sup> One sale promised "a large *batterie de cuisine et d'office*, a large quantity of servant beds, and other effects."<sup>43</sup> The estate sale of Mgr. Daguesseau, *Chancelier de France honoraire*, likewise began with a *batterie de cuisine* and the "beds of servants and officers."<sup>44</sup>

Despite their obvious value, ownership of kitchen tools constituted a particularly inconspicuous form of consumption. Used only inside a kitchen which was itself secreted into the residence's most hidden recesses, the *batterie de cuisine*'s extent could be judged only indirectly by the variety of dishes gracing its owner's table. Furthermore, even the most discerning diner could never be sure whether his host actually owned the implement used to prepare a given dish. If a certain tool was especially infrequently used, a kitchen might not possess it; some cooks opted instead to rent equipment for the occasional feast.<sup>45</sup> For example, Joly de Fleury's cook rented a *batterie* three times to celebrate holidays in 1770, paying five to six livres each time. Records for his Pentecost feast indicate the rental of specialty items including a *turbotière*, *tourtière*, *poissonnière*, and *brochetière*. Even with a kitchen as well-equipped as Calonne's, cooks sometimes rented tools.<sup>46</sup> Kitchen equipment may also have been lent among households for

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<sup>42</sup> AN T 208/1, "Etat général des Meubles appartenant a Madame La Maréchale Duchesse De Mirépoix en son hotel Chaussée Dantin" (1784) and "Etat Général des meubles a Madame La Marechale de Mirepoix Fait en son hôtel Rue de Varenne en Janvier 1788" (1788).

<sup>43</sup> *Petites affiches*, 9 August 1751.

<sup>44</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 May 1751. Another sale advertisement promised the same, *Petites affiches*, 8 January 1753.

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Ketcham Wheaton has also located evidence of this sort of equipment rental in cookbooks of the period. Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 104.

<sup>46</sup> T\* 261/5 (September 1786).

occasional use; one inventory record notes the loss of a cooking dish at another residence.<sup>47</sup>

### *Maintenance*

The expense of the *batterie de cuisine* extended far beyond its initial purchase price. All metal cooking implements required frequent maintenance to protect their cooking surfaces from corrosion. This need for continual repair may help to explain the enduring value of used kitchen tools; whether a utensil was newly manufactured or fifteen years old, it demanded regular attention. Until the mid-eighteenth century, copper was the unquestioned metal of choice for kitchen tools. Thanks to its malleability and ductility, copper permitted extremely flexible designs; it also conducted heat very effectively. Yet copper was expensive and – more troublingly – potentially dangerous. Copper surfaces easily corroded; contact with any type of food or liquid produced verdigris, a dreaded poison.<sup>48</sup> Verdigris had long been recognized a poison, but during the eighteenth century worries arose regarding the tiny but steady doses potentially delivered by cooking utensils.<sup>49</sup> By 1750, worries about the dangers of verdigris reached a fevered pitch: “There is no man, however uneducated, who does not recognize the danger of verdigris, a terrifying poison.”<sup>50</sup> Judicial memoranda traded blows over the

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<sup>47</sup> AN T 208/3 (1780).

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l'usage des vaisseaux de cuivre dans la préparation des alimens," in *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l'Académie royale des sciences*, ed. Joseph Amy (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 18.

<sup>49</sup> The 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* uses the example “verdigris is a poison.” *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1694)*, s.v. "Verdet."

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Amy, "Avis au public sur l'usage des nouvelles fontaines domestiques et de santé," in *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l'Académie royale des sciences*, ed. Joseph Amy (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 3..”



dangers of copper.<sup>51</sup> One writer blamed this compound for the spoiling of ladies teeth; conventional wisdom had otherwise maintained that Paris's foul air ruined them.<sup>52</sup> To prevent direct contact between food and copper, coppersmiths had traditionally coated cooking vessels' surfaces with tin. This process, known as *rétamage*, often occurred in the coppersmith's workshop – a plate from the *Encyclopédie* illustrates a coppersmith at work tinning a pan – but visual evidence suggests that itinerant tanners also performed the service.<sup>53</sup> Resurfacing tool with tin provided only temporary protection because as the tin wore away, even tiny fissures could unleash an invisible and tasteless poison.<sup>54</sup> An increasingly popular solution required abandoning copper altogether, and chemists and doctors widely supported a complete elimination of copper cooking vessels.<sup>55</sup> In 1740 the “very ingenious worker and excellent citizen” Prémery obtained a royal privilege to use iron rather than copper to make his kitchen utensils, creating a *batterie de cuisine* that was “very healthful, lighter, and less expensive.”<sup>56</sup> Even so, his tools still required

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<sup>51</sup> *Arrêt du conseil d'état du Roi, Qui ordonne que celui du 15 mai 1753, par lequel il a été permis à Jean-François Bavard et Thérèse Premery son épouse, de faire fabriquer, vendre et débiter, tant à Paris que par-tout ailleurs, des marmites, casseroles, poissonnières et autres ustensiles de cuisine de fer forgé, blanchi (étamé) en dedans et en dehors, avec queues, anses et pieds desdits ustensiles en fer noir et non blanchi, sera exécuté selon sa forme et teneur, sans que pour raison de ce ils puissent être inquiétés ni troublés par qui ce soit: Et pour l'avoir fait, condamne les Jurés-gardes de la Communauté des maîtres et marchands Chaudronniers de Paris, en tous les dommages et intérêts en résultans, et au coût du présent arrêt, le tout liquidé à trois cens livres.*, (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1754). BHVP N.F. 35380 (1754).

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Amy, *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l'Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 34.

<sup>53</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Chaudronnier." See especially plate 1. Lecoq, *Les Objets de la vie domestique*.

<sup>54</sup> The cure could be worse than the disease: one coppersmith ominously offered to coat copper kitchen fountains and taps with a thick layer of lead to avoid verdigris. *Mercure de France*, January 1760.

<sup>55</sup> Jourdan Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé, ou moyens faciles et économiques de préparer toutes nos Productions Alimentaires de la manière la plus délicate et la plus sanitaire d'après les nouvelles découvertes de la cuisine Française et Italienne*, 3 vols. (Paris: Briand, 1790), 131. Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l'usage des vaisseaux de cuivre," *passim*. Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Cuivre," "Lardoire."

<sup>56</sup> Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l'usage des vaisseaux de cuivre," 31. BHVP N.F. 35380 (1754).

tinning; otherwise, their rust would discolor foods. Proponents of iron cookware claimed that this rust was at worst harmless; a few even suggested that rust could actually convey significant health benefits. One judicial *mémoire* championing the case of iron cooking vessels cited the robust constitutions of workers in iron mines, noting that they “enjoyed a perfect health” quite unlike miners of other metals.<sup>57</sup> Economic factors also conspired against the continuing use of copper utensils; price increases during the eighteenth century elevated them above the reach of poorer consumers.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the emerging consensus in favor of iron cooking utensils, copper did not disappear from kitchens. During the 1750s and 1760s the *Encyclopédie* continued to define most cooking vessels as made of copper.<sup>59</sup> A large *batterie de cuisine* that sold in April 1761 consisted almost entirely of copper pieces.<sup>60</sup> According to Mercier’s *Jezennemours*, despite the well-known danger of verdigris, copper utensils remained in three-quarters of residences as late as 1776.<sup>61</sup> Even wealthy masters continued to purchase new copper utensils for their kitchens; in April 1770, Joly de Fleury bought a new “casserole weighing three pounds four ounces in copper.”<sup>62</sup> As always, these dishes remained only as safe as their thin protective layers of tin.

The responsibility of using and maintaining properly tinned utensils rested in the hands of cooks; one observer lamented “the carelessness of servants and cooks, who

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<sup>57</sup> BHVP N.F. 35380 (1754).

<sup>58</sup> Pardailhe-Galabrun, *Birth of Intimacy*, 85.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Casserolle,” “Chauderon,” “Chaudière,” “Lardoire,” “Marmite,” “Poële,” “Poissonnière,” “Tourtière.”

<sup>60</sup> MC ET CV/1274 (19 April 1761).

<sup>61</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Jezennemours, roman dramatique* (Amsterdam: 1776), 2:36.

<sup>62</sup> BNF Joly de Fleury 2490, f. 252.

reject recently tinned dishes because of the bad taste which comes from the material used to attach tin to copper.”<sup>63</sup> The danger was even greater for wealthier diners, because they rarely saw the state of their cooking vessels.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, verdigris especially threatened the “low and humid kitchens such as one sees in the great houses of the capital.”<sup>65</sup> Urging them to follow safe maintenance practices, one writer commanded cooks, “Therefore obey or leave.”<sup>66</sup> Fortunately for historians, most cooks did obey, and in the process they collected receipts for tinning that communicate something of the size and composition of their *batteries de cuisine*. Because each metal surface that came into contact with food required tin, almost every kitchen tool appears at some point in these maintenance records. In a few cases, these tinning jobs included astronomical numbers of pieces. For example, Calonne’s cook regularly ordered the repair of more than two hundred tools; in a single month, he ordered nearly 500 pieces tinned.<sup>67</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, more modest kitchens might tin just a handful of utensils from time to time; in the Dreneux household, one order included only seven pieces.<sup>68</sup> Between these extremes, a typical monthly repair job for a wealthy Parisian household contained thirty to forty pieces. A representative order of 44 items included twenty pans, six pan lids, five pots with their lids, three skimming spoons, two cooking spoons, two pie dishes, and one platter.<sup>69</sup> The cost of such maintenance was hardly trivial; prices per piece of

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<sup>63</sup> Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l'usage des vaisseaux de cuivre," 36.

<sup>64</sup> Amy, *Nouvelles Fontaines domestiques*, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé*, 131.

<sup>66</sup> Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l'usage des vaisseaux de cuivre," 54.

<sup>67</sup> AN T\* 261/2 (1784), AN T\* 261/3 (1786), AN T\* 261/4 (1787).

<sup>68</sup> AN T\* 217 (18 October 1770).

<sup>69</sup> AN T 451/7 (7 January 1780).

*vétamage* nearly doubled from 8s in 1770 to 15s in the late 1780s. Even a smaller *batterie de cuisine* such as Joly de Fleury's required substantial investment. In a seven month period, he paid 55 livres to his coppersmith Rey for repairs, rental, and new equipment purchases; his January 1770 bill alone ran to 16 livres.<sup>70</sup> Beyond basic tinning, some kitchen tools occasionally required more extensive repairs, such as the soldering of a kettle spout or the attachment of new pot handles.<sup>71</sup> In all cases responsibility ultimately rested with the cook.

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<sup>70</sup> Joly de Fleury 2490, 213, 226. For example, a 6 April 1770 transaction involved the rental of a *batterie* along with the purchase of a new iron-handled copper pan weighing three pounds four ounces.

<sup>71</sup> AN T 451/7 (7 January 1780). See also AN T 208/3 (1788) and AN T\* 261/4 (February 1787).



**Figure 3.2** The coppersmith makes a housecall. Simon-François Ravenet after François Boucher, *Chaudronier, chaudronier, Les Cris de Paris* (ca 1737) Collection Edmond de Rothschild 18983 LR. Photo: RMN / Thierry Le Mage.

Fluctuating monthly repair numbers suggest that some tools required repair more often than others. A tool used only rarely required infrequent maintenance since its protective layer of tin did not experience much wear. As a result, the figures indicated in tinning receipts reflect only a fraction of the total number of kitchen tools held by each kitchen. For example, though the Kerry kitchen repaired just 44 pieces in January 1788, an inventory dating from the preceding October indicates ownership of 141 pieces which

would ordinarily require tinning.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, the Mirepoix kitchen generally repaired thirty to fifty pieces per month, but its inventory indicates around 120 pieces requiring regular service.<sup>73</sup>

## **2. Mental tools: *le livre de compte***

The tools of the kitchen were not limited to those objects used to cook food. Take for example the woman depicted in the 1762 engraving *La Cuisinière* (fig. 3.3); in marked contrast to the equipment-laden cook portrayed by de Larmessin, this cook holds just one tool, a pen.<sup>74</sup> In *La Cuisinière* we catch the cook leaning over a kitchen work table to compose her regular account. As she writes, more papers spill from an open drawer. Nowhere do we see her *batterie de cuisine*. The pen, the table, and a few scattered food items suffice to indicate the writer's occupation; in this particular image, no other kitchen tool reminds us of the setting.

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<sup>72</sup> AN T 451/7 (7 January 1780), AN T\* 451/2 (October 1787).

<sup>73</sup> AN T 208/3 (February-March 1788), AN T 208/3 "Etat de la Batterie de la Cuisine de Madame La Maréchale de Mirpoix. Année 1788" (10 December 1788).

<sup>74</sup> Pierre-Louis Dumesnil, *La Cuisinière* (Paris: A. Duclos, [1762]).



**Figure 3.3. The writing cook. Duflos after Pierre-Louis Dumesnil, *La Cuisinière* (Paris: Duflos, 1762). EST AA-26 in-4 (4). Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.**

I would suggest that the kitchen in fact constituted an important site of writing.<sup>75</sup>

Eighteenth-century cooks generated a vast amount of paperwork, as they monitored equipment inventories and tracked daily expenditures. Collections of household records dating from the eighteenth century brim with these sorts of kitchen accounting

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<sup>75</sup> Folklorist Janet Theophano has also proposed that the kitchen acted as a setting for women to read and write. She bases this assertion on the far less extensive evidence of (largely recent) manuscript cookbooks. Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 165.

documents.<sup>76</sup> Images like *La Cuisinière* are thus supported by an overwhelming amount of archival evidence indicating a highly literate and numerate population of cooks. Yet despite their number, these documents have largely escaped historians' notice, with two notable exceptions. Josef Smets has recently analyzed a single cook's bookkeeping in order to reconstruct the daily table of a provincial noble, while Natacha Coquery has considered cooks' accounts, although more tangentially, in her study of Parisian residential consumption.<sup>77</sup> Neither Smets nor Coquery chooses to consider these documents artifacts of the practices of cooking. Smets treats them essentially as transparent indicators of food consumption; Coquery focuses less on the cook's bookkeeping than on his receipts, regarding them as markers of the web of exchange centered on the *hôtel*. In both cases, they take cooks' bookkeeping for granted. Kitchens were sites of writing and calculation; pen and account book were two of cooks' most important tools.

### *Inventories*

When the Maréchale de Mirepoix's cook Garache compiled an inventory of his kitchen's tools on 22 April 1780, he began by noting the presence of "a table and its drawer," probably much like the one used by *La Cuisinière* and perhaps the very writing

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<sup>76</sup> I studied household records contained in the AN's T series. Swept into the archives when the papers of condemned or exiled were sequestered, these records reveal an unrivaled snapshot of household finances during the late eighteenth century. My research included papers kept by cooks of the Biron-Binet, Bourbon-Busset, Broglie, Calonne, Coigny, Kerry, Lambesc, and Mirepoix households.

<sup>77</sup> Josef Smets, "A la table d'un seigneur languedocien en 1766," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 48, no. 4 (2001). Natacha Coquery, *L'Hôtel aristocratique: le marché du luxe à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), 44-47. According to Natacha Coquery, such records are in fact more numerous than the ample merchant receipts that form the basis of her own research.



surface he used to compose his report. Such a table would have been useful for storing the paper needed for drafting receipts and for composing the kitchen's daily and monthly reports. Kitchen tables regularly appear in architectural diagrams of kitchens, often placed in the center of the room; the architect Le Camus de Mézières insisted on them.<sup>78</sup> St. Martin, cook to the Prince de Lambesc, ordered the construction of several new tables in 1785, one next to his kitchen's door.<sup>79</sup> Near his own kitchen's table, Garache found a butcher's block and a mortar and pestle. Next, he noted water barrels, a linen cupboard, and various baskets that lay scattered about the kitchen. When he turned his attention to the *batterie de cuisine*, Garache began with the cooking tools forged from iron. Dozens of iron pots, pans, their lids, and their spoons hung from hooks or rested on shelves arranged around the kitchen's perimeter. The cook then itemized the kitchen's heavy iron utensils, which included the tools for managing the kitchen's hearth and stove, a roasting spit and its dripping pan, knives and sieves. Once he had enumerated all of the iron tools, Garache counted his copper utensils, which ranged in size from large cauldrons to tiny pâté moulds. Finally, he went into the kitchen's pantry to note a few lingering items.<sup>80</sup>

Cooks in the Mirepoix household compiled such inventories three times in the course of a decade, in 1777, 1780 and 1788. These documents served an ongoing

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<sup>78</sup> Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française, ou recueil des plans, elevations, coupes, et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtels et édifices les plus considérables de Paris, ainsi que des châteaux et maisons de plaisance situés aux environs de cette ville, ou en d'autres endroits de la France, bâtis par les plus célèbres architectes, et mesurés exactement sur les lieux* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1752), distribution XVI plate 2, distribution XXX plate 1. Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture, ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (Paris: Le Camus de Mézières, Benoît Morin, 1780), 193.

<sup>79</sup> AN T 491/3 (August 1785). The Mirepoix kitchen also received some table work in 1789, AN T 208/3 (December 1789).

<sup>80</sup> AN T 208/3 (22 April 1780).

purpose; cooks frequently annotated them to indicate losses and additions to their arsenals.<sup>81</sup> For example, penciled notations to the 1780 report reveal that pots, spoons, and ovens periodically went bad or missing.<sup>82</sup> At other times, cooks appended acquisitions to the inventory, noting the purchase of new pie dishes or sieves for quenelles, flour, and bouillon.<sup>83</sup> Because cooks were responsible for the integrity of their kitchens' equipment, creating and maintaining inventories of valuable tools constituted an essential practice for cooks. Madame de Kerry instructed her cook, "You will make an inventory of the *batterie de cuisine* that you put on the last pages of this book; it is expected that everything that is lost be replaced."<sup>84</sup> As the title of another kitchen inventory makes quite clear, the kitchen's effects "belonged" to the master but were "left in the care" of the cook.<sup>85</sup> Even as cooks came and went in these households, inventories helped to guarantee the consistency of the kitchen's equipment.

### *Accounting*

Enumerated every few years and annotated as needed, inventories comprise only a tiny fraction of the corpus of papers produced by cooks. The vast majority of cooks' accounts instead tracked daily food and fuel expenses, an intensive task which generated vast amounts of paperwork. The eighteenth-century cook was a prodigious writer,

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<sup>81</sup> AN T 208/1 (29 December 1777), AN T 208/3 (22 April 1780), AN T 208/3 (10 December 1788).

<sup>82</sup> AN T 208/3 (22 April 1780). One pot was "lost at M. Valois's residence"; two spoons were listed as "broken", while an oven was described as "bad."

<sup>83</sup> AN T 208/3 (22 April 1780).

<sup>84</sup> AN T\* 451/2. (October 1787).

<sup>85</sup> AN T 208/1 (20 December 1777). "État des effets appartenant à Madame La Marechal Duchesse De Mirepoix laissés à la garde du Sr. Lacroix chef d'office dans l'hotel rue d'Artois le 29 X.bre 1777."

calculating daily expenses and composing regular formal reports. Although Barbara Ketcham Wheaton has noted bookkeeping only as a job of the *maître d'hôtel*, a position found in only in the wealthiest of households, archival evidence reveals instead that cooks produced the vast majority of kitchen accounts.<sup>86</sup> Even in households served by *maîtres d'hôtel*, cooks often still produced their own accounting records.<sup>87</sup> In the simplest of cases, accounts might consist of a few loose sheets of paper summarizing recent expenses.<sup>88</sup> Each of these *mémoires*, or memoranda, summarized a discrete period of the kitchen's expenses, typically ranging from a week to a month in length. At the other end of the spectrum we find highly organized bound volumes of accounts covering a year or more of transactions.<sup>89</sup> Known as *livres de compte* or *livres de raison*, these registers often had preprinted lines to aid entry and calculation of expenses.

Despite the heterogeneity of form, these materials reflect a relatively consistent set of practices. First, at a regular interval each cook prepared a formal account of her expenses, using supply receipts, maintenance costs, and sometimes the wage records of subordinate kitchen staff. By condensing these disparate sources into a single report, the cook created a concise account of the state of the kitchen's finances. Next, the cook submitted this report to her master for review. Finally, the master would approve the document and disburse funds to cover the kitchen's expenditures.

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<sup>86</sup> Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 104. This bias likely stems from overreliance on literary descriptions of kitchen staff such as conduct manuals, which usually limit themselves to the largest and wealthiest households.

<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the *maître d'hôtel* was usually a former cook, as we will see in the next chapter.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, AN T 208/3 and AN T 491/2.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, AN T\* 260/6, AN T\* 261/1-2, AN T\* 265/2, AN T\* 451/2, and AN T\* 470/35.

### *Preparation*

As cooks made the daily purchases necessary to keep their kitchens supplied, they generated an extensive paper trail documenting their activities. A cook would typically run tabs with a number of suppliers; in some households the total number of kitchen suppliers could run to over a dozen. Meat, bread, and vegetables came from a butcher, baker, and green grocer. A creamery supplied eggs and milk. Some items like oysters were sold (and even shucked onsite by the bushel) by specialized vendors.<sup>90</sup> In addition to food supplies, cooks purchased wine for their masters and for the consumption of other servants.<sup>91</sup> They bought wood and charcoal to fuel their stoves.<sup>92</sup> Cooks paid for maintenance to the kitchen's equipment, utensils, locks, and windows; if necessary, they hired someone to tear up the grass of the kitchen courtyard.<sup>93</sup>

Most of these supplies and services were purchased on credit, and each supplier issued receipts for future payment, either for a single purchase or for sales made over a longer period, typically one month. The supplier himself drafted the receipt; spelling, punctuation, and even arithmetic were extremely variable and subject to the merchant's own level of education. As with any transaction between buyer and seller, these receipts allowed both cook and vendor to keep track of credit and debt for the purpose of settling accounts. For cooks, however, these receipts served an additional function; they provided the evidentiary basis for kitchen accounting, which in turn allowed cooks' masters to monitor and audit kitchen expenditures.

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<sup>90</sup> AN T 208/3 (7 February 1788).

<sup>91</sup> Wine (along with meals) frequently constituted a portion of servants' wages.

<sup>92</sup> T\* 261/5 (1784-1787). For examples of individual wood and charcoal receipts, see AN T 261/1 (December 1783 and January 1784).

<sup>93</sup> AN T 491/2 (1779).

Cooks maintained their own concurrent registers of daily expenses, allowing their masters instantly to determine how money was being spent. These daily entries contained commonplace purchases like bread and meat as well as luxury items such as foie gras, truffles, and Gruyère and Parmesan cheese.<sup>94</sup> Rather than present their masters with a stack of diverse receipts scrawled by a variety of merchants, cooks condensed all the expenses into a single account for their masters' review. For example, the Maréchale de Mirepoix's cook Geux prepared a single *mémoire* each month to summarize his expenses. Geux tabulated each day's petty expenses chronologically. For example:

On the fourth [of February 1788]

truffles	10 livres
veal sweetbreads and brains	4 livres
white wine	2 livres 8 sous
double and simple cream	3 livres
chocolate	4 livres
dishwasher	1 livre 4 sous
ice	12 sous <sup>95</sup>

Here costs for supplies mingle with labor expenses; a dishwasher had been hired to help in the kitchen. After itemizing each day's expenses, Geux then appended monthly receipts from his major suppliers, who had provided their own running tallies. In February, these receipts included purchases from his butcher, fruit and vegetable supplier, roaster, charcutier, coppersmith, grocer, and oyster vendor.<sup>96</sup> Working from his records of daily petty purchases and the receipts of monthly major suppliers, Geux neatly drafted his account on a large folio sheet of paper. When finished, he folded it in half and tucked

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<sup>94</sup> AN T\* 261/1 (1783-1784).

<sup>95</sup> AN T 203/3 (February 1788).

<sup>96</sup> AN T 208/3 (February 1788).

in his suppliers' receipts. Each month, he prepared his kitchen's *mémoire* in the same fashion.<sup>97</sup>

How did cooks learn to keep accounts? Little evidence suggests any sort of formal schooling, but one example of an accounting primer exists. The handbook *Le livre nécessaire à toutes sortes de personnes* (1776) promotes just this sort of chronological accounting system used to produce of kitchen accounts (fig. 3.4).<sup>98</sup> In the section entitled "Manner of correctly composing and writing the expenses of each day of the week", the author teaches basic accounting of kitchen expenses. The reader is presented with the example of the daily kitchen expenditures, perhaps those of "Mr. Good Taste" (M. Debongout) whose caterer's receipt follows a few pages later.<sup>99</sup> We see the individual expenses of each weekday; Wednesday's purchases include a *tête de veau*, a rack of mutton, four pigeons, a pheasant, six quails, a pound of Roquefort, and two bottles of champagne, to name a few. No one was going hungry in this household. In fact, the type and cost of the sample purchases suggests that servant cooks constituted the audience of this particular lesson. Consuming over 334 livres of fine ingredients per week, the sample kitchen's expenses compare favorably with those of very wealthy households like the Prince de Lambesc's, whose kitchen dispensed an average of 370 livres per week in 1779.<sup>100</sup> By studying the lesson's sample account, we learn also to keep running totals at the end of each day's purchases, providing a sense of the rhythm of the week's expenses. The *mémoire* concludes with a summary each day's costs and a

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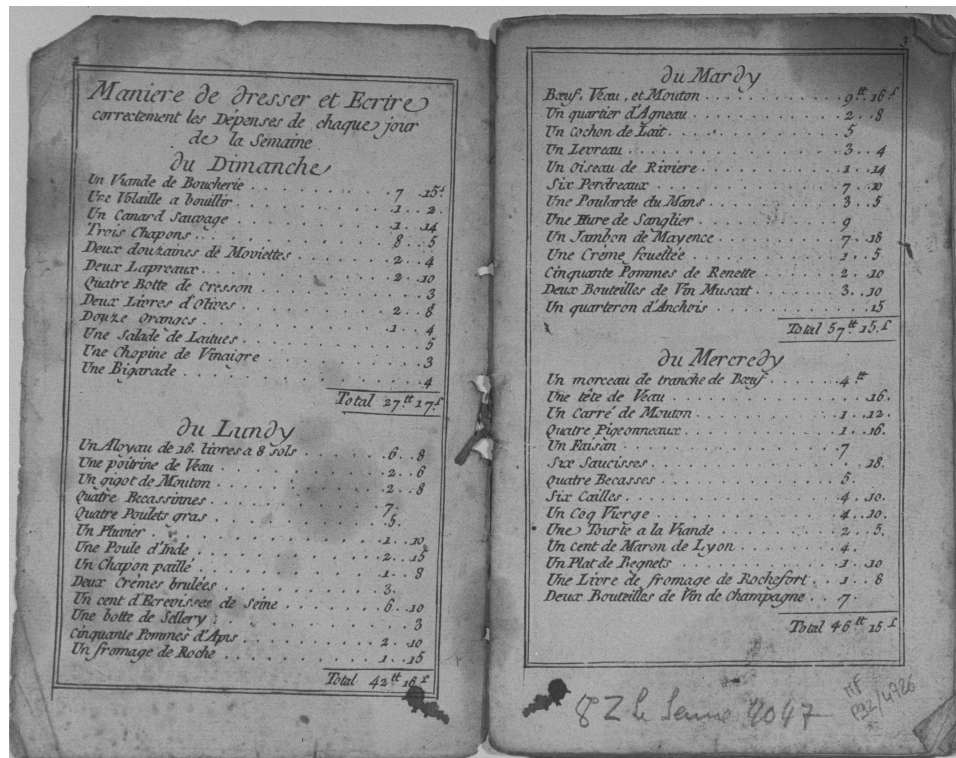
<sup>97</sup> AN T 208/3 (1788).

<sup>98</sup> *Le Livre nécessaire à toutes sortes de personnes*, (Paris: Mondhare, 1776).

<sup>99</sup> Indeed, Monsieur Debongout dispatched delicacies including boar, pheasant, wild duck, salmon, oysters, asparagus, and artichokes, to name a few. Ibid., 8.

<sup>100</sup> AN T 491/2 (1779).

weekly total.<sup>101</sup> The lesson teaches the production of accounts that include both a high-level summary and the details of individual purchases. A master reviewing such a report could quickly identify patterns of expenditure and examine specific transactions. Ease of use appears to have been the primary goal.



<sup>101</sup> *Le Livre nécessaire à toutes sortes de personnes*, 5.

Du Jeudi	
Une Longe de Veau . . . . .	2 <sup>l</sup> 15 <sup>s</sup>
Un Oye . . . . .	2 15
Une Poulle de Cocq . . . . .	3 5
Quatre Pigeons Cochon . . . . .	2 10
Six Orvèrs . . . . .	2 14
Une Poulle d'eau . . . . .	3 12
Une fraise de Veau . . . . .	15
Deux douzaines d'Alouettes . . . . .	1 18
Un Lièvre . . . . .	2 12
Deux Bigarades . . . . .	12
Une Boîte de Cardon d'Espagne . . . . .	15
Deux Livres de Truffes . . . . .	3
Total 20 <sup>l</sup> 14 <sup>s</sup>	
du Vendredi	
Trois Brochets . . . . .	12 <sup>s</sup>
Quatre Perches . . . . .	4
Une Anguille . . . . .	5 10
Deux grosses Capons . . . . .	5 18
Six Tranches . . . . .	4 10
Trois Truites . . . . .	3 15
Une Alouë . . . . .	6
Un Saumon frais . . . . .	18
Six gros Morlans . . . . .	4 10
Quatre Litrons de Poie . . . . .	2 8
Six Archaux et Cirouille . . . . .	2 4
Un cent d'œuf . . . . .	3 15
Une botte d'Asperges . . . . .	3 5
Du Verjus et des Champignons . . . . .	14
Six Choux fleurs et des Epinards . . . . .	16
Six Livres de Beurre . . . . .	5
Total 80 <sup>l</sup> 8 <sup>s</sup>	

Du Samedi	
Une poignée de Melue . . . . .	5 <sup>s</sup>
Quatre Solles et quatre Limandes . . . . .	7 10
Six Lottes et quatre Tinches . . . . .	5 15
Six Macraux . . . . .	4 10
Deux Macreux . . . . .	4 6
Une Raye . . . . .	7
Cent Grenouilles . . . . .	2 10
Un demi cent d'Huitres vertes . . . . .	3
Un cent de Mulet . . . . .	2 5
Une douzaine d'Herrings frais . . . . .	1 15
Six têtes de Choux fleurs . . . . .	1 10
Un paquet d'Epinards . . . . .	9
Aricots verts, et Herbes . . . . .	16
Un plat de Goujons . . . . .	2 8
Quatre pintes de Lait . . . . .	1 4
Total 43 <sup>l</sup> 15 <sup>s</sup>	
Recapitulation	
de la depense pour toute la Semaine	
Du Dimanche . . . . .	27 <sup>l</sup> 17 <sup>s</sup>
Du Lundi . . . . .	42 16
Du Mardi . . . . .	57 15
Du Mercredi . . . . .	46 15
Du Jeudi . . . . .	20 14
Du Vendredi . . . . .	80 8
Du Samedi . . . . .	43 15
Total 334 <sup>l</sup> 5 <sup>s</sup>	

Figure 3.4. Instructions for keeping kitchen accounts. *Livre nécessaire pour toutes sortes de personnes* (Paris: Mondhare, 1776), 2-5. Photos: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In addition to weekly or monthly reports, cooks also prepared annual summaries for their masters.<sup>102</sup> These yearly assessments even monitored the number of *gras* and *maigre* days, which fluctuated from year to year. On *gras* days, the catholic church allowed the consumption of meat; on *maigre* days it was proscribed. Since fish typically cost far more than meat, budgets required adjustment accordingly. Such reports revealed any lingering debts to suppliers and provided a synopsis of annual spending patterns; they could also form the basis of annual budgets. The Prince de Lambesc's cook, for example, was expected in 1775 to adhere to an annual budget of 30,000 livres.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> AN T 491/3.

<sup>103</sup> AN T 491/2 (1775).



To monitor the daily cycle of purchases, cooks computed rates of consumption. For example, in some households, masters were particularly keen to monitor the consumption of meat. Madame de Kerry demanded that her cook provide a daily tally of the weight of meat consumed.<sup>104</sup> The cooks who served the Comtesse d'Artois likewise calculated the amount of meat purchased and eaten each week. After noting the weekly total, the cook who served the Comtesse d'Artois then reckoned both the amount consumed each *gras* day and the portion per person.<sup>105</sup> This cook's registers reveal something of the complexity of the required arithmetic:

Observation on the consumption of butcher's meat

The 37 pounds taken today are raw.

The consumption this week is 32 pounds [with subsequent details by date]

32 pounds divided by ~~five~~ four days make ~~6 pounds 6 ounces per day~~ 8 pounds per day.

There are five people in the kitchen and Felix makes 6, therefore this is one pound eight ounces per person.<sup>106</sup>

Here the cook needed to divide figures, not simply perform the ordinary addition and subtraction of basic daily accounting. Because the number of *gras* and *maigre* days fluctuated from week to week, cooks had to adjust their calculations to follow the liturgical calendar. These calculations helped to determine the broader cost of maintaining the household; by figuring total expense of his mistress's servants, the cook helped her to know how much her retinue cost.

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<sup>104</sup> AN T\* 451/2 (1787).

<sup>105</sup> The liturgical calendar divided days into *gras* and *maigre*, or fat and lean, to indicate when meat was allowed or prohibited.

<sup>106</sup> AN T\* 265/2 (1789).

Kitchen accounts also helped to track expenses associated with guests or special feasts. Joly de Fleury's cook Audiger compiled summary spending reports for each of the major catholic feast days; in 1770 he noted the outlay of nearly a thousand livres each for Easter and Pentecost celebrations.<sup>107</sup> Ponsignon, pastry cook to *contrôleur-général des finances* Calonne, oversaw the provisioning of a more extraordinary function, the Assembly of Notables from February to April 1787; in one month alone the assembled consumed 160 pounds of coffee and more than a quarter ton of sugar.<sup>108</sup> In practice, cooks' accounts took a variety of forms; in all cases, however, it was a time-consuming task. One cook apologized for being busy with "the accounts that [my mistress] demands of me for tomorrow."<sup>109</sup> The size of many of these reports hints at the long hours involved in their preparation; one cook's monthly account is thirteen pages long.<sup>110</sup>

Women as well as men performed kitchen accounting. To be sure, archival sources underrepresent them: the types of households whose records have entered the archives were wealthier and thus tended to hire male cooks. Nonetheless, the accounts kept by the cook Gy, who worked for the duchess of Fitz-James, demonstrate that women followed the same practices as men in the kitchen.<sup>111</sup> Anecdotal evidence also suggests that women kept written accounts. In a letter to his wife, Bernard de Bonnard mentioned paying his female cook's *mémoire*.<sup>112</sup> Letters and documents such as *livres de compte* of

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<sup>107</sup> BN Joly de Fleury 2490, 242, 253. His cook reported expenses of 893 livres 15 sous on Easter and 981 livres 19 sous on Pentecost.

<sup>108</sup> AN T 261/1 (March 1787).

<sup>109</sup> AN T 254, Pierre Lamireau to Anne Farcy.

<sup>110</sup> AN T\* 261/2 (June 1784).

<sup>111</sup> AN T 186/44-46 (1785-1786).

<sup>112</sup> AN 352 AP 39, Bernard de Bonnard to Sophie Silvestre (6 February 1783).

course point to the presence of literate cooks, but what about those whose masters' papers failed to enter the archives? Did other cooks know how to read, write, and calculate? Iconographic and literary evidence suggests that few kitchens could function without the written records that tracked inventories, purchases, wages, and rates of consumption. The engraving of *La Cuisinière* preparing her *mémoire* is by no means an anomaly; contemporary representations of cooks depict highly literate and numerate individuals. Moreover, both women and men exercised these skills in the kitchen; although the majority of surviving examples of cooks' writing come from men, virtually every contemporary representation of a cook engaged in the act of writing involves a woman. In the play *La Dinde du Mans*, the character of the cook makes her first appearance when she arrives in her master's study to deliver her regular account for review and reimbursement.<sup>113</sup> In the verse *La Maltôte des cuisinières*, two women discuss the keeping of kitchen accounts (and the stratagems for perpetrating fraud).<sup>114</sup> The notion of the writing and calculating cook permeates contemporary prescriptive literature; conduct manuals simply assume that cooks practice bookkeeping. These manuals stress only the importance of keeping honest records; they never question whether cooks possess the capacity to read, write, and calculate.

Outside the kitchen, these skills were something of a rarity among servants, among whom literacy rates tended to be quite low. Female servants in particular were especially unlikely to be able to read and write; according to Sarah Maza they were “for

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<sup>113</sup> [Pierre-Germain Parizau], *La Dinde du Mans* (Paris: Cailleau, 1783), 13.

<sup>114</sup> *La Maltôte des cuisinieres, ou la maniere de bien ferrer la mule. Dialogue entre une vieille Cuisiniere et une jeune Servante.*, (Riom: G. Valleyre, 1724).

the most part illiterate.”<sup>115</sup> In England, illiteracy among all domestic servants ranged from 59-66%, and among women the rate was likely much higher.<sup>116</sup> Daniel Roche explains that for women in domestic service, “the question [of literacy] did not even arise.”<sup>117</sup> Roche bases this assertion of illiteracy on his reading of the Audiger’s conduct manual *La Maison réglée* (1692), claiming that servant women’s “chief duty was ‘to be good and honest’”<sup>118</sup> Yet the same conduct manual expects that all cooks, male and female, could read, write, and do sums. Audiger describes the ideal female cook as “wise and of good conscience in the accounts where she reports her expenses.”<sup>119</sup> Roche accurately highlights the importance of moral fitness, but for cooks the ability to calculate and compose kitchen reports came first. Cooks’ literacy was simply assumed by most contemporaries.<sup>120</sup> As a rule, however, servants seem not to have been especially literate, though exceptions of course existed. In some cases valets and chambermaids kept small tallies of petty purchases.<sup>121</sup> In the largest households, stewards kept extensive records of

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<sup>115</sup> Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 52. Such illiteracy among servants was hardly confined to France. For the case of servant illiteracy England, see Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 226-227.

<sup>116</sup> David Cressy, "Literacy in context: meaning and measurement in early modern England," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 317.

<sup>117</sup> Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 201.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée, et l'art de diriger la maison d'un grand seigneur & autres, tant à la ville qu'à la campagne, & le devoir de tous les officiers, & autres domestiques en general. Avec la véritable methode de faire toutes sortes d'essences, d'eaux & de liqueurs, fortes & rafraîchissantes, à la mode d'Italie* (Paris: Lambert Roulland pour Nicolas Le Gras, 1692), 133-134.”

<sup>120</sup> In the nineteenth century, the *Magasin pittoresque* presented the shocking case of a cook who kept her accounts with hand-drawn pictographs. Nonetheless, even she could write; the cook resorted to pictures only after becoming ashamed of the laughter which met her poor penmanship and spelling. "Les Comptes d'une cuisinière," *Le Magasin pittoresque*, January 1877, 7-8.

<sup>121</sup> For example, Madame de Mirepoix’s chambermaid kept receipts for small purchases made on her mistress’s behalf, AN T 208/3.

overall domestic expenses; in fact, a cook's bookkeeping skills opened the possibility of promotion to *maître d'hôtel*, who often managed the general expenses of the entire household.<sup>122</sup>

The exceptionalism of cooks' literacy is perhaps eclipsed by their comfort with the world of numbers. Keith Thomas has suggested that compared to men women during the same period in England "lagged behind in numeracy, perhaps even more than in literacy."<sup>123</sup> The fact that bookkeeping was so closely associated with women cooks is particularly surprising, given Patricia Cline Cohen's assertion that in the eighteenth century mathematics "unmade" women.<sup>124</sup> Yet cooks' account books provide incontrovertible evidence of sophisticated numeracy among servants. Poor math was in fact never a concern; on the contrary, the forging of accounts required especially careful calculation. The *Maltôte des cuisinières* provides an alarming tale in verse of one crooked cook instructing another in the fine art of cooking her books.<sup>125</sup> Merchant receipts, daily transactions, credit balances, and wage records attest to the importance of the skills of calculation in the eighteenth-century kitchen. Yet unlike literacy, numeracy has been the focus of very few serious inquiries. To some degree, the difficulty lies with locating the signs of numeracy, which are often ambiguous.<sup>126</sup> While literacy always involves some form of writing, the abilities to count and do sums can be exercised in the

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<sup>122</sup>Vincent La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier moderne, qui apprend à donner toutes sortes de repas, en gras et en maigre, d'une manière plus délicate que ce qui en été écrit jusqu'à présent* (The Hague: 1742), 2.

<sup>123</sup> Keith Thomas, "Numeracy in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 37 (1987), 113.

<sup>124</sup> Patricia Cline Cohen, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 142.

<sup>125</sup> *La Maltôte des cuisinieres*.

<sup>126</sup> Cohen, *A Calculating People*, 11.

absence of any written record.<sup>127</sup> How did cooks' numeracy skills compare with those practiced by other occupational groups? As with literacy, cooks practiced skills that were less evident among their fellow servants, whose work did not depend as heavily on calculation and writing. Cooks' systematic account keeping resembles that practiced by artisans engaged in public trade, which began as a simple response to the need to keep track of transactions.<sup>128</sup> At first these records may have reflected superior numeracy skills on the part of those keeping them; according to one historian accounting began when "merchants made change or kept credit records for their less numerate clientele."<sup>129</sup> Even during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Cohen finds arithmetic only in the "widening groove of bourgeois life."<sup>130</sup> The *Encyclopédie*'s entry for *livre de compte* emphasizes this public and commercial aspect of bookkeeping, noting that account books were used by "merchants, businessmen, bankers, and others."<sup>131</sup> Evidence suggests, however, that bookkeeping was substantially more widespread; Clare Haru Crowston has found that even seamstresses performed crude bookkeeping.<sup>132</sup> The case of cooks forces us to extend numeracy into one of the unlikeliest of contexts: domestic servitude. The accounts prepared by cooks had no public audience; they were intended solely for the eyes of their masters.

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<sup>127</sup> Keith Thomas has described one shopkeeper "banging out" accounts by using sticks and spoons rather than writing sums. Thomas, "Numeracy in Early Modern England," 119-120, 132.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>129</sup> Cohen, *A Calculating People*, 11.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>131</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Comptes (livres de)."

<sup>132</sup> Clare Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 164-166.

### *Review and disbursement*

Cooks periodically offered their books for their masters' inspection in order to demonstrate the accuracy and honesty of their accounting. The play *La Dinde du Mans* satirizes this ritual; when Monsieur Grapeau's cook presents her kitchen account, we catch a glimpse of how such a meeting might have transpired.

M. Grapeau: Money. Always money! You would think we were the Farmers-General. (*He reads*). "Butter, eggs, beans, charcoal, beans, embers, matches, beans, water, salt, beans." That's a lot of beans.

Cook: A liter every day.<sup>133</sup>

These reviews ordinarily occurred monthly or weekly, but in some households could happen more frequently. One mistress ordered her cook to provide to her the detailed account of the day's expenses before she went to bed each night.<sup>134</sup> After reviewing their cooks' records, masters and mistresses typically signed the *mémoire* or *livre de compte* to indicate their approval. Each month, the Comtesse de Brienne and her cook Peron each countersigned his accounts.<sup>135</sup> Marie Anne Boucher d'Orlay noted that she had "approved the above writing" before signing her kitchen's accounts.<sup>136</sup> The Prince de Lambesc wrote "settled and verified" or "seen good" before attaching his name to his accounts, while Mirepoix wrote only her name.<sup>137</sup> In these last cases, a senior servant actually reimbursed the cooks in question; nonetheless, the affairs of the kitchen continued to merit their masters' direct attention. In one household, the process of

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<sup>133</sup> Parizau], *La Dinde du Mans*, 13.

<sup>134</sup> AN T\* 451/2 (1787).

<sup>135</sup> AN 4 AP 304 (1787-1789).

<sup>136</sup> AN T\* 217.

<sup>137</sup> AN T 491/2 (6 August 1776) "arreté et verifié." AN T 491/3 (September 1785) "vu bon". AN T 208/3 (7 March 1788).

account verification was extraordinarily formalized; each month the cook's records were audited and notarized.<sup>138</sup>

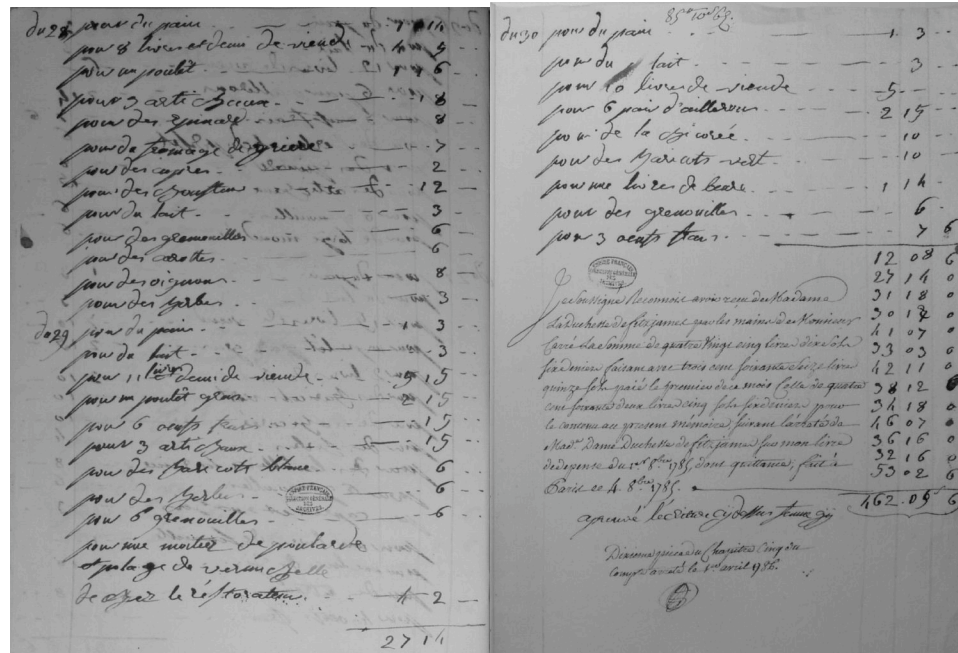


Figure 3.5. The cook's writing. Monthly register kept by "woman Gy," cook to the duchess of Fitz-James, with signatures attesting to the account's accuracy. AN T 186/44 (1785).

In most cases, of course, the cook's books passed muster and satisfied her master that all accounts were in order. Her master (or a senior servant) would then hand over money sufficient to pay outstanding debts. Though in many eighteenth-century commercial transactions artisans and merchants typically languished unpaid for months, kitchen debts were generally paid promptly.<sup>139</sup> Any interruption of the constant daily demand for food would have severely limited a household's ability to function. A

<sup>138</sup> AN T\* 470/35 (1754).

<sup>139</sup> For examples of unpaid debts, see Gillian Lewis, "Producers, suppliers, and consumers: reflections on the luxury trades in Paris, c.1500-c.1800," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in ancien Régime Paris*, ed. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Ashgate: Aldershot, 1998), 287, Carolyn Sargentson, "The manufacture and marketing of luxury goods: the *marchands merciers* of late 17th- and 18th-century Paris," in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in ancien Régime Paris* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 123.



shortage of veal was certainly more pressing than a lack of new clocks. Even so, the delay between purchase and reimbursement varied considerably. In some households, the wait could be as brief as a few days. In others, it could stretch for weeks. In any event, suppliers were nearly always reimbursed by the cook who had initially made the purchases. In a few exceptional cases, the head cook reimbursed merchants for purchases made by his assistant.<sup>140</sup> In very wealthy households, the cook's debts might be reimbursed by an intermediate servant, typically the *maître d'hôtel*, *intendant*, or *secrétaire*. Calonne's cook Oliver, for example received his funds from another servant, Jourdan. Regardless of the payer, the cook would exchange some form of receipt dating the sum received, either entered into the *livre de compte* or noted on a separate document. At least one household used preprinted receipts to indicate payment for goods and services received; using these novelties, the Comte de Kerry needed only to fill in place, date, and sum.<sup>141</sup> Once a cook had submitted a receipt indicating her kitchen had been reimbursed, she could close the previous month's *mémoire* and begin the next.

Despite the supervision of masters, kitchen bookkeeping involved a profound delegation of authority to cooks, through whose hands passed a staggering amount of wealth. The Prince de Lambesc's cook dispensed around 25,000 livres each year during the 1770s.<sup>142</sup> Calonne's kitchen expenses regularly exceeded 8000 livres per month throughout 1780s; during the meeting of the Assembly of Notables, they topped 32,000 livres in a single month.<sup>143</sup> Even in relative terms, cooks oversaw the bulk of the

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<sup>140</sup> AN T 451/7 (1792).

<sup>141</sup> AN T 451/7 (1779).

<sup>142</sup> AN T 491/2 (1776, 1779).

<sup>143</sup> AN T\* 261/5.

household's expenditures. According to Daniel Roche, food budgets accounted for half to two-thirds of all household expenses.<sup>144</sup> Masters clearly had a strong interest in monitoring the expenses of their kitchens. In the past they had likely kept these sorts of household accounts themselves. According to Mark Wigley, domestic accounting in early modern Italy relied on the exclusion of women from both the physical space of its practice and the rhetorical space of its discourse.<sup>145</sup> Husbands secreted themselves into their private studies in order to keep the calculation of their finances hidden from their wives. Because domestic accounting records recapitulated the household's financial dealings, they needed to be kept secret. Even as late as the eighteenth century, Patricia Cohen likewise finds that "family finances [were] the private preserve of men."<sup>146</sup> No study of domestic accounting entertains the possibility of servants (let alone female servants) performing this function. Instead, it has been viewed as a distinctly masculine process.

Servants were considered singularly unfit for the practice of bookkeeping; their minds simply lacked the capacity for independent rational thought. As Steven Shapin notes, seventeenth-century scientists considered servants capable only of acting as amanuenses; they could not function as independent experimenters and calculators.<sup>147</sup> Like women, servants theoretically possessed neither the capacity nor the right to calculate records of household finances. Yet like Wigley's secretive masters, cooks

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<sup>144</sup> Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 225.

<sup>145</sup> Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 348.

<sup>146</sup> Cohen, *A Calculating People*, 142. Cohen finds mistresses beginning to manage household finances only at the very end of the eighteenth century.

<sup>147</sup> Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Need page number.

certainly composed their accounts far from the prying eyes of outsiders. As the previous chapter shows, cooks generally worked in almost complete isolation from their masters; the more distance separating kitchen from living space, the better. Though kitchen accounting constituted an inescapable responsibility for eighteenth-century cooks, placing the responsibility in servants' hands fostered considerable unease. At stake was not just the accuracy of the accounting document but also the moral character of the cook. Cooks demonstrated their own probity and the efficiency of their kitchens each time they presented their accounts for review. This intended effect helped to shape the format of the cook's *mémoires* and *livres de raison*. Unlike the accounts kept by artisans and vendors, a cook's accounts always were written for the eyes of a second party, her master. She could not scribble crude receipts or keep books solely for the occasionally dispute over payment.<sup>148</sup> The cook's books not only had to be legible; they had to make the continual case that her kitchen was honest. Neatly organized accounts provided evidence of an efficient kitchen.

Historians of accounting have extensively studied the emergence its formal practices, in particular that of double-entry bookkeeping. Until the early 1980s, double-entry bookkeeping was understood to be a technical response to the demands of increasingly complex economies. Beginning with the pioneering work of James Aho, however, a new understanding emerged of double entry bookkeeping as "largely rhetorical."<sup>149</sup> As a form of rhetoric, double-entry bookkeeping depicted a symmetric and

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<sup>148</sup> Seamstresses, for example, kept rough books to pursue debtors. Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 165.

<sup>149</sup> James A. Aho, "Rhetoric and the Invention of Double-Entry Bookkeeping," *Rhetorica* 3, no. 3 (1985), 22. Aho's interpretation has heavily influenced later studies of accounting. See, for example, Grahame Thompson, "Is Accounting Rhetorical? Methodology, Luca Pacioli and Printing," *Accounting*,

perfectly balanced relationship between credits and debits. Aho argues that the display of such a relationship helped to demonstrate the probity of the bookkeeper, “anticipat[ing] objections and sooth[ing] concerns.”<sup>150</sup> Cooks’ bookkeeping practices included a wide variety of techniques, most of which fell well short of the formality of double-entry bookkeeping. Nonetheless, I would suggest that, though heterogeneous, they still constituted a rhetoric. Cooks sought to demonstrate their probity to their masters through the maintenance and display of accurate financial records. For cooks, such a demonstration of honest dealing was especially important. With domestic theft remaining a hanging offense until the Revolution, the stakes could hardly be higher.

The tools of the eighteenth-century kitchen were both complicated and expensive. Each cook was charged with the care and maintenance of these instruments; the strategies she used to manage them reveal a cook who exercised both literacy and numeracy, skills that markedly distinguished her from other types of servants. Fastidious attention to detail and careful organization of accounting records enabled her to demonstrate both her technical and moral fitness. The cook’s kitchen calculations placed her at the center of a residence’s web of commercial transactions. This control over domestic accounts made the cook a valuable resource but also could raise concerns about the honesty of her numbers.

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*Organizations, and Society* 16, no. 5-6 (1991), Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>150</sup> Aho, "Rhetoric and the Invention of Double-Entry Bookkeeping," 43.

## Chapter 4. The Labor of Cooking

Donc un excellent cuisinier est digne d'être recherché avec soin, et surtout d'être bien payé de ses peines.

Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*

Although as servants, cooks lacked a guild – or any other formal institution, for that matter – they nonetheless practiced strategies that both organized their labor into sophisticated markets and recognized a hierarchy of cooks. Beginning in the 1760s, cooks began to place advertisements offering their services in the *affiches*, regional newspapers that served France's major urban centers. Cooks aggressively promoted their various qualities, ranging from physical appearance to technical expertise. Prospective masters responded in turn by publishing their own ads seeking to hire cooks. They outlined their own requirements, which could include good moral behavior and proof of good service. Both servant and master thus negotiated a discursive definition of the ideal cook as they participated in the shared practices of print culture. For their services, cooks earned an extraordinarily wide range of wages that began near zero and extended to well over a thousand livres per year. This diversity of incomes resulted from a complex formula involving a number of variables, including skill, status, and gender. Yet income did not always correlate directly to a cook's own status. Instead, cooks understood their ranking among other cooks as a function of their own expertise, experience, and (perhaps most important) the social status of their own masters. Selling their services through an

ordered market that accounted for this rich variety of qualities, cooks plotted complex career trajectories.

To capture a sense of the cooking labor market, I have analyzed a broad sample of printed employment advertisements spanning the second half of the eighteenth century. These ads reflected the immense range of skills and personal attributes claimed by cooks and desired by their masters. Yet cooks left such public traces only briefly during the intervals between jobs. In contrast, while employed they and their labor largely disappeared into residential spaces. Consequently we must follow cooks there in order to learn anything more about them. Fortunately, by examining private household records we can trace the career trajectories of cooks. Sometimes these documents took the shape of the formal accounting registers examined in the previous chapter, but often they consisted of little more than loose scraps of paper noting hiring decisions and requests for payment. Such artifacts offer a window not just into the wages paid to cooks but also into the circumstances of the hiring (and firing) of servants. A cook's place of origin, age, and requests for loans or pay raises could appear as marginalia, and when a continuous series of documents has survived we can occasionally follow the arc of a career from novice to experienced cook.

### **1. Who or What Was a Cook?**

One of the most basic challenges in the study of cooks is the definition itself of "cook." In Old Regime France, a dizzying number of titles or positions involved cooking. To be sure, many cooks were known as just that: "cooks" (*cuisiniers* or *cuisinières*). In other cases, some servants who cooked would never have identified

themselves as “cooks.” For example, a servant who washed laundry, cleaned house, and performed “a bit of cooking” might only label herself a *domestique* or *servante*, both of which meant only “servant.” Evidence suggests that even those who called themselves “governesses” felt comfortable applying for positions as cooks: when Sophie Silvestre sought to hire a cook in 1783, she despaired of finding an actual cook in the multitude of servants that presented themselves to her looking for employment. She wrote to her husband that several governesses had applied for the position, but “I only want a cook and have had a hard time finding one.”<sup>1</sup> At the opposite end of the spectrum an extreme differentiation of cooking skill had similar consequences, with cooks assuming highly specialized positions. For example, cooks who worked in teams of differentiated workers identified themselves through titles that reflected both their activities and their position within a hierarchy. Examples include *maître d’hôtel*, *chef de cuisine*, *aide de cuisine*, *garçon de cuisine*, *enfant de cuisine*, and *servante de cuisine*, to name a few.

Most households that hired a cook typically engaged a single woman. In some cases, she worked as a general purpose *domestique*, with cooking only comprising a portion of her duties. In other households, such women were entirely devoted to cooking.<sup>2</sup> While Louis-Sébastien Mercier feigned pity for the household of the *petit bourgeois* which only had “a servant, whose masterpiece is a chicken fricassee,” he also suggested that such cooks were equally capable of turning out the sort of delicacies enjoyed in the rarefied confines of more elite households.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> AN 352 AP 34, Sophie Silvestre to Bernard de Bonnard (12 August 1783).

<sup>2</sup> Joly de Fleury, *Précis pour la femme Bailleux, ci-devant cuisinière du sieur Petit, intimée, contre le sieur Petit de la Mothe, receveur des rentes à la ville, appellant* (Paris: N. H. Nyon, 1787), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 5:82.

In wealthy households with large domestic staffs, a *maître d'hôtel*, or household steward, often oversaw the operations of the kitchen. Conduct manuals like Claude Fleury's *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques* (1688), Audiger's *La Maison réglée* (1692), and Pierre Collet's *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques* (1758) identified the *maître d'hôtel* as effectively a planner and organizer of the kitchen's functions. He (and the position was invariably filled by a man) needed to possess "the organization and the foresight to secure the necessary provisions in the proper time and season."<sup>4</sup> Mercier listed the tasks of the *maître d'hôtel* as including "the planning of the table, the choice and the purchase of comestibles, to know where to find them, to know how to keep them ready to be properly consumed, and to preserve them from the weather and any loss."<sup>5</sup> The *maître d'hôtel* was also charged with maintaining order among his subordinate staff, since "he appeases quarrels and will not tolerate cooks mistreating their subordinates."<sup>6</sup> Fleury stated that the basis of the *maître d'hôtel*'s function is "fidelity," ensuring honest use of the master's resources.<sup>7</sup> Collet echoed this claim seventy years later, citing fidelity as the *maître d'hôtel*'s "first duty."<sup>8</sup>

Working under a *maître d'hôtel*, the *chef de cuisine*, or head cook, was charged with the actual execution of meals and the coordination of kitchen staff. This role as manager of subordinate cooks ultimately gave rise to the original distinction between

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<sup>4</sup> Claude Fleury, *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques* (Paris: Pierre Aubouin, Pierre Emery, and Charles Clouzier, 1688), 213-214.

<sup>5</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 11:229.

<sup>6</sup> Fleury, *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques*, 215.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-211.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Collet, *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques* (Paris: Debure l'aîné, Herissant, Herissant, Tilliard, 1758), 304.



“chef” and “cook,” since the title *chef de cuisine* indicated a cook’s role as the leader of a team. In practice, however, titles like cook and chef were interchangeable in eighteenth-century France. In Audiger’s model, the cook commanded an extensive staff but remained subordinate to the *maître d’hôtel*. For example, the cook needed always to have “dinner and supper ready at the times specified by the lord or his *maître d’hôtel*.” But the cook in turn needed to act as an authority within the kitchen: “He must moreover know how to order and make himself obeyed by his assistants and boys.”<sup>9</sup>

Just as “chef” and “cook” were often conflated, clear distinctions between *maître d’hôtel* and *chef de cuisine* did not always exist. In fact, the functions of both positions were often performed by a single person. A *maître d’hôtel* might himself cook and work directly over his assistants. Conversely, a *chef de cuisine* might perform the functions of the *maître d’hôtel*. Audiger remained a bit vague on the role of either servant in the composition of meals, recommending that menus include items “on the whim of the *maître d’hôtel* or the cook.”<sup>10</sup> In his conduct manual, Claude Fleury suggested that the *maître d’hôtel* needed “to determine each evening the table service for the following day.”<sup>11</sup> Yet this task could just as easily fall to the cook, as in the case of the de Kerry household, where the cook was instructed to plan each dinner one day in advance.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence suggests that the two terms were often perceived to be virtually

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<sup>9</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée, et l'art de diriger la maison d'un grand seigneur & autres, tant à la ville qu'à la campagne, & le devoir de tous les officiers, & autres domestiques en general. Avec la veritable methode de faire toutes sortes d'essences, d'eaux & de liqueurs, fortes & rafraîchissantes, à la mode d'Italie* (Paris: Lambert Roulland pour Nicolas Le Gras, 1692), 56.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>11</sup> Fleury, *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques*, 214.

<sup>12</sup> AN T\* 451/2 (1787).

interchangeable. Kitchen receipts, for example, could list the same buyer alternately as either *chef de cuisine* and *maître d'hôtel*.<sup>13</sup>

Continuing downward in the cooking hierarchy, the *aide de cuisine*, or kitchen assistant, worked immediately under the cook. As we will see, this assistant was likely to succeed to the head cook's position in the event of a vacancy. Next in line were the kitchen boys (*garçons de cuisine* or *enfants de cuisine*) were generally the most junior members of the kitchen team. In many cases, they were the sons or younger brothers of other cooks. Audiger made no distinction between kitchen assistants and kitchen boys, suggesting only that both act "according to the orders given to them by their chef."<sup>14</sup> Wage records from the eighteenth century, however, suggest a profound gulf between the two, with kitchen assistants often earning nearly as much as the head cook, while kitchen boys received a far smaller salary. Finally, the wealthiest of households typically carved out a separate staff to handle desserts, fruits, and pastries. Known as the *office*, this staff worked in concert with the kitchen. Subordinate either to the *maître d'hôtel* or to the *chef de cuisine*, the *office* might have its own chef, assistants, and boys.

## 2. The Culinary Labor Market

The print-based market for cooks' services began with an advertisement for a slave. On 18 January 1760 the *Affiches de Nantes* published the following notice: "Those wishing to purchase a negro aged about twenty, handsome, excellent subject, and good

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<sup>13</sup> AN T 261/1 (January and February 1784).

<sup>14</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée*, 57.

cook should contact the advertising bureau.”<sup>15</sup> Thus at first, cooks were quite literally bought and sold in the affiches. Despite this inauspicious beginning, other cooks soon began to place their own advertisements, and by the 1770s they offered their services in newspapers across the kingdom.<sup>16</sup> Potential masters looking to hire likewise submitted advertisements for inclusion in the affiches. Masters outlined the qualities of the ideal cook, while cooks aimed to present themselves in the best light. By engaging in the shared practice of submitting and responding to advertisements, cooks and their would-be masters interacted on an essentially level playing field. Within the discursive space of the affiches, masters found themselves negotiating with servants over matters of taste, the qualities of the cook, and the conditions of service. In my research I have analyzed employment advertisements from six cities appearing over a span of twenty-five years.<sup>17</sup> This broad sample offers an unmatched sense of the spectrum of cooking labor, stretching from accomplished cooks who proudly announced their names and experience to anonymous posters meekly mentioning knowledge of only a “little cooking.”

By no means do I intend to portray the affiches as the only market for cooks’ services. Other conduits (both informal and formal) for seeking employment surely existed. First, social networks including family facilitated the hiring process, and cases of nepotism within large kitchen staffs were anything but rare. Second, cooks implicitly

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<sup>15</sup> *Affiches de Nantes* (18 January 1760).

<sup>16</sup> While the *affiches* predate the arrival of employment advertisements, they do so just barely. For the most comprehensive listing of the affiches, see Jean Sgard and Jean-Daniel Candaux, *Dictionnaire des journaux, 1600-1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Universitas, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> I draw my sample from the affiches of Bordeaux, Metz, Nantes, Rouen, Paris, and Toulouse. I have concentrated mainly on the month of January, since it typically witnessed the greatest number of advertisements. Cooks, like other servants, tended to look for new work around this time. Since I am interested more in the character of these ads than in their quantification, such an approach was far more efficient at generating an overall picture of the types and qualities depicted by both job-seekers and employers.

advertised their skills any time their masters hosted guests. Flush with the acclaim of just such an occasion, one cook decided to resign his position, confident of his own marketability.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the affiches hint at the existence of something like an employment agency for domestic servants (*le bureau de confiance et de sûreté pour les domestiques*) that operated during the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Yet given the difficulties of tracing these alternative circuits of employment, the affiches provide our best window into the labor market for cooks, encompassing a continuum ranging from experienced *maîtres d'hôtel* to neophytes.

Although Gilles Feyel argues that the affiches “were first and foremost advertising sheets,” historians of the press have oddly neglected their employment advertisements.<sup>20</sup> Jack Censer, for example, downplays the importance of these ads, focusing instead on the “social and economic questions” that he argues dominated the affiches.<sup>21</sup> Feyel offers one possible explanation for historians’ aversion, suggesting that

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<sup>18</sup> AN T 254, Pierre Lamireau to Anne Farcy.

<sup>19</sup> *Petites affiches*, 6 January 1785. *Petites affiches*, 15 January 1791. Located at 10, rue de Tiquetonne and “established for 40 years,” the agency was directed by a certain Gondeville and later by his wife. A study of this institution would doubtless provide fascinating insight into another aspect of domestic service. *Petites affiches* 10 January 1793 suggests another bureau for servants with an annual subscription fee. Jacqueline Sabattier briefly mentions a servant employment agency in her study of domestic service. Jacqueline Sabattier, *Figaro et son maître: maîtres et domestiques à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1984), 23.

<sup>20</sup> Gilles Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle: la presse d'information en France sous l'Ancien Régime, 1630-1788* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 1129. Even though one can no longer lament a lack of critical studies of the affiches, much work remains to be done. Colin Jones has sought to focus attention on the the affiches’ advertising, an approach that I share. Colin Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996), 17-24. In contrast, recent work which has sought to decode political culture and national identity through the pages of the affiches pointedly neglects their most immediate value as artifacts of markets for a wide range of goods and services. See, for example, Stephen Auerbach, ““Encourager le commerce et répandre les lumières”: The Press, the Provinces and the Origins of the Revolution in France: 1750-1789” (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 2000)..

<sup>21</sup> Jack R. Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1994), 65.

the “infinite repetition” of advertisements has “discouraged analysis.”<sup>22</sup> Yet within this “infinite repetition” we can locate a vibrant discourse of what constituted a cook, as we witness both servants and masters negotiating the definitions of cooks and cooking. Both sides deployed a broad range of skills and attributes much richer than the incomplete categories of analysis historians have so far identified. Censer, for example, lists just four general types of attributes contained in the employment advertisements, including “special skills, appearance, character, and intellectual abilities.”<sup>23</sup> Feyel has offered a somewhat wider characterization of the ads, listing “gender, age, skills possessed or required, [and] the type of job requested or offered.”<sup>24</sup> Censer notably ignores gender, which as we will see factored heavily into hiring decisions. Meanwhile Feyel’s neglect of the moral aspect of affiches advertisements is equally puzzling, since well over a third of all advertisements for cooks explicitly referred to good character.<sup>25</sup> But rather than simply identify and itemize these discrete categories of attributes, I hope to show the interrelationships among the broad constellation of physical, intellectual, and moral qualities displayed in these advertisements. Which characteristics outweighed or complemented others? Could a cook’s physical attributes, including age, further guarantee her moral behavior? How did technical skill stack up against moral fitness? What sort of cooks needed to emphasize which qualities?

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<sup>22</sup> Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle: la presse d'information en France sous l'Ancien Régime, 1630-1788*, 1129.

<sup>23</sup> Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle: la presse d'information en France sous l'Ancien Régime, 1630-1788*, 1133.

<sup>25</sup> Of my sample of 628 advertisements, 226 specified a cook that was “known,” had “good references,” possessed good “morals” or “certificates” of good behavior. Moreover, cooks were if anything less likely than other servants to advertise their moral qualities, as we shall see below.

*Physical attributes: age, size, and looks*

Eighteenth-century job seekers were not shy about promoting their appearance, nor were masters slow to indicate precisely what they sought. Among her physical attributes, a cook's age was probably her most important quality, and about three-quarters of all employment advertisements for cooks make some mention of age.<sup>26</sup> While many of these ads sought only cooks of a vaguely defined age (such as "mature"), well over half specified the cook's age in years, with ages ranging from 17 to 60.<sup>27</sup> In general, masters avoided engaging especially young servants since they were perceived to lack the maturity of more experienced domestics. On the other hand, much older servants might not retain the vigor necessary to fulfill their duties. In general masters aimed for something of a comfortable balance, requesting cooks of a "mature age" (*age mûr*) who were thought more likely to possess the requisite bearing and experience to keep them out of trouble.

Because a full-time cook remained largely hidden away in the kitchen, height theoretically mattered less than with more visible servants like valets. It is thus unsurprising that the vast majority of advertisements seeking cooks do not specify a particular height. When a certain Dasse placed an advertisement seeking to hire two servants, she specified only the desired height of the man who would shave, dress hair,

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<sup>26</sup> In my sample of 628 ads, 467 used the terms "age", "mature", "young", or indicated the cook's age in years.

<sup>27</sup> *Petites affiches*, 13 January 1781 and 12 February 1795.

and serve at the table. In contrast, the cook was only to be aged around fifty and single.<sup>28</sup> For some masters, however, servant height was something of an obsession that could extend even to include cooks. The lawyer Delville, for example, demanded three servants of differing heights: the man who would work in the kitchen, serve at the table, and shave needed to be five feet seven or eight inches tall; the one who shaved and polished floors, at least five feet six; the last, who needed to know the city of Paris well and how to polish floors would need to be five foot eight.<sup>29</sup> One master hoped to find a servant precisely between five feet three and five feet four inches who knew how to read and write and who understood gardening and cooking.<sup>30</sup> These last dimensions were evidently in high demand, since just one week later another master looked for someone of the same height, “around forty years old, who knows how to style hair, polish floors, and do a bit of cooking.”<sup>31</sup> Either prospective master may have been in luck, since later that month “[a] young man of 25 years, height 5 feet 3 to 4 inches, who knows how to read, write, polish floors, and prepare a good *cuisine bourgeoise*” placed an ad in the same newspaper.<sup>32</sup> Other cooks also occasionally indicated their size. One “young man [...] who knows how to cook well” claimed a height of five feet five inches. Another “young man” described himself as of “a good height.”<sup>33</sup> A couple of cooks described their own

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<sup>28</sup> *Petites affiches*, 11 January 1783. This reference could be corrupted, check to see whether it should be *Affiches de Province*.

<sup>29</sup> *Petites affiches*, 11 February 1779. It should be noted that French units of linear measurement ran slightly longer than their standard equivalents: one French inch equalled about 1.066 standard inches. Thus a height of five *pieds* eight *pouces* would be slightly over six feet tall in today’s units.

<sup>30</sup> *Petites affiches*, 19 January 1781.

<sup>31</sup> *Petites affiches*, 23 January 1781.

<sup>32</sup> *Petites affiches*, 29 January 1781.

<sup>33</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 18 January 1771.

size as “advantageous.”<sup>34</sup> Even cooks with numerous cooking qualifications would sometimes provide their height. A thirty-eight-year-old former cook and *maître d’hôtel* advertised his height of five feet four inches.<sup>35</sup> An especially qualified fellow in Metz identified himself as “a good cook knowing pastrymaking, desserts, aged 26 years, height 5 feet 8 inches and having good certificates.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise, a “boy of 33 years, knowing cooking, pastrymaking, desserts, and a bit of everything” gave a height of five feet five.<sup>37</sup>

Both men and women also highlighted their physical condition and the quality of their appearance. One woman described herself as “robust,” while another man claimed to be “very robust.”<sup>38</sup> A twenty-six-year-old chambermaid advertised her “very interesting looks.”<sup>39</sup> A twenty-four-year-old woman described herself as “big and well-made.”<sup>40</sup> In general, however, cooks were less likely than other servants to be prized for their looks, thanks to their relative invisibility within the household. Underscoring the distinction between those who worked inside and outside the kitchen, one Bordelais advertisement requested “a servant who knows how to serve, speak well, and with agreeable looks and another who knows how to serve at the table and work in the kitchen.”<sup>41</sup> For kitchen workers, “agreeable looks” simply were not as important.

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<sup>34</sup> *Petites affiches*, 21 January 1785. *Petites affiches*, 22 January 1785.

<sup>35</sup> *Petites affiches*, 23 January 1781.

<sup>36</sup> *Affiches de Metz*, 20 October 1785.

<sup>37</sup> *Petites affiches*, 4 January 1791.

<sup>38</sup> *Petites affiches*, 13 January 1783 and 10 January 1785.

<sup>39</sup> *Affiches des Évêchés et Lorraine*, 4 August 1785.

<sup>40</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 17 May 1770.

<sup>41</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 12 December 1771.



## *Gender*

Given the attention to physical characteristics, it is perhaps unsurprising that cooks placing their own ads in the affiches invariably indicated their gender. However, masters seeking to hire also nearly always explicitly indicated the gender of the desired cook, with their advertisements splitting nearly evenly among those looking for female cooks versus male cooks.<sup>42</sup> Only in extraordinary circumstances would a master place an ad asking for either a male or female cook.<sup>43</sup> But such an apparently rigid gender dichotomy conceals far greater ambiguity in the hiring process, where female and male cooks could be considered interchangeable. When discussing the prospect of hiring a new female cook, Bernard de Bonnard asked his wife Sophie, “Would you like a *cuisinier* better? It seems that it would be more expensive.”<sup>44</sup> While indeed a male cook would have cost more to engage, de Bonnard makes no qualitative distinction between the two: as cooks either would serve the family’s purposes. Because women cooks could substitute for men (and at a lower cost), they broadened the market for skilled cooks’ services. For example, many English households hired male French cooks to work abroad, and some families looked to engage French women.<sup>45</sup>

Unlike other occupational groups which in fact did tend to split along gender lines, cooks included large numbers of both men and women among their ranks, eliminating even this most basic ordering of Old Regime occupations.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, no

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<sup>42</sup> About 47% sought male cooks; 52% asked for female cooks.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, *Petites affiches*, 6 February 1795.

<sup>44</sup> AN 352 AP 39, Bernard de Bonnard to Sophie Silvestre, 14 August 1783.

<sup>45</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 January 1789.

<sup>46</sup> In my sample of cooks’ employment advertisements, for example, the ratio of women to men is about equal.

clear boundary separated the team of male cooks serving a prince at one end of the spectrum from the woman cooking alone at the other. Kitchen staffs existed of every size in between, and cooks regularly worked in staffs of mixed gender. For example, one household sought to hire a female cook to oversee “two or three [female] servants and several [male] domestic workers, who are numerous.” The prospective masters further guaranteed that they would grant the woman “superiority in all domestic affairs.”<sup>47</sup> Conversely, women also worked under male cooks. Audiger suggested the hiring of a female kitchen servant, largely to handle sweeping and washing, but other evidence suggests that women in such circumstances might perform more skilled work.<sup>48</sup> A 1771 advertisement, for example, requests the services of a woman “who would know a bit of cooking in order to help at the need of the [male] cook.”<sup>49</sup> Cooking thus functioned as a uniquely destabilizing occupation.

I do not mean to obscure the existence of gender gradients that correlated to wealth and shifted over time. In general, many more men than women tended to work as cooks in wealthier households with large kitchen staffs. At the same time, during the course of the eighteenth century, increasing numbers of women worked as cooks, in some cases displacing men whose services had become too expensive.<sup>50</sup> Yet no clear boundary separated women from men who worked in the kitchen. Moreover, qualitatively all cooks performed the same sort of work and hence indicate a rare example of skilled labor intersecting with both male and female workers during the Old Regime. Even among

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<sup>47</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 2 September 1773.

<sup>48</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée*, 59-60.

<sup>49</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 1 March 1771.

<sup>50</sup> Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 277-278.

servants, such diversity was unusual, since male and female domestics typically filled gendered positions. For example, men worked as porters, women as chambermaids, and so on. According to Bridget Hill, nearly all servant work was so divided with one notable exception: cooks.<sup>51</sup> Barbara Ketcham Wheaton likewise argues that although “sex roles were usually very strictly defined” during the eighteenth century, women cooks “could earn substantially more than other women in their class and circumstances.”<sup>52</sup> She thus concludes “[the female cook] may have been exploited, but perhaps no more than men of her class.”<sup>53</sup> It would therefore be unfair to draw a line between male and female cooks since both men and women performed the same kind of work in often overlapping conditions. If we consider cooks as a continuum of workers rather than as divided into two camps, a far richer picture emerges.

### *Family situation*

Most masters were eager to hire servants without spouses or children who otherwise might become burdens on the household. Usually they conveyed such a message through the terms used to describe the potential cook. Most masters looking to hire a female cook asked for a “girl” (*fille*) – in other words, an unmarried woman. The term “fille” was not constrained to cooks of a young age. One ad sought a “woman or girl of thirty-five or forty years.”<sup>54</sup> Another asked for “a widow or a girl of 30 to 40

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<sup>51</sup> Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>52</sup> Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 99.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Affiches de Metz*, 9 October 1773.

years.”<sup>55</sup> A third asked for “a girl or a widow of 30 to 35 years.”<sup>56</sup> Other advertisements were more accommodating. Seeking “a cook, girl, woman, or widow”<sup>57</sup> Thus age and family situation were not clearly linked. Cooks and masters needed explicitly and precisely to specify age and marital status.

Cissie Fairchilds has suggested that the prejudice against married servants stemmed from their presumed “divided loyalties,” since they “could not devote themselves totally to their masters’ interests, as good servants should.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, few advertisements in the *affiches* sought married cooks: for every advertisement seeking to hire a married couple, there were far more married couples looking for work, suggesting the difficulty such servants faced finding employment.<sup>59</sup> In these married couples, the cook was usually a woman, but in about a quarter of the cases married male cooks sought employment for both themselves and their wives. One man proposed to work as *maître d’hôtel* while his wife served as chambermaid.<sup>60</sup> Another cook was married to a woman who knew how “to style hair and work in fashion.”<sup>61</sup> Yet because Fairchilds largely bases her conclusion on prescriptive literature like household manuals, she ignores the existence of cases where masters actively tried to hire married couples, perhaps in an effort to avoid the destabilizing effects of single servants. In 1775, a certain Madame

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<sup>55</sup> *Petites affiches*, 13 March 1777.

<sup>56</sup> *Petites affiches*, 13 January, 1781.

<sup>57</sup> *Petites affiches*, 15 January 1781

<sup>58</sup> Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 81.

<sup>59</sup> In my sample, there were approximately seven times as many married cooks looking for service as those masters seeking a married cook.

<sup>60</sup> *Petites affiches*, 31 January 1785.

<sup>61</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 January 1789.

Girard sought to hire a “good servant who knows how to brush a horse and drive a carriage whose wife is a good cook.”<sup>62</sup> In 1781, an abbé Aleaume looked for “a widowed or married gardener, whose daughter or wife is a good cook: they will live together in the countryside.”<sup>63</sup> Another advertisement appeared to leave open the possibility of engaging a husband and wife, seeking “for a tranquil house, first a married porter without children; second a [female] cook of a certain age.”<sup>64</sup> When Jean Forcade hired his porter in January 1740, he did not realize that he had hired a married man. When he discovered the situation, however, he decided to engage the porter’s wife as his cook.<sup>65</sup> These occasional attempts to hire married couples suggest that spouses per se did not represent a potential drain on the household. Children, on the other hand, posed a tangible threat, since they would almost certainly contribute little more than an extra mouth to feed. In the affiches, hiring masters regularly demanded cooks “without children,” and cooks for their part were quick to point to their lack of children. Yet again in practice, households did engage cooks with children, and in some cases these children also worked in the kitchens. Jean Forcade’s cook, for example, began her service with a one-year-old daughter in tow. In time, the daughter began to assist her mother in the kitchen.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Petites affiches*, 23 January 1775.

<sup>63</sup> *Petites affiches*, 22 January 1781.

<sup>64</sup> *Petites affiches*, 26 January 1783.

<sup>65</sup> Joly de Fleury, *Mémoire pour Me. Philippe-Baptiste Michaux, Avocat en Parlement, Ecuyer, Conseiller du Roi, Contrôleur Général des Ponts et Chaussées de France, au nom et comme Tuteur de Barbe Lievinne Piecteurs, fille mineure de Gabriel Piecteurs, et Barbe Jejars sa femme, Appelant. Contre Dominique Dulac, Bourgeois de Cieutat, et Demoiselle Marie Forcade son épouse, seule et unique heritiere sous bénéfice d’inventaire du feu Sieur Jean Forcade, Bourgeois de Paris, intimés.* (Paris: Paulus-du-Mesnil, 1755), 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, Joly de Fleury, *Observations sur le memoire de Barbe Lievine Pieters, Appellante* (Paris: Knapen, 1755), 2.

### *Moral Character*

Servants seeking employment were quick to assert their moral qualifications, and masters likewise demanded guarantees of sound character. Advertisements regularly promised the job-seeker's possession of certificates attesting to the cook's probity. In other cases, a cook might rely on her public reputation, claiming that she was "known" (*connue*) in the community. In July 1773, "a known person" sought a position as a cook in Bordeaux.<sup>67</sup> Such public knowledge of a person's character could bolster a cook's written recommendations, as in the case of one cook who pointed out that he both carried "good references" and was "known."<sup>68</sup> Likewise, one woman seeking a position as a cook added to her "good lifestyle and morals" that she was "known."<sup>69</sup> Morals could overshadow all qualifications, particularly in the case of women cooks. A twenty-two-year-old "girl" seeking a position of a cook first noted that she was "bearing good recommendations and known in this city." Only afterward did she mention that she knew well both cooking and pastrymaking.<sup>70</sup> One childless couple sought to hire a cook, as long as "she has good morals and [is] sober for drink."<sup>71</sup>

In contrast, men might point to their origins as a sign of their character. A thirty-year-old man claimed to be "well-born" in his advertisement seeking a "position analogous to his talents," which in addition to cooking included reading, writing, delivering mail, driving a carriage, brushing horses, and a bit of hairstyling for men and

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<sup>67</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 25 July 1773..

<sup>68</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 15 January 1778.

<sup>69</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 22 January 1778.

<sup>70</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 16 April 1778.

<sup>71</sup> *Affiches de Toulouse*, 8 June 1785.

women.<sup>72</sup> Another “well-born” man promised that he could read, write, count, and cook.<sup>73</sup> Such demands for morality extended both ways, albeit in limited fashion. Other cooks expressed their desire to work in a “good house,” which could imply a degree of wealth and status, while a very small percentage of masters promised a good house. Other cooks looked for work in a “tranquil house” which might demand less work.

### *Expertise: Skills and Experience*

While the promise of good moral behavior regularly appeared in servant advertisements, under certain conditions morals counted for far less. In particular, if cooks could claim a high level of technical expertise, the guarantee of morals was considerably less important. Let us compare, for example, the following two typical advertisements:

A single man of a mature age, knowing how to read, write, shave, comb, and if necessary how to do a bit of cooking, would like to be placed as a servant. He is known by several people in this city and will give guarantees on his life and morals.<sup>74</sup>

A [female] cook who knows pastrymaking well would like to find a good house.<sup>75</sup>

In the first advertisement, the servant claims a wide variety of skills including cooking, a voluble approach that was not unusual, according to Jack Censer.<sup>76</sup> The servant emphasizes his standing in the city and stresses his good character. Servants that likewise claimed only to be able to perform “a bit of cooking” posted about one out of six

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<sup>72</sup> *Petites affiches*, 29 January 1785.

<sup>73</sup> *Petites affiches*, 11 January 1783.

<sup>74</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 6 December 1770.

<sup>75</sup> *Petites affiches*, 16 January 1779.

<sup>76</sup> Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment*, 63.

advertisements for cooking services in the affiches.<sup>77</sup> Their ads usually convey the most desperation, as they sought to impress upon readers their qualifications. In stark contrast the second advertisement's cook mentions only her technical abilities, and indeed it is she who is looking for a "good house."

In general, cooks with specialized skills like pastrymaking or roasting posted especially confident advertisements. In Metz, a "good cook, roaster, and pastry maker" sought a position of cook.<sup>78</sup> In Paris another cook with the same three skills looked for "a stable position."<sup>79</sup> In Bordeaux a woman characterized herself only as "a very good cook, very competent in pastry."<sup>80</sup> In 1779, yet another cook who described herself as "knowing how to make pastry" wanted to find "a solid position."<sup>81</sup> In none of these examples did the cooks mention good morals. Moreover, they boldly stated the specific type of position they sought. Masters placing advertisements likewise were equally unlikely to mention character if they sought a highly skilled cook. One master looked for "a very good cook for the city" without any mention of morals.<sup>82</sup> Although Mercier cautioned that in Paris it was foolish to require female cooks to know pastrymaking, the preceding examples reveal that women indeed did possess these skills.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, he

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<sup>77</sup> This common phrase "peu de cuisine" appears in 17% of advertisements seeking or offering a servant who could do some cooking (105 out of 628).

<sup>78</sup> *Affiches de Metz*, 7 August 1773.

<sup>79</sup> *Petites affiches*, 6 February 1779.

<sup>80</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 3 September 1778.

<sup>81</sup> *Petites affiches*, 15 February 1779.

<sup>82</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 7 October 1773.

<sup>83</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:343.



suggested that women could also cook in the style of *la cuisine moderne*: “if she is well chosen, one can still taste delicate dishes which above all will not offend health.”<sup>84</sup>

By qualifying the type of cooking to be performed, cooks and masters placing advertisements could indicate the desired level of technical expertise. For example, a certain Madame Gingois sought to hire a woman “who knows how to make a good cuisine [*faire une bonne cuisine*].”<sup>85</sup> Beginning in the 1770s, cooks began to declare themselves capable of preparing a *cuisine bourgeoise*. Thereafter, the phrase “cuisine bourgeoise” occurs in about one out of every eight of employment advertisements for cooks, appearing with equal frequency among ads placed both by masters and by cooks. Cooks used the same terminology whether they worked in Paris or in provincial cities like Rouen and Bordeaux. The popularity of the phrase almost certainly stems from the wildly successful cookbook, *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*, first published in 1746.<sup>86</sup> As its title implied, this cookbook promised a style of cooking aimed not only at a more middling audience but also for execution by women cooks. Indeed, women were more than twice as likely as men to claim to know how to prepare a “cuisine bourgeoise.”<sup>87</sup>

Like other specialized cooking skills, knowledge of *la cuisine bourgeoise* occasionally sufficed for job qualifications. In May 1785, one cook wrote only, “a girl presents herself who knows how to prepare a cuisine bourgeoise.”<sup>88</sup> In 1789, another

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> *Petites affiches*, 8 January 1783.

<sup>86</sup> On the publishing phenomenon of *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*, see Alain Girard, “Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*. Livres culinaires, cuisine et société en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles,” *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* XXIV (1977).

<sup>87</sup> In my sample, 50 advertisements using the phrase “cuisine bourgeoise” involved women, while 24 involved men.

<sup>88</sup> *Affiches de Metz*, 26 May 1785.

woman confidently wrote, “A woman aged 50 years, who knows how to prepare a good cuisine bourgeoise, would like to be placed.”<sup>89</sup> Yet while “cuisine bourgeoise” may have indicated a certain level of expertise, it did not automatically guarantee a dazzling cook. Cooks claiming to know how to prepare a cuisine bourgeoise often listed a wide array of other skills, suggesting a degree of desperation. In Rouen, a young man described himself as “black and free, aged twenty-one desires to serve: he knows how to prepare a cuisine bourgeoise, shave, and do a bit of serving.”<sup>90</sup> In addition to preparing a cuisine bourgeoise, another woman claimed she knew how “to read and write and count well.”<sup>91</sup> One servant claimed to know how to “read, write, drive a carriage, and make a cuisine bourgeoise.”<sup>92</sup> A twenty-eight-year-old woman claimed to know how to sew, iron, and cook a cuisine bourgeoise.<sup>93</sup> That same month, another cook noted that he could comb as well as prepare a cuisine bourgeoise.<sup>94</sup>

Mention of skills like literacy and numeracy also corresponded to a cook’s level of cooking expertise, but in a decidedly inverse manner. As shown in the last chapter, such skills were essential to the proper function of a kitchen. Yet cooks tended to announce these skills only when their cooking abilities were less than certain. In fact, literacy and numeracy were such a well-entrenched aspects of cooking that practicing cooks rarely even bothered to indicate whether they could write and calculate. In

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<sup>89</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 January 1789.

<sup>90</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 30 August 1771.

<sup>91</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 30 August 1771.

<sup>92</sup> *Petites affiches*, 2 January 1781.

<sup>93</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 January 1789.

<sup>94</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 January 1789. During the 1790s, a new descriptive category emerged: *cuisine ordinaire*. In the space of just a few weeks, five different cooks promised to prepare such a style. *Petites affiches*, January-February 1795.

advertisements specifying the occupation as “cook” (*cuisinier, cuisinière*), just 7% mentioned any kind of writing or calculating skills. In the event that literacy skills were requested for cooks, there often was a very specific reason. For example in 1779, a certain wigmaker Maury sought “a German cook, who only makes German food, but who knows French to do his accounting.”<sup>95</sup> In contrast, only advertisements for more marginal types tended to demand or promise literacy and numeracy. Servants who claimed to know only how to do a little cooking (*un peu de cuisine*) were four times more likely to mention writing or math skills, with nearly a third of their advertisements promising or demanding the ability to write or calculate.<sup>96</sup> In essence, the kind of servant who promised numeracy was likely not a cook at all. These marginal applicants desperately sought to impress upon readers some sort of useful qualification, a shotgun approach that produced some very interesting descriptions: For example in 1783, there presented himself “A man of 32 years, good hunter, capable of destroying all sorts of wild beasts, who knows how to read, write, count, and who knows agriculture and the wood business, [who] would like to find a position matching his talents.”<sup>97</sup> Unlike this *Maître Jacques*, for cooks literacy and numeracy were just assumed to be part of the job.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Petites affiches de Paris* (3 February 1779).

<sup>96</sup> Out of 105 affiches advertisements mentioning knowledge of “un peu de cuisine,” 31 (29.5%) mentioned the ability to read or write. Of 201 advertisements for the position of “cuisinier” or “cuisinière” only 14 or 7% mentioned these skills. I base this analysis on a sample of 628 employment advertisements taken from the affiches of Bordeaux, Metz, Nantes, Rouen, Paris, and Toulouse.

<sup>97</sup> *Petites affiches de Paris* (20 January 1783). “Un homme de 32 ans, bon Chasseur, en état de détruire toutes sortes de bêtes fauves, qui sait lire, écrire, compter, et qui connoît l’Agriculture et la partie des bois, voudroit trouver une Place analogue à ses talens.”

<sup>98</sup> One man actually called himself a *Maître Jacques* in his advertisement, claiming he could “read, write, clean floors, cook and do a bit of desserts.” *Petites affiches*, 12 January 1791.

It was not unusual for cooks to speak languages in addition to French. One man who could speak Italian sought a position in Paris, the provinces, or “even to travel.”<sup>99</sup> A forty-year old servant who could do a bit of cooking claimed to speak German, Italian, English, and French.<sup>100</sup> These polyglot cooks often pointed to past travel, suggesting that they had learned their languages while voyaging with previous masters. A thirty-five-year-old German searching for a position as a cook claimed that he had “traveled a lot” and could speak French and English.<sup>101</sup> Foreign languages and backgrounds could translate into knowledge of foreign cuisine, with many cooks boasting they could practice multiple styles. One woman not only stated that she had traveled abroad and spoke English, she also claimed she knew well “how to prepare French and English cuisine.”<sup>102</sup> Another cook likewise stated he could work “English-style and French-style.”<sup>103</sup> A thirty-five-year-old woman, “arriving from Russia,” declared that she could cook and make pastries in both Russian and French styles.<sup>104</sup> A German cook “who speaks French” claimed knowledge of both German and French cooking and pastrymaking.<sup>105</sup> Cooks also advertised such skills in a bid to secure employment in households that had a particular need. A German girl in Paris sought a position as a cook in a German household.<sup>106</sup> A young man who described himself as a “good cook, roaster, and

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<sup>99</sup> *Petites affiches*, 26 January 1785.

<sup>100</sup> *Petites affiches*, 14 February 1785.

<sup>101</sup> *Petites affiches*, 2 April 1781.

<sup>102</sup> *Petites affiches*, 16 January 1783.

<sup>103</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 January 1791.

<sup>104</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 January 1789.

<sup>105</sup> *Petites affiches*, 31 January 1789.

<sup>106</sup> *Petites affiches*, 16 January 1791.

pastrymaker” argued that he could not only speak French and German but could even write in both languages.”<sup>107</sup>

A cook’s amount of experience could also help to indicate her level of expertise. Here technical skill tended to shade into moral character, since experience could be judged either on the quality of the houses in which a cook had served or on the actual length of service. One cook indicated that he had served “12 years in 2 good houses.”<sup>108</sup> Another claimed that he had “worked in the best houses.”<sup>109</sup> A former *maître d’hôtel* noted that he had worked for “people of distinction.”<sup>110</sup> Cooks frequently pointed to the death of their master as the only reason for their sudden availability. One cook declared that he had left his master only upon his death.<sup>111</sup> Another pointed out that he had just “lost a master that he served for 24 years.”<sup>112</sup> A third noted that he was put “out of service by the death of his master.”<sup>113</sup> Cooks and masters alike offered the ability to manage a staff as a badge of valuable experience. One advertisement sought “a man able to cook well for five or six people, intelligent and active enough to engage in all the details of a house whose servants would be subordinate to him.”<sup>114</sup> Another looked for a woman of 35 to 40 years age “to oversee [...] the kitchen and all the servants” in a

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<sup>107</sup> *Affiches de Metz*, 7 August 1773. A large number of such German-speaking cooks appear, rather unsurprisingly, in Metz along the frontier.

<sup>108</sup> *Petites affiches*, 21 January 1781.

<sup>109</sup> *Petites affiches*, 30 April 1781.

<sup>110</sup> *Petites affiches*, 8 January 1783.

<sup>111</sup> *Petites affiches*, 8 January 1787.

<sup>112</sup> *Petites affiches*, 16 January 1783.

<sup>113</sup> *Petites affiches*, 20 January 1787.

<sup>114</sup> *Petites affiches*, 16 January 1781.

chateau.<sup>115</sup> A third requested “a good [female] cook capable of managing a household.”<sup>116</sup> Cooks with this level of experience rarely offered promises of their good character. Their skills and their previous employment in households of status allowed them to seek positions with confidence.

### 3. Compensation

According to Michael Sonenscher, only domestic servants were true wage laborers since the French word for wages, *gages*, originated in this “engagement” of domestic service.<sup>117</sup> Jacqueline Sabattier has argued that wages “in effect form the essential base of the contract that links a master and his servant and the principal element of its legal definition.”<sup>118</sup> Yet despite the central role of wages in domestic service, the majority of job advertisements in the *affiches* did not discuss them. Those ads that did contain language related to compensation nearly always came from masters seeking to hire cooks. In most of these cases, cooks were promised “wages proportional to [their] talents.” The vague promise of “honest” compensation frequently appeared, with masters promising cooks “honest wages,”<sup>119</sup> an “honest salary,”<sup>120</sup> or an “honest outcome.”<sup>121</sup> Other masters promised just a “good salary.”<sup>122</sup> In the few cases when cooks did mention

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<sup>115</sup> *Affiches de Metz*, 9 October 1773.

<sup>116</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 29 January 1778.

<sup>117</sup> Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics, and Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70.

<sup>118</sup> Sabattier, *Figaro et son maître*, 23-24.

<sup>119</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 February 1777, 3 January 1785.

<sup>120</sup> *Petites affiches*, 2 April 1781.

<sup>121</sup> *Petites affiches*, 23 January 1775.

<sup>122</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 13 June 1771. *Petites affiches*, 7 February 1795.

payment, they asked only for “modest wages.”<sup>123</sup> Although Jack Censer has asserted that “in the rare instance when the ads raised the question of recompense, they still never discussed monetary remuneration,” in many instances masters did in fact explicitly spell out wages in their advertisements.<sup>124</sup> Posted in the *affiches* we find wages for cooks ranging from 120 livres offered to a female servant who “knows how to cook” to the extraordinary 600 livres promised to a woman willing to cross the Channel to cook for an English family. In 1783, an advertisement promised a servant who knew “well enough how to cook” a wages of 150 livres and more “if she becomes attached to her mistress.”<sup>125</sup> In January 1785, an intelligent and mature girl who could prepare *une cuisine bourgeoise* was likewise offered 150 livres.<sup>126</sup> Indeed, Mercier pegged female cooks’ wages at precisely this level but also suggested that their pay could rise higher, noting that “it is the least one can give.”<sup>127</sup> In Rétif de la Bretonne’s salacious tale of “The Pretty Cook,” Paule at first earns 200 livres per year but soon receives a raise to 500 from her lecherous master.<sup>128</sup> Also in January 1785, another advertisement offered 200 livres to a male servant who knew how to cook.<sup>129</sup> One master offered a “good cook”

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<sup>123</sup> *Petites affiches*, 18 January 1783 and 17 January 1787. In a few extreme cases during the Revolution, cooks asked for no wages at all.

<sup>124</sup> Censer, *The French Press in the Age of Enlightenment*, 63. In my sample, about 8% of advertisement mention “wages,” which hardly qualifies as “rare.”

<sup>125</sup> *Petites affiches*, 14 January 1783.

<sup>126</sup> *Petites affiches*, 2 January 1785.

<sup>127</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:343-344.

<sup>128</sup> Nicolas-Edme Rétif de la Bretonne, *Les Contemporaines communes, ou les aventures des belles marchandes, ouvrières, etc., de l’âge present* (Leïpsick: Büschel, 1789; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1988), 609.

<sup>129</sup> *Petites affiches*, 15 January 1785.

willing to work in Bayonne wages of 200 livres.<sup>130</sup> Even wages for subordinate kitchen staff make an appearance in the affiches, with 150 livres offered to a lowly kitchen boy in 1793.<sup>131</sup>

How did cooks' wages compare to other servants? Fifty years ago J. J. Hecht warned "how hazardous must be any attempt to compare wage data for servants."<sup>132</sup> More recently Jacqueline Sabbattier has suggested that "it is vain" to attempt to calculate wages for servants in general.<sup>133</sup> Even the case of wages in the general population remains, in the words of one scholar, "a problem which has for a long time preoccupied economic historians."<sup>134</sup> In the case of cooks we can attribute these difficulties to a lack of data. Hard numbers regarding remuneration appeared relatively infrequently in the pages of the affiches. If records from private household accounts provide a somewhat more satisfying scattering of data points, we are still left with a sample limited to a relatively narrow range of wealthy households. Beyond a lack of data, however, a deeper problem arises when historians try to compare wages among different types of servants. Cooks, porters, chambermaids, and lackeys all performed vastly different tasks and were compensated quite differently.

According to Jacqueline Sabbattier, these varying skills and wages suggest a degree of correlation between what a servant did and what she earned. Sabbattier proposes a broad category of those servants earning 100 to 150 livres annually, comprised of those

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<sup>130</sup> *Affiches de Toulouse*, 30 November 1785.

<sup>131</sup> *Petites affiches*, 10 January 1793.

<sup>132</sup> J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1956), 152. Quoted in Hill, *Servants*, 24.

<sup>133</sup> Sabbattier, *Figaro et son maître*, 24.

<sup>134</sup> Jean Sgard, "L'Échelle des revenus," *Dix-huitième siècle* 14 (1982), 425.



with little in the way of skills. Earning more were “specialized personnel,” which included most cooks. Finally, “the great servants, men of confidence” could earn above 1000 livres.<sup>135</sup> Outside of domestic service, how did these wages compare to the general population? Jean Sgard’s characterization of wages begins with the lowest category of 100 to 300 livres, where we find “workers” including laborers and servants. According to Sgard 300 to 1000 livres per year constituted a “professional” salary which went to “specialized workers, mid-level business clerks, and teachers. Above 1000 livres Sgard finds university instructors and low-level royal officials.<sup>136</sup> Sgard’s intent is to provide “an economic and social context” to a given level of wages.<sup>137</sup>

Cooks’ wages cut across all of both Sabbattier’s and Sgard’s categories. Although many of the wages for cooks listed in the affiches belong in the poorest category, other evidence suggests that cooks earned a relatively high income. According to Sarah Maza, cooks’ already high wages rose rapidly during the eighteenth century, particularly among men.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, cooks were invariably perceived as earning high wages. Indeed, contemporary depictions of cooks suggest that they were notoriously well-paid. Voltaire commented in one letter that one cook earned 1500 livres: 500 more than a tutor and 1000 more than a personal secretary.<sup>139</sup> In his *Tableau de Paris*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier asserted that the best cooks earned four times as much as tutors.<sup>140</sup> If cooks’ earnings revealed anything about their esteem in the eyes of masters (and contemporaries certainly

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<sup>135</sup> Sabbattier, *Figaro et son maître*, 24.

<sup>136</sup> Sgard, "L'Échelle des revenus," 426-427.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 425.

<sup>138</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 280.

<sup>139</sup> Voltaire, “Lettre à l’occasion de l’impôt du vingtième” (16 May 1789).

<sup>140</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 5:78.

opined that they did), cooks could easily equal or even outrank surgeons. In the Coigny household, both the *maître d'hôtel* Pajos and the surgeon Houssier earned the same wage of 1000 livres per year.<sup>141</sup> Domestic conduct manuals confirm cooks' high pay. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, Audiger recommended a salary of 500 livres for a *maître d'hôtel*. To the cook and the pastry cook, he suggested 300 and 200 livres, respectively. For the two kitchen boys, the one pastry boy, and the kitchen girl, he counseled 75 livres each.<sup>142</sup> While Audiger's work did not necessarily purport to represent typical wages – he undoubtedly skewed his figures toward elite households and in any case only provided general guidelines – what is most striking about his figures is the level of cooks' wages relative to those of other domestic servants. In Audiger's formula, the *maître d'hôtel* at 500 livres was the highest paid servant in the entire household. At 300 livres, the cook was surpassed or matched by only two servants working outside the kitchen: the head of the stables and the master's secretary. The result of such extraordinarily high wages was to tilt the overall expenditure on servants toward the kitchen staff. In Audiger's model household, the kitchen servants accounted for one-third of the total wages paid to servants, despite comprising fewer than a quarter of the domestics engaged.

Despite the high pay evidenced by Audiger's manual, if anything it understates the level of cooks' wages through the eighteenth century. Of course part of this disparity arises simply from inflation, since Audiger wrote at the end of the seventeenth century. Yet the wages he gives for unskilled servants like chambermaids did not in fact rise much

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<sup>141</sup> MC ET/XXXV/653 (10 April 1748).

<sup>142</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée*, 12-13.

during the eighteenth century, while in contrast cooks' wages (especially among men) increased dramatically, suggesting that contemporaries increasingly prized and rewarded cooks' services.<sup>143</sup> Moreover, this acceleration continued throughout the middle of the century, at the same time that cooks began to promote *la cuisine moderne*. Cooks working in the finest households could earn over a thousand livres per year in addition to receiving housing and food – and the latter of course was hardly an optional benefit when it came to cooks. Finance minister Calonne paid his *maître d'hôtel* and *chef de cuisine* 1000 and 800 livres, respectively.<sup>144</sup> Madame de Kerry paid her own *maître d'hôtel* and cook 1200 and 800 livres.<sup>145</sup> The Prince de Lambesc paid his same two servants 1200 and 1000 livres.<sup>146</sup> But even in the wealthiest households, only the most skilled and experienced cooks received such stunning wages; kitchen boys and dishwashers did not experience similar benefits. In the Coigny household during the 1730s, 40s and 50s, for example, the *maître d'hôtel* earned an annual salary of 1000 livres, while his kitchen boys received just 100.<sup>147</sup> Around the same time the Prince de Lambesc engaged his *chef de cuisine* at 800 livres plus an additional 150 livres for wine, while he paid his kitchen boys just 120 livres.<sup>148</sup> We can detect a small amount of upward movement at the lower end of the spectrum: de Kerry's kitchen boy Vicare earned 200 livres in the late 1770s, double what kitchen boys made a few decades earlier. Yet for the most part a wide gulf separated the best paid cooks from their subordinate staff. The Prince de Lambesc

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<sup>143</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 279-282.

<sup>144</sup> AN T 261/3 (1784-1786).

<sup>145</sup> AN T 451/7 (1778-1780).

<sup>146</sup> AN T 491/2 (1777).

<sup>147</sup> AN T\* 201/3 (1743-1750).

<sup>148</sup> AN T\* 491/2 (1745-1761).

continued to engage his kitchen boys at just 72 livres per year through the late 1780s, an appallingly low sum approaching just 5 sous per day.<sup>149</sup>

A cook's wages were not his only form of compensation. A couple living in the countryside outside Rouen promised in addition that their cook would be "dressed, but not liveried."<sup>150</sup> In 1785, a Monsieur Bony likewise guaranteed that his prospective cook "will be dressed."<sup>151</sup> Other references to compensation were considerably more vague: a Monsieur Delville sought a servant to whom he promised "profits" in addition to his wages. In this case, Delville may have referred to the practice of saving the kitchen's leftover grease and scraps.<sup>152</sup> The businessman Monsieur Barraut also promised "profits" to the "young person" he aimed to hire "to sew, wash, comb, and do a bit of cooking."<sup>153</sup> Another master promised "lodging, food, and even extraordinary gratifications."<sup>154</sup> In addition to wages, masters generally lodged their cooks, typically in the kitchen or nearby. Meals were also provided to servants, though with cooks such generosity was hardly optional. In some cases, cooks received a cash wine allowance in lieu of wine itself. In the de Lambesc household, the *maître d'hôtel* and *chef de cuisine* each received 150 livres per year for wine, while the *aides de cuisine* received 100 livres and the *garçon de cuisine* 72 livres.<sup>155</sup> When cooks were made to travel or when the master was away, they might also receive money to pay for their own meals, perhaps 30 sous per

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<sup>149</sup> AN T 491/3 (1786-1787).

<sup>150</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 20 September 1771.

<sup>151</sup> *Petites affiches* 15 January 1785.

<sup>152</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 102..

<sup>153</sup> *Petites affiches*, 31 January 1789.

<sup>154</sup> *Affiches de Toulouse*, 30 November 1785.

<sup>155</sup> AN T\* 491/2 (1745-1761).

day.<sup>156</sup> If cooks fell ill, they could expect some degree of treatment at their masters' expense. In August 1771, Joly de Fleury paid for a doctor to visit and treat his cook.<sup>157</sup> In August 1773, a surgeon billed him 5 livres 9 sous to care for his kitchen boy.<sup>158</sup> Among other things, the decidedly harrowing treatment involved three visits, a "vomiting purgative," and a further ordinary purging two days later. According to Mercier, such care was anything but atypical: he related the account of a master who, on discovering that his cook had fallen ill, rushed to procure a doctor to cure him. So happy was the master that "he kissed the doctor in my presence and paid him amply."<sup>159</sup>

#### 4. Career Trajectories

Like other domestic servants, cooks circulated in geographical networks as they moved from country to city or from household to household. Paris was at the center of these networks, and contemporaries generally agreed that the best cooks practiced their art there.<sup>160</sup> Such an assertion was hardly novel to the eighteenth century: in 1652, La Varenne's cookbook *Le Cuisinier françois* had declared Paris to rule "eminently over the other provinces of the kingdom" in matters of taste.<sup>161</sup> But Paris's cooks were hardly

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<sup>156</sup> AN T\* 491/2 (1745-1761).

<sup>157</sup> BNF MSS Joly de Fleury 2489.

<sup>158</sup> BNF MSS Joly de Fleury 2490.

<sup>159</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:316.

<sup>160</sup> It became something of a commonplace to mention the "skilled cooks of Paris," as one cookbook described them in 1782. *Essai sur la préparation des aliments dont le but est la santé, l'économie et la perfection de la théorie. A l'usage des maîtresses de maison qui ne dédaignent pas de descendre jusqu'au détail de leur ménage, soit à la ville, soit à la campagne.*, (Paris, London: Onfroy, 1782), 8.

<sup>161</sup> François-Pierre de La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois, enseignant la maniere de bien apprester, et assaisonner toutes sortes de viandes, grasses et maigres, legumes, Patisseries, etc. Reveu, corrigé, et augmenté d'un traitté de confitures seiches et liquides, et autres delicatesses de bouche. Ensemble d'une*

Parisian in origin, as both archival sources and popular depictions reveal. For example, in the de Lambesc household, François Lemerle had come from Fremont to work in Paris, ultimately rising to *maître d'hôtel*.<sup>162</sup> In the same kitchen, Hugues Volant, a forty-year-old *chef de cuisine*, traced his origins to “Marly, near Versailles.”<sup>163</sup> The old cook from *La Maltôte des cuisinières* claimed that at age fifteen she came “alone to Paris from Abbeville.”<sup>164</sup> Paule, Rétif de Bretonne’s “Pretty Cook,” notes that she entered into service after her “arrival in Paris.”<sup>165</sup> The 1778 engraving *La Cuisinière* purported to depict a typical Parisian cook “newly arrived from the provinces.”

Yet if Paris sat at the heart of cooks’ networks of labor, other cities functioned as regional nodes. Olwen Hufton has even suggested that in turn these cities drew their best cooks from particular regions: “In Paris the best cooks were said to be from Carcassonne [...] In Lyons cooks came from the Beaujolais and the Lyonnais; in Bordeaux from the Périgord; in Strasbourg from the Île de France.”<sup>166</sup> According to Fernand Braudel, Paris’s best cooks came from Languedoc.<sup>167</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier characterized the provincial origins of cooks, though with decidedly different regional preferences. He claimed that women cooks from Picardy had the finest taste, followed by those from

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*table alphabetique des matieres qui sont traittées dans tout le livre.* (Paris: Pierre David, 1652), "Le Libraire au Lecteur."

<sup>162</sup> AN T\* 491/2 (1745-1761).

<sup>163</sup> AN T\* 491/2 (1745-1761).

<sup>164</sup> *La Maltôte des cuisinieres, ou la maniere de bien ferrer la mule. Dialogue entre une vieille Cuisiniere et une jeune Servante.*, (Riom: G. Valleyre, 1724), 2.

<sup>165</sup> Rétif de la Bretonne, *Les Contemporaines communes*, 607.

<sup>166</sup> Olwen H. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 95-96.

<sup>167</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 203.

Orléans and Flanders. Those from Burgundy were the most faithful, and Normans “by all accounts the worst of all.”<sup>168</sup>

Cooks did not always make a single move from the provinces to a regional city, and even on reaching Paris they might ultimately leave. Instead, many cooks continued to move throughout their careers. Some joined their masters in their seasonal peregrinations between town and country. A woman in Rouen sought a chambermaid who could work as a cook “when one goes to pass several months in the countryside.”<sup>169</sup> Cooks also relied on masters to get them where they needed to go. A thirty-five-year-old cook from Plombières looked for a master “who would go there to take the baths.”<sup>170</sup> A young man wanted to cook for a master intending to go to Paris.<sup>171</sup> Whether out of wanderlust or desperation, many cooks were quite adamant about their desire to travel. A woman of twenty-four sought a position with a mistress as either a cook, a seamstress, or a chambermaid. Above all, however, she wanted to leave Bordeaux, “and even go to America, if the opportunity presented itself.”<sup>172</sup> One man who could do a bit of cooking wanted a position with “a lord or other, in order to travel by land or by sea.”<sup>173</sup> A well-qualified cook sought a place “in Paris, in the provinces, or abroad.”<sup>174</sup> Masters for their part offered to take cooks abroad. A 1763 advertisement sought, for example, “a cook

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<sup>168</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:343.

<sup>169</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 18 January 1771.

<sup>170</sup> *Petites affiches*, 25 March 1779.

<sup>171</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 20 June 1771.

<sup>172</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 17 May 1770.

<sup>173</sup> *Petites affiches*, 20 April 1781.

<sup>174</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 January 1783.

who knows how to make bread, for a ship going to St. Domingue.”<sup>175</sup> Moreover, a healthy market for French cooks operated across the Channel.<sup>176</sup> The Duke of Newcastle maintained a lively correspondence with the British ambassador in Paris, who regularly sent him cooks and information about the state of *la cuisine moderne* during the 1750s.<sup>177</sup> Foreign employers also placed ads in the French affiches, with one English couple seeking to hire a female French cook.<sup>178</sup>

### *Hiring*

The precise conditions of the hiring process are largely elusive, and little direct evidence survives to document them. In some cases, servants were promised work at a future date by potential employers: a signed note to one servant guaranteed “a position in eighteen months – and if I have no vacancies at that point to take her as a supernumerary with pay.”<sup>179</sup> Personal correspondence, however, can offer a rare glimpse in the conditions surrounding the engagement of a cook. When Sophie Silvestre and Bernard de Bonnard set out to engage a new cook, they worried endlessly about finding a suitable woman. In one letter, Sophie noted that she had just met with a cook who had “the air of a good girl.” Sophie wanted to hire her right away; otherwise, she was certain the cook would find another master.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, Louis-Sébastien Mercier remarked that a good

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<sup>175</sup> *Affiches de Nantes*, 16 December 1763.

<sup>176</sup> Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 202.

<sup>177</sup> Romney Sedgwick, "The Duke of Newcastle's Cook," *History Today* 5, no. 5 (1955).

<sup>178</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 January 1789.

<sup>179</sup> AN T 254 (7 February 1788).

<sup>180</sup> AN 352 AP 34, Sophie Silvestre to Bernard de Bonnard (10 November 1782).



female cook was a real find since one might have to sift through as many as ninety candidates.<sup>181</sup> For male cooks, he likewise suggested that masters search for them with care.

Cooks looking for employment could rely on family networks, which played an essential role in staffing kitchens. Siblings worked side by side, and parents engaged their children as apprentices. On 1 August 1743, the Coigny household hired a certain Hallée to work as *enfant de cuisine*. On the same day his brother was engaged by the same household to serve as *enfant d'office*. In June 1749, the former brother was promoted to *aide de cuisine*, doubling his wages from 100 livres to 200. When in the spring of 1752 the latter brother was promoted to *aide d'office*, a third Hallée was engaged to fill the now-vacant position of *enfant d'office*. This domination of the Coigny kitchen did not endure forever. In 1750 the *aide de cuisine*, perhaps dissatisfied with his salary (he had requested a raise to 300 livres), left the Coigny household. He did not stay long enough to recuperate his final wages and instead left the task to his brothers, since they remained on hand. Indeed, the two other Hallées continued to work together at least until 1759. In other cases, the head of the kitchen more or less packed the kitchen staff with his own children. A certain La Borde, acting as *maître d'hôtel* and *chef de cuisine*, in 1757 hired one of his sons to work as kitchen assistant. In 1758, he took on another to serve as kitchen boy.<sup>182</sup>

Cooks themselves played an important role in hiring subordinate kitchen staff, and warnings against such practices suggest a persistent problem. In a conduct manual

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<sup>181</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:343.

<sup>182</sup> AN T\* 201/17.

aimed at servants, the abbé Collet forbade cooks from taking apprentices, since “in their first efforts they waste and lose many things.” Collet found such a risk especially alarming since cooks would likely ignore any loss that only affected their masters.<sup>183</sup> At least one mistress explicitly echoed Collet’s advice: Madame de Kerry warned her own cook in October 1787 against making changes to the kitchen staff without informing her, instructing him to inform her when he was “unhappy with his boys.”<sup>184</sup>

Archival evidence, however, suggests that cooks played a significant role in making the hiring decisions for their kitchens. For major holidays like Easter, Pentecost, and Assumption, Joly de Fleury’s cook hired additional staff along with renting extra equipment.<sup>185</sup> Calonne’s cook engaged extra assistants during the meeting of the Assembly of Notables.<sup>186</sup> For more durable needs, cooks were responsible for hiring permanent cooks. A certain Huré was hired in 1783 to work as a roaster “on the recommendation” of Olivier, the chef de cuisine.<sup>187</sup> In the same kitchen, a kitchen boy was likewise engaged “on the certification of” Olivier.<sup>188</sup> Vincent La Chapelle in fact encouraged this sort of behavior in his cookbook *Le Cuisinier moderne*, cautioning cooks not to be caught ill-prepared for a major event having lacked the “desire to take on

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<sup>183</sup> Collet, *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques*, 307. “Il doit encore moins permettre aux Chefs d’office de prendre des apprentifs: parce que dans leur commencemens ils dissipent et perdent beaucoup de choses; et l’Officier n’y regarde pas, à cause que la perte ne tombe que sur le Maître.”

<sup>184</sup> AN T\* 451/2.

<sup>185</sup> BNF MSS Joly de Fleury 2490 (1772).

<sup>186</sup> AN T 261/1 (April 1787).

<sup>187</sup> AN T 261/3.

<sup>188</sup> AN T 261/3.

assistants.”<sup>189</sup> La Chapelle maintained that “it is up to the *maître d’hôtel* to choose good officers both for the kitchen and for the *office*.”<sup>190</sup>

### *Training and Promotion*

Novice cooks could not expect to learn much from cookbooks, which for all their talk of theory and practice presupposed a great deal of existing skill and knowledge.<sup>191</sup> Personal instruction from an experienced cook remained the best avenue toward expertise. According to a physician who tried to learn to cook, “cooking was a labyrinth” dominated by a “small number of people noted for their talent” who in turn trained students.<sup>192</sup> He claimed that he learned to cook only by working with a “good cook” who individually instructed him. With no formal options for training, assuming a supporting role in an established kitchen was the surest way to learn how to cook.<sup>193</sup> Thus one young man in 1779 placed an advertisement seeking “a place under a cook.”<sup>194</sup> In 1783, a household sought a kitchen boy “to work under a good cook.”<sup>195</sup> Such a characterization of his future boss hinted at the possibility of the boy cultivating a degree of expertise. If necessary, a cook might have to move from kitchen to kitchen to acquire

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<sup>189</sup> Vincent La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier moderne, qui apprend à donner toutes sortes de repas, en gras et en maigre, d’une manière plus délicate que ce qui en été écrit jusqu’à présent* (The Hague: 1742), 7-8.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>191</sup> For more on the knowledge assumed by eighteenth-century cookbooks, see Sandra Sherman, “The Whole Art and Mystery of Cooking’: What Cookbooks Taught Readers in the Eighteenth Century,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28, no. 1 (2004).

<sup>192</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens*, 8-9.

<sup>193</sup> François Crouzet has suggested that even in occupations with guilds, the process of training remains largely unknown. François Crouzet, “Some remarks on the *métiers d’art*,” in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in ancien Régime Paris*, ed. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 271-272.

<sup>194</sup> *Petites affiches*, 6 February 1779.

<sup>195</sup> *Petites affiches*, 12 January 1783.

the proper skills: as early as 1660 the cookbook *Le Nouveau cuisinier* mocked those cooks who “run from city to city to capture this beautiful knowledge so required and so pompous.”<sup>196</sup> Even experienced cooks searched for subordinate positions: one cook who already knew how to cook and make pastries desired to work as a second cook or kitchen assistant.<sup>197</sup> Another man who described himself as “acquainted with cooking” sought a position as a kitchen assistant.<sup>198</sup> Evidence suggests that cooks were expected to learn on the job. When Bernard de Bonnard sought to hire a new cook, he prepared himself to hire a woman who might not yet be perfect, as long as she knew the basics and “that her principles of cooking were good.”

Give her a teacher, if necessary, but in the name of my appetite, of health, and of the pleasure so natural of eating healthy and well-prepared things, that she know at least how to make a good soup, cook a boiled joint just right, choose meat, roast a leg of lamb and a chicken, cook fresh eggs, and make a white sauce. The rest will come later.<sup>199</sup>

According to de Bonnard, these skills formed the necessary basis of any cook whom he might hire.

While families of more middling means would engage a single dedicated cook or perhaps a general purpose servant who did some cooking, wealthier households typically employed a kitchen staff that included a number of servants. These larger households best illustrate the dynamics of training and promotion particular to cooking, since their hierarchies reveal the shifting wage levels and job titles that marked the trajectories a cook’s career might follow. Two patterns of advancement emerge: vertical promotion

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<sup>196</sup> Pierre de Lune, *Le Nouveau cuisinier, ou il est traité de la véritable methode pour apprester toutes sortes de viandes, gibier, volatiles, poissons, tant de mer que d'eau douce: suivant les quatre saisons de l'année. Ensemble la maniere de faire toutes sortes de patisseries, tant froides que chaudes, en perfection* (Paris: Pierre David, 1660), "Au Lecteur."

<sup>197</sup> *Petites affiches*, 18 March 1779,

<sup>198</sup> *Petites affiches*, 3 April 1781.

<sup>199</sup> AN 352 AP 39, Bernard de Bonnard to Sophie Silvestre (10 September 1783).

within a single household and lateral promotion by shifting among masters. By working in a single household, a cook could wait for a superior position to open within that kitchen and thus move up the chain of command. Alternatively, by moving from one household to another – for example, by leaving a high-status master for another of lesser means – a cook could enjoy a relative increase in status and compensation.

When an upper-level position became available, lower kitchen staff typically moved up in rank. Unfortunately, though there was frequent turnover among the subordinate positions – dishwashers and kitchen boys came and went – top spots only rarely opened. Retiring or firing could free a position, but often one was vacated only when its holder died. In such circumstances, everyone working below could profit. The death of *maître d'hôtel* Plocq in May 1749 touched off a flurry of promotions, with each member of his kitchen staff ascending the ladder: within a week, the *chef de cuisine* Cabrol had become *maître d'hôtel*; Allegre rose from kitchen assistant to *chef de cuisine*; and Hallée, the kitchen boy, became the new kitchen assistant.<sup>200</sup> Each of these promotions carried a significant increase in income. Both Hallée and Allegre received an additional 100 livres per year, with Hallée's wages doubling from 100 to 200 livres and Allegre's increasing from 500 to 600 livres. Cabrol's wages went from 800 to 1000 livres. A similar wave of promotions also occurred in the kitchen of the Prince de Lambesc during 1775. A certain Duval rose from *chef de cuisine* to *maître d'hôtel*, while his kitchen assistant Gerin assumed Duval's former position.<sup>201</sup> When the duc de Biron's cook Crosnier retired in 1753, his assistant immediately took his place. Since cooks

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<sup>200</sup> AN T\* 201/3.

<sup>201</sup> AN T 491/2.

could work for years as an assistant at relatively modest wages only to receive sudden promotion on the death of the *maître d'hôtel*, cooks' titles and wages functioned as a relatively inexact measure of a cooks' skill or even experience. Yet such a situation forced cooks to work at all levels, a system Vincent La Chapelle praised as essential for producing capable *maîtres d'hôtel*. According to his cookbook, the most important quality of a *maître d'hôtel* was having passed through all of the positions that he would himself direct as manager of the household's kitchen.<sup>202</sup>

Cooks also gained by working in elite households even if they never moved up within their hierarchies because a cook's status was inextricably linked to the prestige of the household that engaged him. One self-described "good cook" who had been *maître d'hôtel* for "people of distinction" confidently sought a position in Paris or in a château in the provinces.<sup>203</sup> While this cook had already reached the acme of his occupation, other less accomplished cooks could potentially rise in rank if they transferred to another household. This lateral form of promotion allowed skilled cooks to assume senior positions without waiting for a post to open above them. One cook seeking work in Bordeaux described the situation succinctly: "a young man of good living and morals, well recommended, having done a good apprenticeship in cooking, would desire a position as kitchen assistant in a good house or cook in a bourgeois house."<sup>204</sup> While his skills merited only a supporting position in a "good house" he believed himself fully qualified to serve as a full cook in a lesser household. Moving abroad often provided the ultimate form of lateral promotion. By relocating to another country where French

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<sup>202</sup> La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier moderne*, 8.

<sup>203</sup> *Petites affiches*, 8 January 1783.

<sup>204</sup> *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 10 September 1778.

cooking was especially prized, cooks could gain an instant increase in income and responsibility. In 1789 a couple offered 600 livres in wages to a female cook willing to relocate to London. There she would be responsible for serving up to 15 to 20 people.<sup>205</sup>

This form of relative promotion by shifting households provoked disdain from some cooks. Pierre Lamireau bitterly complained that the cook succeeding him was “only an assistant” from the kitchen of the Baron d’Holbach.<sup>206</sup> Yet with d’Holbach hosting some of the most legendary dinners of the Old Regime, perhaps Lamireau’s mistress felt fortunate to have found such a replacement. From the perspective of the kitchen assistant, such a move also likely made very good sense: d’Holbach was by then already in his 60s, and the possibility of the assistant of gaining promotion to head cook in that household may have seemed increasingly remote.

### *Termination of Service*

Although the affiches suggest a massive amount of turnover among cooks, little evidence explains the proximate causes. Even within private household accounts, usually nothing remains other than a simple “departed” (*sorti*) in the household wage register, providing no clue as to who had made the decision to terminate service or why. Mercier complained that cooks left households “painlessly and without sadness in order to enter another where they will not attach themselves any further.”<sup>207</sup> In the Bourbon-Busset kitchen, cooks departed every few months: a bewildering sequence of signatures adorn the household’s kitchen accounting book, with no less than seven cooks – Renard, Roux,

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<sup>205</sup> *Petites affiches*, 17 January 1789.

<sup>206</sup> AN T 254, Pierre Lamireau to Anne Farcy, 1786.

<sup>207</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:344.

Simon, Forele, Lagnier, Louvet, and Savigny – making their appearance in the space of two years.<sup>208</sup> Sometimes, however, a bit more detail creeps into the records, especially when the circumstance of departure were especially noteworthy. In 1748, Hugues Volant did not merely leave service: his master’s register indicates that cook was fired.<sup>209</sup> In 1750 the kitchen assistant Hallée left after unsuccessfully demanding a 50% raise – perhaps the very audacity of his request merited a mention. During the same year, the kitchen boy Champagne asked to be released from service. When yet another *aide de cuisine* quit in 1752 after just three months of service, the *maître d’hôtel* did not even bother to seek a permanent replacement, instead just hiring “a man while waiting for a suitable assistant to be found.”<sup>210</sup>

Crises in the master’s life could spell catastrophe for cooks, underscoring the tenuous nature of domestic service. A sudden downturn of fortune, for example, could result in drastic reduction of the kitchen staff. When controller-general Calonne was sacked in 1787, for example, his cook Olivier tasted his share of his master’s fate, losing his extraordinarily lucrative position.<sup>211</sup> And when masters died, their kitchen staffs were frequently decimated, since surviving relatives often lacked either the means or inclination to retain existing members.

### *Retirement*

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<sup>208</sup> AN T\* 265/2 (June 1787 to July 1789).

<sup>209</sup> AN T\* 491/2 (1748).

<sup>210</sup> AN T\* 201/3 (1752).

<sup>211</sup> AN T\* 261/4 (1787).



Despite the preference expressed in the affiches for “mature” cooks, in general time was not particularly kind to those who spent years in the kitchen. And although cooking could be lucrative, it was invariably destructive. In 1789 a cook wrote that “his health requires him to quit this position.” He sought instead to become “*maître d’hôtel*, dessert cook, or something similar.”<sup>212</sup> According to Louis-Sébastien Mercier, male cooks all had “their taste burned by the age of fifty.” And even if Mercier claimed that women “at this age still cook well,” other evidence suggests that cooking was viewed as a relatively taxing occupation.<sup>213</sup> The noxious effects of charcoal fumes, for example, were well-known.<sup>214</sup> In the play *L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine* (1757), one fictional character joked about “the effects of a few charcoal vapors” on an old cook.<sup>215</sup> Another very real cook proposed a new kind of stove to “protect himself against the accidents to which charcoal vapors frequently exposed him.”<sup>216</sup> According to one manual of workers’ illnesses, vapors posed the greatest threat to cooks’ health, not physical exertion.<sup>217</sup>

The affiches reveal that cooks frequently sought to escape kitchens for calmer work, typically as concierges or porters. On the same day in 1781, two different aged cooks posted advertisements in the same newspaper seeking alternative employment. The first, “a former cook of around 60 years” looked for a position as either a porter in

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<sup>212</sup> *Petites affiches*, 3 January 1789.

<sup>213</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 10:340.

<sup>214</sup> For contemporary attitudes toward unhealthy air in the workplace, see Bernadino Ramazzini, *Essai sur les maladies des artisans*, trans. Antoine-François Fourcroy (Paris: Moutard, 1777), 508-509, Arlette Farge, “Work-Related Diseases of Artisans in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *Medicine and Society in France*, ed. Elborg Forster and Orest A. Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 93-94.

<sup>215</sup> “L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine,” BNF N.A.F. 2862 (1757), 27.

<sup>216</sup> Louis Nivert, *Nouveau fourneaux économiques et portatifs, extrait de la Gazette de santé, du dimanche 1er octobre 1780, no. 40*. (Paris: Veuve Ballard et fils, 1781).

<sup>217</sup> Ramazzini, *Essai sur les maladies des artisans*, lv.

Paris or a concierge in the countryside. The second man, also aged around 60, sought a position as a porter, even though he knew “a bit of cooking.”<sup>218</sup> Another older man who knew cooking well wanted to escape not just the kitchen but perhaps also the city: he requested a position as concierge “around Paris or more distant.”<sup>219</sup> A thirty-eight-year-old cook who had been “at the head of a good house” wanted to become a concierge.<sup>220</sup> The death of a master could provide the pretext to leave cooking. A fifty-year old cook who noted that he had just lost his master decided to escape the kitchen either by managing the other servants “at the head of the house” or by becoming a porter or concierge.<sup>221</sup> Another man put out of service by the death of his master preferred to become a porter, although he knew how to prepare *une cuisine bourgeoise*.<sup>222</sup> Masters recognized the desire to escape busy kitchens and often promised a quiet post: in 1779, one advertisement searched for a skilled female cook in her early forties who would be willing to leave a “big kitchen” for “a more tranquil life serving only retired people.”<sup>223</sup> Another advertisement promised “a tranquil house where there are never suppers for the masters” to a male cook of 50 years who had several years of service with a single master.<sup>224</sup>

While Jacques Viollet de Wagnon could only dream about an old-age home for domestic servants, cooks did occasionally enjoy pensions that supported their

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<sup>218</sup> *Petites affiches*, 13 January 1781.

<sup>219</sup> *Petites affiches*, 25 April 1781.

<sup>220</sup> *Petites affiches*, 3 January 1789.

<sup>221</sup> *Petites affiches*, 16 January 1783.

<sup>222</sup> *Petites affiches*, 20 January 1787.

<sup>223</sup> *Petites affiches*, 14 January 1779.

<sup>224</sup> *Petites affiches*, 11 January 1783.

retirement.<sup>225</sup> During the 1750s, for example, the duc de Biron's former cook Crosnier received 200 livres per year "granted to him [...] for his support."<sup>226</sup> A certain Martin who worked in the Brienne kitchen appears to have profited from a pension of 300 livres after 1788.<sup>227</sup> In both cases, the cooks received pensions equivalent to half of their previous wages: Crosnier had earned 400 livres per year while still working, and Martin had made 600. Duval, *maître d'hôtel* to the Prince de Lambesc, received a pension of 500 livres after having earned 1200 livres per year.<sup>228</sup> Jean-Baptiste Queval benefited from a lifetime pension of 150 livres from the estate of his former mistress, Madame de Berville, having served 33 years in her household (and later in her daughter's).<sup>229</sup> In 1771 the executors of the Prince de Carignan searched for his former *chef de cuisine* to offer him his inheritance. The cook had worked for the prince for just two years.<sup>230</sup> Evidence also suggests that cooks accumulated substantial savings thanks to their relatively high incomes. At his marriage in 1733, the *maître d'hôtel* Lemerle already possessed a fortune of three thousand livres, and he continued to work in the same household for another twenty years, earning as much as 650 livres per year.<sup>231</sup> When the cook Nicolas Claude Paradis died in 1751, he left behind nearly ten thousand livres.<sup>232</sup> In

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<sup>225</sup> Jacques Viollet de Wagnon, *L'Auteur laquais, ou réponse aux objections qui ont été faites au corps de ce nom, sur la vie de Jacques Cochois, dit Jasmin* (Avignon: Girard, 1750), 120.

<sup>226</sup> AN T\* 479/36 (30 June 1754). AN T\* 470/35 (1754-1756).

<sup>227</sup> AN 4 AP 297 (1785).

<sup>228</sup> AN T 491/2 (late 1770s).

<sup>229</sup> de Varneville, *Mémoire pour la comtesse de Varneville, intimée; contre Jean-Baptiste Queval, ci-devant son cuisinier*, vol. Didot (Paris: 1765), 17.

<sup>230</sup> *Affiches de Rouen*, 12 July 1771.

<sup>231</sup> MC ET/XXIX/415 (15 December 1733), AN T\* 491/2 (1745-1761).

<sup>232</sup> MC ET/XIV/342 (27 June 1751).

1779, a cook pointed to his *rente* of 400 livres when he sought a position as concierge along with his wife, a seamstress.<sup>233</sup>

Although cooks worked in the disorderly world of domestic service, they practiced a number of strategies to market their services, develop skills, and secure a living. Through the pages of the *affiches*, cooks and masters negotiated a complex formula of physical, moral, and intellectual attributes in order to locate a suitable match. For the most talented cooks, skill could outweigh character in hiring decisions. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the most desperate advertised any number of qualities in a desperate bid to find a position. Once employed, cooks could advance either by biding their time or by calculating their standing relative to other households and jumping ship. While like all servants they faced old age with uncertainty, at least a few cooks were able to gain a measure of a financial security through savings and pensions.

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<sup>233</sup> *Petites affiches*, 24 March 1779.

## Chapter 5. Fashioning a Taste Expert

Qui pourroit nombrer tous les mots de la nouvelle cuisine? C'est un idiôme absolument neuf.

Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*

In 1739 the cookbook *Les Dons de Comus* announced the arrival of a new style of cooking, *la cuisine moderne*. According to the cookbook's preface, "*La cuisine ancienne* is what the French popularized throughout Europe, and which was generally followed less than twenty years ago. *La cuisine moderne*, based on the foundation of *l'ancienne* – with less difficulty, less equipment, and as much variety – is simpler, cleaner, and perhaps even more scientific."<sup>1</sup> Thus *la cuisine moderne* claimed to have effectively rendered its predecessor (and by extension its practitioners) obsolete.<sup>2</sup> Also known as *la nouvelle cuisine*, the new style purported to simplify and streamline the process of

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<sup>1</sup> François Marin, *Les Dons de Comus, ou les délices de la table. Ouvrage non-seulement utile aux Officiers de Bouche pour ce qui concerne leur art, mais principalement à l'usage des personnes qui sont curieuses de sçavoir donner à manger, et d'être servies délicatement, tant en gras qu'en maigre, suivant les saisons, et dans le goût le plus nouveau* (Paris: Prault, fils, 1739), xix-xx.

<sup>2</sup> Although *la cuisine moderne* was a decidedly French phenomenon, the notion of "modern" cooking can be traced at least slightly earlier to the English-language cookbook, *The Modern Cook* (1736) by Vincent de la Chapelle, a French cook who had crossed the Channel to serve an English master. While La Chapelle failed to use either the appellation *la cuisine moderne* or *la nouvelle cuisine*, both the title of his work and his notion of a rapidly and radically changing cooking are consistent with the later works which would more clearly define the new style. Vincent La Chapelle, *The Modern Cook: Containing Instructions for Preparing and Ordering Publick Entertainments for the Tables of Princes, Ambassadors, Noblemen, and Magistrates. As also the least Expensive Methods of providing for private Families, in a very elegant Manner. New Receipts for Dressing of Meat, Fowl, and Fish, and making Ragoûts, Fricassées, and Pastry of all Sorts, in a Method never before publish'd. Adorn'd with Copper-Plates, Exhibiting the Order of Placing the different Dishes, etc. on the Table, in the most polite Way.* (London: Thomas Osbourne, 1736), i.

cooking, while at the same time providing gustatory and physiological benefits to its consumers. But *la cuisine moderne*'s most radical contribution was a new kind of cook. Although before *la cuisine moderne* there had been cooks of "great reputation," they had not yet relied on "calculation."<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the new cook used his mind.

## 1. The Invention of the Cookbook

*Les Dons de Comus* quickly inspired a host of other cookbooks, each of which sought to codify its own version of *la cuisine moderne*. The new style of cooking sparked a flood of publication: over a quarter of a million copies of cookbooks were printed during the years 1700 to 1789, with the vast majority of new titles appearing only after 1730, when cookbooks featuring *la cuisine moderne* first appeared.<sup>4</sup> Cooks produced as many new titles during the 1730s as they had in the previous thirty years, and the pace only continued to accelerate through the 1750s.<sup>5</sup> The production of new titles was further magnified by a rapid rate of reedition, both legitimate and counterfeit. Thirty-two editions of Menon's *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*, for example, appeared between 1746 and 1789, and new versions continued to appear into the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> From the perspective of the second half of the eighteenth century, the pace of

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<sup>3</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des aliments dont le but est la santé, l'économie et la perfection de la théorie. A l'usage des maîtresses de maison qui ne dédaignent pas de descendre jusqu'au détail de leur ménage, soit à la ville, soit à la campagne.*, (Paris, London: Onfroy, 1782), 2.

<sup>4</sup> In contrast, just 90,000 cookbooks were printed during the second half of the seventeenth century. This figure, moreover, obscures the relative paucity of new titles, since many early cookbooks enjoyed remarkably long lives: La Varenne's *Le Cuisinier françois* (1651) and Massialot's *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois* (1691) remained in print well into the eighteenth century. Alain Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*. Livres culinaires, cuisine et société en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* XXIV (1977), 500-503.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 503.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

cookbook publication was already overwhelming: the *Encyclopédie*'s article "Cuisine" lamented the appearance "without end [of] new treatises under the names of *Cuisinier françois*, *Cuisinier royal*, *Cuisinier moderne*, *Dons de Comus*, *Ecole des officiers de bouche*, and many others which perpetually change method."<sup>7</sup>

Jean-François Revel and Stephen Mennell have interpreted the accelerating pace of cookbook publication as a sign that cuisine and food preferences were changing rapidly, but I would suggest that their focus on the table – at the expense of the kitchen – has precluded them and other historians from considering the roles of cooks as creators of taste, not to mention as authors and readers.<sup>8</sup> Old Regime cookbooks were written both by cooks and for cooks. Alain Girard concludes, "The cookbook, when its author is identified, is the work of a cook or a *maître-d'hôtel*."<sup>9</sup> François de la Varenne, Pierre de Lune, and Vincent La Chapelle all indicated their positions and masters in the title pages of their cookbooks.<sup>10</sup> François Massialot, author of *Le Cuisinier roïal et bourgeois* (1691), served the dukes of Chartres, Orléans, Aumont, and Louvois.<sup>11</sup> François Marin,

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<sup>7</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1772), s.v. "Cuisine."

<sup>8</sup> Jean François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), 120, Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 510. As the next chapter will show, the *maître-d'hôtel* was usually a practicing or former cook.

<sup>10</sup> François-Pierre de La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois, enseignant la maniere de bien apprester, et assaisonner toutes sortes de viandes, grasses et maigres, legumes, Patisseries, etc. Reveu, corrigé, et augmenté d'un traité de confitures seiches et liquides, et autres delicatesses de bouche. Ensemble d'une table alphabetique des matieres qui sont traittées dans tout le livre.* (Paris: Pierre David, 1652), Pierre de Lune, *Le Nouveau cuisinier, ou il est traitté de la veritable methode pour apprester toutes sortes de viandes, gibier, volatiles, poissons, tant de mer que d'eau douce: suivant les quatre saisons de l'année. Ensemble la maniere de faire toutes sortes de patisseries, tant froides que chaudes, en perfection* (Paris: Pierre David, 1660), Vincent La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier moderne, qui apprend à donner toutes sortes de repas, en gras et en maigre, d'une manière plus délicate que ce qui en été écrit jusqu'à présent* (The Hague: 1742).

<sup>11</sup> Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 155.

author of both *Les Dons de Comus* and *La Suite des dons de Comus* (1742), worked for the maréchal de Soubise. The compiler of the *Dictionnaire des alimens* (1750) was somewhat oblique about his master – preferring only to specify his position as *chef de cuisine* to the “Prince de \*\*\*\*\*” – but he nonetheless indicated that he served as a cook.<sup>12</sup> It is generally agreed that Menon was a cook, but oddly little is known about this most prolific of eighteenth-century cookbook authors.<sup>13</sup> He claimed that he wrote his earliest cookbook for his own use “knowing by experience that however skilled a cook might be, his memory does not always furnish the dishes he knows how to make at the moment he needs them.”<sup>14</sup> Nearly every cookbook can be positively linked to a cook, and just one has been attributed to someone outside the kitchen.<sup>15</sup> In rare cases, an author might avail himself of outside literary assistance in the preparation of a cookbooks. The bulk of the preface of *Les Dons de Comus*, for example, has typically been attributed to two Jesuits, Pierre Brumoy and Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant.<sup>16</sup> Even when *Les Dons de Comus*

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<sup>12</sup> M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens, vins et liqueurs, leurs qualités, leurs effets, relativement aux différens âges, et aux différens tempéramens; avec la maniere de les apprêter, ancienne et moderne, suivant la méthode des plus habiles chefs d’office et chefs de cuisine, de la cour, et de la ville. Ouvrage très-utile dans toutes les familles.*, 3 vols. (Paris: Gissey, 1750).

<sup>13</sup> Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 19. When Joan Hildreth Owen characterizes Menon’s voice, she asserts “This is a servant speaking.” Joan Hildreth Owen, “Philosophy in the Kitchen; or Problems in Eighteenth-Century Culinary Aesthetics,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 3 (1977), 78. Stephen Mennell attributes Menon’s anonymity to the “low status of cooks,” but given the prominent display of other cookbook authors’ credentials, this assertion is not especially convincing. Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 143.

<sup>14</sup> Menon, *Nouveau traité de la cuisine, avec de nouveaux desseins de tables et vingt-quatre menus, où l’on apprend ce que l’on doit servir suivant chaque saison, en gras, en maigre, et en pâtisserie, et très-utiles à toutes les personnes qui s’en mêlent, tant pour ordonner, que pour exécuter toutes sortes de nouveaux ragoûts, et des plats à la mode* (Paris: Michel-Etienne David, 1739), iii.

<sup>15</sup> In this case, the author was the Prince de Dombes, a practicing amateur cook. Even so, he participated in a medium dominated by those who cooked for a living. [Louis-Auguste de Bourbon], *Le Cuisinier gascon* (Amsterdam: 1740).

<sup>16</sup> The preface of Marin’s next cookbook, *La Suite des Dons de Comus*, has likewise been attributed elsewhere, in this case to Anne-Gabriel Meusnier de Querlon. Stephen Mennell, ed., *Lettre d’un Pâtissier*



first appeared, however, readers quickly guessed that it owed this section to someone other than Marin: according to one contemporary reader, the preface was quite simply too “full of erudition” for a work on cooking.<sup>17</sup> Yet as this chapter will show, the literary approach pioneered by *Les Dons de Comus* was quickly emulated by other cookbooks, whose authors’ culinary bona fides have never been questioned.

It is extremely difficult to assess how deeply and widely cookbooks penetrated the broader community of practicing servant cooks. Cookbooks did imagine the existence of a readership of literate cooks. As we have already seen, cooks were extraordinarily literate among servants, and cookbooks explicitly addressed this audience. *Le Nouveau cuisinier*, for example, sought out patient cooks unlike those “young people who run from town to town in order to imitate this beautiful science, so required and so pompous in our own century.”<sup>18</sup> Menon aimed one of his cookbooks especially at “officers of the kitchen who love their art and are jealous of its progress.”<sup>19</sup> In another cookbook he suggested the difference between the way a *maître d’hôtel* would use his volume compared to a cook.<sup>20</sup> Indeed one late eighteenth-century author sought to differentiate his treatise on cooking from all others by declaring that it was in fact *not* intended for cooks but rather for their masters.<sup>21</sup> But if cookbooks thus targeted a readership of cooks,

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*Anglois et autres contributions à une polémique gastronomique du XVIIIème siècle* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1981), xx, xxii.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques-Elie Gastelier, *Lettres sur les affaires du temps* (Paris: Champion Slatkine, 1993), 341.

<sup>18</sup> Lune, *Le Nouveau cuisinier*, “Au Lecteur”.

<sup>19</sup> Menon, *Les Soupers de la Cour, ou l’art de travailler toutes sortes d’aliments, pour servir les meilleures tables, suivant les quatre saisons*, 2 vols. (Paris: Guillyn, 1755; reprint, Paris: Librairie SOETE, 1978), v.

<sup>20</sup> Menon, *Nouveau traité de la cuisine*, iv-vii. Menon also noted that masters who wished to “get involved in the affairs of their house” could use his cookbook.

<sup>21</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens*, “Avertissement.”

problems of evidence make it hard to say how many cooks actually read these texts. As Annik Pardhailé-Galabrun has noted, even comprehensive death inventories frequently fail to list individual titles.<sup>22</sup> The physical attributes of cookbooks have further conspired against their enumeration. The same small format that made them available to readers of modest means also typically precluded their mention in inventories, which favored more luxurious large-format editions.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the hazards of the occupation certainly annihilated many a well-thumbed volume. With the exception of the handful of fine editions preserved in rare book collections today, the vast majority of early modern cookbooks are presumed to have met their end in the kitchen.<sup>24</sup> Finally, ownership may not even be an appropriate avenue for investigation, since cookbooks, like the kitchen's tools, may have been in fact the property of cook's master.

During the middle decades of the eighteenth century, awareness and discussion of *la cuisine moderne* extended far beyond cookbooks and kitchens. Most observers found the style of cooking at best controversial, at worst positively dangerous. The article "Cuisine" in the *Encyclopédie* accused practitioners of the new style of cooking of "perpetually changing methods," thus preventing the establishment of a "fixed order" of taste. *La cuisine moderne*, it charged, testified to the extent to which "the dissoluteness of [man's] taste seeks, invents, and imagines in order to disguise ingredients."<sup>25</sup> The play

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<sup>22</sup> Annik Pardhailé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris* (Oxford: Polity, 1991), 177.

<sup>23</sup> Cookbooks were usually duodecimo (in-12), or about five by seven inches. Girard suggests that cookbooks' small format also precluded their preservation, since smaller books were less valued. Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 500. Pardhailé-Galabrun also concludes that small format books were unlikely to be described individually. Pardhailé-Galabrun, *Birth of Intimacy*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 499.

<sup>25</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Cuisine."

*L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine* (1757) poked fun at the purported generational clash between old and new styles of cooking by anthropomorphizing them both, pitting a dashing young male cook (*la nouvelle cuisine*) against a jealous older woman (*l’ancienne cuisine*).<sup>26</sup> Voltaire had little respect for modern cooking: he asked whether a biblical reference to parents and children eating each other might stand as a precocious example of *la nouvelle cuisine*.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere he had a character in a play comment on the common wisdom surrounding the new style of cooking, “I have heard talk of *la nouvelle cuisine*, of new tastes: you croak, you are ruined.”<sup>28</sup> Yet not every commentator received *la cuisine moderne* so poorly. Parisian observer par excellence Louis-Sébastien Mercier remarked, “*La nouvelle cuisine* is advantageous for health, for the length of life, for the equilibrium of humors, followed by the equilibrium of temperament. It is certain that we are better sustained and better fed than were our fathers.”<sup>29</sup>

I would suggest that what was at stake (and controversial) was not just a new set of recipes or dishes, but rather *la cuisine moderne*’s promise of a new kind of cook. *La cuisine moderne* seized the production of taste from elites and placed it into the hands of ordinary cooks. Instead of receiving taste from above, cooks began actively to create taste from below. Beginning in the late 1730s, a small community of cooks used cookbooks systematically to redefine cooking as a skilled profession that required the use

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<sup>26</sup> BNF MSS N.A.F. 2862, *L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine* (1757). I discuss this play in greater detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>27</sup> Voltaire, *Instruction du gardien des capucins de Raguse à frère Pédiculoso partant pour la terre sainte*, Tome 67: 1768 III (source: Voltaire électronique).

<sup>28</sup> “J’entends parler de nouvelle cuisine, / de nouveaux goûts; on crève, on se ruine.” Voltaire, *Nanine, ou l’homme sans préjugé, comédie en trois actes, en vers de dix syllabes* (Marie-Rose de Labriolle and Colin Duckworth, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire / Complete works of Voltaire*, eds. Ulla Kölling et al (Geneva, Banbury, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1968-), tome 31B65-73, 143 (source: Voltaire électronique).

<sup>29</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 12:318.

of the mind as well as the body. They relied on the medium of print both to codify and to transmit their theory and practices, seeking to transform cooking from an empirical practice to an art and a science. No longer strictly banal, cooking would henceforth involve the application of theoretical knowledge to produce proper meals. Cooks were certainly not unique in the attempt to theorize an essentially mechanical occupation. Geometry became an essential tool for furniture makers, for example, during the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup> Yet as servants (who, unlike furniture makers, lacked even the status of “mechanical art” let alone incorporated *métier*), cooks’ foray into theorizing their practices was particularly audacious. Other types of servants simply did not produce technical literature. The only other technical manual for servants, *Le Parfait cocher* (1744), was in fact penned by the duc de Nevers.<sup>31</sup> Conduct manuals for servants, which did exist in number, served an entirely different purpose, typically seeking to impose moral norms rather than to instruct.<sup>32</sup>

This chapter examines the epistemological shift of cookbooks from occasional vectors of elite taste to the essential tools of new taste production. Cookbooks began in seventeenth-century France as books of secrets promising to reveal the best dishes enjoyed at the highest tables. Yet by the middle of the eighteenth century they had abandoned secrecy as a marketing tool in favor of selling a set of cooking knowledge that

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<sup>30</sup> Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 116.

<sup>31</sup> Philippe Julien Mancini Mazarini Nevers, duc de, *Le Parfait cocher, ou l’art de entretenir, et de conduire un equipage à Paris et en campagne*. (Paris: F.G. Merigot, 1744). Interestingly enough, at least one contemporary reader (erroneously) attributed the preface of *Les Dons de Comus* to the duc de Nevers.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example Claude Fleury, *Les Devoirs des maîtres et des domestiques* (Paris: Pierre Aubouin, Pierre Emery, and Charles Clouzier, 1688), Pierre Collet, *Instructions et prières à l’usage des domestiques* (Paris: Debure l’aîné, Herissant, Tilliard, 1758).

cooks could deploy again and again to make their own novelties. To prove that cooks could play an active role in shaping taste, cookbooks imagined millennia of historical progress culminating with the present state of French cuisine. They conjured examples from ancient Greece and republican Rome to establish the French cook's historical pedigree. But this historicization was intended to provide the foundation for their ambitious plan to escape the historical chance that had previously governed culinary progress. Cookbooks proposed a radical new body of theory that would enable cooks to surmount empiricism. Cooks would now possess the knowledge to make expert decisions regarding ingredients, techniques, and taste in the pursuit of the perpetual generation of novelty. At the heart of the new theory of cooking was the goal to establish a taxonomy of taste. By positing a rational order of food in the face of the kitchen's chaos, cookbooks provided cooks with the intellectual tools to imagine and realize a perfect meal. Although a variety of culinary taxonomies vied for supremacy, all valorized a new gustatory novelty which sprang not from the elite status of cooks' masters but from the expertise of cooks themselves.

## **2. The Quest for Secret Knowledge**

Almost no cookbooks were published in France before the middle of the seventeenth century and none at all appeared between 1610 and 1650. Studying the publication trends of cookbooks, one historian asks whether the cookbook was in fact “a creation of Parisian editors during the middle of the seventeenth century.”<sup>33</sup> Thus when

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<sup>33</sup> Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 505-506. Jean-François Revel goes even further, arguing that “no cookbook that is really a cookbook, properly speaking, was published in Europe” between 1490 and 1651. Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 120.

François de la Varenne published his *Le Cuisinier françois* (1651) it marked the beginning of a entirely new commerce in culinary discourse.<sup>34</sup> After enjoying a decade nearly free of competition, *Le Cuisinier françois* was joined by Pierre de Lune's *Le Nouveau cuisinier* in 1660. The authors of both works proudly displayed their cooking credentials on their title pages: La Varenne worked for the marquis d'Uxelles while Pierre de Lune had served the duc de Rohan. These authors explicitly attributed their wisdom to the status of the masters they served; both of these cooks claimed to have "found the secret" of cooking while in their masters' employ.<sup>35</sup> By relaying this secret knowledge to a wider audience, both cooks promised to garner the recognition their masters deserved for their superior taste. To rely on the idea of secret knowledge derived from social elites was not unusual. It was in fact a familiar conceit of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>36</sup> Books of secrets often claimed noble authorship: the title of *Les Secrets du seigneur Alexis Piemontois* (1652) clearly indicated its secrets' aristocratic origins.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the *Nouveaux secrets rares et curieux* (1660), a collection of cosmetics and remedies was, according to its title, "charitably given to the public by a person of condition."<sup>38</sup> Books of secrets were enormously popular during the sixteenth

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<sup>34</sup> Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 505-506.

<sup>35</sup> La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois*. J'ay trouué dans vostre Maison par vn employ de dix ans entiers le secret d'apprester delicatement les Viandes. Lune, *Le Nouveau cuisinier*. Je puis dire que i'ay trouué chez vous le secret de contenter vn goust difficile.

<sup>36</sup> According to Sandra Sherman, the promise of revealed secrecy was a "commonplace claim" in seventeenth-century English cookbooks as well. Sandra Sherman, "'The Whole Art and Mystery of Cooking': What Cookbooks Taught Readers in the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28, no. 1 (2004), 116. For a comprehensive account of books of secrets, see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> Alessio Piemontese, *Les Secrets du seigneur Alexis Piemontois* (Rouen: Jacques Besongne, 1652).

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Erresalde, *Nouveaux secrets rares et curieux, donnés charitablement au public par une personne de condition. Contenant divers remedes eprouvez utiles et profitables pour toutes sortes de maladies et*

and seventeenth centuries; the secrets of Alexis Piemontois (or Alessio Piemontese, in the original) merited over a hundred editions and translations between 1555 and 1699.<sup>39</sup>

Like all books of secrets, the appeal of secret cookery relied on a disjuncture between elite and popular knowledge, what William Eamon has dubbed “social secrecy.”<sup>40</sup> This form of secrecy did not, however, require any sort of dynamism within cooking or the production of taste. Cooks needed only to claim to have gained their secret knowledge through exposure to cultured masters or by reading other cooks’ published exposés. Moreover, from the perspective of the recipient, secret cooking knowledge required no special skills or talents. One needed only to read a single cookbook to learn the arcana of the royal or noble kitchen. Taste originated with elites, and cooks learned taste either from serving with sophisticated masters or from gaining this knowledge via cookbooks. They played no active role in creating or shaping taste themselves. In the world of secret cookery, the knowledge of the kitchen did not itself evolve: one was either privy to it or not.

Such transmission of knowledge from elites to the public was not without risk, since it could theoretically undermine elite cultural authority by revealing knowledge forbidden to the masses. In the case of cookbooks, this sort of disclosure could also threaten established cooks’ cultural capital. *Les Délices de la campagne* (1654) promised to teach readers those preparations “our best cooks have become accustomed to give to all foods eaten in Paris,” effectively eliminating cooks’ competitive advantage in the

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*divers secrets pour la conservation de la beauté des dames: avec une nouvelle maniere pour faire toutes sortes de confitures, tant seiches que liquides* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Loyson, 1660).

<sup>39</sup> Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, 140.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

marketplace of cooks' services.<sup>41</sup> Pierre de Lune worried that his revelation of cooking secrets would seem "criminal" in the eyes of those cooks "not as advanced" as he.<sup>42</sup> As late as 1691, François Massialot, a self-described "royal cook," offered to instruct his readers "without hiding anything most fashionable and in usage at Court, in the other best tables."<sup>43</sup> According to Massialot, the benefits of disclosure far outweighed its risks; this author of one of the last of the secret cookbooks assured his readers that he "divulge[d] the secrets of his art in order to oblige the public, the common good outweighing the individual." In Massialot's opinion, such a humane gesture was "forgivable."<sup>44</sup>

As one cookbook author was quick to note, the purported secrecy of knowledge did not in any way guarantee its utility. In 1674 the enigmatic L.S.R., author of *L'Art de bien traiter*, began to downplay the value of secrets, promising his readers that they would "vow that [he] was right to reform this antique and disgusting manner of preparing things."<sup>45</sup> Despite its supposedly elite and secret origins, he found the existing style of cooking riddled with flaws; along with disorder and excessive expense, it was moreover "without honor."<sup>46</sup> In proposing this break with the past, L.S.R. ridiculed the old style of

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<sup>41</sup> Nicolas de Bonnefons, *Les Délices de la campagne, suite du Jardinier François, ou est enseigné a preparer pour l'usage de la vie tout ce qui croist sur la terre, et dans les eaux* (Paris: Pierre Des-Hayes, 1654), 371.

<sup>42</sup> Lune, *Le Nouveau cuisinier*, "Avis au lecteur".

<sup>43</sup> François Massialot, *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois, qui apprend à ordonner toute sorte de repas, et la meilleure manière des ragoûts les plus à la mode et les plus exquis. Ouvrage très-utile dans les familles, et singulièrement nécessaire à tous maîtres d'hôtels, et ecuiers de cuisine*. (Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1691), 88.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> L.S.R., *L'Art de bien traiter, divisé en trois parties. Ouvrage nouveau, curieux, et fort galant, utile à toutes personnes, et conditions*. (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1674), 1. Like the author of *Dictionnaire des alimens*, L.S.R. published only under initials. M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens*.

<sup>46</sup> L.S.R., *L'Art de bien traiter*, 1.



cooking, with its “mountains of roasts” and “bizarrely served” dishes.<sup>47</sup> He brazenly mocked his predecessor François de la Varenne, whose recipes he labeled “absurdities and disgusting lessons.”<sup>48</sup> He lamented that for too long the public had mindlessly subscribed to La Varenne’s “doctrine.”<sup>49</sup> He challenged his readers, “

Are you not already shivering at the thought of a soup of teals in mulled wine, of tenderloin in sweet sauce? Do you regard without horror this beef shank soup *au tailladin*, this *soupe de marmite*? That of a fried calf’s head, does it not make you laugh, or rather cry out of compassion[?]”<sup>50</sup>

L.S.R. even questioned the judgment of those who had hankered for La Varenne’s secret knowledge; according to him, they were a “foolish and ignorant populace.”<sup>51</sup> By definition, secret cookery had required a readership ignorant of its details, but now that ignorance had come to represent a liability. L.S.R.’s work thus presaged the declining appeal of secrecy to cookbook buyers. Although books of secrets continued to appear during the eighteenth century – *L’Albert moderne* (1768) is a notable example – cookbooks would no longer rely on the promise of revealed secrecy to sell copies.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. The Valorization of Novelty

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>52</sup> *L’Albert moderne, ou nouveaux secrets éprouvés, et licites, recueillis d’après les découvertes les plus récentes.*, (Paris: La Veuve Duchesne, 1768). This work was intended to update the venerable books of secrets *Secrets d’Albert le Grand* and the *Petit Albert*. Menon’s *Les Soupers de la Cour* (1755) hinted at royal exclusivity in its title, but the preface clearly eschewed secrecy, on the contrary noting that a few readers might even recognize their own inventions among its recipes. Menon, *Les Soupers de la Cour*, ix-x.

The publication of cookbooks slumped dramatically at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Between 1700 and 1730, just three new titles appeared, with none at all during the first decade of the century.<sup>53</sup> When new cookbooks did begin to appear in quantity during the 1730s, they adopted a dramatically different approach from their seventeenth-century predecessors. Instead of claiming to disclose the secrets of the elite, these cookbooks flaunted their novelty.

It would be unfair to claim that novelty constituted in itself an entirely new marketing strategy. Seventeenth-century cookbooks had duly noted their newness. La Varenne remarked of his *Le Cuisinier françois* that both the “title and contents appear new.”<sup>54</sup> Pierre de Lune’s *Le Nouveau cuisinier* carried the word “new” in its title. Yet for a long time, novelty elicited at best an ambiguous response, for new did not necessarily imply better during the seventeenth century. The same L.S.R. who denounced the outmoded recipes of his predecessors warned that the “fatal invention” of ice could poison its unsuspecting consumers; he described it as a “deadly novelty.”<sup>55</sup> In its entry for “novelty,” the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* offered the definition of “new thing,” adding “In this sense it is often taken in a bad way.”<sup>56</sup> The prolonged shelf-life of seventeenth-century cookbooks hints at the relative unimportance of novelty. Nicolas de Bonnefons admitted that his work was several years old before it ever reached the presses; he had to wait until the Fronde had subsided before he could

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<sup>53</sup> Girard, “Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*,” 503.

<sup>54</sup> La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois*, “Amy lecteur”.

<sup>55</sup> L.S.R. makes these characterizations in his table of contents. For his extended discussion of the mortal threat of drinking champagne on ice, see L.S.R., *L’Art de bien traiter*, 32-34.

<sup>56</sup> *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, dédié au Roy*, 1 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694), s.v. “Nouveauté.” Not until a quarter of a century later did the dictionary drop this qualifier, suggesting a less negative connotation.

publish *Les Délices de la campagne*.<sup>57</sup> With little incentive to change, La Varenne's 1651 *Le Cuisinier françois* remained in print for decades. Massialot's 1691 *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois* persisted until the 1730s, tellingly fading only when novelty suddenly assumed greater importance.

In contrast to their seventeenth-century predecessors, the cookbooks that began to appear in the 1730s asserted a more immediate novelty (and consequently risked a more instantaneous obsolescence). François Marin's *Les Dons de Comus* (1739) provided the first precise definition of *la cuisine moderne*, describing a system which had rendered its predecessor effectively obsolete.<sup>58</sup> The author promised, "If novelty in a work were a sure guarantee of its success, I could certainly count on the singularity of my method."<sup>59</sup> The quickening pace of publication brought an accelerating cycle of fashion, with each new cookbook proudly staking its claim to novelty. Even *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* – as if it were not novel enough with its feminine and bourgeois focus – in an early edition added the word "new" to its title, just to be safe.<sup>60</sup> The novelty of cooking was no longer predicated on the knowledge gap between elites and the public, but rather on the fierce

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<sup>57</sup> "Il y a plus de deux ans que j'avois dessein de vous faire voir cette suite de nostre IARDINIER FRANÇOIS, si les divisions et partialitez des Guerres civiles qui incommodoient cét Estat, et sembloient le menasser de ruine, ne m'en eussent osté entierement le tems, et diminüé beaucoup de l'affection que j'avois à m'y appliquer, pour les incommoditez et pertes qu'elles m'ont causées; mais aussi-tost qu'il a pleu à Dieu de pacifier le dedans de cette Monarchie, et mon dernier retour de Paris m'en donnant le loisir; j'ay pris à Coeur de m'y appliquer avec une ardente affection." Bonnefons, *Les Délices de la campagne*, "Préface au lecteur."

<sup>58</sup> Although *la cuisine moderne* was a decidedly French phenomenon, the notion of "modern" cooking can be traced at least slightly earlier to the English-language cookbook, *The Modern Cook* (1736) by Vincent de la Chapelle, a French cook who had crossed the Channel to serve an English master. While La Chapelle failed to use either the appellation *la cuisine moderne* or *la nouvelle cuisine*, both the title of his work and his notion of a rapidly and radically changing cooking are consistent with the later works which would more clearly define the new style. La Chapelle, *The Modern Cook*, i.

<sup>59</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xxx.

<sup>60</sup> Menon, *La Nouvelle cuisinière bourgeoise, suivie de l'office à l'usage [sic] de tous ceux qui se mêlent des dépenses de maison* (Paris: Guillyn, 1746).

competition among cooks themselves, as each cookbook sought to carve out a niche in the growing market of culinary literature. At the same time, claims of novelty came under far greater scrutiny; one eighteenth-century cookbook challenged the use of the word “new” in a competing reedition of Massialot’s cookbook:

Although *Le Cuisinier françois*, called “royal and bourgeois,” is too old, and of a nature impossible to follow anymore, not having been expanded or abridged for more than thirty years, that does not prevent the holder of the copyright (*privilège*) from putting at the head of his book, that it is “new.” Those who happen to be curious and want to take the trouble to examine it will see quite the opposite.”<sup>61</sup>

Vincent La Chapelle argued that even the best cuisine from twenty years past would no longer pass muster: “For should the Table of a great Man be serv’d in the Taste that prevail’d twenty Years ago, it would not please the Guests, how strictly soever he might conform to the Rules laid down at that Time.”<sup>62</sup>

When La Chapelle made his declaration his 1736, he had hardly written the last word on novelty. By definition, *la cuisine moderne* (or *la nouvelle cuisine*) was always “modern” (or “new”). During the 1740s and 1750s, cooks would continue to argue that they were at last revealing the “new” cuisine. As late as 1782, a self-styled reformer of cuisine claimed that he would demonstrate to cooks “the necessity of renouncing their old theory.”<sup>63</sup> Novelty, unlike secrecy, demanded more than the simple revelation of knowledge. Because it could now be perpetually generated, novelty no longer depended on an ignorant populace hungering for the culinary secrets of *les grands*.<sup>64</sup> Quite the

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<sup>61</sup> La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier moderne*, 2.

<sup>62</sup> La Chapelle, *The Modern Cook*, i.

<sup>63</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Le Cuisinier gascon* (Amsterdam, 1740) is an exception to this trend. Exalting the fine taste of his master in the manner of the seventeenth-century cookbook, the anonymous author appears at first a throwback to the age of secrecy. Because authorship of the cookbook has been attributed in fact to the

contrary, to appreciate fully the novelty of the 1730s, familiarity with the other current culinary discourse was required. But before *la cuisine moderne* (or *la nouvelle cuisine*, for that matter) could live up to its name, it was of course first necessary to delineate what constituted “old.” Cookbook authors thus set about the task of situating cooking within a historical context.

#### **4. History, Progress, and Modernity**

While secret cookery had thrived within a static world of cultured elites and ignorant readers, cookbooks of the eighteenth century proposed a dynamic cuisine that evolved with the passage of time. François Massialot first opened the door to historical analysis with *Le Cuisinier roïal et bourgeois* (1691). In a brief preface, he sketched the outlines of an occupation which had once fallen into spectacular decay from its antediluvian austerity, with the culinary nadir firmly situated during the gluttonous Roman empire. Turning his eye to his own day, Massialot found cooking far removed from the unhappy days of heathen excess. Without precisely indicating the mechanism of progress, Massialot declared that cooks now knew how to make use of foods “in the most perfect manner.”

After Massialot’s brief foray into the history of cooking, nearly half a century passed before cookbooks fully exploited the possibilities of examining cuisine in a historical context. When they finally did, they tackled the subject with gusto. In 1739 *Les Dons de Comus* opened with an extensive treatment of the history of cooking.

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object of this dedicatory epistle, it appears instead that the author in fact lauds himself, the Prince de Dombes.

Despite the preface's promise not to "undertake the writing of the history" of cooking, it promptly delivered twenty pages tracing the evolution of cuisine from its origins of "simple necessity" to the current day's "modern Luculluses."<sup>65</sup> Despite its considerable level of erudition, the historical trajectory established by *Les Dons de Comus* would become the conventional narrative followed by other cookbooks.

*Les Dons de Comus* suggested that the life of primitive man resembled "that of the peoples of America, who limited to simple necessity, did not yet think of surplus."<sup>66</sup> According to the *Dictionnaire des alimens* (1750), this was a time of "temperance and frugality," when there were "no cookbooks among [men], because they had no need for them."<sup>67</sup> The "ordinary food of the first peoples of the world" consisted of "dairy, vegetables, bread cooked in embers and boiled, grilled, or roasted meat."<sup>68</sup> This Rousseauian state of nature soon unraveled when people began to tire of eating the same things: "the habit of always eating the same things gave rise to disgust; disgust gave birth to curiosity; curiosity to experimentation; and experimentation to sensuality."<sup>69</sup> Soon the first true luxurious dining arrived from Asia, considered the cradle of luxury thanks to its warm climate. "Luxury and delicacy of the table were born in Asia among the Assyrians and Persians, and without a doubt the quality of the climate contributed more than a little to rendering these peoples so voluptuous."<sup>70</sup> The Greeks next adopted Asian cuisine and began to refine it. According to *Les Dons de Comus*, "The Greeks, with their genius so

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<sup>65</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, iv, xvii.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, iii-iv.

<sup>67</sup> M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens*, v.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>70</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, iv-v.

appropriate for perfecting all the arts and for refining all pleasures, did not neglect those of the table.”<sup>71</sup> Greek preeminence in cuisine was in turn eclipsed by the Romans, who first learned and then improved upon the Greeks’ secrets: “The Greeks’ inventive genius burnished Roman opulence. The Romans, born to outdo everyone, soon overtook their masters.”<sup>72</sup> It was generally agreed that Roman cooks had encouraged the wildest excesses of ancient diners: in addition to bringing to “their tables, at immense cost, all that was most rare in the other parts of the world,” they went so far as to decoct a beverage of pearls.<sup>73</sup> Menon spoke “of Romans softened by Asian luxury, of delicate and sensual Romans, such as were a Lucullus, an Apicius, and others before and after Augustus.”<sup>74</sup> The notion of Roman gastronomic decadence was widely shared: according to Mercier, the Romans “were as blameworthy for their prodigality as were the Spartans with their black sauce.”<sup>75</sup>

Italians inherited the “debris” of Roman cooking through a stroke of geographic luck, and from them the French next tapped into the ancient cooking wisdom perfected by the Greeks and Romans.<sup>76</sup> *Les Dons de Comus* asserted, “The Italians polished all of Europe, and they are the ones, without a doubt, who taught us how to cook.”<sup>77</sup> This

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., viii-ix.

<sup>73</sup> Massialot, *Le Cuisinier royal et bourgeois*. Préface. By some accounts, Roman excesses were even more astounding: according to the *Dictionnaire des alimens*, the Romans consumed a dish known as Sanglier à la Troyenne, a dish involving a boar stuffed with a score of progressively smaller animals until reaching the size of the nightingale, putting today’s turducken to shame. M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens*, xi.

<sup>74</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier, avec des observations sur la connoissance et propriétés des alimens* (Paris: Paulus-du-Mesnil, 1749), xiv.

<sup>75</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:315. According to *Les Dons de Comus*, the suitably austere Spartan black sauce was made with the entrails of a hare. Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, vi.

<sup>76</sup> Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Cuisine.”

<sup>77</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xvii.

claim was again widely shared. According to one encyclopedic dictionary's entry for "cuisine," the French received "from the Italians, and especially those who served at the court of Catherine de Médicis, this art which it seems we have refined again, and which is sometimes so harmful to health."<sup>78</sup> The *Encyclopédie* similarly blamed "the throng of corrupt Italians" which accompanied de Médicis.<sup>79</sup> Historians have since thoroughly demonstrated the lack of evidence suggesting that any Italian, let alone Catherine de Médicis, ever imported Italian cuisine into France.<sup>80</sup> Yet this connection (or lack thereof) is far less suggestive than the fact that eighteenth-century cooks and diners alike were convinced of French cuisine's Italian roots. I would suggest that the persistence of this myth suggests the desire to establish historical continuity with Classical Rome and Greece. For French cuisine to assume an exceptional role, it needed to concoct a suitable culinary genealogy, linking itself to the Romans via Italy. Just as the Romans had inherited and perfected upon the talents of the Greeks, so the French claimed to have improved the cuisine brought from Italy. Menon declared that the Romans "refined the preparation of meats in their time, just as we can today."<sup>81</sup>

The preeminence of the French dated at least from the mid-seventeenth century, when François de la Varenne declared France the leader "above and beyond all other nations of the world, of civility, courtesy and decorum in all kinds of conversations." As a result, "it is no less esteemed for its manner of living, genteel and delicate." La

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<sup>78</sup> Philippe Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers* (Paris: P. Fr. Didot jeune, 1773), 592.

<sup>79</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Cuisine."

<sup>80</sup> Revel, *Culture and Cuisine*, 119-120, Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 43-44, Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 70.

<sup>81</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier*, xiv.



Varenne situated cuisine within the context of an ascendant and radiant France, which already surpassed all other nations in civility, courtesy, and propriety. He offered his cookbook *Le Cuisinier françois* so that cooking might also comprise part of the culture other nations so desperately wanted to imitate.<sup>82</sup> Nearly a century later, *Les Dons de Comus* argued that France still maintained its lead: “France is the country where cooking is done best, and for a long time the capital has especially distinguished itself in this regard. It could not be reasonably contested that a certain elegance, propriety, and delicacy are found nowhere else.”<sup>83</sup> French cooks displayed their superiority through their prodigious output of cookbooks, surpassing their own Italian “masters” by publishing three times as many treatises.<sup>84</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century the superiority of French cooks was unquestioned, at least among the French. A dictionary of arts and trades declared: “Today French cooks in all nations pass for those who prepare food best, and whose taste is the most delicate in executing fine dining.”<sup>85</sup>

France exported its supremacy in matters of taste in the form of both cookbooks and cooks.<sup>86</sup> French cookbooks frequently appeared in English translation and often gave rise to English imitators.<sup>87</sup> Yet something must have been lost in the translation, since

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<sup>82</sup> La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois*, "Le Libraire au Lecteur."

<sup>83</sup> *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine. Ou le cuisinier instruit, de la connoissance des animaux, tant volatiles, que terrestres, aquatiques et amphibies; de la façon, de préparer les divers alimens, et de les servir. Suivi d'un petit abrégé. Sur la maniere de faire les Confitures liquides et autres Desserts de toute espèce. Ouvrage très-utile, non-seulement pour les Maîtres d'Hôtel et Officiers de Cuisine; mais encore pour toutes les Communautés Religieuses, les grandes Familles, et tous ceux qui veulent donner à manger honnêtement.*, (Paris: Cl. J. B. Bauche, 1758), ii-iii.

<sup>84</sup> François Marin, *Les Dons de Comus, ou l'art de la cuisine, réduit en pratique, nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée par l'auteur.* (Paris: Pissot, 1758), xlvii.

<sup>85</sup> Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers*, s.v. "Cuisinier."

<sup>86</sup> For more on French cooks moving abroad, see Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*, 160-172.

<sup>87</sup> Gilly Lehmann, "Politics in the Kitchen," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 23, no. 2 (1999), 72.

demand abroad for actual French cooks was high. Vincent La Chapelle, one of the earliest proponents of “modern” cooking, reversed the formula by writing his first cookbook in England, where he served an English master. Many other cooks crossed the Channel to work for English elites (much to the dismay of English cooks).<sup>88</sup> One London couple took out an advertisement in a Parisian newspaper to find a French woman willing to cross the Channel with her cooking expertise, promising to cover costs of her voyage and pay 480 to 600 livres in annual salary.<sup>89</sup> An Italian lamented the preeminence of French cooking, claiming that an acquaintance who traveled everywhere with his French cook was “quite unable of eating even a boiled chicken unless it has been cooked by him or by a professor similar to him.”<sup>90</sup> So intertwined were Frenchness and good taste by the 1750s that the Duke of Albemarle even preferred to correspond in French when discussing French cooks and their handiwork.<sup>91</sup>

Cooks thus comprised an essential component of France’s “empire of taste” that extended across Europe.<sup>92</sup> By supplying theater, clothing, taste, manners, language, a new art of living, and unknown pleasures to the nations around it, France wielded “a sort of empire that no other people had ever exercised.”<sup>93</sup> In the play *L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine*, one cook characterized another’s work as satisfying even “the least delicate

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<sup>88</sup> Lehmann paints a stark division between English female cooks and French male chefs.

<sup>89</sup> *Petites affiches de Paris*, 17 January 1789.

<sup>90</sup> Giovambattista Roberti, “Ad un Professore di Belle Lettere nel Friuli,” in *Raccolta di varie operette dell’Abate Conte Giovambattista Roberti* (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1785), vii. Quoted in Piero Camporesi, *Exotic Brew: The Art of Living in the Age of Enlightenment*, trans. Christopher Woodall (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 33.

<sup>91</sup> Romney Sedgwick, “The Duke of Newcastle’s Cook,” *History Today* 5, no. 5 (1955), 314.

<sup>92</sup> Rivarol proposed regarding France: “its empire is that of taste.” Antoine de Rivarol, *De l’universalité de la langue française, discours qui a remporté le prix de l’Académie de Berlin* (Paris: Bailly, 1784), 24.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

palates / from the Antarctic to the Arctic.”<sup>94</sup> The chevalier de Jaucourt lamented the international popularity of French cuisine, claiming that his countrymen had “found nothing so gratifying as seeing the taste of their *cuisine* surpass that of other opulent kingdoms, and to reign without competition from the one end of the globe to the other.”<sup>95</sup> Philippe Macquer claimed that “in all nations French cooks pass for those who cook best and whose taste is most delicate with respect to fine dining.”<sup>96</sup> Such culinary dominance was no figment of the French imagination. One Italian observer remarked, “Nowadays the French reign supreme in the science of flavour, from the North down to the South.”<sup>97</sup> In England, indigenous cooks resented French interlopers.<sup>98</sup> Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson has argued that “[o]nly in the nineteenth century did French cuisine truly come to stand for France,” but eighteenth-century critics worried that it already did.<sup>99</sup> Yet if something of an empire had emerged from French cuisine, its control remained firmly in the hands of cooks.

The key France’s success was the assertion that cooking relied on “genius.” Progress could only occur in those occupations which involved the mind, since human bodies had if anything decayed through the course of history, whether from antediluvian longevity or state-of-nature sturdiness. But if genius were involved, cooking could

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<sup>94</sup> BNF MSS NAF 2862, “L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine,” (1757), 29.

<sup>95</sup> Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Cuisine.”

<sup>96</sup> Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers*, s.v. “Cuisinier.”

<sup>97</sup> Giovambattista Roberti, “Ad un Professore di Belle Lettere nel Friuli,” in *Raccolta di varie operette dell’Abate Conte Giovambattista Roberti* (Bologna: Lelio dalla Volpe, 1785), vii. Quoted in Camporesi, *Exotic Brew*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 96, 202, Gilly Lehmann, “Les Cuisiniers anglais face à la cuisine française,” *Dix-huitième siècle* 15 (1983), 79-80, Lehmann, “Politics in the Kitchen,” 80.

<sup>99</sup> Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 50.

witness progress and be perfected like other human intellectual pursuits, according to the precepts spelled out by one critic of the arts. According to the *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (“Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting”), such progress was virtually inevitable in occupations that depended on human genius.<sup>100</sup> In any given generation, a botanist, physician, an astronomer, or a chemist was likely to supersede his predecessors, since these pursuits continually advanced thanks to the power of their practitioners’ intellect.<sup>101</sup> When comparing their own practices to those of their ancient homologues, eighteenth-century cooks were certain that history would reveal their superiority, even in the absence of evidence. As Menon speculated, “If there remained enough records of this remote time to be able to draw an exact and complete parallel, I have no doubt the question would soon be decided in our favor.”<sup>102</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier found culinary progress to be so self-evident that he used cuisine as the first example in his article “Progress of the Arts.”<sup>103</sup> According to *Les Dons de Comus*, the relationship between cuisine and cultural progress was direct and inescapable: “Cooking, like all other arts invented for needs or for pleasure, has been perfected by the genius of peoples, and it has become more delicate as they have become more polite.”<sup>104</sup>

By exercising genius, cooks believed they could escape the punishingly cyclical nature of taste. Until the eighteenth century, culinary progress had been marked mainly by one people improving upon the successes of another (from Asians to Greeks to

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<sup>100</sup> Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Reflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1719), 523-524.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 524.

<sup>102</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*, xiv.

<sup>103</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 1:304.

<sup>104</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, iii.

Romans to Italians to French). With *la cuisine moderne*, however, the French claimed to inaugurate a new age of progress where they could capitalize on their own achievements. Both the cuisine of the seventeenth century (*la cuisine ancienne*) and its eighteenth-century successor (*la cuisine moderne*) were entirely French creations. “*L’ancienne* is the one the French put into vogue in all of Europe at the end of the last century. *La moderne*, established on the foundations of *l’ancienne*, is made with less equipment, less trouble, and does not cost as much. It is simpler, cleaner, more delicate, more scientific, we say, and even more varied.”<sup>105</sup>

In particular, cooks’ conclusion that they had achieved a modern cuisine held implications beyond the mere rhetorical.<sup>106</sup> By appropriating the language of modernity and novelty (and its claims to natural superiority) cooks aimed to transform their own occupation in a manner akin to the other liberal professions and skilled métiers. And by linking *la cuisine moderne* to the France’s other cultural achievements, cooks situated themselves within the narrative of civilization. The superiority of modern architecture provided Menon with a fruitful comparison. “In a word, there is between modern cooking and its predecessor almost the same difference as there is between modern and gothic architecture. In place of these edifices loaded with ornament contrived with painful symmetry, an elegant simplicity makes all of the beauty and the principal merit of our desserts.”<sup>107</sup> With the coming of modernity, both cooks and architects had consigned

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<sup>105</sup> M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens*, xiii.

<sup>106</sup> Rebecca Spang has recently characterized *la cuisine moderne*’s preoccupation with modernity as “a topos, a commonplace” of the eighteenth century. Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 46-47.

<sup>107</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel confiseur, à l’usage des officiers, avec des observations sur la connoissance et les propriétés des fruits. Enrichie de desseins en décorations et parterres pour les desserts.* (Paris: Paulus-du-Mesnil, 1750), iii.

poor taste to the dustbin of history. Yet it must be noted that not everyone embraced modernity as the route to occupational advancement, least of all servants. A 1750 proposal to create a retirement home for servants never invoked the language of modernity and in fact rather regressively called for the formation of something akin to a guild.<sup>108</sup> The instructional manual *Le Parfait cocher* (1744) likewise failed to call for any form of “modern” coach-driving.<sup>109</sup> Unlike the practices of cooks, other servants’ tasks existed outside of the continuum of history, genius, and civilization.

There was a potential downside to the rush to historicize cooking. By situating cuisine in a historical narrative of change, cooks faced the risk of a rather different story: decline and corruption. The *Encyclopédie* best encapsulates this competing narrative: from the halcyon adamantine days of milk and honey, cooks had continually sought to appease the capricious tastes of man. In the end, they converted a simple art into a lethal science.<sup>110</sup>

## 5. Toward a Theory of the Kitchen

By showing historical progress, cooks proved that cooking was perfectible. Next they seized upon a strategy to drive progress rather than wait for it to transpire through sheer accident. No longer would cooks have to wait for the gradual improvements that only rarely occurred. Cooks had already established themselves as transmitters of

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<sup>108</sup> Jacques Viollet de Wagnon, *L'Auteur laquais, ou réponse aux objections qui ont été faites au corps de ce nom, sur la vie de Jacques Cochois, dit Jasmin* (Avignon: Girard, 1750).

<sup>109</sup> Nevers, *Le Parfait cocher*.

<sup>110</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Cuisine." The chevalier de Jaucourt's article borrows much of its narrative from the *Dictionnaire des alimens*, although with a considerably grimmer conclusion.

cultural capital in even the earliest, “secret” cookbooks, but now they assumed the role of generating taste, not merely passing its formulae from elites to readers.

By reconfiguring the orientation of cook to food, cookbooks required a cook who relied on his mind as well as his body. As early as 1654, Nicolas de Bonnefons hinted at such a possibility, deriding cooks who “do not school themselves, with each preoccupied by the good opinion each has of his capacities. They believe that since they disguise and garnish their plates in confusion that they will pass for skilled men.”<sup>111</sup> But *la cuisine moderne* called for far more than just education, and the attributes that had once made for a superb cook hardly guaranteed success in age of *la cuisine moderne*. Menon’s formulation of the new paradigm was so radical, it merits consideration in its entirety:

It is agreed that skilled hands, sound judgment, a delicate palate, and sure and fine taste are the qualities absolutely necessary for a good cook. I daresay these no longer suffice. Whosoever possesses all of these talents in cooking will never be more than a manual laborer guided by routine alone, what in medicine is called an empiric. Servile slave of custom, an artist of this character will neither think of imagining some new dish nor change any practice that he has learned. And if he does, it will be only after several attempts and with much expense that he can hope for any success. But give him knowledge of the qualities of the foods he uses, of the juices with which he desires to make an agreeable mixture, and you will spare him time, labor, and money.<sup>112</sup>

With the advent of *la cuisine moderne*, the cook abandoned the role of fumbling empiric, slave to mere experience. Yet the price of this new power was steep: the guaranteed obsolescence of all formerly adequate skills. Menon minimized even the importance of practical experience in the kitchen, which was now at best a subordinate partner to theory and at worst a waste of time. “Like all other arts, cooking has its rules and principles, and if practice has some advantages, then theory also has others. Only the union of the

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<sup>111</sup> Bonnefons, *Les Délices de la campagne*, 210.

<sup>112</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*, xxv-xxvi.

two can achieve perfection.”<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, Menon tried to make the transition to modern cooking appear simple, and in any case its potentially limitless profits outweighed the risks. One needed only to learn the theoretical qualities to begin to create stunningly novel dishes and practices. Wielding this arsenal of theoretical knowledge, the cook could immediately imagine new and better meals. According to Menon, a cookbook often “furnishes the ideas to invent dishes never before imagined.”<sup>114</sup>

The proposition that cooks could think to create new dishes broke radically with earlier understanding of cooks as mere vehicles for elite taste. In 1691, for example Massialot had suggested that cooks needed to know little other than the replication of elite dishes: “It is necessary to explain the manner of each preparation to them so that then can succeed without difficulty, and this is what we will do in what follows, by hiding nothing of what its most in fashion and in use at the Court, and at other better tables.”<sup>115</sup> But by the 1750s, a completely different understanding of the cook’s role as arbiter of taste held sway: the power of taste had shifted from master to cook. Cooks now knew the “qualities” of the ingredients they employed; they would determine the preparations themselves. In a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, the French cook Pierre Clouet explained the creative powers of the modern cook. Worried that his own French cook was simply making up dishes, the duke had written to Clouet for advice, who responded, “As regards his made-up *entrées* and *entremets*, French *cuisine* has never been anything else but making up.”<sup>116</sup> Because expert knowledge of taste had passed

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<sup>113</sup> Menon, *Les Soupers de la Cour*, vi.

<sup>114</sup> Menon, *Nouveau traité de la cuisine*, vii.

<sup>115</sup> Massialot, *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois*, 88.

<sup>116</sup> Sedgwick, “The Duke of Newcastle’s Cook,” 312. The translation is Sedgwick’s.



from master to the cook, difficulties could easily arise when a cook worked for a master of lesser taste who failed to appreciate his creations: “It is also extremely unfortunate for a cook when his master cannot judge for himself, so that he is all too often judged by critics who have no knowledge.”<sup>117</sup> Taste no longer belonged to the master, and cooks would not need to learn the arcane secrets of each master’s preferences. Instead, *la cuisine moderne* placed taste in the hands of the cook. Cooks, in words of Clouet, “had knowledge” which allowed them to know with certainty whether their dishes conformed to good taste. Their authority now superseded the judgment of others. According to Menon, cooks practicing *la cuisine moderne* followed their own rules, and “The most skilled Artists are sometimes those who least succeed in satisfying the common taste.”<sup>118</sup> By insisting on the primacy of cooks’ knowledge, taste had effectively migrated from master to cook. According to Mercier, “The progress of cuisine is more marked in the kitchens of those who follow their instinct. And the cooks who excel do not dissertate but – tasting the sauce on the tips of their fingers – approve or disapprove.”<sup>119</sup> Cooks now held the knowledge, not their masters.<sup>120</sup>

Cooks promised to share this knowledge within the new discursive space offered by cookbooks. Menon entreated other cooks to participate in the project of *la cuisine moderne* by engaging with its print culture:

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*, vii.

<sup>119</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:313.

<sup>120</sup> A dispute in the 1780s reveals how masters had ceased to be infallible judges of a cook’s success; one Parisian cook openly feuded with his master, reveling instead in the compliments paid by his master’s guests. AN T 254, Pierre Lamireau to Anne Farcy.

Cooks must not put the use of books beneath them. It is well-known that a man who only bases his work on a book could only be a bad cook if he has no foundation of knowledge in his trade [*métier*]. But when he is skilled he is in a condition to judge a work.<sup>121</sup>

Cooks were keenly aware of each others' printed works, and each new cookbook typically commented on its imagined position within the cosmology of existing cookbooks, imagined by one author as the "Library of Cooks."<sup>122</sup> Indeed Marin suggested that his own work superseded Menon's *Nouveau traité de la cuisine*, which had appeared just a few months earlier.<sup>123</sup> The author of *Le Cuisinier gascon* (1740) neatly positioned his own work: "The author of *Les Dons de Comus* is knowledgeable; the *Pâtissier anglois* [an eponymous critique of *la cuisine moderne*] is witty. I pride myself only on taste."<sup>124</sup> There always appeared to be room for another treatise: one cookbook noted that "it is to the public's advantage that several [cooks] work at this art."<sup>125</sup> *La Cuisine et office de santé propre à ceux qui vivent avec économie et régime* (1758) recommended readers of "middling tables" to consult *La Cuisinière bourgeois*; those of "great tables," *Les Soupers de la Cour*.<sup>126</sup> Needless, to say, all were by the same author. By the end of the 1750s, the market had reached saturation, but cookbook authors argued that more work remained to be done: "What! it might be said, another work on

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<sup>121</sup> Menon, *Nouveau traité de la cuisine*, vi.

<sup>122</sup> Marin, *Suite des dons de Comus*, xlvii.

<sup>123</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xxxiii.

<sup>124</sup> [Bourbon], *Le Cuisinier gascon*, "Avis au lecteur".

<sup>125</sup> *Le Cuisinier instruit*, ii.

<sup>126</sup> [Menon], *La Cuisine et office de santé propre à ceux qui vivent avec économie et régime* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1758), 11-12.

cuisine? For several years the public has been inundated with a flood of writings on this topic. I agree, but it is precisely this multiplicity of works that gives birth to this one.”<sup>127</sup>

Through the rising tide of cookbooks and their growing body of technical expertise, cookbook authors imagined that their works would educate a new generation of cooks. According to Menon, both theory and practice “are learned nearly equally in books.”<sup>128</sup> Alain Girard has characterized eighteenth-century cookbooks as “a means for transmitting their experience, the complement of an apprenticeship of word-of-mouth and demonstration.”<sup>129</sup> Cookbooks were not shy about their imagined role in cooks’ training: “Luminaries will guide [the reader] in his attempts. He will even profit from his mistakes.”<sup>130</sup> At the same time, cookbooks promised to bring their authors tangible benefits: Alain Girard has suggested that the publication of cookbooks created a “brand-image” for the elite cooks who wrote them. These cooks also sought to foster a professional community, encouraging others, especially young cooks, to study their precepts.<sup>131</sup> Stephen Mennell suggests, “That was the increasing technical cohesion and social prestige of a professional élite of cooks in the service of members of the upper class, sharing a common repertoire of methods and even of recipes.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Menon, *Le Manuel des officiers de bouche, ou le précis de tous les apprêts qu'on peut faire des alimens pour servir toutes les tables, depuis celles des grands seigneurs jusqu'à celles des bourgeois, suivant l'ordre des saisons et des services: ouvrage très-utile aux maîtres pour ordonner des repas, et aux artistes pour les exécuter* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1759), 3.

<sup>128</sup> Menon, *Les Soupers de la Cour*, vi.

<sup>129</sup> Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 510.

<sup>130</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier*, xxvi.

<sup>131</sup> Girard, "Le Triomphe de *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*," 510.

<sup>132</sup> Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 67.

## 6. Taxonomies of Taste

Though cookbook authors spared few words in the promotion of the ideal of theory, they spent precious little time articulating theory itself. I would suggest that their cookbooks' structures in fact functioned as theoretical models for cooks, since the ordering of each cookbook reveals something of the understood typology of food as well as the cook's place within it. Embedded in each cookbook's form was a system of taste which could vary wildly from one cookbook to another. The variety of form helps to explain the rapid pace of cookbook publication, since each author sought to secure the preeminence of his own classificatory scheme.

It has become something of a commonplace to call the eighteenth century a period of classification, a moniker that cookbooks hardly threaten to dispel.<sup>133</sup> Cooks eagerly joined the effort to catalogue and order the universe; their cookbooks proposed an imaginative variety of systems ranging from temporal to alphabetic to natural. For cooks, however, system-building was not a purely intellectual exercise devoid of practical impact.<sup>134</sup> The classification of food gave meaning to the materials and practices of cooking in an attempt to counter the kitchen's disorder, and both the creation and exercise of these systems empowered cooks.

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<sup>133</sup> Michel Foucault in particular continues to wield immense influence over the notion of the period as obsessed with ordering and over the study in general of classification and order. In a recent study of Enlightenment literature, Julie Candler Hayes has characterized the period as a "preoccupation with systematization, mathematization, and natural order." In the following paragraphs I rely on her distinction between sequential and analytical modes of thought. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), Julie Candler Hayes, *Reading the French Enlightenment: System and Subversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 142.

<sup>134</sup> Vernon Pratt has suggested that the process of ordering itself was largely the goal of eighteenth-century classifiers; according to him, the eighteenth-century obsession with system-building "had no other object" than the articulation of natural order. Vernon Pratt, "System-Building in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Light of Nature: Essays in the History and Philosophy of Science Presented to A.C. Crombie*, ed. J.D. North and J.J. Roche (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1985), 425.

The earliest cookbooks proposed culinary systems that were essentially temporal or cyclical. Seventeenth-century cookbooks used the liturgical calendar or the progression of a meal's courses to prescribe a clearly defined order of dishes. Just as the religious calendar might limit some foods to certain periods, so the idealized progression of services could determine when during a meal a dish could be served. Around 1700 alphabetic ordering eliminated much of the prescriptive quality of earlier cookbooks, implying a new, non-linear understanding of cuisine. With *la cuisine moderne*, an even more ambitious system emerged, proposing a taxonomy of food based on "nature." This synoptic approach gave cooks a powerful model for understanding the relationships among the foods they used.

*Calendars: liturgical and seasonal*

The impact of Christianity and its symbols on the structure of seventeenth-century cookbooks cannot be overstated; it is not by chance that Nicolas de Bonnefons began his *Les Délices de la campagne* with a section devoted exclusively to bread and wine.<sup>135</sup> To comply with the gastronomic prohibitions of the Catholic church, the earliest cookbook authors typically organized their chapters around the liturgical calendar. For example, by dividing his work into three sections, François de la Varenne enabled readers to plan meals based on the church's restrictions on meat consumption. According to La Varenne, he had arranged his work "according to the diverse styles of meals that are made during days of meat, of fish, of Lent, and particularly the day of Good Friday."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Bonnefons, *Les Délices de la campagne*, 1-93.

<sup>136</sup> La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois*, "Amy Lecteur".

His first section covered *gras* meals, which could incorporate any ingredients, including meat. Next La Varenne treated *maigre* foods, which excluded meat but retained eggs. Finally he turned to the dishes that could be consumed during Lent, when even eggs were proscribed. *L'Escole parfaite des officiers de bouche* likewise divided its recipes between *gras* and *maigre*. Although nearly all of these early cookbooks contained some form of alphabetic index at the end, even these indices tended to be segregate *gras* from *maigre* foods: both La Varenne and Bonnefons appended separated indices for both *gras* and *maigre* days.

The financial implications of the division between *gras* and *maigre* days were not inconsequential – fish typically cost far more than meat – but seventeenth-century cookbooks tended to gloss over this detail. Moreover, the distinction was gastronomically rather crude, offering an essentially binary system of dishes riddled with contradictions. Did eggs constitute meat? Was waterfowl to be considered fish? Questions like these plagued theologians and cooks alike. Physicians even weighed in on the issue, since they were frequently consulted in order to substantiate the physiological need for a dispensation.<sup>137</sup> Even within a single household, the proscription of meat could be unevenly followed. Although one mistress ordered her cook to omit all meat from the meals of her servants on *maigre* days, she instructed him to make an exception for her Protestant senior chambermaid, “who is not of your religion.”<sup>138</sup>

Because *gras* and *maigre* days occurred throughout the year, the distinction also failed to account for seasonal variation in the availability and quality of ingredients. To

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<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Philippe Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du carême* (Paris: Frédéric Léonard, 1710), Nicolas Andry, *Traité des alimens de caresme* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1713).

<sup>138</sup> AN T\*451/2 (October 1787).

provide a finer ordering of recipes, Pierre de Lune divided his *Le Nouveau cuisinier* into four seasons of three months each; he began with the “first season” of January, February, and March. Even with these largely arbitrary divisions, de Lune remained sensitive to the importance of particular religious holidays which invariably fell within one or the other of these calendar seasons. L.S.R. pursued a slightly different tack in his *L’Art de bien traiter*. Using major Catholic feasts as points of demarcation, he divided the year into seasons for which he provided appropriate recipes. Both de Lune and L.S.R. proposed meals appropriate during the period from Easter to the feast of St. John, for example.

During the eighteenth century, the distinction between *gras* and *maigre* faded in importance as an organizing principle of cookbooks. As early as 1710, the physician Philippe Hecquet lamented the lack of a *Le Cuisinier catholique* to compete with increasingly secular cookbooks.<sup>139</sup> Like secret knowledge, the liturgical formula was essentially prescriptive; with all foods divided into essentially two categories, cooks wielded only the simplest of cooking systems. *Les Dons de Comus* gave lip service to the distinction in its full title, even if in practice it largely abandoned it. Cookbooks such as *Le Cuisinier moderne* continued to promise to teach the preparation of “all sorts of meals, *en gras et en maigre*” in their titles, but the structure of these cookbooks had moved toward systems that were at once more sophisticated and less overtly religious.<sup>140</sup> Seasonal variety began to invoke the language of nature; L.S.R. promised to reveal what

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<sup>139</sup> Hecquet, *Traité des dispenses du carême*, 1:444. Or perhaps, even better, a *Le Cuisinier janséniste*: Hecquet was of “Jansenist persuasion” and served for five years as the physician at Port Royal. Jan Goldstein, “Moral Contagion: A Professional Ideology of Medicine and Psychiatry in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century France,” in *Professions and French State, 1700-1900*, ed. Gerald L. Geison (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 186.

<sup>140</sup> La Chapelle, *Le Cuisinier moderne*.

one could “naturally serve during the different seasons of the year.”<sup>141</sup> The importance of seasonal variation would become a persistent theme of eighteenth-century cookbooks. Menon prepped a letter code to each recipe heading in his *Manuel des officiers de bouche*, signifying its appropriateness either for spring, summer, fall, winter, or all seasons. Some recipes received more than one code, indicating more extensive seasonality. “Several letters, several seasons,” Menon succinctly concluded.<sup>142</sup> He had reduced to a simple formula the calculus of preparing meals according to the complexity of seasonal variety.

### *Service*

Another way of structuring cookbooks according to time involved focusing on the discrete cycle of the meal. Although apparently unsuited for organizing an entire work, cookbooks during the seventeenth century began to provide supplementary tables organized by service, including sample menus to help cooks determine which dishes could be served in a given course. From this perspective, the order and composition of a meal were at least as important as the production of individual dishes: L.S.R. included numerous menus without even providing their component recipes.<sup>143</sup> Menus remained a fixture of cookbooks throughout the eighteenth century. For example, Menon’s *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier* included nine.<sup>144</sup> Unlike *le service à la russe* which dominates today in France (and elsewhere) in which each diner receives a series of single

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<sup>141</sup> L.S.R., *L’Art de bien traiter*, 2.

<sup>142</sup> Menon, *Le Manuel des officiers de bouche*.

<sup>143</sup> L.S.R., *L’Art de bien traiter*.

<sup>144</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*.



dishes in progression, the eighteenth-century's *le service à la française* involved a multiplicity of dishes covering the table at each service. Menon provides a representative example in his *Traité historique and pratique de la cuisine, ou le cuisinier instruit* (1758). The first service began with hors d'oeuvres or entrées.<sup>145</sup> A course including *potages*, or soups, followed. The second service typically included roasts; usually these consisted of game birds and venison, but during *maigre* periods fish substituted. In either case seasonal salads accompanied the roast. In the third service, diners confronted *entremets*, which could include just about anything: Menon suggested “stews, hams, savory tongues, pâtés, tortes, creams, various sweet pastries, ragoûts, and other similar things.”<sup>146</sup> Dessert comprised the fourth and final service.<sup>147</sup> A more elaborate meal might include the following in order: *potages*, hors-d'oeuvres, entrées, *relevés*, roast, large cold *entremets*, hot and cold small *entremets*, plates of pastry, and finish with dessert.<sup>148</sup> The rare glimpse afforded by Madame de Kerry's written instructions to her cook largely conform to the outlines of the idealized meal depicted by cookbooks. Her “ordinary dinner” included three services: the first consisted of “a good soup” and “two good entrées;” next followed a *relevé*, a lighter dish intended to revive the appetite; the third and final service included two *entremets* and a roast.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> While in the United States “entrée” has come to refer to the main course, in French (and British) usage it retains its original meaning, indicating a dish consumed at the beginning (“entrance”) of the meal.

<sup>146</sup> *Le Cuisinier instruit*, xcvi.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, xcvi-xcvii.

<sup>148</sup> Menon, *Le Manuel des officiers de bouche*, 5-6.

<sup>149</sup> AN T\* 451/2 (October 1787). When Madame de Kerry hosted more elaborate dinners, her servants dined on the leftovers.

## *Alphabetical*

In 1691, Massialot abandoned the tradition of temporal arrangement by writing an essentially alphabetically organized cookbook, with entries ranging if not all the way from A to Z at least from *abattis* to *vive*.<sup>150</sup> Although like his predecessors he included an alphabetic list of dishes, Massialot hardly needed one, since the alphabetic arrangement of his recipes largely obviated the need for an index. Massialot's use of this essentially arbitrary system presaged the growing interest in alphabetical ordering associated primarily with the mid-eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie*.<sup>151</sup> His alphabetic taxonomy furthermore informed the design of a slew of eighteenth-century imitators; these dictionaries of cuisine claimed to serve the cook as convenient reference guides.

Three such dictionaries of the kitchen appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century. The *Dictionnaire des alimens* (1750) promised that the reader would find “under each of the letters of this dictionary the manner of preparing different dishes.”<sup>152</sup> The *Dictionnaire domestique portatif* (1762) folded kitchen knowledge into a three-volume treatise encompassing agriculture and animal husbandry, including such esoteric topics as bee-keeping and silk production. Despite the heterogeneous contents, the author hewed relentlessly to a strict alphabetic arrangement.<sup>153</sup> Alphabetic order's accessibility was the key to its utility, according to the *Dictionnaire portatif de cuisine, d'office et de distillation* (1767); “Its usage is simple; it is that used in all dictionaries, whose

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<sup>150</sup> Or in English, from “giblets” to “weever.” Massialot, *Le Cuisinier royal et bourgeois*.

<sup>151</sup> See, for example, Hugh M. Davidson, “The Problem of Scientific Order versus Alphabetical Order in the *Encyclopédie*,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 2 (1972).

<sup>152</sup> M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens*, xxviii.

<sup>153</sup> Not all dictionaries of cuisine were equally well-alphabetized. The *Dictionnaire portatif de cuisine, d'office et de distillation* (1767) frequently misordered entries, for example placing *porc* between *poitrine* and *poivrade*. *Huitres* after *vive* in *Cuisine et office de santé* (1758).

alphabetic order comprises the entire method.”<sup>154</sup> Even so, the author hazarded an attempt at explaining the dictionary’s usage: “For example, under the word ‘beef,’ you will find the definition of this animal, its usage in the kitchen, and for the different parts of this animal the diverse preparations for which they can be used.”<sup>155</sup> Such an alphabetic arrangement served both experienced cooks and neophytes:

If a work, which, by means of the name alone of a food, presents the various preparations in which it can be used, can only be a very great utility to even the man most consumed with his art; because memory cannot always be lively enough to recall clearly techniques, which demand however to be seen in the most comprehensive detail: how will it not be even more so to those who haven’t the tiniest notion?<sup>156</sup>

This particular dictionary freely acknowledged that it had borrowed its contents from elsewhere, but remained confident in the utility of alphabetic organization: “If this work resembles in this many others we currently have, it will have the particular merit of requiring no sort of work for the research of its contents.”<sup>157</sup> One author suggested that dictionary form allowed for a more concise work since it alleviated the need for a table of contents in a book that was “already too fat.”<sup>158</sup> Moreover, “a dictionary had no need for one, being able to find easily those [dishes] one can use.”<sup>159</sup> Alphabetic ordering played at least a supporting role in most other cookbooks, since even those which eschewed dictionary form often provided an alphabetical index of dishes. Menon’s *Manuel des*

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<sup>154</sup> *Dictionnaire portatif de cuisine, d’office et de distillation, contenant la maniere de préparer toutes sortes de viandes, de volailles, de gibier, de poissons, de légumes, de fruits, etc. La façon de faire toutes sortes de gelées, de pâtes, de pastilles, de gâteaux, de tourtes, de pâtés, vermicel, macaronis, etc. Et de composer toutes sortes de liqueurs, de ratafias, de syrops, de glaces, d’essences, etc.*, (Paris: Vincent, 1767), vi.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., vi. Such plagiarism was hardly atypical. Even *Le Cuisinier moderne* borrowed liberally from Massialot’s *Le Cuisinier roïal et bourgeois*. Mennell, *All Manners of Food*, 77.

<sup>158</sup> M.C.D., *Dictionnaire des alimens*, xxviii.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

*officiers de bouche*, for example, concluded with an alphabetical index which included “remarks for every food and explanations of several terms of the art.”<sup>160</sup>

Alphabetical cookbooks broke with temporally oriented works by mixing ingredients and dishes which in practice occupied distinct times: *gras* and *maigre* ingredients, ranging from hors-d’oeuvres to desserts, appeared in an undifferentiated continuum. Far from prescriptive, these cookbooks provided the reader with precious little idea of how a meal ought to be organized. Cooks instead needed to rely on their own imagination and experience to distill the information of such cookbooks into meals.

### *Natural*

During the 1730s, a new model of cuisine emerged that proposed an organic system of interrelationships among foods. Like culinary dictionaries, cookbooks that promoted these taxonomies were essentially non-linear, ordering food into discrete and infinitely combinable components. At the same time, they provided a system for understanding and exploiting the interrelationships among foods. *Les Dons de Comus* offers one of the earliest and most comprehensive examples of a cookbook ordered according to nature, and it is this ordering that is perhaps most familiar to today’s readers. Its distinctly recognizable form has led Bertrand Guégan to describe *Les Dons de Comus* as “the first complete and methodical cookbook” aimed at a broad audience.<sup>161</sup> Marin gave considerable thought to the structure of his work and patiently articulated to his readers his cookbook’s organizational strategy:

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<sup>160</sup> Menon, *Le Manuel des officiers de bouche*, 576-618.

<sup>161</sup> Bertrand Guégan, *Le Cuisinier français, ou les meilleurs recettes d’autrefois et d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Befond, 1980), LXXIV.

To return to my work: after a list of fat and lean soups, I describe the anatomy of heavy or butcher meat. I indicate the different uses that one can make of them in the kitchen, and their varying degrees of goodness. This section includes the history of beef, veal, mutton, and lamb, which I do not separate from mutton. The pig, which is such a great resource, follows naturally, and comprises the subject of a special article. After this, I move on to poultry, and then to venison and game, and I follow the same methods as with butcher meat. Ocean fish and freshwater fish, vegetables, and herbs make up separate articles, and finish the first part of my book.<sup>162</sup>

Marin described his ordering as following the rules of the natural world; pork “naturally” followed other butcher meats. In the same spirit, he pointed to his decision not to separate lamb from mutton. Other cookbook authors frequently discussed young and old sheep separately and likewise divided veal from beef.<sup>163</sup> The language of a rationalized nature extends far beyond the book’s preface, pervading the entire text of *Les Dons de Comus*. Marin claimed that “natural order dictates” that fowl follow butcher’s meat. He discussed the “orders” and “classes” of domestic and wild animals.<sup>164</sup> After covering the various forms of meat, he asserted that “order demands” a discussion of fish. Likewise, “Vegetables and roots naturally must follow after eggs.”<sup>165</sup> Menon proposed that the similar natural order adopted in his own cookbook would encourage its readers’ creativity. “By reading this book it will be easy to profit from my ideas and to imagine an infinity of dishes to serve as either hors-d’oeuvres, side dishes, entrées, or *entremets*.”<sup>166</sup> By demonstrating the stocks and sauces that could be used for any number

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<sup>162</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xxix.

<sup>163</sup> For example in Menon’s *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*, the order goes beef, mutton, veal, pork, lamb. Menon, *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*.

<sup>164</sup> Butcher’s meat and fowl comprise the first and second orders of domestic animals respectively. Venison (which included boar as well as deer) formed the first class of wild animals, while game constituted the second.

<sup>165</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, 59, 77.

<sup>166</sup> *Le Cuisinier instruit*, v.

of dishes and courses, he would teach his readers “what is essential to be a good cook.”<sup>167</sup> The taxonomy of nature imposed order on taste, but simultaneously freed cooks to work with the component parts of cuisine. Menon credited the “wisdom and fecundity of nature” with the variety of sensory and physiological experiences of dining. Small wonder that like Marin, he sought to organize his cookbook along similar natural lines.<sup>168</sup>

Prior to 1740, the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* defined “*la cuisine*” primarily as the “location of the house where meats are prepared and cooked.” Under this definition the dictionary had added the expression *faire la cuisine*, meaning “to prepare [food] to eat.”<sup>169</sup> But in 1740, the dictionary offered a secondary definition for “*la cuisine*”: “Also signifies the art of preparing meats and of cooking.” This revision was significant for two reasons. First, “*cuisine*” itself now directly signified cooking without any modification. Second, cooking was described as an “art” not simply an action. The examples given under this secondary definition are even more telling: “He learns cooking. He knows cooking well.”<sup>170</sup> Cooking had gone from something one did to something one knew.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., v-vi.

<sup>168</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier*, iv.

<sup>169</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1694)*, s.v. “Cuisine”, *Le Nouveau dictionnaire de l'Académie française, dédié au Roy*, 2 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1718), s.v. “Cuisine”.

<sup>170</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 3 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1740), s.v. “Cuisine.”

## Chapter 6. Health and Medicine

[...]la science de faire la Cuisine est la servante de la Medecine. COQUINA MEDICINAE  
FAMULATRIX EST.

Menon, *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier*

Ten years after the publication of *Les Dons de Comus*, Menon declared in 1749 that “the science of cooking is the servant of medicine.”<sup>1</sup> Along with other cookbook authors, Menon thus increasingly focused *la cuisine moderne* on health. By theorizing the act of cooking, cooks explicitly emulated the path chosen by surgeons, who during the mid-eighteenth century had embarked on their own project to fuse empirical practice with medical theory. This emulation was more than simply skin-deep: in addition to adopting doctors’ print practices and claims to theoretical knowledge, *la cuisine moderne* mobilized the language of refinement and chemistry in order to reformulate cooking as a medical science. By exploiting this knowledge of chemistry, cooks claimed that they could influence the body’s physiology: they specifically targeted the functions of taste and digestion. In a tribute to surgery, cooks rechristened the carving of meats as “dissection” and thus explicitly identified cooking with anatomy. Although cooks did succeed in portraying their work as a science, they ultimately failed to establish themselves as medical practitioners. Instead their efforts encountered significant

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<sup>1</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier, avec des observations sur la connoissance et propriétés des alimens* (Paris: Paulus-du-Mesnil, 1749), xxviii.

resistance, especially from doctors who accused cooks of dabbling in a science they could not control.

### 1. The Case of Surgeons

Print served as the essential medium for legitimating cooks' new knowledge, and indeed the very practices of authoring and reading were seen as a means to recast the occupation in the image of the liberal professions. According to Menon, by the 1750s only bad cooks "affect[ed] to scorn the works proper to instruct them." Such cooks "would blush to be caught reading a book discussing their art." Cooks now needed to read to remain current in their field, and Menon sought to associate this practice with elite occupations, asking his fellow cooks, "Does one see a doctor, lawyer, or architect blush to read books concerning his profession?"<sup>2</sup> Menon could thus have hardly been more explicit in his linking of cooking to the liberal professions.<sup>3</sup> Yet unlike doctors, lawyers, or architects – or for that matter seamstresses and tanners – cooks lacked normalizing or certifying institutions like guilds or faculties. In their absence, cookbooks assumed even greater importance, providing a medium for the transmission of expertise and staking the claims of an emerging community of expert cooks.

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<sup>2</sup> Menon, *Les Soupers de la Cour, ou l'art de travailler toutes sortes d'aliments, pour servir les meilleures tables, suivant les quatre saisons*, 2 vols. (Paris: Guillyn, 1755; reprint, Paris: Librairie SOETE, 1978), v-vi.

<sup>3</sup> L.S.R. used the term "profession" to describe the occupation as early as 1674, but without the same attempt to advance the status of cooking. L.S.R., *L'Art de bien traiter, divisé en trois parties. Ouvrage nouveau, curieux, et fort galant, utile à toutes personnes, et conditions*. (Paris: Jean du Puis, 1674), 4. For an account of the appeal of such liberal professions, see Christine Adams, *A Taste for Comfort and Status: A Bourgeois Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), especially chapters 4 and 5.



By arrogating to themselves a new theoretical knowledge, cooks pursued a strategy remarkably similar to that adopted concurrently by surgeons. According to Toby Gelfand, the royal physician François Quesnay “expressed pride in the fact that surgery demanded both intellectual ability and manual skill.” Surgeons claimed that by embracing the use of the mind and the hands, they practiced a “worthy art” like geometers, architects, sculptors, painters, and chemists.<sup>4</sup> Like cooks, surgeons pursued a larger project aimed at fusing existing empirical skills with theoretical knowledge. Historians have debated whether such an effort ought to be described as “professionalization” and moreover whether physicians in contrast to surgeons failed to innovate.<sup>5</sup> According to Thomas Broman, for example, “professions” are at the most basic level nothing more than “occupations that claim to join theory and practice.”<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of comparison with cooks, however, if surgeons really embarked on a “professionalizing” project or if physicians in fact lacked all innovation is really beside the point. What is beyond dispute is that surgeons *portrayed* themselves as combining theory and practice, which they *claimed* physicians had not yet done. Cooks adopted the same strategy. The fact that surgeons and cooks made the same sorts of claims around

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<sup>4</sup> Toby Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine: Paris Surgeons and Medical Science and Institutions in the 18th Century* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 74-75.

<sup>5</sup> Brockliss and Jones take the position that terms like “professionalization” introduce more problems than they resolve. L. W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 32-33. For the most nuanced defense of the term “professionalization,” see Matthew Ramsey, *Professional and Popular Medicine in France, 1770-1830: The Social World of Medical Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3-4. Gelfand oddly argues against the use of calling surgery a “profession” in its “modern sense” but goes on largely to promote the concept. Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine*, 3. On physicians and innovation, see Colin Jones, “Professionalizing Modern Medicine’ in French Hospitals,” *Medical History* 26 (1982), Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Broman, “Rethinking Professionalization: Theory, Practice, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century German Medicine,” *The Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (1995), 836.

roughly the same time suggests broad appeal of theoretical knowledge. For both groups, asserting intellectual mastery of empirical practices validated their expertise.

Though intellectually cooks may have broadly proposed the same strategy as surgeons, the circumstances of domestic service forced decidedly different tactics. Cookbooks comprised essentially the only means of formalizing and transmitting cooks' new expertise. Surgeons, in contrast, had a guild through which they could appeal to the king for support. In 1743, for example, surgeons succeeded in securing a royal declaration requiring that they receive a master of arts degree. Physicians had long used Latin, and with the requirement that surgeons pursue a liberal education necessarily came the need to learn Latin as well.<sup>7</sup> Facility with Latin (and even Greek) was considered essential to the practice of medicine.<sup>8</sup> During the first quarter of the eighteenth century, physicians had cited surgeons' ignorance of Latin as proof of their inability to analyze illnesses from a theoretical or intellectual perspective.<sup>9</sup> One physician noted that at best surgeons possessed only a poor command of Latin.<sup>10</sup> Even for those operating decidedly outside the liberal occupations of medicine, law, and theology, the Latin language served something of a totemic function. In his treatise on fountains and the insalubrity of Parisian water, the engineer Joseph Amy reproduced his text side by side in both Latin and French.<sup>11</sup> Even more audacious, in his defense on domestic service Jacques Viollet

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<sup>7</sup> Gelfand, *Professionalizing Modern Medicine*, 67, 77.

<sup>8</sup> Paul-Augustin-Olivier Mahon, *Avis aux grands et aux riches, sur la manière dont ils doivent se conduire dans leurs maladies*. Par M\*\*\* Docteur en Médecine (Paris: Ph. D. Pierres, 1772), 19.

<sup>9</sup> Kathleen Anne Wellman, *La Mettrie: Medicine, Philosophy, and Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Amy, *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l'Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750).

de Wagon proposed a stamped medal for domestic servants with “Latin on one side and French on the other.”<sup>12</sup> Thus if facility with Latin signaled intellectual capacity, cooks’ claims to theorize cuisine rang hollow. Indeed, contemporary dictionaries even defined the epithet “kitchen Latin” as a “very nasty Latin,” suggesting that in the mouths of cooks, any such intellectual pretensions degenerated into barbarism.<sup>13</sup> In such a seemingly inappropriate context, knowledge of Latin could be downright hilarious: Rabelais, for example, had his Gargantua learn Latin to comic effect.

## 2. Dining and the Body

Cooks based their claims to expertise in the context of the perceived relationship between dining and the body. According to Jean-François Revel, such a connection was not particularly new. Revel suggests that some degree of overlap between medicine and dining had nearly always existed, pointing to the conflation of cookbooks and medical treatises in ancient Greece as one of his earliest examples.<sup>14</sup> According to Londa Schiebinger, “From ancient times until well in the eighteenth century, the art of cooking was an essential part of medicine.”<sup>15</sup> Daniel Roche notes that the Salerno School’s medical aphorisms regarding dining were published in 240 editions between 1474 and

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<sup>12</sup> Jacques Viollot de Wagon, *L’Auteur laquais, ou réponse aux objections qui ont été faites au corps de ce nom, sur la vie de Jacques Cochois, dit Jasmin* (Avignon: Girard, 1750), 137. Viollot de Wagon proposed that the inscription read “Constantia meret haeredem” along with the year on the obverse and “Chevalier de l’Ordre de la Constance” on the reverse, both in gold lettering.

<sup>13</sup> For “latin de cuisine” (“fort meschant Latin”), see *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, dédié au Roy*, 1 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694), s.v. “Latin.” With the dictionary’s second (1718) and subsequent editions, this phrase migrated to the entry for “Cuisine” suggesting that the term said more about kitchens than it did about Latin.

<sup>14</sup> Jean François Revel, *Culture and Cuisine: A Journey Through the History of Food*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1982), 118.

<sup>15</sup> Londa L. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 112.

1846.<sup>16</sup> Yet despite this long relationship, Schiebinger argues that medical cookery was only the “poor cousin” of other medical fields which in contrast enjoyed greater prestige.<sup>17</sup>

Although perhaps medicine’s poor cousin, medical cookery in France received a significant boost in 1596 with the appearance of Baldassare Pisanelli’s work on dietetics. The Bolognese physician depicted dining as a “continuous transmutation of eating and drinking” required to sustain the human body.<sup>18</sup> Deprived of proper foods, the body would simply consume itself like a lamp running dry: “without oil, the entire wick burns.”<sup>19</sup> Yet not all food was equal to the task, and different fuels served different needs. Pisanelli thus categorized food ingredients according to a number of variables, including their virtues and vices. Figs, for example, were “hot in the first degree and humid in the second.”<sup>20</sup> Veal was “temperate in all its qualities.”<sup>21</sup> Pisanelli moreover extended his model beyond simple component ingredients to include composite foods. Take, for example, the entry for sauce:

Sauce

Election: Made with odiferous herbs like thyme, mint, basil, rose vinegar, some cloves, toasted bread, and a bit of garlic if one likes.

Virtues: Marvelously wakes the appetite and makes one eat with desire, makes one digest meat well, and cuts the stomach’s phlegm.

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<sup>16</sup> Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, trans. Brian Pierce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 247.

<sup>17</sup> Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?*, 113.

<sup>18</sup> Baldassare Pisanelli, *Traité de la nature des viandes et du boire, avec leurs vertus, vices, remèdes et histoires naturelles, utile et délectables à quiconque désire vivre en santé*, trans. Antoine de Povillon (St. Omer: Charles Boscart, 1620).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., "Préface."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 97.

Vices: Harms the feverish and those with a hot stomach, principally if eaten in great quantity.

Remedy: Mixed with a good amount of verjuice or with green grape or bitter orange juice, and eat good meats with it an afterward.

Degrees: Is more or less hot according to the nature of the herbs used.

Temperament, age, complexion: Has been found to wake the appetite of ardent temperaments, for all ages and complexions and especially for the young.

Natural history: Sauce is a green flavor in great usage in all countries and is eaten with meat to render it more agreeable to the taste. During the summer principally when appetite is lost, it seems to be extremely useful. It is made in a thousand ways, but Virgil says: *Allia serpillumque, herbas contundit olentes*. It seems that he approves that it is for the best. No one uses the mustard of *mustun ardens*, which is good only for cold temperaments. Even more used are the sauces made of grapes, cherries, peppers, and other sauces according to people's diverse tastes and according to the season. The Italians say like the Spanish: *Salsa*.<sup>22</sup>

Pisanelli's system exerted a profound influence that persisted through the eighteenth century. Based on his model French physicians proposed increasingly refined models of the interaction between alimentary consumption and health. In his own treatise on the medical properties of food, the physician Louis Lémery paid homage to Pisanelli, arguing that food replenished the "continuous dissipation" of the human body's "own substance."<sup>23</sup> As late as 1790, Pisanelli's explanation of dining remained nearly unchanged, with the physician Jourdan Lecointe claiming that "[t]he continual losses of the human body can only be healthfully replenished by daily offering the juices the most analogous to its perfect constitution, which by their nature are the most proper to feed and fortify it."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 186-188.

<sup>23</sup> Louis Lémery, *Traité des aliments* (Paris: J.B. Cusson and P. Witte, 1702), "Préface." Lémery acknowledged that "Pisanelli in his *Traité des aliments* kept nearly the same ordering, and it is from him that I have borrowed it."

<sup>24</sup> Jourdan Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé, ou moyens faciles et économiques de préparer toutes nos Productions Alimentaires de la manière la plus délicate et la plus sanitaire d'après les nouvelles découvertes de la cuisine Française et Italienne*, 3 vols. (Paris: Briand, 1790), 28-29.

Though satisfied with his characterization of physiological replenishment, French physicians did not share Pisanelli's essentially agnostic attitude toward foods. According to Lémery, the same alimentary properties that nourished the body could potentially destroy it: "if food contributes so necessarily to the conservation of our health and life, it also produces the majority of the illnesses to which we are exposed, and it often causes death by the poor use we make of it."<sup>25</sup> During the same period cookbooks adopted an increasingly defensive posture in response to such growing criticism for their cooks' perceived role in undermining health. In 1652, for example, *Le Cuisinier françois* promised recipes that could "conserve and maintain the good state of health."<sup>26</sup> François Massialot's *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois* (1691) argued that though "all these dishes could contribute to the corruption of the body [...] they also serve to sustain it."<sup>27</sup> But despite these protests of innocence, cooks could not seize control of the debate, since they lacked the tools to challenge doctors' authority.

Beginning in the 1730s, however, cooks began to contest physicians' domination of the discourse of food and health. They rapidly appropriated the dietetic systems devised by physicians, creating their own tables and dictionaries of alimentary properties along with sophisticated taxonomies of cuisine. But *la cuisine moderne* imagined more than just the recapitulation of existing medical wisdom. By redefining cooking as a

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<sup>25</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface."

<sup>26</sup> François-Pierre de La Varenne, *Le Cuisinier françois, enseignant la maniere de bien apprester, et assaisonner toutes sortes de viandes, grasses et maigres, legumes, Patisseries, etc. Reveu, corrigé, et augmenté d'un traité de confitures seiches et liquides, et autres delicatesses de bouche. Ensemble d'une table alphabetique des matieres qui sont traitées dans tout le livre.* (Paris: Pierre David, 1652), "Le Libraire au Lecteur."

<sup>27</sup> François Massialot, *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois, qui apprend à ordonner toute sorte de repas, et la meilleure manière des ragoûts les plus à la mode et les plus exquis. Ouvrage très-utile dans les familles, et singulièrement nécessaire à tous maîtres d'hôtels, et ecuiers de cuisine.* (Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1691).

largely scientific endeavor, cooks could claim to facilitate or even modify the chemical processes of the human body. In particular they focused their energies on the two physiological functions understood to regulate the body's needs: taste and digestion.

### 3. Taste

Just as in today's English language, "taste" in eighteenth-century France carried both figurative and physical meanings. On the one hand, it explicitly referred to the sensory function of detecting flavor. Through the organs of the tongue, throat, and even stomach, flavors could supposedly penetrate into the body. On the other hand, "taste" signified a level of "discernment," "finesse of judgment," and "sensibility."<sup>28</sup> According to the *Encyclopédie*, this metaphorical sense of taste existed "in all known languages."<sup>29</sup> Yet unlike today's understanding of taste, during the eighteenth century, the physical sense of taste was decidedly medicalized. Physicians argued that a diner's taste preferences tended to reflect the body's present physiological needs. According to Louis Lémery, appetite "contributes to health" because it led diners "to seek the foods [they] need."<sup>30</sup> Appetite functioned by making the right foods taste good at the right moment, a widely recognized process that Mercier acknowledged as a commonplace: "It is ceaselessly repeated to us in verse and in prose that appetite is the most perfect cook."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1694)*, s.v. "Goust."

<sup>29</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1772), s.v. "Goût."

<sup>30</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface."

<sup>31</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 11:230.

Cooks agreed on this function and lauded its inherent design, with Menon writing “the sense of taste is a gift [nature] has made for us.”<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately, a diner’s sense of taste could malfunction, leading him or her to consume the wrong foods. According to the physician Nicolas Andry, “tastes vary, and it is ordinarily by taste rather than by principles that we judge the good and bad qualities of a food in the world. Each claims that what he likes the best is the most healthful, and thus arrives this variety of opinions on the nature of each food.”<sup>33</sup> Abandoning potentially fickle taste, Andry argued that doctors followed “more reliable rules.” Because in principle taste ought to have compelled diners to eat well, explaining disgust for otherwise salubrious foods constituted one of the great puzzles of contemporary medicine. Lémery claimed that in some cases a bad experience with a poorly prepared meal might have left “traces in the brain” which reminded diners “with violence” of the offending meal.<sup>34</sup> In other extreme situations, people were driven to eat things wholly inappropriate for consumption like charcoal, plaster, and soil.<sup>35</sup> Because the appetite did not always function properly, doctors admitted that in some situations appetite needed to be stimulated or dampened. Yet cooks were not trusted with such manipulations. George Cheyne suggested that “a doctor can attempt something to revive taste which has been lost as a result of sickness.”<sup>36</sup> The abbé Collet warned cooks tending to sick people that

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<sup>32</sup> [Menon], *La Cuisine et office de santé propre à ceux qui vivent avec économie et régime* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1758), 8.

<sup>33</sup> Nicolas Andry, *Traité des alimens de caresme* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1713), "Avertissement."

<sup>34</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface."

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* Lémery blamed the “retention of menstrual humors” for the majority of such cases.

<sup>36</sup> George Cheyne, *L'Art de conserver la santé des personnes valétudinaires et de leur prolonger la vie, traduite du latin de M. Cheyne, avec des remarques intéressantes* (Paris: Laurent-Charles D'Houry, fils, 1755), 86.



“in trying to wake their appetite, they must not exceed the regime prescribed by the doctor.”<sup>37</sup>

Although doctors were quite sure of what taste did, the diversity of the terminology used to describe taste’s sensory organs suggests considerable uncertainty about exactly how it functioned. In some cases, medical texts used generic terms like “fibrils” or “nervous tufts” to refer to the tongue’s points of sensation.<sup>38</sup> In other cases, they proposed more specific words like *mamelon* and *papille*. *Mamelon* could mean either “nipple” or the “small, very delicate, and glandular parts raised above the skin, on the tongue, which some philosophers believe to serve sensation.”<sup>39</sup> Though *papille* eventually replaced *mamelon* as the preferred term in dictionaries, it retained the original analogy: “certain protrusions resembling nipples spread over the surface of the body and particularly on the tongue.”<sup>40</sup> In part, the confusion stemmed from the tongue’s intricate anatomy. The *Encyclopédie*’s article on taste explained that three entirely different structures covered the tongue. The two that resembled pyramids and mushrooms, it claimed, had nothing to do with taste. Because they were “pierced with holes,” only the *mamelons* could convey flavors into the body.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Pierre Collet, *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques* (Paris: Debure l'aîné, Herissant, Herissant, Tilliard, 1758), 309.

<sup>38</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface.", Leconte, *La Cuisine de santé*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1694)*, s.v. "Mamelon."

<sup>40</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 6 ed. (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1835), s.v. "Papille."

<sup>41</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Goût."

Perhaps because of the uncertainty surrounding the operation of taste, doctors in general tended to avoid prescribing specific diets.<sup>42</sup> Pisanelli had suggested that “The variety of complexions, ages, regions, and seasons requires that [a diet] be administered diversely,” and most physicians heeded his advice.<sup>43</sup> But by abdicating this role, physicians left open the opportunity for cooks to use taste to control diet. According to Mercier, *la cuisine moderne* had already improved diet: “The interest of health is no longer separated from good taste, which has proscribed those burning juices and all those caustic dishes of *l’ancienne cuisine*.”<sup>44</sup> Cooks practicing *la cuisine moderne* further exploited uncertainty about taste by eagerly appropriating its anatomical jargon. Menon, for example, analyzed the effect of overly strong flavors on the “*papilles*” and the “fibers” of the tongue.<sup>45</sup> By exploiting their nearly exclusive access to one of the body’s sensory organs, cooks proposed to influence metaphysical taste as well. Stimulating the anatomy of the tongue was tantamount to stimulating the spirit:

Bodily taste and spiritual taste depend equally on the configuration of the fibers and organs destined to produce their diverse sensations. The acuteness of these two sorts of tastes assuredly proves the acuteness of the organs which correspond to them, and consequently one can, it seems to me, ascend from bodily taste to a very delicate principle which is shared in some way with purely spiritual taste.<sup>46</sup>

The cookbook *Les Dons de Comus* argued that cooks could affect both the tongue and the mind at the same time. Commentators like Mercier delighted in the interest taken by

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<sup>42</sup> One notable exception was Tissot’s recommended diet for men of letters. Samuel-Auguste-André-David Tissot, *De la santé des gens de lettres* (Paris: François Didot, 1768), 25-26, 151-176. Among his more timeless observations was the assertion that thinking too much ruins digestion.

<sup>43</sup> Pisanelli, *Traité de la nature des viandes et du boire*, “Préface.”

<sup>44</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:315.

<sup>45</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*, viii-ix.

<sup>46</sup> François Marin, *Les Dons de Comus, ou les délices de la table. Ouvrage non-seulement utile aux Officiers de Bouche pour ce qui concerne leur art, mais principalement à l’usage des personnes qui sont curieuses de sçavoir donner à manger, et d’être servies délicatement, tant en gras qu’en maigre, suivant les saisons, et dans le goût le plus nouveau* (Paris: Prault, fils, 1739), xxvi-xxvii.

cooks in the tongue's anatomy. He praised cooks practicing *la cuisine moderne*, who would “interrogate every nervous fiber and all the hidden marvels of a profound taste will appear by [their] address.”<sup>47</sup> He claimed that the best cooks exercised a taste “capable of seizing all the nuances of the nervous *papilles*.”<sup>48</sup>

According to one account of the origins of *la cuisine moderne*, one of its founders “had wise, simple, and finished taste.”<sup>49</sup> But if taste was essential to the practice of cooking, its origins remained at best muddy. Some contended that taste was essentially innate. The physician Lecointe argued that cooks could never fully imitate the taste that came only with good breeding. He claimed that “ladies of distinction” and “gentlemen” could, guided by their taste alone, cook more successfully than cooks.<sup>50</sup> Mercier, in contrast, suggested that taste could be imitated, counseling each cook to undertake “an assiduous study of his master’s taste, whose palate should become his own.”<sup>51</sup> He contended that taste could be improved through experience, decrying the “novice palate” that had not yet experienced *la cuisine moderne*.<sup>52</sup> Whatever the case, all now agreed on the inextricable link between taste and health. François Marin claimed that his bouillon recipe’s simplicity ensured its superiority “for taste and for health.”<sup>53</sup> Lecointe proposed

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<sup>47</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:318.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:316.

<sup>49</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens dont le but est la santé, l'économie et la perfection de la théorie. A l'usage des maîtresses de maison qui ne dédaignent pas de descendre jusqu'au détail de leur ménage, soit à la ville, soit à la campagne.*, (Paris, London: Onfroy, 1782), 6.

<sup>50</sup> Jourdan Lecointe, *La Pâtisserie de santé, ou moyens faciles et économiques de préparer tous les genres de pâtisseries de la manière la plus délicate et la plus salubre.* (Paris: Briand, 1792), 19.

<sup>51</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:312.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:318-319.

<sup>53</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, 152.

formulating cooking “by taste and by reason of health.”<sup>54</sup> Mercier concurred that cuisine should be subordinated to the masters’ taste and health.<sup>55</sup>

Cooks thus practiced a balancing act: *la cuisine moderne* would appease taste without altering it. One cookbook claimed that readers would find inside nothing but “natural and simple dishes, commendable by their salubrity, which innocently flatter taste, rouse the appetite without irritating it, and whose benign flavor renders the organs joyous without altering health.”<sup>56</sup> Using physiological terminology, Menon claimed that he could assemble a package of flavors uniquely suited to each diner. For someone with a dull palate, for example, he suggested “a dominant salt in proportion to the collapse of their organ’s fibers and an acidic and corrosive juice which by altering the tissue will make it felt.”<sup>57</sup> For the delicate and sensitive diner, he would compose a “harmony of flavors,” catering to the tongue the way a musician would try to please the ear.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the distillation manual *La Chimie du goût et de l’odorat* proposed an order of flavors analogous to the musical scale: “seven full notes comprise the fundamental base of sound Music; the same number of basic flavors comprise the base of taste Music.”<sup>59</sup> But if cooks could play the tongue like a musical instrument, how did that affect the body’s own sense of what it ought to consume? If foods were made to taste good, did their disagreeable properties remain unchanged? For example, Menon admitted that capers

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<sup>54</sup> Lecoite, *La Cuisine de santé*, 23.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>56</sup> [Menon], *La Cuisine et office de santé*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*, ix.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vi-viii.

<sup>59</sup> *Chimie du goût et de l’odorat*, (Paris: P.G. Le Mercier, 1755), xix.

“naturally have a bit of a disagreeable taste,” but that it could be eliminated by preparing them with salt and vinegar.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4. Digestion

If the sense of taste thus acted as the gatekeeper to what entered diners’ mouths, then digestion determined what permeated into their bodies by breaking down foods into their component parts. To explain this process, doctors had essentially always relied on cooking to furnish a model. One historian explains, “For a long time, the stomach was thought of as sort of a pot that, boiling with internal heat, cooked the substances one had ingested.”<sup>61</sup> According to the *Encyclopédie*, such an explanation owed its origins to Hippocrates, but it continued to resonate during the eighteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Physicians frequently described the process of digestion as *coction*, a word which in fact could signify either “cooking” or “digestion.”<sup>63</sup> Heated by the body and its organs, food broke down into its component parts, allowing nutrients to pass into the bloodstream. Although new theories (especially of the chemical variety) began to dominate explanations of digestion, the notion of *coction* by no means disappeared. In his *Traité des aliments*, Louis Lémery described *coction* as the “preparation of foods” undertaken by the cook, involving seasoning, frying, roasting, or boiling.<sup>64</sup> He also noted that the wrong foods could interrupt the *coction* of the stomach, whose operation he proceeded to detail.

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<sup>60</sup> [Menon], *La Cuisine et office de santé*, 81.

<sup>61</sup> Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, 247.

<sup>62</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Digestion."

<sup>63</sup> The word derives from the Latin “coctio,” which also holds the same dual sense.

<sup>64</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface."

Writing near the end of the century, the physician Jourdan Lecoite described *coction* primarily as cooking, but referred to undigested food as “raw.”<sup>65</sup> Mercier on the other hand preferred the digestive sense of the word when he suggested that *la cuisine moderne*’s delicacy prepared foods for a “laudable *coction*” without the “crude parts” that would otherwise “fatigue the stomach.”<sup>66</sup> One description of the usage of preserved foods noted that specialized *coction* – here cooking – would “render them more digestible.”<sup>67</sup> Thus the connection between the two senses of *coction* as both cooking and digestion could hardly have been more explicit.

Virtually every explanatory scheme for digestion retained the metaphor of cooking. In 1710, Raymond Vieussens, physician and member of the Académie royale des sciences, published an article declaring digestion to be essentially a process of fermentation. According to Vieussens, the stomach “cooks [food] through the action of its own yeast.” In response to a competing mechanical theory Vieussens responded that “the stomach would not know how to act on its own nor by its neighboring parts how to be able to grind and reduce into a form of *broth* the foods that it receives in its cavity.”<sup>68</sup> A number of other contemporary explanations competed with the chemical and mechanical models: that the stomach’s heat or pressure broke down foods; that a sort of crushing and rotting action dissolved them; or even that foods simply digested

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<sup>65</sup> Lecoite, *La Cuisine de santé*, 17, 32-33, 39.

<sup>66</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:312.

<sup>67</sup> Philippe Macquer, *Dictionnaire raisonné universel des arts et métiers* (Paris: P. Fr. Didot jeune, 1773), 593.

<sup>68</sup> Philippe Hecquet, *De la digestion des alimens, pour montrer qu’elle ne se fait pas par le moyen d’un levain, mais par celui de la trituration ou du broyement* (Paris: François Fournier, 1710), vii. Emphasis mine.

themselves.<sup>69</sup> One theory even maintained that armies of worms performed digestion.<sup>70</sup> Writing nearly fifty years later, Anne-Charles Lorry proposed that digestion indeed involved most of these actions (other than the worms): dissolvents, movement and heat, protection against outside elements; and a natural pressure which extracts the useful elements from the crude.<sup>71</sup> And indeed, each of these processes found its analogy in the kitchen. No single model fully displaced its competitors, and the *Encyclopédie* described the situation at mid-century as “a sort of concordance of all the systems” with chemistry largely dominating the discourse.<sup>72</sup>

While cooking had provided a useful explanation for digestion for thousands of years, with *la cuisine moderne* cooks turned to current digestive theory to explain their work in the kitchen. In 1739 *Les Dons de Comus* asked its readers: “then what is the driving purpose of the cook if not to facilitate digestion by the preparation and cooking of meats? To aid the stomach’s functions by exciting its faculties and often to change solid food into a sort of artificial chyle, like we see in extracts and restoratives?”<sup>73</sup> Three years later, the book’s sequel *La Suite des dons de Comus* reiterated this point, asking “what is the function of the cook?”

If it is not to detach these juices from their natural viscosity or the particles that envelop them by cooking, baths, and extracts so that they pass into the blood with less difficulty? If it is not to help the stomach’s digestive faculties by mixture of the mildest or most

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>70</sup> Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Digestion.”

<sup>71</sup> Anne-Charles Lorry, *Essai sur les alimens, pour servir de commentaire aux livres diététiques d’Hippocrate* (Paris: Vincent, 1757), 144.

<sup>72</sup> Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Digestion.”

<sup>73</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xxiii-xxiv.

active juices, according to need? If it is not also to thin the salts that render these juices corrosive and to correct their acids with appropriate ingredients?<sup>74</sup>

*La Suite des dons de Comus* openly borrowed the language of doctors, citing Hecquet's treatise on digestion and claiming that digestion is a "sort of elixation."<sup>75</sup> Cooking could actually reinforce humans' otherwise degraded digestive capacities: man needed to cook in order to eat meat because "he has neither the beak, the claws, nor the teeth appropriate for this type of carnivorous lifestyle, and unlike wolves, his stomach is not hot enough to digest."<sup>76</sup> While initially chided as pretentious, the claims staked by these two cookbooks soon were adopted by other cooks.<sup>77</sup> In 1749, Menon argued that *la cuisine moderne* "subtilizes the crude parts of food" in order to separate the coarse from the refined. Moreover, "it perfects, purifies, and in some way spiritualizes juices." The dishes that resulted "must therefore carry into the blood a great abundance of purer and finer spirits."<sup>78</sup> In response to these claims the *Journal de Trévoux* admitted that dishes prepared under *la cuisine moderne* "undergo an anticipated digestion" and would thus "enter more easily into the blood and the vessels."<sup>79</sup> Mercier fully agreed that *la cuisine moderne* had effectively seized the process of digestion, arguing that it "leaves no fat at all in its fluids, and its artfully mixed spices tone the stomach and facilitate its function so

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<sup>74</sup> François Marin, *La Suite des dons de Comus*, 3 vols. (Paris: La veuve Pissot, 1742), xviii.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii-xix.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

<sup>77</sup> "Lettre d'un pâtissier anglois, au nouveau cuisinier françois," in *Le Cuisinier gascon* (Amsterdam: 1747).

<sup>78</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier*, xxii.

<sup>79</sup> "La Science du Maître d'Hôtel Cuisinier avec des Observations sur la connoissance et les propriétés des Alimens. A Paris, au Palais, chez Paulus Dumesnil, Imprimeur Libraire Grand Salle au Pilier des Consultations, au Lion d'or 1749," *Journal de Trévoux, ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des sciences et des arts* XLIX (1749), 1991.



that foods are more or less easy to digest.”<sup>80</sup> Cooks thus externalized and appropriated the process of digestion.

Cooks proposed to facilitate digestion through their mastery of chemistry, a proposal that dated to the earliest days of *la cuisine moderne*. “*La cuisine moderne* is a form of chemistry,” announced *Les Dons de Comus* in 1739.<sup>81</sup> *La Suite des dons de Comus*, added, “In effect this chemical analysis is the whole object of our art.”<sup>82</sup> The notion that cooking constituted a chemistry rapidly gained currency, and by mid-century few challenged the claim.<sup>83</sup> In his article “Encyclopedia,” Diderot agreed: “as for our cuisine, it cannot be disputed that it is an important branch of chemistry.”<sup>84</sup> The *Encyclopédie*’s article on chemistry included a discussion of cooking, noting that “*Panificium* [breadmaking] is certainly in the domain of *chemistry*: cooking is a type of domestic *chemistry*.”<sup>85</sup> The argument that cooking had entered the world of science convinced the organizer of a 1771 estate sale to categorize four of the latest cookbooks under the heading “Arts and Sciences: Medicine and Chemistry.”<sup>86</sup>

The fact that cooks laid claim to chemistry is all the more remarkable given the importance ascribed to the emerging science. For surgeons and physicians, knowledge of

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<sup>80</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 11:231.

<sup>81</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xx.

<sup>82</sup> Marin, *La Suite des dons de Comus*, xx-xxi.

<sup>83</sup> Londa Schiebinger describes a rather different situation in England, where she argues chemistry actually *disappeared* from cookbooks by the 1750s. Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex?*, 115. French cookbooks, in contrast did not begin to embrace chemistry until the 1730s and continued to do so through the eighteenth century.

<sup>84</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. "Encyclopédie."

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. "Chimie."

<sup>86</sup> *Catalogue des livres de feu M. Crosat, Baron de Thiers, Brigadier des Armées du Roi, Lieutenant Général pour Sa Majesté de la Province de Champagne au Département de Reims, et Commandant en ladite Province*, (Paris: Saillant et Nyon, 1771), 50. Indeed, today the Bibliothèque nationale de France categorizes gastronomy along with astronomy, chemistry, engineering, and medicine.

chemistry operated as a sign of expertise. One surgeon seeking employment declared that he was “up to date on chemistry.”<sup>87</sup> A surgery student claimed that he had practiced chemistry for a “long time” and “worked in the laboratories of the most famous chemists.”<sup>88</sup> One doctor described himself as a “physician-chemist.”<sup>89</sup> But even more important, by claiming to harness chemical processes, cooks exploited the growing popular appeal of chemistry. When a new edition of *La Chimie du goût et de l’odorat* (“The Chemistry of Taste and Smell”) appeared in 1774, a review declared the work “attractive by its subject.”<sup>90</sup> Apothecaries and other self-styled scientists carried out public demonstrations of experiments in order to drum up business. One advertisement for such an event promised experiments on eggs and milk, while Guillaume-François Rouelle, apothecary and member of the Académie royale des sciences, offered a chemistry course featuring “an analysis of vegetable, animal, and mineral substances.”<sup>91</sup> Such experiments suggest considerable ambiguity regarding food’s status as either ingredient or chemical element.

Even the tools of the kitchen increasingly overlapped with the equipment associated with chemistry and medicine. One merchant promised that at his shop one could find “everything concerning cooking, pastrymaking, and chemistry.”<sup>92</sup> A receipt from one household likewise suggests that cookware overlapped significantly with chemistry equipment: a certain Delaporte sold “chemistry vessels” along with porcelain,

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<sup>87</sup> *Petites affiches*, 4 January 1787.

<sup>88</sup> *Petites affiches*, 30 January 1791.

<sup>89</sup> *Petites affiches*, 21 January 1787.

<sup>90</sup> *Affiches de Province*, 1 June 1774.

<sup>91</sup> *Petites affiches*, 8 November 1751 and 2 January 1755.

<sup>92</sup> *Petites affiches*, 13 December 1773.

ceramics, glass bottles, and corks.<sup>93</sup> As early as 1682, Denis Papin introduced his “Machine,” essentially a pressure cooker which could render “the oldest and toughest cow [...] as tender and good-tasting as the best chosen meat.”<sup>94</sup> A century later, however, cooks were offering their own scientific stoves. In 1781 a certain Nivert designed his own contraption based on the principles of “chemical chemistry,” promising that it would “give an idea of the [medical] action of water and fire on foods” (fig. 6.1).<sup>95</sup> The cook cited his device’s scientific bona fides, remarking that “if this device were hermetically sealed, it would be Papin’s machine.” A number of other “economical” or “scientific” stoves appeared during the eighteenth century. In 1761 a certain Vaniere advertised his “economical and portable kitchen hearth” approved by the Académie royale des sciences and the faculty of medicine.<sup>96</sup> In 1790 Jourdan Lecointe situated his “health stove” at the center of a three-volume work on cooking and medicine.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> BNF MSS Joly de Fleury 2490, 187 (1772).

<sup>94</sup> Papin, *La Maniere d’amolir les os, et de faire cuire toute sortes de viandes en fort peu de temps, et à peu de frais. Avec un description de la machine dont il se faut servir pour cet effet, ses proprietéz et ses usages, confirmez par plusieurs experiences* (Paris: Estienne Michallet, 1682), “Préface.” The *Encyclopédie* dubbed his device a *digesteur*. Diderot and D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Digesteur.”

<sup>95</sup> Louis Nivert, *Nouveau fourneaux économiques et portatifs, extrait de la Gazette de santé, du dimanche 1er octobre 1780, no. 40*. (Paris: Veuve Ballard et fils, 1781). Nivert also advertised his device in the provinces. See *Affiches de Dauphine*, 10 November 1780.

<sup>96</sup> *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 18 February 1761.

<sup>97</sup> Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé*.



Figure 6.1. Louis Nivert's "Fourneau de santé." Louis Nivert, *Nouveau fourneaux économiques et portatifs*, extrait de la *Gazette de santé*, du dimanche 1er octobre 1780, no. 40 (Paris: Veuve Ballard et fils, 1781) BNF VP-29989. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Thus if doctors had once described digestion as a sort of cooking, now cooks claimed that their cooking constituted a form of digestion. Cooks thus effectively twisted

medical discourse in their favor, arguing that they could improve diners' health through scientifically informed cooking.

## 5. Dissection

By the eighteenth century, the proper method of carving meats had long been considered an essential skill for men of culture.<sup>98</sup> Specialized carving manuals during the seventeenth century instructed readers in the techniques necessary to dismember various animals and fruits at the table.<sup>99</sup> The 1725 conduct manual *Le Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnêtes-gens* stressed the importance of knowing how “to cut meats properly and with method and to recognize the best parts in order to serve them correctly.”<sup>100</sup> Carving was thus above all a social skill. One needed to recognize the hierarchy of choice cuts in order to serve them to the appropriate diners. The proper carver thus recapitulated social order on the joint of meat at hand.

During the eighteenth century, dedicated carving manuals began to disappear, but cookbooks during the late seventeenth century had already begun to include their own sections on carving meats.<sup>101</sup> With the advent of *la cuisine moderne*, cookbooks rebaptized carving to suit their own medical aspirations, increasingly referring to carving

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<sup>98</sup> Sabine Coron and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal., *Livres en bouche: cinq siècles d'art culinaire français, du quatorzième au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France: Hermann, 2001), 157.

<sup>99</sup> See for example, *De sectione mensaria*, (n.p., n.d.), Jacques Vontet, *L'Art de trancher la viande et toutes sortes de fruits, à la mode italienne et nouvellement à la française* (Lyon: n.d.). Both are thought to date from around 1650. Coron and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal., *Livres en bouche*, 162-163.

<sup>100</sup> Jean Meusnier, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnêtes-gens* (The Hague: Adrien Moetjens, 1731), 105.

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, *L'Escole parfaite des officiers de bouche: contenant le vray maistre-d'hostel, le grand escuyer-tranchant, le sommelier royal, le confiturier royal, le cuisinier royal, et le patissier royal*, (Paris: La veuve Pierre David, 1662).

as “dissection.” The author of *La Suite des Dons de Comus* (1742) promised to include “a small treatise on the dissection of meats.”<sup>102</sup> In his *Les Soupers de la Cour* (1755), Menon provided instructions on “the understanding and dissection of the pig.”<sup>103</sup> In the *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine* (1758), Menon likewise attaches “a small treatise on the dissection of meats.”<sup>104</sup> A later edition of *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* promised to instruct readers in “the manner of recognizing, dissecting, and serving all kinds of meats.”<sup>105</sup> Like earlier carving manuals, these cooks stressed the social aspects of proper meat cutting. Readers would learn to recognize the best morsels in order to distribute them to the proper guests. Yet by labeling carving “dissection,” these cooks adopted an unambiguously medical air. “To dissect” was a “surgical term” meaning “to open the body of an animal in order to study its anatomy.”<sup>106</sup> It is open to debate whether cooks actually considered themselves surgeons or anatomists, but at least one cook thought of surgery when contemplating his work. A disciple of the famous French cook Clouet remarked on the parallel between his own occupation and surgery: “a surgeon

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<sup>102</sup> Marin, *La Suite des dons de Comus*, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Menon, *Les Soupers de la Cour*, 2:1-2.

<sup>104</sup> *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine. Ou le cuisinier instruit, de la connoissance des animaux, tant volatiles, que terrestres, aquatiques et amphibies; de la façon, de préparer les divers alimens, et de les servir. Suivi d'un petit abrégé. Sur la maniere de faire les Confitures liquides et autres Desserts de toute espèce. Ouvrage très-utile, non-seulement pour les Maîtres d'Hôtel et Officiers de Cuisine; mais encore pour toutes les Communautés Religieuses, les grandes Familles, et tous ceux qui veulent donner à manger honnêtement.*, (Paris: Cl. J. B. Bauche, 1758), ix.

<sup>105</sup> *Mercure de France* (May 1764), 106.

<sup>106</sup> *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 3 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1740), s.v. "Dissequer." This definition remained unchanged from 1694 through 1798.

may as well attempt to make an incision with a pair of sheers, or open a vein with an oyster-knife, as for me to pretend to get this dinner without proper tools to do it.”<sup>107</sup>

## 6. The Cook as Medical Practitioner

Although Emma Spary has suggested that “a science of taste” did not emerge until the nineteenth century, eighteenth-century culinary and medical texts make it abundantly clear that cooks and doctors contested the scientific aspects of dining from at least the 1740s.<sup>108</sup> Cooks invaded the discourse of medicine, and doctors felt compelled to reply. Indeed, the fact that doctors found themselves drawn into a debate with cooks reflects the imagined threat they faced. The physician Jourdan Lecointe for example, responded to Menon’s *La Science du maître d’hôtel, cuisinier* (1749) and *La Science du maître d’hôtel, confiseur* (1750) with his own parallel set of treatises: *La Cuisine de santé* (1790) and *La Pâtisserie de santé* (1792).

By applying the principles of anatomy and chemistry as well as the techniques of surgery, cooks sought to cast themselves as medical practitioners. Indeed, when Menon suggested that cooks acted as the servants of medicine, he imagined that cooking might become the peer of pharmacy: the former could conserve health while the latter restored

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<sup>107</sup> William Verral, *A Complete System of Cookery. In which is set forth, A Variety of genuine Receipts, collected from Several Years Experience under the celebrated Mr. de St. Clouet, sometime since Cook to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle. By William Verral, Master of the White-Hart Inn in Lewes, Sussex. Together with an Introductory Preface, Shewing how every Dish is brought to Table, and in what Manner the meanest Capacity will never err in doing what his Bill of Fare contains. To which is added, a true Character of Mons. de St. Clouet.* (London: William Verral, 1759), v-vi.

<sup>108</sup> Emma Spary, "Making a Science of Taste: The Revolution, the Learned Life and the Invention of 'Gastronomie'," in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe 1650-1850*, ed. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

it.<sup>109</sup> Fully aware of the audacity of his proposal, Menon went to great lengths to demonstrate his deep respect for doctors. He promised that if cooks ever formed a guild, they would never dream of insubordination: nothing could “inspire sentiments of independence” from doctors.<sup>110</sup> But in exchange for this “legitimate submission,” Menon demanded respect from medicine.<sup>111</sup> Such a bold statement caught the eye of one reviewer, who noted some surprise that Menon “seeks the approbation of medicine.”<sup>112</sup> By asserting even such a self-effacing role, cooks hardly conceded to doctors. Instead they sought to convert themselves from opponents into collaborators.

Despite the heavy criticism from doctors, popular wisdom agreed that in principle the cook could function as a medical practitioner, particularly through the regulation of diet. Bernard de Bonnard believed that his cook could cater to his health, calling on her to cook for him “in the name of [his] appetite, of health and of the so natural pleasure of eating healthy and well-prepared things.”<sup>113</sup> Some evidence even suggests that cooks specifically tailored their preparations to cure disease: in his analysis of one kitchen’s records, Josef Smets concludes that one cook adapted his cooking to his master’s illness.<sup>114</sup> One character in the play *L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine* observed, “your *gigot à l’épigramme* / and your sauce Robert / cure a sick person better / than all the *Grand*

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<sup>109</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier*, xxviii.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix-xxx.

<sup>112</sup> “La Science du Maître d’Hôtel Cuisinier avec des Observations sur la connoissance et les propriétés des Alimens. A Paris, au Palais, chez Paulus Dumesnil, Imprimeur Libraire Grand Salle au Pilier des Consultations, au Lion d’or 1749,” 1992-1993.

<sup>113</sup> AN 352 AP 39, Bernard de Bonnard to Sophie Silvestre, Cherbourg, 10 September 1783.

<sup>114</sup> Josef Smets, “A la table d’un seigneur languedocien en 1766,” *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 48, no. 4 (2001), 32.



*Albert* [a book of remedies].”<sup>115</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier was wholly convinced of the cook’s power over health, suggesting that

*La cuisine moderne* is preferable to *l’ancienne* for health as well as for taste. A good cook makes us live longer because he gives unction to dishes and prevents them from becoming corrosive. Nature gives us foods completely crude; the cook corrects and perfects them.”<sup>116</sup>

Indeed, Mercier was the ultimate partisan of *la cuisine moderne*’s health ambitions, claiming the new style was “advantageous for health, for the length of life, for the balance of humors, and therefore the balance of temperament. It is certain that we are in better health and better fed than were our fathers.”<sup>117</sup> He even labeled the cook a “doctor-physician,” albeit one who cured the “mortal illnesses” of hunger and thirst.<sup>118</sup>

Yet according to contemporary wisdom, moderation was also the key. One handbook to healthy dining suggested, “If you lack a doctor, three things will compensate for it: happiness, moderate rest, and diet. Do not drink without thirst or eat when you have a full stomach. If you observe these things well, you will live for a long time.”<sup>119</sup> The affiches sustained the notion that frugal living led to longevity: among their endless astonishing accounts of the lives of centenarians, the theme of moderation (often verging on asceticism) consistently emerged. Denis Gille, who lived to 98, “ate little” and “was never sick.”<sup>120</sup> A certain Marie David lived to 150 subsisting on nothing other than

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<sup>115</sup> BNF MSS NAF 2862, “L’Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine,” (1757), 28-29.

<sup>116</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:311.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:318.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 11:234.

<sup>119</sup> *Étrennes aux vivans, ou l’art de vivre agréablement sans nuire à sa santé*, (Paris: Guill. Leclerc, 1786), 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 25 February 1761.

alms.<sup>121</sup> An English beggar reached age 152.<sup>122</sup> Of course there were occasionally exceptions: before dying at age 107, Jean Jacquemot smoked “at least twelve pipes a day” and drank homemade gin as his “ordinary beverage.”<sup>123</sup> Frequent news accounts of fasting further undermined the notion that food was intrinsically unhealthful. A thirteen-year-old boy survived for over a year without consuming food or drink: he lost nothing through secretions, his body functioning “a bit like snakes.”<sup>124</sup> In contrast, cooks allegedly encouraged immoderate dining. A late-seventeenth-century cookbook noted that critics of cooks blamed “the shortness of Man’s life on his estrangement from our first Fathers’ simple and frugal manner of living and on the multitude of dishes whose secret he has sought.”<sup>125</sup> One medical guide suggested that the “sumptuousness” of princes’ tables undermined their health. On these tables one was most likely to find the least healthful dishes. He counseled “eating moderately and simply.”<sup>126</sup>

If cooks enjoyed a measure of success in portraying their work as a chemistry, they faced a greater challenge in casting themselves as chemists, and in just a few rare cases were cooks depicted as such. A 1760 almanac illustrated a cook in her kitchen with

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<sup>121</sup> *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 27 May 1761.

<sup>122</sup> *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 8 July 1761.

<sup>123</sup> *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 27 May 1761. Unfortunately the report provides no indication of his diet. Or perhaps it did: gin and tobacco.

<sup>124</sup> *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 1 July 1761. Several weeks later the same newspaper claimed to reveal the boy’s polar opposite: “This man ate (but for money) a an entire sheep or pig, sometimes two bushels of cherries with their stones. With his teeth he broke, crushed, and chewed glass or earthenware bases and even rather hard stones. He devoured live animals like birds, mice, caterpillars, etc. One day he was presented a writing desk covered with iron plates. He ended by tearing it to pieces and swallowing it entirely with the pens, penknife, ink, and sand. Seven eyewitnesses testified to this fact in front of the Wittenberg Senate.” But even this man decided to adopt a more moderate diet at the age of 60, allowing him to reach the age of 79. *Annonces, affiches, avis divers*, 29 July 1761.

<sup>125</sup> Massialot, *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois*, "Préface."

<sup>126</sup> Bernadino Ramazzini, *L’Art de conserver la santé des princes et des personnes du premier rang* (Leide: Jean Arn. Langerak, 1724), 47, 87.

the accompanying verse: “Every year *nouvelle cuisine*, / Because every year tastes change; / And every day, new dishes: / So be a chemist, Justine.”<sup>127</sup> One eighteenth-century play carried the title *Le Chimiste, ou le diable officier* (The Chemist, or the Devil Cook).<sup>128</sup> In one of his many riffs on cooking, Mercier also claimed that “[t]he cook is a chemist who performs metamorphoses; he changes, he corrects nature.”<sup>129</sup> Despite these odd cases, however, the overwhelming majority of commentators declined to endorse the notion that cooks could act as chemists. Chemistry was quite simply too dangerous to be trusted to cooks. Those who attempted to practice it “without method and without principles [...] ruin themselves and ruin those who are stupid enough to listen to them, believe them, and lend them assistance.”<sup>130</sup>

We can explain this distrust of cooks in part as stemming from contemporary understanding of the practice of science. According to Diderot, it was not just knowledge but also its dissemination that defined scientists. Unlike artists, who were “unknown, obscure, and isolated,” scientists wrote about and debated their discoveries. In contrast, artists did “almost nothing for their glory.”<sup>131</sup> Cooks arrived at the same conclusion, and Menon equated dissemination with glory, writing of other authors, “I want to follow them and to glorify my art as they have glorified theirs.”<sup>132</sup> Yet if cooks believed that

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<sup>127</sup> *Almanach utile et agréable de la loterie de l'Ecole royale militaire, pour l'année 1760*, (Paris: Prault père, 1760), pl. 84. “Tous les ans nouvelle cuisine, / Car tous les ans changent les goûts; / Et tous les jours nouveaux ragoûts: / Soyez donc chimiste, Justine.”

<sup>128</sup> BNF Arsenal Rondel Ms 220.

<sup>129</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:317-318.

<sup>130</sup> *Almanach du dauphin ou tableau du vrai mérite des artistes célèbres et d'indication générale des principaux marchands, négociants, artistes, et fabricants des six corps arts et métiers de la ville et fauxbourgs de Paris et autres villes du royaume*, (Paris: Demas, 1776), s.v. “Chimistes.”

<sup>131</sup> Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, s.v. “Encyclopédie.”

<sup>132</sup> [Menon], *La Cuisine et office de santé*, i.

publishing cookbooks validated them as scientists, others did not agree. The author of one treatise on health and dining declared that existing cookbooks like *Les Dons de Comus* and *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* were nothing more than “informal compilations which very unfaithfully gather together everything that everyone already knows.” He further added that knowledge of these cookbooks held little worth, however “voluminous they are.”<sup>133</sup> To some degree, cooks acknowledged the risks of inaccuracy: one press announcement for a cookbook complained about the circulation of counterfeit copies that could potentially lead to dangerous accidents.<sup>134</sup> But according to doctors, it was cooks themselves who could not be trusted, not just their cookbooks. The physician Lecointe offered scathing criticism of cooks’ efforts to create a body of culinary knowledge:

Everything that has been published up until now has offered us only so many poorly digested compilations, or the scattered debris of obscure or inaccurate memoirs. Good cooks communicate these things only with regret, because fear of losing their reputations or of harming their fortunes imposes on them the law of revealing only those things already known to the whole world, and of remaining silent on or disguising all the essential preparations without which one cannot succeed.<sup>135</sup>

Lecointe believed that cooks under the proper circumstances could be controlled: he admitted to working “under a good cook who directed [his] first efforts.”<sup>136</sup> But in Lecointe’s estimation, most cooks preferred to lie rather than to share their knowledge. Unlike scientists, who shared and validated knowledge, cooks instead disguised the truth to serve their own selfish aims. The majority of cooks were not “good” like Lecointe’s, and these quite simply could not be trusted.

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<sup>133</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens*, 7.

<sup>134</sup> *Petites affiches*, 3 October 1770.

<sup>135</sup> Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé*, 22.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. On the lack of epistemological capacity of servants in general, see Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 91-93.

Cooks essentially lacked the “moral and epistemic capacity” identified by Steven Shapin as essential to the creation and validation of scientific knowledge.<sup>137</sup> According to one medical handbook, the best doctors possessed four qualities: wit, knowledge, experience, and probity. This last quality was in some measure the most important, since without it a doctor would possess the other three “in vain.” Moreover, probity alone assured the “fruit” and even the “existence” of the doctor’s other qualities.<sup>138</sup> At best, *la cuisine moderne* could instill only two of these four qualities. Cookbooks could impart knowledge through the new theories and taxonomies of food. Cooks could also gain experience from reading cookbooks, since even doctors could do the same.<sup>139</sup> When the distillation manual *La Chimie du goût et de l’odorat* (1755) proposed a “harmonious instrument of flavors,” it cautioned that such a device’s operator would need to play it “with intelligence.”<sup>140</sup> According to the physician Lecoite, only doctors could shoulder the responsibility of managing food consumption. In his 1790 *La Cuisine de santé*, he asserted that cooks were “people who often have neither principles nor true talents” and that they judged food only by its taste, not by its scientific properties.<sup>141</sup>

Through novel combinations of ingredients and seasonings, cooks contended that they could manipulate the sense of taste, with attendant physiological and even spiritual

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<sup>137</sup> Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, 397. Shapin’s chapter eight, “Invisible Technicians: Masters, Servants, and the Making of Experimental Knowledge,” explores the broad limitations of servants as knowledge producers.

<sup>138</sup> Mahon, *Avis aux grands et aux riches*, 33-34.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>140</sup> *Chimie du goût et de l’odorat*, xxiv-xxv.

<sup>141</sup> Lecoite, *La Cuisine de santé*, 14.

results. With the application of scientific cooking methods, they furthermore argued that they could ease the process of digestion, simplifying the body's conversion of food into nutrients. In response to cooks' pretensions to medicine, doctors launched a vigorous attack against *la cuisine moderne*, labeling it a dangerous fad which threatened to destroy diners' constitutions. Yet while doctors challenged cooks' claim to function as scientists, they did not contest cooks' assertion that cooking itself was a science. Cooks thus succeeded in promoting the linkages between chemistry, cuisine, and health even as they ultimately failed to gain recognition as legitimate practitioners of their new science.

## Chapter 7. Dangerous Cooks

J'avois toujours craint ce long séjour de Paris pour notre cuisiniere; cette solitude, cette absence des maitres, l'oisiveté [...] que de tentations pour mal faire!

Bernard de Bonnard to Sophie Silvestre

Cooks during the eighteenth century were invariably perceived as dangerous. Despite little evidence of actual criminal behavior, a steady stream of images, texts, and performative practices cultivated and reinforced these popular perceptions: paintings, engravings, medical treatises, fictional accounts, and theatrical plays all depicted cooks as threatening. These representations tended to coalesce around two general types of danger: moral and physical. The first type of dangerous cook threatened dissolute behavior. Usually gendered feminine, such danger typically assumed the form of theft but sometimes involved seduction. It was not unusual to encounter the two threats intertwined. In contrast, the second category of dangerous cooks imperiled the body. Threatening physical corruption, these usually male cooks either through inattention or incompetence destroyed the health of diners. To be sure the roles could be reversed – male cooks were sometimes accused of theft, and women could be portrayed as poisoners – but in general female cooks jeopardized morals, and males endangered the body. Different circumstances reinforced each form of danger. Both the spatial conditions and particular practices of cooks' work encouraged fears of immoral activities, while the

claims made by *la cuisine moderne* exacerbated such worries and generated anxiety about poisoning.

### 1. The (Not So) Criminal Cook

Despite the rich imagined life of the criminal domestic servant, historians have largely discredited the notion that servants constituted a criminal class. According to Sarah Maza, “contemporaries were inclined to believe” in the dangers posed by servants, which included (at a minimum) murder, theft, and blackmail.<sup>1</sup> Cissie Fairchilds suggests that the “traditional negative stereotypes” about domestic servants depicted them as “lazy, lusty, dishonest, and possessed of a low-animal-like cunning.”<sup>2</sup> Yet Maza concludes that servants were actually less likely to engage in criminal behavior than members of the general population.<sup>3</sup> Fairchilds for her part argues that contemporary concerns over criminal servants tended to overstate the problem.<sup>4</sup> If the threat was overblown, the source of the anxiety was clear. As one eighteenth-century commentator noted: “[t]he wealth, the reputations, and the lives of masters [were] in some sense in their hands.”<sup>5</sup>

Even among servants, cooks did not comprise an especially criminal element. For example, Robert Anchel devotes fifteen pages to the crimes committed by domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 229.

<sup>3</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 113.

<sup>4</sup> Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 72.

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Collet, *Instructions et prières à l'usage des domestiques* (Paris: Debure l'aîné, Herissant, Herissant, Tilliard, 1758), iii.



servants, but he makes just one brief reference to a cook. Even this single case is decidedly underwhelming: a cook fled her master after just two days on the job, taking personal effects which were not her own.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the most common crime attributed to cooks was theft. Cooks who actually did steal from their masters would have risked an extraordinarily severe penalty. In the distant past, thieving servants had merely had their limbs amputated, but since the time of Saint Louis, *vol domestique*, or domestic theft, had been treated as a capital crime. During the eighteenth century, the crime of *vol domestique* continued to carry the death sentence, typically by hanging. Henri Richard explains that the intimate nature of domestic theft necessitated such harsh punishment, since it violated both the master's trust and the sanctity of the household.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, ordinary theft would have resulted only in the far milder sentence of branding and a trip to the galleys. On 24 April 1762, for example, one Antoine Colinet, cook to the marquis de Montesson, received a sentence involving the stocks, a whipping, branding, and five years of service in the king's galleys – all for stealing a duck.<sup>8</sup> Yet crucially, Colinet had not stolen the duck from his master, which explains the court's relative leniency. In cases of *vol domestique*, the actual amount stolen by a servant was irrelevant: the death penalty followed in any conviction. According to Richard, such a severe punishment had two consequences. First, few cases of domestic theft actually went to trial, since masters knew that their servants' deaths would likely ensue. Second, servants theoretically had a

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Anchel, *Crimes et châtements au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1933), 33.

<sup>7</sup> Henri Richard, *Du Louage de services domestiques en droit français* (Angers: A. Burdin et compagnie, 1906), 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Arrest de la cour du Parlement, qui condamne Antoine Colinet, ci-devant cuisinier, au carcan, au fouet, à la marque et aux galeres, pour avoir volé un canard*, (Paris: P.G. Simon, 1762).

far greater incentive to kill their masters, since they had nothing to lose and in so doing they might eliminate a star witness.<sup>9</sup>

Despite these apparent obstacles, cooks were sometimes convicted of *vol domestique*. In 1780, for example, a certain Marie Launay was hanged for having stolen a gold watch and some silver table service from her master.<sup>10</sup> In this case Launay was actually caught in the act of pawning the stolen goods. Yet while such examples of flagrant theft can be found, notably absent from the criminal record are substantiated cases of embezzlement, the crime most frequently attributed to cooks in representations of them. As we saw in Chapter 3, masters regularly signed their approval of their cooks' books. If such surveillance protected the masters, it also shielded cooks against prosecution, since the signatures provided written evidence that the accounting records had been approved.

If not thieves, cooks were likely to be labeled as poisoners. One 1787 news account claimed that a *maître d'hôtel* had recently poisoned 32 people in retaliation for being fired. Although none of his victims died, supposedly the poisoner consumed a lethal dose himself.<sup>11</sup> Given the punishment for poisoning, such a course of action was not particularly surprising: convicted poisoners were burned alive and their ashes scattered to the winds. As in the above example, the cases of poisoning that tend to

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<sup>9</sup> Richard, *Du Louage de services domestiques en droit français*, 44-46. Richard's work remains a definitive resource on servants, crime, and the law.

<sup>10</sup> *Arrest de la cour de parlement, qui condamne Marie Launay, fille cuisiniere, à être pendue et étranglée, jusqu'à ce que mort s'ensuive, par l'exécuteur de la haute-justice, à une potence qui, pour cet effet, sra plantée dans la place de greve, pour vol domestique d'une montre d'or et de couverts d'argent, dont elle a été trouvée saisie au moment où elle se disposoit à les mettre en gage au Mont-de-Piété*, (Paris: P.G. Simon, 1780).

<sup>11</sup> *Affiches de Toulouse*, 4 April 1787.

appear overwhelmingly involved the deliberate addition of a poison like arsenic, which during the eighteenth century was treated essentially as a controlled substance. Apothecaries who sold it were required to register the names, occupations, and addresses of buyers. Moreover, only heads of households (*chefs de famille*) were permitted to purchase it.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, most representations of poisoning cooks depicted a completely different sort of danger. They worried not that cooks would conspire to add something like arsenic, but rather that they might *accidentally* poison diners as a result of negligence. Similarly, they feared that cooks' meddling with the science of cooking might actually backfire to produce dangerously delicious or corrosive foods, either of which would ravage diners' health. Such poisons originated in otherwise salubrious food that had somehow been transformed into a deadly agent.

I do not mean to suggest that cooks were usually or even sometimes well-behaved individuals. In the 1780s, for example, the cook Pierre Lamireau gleefully profited from the absence of his master by inviting his wife (who happened to work as a servant in another household) over for a meal. He explained in a letter to her:

[My master] has left, that's the reason why you can come to the house tomorrow, my dear [...] Come as early as you can – we will lunch together on whatever pleases you. As for provisions I will have coffee ready to go or fresh eggs if you like them better, but don't forget to come.<sup>13</sup>

Cooks could also divert leftovers for their own profit. According to Sarah Maza, “cooks felt entitled to these kickbacks,” which she notes included animal skins and fats.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Sentences for poisoning invariably refer to these restrictions and urge their adherence. See for example, *Arrest de la cour de Parlement, qui condamne Marie Letessier à être brûlée vive, pour crime de poison*, (Paris: Pierre Simon, 1732), *Arrest de la cour de Parlement, portant condamnation d'amende honorable, et d'être brûlé vif, contre le nommé Pierre Guet, pour crime de poison*, (Paris: Pierre Simon, 1734).

<sup>13</sup> AN T 254, Pierre Lamireau to Anne Farcy.

<sup>14</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 102.

Considerably more alarming, some cooks gave every indication of actually wanting to kill their masters: after having written three threatening letters to his master, the conveniently-named Jean Guillaume Cuisinier was sentenced to death by strangling.<sup>15</sup> However, the disparity between reported or convicted crime and the imaginary danger of cooks is striking. First, there is a quantitative disjuncture. While very few cooks appear to have been convicted as thieves, seductresses, and poisoners, they are almost invariably so depicted in narrative fiction and visual imagery. Second, and more important, representations of danger differed qualitatively from the few documented cases of crime. Rather than overt theft and poisoning, cooks were instead charged with covert embezzlement and bodily corruption. The kinds of dangers that contemporaries imagined cooks to pose in fact had very little to do with crimes actually committed.

## **2. Moral Corruption**

Through their perceived moral failings, cooks consistently threatened to undermine the household from within. Contemporaries singled out women for particular attention, accusing them of theft and seduction. Yet the purported theft involved a remarkable level of sophistication. Cooks' supposed sexual charms only compounded the risk of theft, with images of seduction typically conflating sexual with gustatory appetite. In representations of both sorts of moral failure, cooks threatened to defraud and sexually corrupt the household.

*Shoeing the Mule*

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<sup>15</sup> *Sentence de mort du Châtelet de Paris*, (Paris: 1726).

Of all the threats cooks were imagined to pose, theft surfaced the most frequently. In the contemporary imagination, cooks were uniquely situated to steal from masters quite unlike any other servant. Rather than suddenly abscond with the silver service or the mistress's jewels, the cook was presumed far more likely to engage in a subtle and ongoing effort to defraud her master. In principle, cooks found no shortage of opportunities to steal. At the point of sale of kitchen ingredients and supplies, they could negotiate a price lower than the one indicated on the receipt. When preparing their account registers, they could pad their numbers. And even if all the books were absolutely in order, what could prevent cooks from treating themselves and their friends to a taste of the kitchen's delights? Employing any combination of these strategies, the thieving cook emerged as something of a commonplace during the eighteenth century.

The first and perhaps best-known text to portray cooks as embezzling thieves arrived in 1724 with *La Maltôte des cuisinières*. Twelve pages of verse recounted the dialogue between an experienced cook and her young protégée, with the older instructing the younger woman in the various dark arts of creative accounting. The subtitle of the work, “la maniere de bien ferrer la mule,” or “the manner of shoeing the mule well,” suggested a form of theft particularly attuned to the practices of cooking. Mules (unlike, say, horses) do not require shoes, thus “to shoe the mule” meant to invent fictitious expenses.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The body of the text suggests an even more colorful expression, “to comb the monkey,” which sadly did not enjoy the same degree of popularity. *La Maltôte des cuisinieres, ou la maniere de bien ferrer la mule. Dialogue entre une vieille Cuisiniere et une jeune Servante.*, (Riom: G. Valleyre, 1724), 2.

In *La Maltôte des cuisinières*, the older cook assured the younger that “[t]he kitchen can be governed with profit.”<sup>17</sup> Cooks’ kitchen accounting practices were assumed to provide the perfect opportunity to skim from their masters’ funds, and few depictions of cooks missed the opportunity to label them as cunning thieves. For example, though the 1762 engraving *La Cuisinière* portrayed a cook seemingly innocuously engaged in the act of keeping her accounts, below the image we find the following verse:

Of her purchases Nicole to her mistress  
Writes the account, and far from forgetting anything,  
Completes it with such finesse,  
That she knows how to find within it her own [profit].  
Without the least scruple  
Of skimming off profits,  
She knows how to shoe the mule  
As well as a *maître d’hôtel*.<sup>18</sup>

In *La Maltôte des cuisinières*, the young cook likewise praised the older cook as understanding how to cheat “better than a *maître d’hôtel*.”<sup>19</sup> As both works suggest, both women cooks like the one depicted as well as male *maîtres d’hôtel* possessed the ability to defraud masters. Yet both works depict women, and indeed male cooks are rarely if ever portrayed as “shoeing the mule.” In the play *La Dinde du Mans*, for example, Babette the cook similarly appears as suspect, not only padding her account with multiple references to beans but also for meals prepared when her master was away. When

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre-Louis Dumesnil, *La Cuisinière* (Paris: A. Duclos, [1762]). “De ses achats Nicole à sa Maitresse / Ecrû le compte, et loin d’oublier rien, / Le fait avec tant de finesse, / Qu’elle sçait y trouver le sien. / Sans avoir le moindre scrupule / De gagner sur le casuel, / Elle vous sçait ferer la mule, / Aussi bien qu’un Maitre d’hotel.”

<sup>19</sup> *La Maltôte des cuisinieres*, 7.

confronted about her dodgy accounts, Babette angrily defended her accounting: “Well, look! Didn’t Madame have dinner here? Didn’t your clerks stop by?”<sup>20</sup>

Because cooks enjoyed a degree of fiscal autonomy, they could potentially commit crimes other servants would have found impossible. The cooks who appeared in *La Maltôte des cuisinières*, *La Dinde du Mans*, and the engraving *La Cuisinière* all embezzled, a crime predicated on the abuse of financial responsibility. Contemporary dictionaries defined shoeing the mule as “to profit on the purchases made on behalf of another.”<sup>21</sup> The phrase thus implied a situation where one person handled another’s business, implicitly exploiting both trust and responsibility. Cooks were hardly suspected of lacking the intellectual capacity to conduct their affairs. Quite the contrary, their critics assumed that they were all too clever in their accounting practices. Indeed, what cooks lacked was not mental acuity but rather moral probity.

Such examples suggest that cooks’ skills with numbers led masters to suspect them of fraud. Underlying these suspicions was the problem of cooks’ literacy and numeracy: these skills granted cooks unique abilities to defraud their masters. Other servants lacked these abilities and (more importantly) the opportunity to exercise them. Cooks, however, absolutely required literacy and numeracy in order to maintain records of their daily transactions.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, no other category of servant regularly handled money like cooks. To be sure extraordinarily wealthy households might employ an

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<sup>20</sup> [Pierre-Germain Parizau], *La Dinde du Mans* (Paris: Cailleau, 1783), 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, dédié au Roy*, 1 ed. (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard, 1694), s.v. “Mule.” This entry remained constant through the dictionary’s fifth edition in 1798.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 3 and Sean Takats, “Domestic Expertise: Literacy and Numeracy in the Eighteenth-Century Kitchen,” in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, ed. Kathryn Edwards and Carol Harrison (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Scholarly Publishing Office, 2005).

*intendant* or *secrétaire* to manage finances, but households all the way down the income scale employed cooks who handled a significant proportion of household expenses.

The physical isolation of the kitchen only exacerbated the perceived threat of theft. In principle, cooks oversaw the security of the kitchen space and its valuable contents, guarding them against theft by other servants. According to the architect Sebastian Leblond, the kitchen's pantry needed more than fortified doors: the cook's bedroom ought to be nearby in order to oversee "the dishes and other effects with which he has been charged."<sup>23</sup> Jacques-François Blondel concurred, arguing that the *maître d'hôtel* and the cook both needed to sleep near the kitchen – ideally he situated their bedrooms next door, but at the very least in the mezzanine above the kitchen.<sup>24</sup> In the popular imagination, however, the kitchen provided a remote haven for cooks to commit any sort of fraud. Mercier related an account of one cook actually selling access to his mistress's kitchen at the rate of 27 livres per month.<sup>25</sup> Even if cooks did not actually sell food on the side, they could give it away to their friends. In the delightful novel *Gil Blas* (1739), the title character first encountered his new master's *maître d'hôtel* and cook in the act of despoiling the household provisions: "The *maître d'hôtel* was with five or six friends who were gorging themselves on hams, beef tongues, and other salted meats which made them drink cup after cup."<sup>26</sup> The cook, meanwhile, treated a few other

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<sup>23</sup> Sebastian Leblond, "De la nouvelle manière de distribuer les plans," in *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de vignole, avec des commentaires, les figures et descriptions de ses plus beaux bâtimens, et de ceux de Michel-Ange, etc.*, ed. A.C. Daviler (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1710), 185\*12.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques-François Blondel, *De la distribution des maisons de plaisance et de la décoration des édifices en général* (Paris: Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1737), 81.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Claude Petitfrère, *L'Oeil du maître: maîtres et serviteurs de l'époque classique au romantisme* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1986), 164.

<sup>26</sup> Alain-René Lesage, *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1920), 2:84.



outsiders to wine and rabbit and partridge pâtés.<sup>27</sup> Blas was completely overwhelmed by the sight of such activity: “I thought I was in a house abandoned to pillage, however that was nothing. I had only seen a trifle compared to what I had not yet discovered.”<sup>28</sup>

Mercier suggested that idleness played a role since cooks “in Paris have half as much work as in the provinces.”<sup>29</sup> Since they moreover did not enjoy the confidence of their mistresses, they received less “consideration, care, and attention,” leaving them free to misbehave.<sup>30</sup>

Although both men and women could thus steal from their kitchens, contemporaries tended to associate women with fraud. As the above examples demonstrate, men were rarely accused of forging accounts or embezzling. Instead, texts like *Gil Blas* depicted them as selling or even giving food away. Women, in contrast, were suspected of all sorts of malversations in the kitchen. I would argue that this propensity to identify women as fiscally devious stems from contemporary perceptions of their moral weakness. In the late seventeenth-century conduct manual *La Maison réglée*, for example, Audiger clearly identified the failures of women cooks that distinguished them from their male counterparts. Audiger noted only that a male cook should “keep good records of everything taken into their hands,” whereas a woman ought “to be even more sensible and of good conscience in the accounts where she reports her expenses.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: 1782-1788), 10:344.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée, et l'art de diriger la maison d'un grand seigneur & autres, tant à la ville qu'à la campagne, & le devoir de tous les officiers, & autres domestiques en general. Avec la veritable methode de faire toutes sortes d'essences, d'eaux & de liqueurs, fortes & rafraîchissantes, à la mode d'Italie* (Paris: Lambert Roulland pour Nicolas Le Gras, 1692), 56, 133-134.

Audiger further emphasized the importance of moral behavior among women cooks, urging them to be neither “querulous nor ingratiating.”<sup>32</sup> The technical skills of accounting combined with women’s perceived moral weakness to generate a durable stereotype of the corrupt female cook.

### *The Cook’s Charms*

Concerns about women’s ability to defraud the kitchen financially were granted additional weight by the potential for sexual liaisons between cooks and their masters. Cooks appeared as sexually corrupt in a variety of media, but the trope of the seductive (or seduced) cook was particularly evident in visual representations. François Boucher’s painting *La Cuisinière* (1735), for example, surprises a cook in the company of a man whose own clothing suggests that he, too, is a servant (fig. 7.1). The man embraces the cook, with one arm placed around her neck and the other tugging at her market sack and the front of her dress. The cook in turn smiles down obligingly on her suitor, apparently oblivious to the eggs cradled precariously in her arms. In such images, eggs typically signified virginity: with one already broken on the floor, this cook’s purity has perhaps already been corrupted. Around the two servants, we see the kitchen in wild disarray. Overturned cooking vessels and vegetable produce litter the floor. A cat has seized and begun to devour an unplucked bird presumably intended for the master’s table.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 134.



Figure 7.1. François Boucher, *La Cuisinière*, 1735. Musée Cognacq-Jay. Photo: RMN / Bulloz.

When the painting was reproduced as an engraving, one reviewer claimed that the chaotic scene as depicted “truthfully represents the interior of a kitchen, with the pot on the fire, etc.”<sup>33</sup> Whether the conventions of the review or the imagination of the reviewer dictated such a judgment is quite beside the point. In either case, the image’s setting, not

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<sup>33</sup> *Mercure de France*, April 1735.

just its salacious content, was sold to readers and buyers as truth. And the image did sell: the original painting left France almost immediately for London with its new English owner, but the work was reproduced in at least two different engravings sold in France (fig. 7.2).<sup>34</sup> When the *Mercure de France* reported on one of the engravings in April 1735, the review claimed that the image was selling “with great success.” Further mentions of the same engraving in June 1737 and again in June 1738 suggest that buyers continued to purchase prints of *La Cuisinière* for several years.<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 7.2 Engravings of Boucher’s *La Cuisinière*. Pierre-Alexandre Aveline after François Boucher, *La Belle cuisinière* (Paris: Drouais, ca. 1735) Collection Edmond de Rothschild 5998 LR. P. Duverbret after François Boucher, *L’Infortunée pourvoieuse* (Paris: ca. 1735) Collection Edmond de Rothschild 18562 LR. Photos: RMN / Thierry Le Mage.**

Like many other reproductions of genre paintings, engravings of *La Cuisinière* were accompanied by verse that helped to “explain” the painting. One version carried the verse: “Your eggs are getting away, Mathurine / It doesn’t bode well for you / This lecher

<sup>34</sup> Today the original is displayed at the Musée Cognacq-Jay in Paris.

<sup>35</sup> *Mercure de France*, June 1737 and June 1738.

in our kitchen / Could well break them all for you.” Another version reversed the image with different text, but again drew attention to the eggs: “Suson, if on your route / You again encounter someone who teases you / Little girl, take care! / I predict, without being a psychic, / That you will not carry any eggs to the kitchen / On his eggs in his apron.” Both captions depict the man as an outsider who has infiltrated the kitchen thanks to the cook’s inattention. By focusing attention on the eggs carried by the cook, both pieces of verse moreover emphasized the resulting intersection of both loss and seduction. While not theft per se, the cook’s own negligence resulted in their loss. The cook’s weak morals not only placed her sexuality at risk, they also threatened her master’s bottom line.

The moralizing tone adopted in these engravings was not particularly unusual. According to Anne Schroder, during the eighteenth century “moralizing subjects coexisted with erotic themes; one did not supplant the other.”<sup>36</sup> But if we compare the message of the two engravings of *La Cuisinière* with that of *La Belle villageoise*, the piece’s companion painting, we find a completely different aesthetic: “Happy children, happy mother / In your humble hovel content with necessity / The simplest object fulfills your desires / The wise man rightly prefers / To the pomp of court, to the charms of Cythère / The innocence of your pleasures.” Although the verse carries an even more explicitly sexual message, it (along with the image itself) lacks the elements of money and seduction of *La Cuisinière*. Unlike the cook, who is complicit in the seduction, the village woman merely functions as the object of the viewer’s desire. No money is at

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<sup>36</sup> Anne L. Schroder, "Genre Prints in Eighteenth-Century France: Production, Market, and Audience," in *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France*, ed. Richard Rand (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 83.

stake, and the village woman hardly violates the master's domestic space in the manner of the cook and her suitor.

The isolated space of the kitchen played an essential role in the fantasy of the cook's seductive powers, and the same autonomy that made possible theft also enabled seduction. Kitchens were hot, noisy, and stinking places which architects had since the seventeenth century increasingly sought to hide from the rest of the household. As a result, cooks had nearly unfettered reign in these disgusting sites. If kitchens were increasingly sealed off from the rest of residential space, they necessarily remained open to the outside world, allowing a level of promiscuity that engendered disrepute. Strangers could and did invade the kitchen space, and engravings of Boucher's *La Cuisinière* preyed on fears of infiltration.<sup>37</sup> Yet despite its apparent openness, represented cooks somehow remained trapped within the kitchen, easy targets for lecherous intruders.

By conflating the sexual and gastronomic appetite, cooks could be made to appear especially alluring to those who chanced upon a cook in her kitchen. In the play *L'Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine*, one character remarked, "she's coming back. By the gods, she is beautiful! / This steam is increasing her charms."<sup>38</sup> In an engraving of a cook, an otherwise mundane image of a woman chopping onions was received as anything but innocent: "I really want only to believe that you are / Knowledgeable in the appetizing art of preparing dishes / But I feel much more appetite for you / Than for the

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<sup>37</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 143.

<sup>38</sup> BNF MSS NAF 2862, "L'Ancienne et nouvelle cuisine" (1757).

dish you are making.”<sup>39</sup> In another engraving, even a decrepit old man was driven to desire by the sight of a young cook, with the caption explaining: “Your feeble resistance and naughty looks / Recall in the heart of this gallant geezer, / The taste of pleasures that age denies him.”<sup>40</sup> In representations of cooks, the power over taste and appetite thus extended to include a sexual component.

Fictional accounts reinforced belief in the cook’s fetching looks. In Rétif de la Bretonne’s “The Pretty Cook,” a master instructed his young cook Paule to avoid potentially dishonorable contact with other servants:

You are good-looking, and I believe you know it. I advise you not to be familiar with the servants of the opposite sex. From this moment I declare that you are above them, and I expect them to obey you in all respects that are not contrary to my orders or Madame’s. But no *familiarity*! You understand, I think, what this word means?”<sup>41</sup>

The master recognized his cook’s powerful allure but wanted to isolate her from the other servants. By placing her in charge of the rest of the domestic staff, he raised Paule above the fray of their promiscuity. Of course, his intentions were anything but noble, the master had his own designs on the cook. To the familiar caricature of the scheming cook, Rétif de la Bretonne added a twist: naïveté. When Paule’s master raised her wages to five hundred livres per year, Paule reflected, “I was too new to see anything there that ought to have raised my suspicions.” Perhaps most alarmingly, in the end Paule married her former master, suggesting that the cook could exploit her charms to get ahead.

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<sup>39</sup> “Je ne veux bien croire que vous estes / Sçavante en L’art friand d’apprêter les Ragouts / Mais je me sens/ encore plus d’appetit pour vous / Que pour le Ragoût que vous faites.” Engraving by Louis Surugue after a painting by Gerard-Dau, *Le Hachis d’oignons* (Paris: L. Surugue).

<sup>40</sup> “Goton que sans couroux ce vieux renard amuse, / Ta foible resistance et ton regard fripon: / Rapellent dans le coeur de ce Galant barbon, / Le goust pour les plaisirs que l’aage [sic] luy refuse.” Engraving by Louis Surugue after a painting by Vanschupen, *La Cuisinière* (Paris: L. Surugue). BNF EST ED 96 Fol.

<sup>41</sup> Nicolas-Edme Rétif de la Bretonne, *Les Contemporaines communes, ou les aventures des belles marchandes, ouvrières, etc., de l’âge present* (Leïpsick: Büschel, 1789; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1988), 608.

Cooks were attributed an inordinate degree of coquettishness even outside of the kitchen. The engraving *La Cuisinière nouvellement arrivée* (fig. 7.3) depicted a young woman dressed nominally in the style of a cook, complete with traditional cook's bonnet and carrying a marketing sack. The engraving's caption – "Cook newly arrived from the provinces and who begins to assume the elegant airs of Paris" – however, invited a closer look at her dress. According to the accompanying description:

Her hairstyle is a *Bastienne* or round bonnet *à barbes*. A skirt without decoration and a canvas apron are still the remnants of the simplicity of her station. But already the fine tissue shawl is decorated and revealing, her hairstyle appears to be accompanied by a buckle on the finger with a wisp of hair in front of her ear. Thus gradually her coquettishness will extend from head to feet.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed the feet in question already sported dainty shoes complete with a vertiginous heel. If not for the omnipresent cook's ham jutting from her market sack (at a decidedly suggestive angle, no less), this woman's job might have remained in doubt. By casting her as a cook from the provinces, the artist did not just recognize the typical origins of cooks. He juxtaposed provincial innocence with the corrupting influence of Paris, resulting in a dangerously promiscuous cook.

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<sup>42</sup> The description describes the cook as assuming the elegant "tone" rather than "airs" of Paris. *Galerie des modes et costumes français*, (Paris: Esnauts & Rapilly, 1779-1781), plate 11.





*Dessiné par Le Clerc*

*Gravé par Le Beau*

Cuifiniere nouvellement arrivée de Province et qui commence  
à prendre les airs élégants de Paris .

*A Paris chez Bernauts et Rapilly rue S. Jacques a la Ville de Coustances , A. P. D. R.*

**Figure 7.3. The cooking coquette. Engraving by Le Beau after Le Clerc, *Galerie des modes et costumes français* (Paris: Esnauts & Rapilly, 1779-1781). Photo: New York Public Library.**

Female cooks were not only perceived as the objects of desire: their own sexual appetites approached legendary status. One broadsheet related the tale of a certain Geneviève Picola, a cook who lived and worked in her master's residence in the Marais.<sup>43</sup> Over the years, she had accumulated a total of three husbands: one legitimate and two secret. Picola spun a complicated web of lies to keep the men's existence secret from each other, identifying them alternately as her cousins, parents, and friends: according to the broadsheet, "she knew her job well." Upon Picola's death, however, the ruse came apart when the three men discovered each other for the first time. Gathered around the late cook's body, all three men came to blows. Tellingly, only the cook's master could restore order, reinforcing the notion that cooks could not themselves police the kitchen's disorderly space. Laughing at the husbands' predicament he took steps to resolve the conflict.

Although nominally about the cook's own infidelity, Picola's story served also to encourage the belief that cooks were inveterate thieves. According to the story's opening lines, Picola had worked in the household of "a rich foreigner, where she took good care of herself [*faisoit fort bien sa compte*]." The *compte*, or account, in question remained decidedly ambiguous: had Picola manipulated her own or her master's? Given the general tenor of depictions of cooks as embezzlers, the broadsheet thus suggested that she, too, had shod the mule. Moreover, it also came to light that Picola had amassed a fortune of twenty-four thousand livres in addition to her personal effects. Small wonder

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<sup>43</sup> *Relation de ce qui s'est fait et passé au sujet d'une Cuisinière qui avoit trois maris vivans*, (Paris: Claude Hérissant, 1775).

that her three husbands found themselves hovering around her deathbed and that they fell to fighting over who in fact stood to inherit this estate.

## 2. Physical Corruption

Unlike their thieving and seducing female counterparts, male cooks were typically depicted as physically corrupting. Critics inverted the concerns raised by *la cuisine moderne* about cleanliness and dietetics, choosing to portray male cooks instead as filthy and poisoning. Two general types of physical corruption emerged: one based on hygiene; the other on the food itself. In either case, contemporaries feared poisoning by slow, nearly imperceptible processes. Like his embezzling female counterpart, the male cook posed an insidious threat to his master. Unlike representations of moral corruption, however, physical threats rarely took the form of visual images. Instead, these hidden dangers usually appeared in the form of jeremiads penned by doctors and other critics.

### *Foggy Kitchens, Green Dishes, and Black Hands*

The isolation of the kitchen that encouraged fantasies of theft and seduction initially evolved in response to concerns about the comfort of household masters. Yet this same quarantine potentially allowed the kitchen to degenerate into a genuinely toxic site. Permeated by poisonous charcoal fumes, kitchens functioned like workshops within domestic space. For example, one contemporary study of workers' illnesses pointed to charcoal fumes as a mortal threat to cooks.<sup>44</sup> Arlette Farge has suggested that during the

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<sup>44</sup> Bernadino Ramazzini, *Essai sur les maladies des artisans*, trans. Antoine-François Fourcroy (Paris: Moutard, 1777), iv, 504-509.

eighteenth century there emerged a powerful discourse vilifying workspaces as dangerous sites of fumes, miasmas, exhalations, and effluvia.<sup>45</sup> With kitchens producing the same sorts of pollution, such dangerous workspaces were quite literally under masters' noses.

Although the kitchen suffered no shortage of threatening effluvia, contemporaries also worried about external contaminants entering *into* the kitchen's space. In addition to the kitchen's already numerous locks, Audiger suggested that cooks guard the kitchen against intruders who might poison the master, warning kitchen boys to prevent anyone from approaching "either the pots or dishes so that no one throws anything" in them. At the very least, the author argued, such vigilance could moreover protect the kitchen's *chef de cuisine* from being accused of making mistakes.<sup>46</sup> When the cook Nivert designed his health stove, he included locks, noting that it "closed with a key which you can take with you."<sup>47</sup> These attempts to secure the kitchen's space and tools reflected fears of contamination more than theft.

The gravest hygienic threat posed by cooks revolved around the state of their tools. An incident from the late 1780s illustrates the general panic engendered by fear of contamination. One morning, a certain Monsieur d'Anisson called for his cook Pierre Lamireau to complain about the state of his kitchen and in particular to order Lamireau to clean the pots that had been used to prepare the previous evening's dinner party. When Lamireau replied that the dishes were already in a serviceable state, d'Anisson flew into a

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<sup>45</sup> Arlette Farge, "Work-Related Diseases of Artisans in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Medicine and Society in France*, ed. Elborg Forster and Orest A. Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 93-94.

<sup>46</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée*, 58.

<sup>47</sup> Louis Nivert, *Nouveau fourneaux économiques et portatifs, extrait de la Gazette de santé, du dimanche 1er octobre 1780, no. 40*. (Paris: Veuve Ballard et fils, 1781). See Figure 6.1.

rage. According to Lamireau, his master “began to hurl invectives at me, saying that I wanted to poison him, along with similar foolishness, all driven by his madness.”<sup>48</sup> At the time, d’Anisson was almost certainly voicing fears about copper poisoning. The greenish byproduct of copper corrosion known as verdigris struck fear in the hearts of eighteenth-century diners.<sup>49</sup> Concerns about the toxicity of copper were not entirely new – the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* used the example “verdigris is a poison” – but from the middle of the eighteenth century onward they became increasingly localized around the cook and his tools. Fears about copper preoccupied not only physicians but also interested parties like coppersmiths and ironsmiths. In 1740, a certain Prémery secured a royal privilege to produce iron cookware which avoided the use of copper altogether. The cook Nivert designed his health stove to hold food in any number of non-cupreous materials: glass, crystal, ceramics, porcelain, polished iron and even silver.<sup>50</sup> French fears of copper poisoning even assumed national dimensions when commentators pointed to the supposedly enlightened case of Sweden, where the government had banned copper cookware in the armies and encouraged the rest of the population to do the same.<sup>51</sup> Yet despite widespread opposition, French cooks continued

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<sup>48</sup> AN T 254, Pierre Lamireau to Anne Farcy.

<sup>49</sup> Two contemporary terms – *verd-de-gris* or *verdet* – both referred to the same phenomenon. I have translated them both as simply “verdigris.”

<sup>50</sup> Nivert, *Nouveau fourneaux économiques et portatifs*.

<sup>51</sup> *Arrêt du conseil d’état du Roi, Qui ordonne que celui du 15 mai 1753, par lequel il a été permis à Jean-François Bavard et Thérèse Premery son épouse, de faire fabriquer, vendre et débiter, tant à Paris que par-tout ailleurs, des marmites, casseroles, poissonnières et autres ustensiles de cuisine de fer forgé, blanchi (étamé) en dedans et en dehors, avec queues, anses et pieds desdits ustensiles en fer noir et non blanchi, sera exécuté selon sa forme et teneur, sans que pour raison de ce ils puissent être inquiétés ni troublés par qui ce soit: Et pour l’avoir fait, condamne les Jurés-gardes de la Communauté des maîtres et marchands Chauderonniers de Paris, en tous les dommages et intérêts en résultans, et au coût du présent arrêt, le tout liquidé à trois cens livres.*, (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1754), 4.

to use copper tools, leading one pamphlet to lament that “we are in the habit of employing copper [in cooking] which is certainly a true poison.”<sup>52</sup>

What most fanned the fear of copper poisoning was the fact that the wealthiest of diners actually faced the greatest risks. Verdigris inordinately endangered elite diners, since “they rely on the inattention of their servants, and we have seen deadly examples in the homes of the most opulent people of the finest distinction.”<sup>53</sup> Even worse, fears of copper poisoning threatened to undermine the practices of sociability, with one pamphlet asking: “How many people of condition invited here and there only eat roast out of fear of some accident?”<sup>54</sup> Like kitchen theft, which exposed even the wealthiest members of society to theft from within, culinary poisoning threatened to corrupt the elite at the hands of mere servants.

Cooks quite simply could not be trusted to ensure their masters’ safety. One pamphlet argued that “[Lords’ and ladies’] lives or health depend on the inattention or the negligence of a *maître d’hôtel* in the same way that one might depend on an ignorant or inattentive pilot at sea.”<sup>55</sup> The author regretted especially the cook’s responsibility for retinning cooking vessels and its attendant importance for his master’s health since, “[b]oth one and the other thus depend on the carelessness of servants and cooks.”<sup>56</sup> The

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<sup>52</sup> Joseph Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l’usage des vaisseaux de cuivre dans la préparation des alimens," in *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l’Académie royale des sciences*, ed. Joseph Amy (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 6-7. “mais on a la mauvaise habitude d’employer à [7] cet usage le Cuivre, qui est certainement un véritable poison.”

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Amy, "Avis au public sur l’usage des nouvelles fontaines domestiques et de santé," in *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l’Académie royale des sciences*, ed. Joseph Amy (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 10.

<sup>54</sup> Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l’usage des vaisseaux de cuivre," 54.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Amy, *Nouvelles fontaines domestiques approuvées par l’Académie royale des sciences* (Paris: J.B. Coignard; A. Boudet, 1750), 34.

<sup>56</sup> Amy, "Si on doit rejeter entièrement l’usage des vaisseaux de cuivre," 37.

doctor Lecointe likewise indicted cooks for carelessness, blaming foul-tasting “and always unhealthful” corrosion on “the majority of cooks” who neglected to clean skewers after using them to roast meat.<sup>57</sup>

If the space and tools of the kitchen were unsanitary, even more disturbing was the decrepit state of the cook. Prescriptive literature like conduct manuals and cookbooks vigorously promoted hygiene in an uphill battle to promote a cleaner cook. As early as 1692, Audiger asserted, “One of the principal qualities of a cook is cleanliness.”<sup>58</sup> *La cuisine moderne* particularly encouraged hygiene, and one of its first practitioners was “infinitely clean in his work.”<sup>59</sup> One author suggested that persons seeking to learn to cook would need “especially cleanliness.”<sup>60</sup> Cooks claimed that *la cuisine moderne* itself was meant to be even “cleaner” than its predecessor, which by some accounts had suffered as a result of poor hygiene.<sup>61</sup> One contemporary history of cooking noted that *la cuisine ancienne*’s obsession with sculpted foods had led to raw ingredients spending “a very long time in the hands, which were not of an extreme cleanliness.” Such poor hygiene resulted in a “laborious digestion” for diners.<sup>62</sup> Critics of *la cuisine moderne*, however, claimed that in abandoning *la cuisine ancienne* cooks had never actually solved

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<sup>57</sup> Jourdan Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé, ou moyens faciles et économiques de préparer toutes nos Productions Alimentaires de la manière la plus délicate et la plus sanitaire d’après les nouvelles découvertes de la cuisine Française et Italienne*, 3 vols. (Paris: Briand, 1790), 113.

<sup>58</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée*, 55.

<sup>59</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens dont le but est la santé, l’économie et la perfection de la théorie. A l’usage des maîtresses de maison qui ne dédaignent pas de descendre jusqu’au détail de leur ménage, soit à la ville, soit à la campagne.*, (Paris, London: Onfroy, 1782), 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>61</sup> François Marin, *Les Dons de Comus, ou les délices de la table. Ouvrage non-seulement utile aux Officiers de Bouche pour ce qui concerne leur art, mais principalement à l’usage des personnes qui sont curieuses de sçavoir donner à manger, et d’être servies délicatement, tant en gras qu’en maigre, suivant les saisons, et dans le goût le plus nouveau* (Paris: Prault, fils, 1739), xx.

<sup>62</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens*, 5.

this problem, which had more to do with the cook's own hygiene than cooking techniques. One urged that "molds destined to form so many sophisticated delicacies cease to be manipulated by the often disgusting hands" of cooks.<sup>63</sup> An especially harrowing account by Louis-Sébastien Mercier suggests that even by the 1780s cooks had not managed to shake their filthy image:

These cooks really have the blackest hands! One of them was white only on the tip of the index finger he dipped incessantly in the sauces and which he sucked. One day his master said to him: Oh your hands! – Ah, monsieur! That's nothing. If you were to seem my feet! The master ran away. You must never descend into the kitchens if you wish to eat with pleasure intact.<sup>64</sup>

Thus even as cooks asserted the cleanliness and propriety of *la cuisine moderne*, a far more powerful backlash charged that cooks themselves were filthy and corrupt.

The cook's presumed lack of hygiene comprised just one part of a more general impropriety that also included drunkenness. Mercier relates one tale of a drunken cook staggering through the production of his master's meal.<sup>65</sup> Though perhaps considered cleaner than their male counterparts – Mercier noted regarding cooks: "Female animals are in the end cleaner than males" – evidence suggests that women were hardly immune from the temptations of drink.<sup>66</sup> Claude Petitfrère has noted that female cooks were reputed to have a "immoderate penchant for alcohol and sweets."<sup>67</sup> One 1785 advertisement indeed sought a good female cook who was "sober for drink."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Jourdan Lecointe, *La Pâtisserie de santé, ou moyens faciles et économiques de préparer tous les genres de pâtisseries de la manière la plus délicate et la plus salutaire*. (Paris: Briand, 1792), 8.

<sup>64</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 11:233.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 10:340.

<sup>67</sup> Petitfrère, *L'Oeil du maître*, 163.

<sup>68</sup> *Affiches de Toulouse*, 8 June 1785.



### *An Agreeable Poison*

Even when decrying dirty or corroded tools, critics generally blamed cooks only for their carelessness. But in addition to this dangerous neglect, a far more treacherous cook lurked in the contemporary imagination. This cook poisoned diners through willful manipulation of the properties of foods. Ironically, the rhetoric of *la cuisine moderne* played an essential role in stoking these fears of poisoning. As we have seen, among the shortcomings of *la cuisine ancienne* that cooks had promised to redress was the insalubrious effect of their cooking on the health of diners. Their efforts, however, provoked quite the opposite reaction. Medical treatises in particular cultivated the image of a cook who, far from transmuting nature's bounty into healthful cuisine, produced dishes that allegedly corroded health. These cooks were equally likely to be accused of exploiting their culinary expertise to trick diners into eating dangerous foods, with contemporaries imagining them creating a delicious but essentially toxic cuisine. The *Journal de Trévoux* neatly declared *la cuisine moderne* to be "[a]n assassin art hid[ing] a subtle poison beneath an agreeable sensation."<sup>69</sup>

The 1742 engraving *La Ratisseuse* (fig. 7.4) suggests the pervasiveness of these fears of poisoning. While the image depicted only a woman peeling vegetables, below an ominous snippet of verse evoked the audacious claims of *la cuisine moderne*: "When our ancestors took from nature's hands, / These vegetables guaranteed their simplicity / The art of making a poison of our food, / Had not yet been invented." Though *la cuisine moderne* claimed to simplify cuisine, critics twisted its message of refinement into one of

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<sup>69</sup> "La Science du Maître d'Hôtel Cuisinier avec des Observations sur la connoissance et les propriétés des Alimens. A Paris, au Palais, chez Paulus Dumesnil, Imprimeur Libraire Grand Salle au Pilier des Consultations, au Lion d'or 1749," *Journal de Trévoux, ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des sciences et des arts* XLIX (1749), 1992.

risky complexity. The message of *La Ratisseuse* was clear: every cook, even those who appeared the most innocent, could potentially poison diners with *la cuisine moderne*.



Figure 7.4. Transforming nature's bounty into poison. Lépicié after Jean-Baptiste Chardin, *La Ratisseuse* (Paris: Lépicié, 1742). MD 43 fol. Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The fears about seasoning perfectly illustrate the power – real or imaginary – wielded by cooks. Louis Lémery, physician of the faculty of Paris and member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, maintained that seasoning held medical utility since it was “sometimes necessary to help in the digestion of foods and in their distribution.”<sup>70</sup> But its value in such applications was a double-edged sword, since according to Lémery cooks could easily use seasoning to stimulate the appetite at inappropriate times, with invariably deleterious effects. According to Lémery, “[seasoning] excites in us extraordinary fermentations which give our humors an extremely strong acridity and corrupt them in little time.” Partisans of *la cuisine moderne* acknowledged the risk of seasoning. According to *La Suite des dons de Comus*, it was “ordinarily the stumbling block of the most skilled people, and the part of our work that demands the most attention.”<sup>71</sup> Spices were widely held to possess quasi-elemental properties that required an extraordinarily fine degree of judgment:

Salt, pepper, and other spices – ingredients more precious than gold when they are employed properly but true poisons when they are squandered – should be handled like gold itself and dispensed with economy and intelligence by a light hand. Otherwise no matter what you try to do to salvage things, you will ruin all the fruit of a long labor and in the place of the crude salts that you have separated by elixation, you will substitute pure corrosives in your foods.<sup>72</sup>

Nearly fifty years later, Louis-Sébastien Mercier echoed this view nearly verbatim, declaring spices to be “ingredients more precious than gold when combined skillfully and dosed accordingly but true poison when they are overused.”<sup>73</sup> But if seasoning was risky,

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<sup>70</sup> Louis Lémery, *Traité des aliments* (Paris: J.B. Cusson and P. Witte, 1702), "Préface."

<sup>71</sup> François Marin, *La Suite des dons de Comus*, 3 vols. (Paris: La veuve Pissot, 1742), xxi-xxii.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>73</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:314.

from the perspective of cooks it was also necessary. As the frontispiece to *La Suite des dons de Comus* put it: “All [the gods’] gifts to us are superfluous / if Comus [the god of revelry] does not season them.”<sup>74</sup>

The physician Jourdan Lecointe responded to the supposed reforms of *la cuisine moderne* with the accusation that cooks had actually worsened the situation with respect to seasoning:

The two most formidable vices of nearly all the productions of *la cuisine moderne* is to offer us either: foods that are too viscous who sticky tenacity combines problematically with our humors and produces a multitude of harmful engorgements; or dishes that are too spicy, whose corrosive acidity dries, burns, and chars our fibers, our stomach, our intestines, and spreads into our blood this devouring inflammation that consumes in little time even the most vigorous temperaments.”<sup>75</sup>

This contradiction between the culinary and medical assessments of spices fueled the notion that cooks represented a mortal threat to society. Late in the century, one amateur reformer of the kitchen went so far as to suggest abandoning cooks’ practice of seasoning altogether, instead substituting tasty pork for the “poisonous seasonings which cooks have the bad habit of using in abundance.”<sup>76</sup>

If *la cuisine moderne* encouraged the dangerous use of spices, and even more alarming threat came in the form of deliberately disguised foods. Cooks could manipulate far more than simply the quantity of food consumed. Both *la cuisine moderne* and its predecessor *la cuisine ancienne* involved a substantial amount of so-called “disguise.” In 1674, *L’Art de bien traiter* promised to show readers how “to

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<sup>74</sup> Marin, *La Suite des dons de Comus*. “Qu’à Palès, à Diane, à Cerès, à Bacchus / Se joignent Glaucus et Pomone: /Tous leurs dons nous sont superflus, / Si Comus ne les assaisone.” The Greek gods in question represent cattle, game, grain, wine, fish, and fruit, respectively. The eponymous Comus was the god of revelry.

<sup>75</sup> Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé*, 18.

<sup>76</sup> François Cointeraux, *La Cuisine renversée, ou le Nouveau ménage par la famille du professeur d’architecture rurale, par la famille Cointeraux* (Lyon: Ballance et Barret, [1796]).

prepare, disguise, and serve properly all sorts” of foods. Massialot’s 1691 *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois* described one dining regimen as involving the disguise of dishes according to the vegetable season.<sup>77</sup> According to Audiger, cooks needed to know how to “disguise [foods] according to the lord’s taste.”<sup>78</sup> Cookbooks promoting *la cuisine moderne* continued to describe cooking as “disguise”: the *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine* (1758) offered instruction on disguising “all the different butcher meats that are served on the best tables.”<sup>79</sup> Yet to critics of *la cuisine moderne*, the language of “disguise” revealed the fundamental untrustworthiness of cooks. As noted earlier, the physician Jourdan Lecointe, for example, accused cooks of intentionally hiding the secrets of their preparations from the public. Even with their many printed cookbooks, he claimed that cooks still “disguise all the essential compositions without which one cannot succeed.”<sup>80</sup>

Through the disguise of foods, skillful cooks could deceive diners. One cookbook provided instruction on “the art” of eliminating from slightly spoiled and “dubious” fish “the taste of fish and all bad tastes.”<sup>81</sup> Cooks were so skilled that they could supposedly transform anything into a dish that was not merely edible but delectable. Mercier

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<sup>77</sup> François Massialot, *Le Cuisinier roial et bourgeois, qui apprend à ordonner toute sorte de repas, et la meilleure manière des ragoûts les plus à la mode et les plus exquis. Ouvrage très-utile dans les familles, et singulièrement nécessaire à tous maîtres d’hôtels, et ecuiers de cuisine.* (Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1691), 12.

<sup>78</sup> [Audiger], *La Maison réglée*, 55.

<sup>79</sup> *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine. Ou le cuisinier instruit, de la connoissance des animaux, tant volatiles, que terrestres, aquatiques et amphibies; de la façon, de préparer les divers alimens, et de les servir. Suivi d’un petit abrégé. Sur la maniere de faire les Confitures liquides et autres Desserts de toute espèce. Ouvrage très-utile, non-seulement pour les Maîtres d’Hôtel et Officiers de Cuisine; mais encore pour toutes les Communautés Religieuses, les grandes Familles, et tous ceux qui veulent donner à manger honnêtement.*, (Paris: Cl. J. B. Bauche, 1758), vi.

<sup>80</sup> Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé*, 22.

<sup>81</sup> *Essai sur la préparation des alimens*, 32-33.

recounted the tale of a cook serving his own leather breeches to his master after “boiling and macerating them in the most appetizing sauces.”<sup>82</sup> A cookbook countered that while cooks possessed the ability to effect such transformations, only a public caterer would stoop to such measures: one supposedly prepared an old pair of buffalo hide gloves in a manner that the diners found “excellent.”<sup>83</sup> Breeches and gloves sounded positively appetizing compared to some of the raw materials allegedly utilized by cooks. Lecoite lamented the fate of the poor creatures of the street that unscrupulous cooks slipped into their creations. “How many cats,” he mused, “have found their tomb in the center of a pâté?”<sup>84</sup>

By rendering the component ingredients of the natural world unrecognizable, cooks confused diners. Mercier wrote of a meal where dishes made with vegetables imitated “all the fish furnished by the ocean” in both flavor and appearance. Such was the transformative power of *la cuisine moderne* that he furthermore claimed to have eaten other dishes “prepared with such art that I could not imagine what they could have been.”<sup>85</sup> The *encyclopédiste* de Jaucourt savaged cooks as those who produced “poison rather than foods useful and proper for the preservation of health.”<sup>86</sup> Jourdan Lecoite lamented such trickery, asking his readers, “Must we renounce nature’s delicious pleasures because the art of the cook has transformed them into poisons?”<sup>87</sup> Cookbooks

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<sup>82</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 5:82-83.

<sup>83</sup> François Marin, *Les Dons de Comus, ou l’art de la cuisine, réduit en pratique, nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée par l’auteur*. (Paris: Pissot, 1758), 167-168.

<sup>84</sup> Lecoite, *La Cuisine de santé*, 25.

<sup>85</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 5:81.

<sup>86</sup> Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1772), s.v. “Cuisine.”

<sup>87</sup> Lecoite, *La Cuisine de santé*, 14.

acknowledged this risk, worrying that man could spoil, corrupt, and poison “nature’s innocent bounty.”<sup>88</sup> Even a partisan of *la cuisine moderne* like Mercier suggested that cooks who used their skills to disguise foods ultimately “spoil the gifts of nature.”<sup>89</sup> How could diners be expected to choose proper foods in such a chaotic environment?

Culinary disguise threatened to undermine the body’s own sense of taste. The physician Lémery argued that if “appetite is altered in some manner [...] all the body’s functions are affected, and one suffers extremely dangerous illnesses.”<sup>90</sup> By disrupting the sense of taste over the long term, cooks could drive the body into disrepair, since its daily needs would meet with the wrong replenishment. Cooks could easily overstimulate the appetite by offering too many deceptively appetizing dishes. Diners as a consequence made poor choices at the table. According to one physician, “The lack of exactitude in the choice of foods is ordinarily the cause of the accumulation of salts so acrid and corrosive.”<sup>91</sup> Cooks even transformed culinary variety into a mortal threat, and contemporaries lamented the multitude of choices facing diners: “The true poison is the great number of dishes on our tables.”<sup>92</sup> Dining at the wrong time of day or eating too much at a given meal could easily overwhelm the stomach, resulting in the accumulation of dangerous acids and salts. Lémery quoted the axiom “gluttony has killed more people than the sword.”<sup>93</sup> According to the English physician George Cheyne, “too much food

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<sup>88</sup> Marin, *Les Dons de Comus*, xvi.

<sup>89</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12:317.

<sup>90</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface."

<sup>91</sup> George Cheyne, *L'Art de conserver la santé des personnes valétudinaires et de leur prolonger la vie, traduite du latin de M. Cheyne, avec des remarques intéressantes* (Paris: Laurent-Charles D'Houry, fils, 1755), 54-56.

<sup>92</sup> Lecointe, *La Cuisine de santé*, 16.

<sup>93</sup> Lémery, *Traité des aliments*, "Préface."

overwhelms the strength of the digestive organs.”<sup>94</sup> Jourdan Lecoite painted a vivid image of the consequences of overeating:

One is often at the table for three hours, and one eats out of habit – without appetite, taste, or pleasure – a multitude of foods because the nervous fibers of the palate and the stomach, still coated with the yesterday’s badly digested foods, do not have the strength to savor the new ones. Dulled and drowned in a mucky saburra [a granular deposit of the stomach] of undigested raw bits, they have lost all their sensitivity and altered the quality of the gastric juices destined to dissolve our food.<sup>95</sup>

Although most complaints charged that cooks overfed diners, a few worried that cooks actually starved their masters. Since they often prepared foods uncovered, cooks were imagined literally to inhale away food’s nutritious aspects via their airborne “vapors and quintessence.”<sup>96</sup> Lecoite pointed to the cook’s robust figure as evidence of this phenomenon: “the cook is nearly always the fattest and best fed creature in the house.”<sup>97</sup> Perhaps lending some weight to this claim, Mercier once noted that a bystander “could practically feed himself on the thick fumes” pouring out of household kitchens on to the street.<sup>98</sup>

Cooks inevitably defended themselves against charges of poisoning. One cookbook, for example, promised to exclude all “imposter dishes which under seductive enticements hide a secret poison.”<sup>99</sup> But cooks were careful not to deny the possibility of

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<sup>94</sup> A morbidly obese man, Cheyne was certainly in a position to know. For an account of his popular regimes, see Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000). In any case, Cheyne enjoyed good credibility in matters of French cuisine. See, for example, Marin, *La Suite des dons de Comus*, xii-xiv, *Encyclopédie méthodique. Arts et métiers mécaniques, dédiés et présentés à Monsieur Le Noir, Conseiller d’État, Lieutenant général de Police, etc.*, (Paris: Panckoucke, 1783), s.v. “Cuisinier-Traiteur, Pâtissier-Rôtisseur (Art du).”

<sup>95</sup> Lecoite, *La Cuisine de santé*, 17.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 5:255.

<sup>99</sup> [Menon], *La Cuisine et office de santé propre à ceux qui vivent avec économie et régime* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1758), 10.



poisoning outright. Some cooks *had* poisoned diners, they acknowledged. Food *did* affect health, they agreed. But, as Menon artfully noted, should the entire occupation be blamed for the mistakes of a few, poorly trained cooks?<sup>100</sup> By acknowledging the past failures of individual cooks, *la cuisine moderne* preserved the belief that cooks could influence the human body. If cooks possessed the power to harm, then by extension they also could cure.

### 3. Social Order

If cooks were not especially criminal and if their imagined crimes in any case diverged from actual criminality, what then do representations of their danger tell us? William H. Sewell has suggested that “[r]epresentations of women’s work, in short, tell us a great deal about the artists’ and the print-buying public’s fantasies about working girls, but not much about women’s work.”<sup>101</sup> Much the same could be said for representations of dangerous cooks: to a large degree they reflected fantasies about cooks. But I would suggest that these fantasies also *do* tell us something about cooks’ work. Representations of danger were colored both by the specific conditions of cooks’ labor and by reactions to the claims put forth by *la cuisine moderne*. At the same time, the fantasies embedded in these representations reveal a great deal about the social and cultural landscape inhabited by cooks. Drawing on the conclusions of anthropologists Mary Douglas and Victor Turner, Sarah Maza has suggested that servants’ marginality

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<sup>100</sup> Menon, *La Science du maître d’hôtel cuisinier, avec des observations sur la connoissance et propriétés des alimens* (Paris: Paulus-du-Mesnil, 1749), x-xi.

<sup>101</sup> William H. Sewell, "Visions of Labor: Illustrations of the Mechanical Arts before, in, and after Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*," in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, ed. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 260.

invested them “with powers that challenge the ordering of society.”<sup>102</sup> While representations of dangerous cooks comprised one response to these powers, masters also took legal action to reinforce the order of their households and by extension of society in general. Although Maza concludes that fears about servants’ power were ultimately “absurd,” these court cases illustrate how masters feared that cooks threatened them, other servants, and even the population at large.<sup>103</sup>

### *The Master’s Honor*

Following the death of his wife in January 1786, Petit Delamothe accused his cook Nanette Bailleux of stealing household linens. Although of course any form of vol domestique could have resulted in the death penalty, in this case the allegedly stolen linens amounted to 1100 to 1200 livres, no small sum. Bailleux immediately resigned her position and won a judgment of 30 livres against her master. Despite the modest sum involved, Delamothe appealed the sentence, declaring that his “honor” was at stake. From the testimony in the case, we learn that Delamothe never had any hard evidence implicating his cook. Instead he claimed that Bailleux had both opportunity and poor moral character. First, Delamothe charged that Bailleux had access to the keys to the linen pantry. He argued that the close relationship between Bailleux and his late wife indicated that the cook wielded a great deal of responsibility outside of the kitchen, a claim that Bailleux vigorously denied.<sup>104</sup> He thus cast his cook as a conniving liar who at

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<sup>102</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 137.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>104</sup> Petit Delamothe, *Mémoire à consulter pour Me Petit Delamothe, avocat, accusé, contre sa cuisinière, demanderesse en réparation d’honneur* (Paris: Veuve Hérisant), 31.

best misconstrued her relationship with her former mistress and at worst exploited a mortally ill woman. Second, Delamothe embarked on a systematic character assassination, telling anyone who would listen about his thieving cook. In a *mémoire* contesting the original sentence, Delamothe indicted domestics in general as untrustworthy, calling them “negligent servants who compiled lies to seduce the first judges.”<sup>105</sup> Finally, he labeled Bailleux a “hussy” and a “slut.”<sup>106</sup> By invoking the usual dangers of theft and sexuality, Delamothe sought public support for his effort to restore his own honor, threatened as much by the cook’s previous legal victory as by her alleged theft.<sup>107</sup>

### *The Cause of All Masters*

A 1762 case evinced fears of cooks practicing far more sophisticated theft, illustrating just how deeply involved a cook could become in his masters’ financial dealings. On 2 July a cook named Queval filed a lawsuit against his former employer, the comtesse de Varneville charging that she wrongfully accused him of theft, thus irreparably damaging his reputation. In restitution, he demanded nothing less than:

That the comtesse de Varneville be made to recognize him as a man of honor and probity and to do so officially before a notary. Second that she pay him damages and interests to repair on the one hand the wrong she caused him by defaming him through odious calumny and on the other hand the undignified treatment she meted out along with the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>106</sup> Joly de Fleury, *Précis pour la femme Bailleux, ci-devant cuisinière du sieur Petit, intimée, contre le sieur Petit de la Mothe, receveur des rentes à la ville, appellant* (Paris: N. H. Nyon, 1787), 3.

<sup>107</sup> For an excellent analysis of the strategy of appealing to public opinion, see Sarah C. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 12-14.

cruelty with which she chased him from her house. Third, that she be held to pay him his wages and return to him his belongings.<sup>108</sup>

Given the unpleasant consequences associated with *vol domestique*, Queval's concern about being wrongly labeled a thief was certainly understandable. Moreover, given the importance of good morals, even the accusation of theft could seriously impair a cook's chances of securing work. Yet what precipitated Queval's dismissal was not fraudulent accounting or the loss of food, silver, or linens, but rather the disappearance of four stock certificates. De Varneville asserted that she had secretly entrusted the certificates to Queval's care, informing no one else. What business did a servant cook have with stock certificates? The countess claimed the cook had in fact actually brokered the deal: according to his lawyer's brief, de Varneville "had purchased [the stocks] through the negotiation of Queval her cook."<sup>109</sup> Although he had served the comtesse de Varneville (and her parents before her) for thirty-three years, Queval's long period of service was not invoked as an explanation for entrusting the certificates to him. De Varneville claimed that old cooks were at least as likely to steal as new ones, echoing the dangers illustrated by the old cook in the *Maltôte de cuisinières*. Thus issues of culpability aside, what is perhaps most striking about this case is its nonchalant attitude toward the possibility of a mere servant cook being so deeply involved in his mistress's very expensive and completely secret financial transactions. His involvement was depicted as normal.

In de Varneville's brief, she acknowledged that precious little evidence proved Queval's guilt other than the alleged disappearance of the stock certificates. Thus the

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<sup>108</sup> de Varneville, *Mémoire pour la comtesse de Varneville, intimée; contre Jean-Baptiste Queval, ci-devant son cuisinier*, vol. Didot (Paris: 1765), 8.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

case largely came down to his word against his mistress's. She could only ask rhetorically, "was she obliged to keep in her service a man whose fidelity was suspect?"<sup>110</sup> In the absence of evidence, de Varneville's strategy for indicting Queval's reputation drew on popular prejudice against cooks. De Varneville pointed to Queval's unseemly wealth as a sign of his guilt. In addition to a lifetime pension of 150 livres, for example, Queval was known to have assets of twelve to fifteen thousand livres. According to de Varneville's *mémoire*, "this is a considerable fortune for a man of his station [*état*]." <sup>111</sup> Moreover, after leaving de Varneville's service, Queval was found to have a great deal of money in his possession, again inappropriate for a cook. The de Varneville case thus revealed a deep uneasiness about cooks' financial dealings. Although just about every cook was granted a great deal of financial responsibility, such activities were viewed more as a necessary evil than as a sign of trust. Maintaining order was the goal:

Every duty in society is reciprocal. Servants, these men like us, must not be the plaything of our caprice. Their reputation must not be sacrificed lightly. Who would deny it? But servants owe respect and recognition to their masters, to their benefactors. They are culpable when they insult them and when they slander them. The comtesse de Varneville's cause is that of all masters.<sup>112</sup>

In the end, the de Varneville case came down to a matter of honor, where de Varneville's word carried more weight than that of a servant cook. As her memo argued: "The testimony of a woman of the comtesse de Varneville's station should not be suspected easily."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 18.

### *Compromising Society*

If cooks could corrupt households through theft, they could utterly destroy them through seduction. When Jean Forcade died in September 1754, he left the vast majority of his wealth not to his surviving family members but rather to his cook's daughter, Barbe Pieters. In his will, Forcade promised Pieters 80,000 livres in addition to whatever other assets he had already bestowed upon her at the time of his death. In contrast, Forcade's own relatives stood to receive rather paltry inheritances: his two illegitimate sons were to get just 6000 livres each, and while Forcade's nephew became the universal beneficiary he would inherit only those assets remaining after the itemized endowments had been made. Jean Forcade's sister, Marie Forcade, was outraged by this arrangement of the estate, and after her brother's death she vigorously contested his will.

By exploiting popular belief in cooks' powers of seduction, Marie Forcade hoped to sway public opinion to her side. According to the sister, Forcade had been recklessly intimate with his cook, who enjoyed "the greatest familiarity with him."<sup>114</sup> So close were the two that according to Marie Forcade the cook's own husband had at one point become jealously angry and had threatened both his wife and Jean Forcade, an act for which he received a prison sentence. But far more alarming than the suggested indiscretions between Jean Forcade and his cook were intimations that the cook had exploited even her own daughter in order to compromise her master. Marie Forcade charged that from the age of thirteen or fourteen, Barbe Pieters had been summoned from

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<sup>114</sup> Joly de Fleury, *Observations sur le memoire de Barbe Lievine Pieters, Appellante* (Paris: Knapen, 1755), 6-7.

the convent by Forcade to sleep in the bedroom adjoining his, which “Pieters’s mother had the indecency to tolerate.”<sup>115</sup> Such an arrangement was doubly insulting since this bedroom ordinarily belonged to Marie Forcade’s son-in-law. Thanks to the cook’s machinations, Barbe Pieters had not only escaped the kitchen, she had penetrated into the family’s own personal living spaces.

At stake in this case were the divisions and hierarchy of family order. In her own trial brief, Barbe Pieters asserted that she had regularly eaten at her master’s table like a member of the family. Marie Forcade denied this claim, declaring instead that Pieters “ate in the kitchen with the servants.”<sup>116</sup> Indeed, according to Marie Forcade, Pieters had been “always raised in Forcade’s kitchen by her mother whom she helped in her functions as a servant as soon as her age permitted.”<sup>117</sup> To escape the kitchen and to eat instead at the master’s table implied a level of equality that Marie Forcade could not abide.<sup>118</sup> Marie Forcade further charged that her brother had always noted “all that concerned” Barbe Pieters in a book titled “Livre de domestiques.”<sup>119</sup> According to Forcade, tolerance of such a perversion of family order threatened far more than just the household. By accusing the cook and her daughter of seeking to flatten if not invert the domestic hierarchy, Marie Forcade claimed that their behavior jeopardized the very fabric

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 3. Marie Forcade’s brief also referred to the cook’s “indecent complacency.”

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>118</sup> Yet cooks apparently did occasionally dine with their masters. One advertisement from the *affiches* promised a cook that “she would eat at the masters’ table.” *Affiches de Bordeaux*, 2 September 1773. At the same time, other advertisements suggest the importance of maintaining a strict division between servants and masters, with one young man seeking a position in a household where he would be “neither servant nor regarded as one.” *Petites affiches*, 6 February 1779.

<sup>119</sup> Fleury, *Observations sur le memoire de Barbe Lievine Pieters, Appellante*, 2-3.

of social order, asking “is there anything more invalid than a clause which injures good moral conduct and compromises all of society?”<sup>120</sup>

### *Sickening the Poor*

By claiming that Barbe Pieters’s actions endangered society as a whole, Forcade insisted that cooks’ threats were no longer limited to the private household. Indeed, the cook’s actions could find victims at just about every level of society. On 25 June 1744, the police of Paris conducted a raid on unlawful food vendors. In two different locations, they came across women hawking scraps on the street: each of these four women sold from a table covered with “a display of cooked meats.” On the rue Neuve des Petits Champs, they found Toussaints and la Farre, both of whom had set up business near the Compagnie des Indes. On the rue des Frondeurs the police caught another two women, Lecomte and Grostard: the former had staked out the front of a candlemaker’s shop near the rue Saint-Honoré, while the latter was selling her food a bit up the street. Confronting each woman the police seized her food, cast it into the gutter, and ordered the offender to appear in court.

By the time of these seizures, the sale of food scraps had already been outlawed for decades. Regulations from 1724 and 1726 specified that any person caught selling leftover food – whatever the pretext – was subject to not only a fine of two hundred livres but also the confiscation of “the plates, terrines, tables, and trestles, and linens” on which the food might be displayed. Though none of the women was identified as a cook and though presumably anyone could be charged with selling food illegally, the judgment

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 8.



in the 1744 case singled out cooks for particular attention. As the sentence noted, “tolerance of this type of food resale would allow cooks to steal from their masters and mistresses or to take and divide the portion of food intended to feed the [other] servants.”<sup>121</sup> Moreover, the sentence charged that selling leftovers “can give rise to another problem which concerns the health of this city’s inhabitants, since most of the different types of meats – having been mixed together and often kept for a long time – go bad, especially during the present season, and are capable of sickening the poor people who buy them.”<sup>122</sup> Thus in addition to potentially stealing from their masters, cooks also threatened public health by poisoning those people foolish or desperate enough to purchase their wares. By claiming that cooks would harm their fellow servants and the city’s poor, the court emphasized the destabilizing consequences of cooks’ behavior. They not only threatened their masters above them, but also their peers and the urban poor below them. Cooks could export the kitchen’s dangers to the public at large.

Underlying all of the dangers associated with cooks was a curious tension between incompetence and expertise. On the one hand, through negligence cooks could subject their masters to financial loss or poisoning. On the other hand, cooks possessed a level of expertise that potentially allowed them to harm their masters extraordinarily deeply. To forge accounts and embezzle funds required financial acumen. To deceive sophisticated and refined palates, cooks effected powerful kitchen transformations.

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<sup>121</sup> *Sentence de police, qui fait deffenses à tous cuisiniers, cuisinieres et autres de vendre et débiter en regrat aucuns restes de viandes cuites; et condamne en l’amende plusieurs particulieres pour y avoir contrevenu.*, (Paris: P.J. Mariette, Imprimeur de la Police, 1744), 2.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Indeed the promotion of *la cuisine moderne* as a means to correct the perceived flaws of cooks only worsened cooks' situation. Mary Douglas has argued that for marginal creatures like cooks, "all precaution against danger must come from others. He cannot help his abnormal situation."<sup>123</sup> Cooks were thus the last people who could successfully reform cooking. They were thus imagined to make their own fortune even as they corrupted the household, its diners, and indeed even the society around them.

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<sup>123</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Power: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2003), 98.

## Chapter 8. Conclusion

Le grand art de la nouvelle Cuisine, c'est de donner au poisson le goût de la viande, et à la viande le goût du poisson, et de ne laisser aux légumes absolument aucun goût.

*Lettre d'un pâtissier anglois au nouveau cuisinier français*

The pamphleteer who went by the name the “English Pastrycook” wryly argued that cooks’ disguise of dishes effectively destroyed natural order: “one cannot distinguish either by taste or by eye whether what one is eating is meat or fish.” This culinary disguise had broader cultural consequences beyond the dining table. According to the pamphleteer, under such conditions “eloquent” literary works assumed “the air of dissertations,” while dissertations became eloquent. Verse and prose reversed positions. The inversion threatened by *la cuisine moderne* effectively turned the world upside-down: “Funeral elegies make people laugh, comedies make them cry, an opera is a sonata, a poem is a history, a history is a novel.”<sup>1</sup>

We could easily add to the list inversions like “the cook is a doctor” or “the servant determines taste.” In the eyes of most contemporaries, *la cuisine moderne*’s proposals constituted radical challenges to cultural and social order. The circumstances and prejudices associated with domestic service simply overwhelmed any endeavor

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<sup>1</sup> "Lettre d'un pâtissier anglois, au nouveau cuisinier français," in *Le Cuisinier gascon* (Amsterdam: 1747), 208-209. For this concept I am indebted to Christopher Hill's work on the English radical revolution. Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1972).

aimed at establishing cooks as authorities in matters of taste or health. If we consider *la cuisine moderne* as an attempt to “professionalize” cooking, then without a doubt it was a flop. Cooks failed to achieve most of their stated goals. They were mocked for trying to theorize and engineer taste. They were never accepted as medical practitioners, and indeed their claim of producing a more salubrious cuisine largely backfired. Cooks instead were cast as dangerous sources of corruption who threatened to undermine the moral and physical health of the households they served. But if most of cooks’ occupational ambitions were thwarted, *la cuisine moderne* still succeeded on two fronts: first, a few cooks were for a time highly remunerated for their services; and second, these same cooks contributed to France’s international standing as a cultural hegemon. Yet these very successes encouraged still further criticism of cooks, who allegedly had no place participating in the French civilizing narrative.

Whether through abdication or delegation of authority, masters during the Old Regime largely ceded control of the kitchen to cooks. In response to the perception that the kitchen’s spatial characteristics increasingly threatened to undermine the convenience, comfort, and health of the household, architects progressively distanced the kitchen from masters’ space. As suggested in this dissertation’s opening chapters, the kitchen functioned as something like a public workshop – with all its attendant risks, sensory and otherwise – that had penetrated into residential space. Within this isolated site, cooks wielded a remarkable degree of autonomy. In a sense they were neither within nor without the house; instead, they mediated between, on the one hand, market transactions and external filth, and on the other, the increasingly privatized space of domesticity and comfort. Efforts to introduce hygiene and order to the kitchen’s design

reflected the growing concerns associated with this isolated space. Absent the oversight of masters, however, the kitchen was essentially abandoned to slide into chaos. Rather than bring it under control, this strategy of quarantine only intensified the kitchen's status as a remote and disorderly site. I do not mean to suggest only that the isolation of the kitchen encouraged fears of contamination or that such fears inevitably led to isolation. Rather, the two reinforced each other in an autocatalytic reaction with each viewed as the natural response to the other. As the kitchen became ever distant, its reputation as a disorderly site grew. As the kitchen became perceived as disorderly, architects sought to protect masters from its influence.

An analogous conflict developed in response to concerns about the safety of cooks' tools and the accuracy of their account books. Despite endless worries about the danger of copper poisoning, masters never assumed direct responsibility for the care of kitchen tools. Instead cooks, whose trustworthiness was considered dubious at best, continued as always to attend to the repair and maintenance of their kitchen equipment. Likewise, in the face of fears of embezzlement, masters continued to allow cooks to practice kitchen bookkeeping.

Cooks sought to counter the alleged disorder of the kitchen's physical site and practices by opening new discursive spaces of culinary order and authority. By marketing their services in the affiches, they forced masters to negotiate with them in the essentially neutral space of the press. Even if work advertisements were sometimes "normalized" by editors as one historian has suggested, all participants, masters and

servants, would have felt the same impact.<sup>2</sup> Cooks' most audacious maneuver involved the publication of cookbooks. Here they fashioned a discourse of taste where they seized cultural authority from their masters. Finally, armed with the principles of *la cuisine moderne*, cooks attempted to establish themselves not only as arbiters of taste but also as medical practitioners. In the public world of print, cooks sought to distance themselves from the private contamination of domestic service by casting themselves as practitioners of a new public expertise. While far from asserting any degree of equality, they positioned themselves as the worthy subordinates of doctors, explicitly linking their menial service to the liberal professions. While perhaps modest to our eyes, such claims rang as audacious during the eighteenth century.

Colin Jones has suggested that during the latter half of the eighteenth century a "Great Chain of Buying" encouraged more horizontally-oriented networks that increasingly replaced the vertical hierarchies that had long organized society.<sup>3</sup> By effectively supplanting the court-centered society of orders, these networks effectively forged the nation long before the Revolution. But if other groups succeeded in establishing such networks, cooks encountered fierce opposition to their attempts. With cooks eagerly asserting their powers as both tastemakers and medical practitioners, they

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<sup>2</sup> Gilles Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle: la presse d'information en France sous l'Ancien Régime, 1630-1788* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 1129.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Jones, "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change," in *Rewriting the French Revolution: The Andrew Browning Lectures 1989*, ed. Colin Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), Colin Jones, "The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (1996). Sarah Maza has consequently dubbed Jones a "neo-Marxist." Michael Kwass finds Jones's proposal suggestive. Sarah C. Maza, "Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France," *The Journal of Modern History* 69 (1997), 200, Michael Kwass, "Ordering the World of Goods: Consumer Revolution and the Classification of Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 82 (2003), 88, n. 5.

threatened to upset existing vectors of culture and expert authority. Yet even though they mocked, derided, and attacked cooks, contemporaries nonetheless felt compelled to engage with them: whether masters negotiating through the affiches or physicians responding to the claims of *la cuisine moderne*, these critics participated in the new zones of discourse created by cooks. Just as the king increasingly found himself forced to appeal to public opinion, so doctors and cultural elites tacitly accepted a “politics of contestation” by responding to cooks’ claims.<sup>4</sup>

If *la cuisine moderne* thus played a part in the disintegration of old social boundaries, its practitioners did not themselves play a major role in the events of the Revolution. Like other servants, most cooks remained inconspicuous.<sup>5</sup> Among the rolls of voluntary contributions received in 1789 and 1790, cooks and other servants barely even register.<sup>6</sup> Cissie Fairchilds suggests that servants viewed the Revolution with deep ambivalence, especially since they frequently lost work as their masters emigrated.<sup>7</sup> Because cooks could earn such good wages, the stakes for them were especially high. It is perhaps not surprising that one of the sole examples of a servant uprising during the Revolution involved a cook: a certain Eugene Gervais arrested for inciting servants to revolt against National Guard during the summer of 1790.<sup>8</sup> The traditional narrative has

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<sup>4</sup> Keith Michael Baker, "Public opinion as political invention," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 172.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 308-309.

<sup>6</sup> One exception was a certain Garcis, who identified himself as a maître d’hôtel. AN T 328.

<sup>7</sup> Cissie Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 229-244.

<sup>8</sup> George F. E. Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1959), 65, n. 5. Both Sarah Maza and Cissie Fairchilds cite this incident as indicative of the dissatisfaction of newly unemployed servants during the Revolution. Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 307, Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 236.

had cooks like Gervais largely cast into the streets when their aristocratic masters either fled the country or found themselves suddenly deprived of a head. Without their masters to sustain them, these cooks allegedly turned to opening restaurants, effectively ringing the death knell for the era of fine private dining. Rebecca Spang of course challenges this assertion, tracing the restaurant's origins squarely to the Old Regime.<sup>9</sup> But even though the restaurant predated the Revolution, the fact remains that cooks *were* thrown out of work after 1789.<sup>10</sup> Maza and Fairchilds agree that the Revolution had a catastrophic effect on the aristocratic household, forcing servants (especially males) out of work.<sup>11</sup> Cooks' advertisements in the affiches reflect this pressure on the labor market: from 14 July 1789 through 1791 the percentage of male cooks placing ads actually increased, temporarily reversing the long-term trend.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps equally damaging to the institution of cooking were the exigencies of war. Male cooks were swallowed up into the revolutionary armies, and the job advertisements of the 1790s reflect these new circumstances. When one cook looked for work in 1795, his advertisement noted that his "2 immobile fingers" precluded his service in the army.<sup>13</sup> By focusing on institutions rather than cooks Spang neatly sidesteps the Revolution's impact on domestic service, instead conflating the phenomenon of *la cuisine moderne* with the emergence of the restaurant. Without denying certain shared discourses, notably of the potentially

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<sup>9</sup> Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000). Cissie Fairchilds discusses the same phenomenon from the perspective of more anecdotal evidence. Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 237.

<sup>10</sup> Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 236-237.

<sup>11</sup> Maza, *Servants and Masters*, 328-329, Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 234-235, 240.

<sup>12</sup> The percentage of cooks' ads placed by men by increased from 47% (1 January 1787 to 14 July 1789) to 60% (14 July 1789 to 31 December 1791).

<sup>13</sup> *Petites affiches*, 29 January 1795.



restorative properties of food, it must be recalled that the cookbooks of the eighteenth century which advocated *la cuisine moderne* were written exclusively by cooks working in private households. *La cuisine moderne* was foremost the product of private cooking, not public. If the restaurant owes its origins to *la cuisine moderne*, then it arose from *la cuisine moderne's* ashes, not its triumph.

Though the Revolution doomed the aristocratic households that had sustained servant cooks and by extension *la cuisine moderne*, the prejudices against cooks did not fade so easily. Cissie Fairchilds has argued that with the Revolution domestic service finally became an ordinary *métier*, but the particular dangers associated with cooks persisted beyond 1789.<sup>14</sup> In a 1793 judicial *mémoire* a certain Lartois called upon “Citizen Defenders” to unite against the cook Raimbault, who like Forcade’s cook had supposedly diverted her master’s estate to benefit her own son. Though couched in the language of the Revolution – Raimbault threatened to privilege a single individual to the detriment of the nation – the concerns remained the same. A cook had exerted undue sexual influence over her master and had consequently stolen his wealth at the expense of the master’s own family. As in the Forcade case, social order still remained at stake, and the *mémoire* charged, “In a word, Citizen Raimbault has taxed our society.”<sup>15</sup>

Of course since the eighteenth century, traditional cuisine has become one of the hallmarks of French culture. In France, the man who vandalizes a McDonald’s becomes

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<sup>14</sup> Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> *Observations pour le citoyen Lartois, représentant les héritiers Morisse, du Havre. Adressées aux citoyens Prieur, Boissel, Ladet et Anacharsis-Cloos, membres de la Société des amis de la liberté et de l'égalité séante aux Jacobins, ses défenseurs officiels. Contre La cne. Raimbault, cy-devant cuisinière du décédé, et mère de son enfant naturel, riche de 200,000 liv.*, (Le Havre: Célère, 1793), 3.

a national hero. When a three-star chef commits suicide, he sparks a bout of national soul searching. But when historical monographs claim to reveal “the triumph of French cuisine” and “how the French invented the culinary profession,” they presume a teleological if not inevitable process that has culminated in the status of French cuisine today.<sup>16</sup> It is no accident that such works tend to begin their narratives in the nineteenth century, long after the radical propositions of the eighteenth century had ossified into “classic” French cooking. Yet there was a period when French cooks overtly declared themselves to be modern and new, not traditional. Harnessing the notion of a civilizing process and cloaking themselves with scientific theory, these cooks looked more to the future than to the past. This dissertation has sought to restore the contingency of that moment when cooks set about establishing not only a new style of cooking but a new type of cook. Yet in the end the embrace of modernity hardly guaranteed cooks’ success, suggesting that strict limits governed who could aspire to be modern and who could profit from such claims. During the eighteenth century, cooks could claim to be modern, but they never succeeded in capitalizing on these claims.

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<sup>16</sup> Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), Amy B. Trubek, *Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

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