

# Exploring the Domestic Ideology of the Postwar Era through Cookbooks

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Cookbooks were increasingly published and marketed to overwhelmingly female audiences during the aftermath of the Second World War, when tensions with the Soviet Union escalated and the new consumer culture of the 50s materialized. Upon first glance, these instructional guides may have seemed a frivolous and unnecessary part of history, not unlike commonly held attitudes about women's roles themselves. These books did more than merely show readers how to prepare the perfect Baked Alaska, however, because they also provided evidence of a burgeoning anxiety toward gender roles in postwar America. Cookbooks, which were carefully constructed by primarily male editors, utilized gendered language in their recipes that aimed not only to help women help themselves but also to simultaneously oppress them by reminding them of their proper place in the home. In sharing time-saving, cost-efficient recipes that often stressed the necessity of convenience foods, cookbooks affirmed, consciously or otherwise, that expectations on women to maintain the home were not only burdensome but unavoidable. Postwar cookbooks were fraught with contradictory language that revealed concerns about the gender hierarchy in 1950s and 1960s America thinly veiled by encouraging, often complimentary language that damaged rather than fortified women's standing in society.

The mixed messages found in postwar era cookbooks seem unsurprising when one considers how closely they resembled paradoxical depictions of women in the mass media at large. In her 1994 book *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female in the Mass Media*, Susan J. Douglas examined how the generation of women and men born after World War II were constantly exposed to multiple representations of gender roles. She problematized this advertising phenomenon and declared, "There is a crucial contradiction here: baby boom culture for girls didn't matter at all, yet it mattered very much. It was laughable and historically insignificant, but at the same time, it was a dangerous and all too powerful enforcer of

suffocating sex-role stereotypes."<sup>1</sup> Douglas wondered how the media could portray women as gentle and submissive on one hand and encourage them to be resilient and perceptive on the other? She argued that women's growing understanding of their inconsistent representation in the media prompted many of them to doubt societal norms and the reliability of the media and to take their femininity into their own hands. She attributed second-wave feminism to advertisers' tendencies to portray women in extremes, from the humble housewife June Cleaver to sex symbol Marilyn Monroe.

The muddled language of cookbooks followed suit with these preexisting and conflicting notions of traditional gender roles. The language of postwar cookbooks often reflected similar dualities displayed by the media with regard to gender roles, including such paradoxes as women serving as both consumers and producers, men as powerful legislators and progressive thinkers who were helpless in the kitchen, and most importantly, America's assuredness and doubt that women would remain subordinate to men in the social hierarchy.<sup>2</sup>

Women and food preparation were habitually connected for hundreds of years, but the 1950s highlighted this relationship more clearly than any other decade in American history. Cookbooks had existed as early as 1796, when Amelia Simmons introduced her food instructional guide *American Cookery* to the masses. Though cookbooks became popularized in the era after World War I, they further expanded into the mainstream during the Cold War, when the nation was relieved to have dissolved tensions that had arisen during the Second World War but had entered into additional conflicts with the Soviet Union shortly thereafter. Cookbook sales experienced an increase after the first major war, when the Great Depression's impact was felt across America, and particularly in kitchens. Just as women felt a greater pressure to take care of their families' nutritional habits during this crisis, homemakers were compelled to cater to the needs of their husbands and children after the Second World War. With the resolution of the war, the United States government as well as businesses urged women to vacate the jobs they secured while their husbands were off fighting and encouraged them to resume their work in the private sphere. One mentality of cookbook authors

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<sup>1</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media*. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, 6-18.

and others that was used to justify women's duties in the kitchen was the concept that American men had done their part by protecting their country in the war and preserving democracy abroad, so the least women could do was help maintain this stability by providing home-cooked food in the domestic sphere. Cookbooks often emphasized their recipes as comforting during a time when everyone searched for respite from the communist menace.<sup>3 4 5</sup>

Americans looked no farther than their homes to find seclusion and peace from the turmoil of the outside world and the nation's messy foreign relations with the U.S.S.R. The development and popularization of convenience foods during the 1950s was one method businesses used to differentiate the U. S. from the Soviets.

Americans often showed their patriotism by shopping for canned and already prepared foods at supermarkets, an important symbol of democracy and modernization. Advertisers capitalized on the public's new spending habits and were encouraged by the threefold increase in food sales between 1941 and 1953. Stores gave shoppers the opportunity to browse hundreds of shelves that contained many different brands and options for creating the perfect meal with minimal effort. Supermarkets, therefore, set the nation apart from its communist enemies by allowing choice and convenience to characterize a distinctly American way of life.

Another important symbol meant to counteract the Soviet threat on a smaller scale was the cookie jar, which represented Americans' yearning for the warmth, innocence, and nostalgia of peacetime. The image of the cookie jar was alluring and often used by cookbook authors as an inviting ploy to encourage readers to buy their books. For example, *Betty Crocker's Cookbook for Boys and Girls* included an illustration of a cookie jar on its cover to impress upon readers from an early age that the cookie jar was the epitome of the coziness and sanctuary of home. *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* told readers, "Long after the spicy fragrance of her ginger

cookies baking has faded into the years...the thought of that ample cooky jar on the shelf will bring back vividly the old-time peace...and comfort...and security of Home."<sup>6</sup> Postwar associations of supermarkets and cookie jars with U.S. superiority demonstrated how Americans' perceptions of food, its availability, and its preparation were closely intertwined with national politics.<sup>7 8 9 10</sup>

If one food characterized American industrialization and women's cooking habits in the postwar era, however, it would be gelatin. Many housewives appreciated its versatility and were intrigued at the very least by claims made by companies such as JELL-O and Knox about its health benefits and attractive appearance. Laura Schenone even argued that gelatin companies' penchant for changing their taglines closely mirrored society's tendency to reshape images of femininity itself over the years. She reflects,

Perhaps no other food has come to embody postwar conservatism and suburban womanhood as JELL-O brand gelatin, which peaked in sales during the early 1960s. Pastel colored with fruity perfumes, gelatin was a pretty, shimmery thing, a decorative object as much as a food. Pliable in spirit and texture, it could form itself to the trends of any generation—not unlike the stereotypes of women. During the 1920s, it had been dainty. During the 1930s, economical. During the 1940s, quick. Now, during the 1950s, JELL-O was light-hearted and comforting, perfect for a generation struggling with the memories of war, fear of communism, and worry that an atom bomb might fall...<sup>11</sup>

Schenone echoed Douglas's observation that the image of women in American culture was inconsistent and, like gelatin, molded by those in power to fit the country's changing needs. During the Roaring Twenties, women were expected to carry themselves with poise, reflecting the growing wealth of the nation and the lavish celebrations of American modernism in the decade before the depression. After the stock

<sup>3</sup> Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 3 (1999): 531-532, accessed September 27, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3789341>.

<sup>4</sup> Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), 317.

<sup>5</sup> Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 218-225.

<sup>6</sup> *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), 187.

<sup>7</sup> Katherine J. Parkin, *Food is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 105.

<sup>8</sup> Neuhaus, "The Way," 532.

<sup>9</sup> Neuhaus, *Manly Meals*, 223-226.

<sup>10</sup> *Betty Crocker's Cookbook for Boys and Girls* (New York: Golden Press, 1957).

<sup>11</sup> Schenone, *A Thousand Years*, 320.

market crash, women were encouraged to provide nourishment for their families using the limited means available while educating their children about the value of the dollar. When women increasingly pursued men's jobs in factories during World War II, they needed instant foods like JELL-O to put food on the table after a long day of work.

After the war, this trend toward quick meals continued and intensified with the introduction of new household appliances into American kitchens that coerced women into spending money on these new products and utilizing them to prepare food for their families in order to show their patriotism. In their instructional manual *Knox On-Camera Recipes: A Completely New Guide to Gel-Cookery*, the Knox Gelatin company flaunted all the different recipes homemakers could prepare using only their gelatin product, a mold, and a few other ingredients. In the introduction to a recipe for Brown Derby Black Bottom Pie, Knox promises, "Famous and rightly so, this scrumptious pie will add stature to your reputation as a hostess."<sup>12</sup> The guide's message to a targeted female audience and the inclusion of a women using the product on its cover spoke to the inherently gendered nature of cooking guides in the postwar years.

A woman's duty to provide home-cooked meals was rarely questioned in society, and cookbooks reiterated these presumptions. The authors of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* asserted, "Just as every carpenter must have certain tools for building a house, every woman should have the right tools for the fine art of cooking."<sup>13</sup> They equated a man's chosen career path with a woman's obligation to maintain the home by performing menial tasks like cooking and cleaning.

In her book *Food is Love: Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America*, Katherine J. Parkin examined advertisers' preoccupation with female consumers, referencing a statement made in the late 1950s by Stouffer's which declared, "Our present customers and future customers are and will be primarily women. Women carry the responsibility for feeding the families of America."<sup>14</sup> This confident assertion by the company reflected the prevailing domestic ideology of the postwar years that women were to serve as the indisputable keepers of the home.

This immense pressure placed on homemakers to provide their families with nurturance and nutrition was echoed throughout cookbooks published after World War II. Mothers and wives became scapegoats whenever family matters did not run smoothly. The makers of *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* implied that when a woman's children became sick, it was her fault for not preparing the right types of food and her duty to reverse this mistake. Under the heading "A Mother Can Give Her Family a Priceless Gift," the cookbook pondered, "Why are some mothers tired all the time and some children fighting colds all winter? Probably because they don't eat the right things."<sup>15</sup> The statement may seem ironic to modern readers, who would understand that mothers were constantly fatigued due to social pressures on them to run their homes smoothly by placing the needs of her family above more selfish needs. Rather than attribute this phenomenon to any deficiency of American culture, however, cookbook writers stressed in an offhand way the woman's role in setting matters straight. This message became engrained in women's minds and prompted many to passively accept the hand they had been dealt by society to avoid personal feelings of failure.

Food preparation guides such as *America's Cookbook* dictated messages intended to help women prove their adequacy as mothers and wives by providing matter-of-fact instructions like "The child's lunch box should contain sandwiches that are suitable to his needs... The man who carries his lunch requires at least two substantial sandwiches with a protein base."<sup>16</sup> The recipients of these tips were automatically assumed to be females, and those who enjoyed the fruits of women's labor were typically males, as evidenced by this cookbook's emphasis on the needs of the man of the house and the male child. This theme was displayed so consistently in postwar cookbooks and food advertisements that the women in these images were rarely shown to find satisfaction in the act of eating because the emphasis was placed so heavily on finding fulfillment through serving and pleasing others.<sup>17</sup>

Homemakers were expected not only to cater to their families' needs but to enjoy their station and outwardly display their contentedness. After listing some of the joys of cooking, *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* concluded, "Best of

<sup>12</sup> *Knox On-Camera Recipes: A Completely New Guide to Gel-Cookery* (New York: Knox Gelatine, Inc., 1962), 32.

<sup>13</sup> *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Parkin, *Food is Love*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> *America's Cookbook*, The New York Herald Tribune Home Institute (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 814.

<sup>17</sup> Parkin, *Food is Love*, 36-37.

all, there's the rich reward of seeing the beaming faces of the family as they enjoy these fruits of your homemaking."<sup>18</sup> An array of delicious food and a cheery demeanor were especially crucial when preparing meals for outside company. Because prepackaged foods made up many of the ingredients found in postwar recipes, homemakers simply had to combine these canned foods and add a garnish in order to create a "unique" dish for company. This combination of ingredients often produced what would be considered ornamental and garish meals by today's standards, with the cuisine of the 50s defined by the mantra "appearance was all and reality was the cook's own little secret."<sup>19</sup> A hostess often aimed to prepare foods so dazzling that their female guests would observe her cooking skills with admiration and inquire about the recipe. Women went to such lengths to prove their worth as cooks and entertainers because housewives were expected to bolster their husbands' social standing.<sup>20 21</sup>

One effective strategy cookbook authors employed in order to remind women of their place was to caution them against growing lazy in their cooking habits because their marriages might crumble if their husbands were not satisfied with their culinary abilities. Writers frequently targeted married women, knowing many of their readers would feel susceptible to this risk because of their economic dependency on their husbands. Cookbooks often offered tips to a new bride or a housewife about which meals would best satisfy her husband's taste palette and how wives could help their spouses by offering small gestures of love, namely by fussing over his food or drink. *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* declared that "the simplest fruit juice cocktail—for a tired husband just home from work" could ensure a successful meal, and by extension, a fulfilling marriage.<sup>22</sup>

Many food advertisements regarded food preparation as the essence of love and femininity. Parkin cites a Green Giant advertisement from 1957 that featured a wife feeding peas to her lover as a cupid hovered above them with arrows and told women to "fuss over 'em like a hen over her only chick."<sup>23</sup> The postwar domestic ideology that shaped this image was problematic because it

limited opportunities for both sexes; women were subject to the every whim of their husbands, while men were considered lazy, oversized children who needed to be fed and nurtured by their wives. At the same time, men were credited with having sound judgment where tasting meals and gauging economic practices was concerned. Many cookbooks presented men as authority figures who understood food preparation even better than women did, such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* suggested with an image of a male police officer brandishing a ruler at a homemaker in an intimidating manner and ordering her to "measure that pan!"<sup>24</sup> Portrayals of men in cookbooks, however, were often as equally inconsistent as those of women.<sup>25</sup>

Cookbook authors typically attempted to prove men's superiority by presenting seemingly paradoxical representations of men that wavered between praising men's cooking intuition and confirming the masculinity of the men in the kitchen despite their culinary know-how. Some cookbooks chided women for their lack of innovation in preparing food. For instance, *America's Cookbook* proclaims in their section on produce, "For some reason, women in the past have generally been poor vegetable cooks. Overcooking, bad seasoning, and lack of imagination in serving have been the chief weakness."<sup>26</sup> Cookbook author Malcolm LaPrade accused women of focusing more on the outward attractiveness of a dish rather than the quality of its ingredients.

Recipes intended for men, by contrast, emphasized the daring choices men made in the kitchen compared to those of women, who were more likely to follow a cookbook's instructions verbatim than risk diverging from the recipe. Whereas a woman may have been assigned the menial task of making appetizers with ready-made ingredients for a special gathering, the husband was in charge of the more inventive enterprise of preparing cocktails. This language distanced men's culinary ventures from women's compulsory, insipid cooking. The need to distinguish between the two genders was significant during the 1950s, when the McCarthy era and the lavender scare had further politicized gender issues and caused Americans to fear anyone outside the norm.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Sylvia Lovegren, *Fashionable Food: Seven Decades of Food Fads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 218.

<sup>20</sup> Lovegren, *Fashionable Food*, 182-253.

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Manton, *Fed Up: Women and Food in America* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), 44.

<sup>22</sup> *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook*, 57.

<sup>23</sup> Parkin, *Food is Love*, 32.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Parkin, *Food is Love*, 49-127.

<sup>26</sup> *America's Cookbook*, 515.

<sup>27</sup> Neuhaus, *Manly Meals*, 212-217.



Another technique authors utilized to differentiate men's cooking habits from women's was to use language that appealed to men's interests and food preferences. Cookbooks from the 20s, 30s, and 50s all encouraged men to take an interest in the kitchen by equating cooking with traditionally "masculine" pastimes like sports. The language of recipes intended for men used verbs associated with power and aggression, such as a recipe for hot dogs that concluded, "Pull out toothpicks, slosh with mustard to taste, clamp both pieces of the bun together, and fling your lips over as delicious a dish as Hebe ever served on Olympus."<sup>28</sup> By invoking the authority of the gods and the rhetoric of warfare, cookbook authors subliminally assured male cooks of their masculinity despite the common association between cookery and females.

Additionally, men and women were frequently linked with the preparation of specific meals. A typical meal for a gathering of women included mixed nuts, tea, and delicate finger food such as cucumber sandwiches. Men, on the other hand, were assigned the role of cooking meat, which was considered an inherently masculine food. Many recipes justified the act of men cooking over a stove by suggesting that men and meat were connected since the first cavemen created fire, and images of cowboys cooking meat over fires supported this notion. Even within the realm of food preparation, women were relegated to the private sphere of the home, while men cooking outside was perfectly acceptable. Jessamyn Neuhaus credited Marguerite McCarthy, author of the 1954 cookbook *The Queen is in the Kitchen*, for asserting, "To my way of thinking, no member of the gentler sex can appear at her best lugging wood for a fire or stooping over it to give a final poke. This is strictly a man's department and should be turned over to him."<sup>29</sup> Not only were wives discouraged from barbecuing, but "women's food"—particularly gelatin salad—was rarely found in these settings because such meals were not deemed substantial or "macho" enough.<sup>30 31 32</sup>

While some cookbooks targeted their recipes at men, authors made sure to underscore that men were not expected to cook for their families on an everyday basis. One inconsistency in the representation of men in the kitchen was

that they were sometimes portrayed as creative, and at other times dependent on their wives. Many cookbooks implied that men did not understand even the most basic aspects of cooking. *America's Cookbook* declares, "Food freezing is so simple and the results are so satisfying that not only the women of the household but the menfolk, as well, enthusiastically endorse this easy and effective way of food preservation."<sup>33</sup> Cookbook authors presumably concluded that men did not spend time in the kitchen and could hardly grasp the most basic processes like food freezing.

These gendered assumptions about food and its preparation were communicated to Americans from an early age. For example, *Betty Crocker's Cookbook for Boys and Girls*, released in 1957, featured a girl on its cover assisting her mother with cooking while a boy in the background ate out of the cooking pot. Even though the book was intended for boys *and* girls, the cover promoted the message that females were meant to work in the kitchen while males were allowed to be more negligent. In another illustration next to a recipe for Whiz Nut Bread, a boy observes and pokes a loaf of bread while his sister does dishes in the background. Most recipes in this cookbook for children were accompanied by pictures of girls cooking, except for a section on "Campfire Cooking" that featured three boys building "the Hunter's Fire"—language that appealed to the same male audience who believed barbecuing meat was not a task for the weak.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, while a young boy reflected, "Baking is as much fun as my chemistry set. And you can eat what you mix up," a girl from the same book affirmed "If I were a mama, I'd cook all day long."<sup>35</sup> While boys could have varied and scholarly interests, postwar society trained girls from a young age not to look farther than their duties as a homemaker for fulfillment.

Despite cookbooks' emphasis on the gratification wives and mothers could find through cooking for their families, they often hinted at the tediousness of this task. Authors regularly emphasized how their cookbooks would make cooking less of a chore, exposing the underlying and often unspoken consensus that women's jobs were not enviable, despite society's insistence that American women were privileged. Guides such as *Betty Crocker's Picture Cookbook* often acknowledged that women had other hobbies besides cooking and advised their readers

<sup>28</sup> Neuhaus, "The Way," 541.

<sup>29</sup> Neuhaus, *Manly Meals*, 193-198.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>31</sup> Neuhaus, "The Way," 539-542.

<sup>32</sup> Lovegren, *Fashionable Food*, 170-176.

<sup>33</sup> *America's Cookbook*, 853.

<sup>34</sup> *Boys and Girls*, 64-65.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 107.

to plan meals in advance to avoid having to fix dinner later. The authors promised that an orderly cooking schedule would not only ensure that homemakers had more time for their “sewing circle” and other activities, but also that more organized homemakers would have a “relaxed spirit,” “happy smile,” and “cheerful attitude” that was an essential complement to any winning meal with family or friends.<sup>36</sup> The authors of *America’s Cookbook* admitted that modern women had trouble factoring in time for meal preparation because they had so many other duties to worry about when compared to those of their female ancestors.

In an effort to alleviate the burdens of 1950s housewives, cookbook authors frequently touted the huge selection of appliances introduced during and after the war that would save homemakers time and money in their culinary responsibilities. Consequently, women had no excuse to abstain from cooking because most of their work was already done for them. Postwar cookbooks credited canning, pressure cooking, and new agricultural techniques offered by this new and superior consumer culture with making domestic chores more bearable.<sup>37 38 39</sup>

Many women were not convinced by the manipulative strategies used by advertisers—including cookbook writers—to present an inaccurate depiction of women in the mass culture in an effort to indicate male superiority. In a poll conducted as early as 1958, J. A. C. Brown found that eighty-six percent of American women were disillusioned with advertising and its tendency to bend the truth.

The tensions about a woman’s proper place were displayed in subtler ways in 1950s cookbooks, but these issues became more pronounced in the 60s with the rise of social movements that brought awareness to oppressed minority groups. Women in the postwar era became increasingly cognizant of their subjugation, as expressed by women like Peg Bracken, author of the popular 1960 guide *The I Hate to Cook Book*, and more famously by Betty Friedan in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*. Bracken’s work did not explicitly advocate for gains for women but was progressive nonetheless because she bluntly stated that many women were repulsed by the idea of cooking—an “unwomanly” idea for the time period. She boldly

addressed her audience from the outset that “This book is for those of us who hate to, who have learned, through hard experience, that some activities become no less painful through repetition: childbearing, paying taxes, cooking.”<sup>40</sup>

Bracken created a satire of traditional cookbooks, selecting witty chapter names such as “Last-Minute Suppers: Or This Is the Story of Your Life” and “Company’s Coming: Or Your Back’s to the Wall” that clearly expressed her dissatisfaction with the expectation on women to serve others through cooking for their families and guests. Though she expressed her resentment at this longstanding injustice, she did not provide an alternative and even appeared to accept stratified roles for men and women, telling her female audience, “But perhaps the most depressing thing about those big fat cookbooks is that you have to have one.”<sup>41</sup> Despite Bracken’s seeming indifference to a more reformist mode of thinking about gender roles, *The I Hate to Cook Book* was a significant addition to the literature of postwar cookbooks because it subverted many of the ideas of writers who insisted that a woman’s only livelihood was to serve her family.<sup>42</sup>

Betty Friedan was more direct in her assessment of separate spheres and the limitations this concept placed on both genders. In *The Feminine Mystique*, she asserts, “Love and children and home are good, but they are not the whole world, even if most of the words now written for women pretend they are. Why should women accept this picture of a half-life, instead of a share in the whole of human destiny?”<sup>43</sup> She believed the kitchen was a jail for women and observed that public education and the invention of new household appliances undermined the valuable work that had been assigned to women. Betty Friedan furthermore maintained that women’s lives should be governed by their own choices and they should not feel compelled to practice any one chore over and over again. She received wildly positive feedback on her work, with hundreds of homemakers writing to her to thank her for labelling the crippling domestic ideology that left so many women feeling discouraged or empty during the postwar era.

Attitudes about women in the kitchen slowly began to change with both the publication of *The Feminine Mystique* and the airing of Julia

<sup>36</sup> Betty Crocker’s *Picture Cookbook*, 34-35.

<sup>37</sup> Neuhaus, *Manly Meals*, 246-249.

<sup>38</sup> *America’s Cookbook*, 29, 914, 958.

<sup>39</sup> Betty Crocker’s *Picture Cookbook*, 421.

<sup>40</sup> Peg Bracken, *The I Hate to Cook Book* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1960), 1.

<sup>41</sup> Bracken, *I Hate to Cook*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Parkin, *Food is Love*, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1963), 120-121.

Child's television show. Though she stood in a kitchen, Julia Child defied previous boundaries set for women because she demonstrated that cooking could be empowering and that food could be a source of enjoyment after women had been taught for years to take pleasure in the process of serving meals to others rather than savoring food themselves. Julia proved that women could pursue their preferred career paths and earn a living without feeling obligated to get married or have children. The blatantly sexist language of cookbooks has since faded and cooking became more inclusive as the domestic ideology of the postwar years faltered and men gradually joined women in the kitchen.<sup>44 45</sup>

Cookbooks produced during the mid-twentieth century and earlier had a legacy of confining women to certain tasks, while assigning another set of responsibilities to men. This ideology was deeply engrained in American society during the Cold War, when the nation took every measure to contain communism by offering new goods and services to consumers and dictating women's moral duty to prove themselves as patriots and homemakers. As Susan Douglas surmised, this limiting depiction of women persisted for so many years because both advertisers and cookbook editors had "carefully, relentlessly researched" females' most profound worries, including the fear that they would be insufficient wives and mothers.<sup>46</sup>

Cookbook authors' relentless badgering of women to cook for men and children exposed society's anxiety and understanding that women did not *have* to cook for their families. Many writers implored women through cookbooks to remain in the kitchen in order to push the agenda of male authority. Revolutionaries like Peg Bracken and Betty Friedan grew tired of these stereotypes and paved the way for women to combat traditional gender roles. As a result, many women decided to cook for their own pleasure, while others resisted the undertaking entirely. Though women are still associated with food preparation in contemporary society, they have more options and have realized that this relationship does not have to be a source of shame, but an empowering manifestation of feminine compassion.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Schenone, *A Thousand Years*, 324-328.

<sup>45</sup> Neuhaus, *Manly Meals*, 237.

<sup>46</sup> Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media*. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994), 15.

<sup>47</sup> Catherine Manton, *Fed Up: Women and Food in America* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), 87.