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## The Early Culinary Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland

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### SUMMARY

The paper discusses the scarcity of culinary manuscripts in Ireland and how the country's culinary history is not as developed as in other parts of the world. It highlights the influence of the relationship between Ireland and England on Irish culinary traditions. Due to the absence of a medieval recipe writing tradition in Ireland, the earliest surviving manuscript recipe books date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are written exclusively in English, primarily for household use. Those Irish manuscript recipe books that identify an author or compiler often link them to upper-class backgrounds. Female members of the upper class were the primary authors of these collections, which were predominantly compiled by women in domestic settings, similar to the practice in Britain. The National Library of Ireland holds several manuscript recipe books, with the earliest texts dating from the mid- to late 17<sup>th</sup> century, offering insights into the culinary culture of the time. These early recipe collections emphasise the importance of food in Irish culture and reveal the significant influence of British cuisine on Irish cooking.

**KEYWORDS:** manuscript recipe books, recipe, culinary tradition, Ireland.

### STRESZCZENIE

#### Wczesne rękopisy kulinarne w zbiorach Narodowej Biblioteki Irlandii

Autor artykułu zwraca uwagę na niedobór manuskryptów kulinarnych w Irlandii oraz podkreśla wpływ relacji między Irlandią a Anglią na irlandzkie tradycje kulinarne. Ze względu na brak średniowiecznej tradycji zapisywania przepisów w Irlandii, najwcześniejsze zachowane rękopiśmienne książki kucharskie pochodzą z XVII wieku i są napisane wyłącznie w języku angielskim. Powstały one głównie z myślą o członkach rodziny. Te irlandzkie książki kucharskie, które zawierają nazwisko autora lub kompilatora, wskazują na ich powiązanie z wyższymi klasami społeczeństwa irlandzkiego. Kobiety z wyższych klas społecznych były głównymi autorami książek kucharskich, podobnie jak w Wielkiej Brytanii. Biblioteka Narodowa Irlandii jest w posiadaniu wielu rękopiśmiennych książek kucharskich, przy czym najwcześniejsze teksty

pochodzą z połowy lub końca XVII wieku, co pozwala na wgląd w ówczesną kulturę kulinarną. Te wczesne zbiory przepisów podkreślają znaczenie jedzenia w kulturze irlandzkiej oraz wpływ kuchni brytyjskiej na kuchnię irlandzką.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: rękopiśmienne książki kucharskie, przepis, tradycja kulinarna, Irlandia.

Manuscript cookbooks, also known as handwritten recipe collections, offer a fascinating glimpse into the history of food and cooking. Created by individuals or families, these collections record personal tastes, regional influences, and evolving culinary traditions over time. By examining both manuscript and printed cookbooks, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and economic factors that shaped the way people cooked and ate. This paper will explore the earliest manuscript cookbooks created by members of Anglo-Irish or Protestant families living in Ireland during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Whether used for practical purposes or to preserve family recipes, these manuscripts provide a rich source of historical and cultural information, offering a unique perspective on the development of cuisine and cooking techniques.

Most medieval and early modern recipe collections were written in order to preserve culinary recipes and cooking techniques passed down through generations. Often compiled by family members, these cookbooks served not only to share recipes and cooking methods with future generations but also to document a family's culinary history. While some manuscripts are highly elaborate, featuring ornamental elements and sophisticated binding, others are simple copies, written in poor handwriting without decorative features. Almost all are in codex form, an early type of manuscript resembling a modern book, with pages stitched together along one side. These manuscripts were typically produced informally for domestic use, often unattributed and written by multiple hands. They provide valuable insights into the personal recipes, tastes, and habits of specific families and households. In addition to food-related recipes, some also include medical prescriptions, household tips, gardening advice, and even table and menu plans.

Unpublished manuscripts usually originate from the same geographical area and oftentimes can be traced back to a common source. However, while some geographical differences may be noted, it is difficult to consider these manuscripts as representative of regional or national cuisines. The key to the creation and survival of these manuscripts was textual mobility<sup>1</sup>. Recipes were shared and

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<sup>1</sup> H. Notaker, *A History of Cookbook*, Oakland 2017, pp. 50–51.

distributed among family members such as mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, and cousins, as well as friends and neighbours. In the case of medicinal prescriptions, this exchange extended to practitioners and patients. As one scholar notes, “Exchange of domestic information was a crucial medium of female association, conversation and friendship”<sup>2</sup>. Madeline Shanahan rightly observes that elite women in Ireland exchanged and circulated culinary recipes as well as domestic knowledge “to maintain their connections to family members and friends from whom they were separated by time and ever-increasing geographical distances”<sup>3</sup>. By passing down these recipe collections, using them daily, and continually adding to them over the years, these women compilers strengthened familial ties and reinforced female lineages.

In Ireland, culinary manuscripts are scarce, and the country’s culinary history is still developing compared to other parts of the world<sup>4</sup>. As Susan Flavin observes, Ireland’s history of consumption was underdeveloped, partly due to the belief that the country was isolated and detached from European culture<sup>5</sup>. Given the intertwined history of Ireland and England, it is important to recognise that Irish culinary traditions were shaped by this relationship during specific periods. The Anglo-Normans, who arrived in the twelfth century, left a lasting impact on Ireland. The first Norman knights landed in 1167, followed by the main forces led by Richard de Clare, known as Strongbow. The Norman army captured the port cities of Wexford, Waterford and Dublin, which along with their surrounding areas, became a royal domain. The conquered regions were settled by Anglo-Norman knights under King Henry II of England.

The conquests in Ireland led to the emergence of an Anglo-Irish gentry class with distinctively rich and varied cuisines<sup>6</sup>. By the seventeenth century, Ireland displayed a diversity of culinary traditions. As one source notes, “The very basic native peasant diet of oats and dairy produce co-existed with the acquired Anglo-

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<sup>2</sup> S. Pennell, *Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing. Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. V.E. Burke and J. Gibson, Aldershot 2004, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup> M. Shanahan, ‘*Wright by Her Own Hand*’: *Recipe Exchange and Women’s Kinship Networks in Ascendancy Ireland, 1690–1800*, “Lilith: A Feminist History Journal: Number 27” Canberra, 2021, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> E.B. Messer et al., *Culinary History in The Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. K.F. Kiple and K. Coneè Ornelas, Cambridge 2000, pp. 1367–1380.

<sup>5</sup> S. Flavin, *Consumption and Culture in Sixteenth-Century Ireland: Saffron, Stockings and Silk*, Woodbridge 2014, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> F.X. Martin, *The Normans – Arrival and Settlement: 1169-c. 1300 in The Course of Irish History*, ed. T.W. Moody and F.X. Martin, Cork 2011, p. 104–122.

Norman and English traditions”<sup>7</sup>. From the mid-sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, the governments of Tudors and Stuarts pursued a policy of conquest, colonization, and the ‘plantation’ of settlers on native lands. Protestant colonists from Scotland and England were sent to King’s County and Queens’s County (later Offaly and Laois). In the 1580s, a plantation scheme was undertaken in the southern province of Munster, with another major initiative in Ulster<sup>8</sup>. These Protestant settlers replaced the previous Irish Catholic landlords, who were removed from their lands<sup>9</sup>. Notably, these settlers brought their own culinary traditions, which further influenced the evolving culture.

In Ireland, there was no medieval tradition of recipe writing. The earliest extant manuscript recipe books come from the seventeenth century and are all written in English<sup>10</sup>. This is unsurprising, as the Anglo-Irish elite was influenced by English culinary tradition and dining habits, with English recipe books appearing as early as the fourteenth century<sup>11</sup>. What is more, recipe books were often imported from Britain, as it was cheaper and faster to bring printed books on food preparation and household care from Britain to Ireland, where the elite and affluent spoke English<sup>12</sup>. The manuscripts under consideration, like many other recipe collections, have never been published and remained personal, intended for private circulation. They were written mainly with household members in mind and, like similar texts from other countries, they contain not only culinary recipes but also prescriptions for medical remedies, confections, cleansing products, household necessities, and instructions on food preservation and distillation. These manuscripts were written by more than one person, as evidenced by the different handwriting styles present.

Irish manuscript recipe books that identify an author or compiler typically connect them to women from upper-class backgrounds. As in Britain, domestic recipe writing in Ireland was predominantly a female activity, carried out within

<sup>7</sup> R. Sexton, *Forward*, in: D. Allen, *Irish Traditional Cooking*, London 1996, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> T. Dooley, *The Big Houses and Landed Estates of Ireland*, Dublin 2007, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> F.X. Martin, *The Normans*, pp. 158–159, 164–165.

<sup>10</sup> According to Madeline Shanahan “No Irish-language recipe books were located from the pre-Victorian period”; M. Shanahan, *Manuscript Recipe Books as Archaeological Objects*, London 2015, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> The earliest known cookbook in the English language is *The Forme of Cury*, written around 1390 by the chefs of the king Richard II; it contains 196 recipes, including methods for cooking whales and herons, using spices such as cloves, mace, nutmeg, and pepper.

<sup>12</sup> C. Clear, *Women of the House: Women’s Household Work in Ireland 1922–1961*, Dublin 2000.

domestic contexts. Wendy Wall observes that women's participation in the creation and circulation of manuscript texts was a "bid for gentility", contrasting with the emerging print culture, which sought to reach a broader audience<sup>13</sup>. However, as Madeline Shanahan argues, men may have also contributed to the production of culinary texts as authors or scribes<sup>14</sup>. The early modern manuscript recipe or household compilation was a diverse and fluid creation, drawing from various forms of manuscript writing, such as verse miscellanies, table books, and adversaria, which were components of the self-directed humanist education of high-ranking men and women. Peter Beal suggests that the relatively minor literary content in these collections marks a period when the "sense of specialness" associated with manuscript practices began to fade<sup>15</sup>.

Manuscript recipes differ significantly from their printed counterparts in that they provide a broader sense of how people actually cooked traditional dishes. Recipes in printed cookbooks fall under prescriptive literature, often reflecting people's aspirations or the authors' assumptions about what readers might want to know, rather than actual culinary practice<sup>16</sup>. Published cookbooks operated within the imagined community of the literary marketplace, where recipes were typically selected by authors or compilers who may not have had the opportunity to test them. In contrast, manuscript collections often included the author's personal recipes, which were likely popular and used during their lifetime.

Madeline Shanahan, having analysed the Irish collection of culinary manuscripts, identified three broad typologies: the household notebook, the recipe collection, and the planned volume<sup>17</sup>. According to her, "planned volumes, which could be highly decorative pieces requiring time and skill to complete", were not typically used in the kitchen, as they are usually well-preserved and show little to no signs of wear<sup>18</sup>. The exact role of early cookery books remains unclear, and it is still unknown who their intended audience was. It is likely that such books were rarely used as direct instructions for cooks, who often did not need them. Instead, these

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<sup>13</sup> W. Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in English Renaissance*, Ithaca 1993, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> M. Shanahan, *Manuscript Recipe Books as Archaeological Objects*, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> P. Beal, *Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book*, in: *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill, Binghamton 1993, p. 142–44.

<sup>16</sup> K. Albala, *Cookbooks as Historical Document*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, ed. J.M. Pilcher, Oxford 2012, p. 229.

<sup>17</sup> M. Shanahan, *Manuscript Recipe Books as Archaeological Objects*, 110.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

books were seen as symbols of the mistress' literacy, knowledge, skill, discipline, and domesticity. Some cookbooks present recipes in no particular order, such as those for elderberry wine followed by orange marmalade, then a remedy for gravel, and finally Naples biscuits, suggesting they were compiled over time like a diary<sup>19</sup>. In contrast, other cookbooks categorise recipes under meats, fish, puddings, and so on, written in a uniform hand, indicating they were copied systematically.

Most of the manuscript recipes under consideration prominently feature sugar and can be categorised as follows: 1) preserves and sweet wines made with fruit; 2) sweet dishes (including puddings, creams, custards, and marchpanes); and 3) cakes and biscuits. From the initial introduction of sugar to England until the late seventeenth century, sugar was a sought-after ingredient in many dishes. By the sixteenth century, sugar became more accessible, with imports to Europe increasing by 1500 percent. As a result, the number of sweet dishes in cookbooks also rose significantly. In wealthy households, sugar was used not only as a component of sweet foodstuffs but also as a medicinal ingredient and as a medium for creating entremets. The widespread use of sugar in meat, fish, vegetable, and other dishes during this period indicates that sugar was regarded as a spice. Recipes from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries demonstrate that "sugar was perceived as a segment of a taste spectrum"<sup>20</sup>. However, sugar and other spices were often combined in dishes that were not preponderantly sweet. For instance, in fifteenth-century culinary manuscripts<sup>21</sup>, sugar appears in 39% of all dishes, while in *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye* (1550), sugar constitutes 46% of all ingredients. By the sixteenth century, the English had developed a reputation throughout Europe for their fondness for sugar. It was a common practice to add sugar into wines, even in small amounts. By the eighteenth century, the English were leading per capita sugar consumers in the world. With increased sugar production and decreased prices, sugar became a principal ingredient not only in pastries and wines but also in recipes involving meat, fish, fowl, and vegetables.

The National Library of Ireland (NLI) holds several manuscript recipe books. While numerous examples of culinary texts from as early as the fourteenth century exist throughout Europe<sup>22</sup>, the earliest Irish texts of that kind in the NLI

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<sup>19</sup> NLI, Ms 9563.

<sup>20</sup> S.W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, New York 1986, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> Harleian Ms 279; Harleian Ms 4016.

<sup>22</sup> Among these are *Daz buch von gutter spise* (c. 1350) and *Kochbuch* (1400) in German, *Le Viandier* (1300) and *Le Menagier de Paris* (1390s) in French. In the 1320s came out the

collection date from the mid- to late seventeenth century. There are eight such manuscripts in total, although similar texts may be found in other collections and private holdings. Despite being written in Ireland, these manuscripts do not reflect a distinctly Irish culinary tradition. Instead, they reveal the close cultural ties between their authors and the British upper classes.

All Irish manuscripts from this period belonged to Anglo-Irish or Protestant families, known as ‘New English’, who began arriving in Ireland in the sixteenth century. There are exceptions, including two Gaelic-Irish families: the O’Haras, descendants of Eaghra, a chief in the barony of Leyney in Sligo<sup>23</sup>, and the Inchiquin O’Briens, the ruling family of Thomand from Brian Boru’s time<sup>24</sup>. The manuscripts at the National Library of Ireland, classified as collected cookbooks, were handed down through generations. Successive authors added new recipes and comments based on their own experiences. These manuscripts encompass a wide range of interests, including culinary, medical, and other domestic topics. As noted, “the status of their named, but often anonymous authors reflects a permeation of the practice of compiling such volumes beyond close-knit literary coterie into the pedagogic habits of the middling sorts”<sup>25</sup>.

The earliest culinary manuscripts in Ireland will now be briefly characterised and discussed. There are significant uncertainties regarding the authorship, creation dates and origin of the recipes in these manuscripts. However, in some cases, details have emerged that shed light on their origins. I aim to demonstrate that while these manuscripts share similarities in structure and content, each was written to meet the specific needs of its owner or owners. Consequently, each manuscript is unique.

### Ms 9563

The manuscript titled “Mrs Jane Bury’s Receipt Booke” is dated 1700. The book was re-bound in calfskin in 1991, when it was restored. The manuscript contains mostly recipes, food preservation methods and medical cures, many of which are attributed to friends, family, and occasionally doctors. The recipes

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Catalan *Llibre de Sent Soví*. These manuscripts are mainly compilations of recipes copied from earlier texts or dictated by cooks or chefs.

<sup>23</sup> M.C. O’Laughlin, *The Book of Irish Families, Great and Small*, vol. 1, Kansas City 2002, p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> M.C. O’Laughlin, *Families of County Clare Ireland*, vol. 3, Kansas City 2000, p. 36.

<sup>25</sup> S. Pennell, *Perfecting Practice?*, p. 240.



include instructions on how to make 'substitute' wines in Ireland, a country with an unfavourable climate for winemaking. Examples of these wines include elderberry, gooseberry, currant, cowslip, and blackberry wine. Cowslip wine was highly regarded and popular, especially among the higher members of society in both England and Ireland. The herb itself played a significant role in the pharmacy and mythology of the Celtic druids, possibly serving as an ingredient in magical potions. According to a recipe, to prepare cowslip wine, add six pounds of sugar to three gallons of water and boil for an hour ("or better, as the scum rises"). Remove the scum and let the liquid cool. Stir in a spoonful of yeast and mix in six ounces of lemon juice. Add well-pressed and bruised cowslips. Let the mixture stand for two to three days, then pour it into a cask to age for three weeks before bottling. It is advisable to "put a little piece of sugar into each bottle"<sup>26</sup>.

One can find recipes for beverages, such as sack posset, whipped syllabub, and tinctures. There are also recipes for various creams, including barley cream, almond cream, and lemon cream. Instructions are provided on how to pot tongues, salmon, lobsters, as well as how to boil a cod's head, "make an excellent soope", "suoce fish", stew carp, and make sausages. Numerous recipes focus on pies, such as an egg pie, chicken pie, hare pie, calf foots pie, and oyster pie. Puddings make another group of recipes, with examples like orange pudding, almond pudding, brown bread pudding, oatmeal pudding, neat's foot pudding, and potato pudding. In addition to the potato pudding recipe, there is another one "To make potatote pankcakes" indicating that potatoes were already in use in Ireland as early as the seventeenth century<sup>27</sup>. Some recipes are attributed to friends and acquaintances, as for instance "Mrs Townly's orange pudding", "Mrs Jane Brinker's poppy cordial", or "Mrs Jane Brinker's Angelot chees".

A wide variety of fruits and vegetables were preserved in numerous ways. Food preservation methods include: "to preserue oranges in jelly", "to preserue oranges whole", "to preserve oranges in hony", "to preserve lemmons for a pudding", "to preruesue green appricock", "to preserue rasberries/cherries/gosberys", and "how

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<sup>26</sup> NLI Ms 9563.

<sup>27</sup> The potato was introduced to Ireland by the end of the sixteenth century. Initially used as a supplementary food and standby against famine, it soon became a central component of the Irish diet. See J.W. Choiseul, G. Doherty et al., *Potato Varieties of Historical Interest in Ireland*, Dublin 2008, p. 3; A. Bourke, *The Visitation of God? The Potato and the Great Irish Famine*, Dublin 1993.



to pickell cucumbers or purslane”. Numerous prescriptions for medical cures include: “a medicen for the could”, “an excellent way for aqua mirabilis”<sup>28</sup>, “an excellent plaister”, “to make the plague watter”<sup>29</sup>, “a powder for consumptive coff”, “a dyett drinke for gout or scurvy”, and “to stop a vomiting”.

### Ms 11,688

The manuscript is a long, narrow notebook of unknown authorship, part of the papers of the Smythe family of Barbavilla, County Westmeath. It includes recipes along with accounts, prescriptions for medicines, and pieces of household advice. Some entries are dated 1676 and 1695, indicating that the manuscript was not started later than 1676. Similar to Ms 9563, the manuscript is filled with recipes for various non-vine wines made from herbs or fruit. The list begins with sage wine, which has a long tradition in England – King Edward I had a taste for it<sup>30</sup>. Herb wines were often used as medicinal drinks due to their curative properties, depending on the herb or fruit used<sup>31</sup>. Sage, from which the wine was made, was known for its antiseptic, stimulant, tonic, antispasmodic, and anti-febrile properties. It was also recommended for restoring wines with unpleasant odours<sup>32</sup>. Other recipes for wines include: cherry wine, “Small cowslip wine”<sup>33</sup>, gooseberry wine, apricot wine, elder wine, quince wine, white currant and red currant wine, and raspberry wine. Apricot wine can be prepared according to the following recipe:

<sup>28</sup> *Aqua mirabilis*, or ‘miracle water’, was described by Samuel Johnson, as cited in the OED, as being made from cardamom, cloves, cubeb, galingal, ginger, mace, and nutmeg, all soaked in spirit of wine and then redistilled.

<sup>29</sup> Plague water refers to various medicinal waters believed to be effective against the plague. Typically, it was a distillation of various herbs and roots thought to have therapeutic properties. In the recipe found in Ms 9563, the following ingredients are used: sage, celandine, rosemary, rue, scabious, dragons, sorrel, agrimony, wormwood, betony leaves and flowers, scordium, zedoary root, angelica, balm, gentian, and others.

<sup>30</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, Hamondsworth 1976, p. 340.

<sup>31</sup> Similarly, ale and beer were often consumed for their medicinal properties, as they were often brewed with herbs and spices. For more on the tradition of drinking medicinal ales and beers, see A.K. Kuropatnicki, *Medicinal Properties of Beer: from Ancient to Early Modern Times*, “AMHA – Acta medico-historica Adriatica” 2024, vol. 22(1), pp. 83–110.

<sup>32</sup> L.F. Salzman, *English Industries of the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1923, p. 404–405.

<sup>33</sup> In her story from 1931 *The Country Child* Alison Uttley writes that “[cowslip wine] was more precious than elderberry wine, which was the drink for cold weather, for snow and sleet”; A. Uttley, *The Country Child*, London 1952, p. 156.

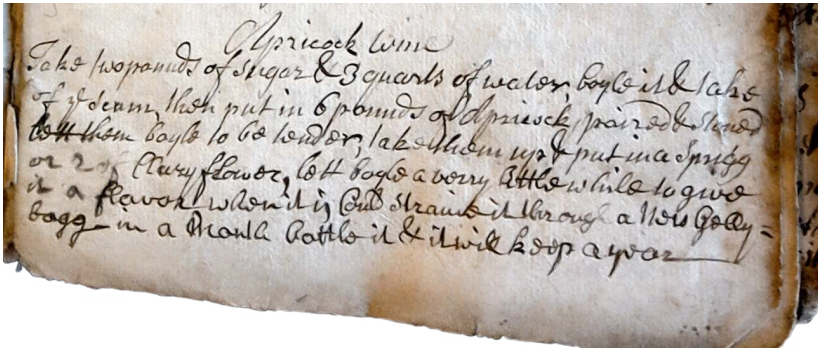


Fig. 1. Example of a recipe for “Apricock wine” from Ms 11,688

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

Take two pounds of sugar & 3 quarts of water, boyle it & take off[f] the scum, then put in 6 pounds of Apricock pared and stoned, boyle to be tender, take them up & put in a Sprig or 2 of Clary flower, lett boyle a verry little while to give it a flavor, when it is could strain it through a ...bagg... Pottle it & it will keep a year<sup>34</sup>.

Other recipes for drinks included in the manuscript are “the froth posset”<sup>35</sup>, “to make strong mead”, “to make lemonade”, and “make rosemary cordial”. There are numerous recipes for pies (such as egg pie and lobster pie), creams (including rice cream, fine cream, barley cream, “a littel lemon cream”, and “clouted cream”), puddings (like black pudding and orange pudding), and cakes (such as Portugal cakes, orange wine cakes, and cheese cakes). The manuscript also contains instructions for making “stew trip”, sausages, puff paste, fine paste for tarts, “Scooth scolop”, marmalade of quince, oyster pottage, broiled mackerel, “a frigacy<sup>36</sup> of lobster or crab”, macarons, and ragout.

As with the previous manuscript recipe book, this one also includes preservation methods, such as how to pickle mushrooms, oysters, or green walnuts, preserve French beans, candy orange flowers, dry and preserve cherries,

<sup>34</sup> NLI Ms 11,688.

<sup>35</sup> Posset (or poshotte) is a drink made from hot milk curdled with ale, wine, or other liquors. It is often sweetened and flavoured with sugar, spices, or other ingredients.

<sup>36</sup> Fricassee (1560s) – the term comes from Middle French *fricassée*, which is the noun form of the feminine past participle of *fricasser*, meaning ‘to mince and cook in sauce’ (15<sup>th</sup> century). The origin of *fricasser* is uncertain, but it may be a compound of elements related to or altered by Middle French *frire* (to fry) and *casser* (to break or cut up); *Online Etymology Dictionary*, [https://www.etymonline.com/word/fricassee#etymonline\\_v\\_14176](https://www.etymonline.com/word/fricassee#etymonline_v_14176) (retrieved: 10.08.2019).

and dry any sort of plums. Additionally, there are medical prescriptions, including receipt against wind, Lady Bonfisher's receipt for a cancerous breast, receipt for rheumatism, as well as cures for the plague, flux, teeth and other ailments.

### Ms 11,689

The manuscript is a good example of repurposing old books for uses beyond their original intent. The author likely used either a household account book, of which the manuscript contains part, or pages from such a book. Most of the pages are lined to facilitate the entry of dates, expenditure descriptions and amounts paid. Even the extant 'Day booke' was repurposed for writing recipes in the margins. The book contains relatively few recipes and focuses more on prescriptions for cures, preservation methods, and various pieces of household advice. It frequently references several names, likely friends and family members, who contributed their recipes and cures. The earliest dated entry is April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1680 (in the 'Day booke') and the book remained in use through the mid-eighteenth century. What is more, the manuscript includes personal letters and loose leaves with recipes and cures, and it is written in several handwriting styles.

As previously mentioned, only a few descriptions refer to food preparation. These include recipes for Mrs. Ernlys' very good seed cake, a good biscuit, Mr. Butler's syllabub, Lady Harbret's caraway buns, Mrs. Brincee's recipe for biscuits, Mrs. Hicks' good orange pudding, and Mrs. H's gingerbread. There are instructions for lemon cream, almond cream, how to bake veal, to make white puddings (according to F. Smith), to dry legs of pork like Westphalia hams, to make rice pancakes, to make cheese the Lady Thomas's way, to make a cheese slipcoat<sup>37</sup> (according to Mrs. Butler), to make good caraway waters, and how to stew quinces and "pipens"<sup>38</sup>. The final recipe reads:

Cut in halfe and Paire them & boil them very soft in a good deale of water & suger as you Please with a bit of Leamon Peile & some strings of orange & Leamon after it has been boyled you must Put in Juice of Leamon as you like it.

Numerous procedures for preserving fruit and vegetables are also included. For instance, there are recipes for "to preserve pipens, mr Butler", to make conserve of roses, to pickle cauliflowers, to preserve raspberries with or without seeds, to

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<sup>37</sup> Slipcoat – a rich type of new cheese that resembles butter but is white in colour.

<sup>38</sup> Pippins – a type of tart green apple that is particularly good for cooking.

preserve barberries, to make marmalade of oranges<sup>39</sup>, to candy lemon peels, and to candy oranges. The last two recipes are examples of ‘sucket’, a sweetmeat made by boiling lemon or orange peels in successive changes of water to remove bitterness, then simmering them in a sugar syrup. When suckets were left in syrup, they were known as wet suckets. These wet suckets and fruits preserved in syrup were often served in glass bowls to display their fine colour and translucency<sup>40</sup>.

Remaining in the manuscript are prescriptions for a variety of illnesses affecting many body systems in both children and adults. For children, there are remedies such as Mrs. Middleton’s receipt for the colic, a powder for children sore mouth by Mrs. Hicks, and a good purge for a child. Common cures include “To stop bleeding wound by Lucy”, “For the vapors, mrs Amy”, and a cordial for the vapours by J<sup>c</sup> Gibbonse”, as well as “for sore eys, Mrs Hicks”, and a very good powder to preserve the eyes. Other prescriptions address conditions like ague<sup>41</sup>, toothache, warts, and “The kinge evill”<sup>42</sup>. There are also remedies for piles<sup>43</sup>, cramp, “green sickness”<sup>44</sup>, burns, general itching, and “itching humor in eyes”. Specific prescriptions for balms and oils include “To make an exelent balsam”, “Oyle of hiperican or red oyle”<sup>45</sup>, and “The true way of making Lucatells balsame”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Orange marmalade was made by pounding orange peel in a mortar with the pulp and then mixing this mass with the juice. When sugar was added, the mixture would set into a thick jelly.

<sup>40</sup> P. Brears, *Rare Conceites and Strange Delights: The Practical Aspects of Culinary Sculpture in: Bunquetting Stuffle*, ed. C.A. Wilson, Edinburgh 1991, p. 114.

<sup>41</sup> Ague refers to malaria or another illness characterized by fever and shivering; it also denotes a fever or shivering fit.

<sup>42</sup> King’s evil, scrofula, or struma – a tuberculous swelling of the lymph glands, once believed to be curable by the touch of royalty; *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online, <https://www.britannica.com/science/kings-evil> (retrieved: 20.08.2019).

<sup>43</sup> Haemorrhoids.

<sup>44</sup> Green sickness – a condition historically referred to as *morbus virgineus* (‘virgin’s disease’) or *febris amatoria* (‘lover’s fever’). It was believed to be common, particularly among girls approaching puberty and thin, languid young women.

<sup>45</sup> Hypericum oil is extracted from the leaves, flowers, and stems of St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). Ancient Romans and Greeks used St. John’s Wort to treat skin wounds, depression, and sciatica, as well as gastrointestinal issues, menstrual problems, and snake bites. The red, oily extract of *H. perforatum* has been employed in wound treatment for millennia.

<sup>46</sup> Lucatelli’s balsam (also known as balsam of Locatelli) was highly popular and commonly found in cookbooks of the period. It is an ointment made from wax, oil, turpentine, sherry, and balsam of Peru, and is coloured with red Saunders. It was historically used to treat pulmonary consumption; *Medical Lexicon. A Dictionary of Medical Science*, ed. R. Duglison, Philadelphia 1866, p. 101.

which was given by Matheu Lucatles to Dr Clayton". There are instructions for curing madness, inducing labour and a prescription for a cordial to induce sleep. Remarkably, there are also prescriptions for horses, such as a purge for a horse and "To cure a horse of a new cold".

The leaves of the manuscript contain more recipes, but there are also letters with prescriptions, such as a receipt for a cough or other pectoral complaint, a plaster against the rheumatism by Lady Caple, and "For the [r]eumatism". There are also prescriptions for choleric water, palsy drops and "The oyle of charity"<sup>47</sup>. The private letters contain more prescriptions sent by doctors or friends. For example, a letter by C. Dale, dispatched on March 6<sup>th</sup> to Mrs. Bonnett at the Golden Bottle in Fleet Street, London, includes "The high palcey water you must begin to make in Apri". Another letter to Mrs. Bonnett contains a prescription for pleurisy. In yet another letter, we find instructions on how to make milch punch (a popular alcoholic beverage in the eighteenth century, made with rum, brandy, and milk) and walnut water. There is also "Dr Hamiston's receipt for the collick".

#### Ms 14,786

This large leather-bound volume contains a collection of domestic recipes, medical prescriptions, and an inventory of the household furniture of Dromoland Castle, dating back to 1753. Many of the recipes are attributed to the renowned friends and relations of the Inchiquin O'Brien family of County Clare. Among those mentioned are Mrs. Boyle, Mr. Robert Boyle, Mrs. Howse, Mrs. Long, Mrs. Keithly (also referred to as "My aunt Keithly"), Mrs. Pear, Doctor Butler, Lady Ewes, Lady Blessington, Lady Harvey, John Cook, and many others. According to a note added inside the cover, the manuscript was possibly started by Lady Frances Keightley in 1660. However, it seems more likely that it was begun later by Catherine O'Brien (nee Keightley), Lady Frances' daughter, who was born in 1676<sup>48</sup>. The manuscript was continued by Mary O'Brien (nee Hickman), Catherine's daughter-in-law, and was likely contributed to by three or four generations of women in the family. Some of the later sections of the manuscript

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<sup>47</sup> Oil of charity is a medicinal oil made from a blend of olive oil, rosemary oil, and lavender oil. It was used to treat a variety of skin conditions, including eczema, psoriasis, and dry skin. It is also believed to have anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties, which can help to reduce redness and irritation.

<sup>48</sup> B. Kirby, *Inchiquin Papers: Collection List No. 143*, unpublished collection list from the National Library of Ireland, Dublin 2009, p. 8–10.

date to the mid-eighteenth century. At a later stage, one contributor added a title page with an ornate watercolour illustration and an index, bringing order and cohesion to the whole collection of recipes.

The elaborate watercolour title page from the manuscript, mentioned above, depicts a landscape with cottages and ruins in the background. Two winged figures carry a banner that reads “Mrs O’Brien’s rect book given by her to me M O’Brien.” One figure holds a shield with the initials “M. O’Brien”, while the other plays a trumpet. “M. O’Brien” most likely refers to Mary O’Brien (nee Hickman), and “Mrs O’Brien” refers to Catherine O’Brien (nee Keightley), her mother-in-law. Madeline Shanahan is of the opinion that

The time and effort put into the creation of this title page can be seen as evidence that this was a cherished item. The use of classical iconography in this instance elevates the book, its contents and its authors. The O’Briens were one of the most ancient and respected Gaelic clans in Munster, so it is appropriate that the knowledge of their women, the mothers and nurturers of their heirs, was celebrated in this way<sup>49</sup>.

As stated above, the recipes in the manuscript were contributed by numerous friend and relations, as well as cooks or kitchen clerks, such as the recipe for “Sole by Lord Inchiquin’s Cook”. Medical doctors also provided many of the prescriptions. Among the numerous prescriptions, there is one for “Oytmnt for the Rickets” attributed to ‘Doctor Frye’, which reads:

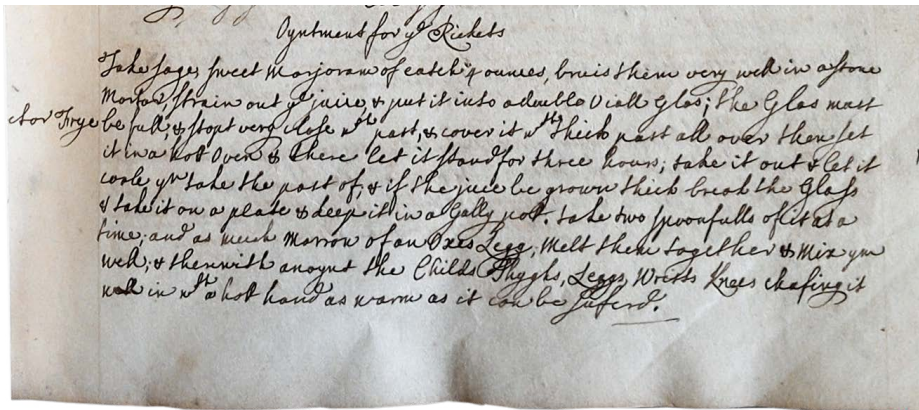


Fig. 2. Example of a prescription for “Oytmnt for the Rickets” from Ms 14,786

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

<sup>49</sup> M. Shanahan, *Manuscript Recipe Books as Archaeological Objects*, p. 42.



Take sage, sweet marjoram of "each 4 ounces, bruise them very well in a stone mortar, strain out the juices, & put it into a double Viall Glas, the Glas must be full & stopp'd very close with past, & cover it with thick past all over then set it in a hot oven & there let it stand for three hours; take it out & let it coole and take the past of; & if the juices be grown thick break the Glass & take it on a plate & keep it in a Gally pott. Take two spoonfuls of it at a time; and as much marrow of the oxes Legg; Melt them together & mix ym well; & therewith anoynt the Child's Thyghs, Leggs, Wrists, Knees, chafing it well in with hott hand as warm as it can be suferd<sup>50</sup>.

The collection contains foreign sounding recipes such as "Dutch Bisket", "Dutch Beef", and "Spanish paps"<sup>51</sup>, the last so named because they resembled small breasts. However, a large part of the manuscript consists of medical prescriptions for various ailments. Examples include syrup of mulberries, syrup of marshmallow, "Lapis Prunella or the White Stone"<sup>52</sup>, The Lady Barrington balsam for palsy, "For a canker in the mouth or throat", garlic ointment for a chin cough. There is also "A purging dyet drink to be taken from the middle of Aprill to the middle of May or from June[?] to October". The manuscript includes prescriptions for conditions such as deafness, worms, sore throat, rickets, ulcers, green sickness (hypochronic anaemia), stone, convulsions, consumption, bleeding and spitting of blood, dropsy, ague, toothache, scurvy, flax, weakness in the back, fistula, sore eyes, burns, headache, and obstruction of the spleen and liver.

From the collection, we can also learn how to prepare a variety of medication, including plasters, poultices, ointments, pomatums, syrups, balsams, pastes, elixirs, cordials, tinctures, powders, pills, draughts, and waters. The assortment of waters is impressive, featuring choleric water, juniper water, eye water, lavender water, lemon water, orange water, mild water, hysterical water (used to 'calm' women), honey water, elder water, shrub water, cinnamon water, saffron water, treacle water, gripe water, and waters named after their donator. For example, "Lady Hewit's water", which concludes with the note, "This is Lady Hewit's original Receipt given by my Lady Wiseman to our family". There are also drugs of a gynaecological nature, such as a water to prevent miscarrying, "Doctor Hamilton's draught for me when I was with child", "A plaister to prevent miscarrying by Aunt Pearls", to bring away a dead child.

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<sup>50</sup> Ms 14,786.

<sup>51</sup> Spanish paps – a creamy dessert similar to blancmange, but enriched with egg yolks and flavoured with sugar and rosewater.

<sup>52</sup> Lapis Prunella, also known as the White Stone, is a type of gemstone believed to have healing and protective properties.



## MS 19,332

The leather-bound manuscript, authored by a member of the Montgomery family of Convoys, Co. Donegal in the late seventeenth century<sup>53</sup>, contains recipes and medical cures, which constitute a high proportion of the text. Medicinal sections are interspersed with food and drink recipes, with no clear division or separation. The majority of the recipes relate to preserves, confectionary, and alcoholic beverages, alongside recipes for creams, cakes, biscuits, and fish and meat dishes. The book concludes with several sections of poetry and a sketch of a woman, dated 1822. The manuscript is difficult to read due to the deterioration of the copy and irregular spelling. In December 2016, the book underwent conservation work, including paper repairs and re-collation of the text, along with sawing.

One of the recipes in the book instructs the reader on the ‘making of sirop of mulburyes or any suchlike’:

put y<sup>e</sup> frute into an erthen picher & let it boyle in a kettle of water 2 owers y<sup>n</sup> strayne out juice & put to euery pint of y<sup>e</sup> Licor a pound & halfe of Shuger but if it be a sharpe frute y<sup>o</sup> must put more Shuger; so boyle it up quick & scum it cleane in y<sup>e</sup> boyling; so kepe it for y<sup>e</sup> youse<sup>54</sup>.

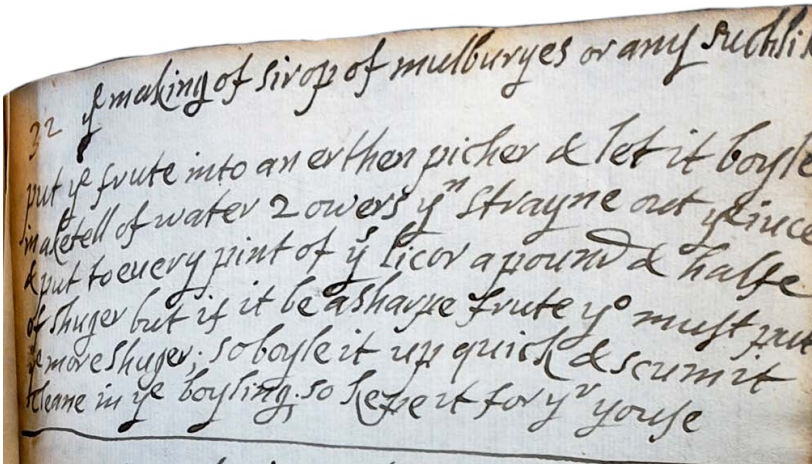


Fig. 3. Example of a recipe for “Making of sirop of mulburyes or any suchlike” from Ms 19,332

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

<sup>53</sup> The earliest recipe in the manuscript comes from 1682, it is ‘To preserve green plums’ according to Dr Lambarts.

<sup>54</sup> Ms 19,332.

## MS 39,250/1

This “manuscript is, in fact, a collection of loose pages containing recipes and prescriptions, possibly compiled by the cook at Abbeyleix, the seat of De Vesce family. The introduction of the ancient family of Vesey or Vesce into Queen’s County dates back to the thirteenth century when William Vescey (12497–1297) arrived from Normandy. However, it was not until the seventeenth century that a descendant of this family, Sir Thomas Vesey, acquired the Abbeyleix estate in County Laois through his marriage to Mary Muschamp in 1698. Inter-generational linkages ensured that the property passed down from one generation of de Vesces to the next. When Sir Thomas died in August 1730, the estate passed to his son, Sir John Denny Vesey, who succeeded his father as the second baronet<sup>55</sup>.

The loose pages of the manuscript are potentially from the seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The recipes predominantly feature sweet dishes such as puddings, macrons, biscuits, and preserves, among other dishes. These pages also include some cures as a prescription for Daffy’s elixir<sup>56</sup>, which was one of the most popular medicines in Britain during the eighteenth century.

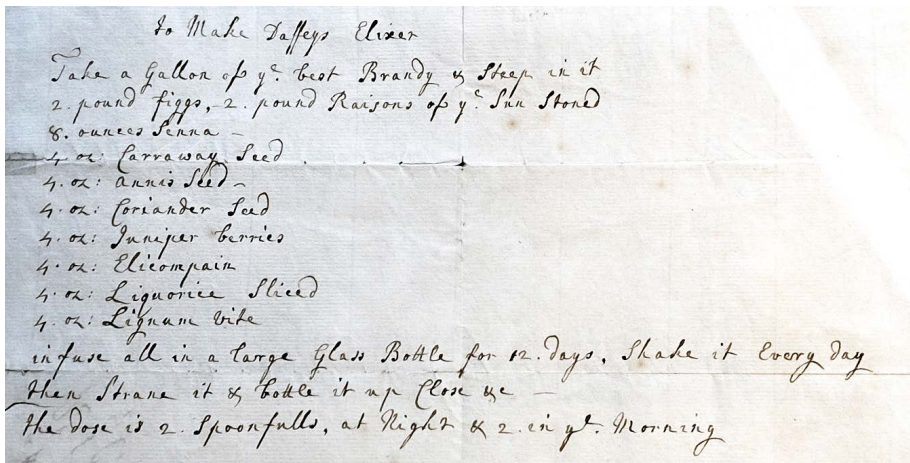


Fig. 4. Example of a recipe for “Daffy’s elixir” from Ms 39,250/1

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

<sup>55</sup> See J. Burke, *A General And Heraldic Dictionary of The Peerage And Baronetage of The British Empire*, Vol. 1, London 1832, p. 352.

<sup>56</sup> Daffy’s elixir was allegedly invented in 1647 by Thomas Daffy, rector of Redmile, Leicestershire. Daffy named it ‘elixir salutis’ (elixir of health) and universal it as a generic cure-all.

To Make “Daffey’s Elixer”

Take a Gallon of y<sup>e</sup> best Brandy & Steep in it 2 pound figs, 2 pound Raisons of y<sup>e</sup> Sun Stoned, 8 ounces Senna –

4 oz. Carraway Seed

4 oz. annis Seed

4 oz. Coriander Seed

4 oz. Juniper berries

4 oz. Elicompain

4 oz. Liquorice Sliced

4 oz. Liguam vite

Infuse all in a large Glass Bottle for 12 days. Shake it Every day then Strane it & bottle it up Close –

The Dose is 2 Spoonfulls, at Night & 2 in y<sup>e</sup> Morning<sup>57</sup>.

The recipes are accompanied by a folio menu book, partly in French, that dates to the late eighteenth century<sup>58</sup>. The menu book focuses on meal planning and is fascinating from a culinary history perspective, despite its limited recipe sections.

#### MS 41,603/1–12

The manuscripts, which are part of the papers of the Smythe family of Barbavilla, are stored in a box that contains two recipe books (MS 41,603/2/1–2) and four folders of assorted pages with recipes and prescriptions (MS 41,603/3–6) dated c. 1690–1750. Additionally, the box holds genealogical material, deeds, miscellaneous letters and papers (dated circa 1680–1782), commonplace books, devotional material, and printed matter (circa 1820–80), as well as the eighteenth-century letters (circa 1750–1830).

#### MS 41,603/2(2)

The manuscript is the second of the two recipe books catalogued under the number Ms 41,603/2 and is part of the papers of the Smythe family of Barbavilla,

<sup>57</sup> Ms 39,250/1.

<sup>58</sup> The culinary manuscripts are part of the collection of de Vesci estate papers in the National Library of Ireland. The collection of papers contains about 22,000 documents dating from 1552 to the present day and includes maps, plans, drawings, account books, inventories, wages and cash books, rentals, rent receipt books, architectural material and various other documents typical of landed estates.

Collinstown, Co. Westmeath. The Smyth family (the ‘e’ was added in 1810) arrived to Ireland in the 1630s and acquired lands in counties Down and Antrim. The founder of the Barbavilla line was the Rt Rev. William Smyth (1638–99), who married Mary, daughter of Sir John Povey, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in Ireland, and Elizabeth Folliott. William and Mary had three sons and four daughters.<sup>59</sup> Toby Barnard mentions the Povey family in the context of the gradual decline of fortune and status often experienced by the Irish ascendancy class<sup>60</sup>. Notably, halfway through the manuscript, one of the pages features the name “Richard Povey” written in an elaborate font in pencil, with “Elizabeth” written over it in ink. Numerous members of the Povey family are mentioned in the manuscript, and several recipes are attributed to them. Remarkably, the name Smythe does not appear anywhere in the manuscript, and no recipes are attributed to them.

The manuscript is bound in a brown leather cover with a distinctive decorative imprint and is entitled “A Book of Reaseats. Eliz. Hughes”. The volume includes an indenture dated 1564, “the sixth year of Lady Elizabeth’s reign”, relating to the Preband of Waltham, England. Although the indenture is not related to the recipes, it follows a similar pattern to Ms 11,689, where blank spaces and margins were later used to record recipes. The main recipe section of the manuscript begins after a letter in Latin dated 1656. While the recipes are not individually dated, they appear to be from the mid- to late seventeenth century based on the paper, handwriting and content. The manuscript includes a variety of recipes for cakes, possets and drinks<sup>61</sup>, as well as a large collection of medical cures, such as “To open the stomach”, “A drinke for the Stones”, “For obstructions”, and “For children troubled with worms”. It also contains poetry, musical entries, and guidelines for magic tricks, such as “How to wright letters secretly”, “To make flames suddenly come out of a pot full of water”, and “How to have a letter within a egg”. The last guideline reads

Keip your egg in good vinegar for the space of 12 hours then cut it downe with a thin knife – and put y<sup>e</sup> letter in then put it no more in vinegar but in water: & it will be as hard as ever<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> S.R. Penny, *Smythe of Barbavilla: the History of an Anglo-Irish Family Compiled by Various Members of the Family* (privately printed, 1974).

<sup>60</sup> T. Barnard, *A New Anatomy of Ireland: The Irish Protestants, 1649–1770*, New Haven and London 2004.

<sup>61</sup> As shown by Madeline Shanahan, majority of food recipes in the collection were sweets (56%), then preserves (21%), followed by savouries (19%) and alcoholic beverages (4%). See M. Shanahan, *Manuscript Recipe Books as Archaeological Objects*, p. 44 (Fig. 2.4.2).

<sup>62</sup> Ms 41,603/2(2).

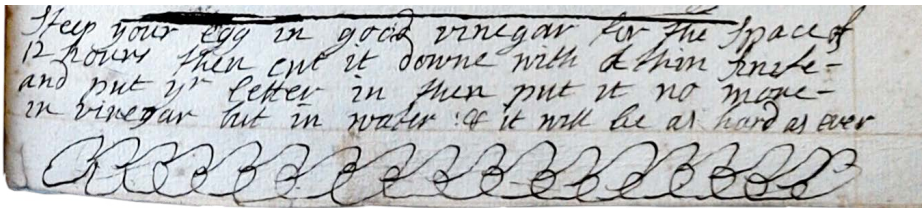


Fig. 5. Example of a recipe for "How to have a letter within an egg" from Ms 41,603/2(2)

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

### MS 41,603/3

This manuscript contains household accounts, recipes, and prescriptions presented in no particular order. Manuscript recipe books were often used to record household accounts, which included food bills, servants' wages, travel costs and other household expenses. For instance, in March 1756, the expenses listed include meals – breakfast (6 p.), dinner (2 s. 4 p.), and supper (3 s. 3 p.) in Chester on March 3<sup>rd</sup>; travel – horse to Chester (2 s. 2p.) horse to London (2 s. 9 p.); and servants' wages – chambermaid (6 p.) and hostler (6 p.).

Among the recipes, there are instructions for making hams, pickling pork, preparing rice pudding, and making partridge broth.

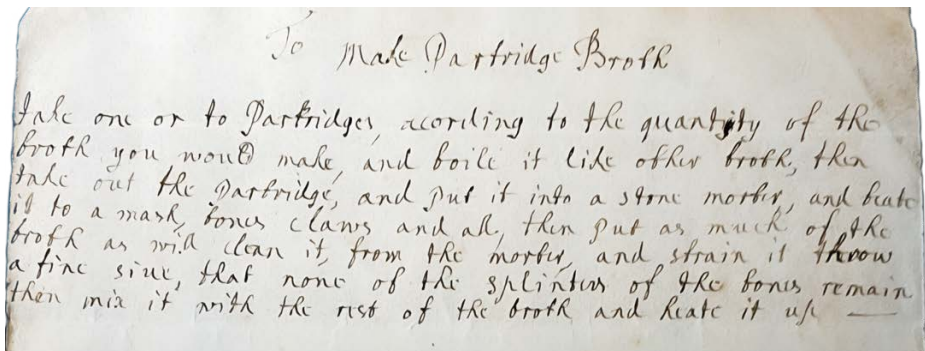


Fig. 6. Example of a recipe for "Partridge Broth" from Ms 41,603/3

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Ireland.

#### To Make Partridge Broth

Take one or to Partridges, according to the quantity of the broth you would make, and boil it like other broth, then take out the Partridge, and put it into a stone mortar, and beate it to a mash, bones, claws and all, then put as much of the broth as will clean it,



from the mortar, and strain it throw a fine sive, that none of the splinters of the bones remain then mix it with the rest of the broth and heate it up.

Following these recipes are prescriptions and recipes for wines. Among them are a drink for weakness and consumption, a wound drink, instructions “to make meath”, sugar of roses, Mrs. Wilkins’s water for convulsions, elderberry wine, raisin wine, and “Frontinuack wine”<sup>63</sup>.

In conclusion, early recipe collections in Ireland offer a unique insight into the culinary culture of their time. They highlight the significance of food in Irish culture and the influence of British cuisine on Irish cooking. Although this genre, prevalent in Europe from the fourteenth century, was not native to Ireland, it was introduced as new elites began settling in the country. These elites, many of whom were English migrants arriving in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and some even earlier), brought their culinary traditions with them, which were then incorporated into Irish cuisine. Analysis of the manuscript recipe books from this period reveals that the elite classes in Ireland in the seventeenth century shared a similar food culture with their British counterparts. Recipes for dishes, drinks, and household products in these manuscripts closely resemble those found in English cookbooks of the time. There are only a few recipes that can be considered specifically Irish. Additionally, as with British manuscript recipe books, Irish collections include a wide variety of non-food-related information. Notably, medicinal information is the most common non-food content. Some manuscripts even feature more medicinal remedies than food recipes, addressing both common ailments and more serious conditions.

An essential aspect of creating recipe collections was the exchange and circulation of recipes. This exchange, which occurred among family members, acquaintances, and sometimes distant relatives, can be linked to contemporary special interest groups on social media. The primary difference is that in the seventeenth century, this exchange happened through letters, as evidenced by manuscript collections. However, it is difficult to determine whether the recipes collected in this way reflect the culinary needs of the cookbook’s owner or if they were gathered randomly because they were sent to the author. Additionally, we cannot ascertain how many of these recipes were actually used in preparing dishes and how many remained merely as entries in the book. In the manuscripts

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<sup>63</sup> Probably a drink imitating muskat de Frontignan, a sweet wine made solely from the Muscat grape variety in Frontignan, France. The manuscript recipe calls for raisins, elder flowers and lemon. MS 41,603/3.

examined, there are virtually no corrections made to the recipes that might suggest they were modified after testing. In exceptional cases, a recipe is crossed out, but the reason for these deletions remains unknown.

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**Zainteresowania badawcze:** historia żywności i kulinariów na Wyspach Brytyjskich, wczesne angielskie i irlandzkie książki kucharskie, organizacja angielskiego dworu szlacheckiego oraz medyczne aspekty średniowiecznej i wczesnonowożytnej diety. Jego publikacje obejmują szeroki zakres tematów z historii żywności, medycyny, teorii humoralnej i produktów naturalnych. Jego najnowszą publikacją jest monografia *Historia Irlandii. Aspekty kulinarne*, której jest współautorem.

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