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**VARIOUS MODES OF “COOKING” IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MRS BEETON AND ARTUSI’S
COOKBOOKS**

ABSTRACT. This paper sets out to provide a comparative study of two apparently unrelated cookbooks as the British *Mrs Beeton’s Book of Household Management* (Beeton, 1861) and the Italian *La Scienza in Cucina e l’Arte di Mangiar Bene* (Artusi, 1891) by Pellegrino Artusi, a food writer virtually contemporary of Mrs Isabella Beeton. Both are founding texts of the food writing tradition that they helped shape in their respective home country and have been extremely influential beyond their time and space. In the case of *Mrs Beeton*, the book became a famous Victorian cookbook with numerous editions and a vast readership of English speaking readers all over the world; a direct consequence of a world-wide British empire. In the case of the Italian cookbook, its global success stemmed from its translation into multiple languages.

The juxtaposition of these two publishing stories, I will argue, is particularly revealing of the societies these two books came to embody abroad over centuries.

According to Floyd and Forster¹ (2003:1-2) the recipe constitutes a textual form which is not exclusively concerned with the production of daily meals, but it also discloses information on the cultural world in which it appears. A cookbook can hence shed light on habits, expectations, fears and fantasies related to food and fashionable lifestyle in a given period and geographical area. Drawing on Floyd and Forster's assumptions, the present paper aims to explore how Mrs Beeton and Artusi's cookbooks are embedded in the cultural context in which they were produced and to what extent they represent parallel stories of nineteenth century Europe's knowledge, fantasies and fears associated with foods

Key words: Food Writing; Nineteenth Century Cookbooks; Translation; Cross-Cultural Analysis of Cookbooks; food and scientific knowledge.

ABSTRACT. Questo articolo si basa su uno studio comparato tra due testi di argomento culinario, apparentemente distanti tra loro, come il manuale inglese di economia domestica di Mrs Beeton, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, pubblicato nel 1861 nel Regno Unito e il libro di cucina di Pellegrino Artusi *La Scienza in Cucina e l'Arte di Mangiar Bene*, pubblicato a Firenze nel 1891. Si tratta di due pilastri di quella tradizione gastronomica che hanno contribuito a plasmare nei rispettivi paesi di origine. Entrambi sono conosciuti come libri di cucina la cui

¹ Floyd Janet and Forster Laurel *The Recipe in its Cultural Contexts*, In Floyd J. and Forster L., a cura di, *The Recipe Reader*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, pp. 1-11.

influenza è andata ben oltre i confini dell'epoca e del paese di cui sono espressione. Nel caso di *Mrs Beeton*, grazie alle numerose edizioni che si sono susseguite anche dopo la morte dell'autrice, e potendo contare su un'ampia platea di lettori di lingua inglese in tutto il mondo, conseguenza diretta dell'impero britannico, il libro è diventato un'icona della cucina vittoriana. Nel caso del libro di cucina di Artusi, il suo successo internazionale è dovuto principalmente alla traduzione in molteplici lingue.

In questo articolo mi servirò dell'accostamento di questi due casi editoriali per mettere in luce alcuni aspetti della società e dello stile di vita di cui questi due libri di cucina sono divenuti simbolo nel corso dei secoli, particolarmente oltre i confini del proprio paese d'origine.

Secondo Floyd and Forster² la ricetta è un genere testuale che non si occupa esclusivamente della preparazione dei pasti quotidiani, ma rivela tratti del contesto culturale di cui fa parte. Un libro di cucina parlerebbe quindi delle abitudini, delle aspettative, delle paure e delle fantasie legate al cibo e allo stile di vita in voga in una data epoca e in un dato contesto geografico. Partendo dagli assunti di Floyd and Forster, questo articolo indaga come i libri di cucina di Artusi e di Mrs Beeton siano espressione del contesto culturale in cui vennero prodotti e si interroga su quanto essi

² Floyd Janet and Forster Laurel, *The Recipe in its Cultural Contexts*, In Floyd J. and Forster L., a cura di, *The Recipe Reader*, Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, pp. 1-11.

rappresentino delle storie parallele circa le conoscenze, le fantasie e le paure legate al cibo nelle società europee del diciannovesimo secolo.

Introduction

This chapter is based on a comparative analysis of two world famous cookbooks published in the second half of the nineteenth century, namely the Italian *La Scienza in cucina e l'arte di Mangiar Bene* by Pellegrino Artusi (1891) and the British *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* by Mrs. Isabella Beeton (1861). Enjoying enduring international success, each of them reflects different aspects of nineteenth century cookery traditions, ways of life, beliefs, habits in their respective country of origin, and yet through the analysis of their main discursive features I would like to pinpoint how much the two works have in common, and how much they may reveal about the European society of the nineteenth century. I will argue that both cookbooks tend to reflect socio-political strands of their time and are markedly didactic, thus reflecting a strong ambition to educate the masses and moralize. In particular, both cookbooks seem to pursue the aim of disseminating notions of scientific and technological developments of the time which might have not been

widespread among less educated people. According to Cantor et al.³ (2016: xvii) that science formed a fundamental part of the cultural economy of nineteenth century is generally accepted, however it is less clear how readers outside the relatively small intellectual community gained access to modern scientific ideas and practices. One possibility (*Ibidem*) is that the general public depended largely on magazines, periodicals, and newspapers, another possibility is that popular books as those under scrutiny also served the purpose of disseminating new scientific advancements. According to Turbil⁴ (2019: 112) in the second part of the nineteenth century a general public made predominantly of middle-class individuals found in popular science a series of tools that actively changed their everyday life, particularly in the kitchen: «Here, the new science of hygiene helped individuals and families to benefit from a new culinary culture while also learning about medicine and science more broadly». (2019:112)

³ Cantor, G. et al *Introduction* in Cantor et al., a cura di, *Culture and Science in the nineteenth century media*, 2016, London and New York, Routledge, pp. xvii-xxiii.

⁴Turbil, C. *Science in the Kitchen and Beyond: Cooking with Pellegrino Artusi in Post-Unified Italy*, “Public Understanding of Science”, Vol 29 (1) pp. 112-120.

Cookbooks are a reflection of their times

According to Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster (2003:1-2) the recipe constitutes a textual form which is not exclusively concerned with the production of daily meals, but it can shed light on the cultural world in which it appears. A cookbook can reveal some of the consumption habits of a certain population at a given time, and it can provide further information on trends related to food and lifestyle. Along similar lines is Nicola Humble's introduction to the Oxford World's Classics' version of *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* (2000: xv), where she states that it is precisely because cookery books are ephemeral, market-led forms of writing that they reveal so much a particular historical moment. Yet, she warns us that like any other text type, cookbooks consist of constructed discourses, therefore they are to be read as narrations and «can never be clear windows onto the kitchens of the past»⁵ (2000: xv-xvi). What Humble claims about Mrs Beeton's manual about Victorian household management can easily be extended to describe Umbertine Artusi's cookbook. Both are cookery books that do not reveal in a straightforward way what middle-class people in the United Kingdom or Italy actually ate in the second half of the nineteenth century, but perhaps more interestingly, they reflect recipes which the

⁵ Humble, Nicola, *Introduction in Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management. Abridged edition.* N. Humble (ed.) 2000, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, pp. vii-xxx.

authors selected as stylish, tasty or nutritious. As Humble points out «cookery books are always interventions in the nation's diet, rather than an accurate reflection of its current state: they represent an attempt to popularize new foods, new methods, fresh attitudes. They tell us more about the fantasies and fears associated with foods than about what people actually had for dinner at a particular date» (2000: xvi).

In the next paragraphs I shall outline some of the main well-known traits of the historical and social contexts that surrounded the two cookbooks in their respective home country.

During the Victorian period, Britain controlled a large empire. The country was wealthy and powerful, in part because of its degree of industrialization and because of its imperial holdings. Classes were organized hierarchically. The large majority of the population belonged to the working-class, while the middle class grew rapidly during the nineteenth century from 15% to 25% of the society. A very small percentage of upper class citizens having titles and wealth, owned most of the land in Britain and controlled local, national, and imperial politics. The Victorian age, particularly in Britain, was a period of paradoxes and moral double standards, based on an ideology of rigid gender separation. Although there were exceptions to this, men dominated the public sphere, and were free to participate in politics and in active economic life, while women were designated to the private sphere where they were responsible for the household and raising families. While the church played an

important role in British society in shaping moral values and Victorians still held a Christian world view, they appreciated developments in science. One of the best-known Victorian scientific advancements was the theory of evolution, developed by Charles Darwin, his *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, but Victorians were also fascinated by the pseudoscience of eugenics and the emerging discipline of psychology.⁶

As for Italy, the nineteenth century was a time of great social and political change which saw the rise of the Italian Risorgimento movement, which eventually led to the unification of Italy in 1870. Previously existing local states and kingdoms from North to South were drawn together under the Savoy crown. However, the newly united Italy was still deeply divided and compartmentalized.⁷ In the first decades after unification, Italy, which was not as industrialized as other European nations such as Austria or Great Britain, struggled to address many social and economic problems. Agriculture was the main source of sustenance of nearly three quarters of the population. Although some efforts to modernize food production were made by the new government in the first decades after the unification, these proved not to be

⁶ Cfr. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Victorian-era> last visited on December 24th, 2021.

⁷ Cfr. <https://lifeinitaly.com/life-italy-during-19th-century/> last visited on December 20th, 2021.

effective. Life was hard for most Italians, who remained indigent and subsisted on a meagre diet, thus triggering the phenomenon of Italian mass migration.⁸

Artusi and Mrs Beeton's cookbooks are founding texts of the food writing tradition in their respective home countries which have been extremely influential far beyond their context of origin. First and foremost, their wide dissemination, the numerous subsequent editions and their overall reader success are clearly indebted to the technological evolution of the printing industry in the nineteenth century. The introduction in 1814 of the steam machine in the print industry, the use of chromolithography since 1837 and the invention of the lithographic rotary printing press in 1843, helped speed up the printing process, in turn diminishing the cost of printing, streamlining the production of large numbers of copies and, as a consequence, exponentially increased the number of readers. Yet, while the success of Mrs. Beeton's handbook could count on a vast English speaking readership, scattered world-wide in times where the British empire also represented the most fashionable, civilized, must-have life-style; Artusi's book was the expression of a somehow rustic, peripheral, recently united Italy and its enormous success outside the country borders was almost exclusively based on the appreciation of many subsequent translated versions of the original work, which progressively appeared in

⁸ Turbil, Cristiano *Science in the Kitchen and Beyond: Cooking with Pellegrino Artusi in Post-Unified Italy*, “Public Understanding of Science”, 2019, Vol 29 (1) pp. 112-120.

many different languages, including French, English four different versions, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Russian, Polish, and very recently Japanese (in 2020)⁹. The book has remained in print and it has come to be recognized as one of the most significant Italian cookbooks of modern times as well as a landmark work in Italian nineteenth century literature and culture. In the Italian Einaudi edition of 1970, featuring a long and insightful introduction by historian of literature and food scholar Camporesi¹⁰, it was pointed out that at the time when the book was published, the newly created Kingdom of Italy was still linguistically and gastronomically fragmented, let alone politically and economically. According to Camporesi, this cookbook helped the nation overcome internal differences and reciprocal diffidence thus contributing to its homogenization both in linguistic and in cultural terms (1970; 1991: x-xi). Moreover, one of the most well-known English editions, published by University of Toronto Press in 2003,¹¹ featured an introduction by Luigi Ballerini, scholar, translator and gastronome, who traced a fascinating history of the book explaining its importance in the context of Italian history and politics. Conversely *Mrs. Beeton's book* was only recently translated into Italian. In 2013 a very abridged version of the Victorian cookbook, which did not include any of the recipes of the

⁹ See <https://www.casartusi.it/it/libro/> last visited on December 13th, 2021.

¹⁰ Camporesi, Piero *Introduzione* in “La Scienza in Cucina e l’Arte di Mangiar Bene”, Einaudi, Torino, 1970; 1991, pp. IX-LXXII.

¹¹ Artusi, Pellegrino, *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, 2003 Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Foreword by Michele Scicolone; introduction by Luigi Ballerini; translated by Murtha Baca and Stephen Sartarelli.

original household manual, was published by a minor Italian publisher, Editrice Berti, with a disclaimer (Beeton, 2013: ii) about the editorial deliberate choice not to translate the almost 2000 recipes contained in the original book, because they were dimmed old-fashioned and less interesting than the other chapters.¹²

Two apparently unrelated cookbooks and their dissimilar publishing stories

The front cover of each cookbook, in its first edition, reflects two very different publishing stories. The Victorian *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* was published in London in 1861 by a young and well-educated female journalist, food writer, and translator, Mrs Isabella Beeton. The Italian *La Scienza in Cucina e l'Arte di Mangiar Bene*, by Pellegrino Artusi, an elderly former businessman and occasional food writer from a tiny village called Forlimpopoli to the south of Bologna, was first published in Florence in a recently united Italy, by the author himself in 1891. The flamboyant style of Mrs Beeton's coloured book title page reflects a rich and sophisticated print tradition of women weekly magazines. One of them, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, had been founded by the young publisher Sam

¹² Beeton, Isabella Mary (2013) *Il libro di Mrs Beeton: Saggi consigli domestici per la perfetta gentildonna*, Parma, Nuova Editrice Berti.

Beeton whom Isabella Beeton, born Isabella Mayson, had married in 1855, and that magazine was in many respects a source of inspiration for the creation of the cookbook (Humble 2000: x-xi). Artusi's plain and rational cover design is more in tune with the Italian artisan printing tradition and with the author's need to reduce publishing costs. While Mrs Beeton could count on the support and assistance of her publisher husband, Artusi had to publish his book at his own expense because no publisher, in the newly unified Italy, would publish it, as the subject matter was considered too trivial. At first sight the book titles also look dissimilar, while *Beeton's book of Household Management* clearly addresses the domestic sphere, Artusi's book title has a very positivist and hedonistic flair «Science in the kitchen and the art of eating well»; yet Artusi's high-flown cookbook title is followed by a more down-to-earth subheading: «a practical handbook for the families»¹³ which also positions the book in the realm of the homely, the intimate and the ordinary.

¹³ All quotations from Pellegrino Artusi's cookbook that are reported in English are extracts from the 2003 translated version.

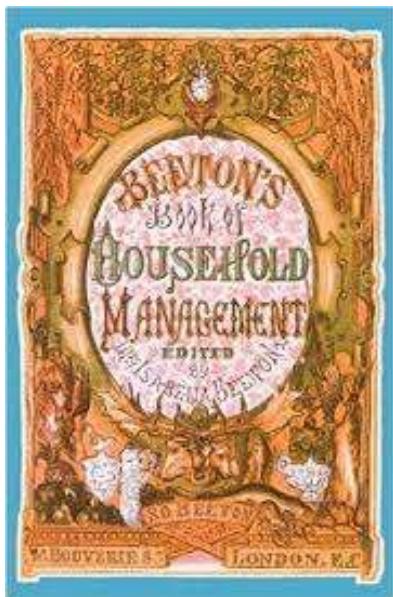


Fig. 1

Fig. 1 Title page to the *Book of Household Management*, 1861



Fig. 2

Fig. 2 Title Page to the book *La Scienza in Cucina e l'Arte di Mangiar Bene*, 1891

Originally published in the form of twenty-four magazine columns from 1859 to 1861, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* was one of the major publishing success stories of the nineteenth century, selling over 60,000 copies in its first year of publication and nearly two million by 1868. Regarded as the quintessence of Victorian cookery, it has been published and republished in new editions which progressively modified the original. When the last edition appeared in the 1960s, little, if any trace of Mrs. Beeton's work remained. Far more than just a cookery book, it contained all that was needed for a newly married woman to face housekeeping with confidence, how give or accept a dinner invitation, in what order people should sit at the table, what kitchen equipment to buy, how to clean and

maintain household appliances, furniture, brushes and combs, how to remove paint-spots from silk cloth, what to look for in hiring servants, how to raise children and cure various ailments, and much more. It is an encyclopaedic volume containing all sorts of information on history, myths, animal breeding, science, religion, and even advice on legal issues. Throughout the book there are paragraphs describing a variety of edible plants and animals, with illustrations of them in their natural habitat (Humble 2000: xii). But it is the nearly 2000 recipes which are the glory of the book: although Isabella Beeton made no claims for herself as the author of these. She simply collected, organized and tested the recipes before publishing.

Artusi's book *La Scienza in Cucina e L'arte di Mangiar bene* is the collection of hundreds of regional and family recipes from all around Italy that Artusi sampled during his business travels, and published in 1891 in one monumental work devoted to gastronomy, notwithstanding significant difficulties. Thirty years after the publication of *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, no editor dared publishing Artusi's cookbook devoted mainly to home-cooking, considering it a minor endeavour with little potential for success. Artusi resolved to publish the first edition (1000 copies only) at his own expense and risk. After a short time, and to his great surprise, Artusi's book became so popular that edition after edition sold over a million copies and eventually reached 111 editions. It was reprinted thirteen times and it had sold more than 56,000 copies before its author's death in 1910, with the number of recipes growing from the initial 475 to 790. In the introduction to one of

the book's numerous editions, Artusi postulated that in an hedonistic and materialistic century such as his own there would come a time when writing and reading about food will be regarded as an important part of the cultural debate.

With our century tending towards materialism and life enjoyments, the day shall soon come when writings of this sort, which delights the mind and nourish the body, will be more widely sought and read than the words of great scientists, which are of much greater value to humanity. Blind is the man who cannot see this.¹⁴ (Artusi, 1891; 2003: 4)

Indeed, in many ways these sentiments anticipate the influence of celebrity chefs and the pervasiveness of food discourse in many cultural and intellectual domains nowadays.

Target readership

Both Mr Beeton and Artusi's cookbooks are meant as guidebooks for a new emerging social class, *la bourgeoisie*. The middle-class were in need of legitimization but also needed guidance on social etiquette; for instance instructions on how to manage a

¹⁴ Artusi, Pellegrino *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, Cit. p. 4.

household, how to hold a reception, and how to hold social events which include aristocratic guests. These books are nonetheless also an expression of the pragmatic nature of the middle class. Both books include advice on how to use leftovers and to reduce costs for shopping and for hiring servants. *The book of Household Management* by Mrs Beeton clearly targeted women of the emerging middle class, who needed advice on how to keep a house according to modern standards.

Artusi's volume also mainly targeted women, although this was not as explicit as in Mrs Beeton's book. In his foreword he addressed the general reader: «A chi legge» (which can be interpreted both as ‘those who will read [this]’, but also ‘those who [can] read’). It is worth mentioning that at the time it was not unusual for women in Italy to be excluded from the public sphere, and even if upper class women could write and read, this was not generally assumed or publicly referred to. Among the 1,840 letters Artusi received from his readers suggesting new recipes, praising his work or requesting a copy of his book, many were signed by men, but written or conceived by women.¹⁵ As a member of the upper class he had servants who cooked for him and tried the recipes out for him, and it is questionable whether Artusi ever cooked himself, however, his book was implicitly addressed to middle-class women and family cooks rather than male professional chefs as it was customary in the nineteenth-century. Cookery books in Italy at the time were typically written by

¹⁵ Cfr. <https://www.casartusi.it/it/carteggio/> last visited on December 23rd, 2021 and <https://www.lacucinaitaliana.com/trends/restaurants-and-chefs/pellegrino-artusi-10-rules-to-respect-the-italian-cuisine> last visited on December 23rd, 2021.

French-trained chefs who either wrote in French or were about French cuisine.¹⁶ Artusi's was the first book which was available to those who could read only Italian; and it especially appealed to the newly emerging middle class: housewives and mothers who prepared the family meals with the assistance of a cook or one or two servants, none of whom was highly educated (Ballerini 2003: ix). Artusi's book helped expand their repertoire and further instructed them about other topics such as table manners, nutrition and cooking techniques. But while some of Mrs Beeton's recipes now tend to be perceived as extravagant, inedible curiosities, which reflect the Victorian British imperial past with recipes such as «Turtle soup» or the «Calf's feet jelly» (Beeton, 1861, 2000: 90, 289), Artusi's recipes have withstood the test of time. By way of proof, there is even a restaurant called *Casa Artusi*, in the village of Forlimpopoli, Artusi's place of birth, where there are only original versions of Artusi's recipes on the menu and can be enjoyed by the restaurant visitors.

Artusi's advice that fresh air and sporting activity (riding a bicycle for example) can be more beneficial for one's health than intellectual speculations could be read as a sign of pragmatism, but also suggests he sympathized more with the middle-class than with aristocracy.

¹⁶ Ballerini Luigi, "Introduction: A as in Artusi, G as in Gentleman and Gastronome" *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, pp. xvii-lxxiii

Lavishness and moderation: fantasies and fears about food

In terms of fears related to food, Isabella Beeton pointed out the necessity for middle class women to compete with the attractions of the world outside the family home: «Men are now so well served out of doors, - at their clubs, well-ordered taverns, and dining houses, that in order to compete with the attractions of these places, a mistress must be thoroughly acquainted with the theory and practice of cookery, as well as be perfectly conversant with all the other arts of making and keeping a comfortable home» (Beeton, 1961; 2000: 3). This was a time when men in the UK could find plenty of places to eat out, especially in the towns and cities: «From rough-and-ready chop houses and public houses, elegant tea rooms and refreshment rooms, through to oyster bars and high-class restaurants, there were plenty of eateries for different social classes and budgets»¹⁷. In the mid-nineteenth century, women were a rare sight in restaurants as *The American Stranger's Guide to London and Liverpool at Table* (1859) highlighted. In London and other cities, it was difficult to find restaurants where women could dine: «It is true that some have been opened where gentlemen may take their wives and daughters, but it has not yet become a recognized custom»¹⁸. When Isabella Beeton was writing her book it was rare for women to dine out, and

¹⁷ See: <https://visitvictorianengland.com/2019/06/06/eating-out-in-victorian-england-restaurants/> last visited on Decemmmber 20th, 2021.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

thus, becoming confident in the arts of cooking, hosting and running a household was a way of maintaining marital harmony and establishing social credibility. By the 1880s, it had become more acceptable for women and girls to eat out, even unaccompanied by men, and the male-dominated world of restaurants slowly came to an end. For the middle classes, restaurants offering set menus at a fixed price were extremely popular and regular menu could include no less than eight courses. It is no wonder the competition with Victorian restaurants caused some anxieties to newly married women. Homemade indigestion remedies were part and parcel of Mrs Beeton's and Artusi's suggestions to their respective readers. In an introductory section devoted to hygiene and health guidelines Artusi explained that a cup of black coffee in the morning, especially with the addition of some hot water, could help process the remnants of an imperfect digestion.¹⁹ In both cookbooks, lavish meals are described and stand as representations of abundance, elegance and good taste. Apart from providing numerous recipes grouped into different sections devoted to the main ingredients of their dishes (fish, meat, vegetables, etc.), both authors included a selection of two menus for each month of the year which comprised at least five courses each along with a few suggestions on how to dress the dinner table. These

¹⁹ «It also appears that coffee when drunk in the morning on an empty stomach rids the organism of the residue of an imperfect digestion and prepares it to receive a more appetizing breakfast ». Artusi, Pellegrino *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*, Cit p. 560

menus were aimed at helping mistresses selecting the recipes for their well-planned receptions with an eye on the budget.

The elegance with which a dinner is served is a matter which depends, of course, partly upon means, but still more upon the taste of the master and mistress of the house. It may be observed, in general, that there should always be flowers on the table, and as they form no item of expense, there is no reason why they should not be employed every day. The variety in the dishes which furnish forth a modern dinner-table, does not necessarily imply anything unwholesome, or anything capricious. Food that is not well relished cannot be well digested.

(Beeton, 1861, 2000: 367)

What follows is an extract from Mrs. Beeton and Artusi's cookbooks presenting a menu suggestion for February meals. Both menus start with a soup and end with a selection of desserts, which are common trends in the numerous menus provided in the two books.

Mrs Beeton February's Menu (Beeton 1861, 2000: 370)	Artusi's February's Menu (Artusi, 1891, 2003)
Dinner for 12 Persons <i>First Course</i> Soup à la Reine Clear Gravy Soup	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Soups and broths. Tortellini all'italiana (Agnellotti), no. 82. Boiled meats. Chicken and veal with a spinach sauce no. 4483. Cold dishes. "Pane di lepre," hare terrine no. 373

Brill and Lobster Sauce Fried Smelts <i>Entrées</i> Lobster Rissoles, Beef Palates Pork Cutlets à la Subise, Grilled Mushrooms <i>Second Course</i> Braised Turkey, Haunch of Mutton, Boiled Capon and Oysters, Tongue, garnished with tufts of Broccoli Vegetables and Salads <i>Third Course</i> Wild Duck, Plovers, Orange Jelly Clear Jelly, Charlotte Russe, Nesselrode Pudding Gateau de Riz, Sea Kale, Maids of Honour <i>Dessert and Ices</i>	4. Entremets. Cockles in hollandaise sauce no. 498 5. Stews. Milk-fed veal cutlets with truffles, Bolognese style no.312 6. Roasted meats. Roast woodcock no. 528, with salad 7. Desserts. Savarin, no. 563 or French style custard no. 68 8. Fruit. Pears, apples, various dried fruit.
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Both are sumptuous menus comprising a range of meats, poultry, fish and game served with elaborate sauces which both reflect the influence of refined French-style cuisine, although perhaps more so for the English cookbook.

The lavishness of the proposed meals is directly in contrast to what seems to be one further concern of both authors, namely, modesty and moderation. Both Mrs Beeton and Artusi encouraged decency and sobriety and disapproved of overindulgence and waste. In the case of Artusi, this might also have been caused by the fact that at the

time of writing Italy had been in the grid of poverty for almost two decades: «The scarcity of food and the poor nutritional value of the staples consumed day in and day out by the working classes were indeed the talk of the nation» (Ballarini, 2003: xxxix).

Chapter I

The Mistress

FRUGALITY AND ECONOMY are home virtues, without which no household can prosper.

HOSPITALITY is most excellent virtue; but care must be taken that the love of company, for its own sake, does not become a prevailing passion; for then the habit is no longer hospitality but dissipation.

Preface

I should not like my interest in gastronomy to give me the reputation of a gourmand or glutton. I object to any such dishonourable imputation, for I am neither. I love the good and the beautiful wherever I find them and hate to see anyone squander, as they say, God's bounty. Amen

Artusi's health guidelines were based on the assumption that good diet and physical exercise could be good for one's health; he highlighted the virtues of a well-balanced diet, encouraged moderation in food consumption and discouraged excess.

Temperance and physical exercise are thus the two factors on which good health depends. Be advised, however, that "when overdone a virtue is a vice become" -since the constant discharges of the organism need to be replaced. You should beware of falling from one excess, overabundant eating, into the contrary one: scant and insufficient nourishment which weakens the body. (Artusi, 1970: 18)

Mrs Beeton, on the other hand, underlined in many different ways the merits of sobriety, she also recommended an early rising, being not only «the parent of health, but of innumerable other advantages». (Beeton, 1861, 2000: 8).

One further concern related to food that emerged from both cookbooks had to do with hygiene. This was closely connected to the nineteenth century developments in scientific understanding. Medicine and surgery made great advances in the 19th century, after several outbreaks of cholera in Britain, it was shown that cholera was transmitted by water. In a series of experiments between 1857 and 1863 Pasteur proved that microscopic organisms caused disease. The focus on hygiene was particularly relevant and new at the time, given the lack of widespread understanding among less educated populations.

In post-unified Italy, Artusi was, of course, not the only one to embrace the task of improving the hygienic condition of Italians. He was also one of many to use scientific nationalism to bring Italians together. Artusi's book of recipes fits within the tradition of self-help/popular science books introduced in Italy by Mantegazza in 1865 [...] Artusi did not want to make Italians 'doctors at home'. Instead he wanted to show his fellow countrymen what a proper knowledge of food and recipes could do for their health. Indeed, Artusi saw Italians not as a political category but rather as a heterogeneous group of individuals with different languages, social statutes and culinary traditions which needed to be educated and guided in a common culinary culture. Only in this way, Artusi believed, Italians could be transformed into a healthy, well-nourished and more educated population. *La Scienza in Cucina* is, therefore, an example of culinary positivism and political activism.(Turbil, 2019:115)

Turbil (2019: 116) argues that Artusi's cookbook helped to convey ideas about what constituted a healthy diet, and moreover, what constituted Italian cuisine. Artusi also

provided advice on how to maintain a healthy and hygienic household, through offering information around optimal temperatures and cleaning recommendations for various parts of the house. The second significant change Artusi proposed concerns the type of food available to Italians and the importance of changing their diet.

Mrs Beeton's book also provided guidelines on healthy living and hygiene:

CLEANLINESS is also indispensable to health, and must be studied both in regard to the person and the house, and all that it contains. Cold or tepid baths should be employed every morning, unless on account of illness or other circumstances, they should be deemed objectionable. The bathing of children will be treated of under the head of MANAGEMENT OF CHILDREN. (Beeton, 1961, 2000: 8)

Let the temperature of the dining-room be about 68°. Let the dishes be few in number in the first course, but proportionally good.

(Beeton, 1961; 2000: 368)

Interestingly, both books also offered suggestions on how to raise healthy children:

Start by dressing your children lightly, from infancy, for with this method, when they are grown up they will be less sensitive to sudden changes in atmospheric temperature and less subject to cold and bronchitis. And if in winter you do not let the stove raise the heat in your apartment above 12 or 14 degrees Centigrade (about 60 degrees Fahrenheit) you will probably be safe from pneumonia, which has become so prevalent these days. [...] Try to leave in healthy houses, full of light and well ventilated: illness flees where the sun shines in.

(Artusi, 1991, 1970:14-15)

Science and Religion

The use of science in the two books served a specific political purpose: the necessity to create a common culture for hygiene. Both Mrs Beeton and Artusi were willing to provide a scientific approach to cooking and eating and yet to instruct people on how to enjoy the pleasures of food while putting together a well-balanced menu. Enthusiasm for science and the determination to provide a scientific approach to cooking and household management emerges from Mrs Beeton's preface to her work, for example:

In the department belonging to the Cook I have striven, too, to make my work something more than a Cookery Book, and have, therefore, on the best authority that I could obtain, given an account of the natural history of the animals and vegetables which we use as food. I have followed the animal from his birth to his appearance on the table; have described the manner of feeding him and of slaying him (Beeton, 1961; 2000: 3)

In those days the most obvious competition was between science and religion. Scientific theories and discoveries had questioned many of the religious beliefs and traditional accounts about nature and the world. Beeton showed an awareness of this conflict, especially in the parts where she discussed natural history, where she tried to combine her enthusiasm for science with her creationist faith, thus reflecting a conflict which was also very present in Victorian cultural life in general (Humble, 2000: xvii).

The animal with the largest mouth is usually the victor, and he has no sooner conquered his foe than he devours him. Innumerable shoals of one species pursue those of another, with a ferocity which draws them from the pole to the equator, through all the varying temperatures and depths of their boundless domain. In these pursuits a scene of universal violence is the result; and many species must have become extinct, had not Nature accurately proportioned the means of escape, the production, and the numbers, to the extent and variety of the danger to which they are exposed. [...] but whether considered in their solitary or gregarious capacity, [fishes]are alike wonderful to all who look through Nature up to Nature's God, and consider, with due humility, yet exalted admiration, the sublime variety, beauty, power and grandeur of His productions, as manifested in Creation. (Beeton, 1961, 2000: 97-98)

Moreover, Beeton's entire cookbook is pervaded with the sense of industrial organization. Her book describes perfect household management, provides scientific introductions to recipes and elaborate classifications of duties each servant has to accomplish. In this, the running of a household can be seen to resemble the organization of a factory; and yet the writer conveys a nostalgia for a rural or more simple way of life, especially in the chapters devoted to bread, dairy products or preserves. The tensions between rural nostalgia and modern pragmatism reflected a fundamental conflict of the Victorian age. A rapidly changing industrial society and shifting values caused many people to look back at various past golden ages as sources of moral stability (Humble, 2000: ix-x).

Shaping a genre, shaping the language

Isabella Beeton continued the tradition, inaugurated by Eliza Acton, to separate ingredients, quantities and time of preparation from method. She consistently contributed to shaping the recipe text genre by providing information on the number of people the dish served and its average cost, and explanatory notes. An index at the end of the book was another innovation her book introduced. Moreover, *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* was illustrated with coloured engravings on nearly every page and was the first to format recipes in this way.

I have attempted to give, under the chapters devoted to cookery, an intelligible arrangement to every recipe, a list of the ingredients, a plain statement of the mode of preparing each dish, and a careful estimate of its cost, the number of people for whom it is sufficient, and the time when it is seasonable. The coloured plates* are a novelty not without value.

(Beeton, 1861, 2000:4)

But while Beeton's tone appears very serious and business like in tone, Artusi's tone is «that of a friendly advisor - humorous and nonchalant. He indulges in witty anecdotes about many of the recipes, describing his experiences and the historical relevance of particular dishes» (Ballerini, 2003: i). Following examples are but the tip of the iceberg of a very lively and witty approach Artusi employed invariably to

describe the subject matter of his book and its reception, provide advice on hygiene or present regional dishes or ingredients that were not well-known in the rest of Italy: «I may discretely assume that my dishes have been generally well received and that to my great fortune few people, thus far, have cursed me for stomach aches or other phenomena that decency forbids me to mention» (Artusi 2003: 8); «Forty years ago, one hardly saw eggplant or fennel in the markets in Florence; they were considered to be vile because they were foods eaten by Jews. As in other matters of greater moment, here again the Jews show how they have always had a better nose than the Christians » (Artusi, 2003; 296); «This dish, which in Florence is called “cavolo con le fette” (cabbage with bread slices) is something fit for a Carthusian monk, or to be inflicted on a glutton as penitence» (Artusi 2003: 316).

Artusi contributed to shaping the Italian language of food. At the time when his book was published it was the first cookbook written in Italian dealing with home-cooking in Italy. In a recently united Italy (1861) Artusi was very careful about not including dishes that were perceived as too local or using names of dishes that were too colloquial, and in this way he created a food language that made dishes recognizable in households in the whole peninsula. Not only that but, according to the editor of the Einaudi 1970 edition of *Science in the Kitchen*, historian and literary critic Piero Camporesi, suggested that it was Artusi's cookbook that helped bring the country and its diverse dialects together into one national language, and in doing so, it unified Italy more than any politician could do. Gillian Riley in the Oxford

Companion to Italian Food, paints this picture: «While the *questione della lingua* was being debated by academics, innocent housewives throughout the land were consulting their ‘Artusi’ every day, and his literate, slightly colloquial, Florentine version of Tuscan dialect... became reassuringly familiar». Artusi also includes, at the front of his cookbook, a glossary to explain the vernacular Tuscan words he often used to the readers of the rest of Italy. In the extract below, which was not included in the 2003 English translation, the author provided a glossary of Florentine gastronomic terms that he assumed were not intelligible to the majority of his readers who might be more familiar with other dialects. The terms in bold are nowadays standard Italian terms and cooking technical terms.

Spiegazione di Voci che essendo del Volgare toscano non tutti intenderebbero

Frattaglie. Tutte le interiora e le minute dell’animale macellato

Lunetta o mezzaluna. Arnese di ferro tagliente dalla parte esteriore ad uso di cucina per tritare carne, erbe o simili, fatto a foggia di mezza luna, ocn manichi idì legno alle due estremità.

Mestolo. Specie di cucchiao di legno, pochissimo incavato e di lungo manico, che serve a rimestare le vivande nei vasi da cucina.

Zucchero a velo. Zucchero bianco pestato fine e passato per un setaccio di velo.

(Artusi, 1891; 1970: 30.31)

Conclusions

This comparative analysis of two nineteenth century cookbooks, namely *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* by Mrs. Isabella Beeton and *La Scienza in cucina e l'arte di Mangiar Bene* by Pellegrino Artusi, published in the capital of the British Victorian empire and in the new born Kingdom of Italy respectively, has provided valuable insights into the kitchen and the society of two European countries of the past. In spite of the fact that the two books reflect different cookery traditions and ways of life of the British Victorian society and the Umbertine Italy respectively, the study has revealed that the two cookbooks targeted similar readerships, made out of a growing number of middle-class individuals, women in particular, who aspired to become knowledgeable about good table manners, stylish nutritious and healthy food and a balanced diet. Those readers wanted to learn more about how to hold a reception that could impress even upper classes, what to dress for a dinner invitation, how to put together a delightful menu or simply manage a household according to modern standards. Food abundance and sobriety were conflicting concerns emerging from both books, thus reflecting the expectations of a middle class readership to be taught how to be *à la page*, while keeping an eye on the budget. The two culinary texts, it has been argued, also share the same “didactic” purpose of instructing the general public about hygiene and disseminating the novel scientific understanding of the century. Despite all these aspects the two books have in common, one striking

difference between the two texts, which through subsequent editions became landmarks of the culinary tradition, is to be seen in their tone. While Mrs Beeton's manual was extremely serious, analytical and almost business-like, Artusi's cookbook was witty, ironic and above all entertaining, moreover, while Mrs Beeton's text helped shape the genre of modern cookery books, Artusi' helped shape a common, national, culinary language in Italy.

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