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## Let's Get Cookin': Volunteers transcribe and translate historic manuscript cookbooks

K-State Libraries

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# LET'S GET COOKIN'

## Volunteers transcribe and translate historic manuscript cookbooks

BY CAILIN RILEY

Staff and volunteers with K-State Libraries' Richard L.D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections are transcribing more than 30 manuscript cookbooks to make them digitally accessible to the public.

The department is home to a renowned cookery collection which includes more than 250 manuscript cookbooks dating from the late 1600s to the 21st century; the manuscripts come from multiple countries and are written in a variety of languages including German, French, Spanish and Hebrew. The cookery collection is the largest collection of its kind that is available at a public university.

Staff and volunteers are using From the Page, an online platform often used by universities and historical societies to crowd-source transcription of selected digital images from manuscripts. The use of this software is supported by the Jean F. Caul Access to Cookery endowment, without which this project would not be possible.

"Since going live in September 2020, we have scanned 31 cookbooks," said Roger Adams, cookery collection curator, associate professor and lead on the project. "Of the 31 cookbooks, 21 have been fully transcribed and are being reviewed for transcription accuracy. The remaining 10 cookbooks are in the process of being transcribed by some of our 96 volunteers."

After the cookbooks are reviewed for accuracy, they will be taken out of From the Page and placed in the Libraries' digital archive where they will be easily searchable and available to anyone in the world.

Adams said that a goal of the transcription project is to share the wealth of knowledge that K-State has access to with those both inside and outside of the university community. In the future, Adams wishes to work with instructors in the modern languages department to incorporate some of the foreign language cookbooks into their curriculum,

with the hope that they could create assignments to help with transcription and translation.

"It's up to us as researchers to determine the age of the cookbook, where its author might have lived based on the ingredients they had available to them and the general health and financial status of the family that owned the cookbook," said Adams.

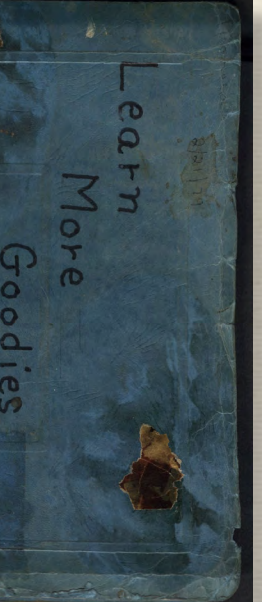
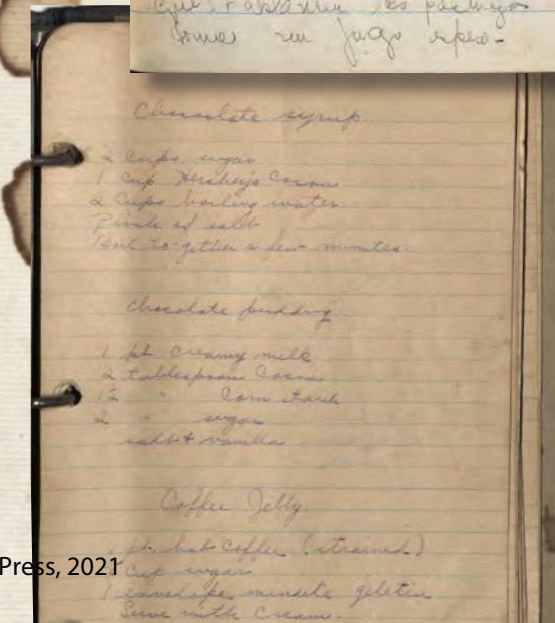
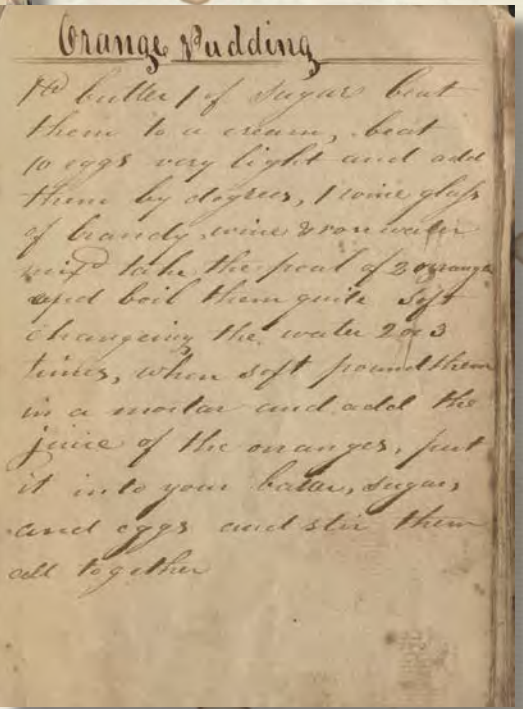
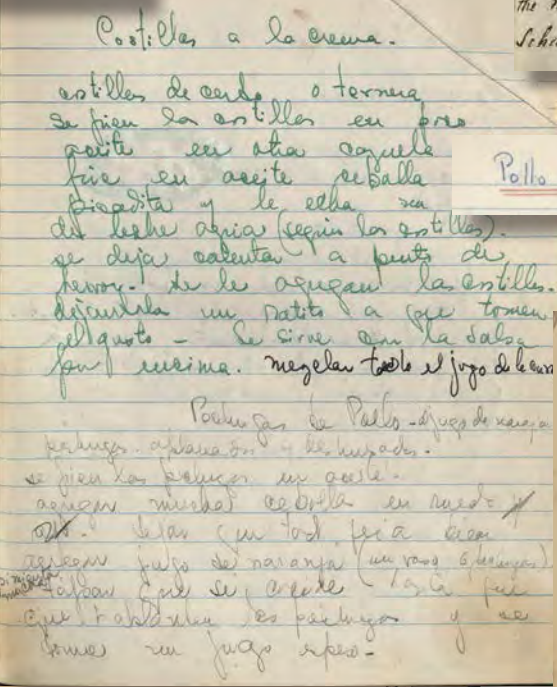
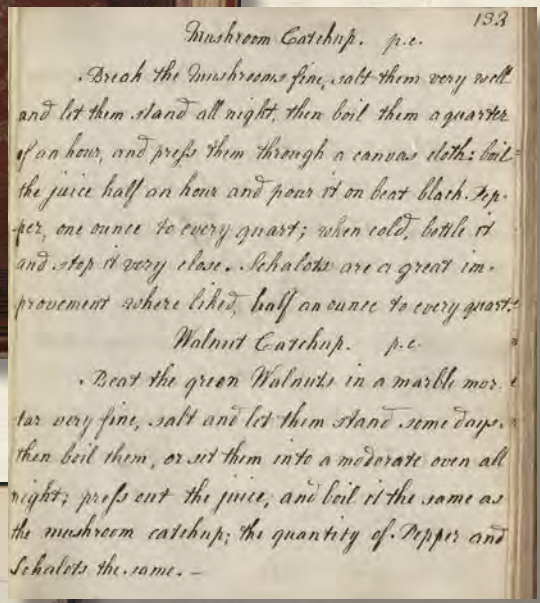
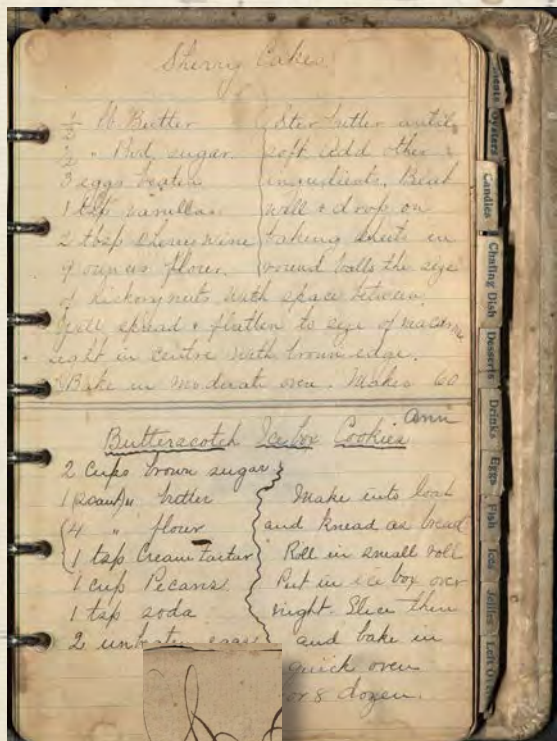
The collaborative nature of this online project means that anyone in the world can view the cookbooks and help transcribe and translate them. Anybody who has a passion for transcribing or translating documents can help with the cookbook project, especially those with knowledge of foreign languages.

Cindy Von Elling, project support staff and library assistant III in the Morse Department of Special Collections, contributed to this effort by scanning and uploading to the website every page from the manuscripts.

"There is a lot of satisfaction in putting the cookbooks out there for the world to see and transcribe," said Von Elling. "While we might not know who created an individual cookbook, their method of creation, organization and the recipes they selected allow us to infer things about their lifestyle and personality."

Those who wish to help can access the project by going to the Libraries' From the Page website at [fromthepage.com/kstatelibraries](http://fromthepage.com/kstatelibraries).

Contact Roger Adams at [rcadams@k-state.edu](mailto:rcadams@k-state.edu) for more information about this project.



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