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La Cuisinière Canadienne: The Cookbook as Communication

Cookbooks are not merely instructional texts designed to teach culinary techniques and transmit recipes. They are a form of communication that tells a story and ultimately projects aspirational values. Cookbooks entice readers with the possibility of an enhanced lifestyle and they often reflect a distinct aesthetic or ethical position, even an entire world view. Most cookbooks also promote a particular mode of eating that promises a transformational experience. If you follow their advice, they offer rewards ranging from better health and weight loss to sophistication for impressing guests, perhaps a happy well-fed family, a conscience free of cruelty to animals. Whatever the angle, implicitly cookbooks promise a better life.

Deciphering the messages, the subtext beneath the recipes, which is not always so apparent, is a matter of setting the cookbook in social and historical context, reading between the lines to gauge the intended audience and projected outcomes. Sometimes what appears to be a simple list of recipes actually contains an entire explicit agenda with social, political, and economic goals. Moreover the cookbook empowers the individual to express identity, to perform a specific role, whether it be one's ethnic or religious persona, national background or even ideological position.

For example, a cookbook about traditional ethnic recipes enables the reader to engage in one's heritage and recreate the past when cooking and serving foods eaten by one's ancestors. It thus strengthens social cohesion within the group. Likewise a cookbook based on fresh and local ingredients subsumes a larger political stance against mass produced corporate food, processed hundreds of miles away and shipped, wasting fossil fuels and damaging the environment. In other words, cookbooks are almost always about something more than recipes.

With this in mind, this article will deconstruct and analyze one particular cookbook, the first indigenous culinary text published in Canada, the anonymous *La Cuisinière Canadienne* which appeared in Montreal in 1840.¹ It was an immensely popular book, going through eleven editions well into the 20th century.² It is partly a book simply recording recipes, but it also aims to preserve a threatened culture by teaching readers how to be proper Montrealais, through knowing how to make and ultimately serve dishes that are unique to this city and its French speaking population. It enables one to perform this role, to ones self, family and guests, by being able to cook signature recipes which

¹ Anon. *La Cuisinière Canadienne* (Montreal: Louis Perrault, 1840). http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/cuisine/027006-119.01-e.php?brws=2&cat_nbr=74&page_ecopy=nlc009095.U29&&PHPSESSID=ed506qdqhfns4sg6aislbs4vh2 The first cookbook published, in 1825, was actually a reprint of Menon's classic *La Cuisinière Bourgeoise* first published in Paris in 1746.

² Elizabeth Driver. *Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks* (University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 84-6; Nathalie Cook, *What's to Eat?: Entrées in Canadian Food History* (McGill Queens University Press, 2009).

define this culture. Needless to say, to some extent it creates these traditions in the very act of setting them down in print.

The book therefore functions on one level as propaganda insofar as it attempts to promote one particular culture among many, a consciously antiquated culture that may no longer have reflected how most people ate. The work is not only self-consciously French but also Catholic, and Elizabeth Driver's contention that the book originated within a nunnery is perfectly plausible. The author of the book is not identified, but the publisher Louis Perrault was in the circle of one Mme. Gamelin, one of the founders of the Institute of Providence, a religious order. The church had a vested stake in preserving French culture and was one of its foremost advocates in these years.³ The message here is explicitly cooking very traditional dishes as a way to preserve identity.

Before delving into these details, allow me to briefly explain the initial allure of this topic for me personally. When I was very young my mother, while doing her daily chores, would set me up in front of the TV to watch cooking shows. I remember my favorite was *The Galloping Gourmet* (which as filmed in Ottawa from 1969-71) starring Graham Kerr, who would traipse around the studio, wine glass in hand, while executing impossibly rich fantastic dishes. In one particular episode he cooked a gargantuan Tourtière, the historic game pie of Quebec, replete with a variety of meats. It stuck in my mind years later as one of the most incredible things I had ever seen. It became such an obsession that on the day after I got my drivers license, my best friend and I drove all the way from central New Jersey, 100 miles an hour in Delta 288 Oldsmobile, to Montreal just so we could taste a tourtière. I'm not sure why my parents let us go, but we did find the tourtière, at Les Filles du Roy, a historic restaurant that still exists, and the dish is still on the menu. And as you will see it is featured in the *Cuisinière* too.

My impression, confirmed by this admittedly limited experience, has always been that Quebecois cuisine contains numerous rudiments of 17th century cooking, somehow frozen in time from the point of original settlement, while they disappeared back in France. Most notably there is the use of spices in savory dishes, but also cooking techniques that are characteristically medieval. I also expected to find, as is typical of colonial cuisines, odd substitutions, use of indigenous ingredients in place of those available in Europe. These elements are, naturally, what makes a cuisine unique. It is the product of its history and the result of evolution, interacting with a new environment, peoples and economic forces.

This phenomenon is not unusual among emigrant cuisines. Often a set of classic dishes will become fossilized in a colonial setting and remain as a mark of identity long after the repertoire had changed back in the mother country. This is partly a function of being cut off, as it were, and retaining antiquated usage, as happens in language and dress. In cuisine it occurs most frequently among expatriate communities surrounded by other cultures in the majority. The Portuguese in Macao or Goa, The Dutch in South Africa or what is today Indonesia, The Spanish in Mexico and Peru, and as I will argue the French in Montreal. The publication of a cookbook naturally aids in the ossification of culinary

³ Driver, p. 86.

practices because it can become authoritative, a kind of invented authenticity which people thereafter rarely veer away from in their effort to remain true to what they perceive as the proper way to make a certain dish.

The historical setting is crucial to understanding this cookbook, because it was written several centuries after settlement. Montreal in 1840 was the biggest city in Canada, the financial and trade hub and even the capital for a while. It was also in the thick of the industrial revolution, the Lachine Canal has just been built and the Victoria Bridge. One might expect that a cookbook would reflect these industrial advances somehow, but in fact *La Cuisinière Canadienne* is decidedly traditional. Most surprising is that the cooking takes place entirely in a hearth or wood burning oven, rather than a cast iron stove with hobs on top. Several recipes call for a tripod or as it's called in English a spider, on which is set a pot, over hot coals in the hearth to cook. The technology is scarcely different from a century before and the recipes also could easily have been penned in the 1740s, some even in the 1640s.

The absence of any prepared condiments and sauces which are evident in contemporary British cookbooks is also immediately striking. Everything here is made from scratch and the author insists in the introduction that one must start with good fresh butter, the purest flour and fresh eggs. The implication is that many people bought stale ingredients in the city. No doubt the booming population made it increasingly difficult to obtain fresh ingredients from the countryside.

It is also important to remember that Lower Canada (what is today Quebec) had been conquered by the English in 1763. After 77 years it was still to some extent an occupied territory under foreign rule, and with an influx of English and especially Irish in the 19th century, its cultural identity was considered threatened. This was also a time of political reactionism following the failed Republican uprisings of 1837-8. The Act of Union of 1840 was intended not only to join Upper and Lower Canada but to efface the Francophone population and assimilate them among the English as subjects loyal to the crown. There were even measures to ban French in the legislature. This turmoil would not begin to be settled until later in the decade, so when this cookbook came out, French culture, language and cuisine were definitely under threat.

Thus at a certain level this cookbook can be seen as an act of defiance, for it is written in French and features recipes that are decidedly antiquated. As for the book's inherent conservatism, a close examination of the recipe will be instructive. One in particular is for *canards maigres aux épices*.⁴ It is made with wild ducks which are cleaned and stuffed with a mixture of onions and bread crumbs. The ducks are then boiled for two hours in water, which creates a kind of broth. Then, strangely, they are removed and roasted with butter and spices, then returned to the broth before serving with sliced onions or shallots, and a splash of wine. The technique here of first boiling then roasting, or equally often, half roasting then braising is entirely medieval and had pretty much disappeared from the French repertoire by the 18th century. So too had serving duck this

⁴ *La Cuisinière*, p. 37.

way, in a dish of broth. This is a culinary rudiment that had survived, or perhaps revived, in Montreal and was at least several centuries old.

The question is: why would this survive here, apart from the prevalence of wild ducks? Obviously the spices had to be imported – in this case a typical combination would include pepper, nutmeg, cloves, cinnamon and ginger. This was a standard medieval combination called *poudre fort* – enjoyed specifically for the heat of its spices and originally intended to counteract the cold phlegmatic nature of water fowl. It may thus have originally have had a medicinal logic. The hot spices were also thought to aid in the passage of tough indigestible flesh, in this case old thin ducks that are best stewed. Retaining this very old recipe appears to be a matter of confirming identity. It communicates what it means to be a member of this culture and thus resists tinkering or evolution entirely. It is something like lutefisk among midwesterners of Nordic decent – a dish that is becoming increasingly rare in Scandinavia, but is traditional in America. In order to perform one’s background and heritage, you need the dish, even though few people actually admit to liking it. Something similar is happening with this spiced duck recipe. It communicates identity as much as a traditional folk dance, song or dress does, and perhaps even more effectively, because we consume it, it becomes us, and in the act of eating we express it.

There are other very traditional dishes in the cookbook, for example a *haricot de mouton*⁵ in which nubbins of mutton are boiled with turnips, onions and “*farine rotie dans du saindoux*” which is a very early form of a roux using lard instead of butter. In fact, it looks very much like the recipe printed in *La Varenne* in the mid 17th century.⁶ The most interesting thing about this dish is that it derives from the word *harigot* meaning a lump or piece, and has nothing to do with haricots – a new world bean. But by a perverse etymological mixup, it usually is cooked with beans nowadays in France, but *La Cuisinière* has the original essentially medieval recipe. Actually, even the *Viandier* of Taillevent in the 14th century has a *hericoc de mouton*.⁷

Another medieval throwback, though using an American ingredient as a substitute, and something so familiar today that we scarcely think of it as such, is roast fowl, in this case goose, served with “*compotes d’Atocas*” or as we call it in English cranberry sauce.⁸ Serving a tart fruit based sauce with wild fowl not only served to compliment the gamey flavor but it was thought to help digest the tough meat and counteract its hot and dry humoral qualities with something sour and humorally cold. It’s a quintessential 16th and 17th century flavor combination that stuck in Canada much as it did in the US with turkey

⁵ *Cuisinière*, p. 24.

⁶ “*Poictrine de mouton en aricot*” in *La Varenne’s Cookery*, tr. Terence Scully (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2006), p. 164.

⁷ *The Viandier of Taillevent*, ed. Terence Scully. University of Ottawa Press, 1988, p. 40. The Vatican manuscript reads: “Prenez vostre mouton et le mettez tout cru soubz fire en sain de lart, et soit despecié par menuz pieces, des ongnons menuz meciez avec...et deffaites de boullon de beuf; et mettez du vin du verjus et macis, ysope et saulge et faites bien bouillir ensemble.” By comparison the *Cuisinière* flavors the haricot with cloves and parsley rather than mace, hyssop and sage. In any case the dish had completely evolved in France by the 19th century, losing the spices.

⁸ *Cuisinière*, p. 33.

even though we really don't eat any other combination like this, nor do they in Europe any more. But people did in the past, La Varenne infamously served turkey with raspberry sauce – something later chefs mocked as backward.⁹ But in Montreal in 1840 it's still perfectly legitimate, precisely because traditional.

Another very ancient dish found in *La Cuisinière* is pork cutlets in Sauce Robert. This sauce, based on onions, underwent a fascinating evolution in France. The version one finds in Marie-Antoine Carême's classic published only a few years earlier involves onions cooked in butter, a reduction of wine and addition of demiglace (reduced veal stock) and brown mustard.¹⁰ It is thus a compound sauce based on a fond which is the base of many different sauces in a professional kitchen. This recipe goes back much further though and Carême's is scarcely different from the version published in Massialot's *Le Cuisinier Royal et Bourgeois* of 1691.¹¹ The version in *La Cuisinière* on the other hand is a much older version, with the onions fried in lard, thickened with breadcrumbs and a little water, which is essentially the medieval version.¹² Compare the version in *La Cuisinière* to that published in the early 16th century.

Filets à la Sauce Robert

Coupez les en quatre morceau d'épaisseur d'un doigt, jetez dessus poivre et sel; faites fondre du saindoux dans la poële, cuisez votre filets doucement retirez et placez dans un plat. Tranchez les ognons, que vous ferez frire avec poivre et sel, dans un peu de saindoux, une poignée de miettes de pain, faites revenir un peu cette sauce et y autant mis un peu d'eau, versez la sur les filets que vous avez dû tenir dans un plat à part.

Cut them into four morcels the thickness of a finger, sprinkle on top pepper and salt; make a base of lard in a pan, cook your filets gently, remove and place in a plate. Slice the onions which you let fry with salt and pepper in a little lard, a handful of bread crumbs, to make the sauce come together a little add a bit of water water, then put on the filets which you have kept in a separate plate.

⁹ See L.S.R.'s infamous jibe at La Varenne whose larks in hypocras and turkey with raspberries was seen as brutishly backward. L.S.R. *L'art de bien traiter* in *L'art de la cuisine française au XVIIe siècle*, Paris: Payot et Rivages, 1995, p.23. "Ne frémissiez-vous point déjà au récit d'un potage de sarcelles à l'hypocras, d'alouettes à la sauce douce?..Voyons ensemble, je vous prie, un jarret de veau à l'epigramme, un poulet d'Inde à la framboise farci des manches d'épaules à l'olivier..." In other words the recipes such as are found in *La Cuisinière* were already considered backward in France in 1674.

¹⁰ Marie-Antoine Carême *L'Art de la Cuisine Française* 5 vols. Paris: 1833-47.

¹¹ François Massialot, *Le Nouveau Cuisinier Royal et Bourgeois*, vol. 11, Paris: Elibron Classics, 2005, p. 322. "Sausse-Robert. Prenez des oignons, & les coupez en dez: passez dans une casserole avec un peu de lard fondu en les remuant toujours; etant demi roux, égoute bien la graisse, & moiulle-les de jus, & laissez mitonner à petit feu, les assaisonnez de poivre & de sel; etant cuits, liez d'un coulis de Veau & jambon: voyez que la sausse soit du'n bon gout, & y mettez un peu de moutarde, & lui donnez de la pointe, & vous en servez eu besoin."

¹² In the *Livre fort excellent de Cuyisine* (Lyon: Arnoullet, 1542), fol. 32. The sauce is mentioned with a fricasee of liver. "Coupes voz foyes par lesches & aussi des ongnons par rouelles & saupouldrez de sel puis frises en saing de lart serves tout chault pouldre blanche dessus, et ainsi pourrez faire de tous aultres foyes comme il[s] ont vue saulce appallee barbe robert."

One more very antiquated dish I think will prove this point, it is fresh cod roasted.¹³ The flavoring with cloves is one very old fashioned element but even more importantly, is a butter sauce made in a *lèche frite*, a dripping pan in which is added port wine and sugar. Sugar in sauce, especially for fish, became completely obsolete in France in the latter 17th century. This recipe actually fits squarely in the 1540s and looks very much like recipes found in the *Livre Fort Excellent de Cuisine*, which has a recipe for roasted carp or pike which includes a sauce made of wine spices, sugar and butter.¹⁴ Jacques Cartier would have been perfectly comfortable eating a dish like this.

This cookbook is traditional, but I don't want to give the impression that it is staunchly and exclusively French. It actually has little relation to what people in France were eating, it is more precisely Montrealais. Though there are recipes separated as *gras* or *maigre*, meaning containing meat or not – the latter being appropriate for Catholic Lent, there is nothing particularly chauvinistic about this cookbook. Exactly the opposite, as there is an entire section devoted to very English “pouding” - plum puddings, and a variety of other stodgy boiled things no 19th century Frenchman would touch, but which had by this time become integral to Canadian cooking among people of all backgrounds. The most interesting of these is also, as far as I can tell, uniquely Canadian.

It is a *Pouding à la Farine de Blé d'Inde* or a cornmeal pudding. Not cornbread or even what is called Indian Pudding, which is a kind of long cooked mush. This is a proper English pudding slowly cooked in a cloth, on a tripod for 3 hours, but served in a uniquely Canadian manner. “La meilleure sauce est du sucre d'Erable pour ces sortes de pouding.”¹⁵ That's maple syrup. It seems significant that Montrealers are willing to embrace the English dishes as integral to their heritage as well as the Native American, at least in the ingredients here. In this respect it is similar to the first indigenous US cookbook, published a few decades earlier by Amelia Simmons. If anything this is a truly Canadian cookbook, and that's exactly what it communicates. It doesn't try to replicate whatever is in fashion in Paris, which would have been very easy to do. Rather it is proudly local and resolutely backward-looking in its flavor combinations.

Another dish with medieval origins that must be mentioned since it is featured here is the *blancmange* or as it is called in *La Cuisinière Blanc Mangé*.¹⁶ The original dish was a combination of poached capon finely pounded, thickened with rice starch and flavored

¹³ *La Cuisinière* p. 42. “Il faut extraire l'interieur par les Ouïes; faire un farce d'ognon avec mie de pain, persil, sel, poivre et clous que l'on met dans la morue. On poudre de farine la pièce, avec poivre et sel, et on la place sur un gril dans un lèche-frite, avec précaution; on fait une sauce au beurre, avec vin de porte et un peu de sucre.”

¹⁴ *Livre fort excellent de cuisine* (Lyon: Arnoullet, 1542) fol. viii. “Pour une carpe fresche pour un becquet, pareillement pour une ploye, prenes des oignons, & les frises, ayes de la mye de pain blanc, & les frises tresbien, & apres iettes les oignons avec le beurre bouilly avec la mye de pain ensemble prenes de la canelle un peu d'espice un petit de sucre, de la semence de fenouil, puis frises vostre poisson & si vous le voules encores rostir sur le Gril vous le poves rostir, si vous le voules servir tout sec si le serves, & pour le mettre en saulce vous le mettres en une toille et feres le boullon de vin vermeil & du vinaigre, pour espices canelle moix muguettes & sucre, et le faictes boullir a court boullon et du beurre dedans.”

¹⁵ *La Cuisinière*, p. 54.

¹⁶ *La Cuisinière*, p. 97.

with sugar, almond milk and rosewater. It still survives in this form in Turkey as *Tavuk göğsü*. In Europe, on the other hand the recipe evolved so completely that it is barely recognizable, now as a sweet milk pudding thickened with cornstarch and flavored with almond extract. Sometimes gelatin is used, but as with most recipes, this is quicker, easier and uses mass manufactured ingredients. *La Cuisinière's* recipe is somewhere in the midpoint of this evolution. It starts with veal feet and water to make the gelatin – something few people would do once gelatin packets were invented. This version uses milk, bitter almonds, sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg, infused then strained and chilled. It's not clear if the author knew nothing of the early history of the dish, and if one had to pinpoint this version, it would still be long before 1840, that is still antiquated, but perhaps not historically researched.

Finally we come to the tourtière. Today the classic is considered to be the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean version made with a variety of meats, including game, cut into chunks, potatoes and other vegetables. The Montreal version is made with ground pork. Both are traditionally eaten on Christmas eve, as a celebratory dish which intentionally recalls ethnic background and binds the community. In *La Cuisinière* there are actually several different varieties, made of mutton, veal, even potatoes alone, which is not surprising. Nor is it surprising that the supposedly most traditional tourtière made of venison is not here, but rather the quintessential Montreal version made with fresh pork very finely minced and cooked first before filling the pie. It is still made this way.

What is not generally recognized, is that these kinds of pies were the height of fashion in Europe in the early modern period, though far more elaborate. In the *Patissier François* of 1653 there is a pie made of either ground veal, pork or mutton, suet, spices, eggs, pine nuts and currants, garnished with artichoke bottoms or mushrooms, slices of ox tongue, pistachios, lambstones, sweetbreads, marrow, chestnuts, verjuice that can be baked free-standing or in a tart pan.¹⁷ The Quebecois version substitutes potatoes and sometimes vegetables, but they are still very closely related. Although *La Cuisinière* doesn't mention it, the green tomato ketchup often served with tourtière also seems particularly antiquated, though it wouldn't have been made with tomatoes in France, but something tart like gooseberries, or unripe grapes, but it's the exact aesthetic equivalent. There is also again the medicinal logic of sour condiments helping cut through the coarse and difficult to digest meat.

An even more direct connection can be made between the veal tourtière in *La Cuisinière* and recipes from the very earliest days of settlement. The 1840 recipe takes veal morsels with pepper, cloves, herbs sautéed them and then puts them into a pie either in thin strips or finely ground. A recipe *pour faire tourtes de veau à la creme* from Lancelot de Casteau's cookbook of 1604 is exactly the same, though includes cream and a few more spices.¹⁸ This is actually the only cookbook written in French in the early 17th century at

¹⁷ Mounsiere Marnettè, *The Perfect Cook* (London: Nath. Brookes, 1656). This is a translation of the anonymous *Le Patissier François* of 1653.

¹⁸ Lancelot de Casteau, *Ouverture de Cuisine* (Liege: Leonard Streele, 1604), p. 35. "Pour faire tourtes de veau à la creme. Prenez douze õces de chair de veau, & faites cuire, puis prenez demye liure de graisse de boeuf, & hachez tout ensemble, battez trois oeufs cruds, quatre onces de sucre, demye once de canelle, un

the initial point of settlement and if *La Cuisinière* was intentionally targeting this period consciously or otherwise, one would expect many other direct correlations.¹⁹

Significantly, as Jean-Pierre Lamasson has shown, these kinds of pie had gone entirely out of fashion in France by the 19th century.²⁰ But they're still a potent marker of identity in Montreal, a culinary rudiment that could not be abandoned for the sake of fashion.

The Pâtés de Noël, a kind of mincemeat pie is the one most recognizably antiquated. It's made of beef tongue, suet, sugar, raisins, apples, a slew of spices and brandy, and is meant to keep several months, with the crust as a kind of hermetically sealed container, just as pies would have been in the middle ages. Of course this dish survives in English cuisine as well, but rarely is the original version with actual meat cooked anymore. Mincemeat has been toned down, usually just to fruit.

The final chapters of the book are perhaps the most interesting because they feature exactly the kind of do-it-yourself old fashioned recipes that have once again come into fashion recently. There is a whole section on home made liqueurs made with frere piquant (prickly ash) or Ratafia which is made with anise, walnuts or bitter almonds. Fresh berries are steeped in eau de vie or rum. There are also recipes for pickles – cornichons, little onions, beets in a vinegar pickle, green beans. These were all products one could have easily purchased but making them yourself gives a person social caché – serving home made versions is a point of pride.

To understand these recipes in the broader context of the 1840s, one need only look at all the contemporary food literature of the time. The theme of rugged self reliance prevailed in the Jacksonian era, Sylvester Graham was advocating whole grains and natural foods. Although the *Cuisinière* doesn't explicitly state so, this aesthetic is a conscious reaction to the industrialization of food. Think also of the Romantic landscape paintings of this era, they are decidedly nostalgic for a way of life perceived to be disappearing. Cornelius Krieghoff's images of rustic life along the St. Lawrence come to mind and are contemporary with this cookbook. Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper were writing in this same era, in much the same vein. I think this explains the many antiquated traditional recipes in the *Cuisinière*. It's not that people ordinarily ate this way all the time, and of course cookbooks are not descriptive but prescriptive. But insofar as this cookbook reflects a perceived heritage that the author hopes to preserve, it does communicate much more than recipes. It informs the reader how to enact identity as a Montrealais.

noix muscade, un peu de sel, demye sopine de creme, bien meslé tout ensemble, & fites votre tourte selon notre fantasie.”

¹⁹ From a quick glance the similarity of some recipes between these two texts could constitute much further study. For example the Oeufs à la Neige recipe in *La Cuisinière* looks rather similar to Lancelot's Pour faire neige on page 123. This was actually an even older recipe though, called snow in England and appearing in the *Proper Newe Book of Cookery* and many other works in the 16th century. There is also an illustration of someone making it in Scappi's *Opera* (Venice: Tramezzino, 1570).

²⁰ Jean Pierre Lamasson, “The Long History of the Tourtière of Quebec's Lac-St. Jean” in Cooke p. 107. He quotes Carême who says “This pastry entrée is no longer considered enough of a delicacy to appear on the tables of the wealthy, for it's bearing is too uncouth.”

The message here is so strongly a communicator of identity, that a brief comparison with a cookbook published in Toronto might be instructive. Also appearing in 1840 this was the *Frugal Housewife's Manual* written by one A.B. of Grimsby.²¹ In contrast to the *Cuisinière* it was never reprinted and only two copies survive. Many of its recipes were pirated from earlier English cookbooks and the sections on cultivation were taken from an American Shaker seed catalogue. The recipes are fairly standard early 19th century fare: plum cake, sponge cake, pound cake, waffles, custard, bread pudding, mince pie. These were recipes that could more or less be found anywhere else, in British or US cookbooks. That is they say practically nothing about identity, and because they reflect a dominant culture with no need to protect traditions, they communicate very little. That is not to say the recipes are bad – though sales might be an indication - but that they have nothing particular to say. There is no powerful social, political or cultural message written between its lines. Not every cookbook has a deeper story to tell.

Ironically the recipes in the *Frugal Housewife's Manual* might even have been more practical, fashionable at the time, and even more tasty. Despite its overwhelming success, one must wonder how *La Cuisinière* was first received and even more so what did people do with this cookbook years later. It is remarkably backward. Imagine someone trying to cook in a hearth in the early 20th century when this cookbook was still in print. At some level it must have been viewed as a historical piece, something used to remember the past, a past even longer than Montrealais can have imagined. But could people have still been cooking with it? Perhaps they adapted the recipes using modern equipment, toning down the odder flavor combinations and baking in a modern oven. Or maybe they never used it at all. If the widespread survival of dishes like tourière is any indication though, the antiquation of this cuisine was intentional, and if anything, it stubbornly resisted change precisely because francophone culture remained under threat. Though today the Réveillon Christmas Eve tourtière may only offer a brief respite from typical fast food and convenience food, its value lies precisely in the fact that it is time consuming and fairly difficult to make, and as a strange old fashioned dish, it is all the more powerful a marker of identity. This is a dish that one can bet will not change.

²¹ A.B. of Grimsby, *The Frugal Housewife's Manual* (Toronto: J.H. Lawrence, 1840).