



Cooking Lessons: The Politics of Gender and Food

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Meatloaf, fried chicken, Jell-O, cake—because foods are so very common, we rarely think about them much in depth. The authors of *Cooking Lessons* however, believe that food is deserving of our critical scrutiny and that such analysis yields many important lessons about American society and its values. This book explores the relationship between food and gender. Contributors draw from diverse sources, both contemporary and historical, and look at women from various cultural backgrounds, including Hispanic, traditional southern White, and African American. Each chapter focuses on a certain food, teasing out its cultural meanings and showing its effect on women's identity and lives. For example, food has often offered women a traditional way to gain power and influence in their households and larger communities. For women without access to other forms of creative expression, preparing a superior cake or batch of fried chicken was a traditional way to display their talent in an acceptable venue. On the other hand, foods and the stereotypes attached to them have also been used to keep women (and men, too) from different races, ethnicities, and social classes in their place.

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