

Call for Papers: Special Issue of *Amerikastudien / American Studies*

## **“Cookbooks in/as American Culture: Identity, Community, Action”**

Edited by Ellen Barth and Corinna Norrick-Rühl (University of Münster)

Deadline for abstracts: June 30, 2024

Deadline for full papers: November 15, 2024

Publication: late 2025/early 2026

As bibliographer Elizabeth Driver has asserted, in order to understand cookbooks as more than mere containers for recipes, “it is important to keep the books themselves at the center of the story” (258). From Amelia Simmon’s *American Cookery* (1796) to the self-published *Trump: A Cookbook for the Political Appetite* (2020), cookbooks in the United States are documents that proclaim political positions, form imagined communities, and exert influence on readers and markets. Although often considered to be apolitical, quotidian, and traditional, cookbooks like Ghetto Gastro’s *Black Power Kitchen* (2022) and the Bloodroot Collective’s *The Political Palate: A Feminist Vegetarian Cookbook* (1980) complicate these characterizations. Taking Driver’s advice to heart, the proposed special issue “Cookbooks in/as American Culture: Identity, Community, Action” brings together articles that explore American cookbooks, past and present, placing particular focus on print culture and book historical methods in order to understand American cookbooks as *books*—that is, as material, textual, cultural, and economic goods. Concerned with the ways books move from author to publisher to bookseller to reader, whether “Shakespearean sonnets or directions for assembling radio kits” (Darnton 67), book history is “a way of thinking about how people have given material form to knowledge and stories” (Howsam 1). While research into cookbooks has expanded in recent years (Le Dantec-Lowry 100), from foodways to rhetoric studies, research into American cookbooks at the intersection of cultural and book studies remains rare. The proposed special issue aims to address this gap and present new research that considers the agents and mechanisms that have made cookbooks a powerful force in American culture.

Cookbooks record taste, tradition, and values, and are therefore valuable sources for American studies. The books inscribe and reinforce individual, communal, and national identities—providing instructions for how to cook and eat like an American—and work as vehicles of protest and resistance. Scholarship from Derleth, Walden, and Theophano have analyzed the strong connection between cookbooks, women, and the private sphere, with research into community cookbooks, a kind of fundraising cookbook with Civil War origins, demonstrating how women made subversive use of cookbooks to break down the public/private dichotomy. Works such as *Cookbook Politics* (2020), *Black Hunger* (1999), and “Queering the Cookbook” (2020) have attested to the political work cookbooks do, revealing how issues such as race, sexuality, and power are encoded in a genre that is often associated with the domestic. West, Dubisar, and Miller and Hardman have further revealed the way activist communities of different generations have used cookbooks as sites of protest, from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Building off of

these important investigations, the proposed special issue aims to further interdisciplinary approaches within cookbook research, connecting to material culture, publishing studies, critical bibliography, and women's book history.

Looking within and beyond the American nation as well as within and beyond the textual content of the books themselves, expected contributions in this special issue will use approaches that incorporate print culture and bibliographic methods to place particular focus on how American cookbooks do cultural work—be that repressive, resistant, or reparative—through their material form, means of creation, distribution and circulation, modes of reading, historical and economic contexts, and movement across national borders. As a whole, the special issue will highlight the potential of book studies methodologies for American studies, opening up new lines of interdisciplinary enquiry around cookbooks and showcasing their significance within broader societal and political contexts.

Please send abstracts (200 words) and a short bio (50 words) by **June 30, 2024**, to the guest editors:

Corinna Norrick-Rühl: [cnorrick@uni-muenster.de](mailto:cnorrick@uni-muenster.de)

Ellen Barth: [e\\_bart10@uni-muenster.de](mailto:e_bart10@uni-muenster.de)

Prospective authors will be notified about proposals by **mid-July**, and final articles of roughly 6,000 words that follow the *Amerikastudien / American Studies. A Quarterly* style guide (<https://dgfa.de/american-studies-a-quarterly-2/article-style-sheet/>) will be expected by **November 15, 2024**. *Amerikastudien / American Studies. A Quarterly* is peer-reviewed, and peer review will follow in early 2025.

## Bibliography

Darnton, Robert. "What Is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111.3 (1982): 65-83.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024803>.

Driver, Elizabeth. "Cookbooks as Primary Sources for Writing History: A Bibliographer's View."

*Food, Culture & Society* 12.3 (2009): 257-74.

<https://doi.org/10.2752/175174409X431987>.

Howsam, Leslie. "The Study of the Book." *Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*. Ed.

Leslie Howsam. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 1-13. Print.

Le Dantec-Lowry, Hélène. "Reading Women's Lives in Cookbooks and Other Culinary Writings: A Critical Essay." *Revue française d'études américaines* 2.116 (2008): 99-122.

<https://doi.org/10.3917/rfea.116.0099>.