

Early Cooking I

The following is from an 1819 cookbook in the Museum collection called *American Cooking – by an American Orphan*. It is most likely that this is a variation of *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons, first published in 1796 but was extremely well received and continued to be published until the 1830s.

American Cookery was the first printed cookbook written by an American, and the first cookery title in which the word "American" appeared. This slim publication is addressed specifically to orphans and others of "unfortunate circumstances" who "are reduced to the necessity of going into families in the line of domestics." Most of the recipes are English in origin but have an American spin (it would be a few more decades before a Canadian cookbook would come to the market). Some of the changes include the use of corn meal and molasses instead of treacle. Also recipes for wild turkey roasts, pumpkin pies and cranberry sauce show up in the book, which would not have appeared in a European cookbook.

The benefit of this cookbook is that it provides us a glimpse into the tastes and availability of food in North America and as the 200th Anniversary of the War of 1812 comes up, maybe you will want to try your hand at one of two of the dishes. Keep in mind, the directions are for open hearth cooking (times may vary and you may have to guess at the temperatures).

A crookneck, or winter squash pudding

Core, boil and skin a good squash, and bruise it well; take six large apples, pared, cored, and stewed tender, mix together; add six or seven spoonfuls of dry bread or biscuit, rendered fine as meal, on pint milk or cream, two spoons rose-water, two of wine, five or six eggs beaten and strained, nutmeg, salt and sugar to your taste, one spoon flour, beat all smartly together, bake one hour.

The above is a good recipe for pumpkins, potatoes or yams, adding more moistening, or milk and rose-water, and to the two latter a few black or Lisbon currants, or dry whortleberries scattered in will make it better.

(Image – 985.5.557.jpg)