

# **Manuscript Cookbooks Survey: Building A Research Portal for Manuscript Cookbooks and Kitchen Artifacts**

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## **Abstract:**

Due to the considerable difficulty of finding manuscript cookbooks in library and archival collections, a culinary historian and a special collections librarian decided to build a website with a database at its center to bring together the collections of various institutions: libraries, historical societies, historic houses and sites to create a dedicated portal to locate pre-1865 English-language manuscript cookbooks. In compiling this database (an ongoing project), our aim is to give culinary historians, food writers, and others enhanced access to these important, fascinating materials, which too often lie neglected in our libraries, historical sites, and other public institutions, and which shed light on so many facets of history.

This poster will illustrate how the project team designed the research portal; how library records, archival finding aids, and other uncataloged items were uncovered at participating institutions, and how the varying levels and types of description were enhanced and made compatible for searching and browsing across institutions. The project is also enriched by scholarly contributions written by the culinary historian team member, using recipes from the manuscript cookbooks in the database. Additional functionality including faceted browsing, an interactive map view, and an interactive timeline, as well as the recent addition of hundreds of kitchen artifacts from historical societies and museums have further expanded the scope and research possibilities provided by the portal.

## **About the Author:**

*Alyse Hennig* serves as the Assistant Archivist at St. John's University, and as a cataloger for the Manuscript Cookbooks Survey. She has a master's degree in library science and in public history, and a certificate in archival studies.