Reading Early Modern Recipes in a Digital Age

Online Workshop

2-3 September 2022

**Participant Bios**

**Devin Creed**

Devin Creedis a PhD student in history at Duke University where he studies famine, food, and capitalism in 19th and 20th century Bengal and North India.

**Bethan Davies**

Bethan Davies is a second year AHRC PhD student at the University of Roehampton (English and Creative Writing). Her research looks at the shifting metaphorical and material dimensions of sugar and sweetness in the early modern period, and how they intersect, complicate, and ratify contemporary cultural constructions of femininity as portrayed onstage. She has recently been a researcher on the BBC Podcast ‘You’re Dead to Me’. Research interests: early modern drama and performance; material culture; food history; history of intoxicants; history of the body; gender studies.

**Kyle Denlinger** (he/him) is the Digital Pedagogy & Open Education Librarian at Wake Forest University’s Z. Smith Reynolds Library. In this role, Kyle works with faculty to design and implement digital class projects, with a specific focus on digital humanities methods, digital publishing, and the creation of open educational resources. He also teaches undergraduate information literacy courses and supports student and faculty research within his assigned departments. Kyle earned his MA in Information Science and Learning Technologies from the University Missouri and his BS in Secondary Education from the University of Cincinnati.

**Marlene Ernst**

Marlene Ernst is PostDoc at the University of Passau at the Department for Digital Humanities. She studied History and Applied Computer Science at the University of Salzburg and completed her dissertation ("Recipes for the Digital Age. Digital Processing of Sources of Cultural History Shown by the Example of Cookbook Literature of the Early Modern Period") with distinction in 2019. Her research interests lie in the fields of historical recipe research and food studies, digital humanities, citizen science, and science communication.

 **Anna Fielding**

After working for the National Trust at Little Moreton Hall in Cheshire as a costumed interpreter and on several academic collaborations with the University of Manchester, I began my collaborative PhD between Manchester Metropolitan University and the National Trust. I research early modern food and dining at three National Trust properties and how the families who lived there used dinner parties to influence others. I believe that food history is a useful way to engage the public in deeper and more complex ways, using affective interactions which incorporate doing, making, sensory experiences, and unexpected aspects of history.

**Joseph Kelly**

I am a first-year DPhil student in Italian Cultural History at the University of Oxford. My doctoral research is focused on Italian Fascist radio propaganda and the regime’s search for cultural and political influence overseas. Of particular interest to me are rhetorical appeals to the glory of Ancient Rome and the notion of Fascist universalism. My research looks at Fascist propaganda in various countries, including Spain, France, Britain and the United States, targeted both at foreign listeners and Italians migrants. Having read for French and Italian at the University of Oxford (2019), I went on to train as a journalist, completing an MA at the University of Salford (2020), and working in radio before returning to academia.

**Sarah Kernan**

Sarah Kernan is an independent culinary historian. She is a Scholar-in-Residence at the Newberry Library (Chicago, IL) and a Virtual Fellow at the Linda Hall Library (Kansas City, MO) during 2022–23. Sarah is currently working on her first monograph, *Creating Cookbooks: Networks of Recipe Readers and Writers in England, 1300–1700*, and with Helga Müllneritsch is editing *Early Modern Manuscript Recipe Books Across Europe: Materiality and Use* (under contract with Amsterdam University Press). Sarah also serves as an editor [*The Recipes Project*](https://recipes.hypotheses.org/) and a Corresponding Member for the journal *Food and History*. She is also an active public historian, teaching culinary history courses and historical cooking workshops in continuing education and adult learning programs at the Newberry Library and the College of DuPage (Glen Ellyn, IL). Sarah also collaborates frequently with the Newberry Library, assembling modules on food history topics for [Digital Collections for the Classroom](https://dcc.newberry.org/), teaching programs on culinary history for teachers, and creating [YouTube collection presentations](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJLwjPnkjfIOBglMNt-cAI2LzS9rfudq1) for the Center for Renaissance Studies.

**Stephanie Koscak**

Stephanie Koscak is Associate Professor of History at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She is a cultural historian of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain and the British Atlantic World, focusing on material and visual culture, print and ephemera, politics, and gender. Her first book, *Monarchy, Print Culture, and Reverence in Early Modern England: Picturing Royal Subjects*, was published by Routledge in 2020, and she has published articles in the *Journal of British Studies, Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture*, and the *Court Historian.* She is working on a new project about the material culture and dispossession in the eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world, provisionally titled "Inscribing Absence: Materialities of Loss in Eighteenth-Century Britain." She received her PhD from Indiana University, Bloomington (2013) and was previously a Postdoctoral Fellow in the History of the Material Text in the History Department at the University of California, Los Angeles.

**Kaian Lam**

Kaian Lam is from Macau. During the day, she is a Chinese-Portuguese translator-interpreter and works in the civil service. In the evening, she teaches History of Food and Gastronomy to postgraduate students. Academically, she is trained in the Lusophone ethnographic tradition and holds an African Studies doctorate. She collaborates with universities in Lisbon and Porto for publications and presentations. She fills her leisure time leafing through novels, deciphering French verb conjugations, and reading other people’s fascinating research. Personal website: [www.creolescape.com](http://www.creolescape.com)

**Julia Martins**

Julia Martins is a final-year PhD candidate at King’s College London. Her thesis is about the translation of recipes about the female body from Italian into French and English in the 16th and 17th centuries, and how the circulation of knowledge about sex and reproduction shaped the way the sexed body was understood. Her general research interests are gender history, history of medicine, and feminism. You can follow her work on [juliamartins.co.uk](http://juliamartins.co.uk/).

**Ailsa Maxwell**

I am a first-year History DPhil candidate at the University of Oxford. My research looks at ‘luxurious cuisine’ in eighteenth-century Britain. I am examining the growing, importing, preparing and eating of foods within a cultural context to see how moral and social debates affected ideas about food, consumption, and body image in the period.  Many of these ideas have resonated in subsequent periods, particularly in concerns about the influence of unfamiliar cuisines, and in public health interventions which connect health, bodyweight and moral responsibility. I previously studied at the London School of Economics (BA, 2019) and University College London (MA, 2020).

**Mireille Pardon**

 Mireille J. Pardon is an assistant professor of History at Berea College and a visiting Mellon Faculty Fellow at the Medieval Institute, University of Notre Dame. She received her PhD from Yale University in 2020 and is currently working on a book about judicial practice in fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Flanders. To bring her engagement with history outside the confines of academia, Mireille started a TikTok in January 2021 and currently has 68,000 followers. On TikTok, she creates informative and humorous videos about the Middle Ages, from why different medieval theologians would have been canceled on Twitter to advice from a time-traveling legal advisor trying to help you get away with murder.

**Leonie Rau**

Leonie Rau is a research assistant at the Chair of Islamic History and Culture at the University of Tübingen, Germany. She is currently preparing her dissertation proposal on medieval Arabic recipe collections and is particularly interested in cookery, perfumery, and aphrodisiac recipes.

She also writes and edits for *ArabLit & ArabLitQuarterly* and can be found on Twitter @Leonie\_Rau\_.

**Ewelina Sikora**

I am currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Central European University (Budapest/Vienna) working on a dissertation about food, drink, and politics in seventeenth-century Poland-Lithuania’s diplomatic relations. More widely, my interest lies in early modern Central Europe’s political and material culture.

So far, my research has been supported by a fellowship from the Leibniz Institute for European History (Mainz) and a grant for a study visit at the European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food (Tours).

**Sonakshi Srivastava**

Sonakshi Srivastava is a writing tutor at Ashoka University, and an MPhil scholar at Indraprastha University. Her research is at the intersection of food futures, speculative fictions, and the Anthropocene. She is a South Asia Speaks Translation Fellow from the class of 2021, and was also shortlisted for the Food Serendipity Lab.

**Florence Swan**

Florence started her PhD at Durham University in 2021 after completing her MSt at Oxford and BA at Royal Holloway. ‘The Transmission of Taste’, examines food, recipes, and taste in England c.1200-c.1450. Collaborating with Blackfriars Restaurant, her archival research will be complimented with the practical knowledge of culinary science and recipe development from the restaurant. Although a food historian, her research interests encompass a variety of topics from medieval horticulture to London urban life in the twelfth to sixteenth centuries

**Brigitte Webster**

As a former teacher of home economics and history I now dedicate my time to the full-time research and recreation of authentic Early Modern recipes. I use my Tudor home in Norfolk as my authentic work base where I also grow all typical vegetables and fruits which were once a common sight in Tudor kitchens. 2023 will see the publication of my first book ‘Eating with the Tudors’ and in 2024 ‘How to create a Tudor garden in your back yard’, both by Pen & Sword Publishers.

**Abstracts (in presentation order)**

“Crossing boundaries of time, form, and taste:” professional chefs and their historical inspirations in Poland, Ewelina Sikora

Stanisław Czerniecki’s “Compendium ferculorum,” the only 17th-century printed cookbook in Polish, was published in a critical edition in 2009, initiating the Monumenta Poloniae Culinaria series, numbering eight volumes today. Those source editions challenged the popular image of an early modern cuisine in Poland-Lithuania, finding readership beyond the academic audience. Several chefs (Aleksander Baron, Maciej Nowicki, Marcin Przybysz, Karol Okrasa) have named Old Polish cuisine a source of inspiration, often explicitly mentioning “Compendium ferculorum.” In my presentation, I will look into how professional chefs refer to and relate to the past while communicating with a broader audience in the interviews, on their websites, and social media.

*Experimenting with period authentic gluten free alternatives in Tudor cookery,* Brigitte Webster

As a qualified teacher of cookery and history, my path into historic cookery started with the practical element. Having lived in a sixteenth century property was a deciding element in my choice of period. As a vegetarian and keen gardener, I quickly focused on the recipes for ‘lean’ days and my food intolerances have forced me to research period authentic gluten free alternatives. I am particularly interested in the use of pea flour but also bean flour, oats, chestnuts and walnuts. The recreation of early recipes with such alternatives is sometimes a challenge but helps me to understand the diet of the poor in that era.

*In Search of Lost Thyme: The limitations in and of seeking authenticity,* Ailsa Maxwell and Joseph Kelly

One of the main methodological challenges of recreating historic recipes is the attempt to achieve authenticity - a familiar concept which rarely receives analytical interrogation. The most apparent stumbling block to achieving an ‘authentic’ recipe recreation is usually kitchen equipment, but ingredients would also have been very different. We will outline some of the ways academics have attempted to overcome such methodological challenges while questioning the very value of achieving authenticity. For this, we will discuss the case study of macaroni cheese. From its fourteenth-century Italian roots to eighteenth-century British and French versions, can we speak of a truly ‘authentic’ version of this dish?

*Traces of Portuguese Cuisine in Modern West Bengal*, Devin Creed

Portuguese culinary influence is easy to see in Goa and Kerala, but much less so in Bengal, a region far removed from the Estado de India's direct influence. The Portuguese established a trading post in Bengal in 1528 and remained a steady commercial presence in the region, but Portuguese culinary influence has only survived in sweet-making techniques and the elusive Bandel cheese. I tracked down this odd cheese at a stall named J Johnson in New Market, one of Kolkata’s most prominent 19th century markets. Its sharp, salty flavor sets it wholly apart from typical dairy items of the city.

*Recreating Macanese cuisine, reportedly the world’s first fusion food born of Portuguese Discoveries,* Kaian Lam

By December 2022, Macau will have completed 23 years’ history as a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China. This will add up to Macau’s 400-plus years’ encounter with the Portuguese. Politically and legally, Macau is said to have always been an unalienable part of China; but culturally and socially, Macau is claimed to have witnessed historical convergence of European and Asian influences. Macanese cuisine epitomizes this celebratory narrative. Not only is Macanese cuisine recognized by UNESCO as the world’s first fusion food, but it is also granted Chinese national recognition as the country’s own intangible heritage. We will investigate the processes of patrimonialisation more closely.

*“Seeth not your sugar…for that will make it black”: Sanitising Sugar in Early Modern Receipt Books,* Bethan Davies

This paper examines the fraught assimilation of sugar into the early modern household. As sugar’s usage evolved and it percolated down the social strata, it became invested with new and complex connotative meanings. While the nation was increasingly defined by its love of sugar, the commodity’s residual connotations of otherness and subaltern labour haunted its appearance in English culture. I reflect on sugar’s troubling chromatic symbolism within an emergent semiotics of race, suggesting that the commodity functioned as a powerful index of racial and national alterity in the home.

*"'A Sweet Apple': Inducing Menstruation with an Edible Medicine”*, Julia Martins

Early modern printed recipe books were full of ‘secrets of women’, practical knowledge about the female body and reproduction. Many of these formulas included ways of stimulating menstruation and ‘cleaning’ the womb. For women of childbearing age, these recipes promised to facilitate conception, as regular, healthy menstruation was thought to be a sign of fertility. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, these recipes multiplied in number and grew ever more specialised, although there was still much overlap between emmenagogues, aphrodisiacs, and abortifacients. In this paper, I explore these trends through a unique recipe, an apple-based medicine to purge the womb.

*Chickpeas, Eggs, and Goat's Hooves: Aphrodisiac Recipes from 14th Century Cair*o, Leonie Rau

My presentation will focus on a chapter of the encyclopaedia *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* by 14th-century Egyptian scholar Shihab ad-Din an-Nuwayri. In this chapter, an-Nuwayri compiles dozens of recipes broadly related to sex, ranging from aphrodisiac foods and external stimulatory applications such as pastes, perfumes, and deodorants, to suppositories, enemas, and methods of encouraging or preventing pregnancy, as well as remedies to staunch excessive sexual appetites. I present two of these recipes in their literary, historical, and medical contexts, with particular attention to the gendered aspects of medieval and early-modern Arabic sexual medicine.

*Baroque Culinary Art – Today*, Marlene Ernst

Take a prominent Salzburg noble family of the early modern period, dishes with (aristocratic) history and combine everything into a cookbook for modern connoisseurs. A look into the culinary past opens new worlds of taste. The aim is to show what challenges can be expected in terms of content analysis and practical implementation of historical recipes when dealing with early modern cookery book manuscripts and how these can be dealt with. In the cookbook manuscript of Maria Clara Dückher, dated 1654, many Baroque kitchen secrets can be revealed by reading between the lines.

*Recipes and Public History* Anna Fielding

My work focuses on early modern gentry commensality: dinner party interactions that brought together food, conversation, décor, religious thought, political allegiance, modes of entertainment, the early modern body, and material culture. I present my research to the public at properties across the north-west through exhibitions, room settings, indoor and outdoor installations, creative workshops, and community group projects. I want to discuss the various ways I have used food and recipes in my work at heritage sites. I believe remaking and exploring written recipes can open up and complicate 16th and 17th century lives for audiences through making, tasting, and questioning.

*Domestic Knowledge: Early Modern Women, Recipes, and Classroom Community During Pandemic Times,* Stephanie Koscak & Kyle Denlinger

This presentation discusses a fall 2020 European history class about early modern women and gender that was organized around historic recipes and included the creation of a public website ([www.domesticknowledge.com](http://www.domesticknowledge.com/)) with recipe transcriptions and student research essays. The household was a space of knowledge creation, experimentation, healing, and gendered labor, implicated in larger histories of trade, colonialism, and racism. By examining how historic recipes and foodways reveal “hidden” histories of power, empire, and slavery, students gained a more critical and diverse history of the period, while also recognizing the forms of collaboration central to the creation of manuscript recipe books. We are working to migrate our website to a new platform to preserve the data and make it available for future contributors.

*The Digital Thesis: Recording Culinary Research in a Digital Age,*Florence Swan

In this paper I will use my experience researching medieval recipes to discuss how food historians can better utilise digital media in academic publications, particularly theses, arguing the inherent sensory nature of food lends itself towards multisensory media. I will use my PhD *The Transmission of Taste* to demonstrate how I am combining the digital with the traditional to present a blended, radical approach to food history. It is hoped this paper will demonstrate how traditional archival and recipe analysis can be effectively combined with recipe reconstruction and digital records to provide a multisensory and interactive study of food history.

*Savouring the Aura: Food, Digital Savour and Authenticity,* Sonakshi Srivastava

There is an instance in Intizar Husain’s popular novel, Basti, where, while dining at the Shiraz, a restaurant in the newly created Pakistan, discussion ensues about the authenticity of the identity of the bread seller, Nuru. He boasts of being a ‘pure bred Ambala man, evoking ’ layers of connotations of identity, nostalgia, and nation/al boundaries in the face of the partition of the British India.

Cyber wars exist to lay claim to the authenticity of biryani and its local variants, the “real” kebabs and its imitations around. Through this paper I seek to explore the intertwined and contested notions of “authenticity” and “heritage” in the face of certain food items (basmati rice as the latest example). My paper seeks to navigate through the implications of the authenticity in the age of digitality. What does it mean to be original? These are a few questions that I unpack in my paper.