

URSZULA NIEWIADOMSKA-FLIS¹

DOI: 10.15290/CR.2026.52.1.08

John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0840-6497>

Edible Witness: Emily Meggett's *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking* as Cultural Testimony

Abstract. This article reads Emily Meggett's *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking: Recipes from the Matriarch of Edisto Island* (2022) as a form of cultural and historical testimony. I introduce the concept of "edible witness" to analyze how culinary texts produced by marginalized communities function not as peripheral artifacts but as embodied acts of knowledge-making and resistance to erasure. Drawing on Paul Connerton's work on incorporated memory, bell hooks's theorization of the domestic sphere as a site of political struggle, and Felman and Laub's relational approach to testimony, I examine the structural and rhetorical features of Meggett's cookbook—its title, dedication, prefatory sections, and visual elements—to show how they collectively challenge dominant American narratives and reclaim Gullah Geechee culinary authorship. I also consider what is at stake when Gullah recipes transition from oral tradition to written form, and how Black Southern cuisine becomes a site of contested authenticity amid ongoing cultural appropriation. Ultimately, I position Meggett's work as a powerful counter-narrative that insists on recognizing and preserving the stories and contributions of the Gullah Geechee people.

Keywords: edible witness, Gullah Geechee, culinary testimony, incorporated memory, cultural appropriation, Black Southern cuisine, situated knowledge, counter-narrative, cookbooks

"Food often tells the stories that society will not."

Emily Meggett, *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking*

A recipe can give us a sense of the world from which it originates, incorporating history and the personality of its writer and their community.² "A recipe is not simply

1 Address for correspondence: John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin, Poland, E-mail: urszula.niewiadomska.flis@gmail.com

2 A related but distinct version of this study was co-authored with prof. Robert Westerfelhaus—whose collaboration the author gratefully acknowledges—and published as "Curating Culinary Culture: The Rhetorical Function of Cookbooks and Their Paratexts," *Res Rhetorica* [vol.11.3, 2024]. That article offered a detailed close reading of Meggett's fried okra recipe as its analytical centerpiece, applying

a set of instructions,” Bower asserts, “rather, it is a text embedded within—and reflective of—the cultural, social, and historical contexts that shaped it” (1997, 8). If this is true of recipes in general, it is especially true of the recipes produced by communities whose histories have been systematically erased or distorted. In the present article, I read Emily Meggett’s *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking* as a form of cultural and historical testimony, analyzing what the bestselling cookbook communicates beyond mere cooking instructions. To do so, I introduce “edible witness” as an original theoretical concept that draws on Paul Connerton’s work on incorporated memory, bell hooks’s theorization of the domestic sphere as a site of political resistance, and Felman and Laub’s relational model of testimony. I apply this framework first to Gullah Geechee culture and the history of erasure it has faced, and to a close reading of the structural and rhetorical features of Meggett’s cookbook. I then turn to what is at stake when Gullah culinary knowledge transitions from oral to written transmission, and to the contested authenticity of Black Southern cuisine³ in the context of ongoing cultural appropriation. Taken together, these analyses will position Meggett’s cookbook not as a peripheral cultural artifact but as a powerful act of counter-testimony of the Gullah Geechee people.

1. “Edible witness”

Food has long resisted reduction to the merely nutritional. As Terry Eagleton observes, “[i]f there is one sure thing about food, it is that it is never just food”—it is “endlessly interpretable, as gift, threat, poison, recompense, barter, seduction, solidarity, suffocation” (1998, 204). Food, he argues, “looks like an object but is actually a relationship” (1998, 204), and eating “combines biological necessity with cultural significance”—it is

Gérard Genette’s paratext theory and classical rhetorical categories (ethos, pathos, logos) to the cookbook’s structural elements. The present article represents a substantial theoretical reorientation. I have set aside the Genettian framework and the fried okra case study in order to introduce “edible witness” as an original theoretical concept which enables a more direct and expansive engagement with questions of cultural testimony, embodied knowledge, epistemological stakes of oral-to-written transmission, and the politics of culinary appropriation and reclamation. With this publication I intend to extend the conversation beyond rhetorical studies toward interdisciplinary audiences in food studies, cultural memory, and African American studies. I gratefully acknowledge Prof. Westerfelhaus’s collaboration on the earlier work and thank him for his gracious permission to publish this substantially reimagined version under sole authorship.

- 3 This article capitalizes both *Black* and *White* when used as adjectives referring to racial or ethnic identity and cultural traditions. I follow the guidance of the Associated Press, the Chicago Manual of Style, and the American Psychological Association, all of which recommend consistent capitalization as a matter of parallel treatment and editorial fairness. Capitalizing both terms acknowledges that race shapes cultural experience across groups, at the same time it avoids the implication that one group’s identity warrants more linguistic recognition than another’s.

“cusped between nature and culture, and so too is language” (1998, 205). This parallel between food and language is what makes food practices readable as texts: these culinary acts are dense with encoded meaning and open to interpretation, that is why they are simultaneously cultural acts. It is from within this theoretical perspective that the concept of “edible witness” emerges.

“Edible witness” is a deliberately multivalent concept, and it is essential to elucidate its three interrelated aspects before advancing, since each informs the others and the concept’s analytical force derives precisely from their inseparability. Firstly, “edible witness” designates a person: the cook who, by virtue of her position within a specific community and culinary tradition, has authority to provide testimony. She is not an outside observer of that tradition; as a practitioner, she is the custodian of and living embodiment of that tradition. Her authority comes not from institutional credentials or scholarly distance, but from intergenerational and experiential wisdom of her community that has been accumulated through a lifetime of cooking and feeding others.

Secondly, “edible witness” denotes a practice: the act of preparing food and transmitting culinary knowledge as an active epistemic and political act. Bearing edible witness is not a passive recording of tradition but rather a performance that produces and validates knowledge with every repetition. Each time a Gullah grandmother demonstrates a recipe through the skilled movement of her hands, the smell that signals when heat is right, the color that tells her when a crust is done, and the taste that no written instruction could replicate, she transmits knowledge in a register that writing cannot reach. Rather than merely preserving the past, she actively asserts its continued relevance and authority in the present. Thirdly, “edible witness” refers to a testimony: the culinary text or dish that communicates that knowledge beyond the immediate moment of its production. A recipe or even a meal can function as testimony in this sense; it is an artifact that bears witness to histories and communities that dominant archives have marginalized or attempted to obliterate.

These three dimensions—person, practice, and testimony—are not competing definitions but rather mutually constitutive elements. In most other testimonial contexts, the witness, the act of witnessing, and the testimony it produces can be analytically separated: a survivor narrates an experience, the narration becomes a practice, and the written or recorded account serves as the testimony. In the kitchen, these three elements collapse into a single act. The cook is the witness; the act of cooking is the witnessing; and the dish or recipe is simultaneously the testimony and its transmission. This collapse—the inseparability of agent, act, and artifact—gives “edible witness” its distinctive analytical force and differentiates it from other frameworks for reading culinary texts as cultural testimony.

The “edible” dimension of this witnessing is connected with the specific materiality of culinary knowledge—that is the incorporated memory reconstituted through

performative body. Most theories of cultural transmission, according to Paul Connerton's groundbreaking work on social memory, have placed an emphasis on inscribed and written forms rather than "incorporated practices," which he defines as the physical habits and ritual acts by which societies transmit their historical knowledge. The distinction between embodied and inscribed knowledge, however, warrants further interrogation—particularly with respect to the mechanisms by which each mode operates as a vehicle for cultural transmission. "Performative memory is bodily," said Connerton, and "images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less) ritual performances" (1989, 71, 38). We should think, for instance, of the difference between reading a recipe and watching your grandmother make it. Culinary transmission is among the most personal of such incorporated practices: it is not just inscribed in documents (recipes and cookbooks), but more importantly it is embedded in gesture (the timing of a stir), ritual and practice (seasoning refined throughout a lifetime). This corporeal dimension is precisely what distinguishes the "edible witness" from other forms of testimony. While written testimony relies on the fixed and stable inscription of knowledge, culinary testimony is enacted and internalized with each performance. In this sense, the kitchen becomes a living, breathing archive—one that requires action to access. Hence, "edible witness" is predominantly expressed in the kitchen through the performative act, not just the archive of written texts.

But there is something else happening in the kitchen that theory alone cannot capture. The kitchen is not only a living archive that stores knowledge; it is also, and perhaps more urgently, a contested political space in which the act of preserving that knowledge is a form of resistance. In her essay "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," bell hooks describes the domestic spaces created by Black women as places where marginalized communities have the opportunity to affirm their racial dignity and fight against erasure. According to hooks, "[t]his task of making a homeplace, of making home a community of resistance" is a political act that has been continually undervalued precisely because of its connection with the domestic sphere (2015, 78). This is crucial for understanding what "edible witness" does. We can read the kitchen through hooks as a space in which cooking and feeding not only offer biological survival to African Americans (nourishment), but more importantly as a space in which Black people could assert the survival of selfhood and community with dignity against dehumanizing oppression. The edible witness is not an outside observer looking at the kitchen, her authority to testify derives from that location. Her testimony is not something that happens alongside or after the cooking—the testimony is inseparable from the labor in the kitchen. The act of preparing food according to inherited tradition and feeding a family and/or community are not the backdrop to the witnessing; they *are* the witnessing. Her recipes are meant to capture the full arc of what communities living under conditions of racial oppression do: they endure, persevere, refuse to surrender, and they actively resist erasure.

The “edible witness” testimonial framework is based on Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub’s relational and dialogic theory of witnessing.⁴ According to Felman and Laub, in order to articulate and receive previously hidden or suppressed knowledge, testimony requires a witness, or as they put it, “the enabler of the testimony” who will serve as a “you” to whom the witness’s experience can be legitimately addressed (1992, 58). The act of receiving, whether in the form of listening, reading, or cooking, is not passive. It is an active and necessary part of the testimonial process. The active presence of the receiver is what transforms personal and/or communal experience into something that exists beyond the culture of the people who originally lived it.

The “edible witness” exemplifies this relational and dialogic framework: the act of cooking from a recipe is a form of listening. The hands that follow the instructions represent the “you” in the recipe, without the recipient the testimony cannot fully take place. This is knowledge that is received through the senses and the body, not just processed by the mind. This bodily reception involves a kind of closeness between the person who transmits the knowledge and the person who receives it. When you cook someone’s recipe, you are not at a scholarly distance from your source—you are, in a very literal sense, handling what they handled and replicating the movements of their hands. Much unlike a reader of a written account who receives knowledge only through cognitive and linguistic channels, the cook receives it through many sensory channels simultaneously.

I should be clear about what “edible witness” is not. *Donna Haraway’s “modest witness” is the theoretical figure against which “edible witness” defines itself most critically.* Haraway traces the figure of the modest witness to the origins of Western experimental science in the seventeenth century, when the gentlemanly virtues of self-restraint and disinterestedness became the gold standard of credible observation (1997, 24). To be

4 The application of Felman and Laub’s testimonial framework to culinary texts requires a word of clarification. Their theory was developed in the context of Holocaust testimony and traumatic witness—contexts in which the stakes of speaking and being heard are, in an obvious sense, categorically different from those of a cookbook. The present article draws on Felman and Laub not to equate the testimonial situation of Holocaust survivors with that of Gullah Geechee cookbook authors. What it does claim is that the structural logic Felman and Laub identify—that testimony is inherently relational and dialogic, requiring an active receiver to be complete and that previously suppressed or marginalized knowledge can only be fully articulated in and through a dialogic relationship—is not exclusive to traumatic contexts. Indeed, the conditions under which Gullah culinary knowledge was transmitted and repeatedly threatened with erasure—including the violence of slavery, the deliberate suppression of African cultural memory, and the ongoing appropriation of Black culinary labor—are conditions of historical injury whose testimonial stakes are high, even if they are expressed through the medium of a cookbook rather than direct survivor narrative. The “edible witness,” in other words, bears witness to a history that is not merely cultural but also, in the deepest sense, traumatic.

a trustworthy witness to nature, a man had to demonstrate that he had no personal stake in what he observed—that his report was untainted by passion or interest (1997, 23-24). This performance of detachment, Haraway argues, was never truly neutral: it was a social and political achievement available only to those whose class, race, and gender already positioned them as legitimate knowers (1997, 27).

The modest witness was a seemingly impartial and transparent observer “adding nothing from his mere opinions, from his biasing embodiment” (1997, 24). What Haraway calls “modesty” is the performance of self-effacement—the claim that the witness himself is not really present, that what he accounts is just objective truth. He seems to have no stake or investment, and therefore his account is seen as generally universally valid. It is taken as an objective fact rather than as one viewpoint among many. He gets to decide what counts as knowledge and what counts as legitimate testimony—he is “the *legitimate and authorized ventriloquist for the object world*” (1997, 24). The modest witness does not simply find himself in a neutral position. He occupies it because certain historical and social structures put him there and keep him there.

The gendered pronouns used throughout this article are not incidental. Haraway herself identifies the modest witness as a historically masculine figure—one whose claim to objectivity and universality was grounded in the social position of White, propertied men (1997, 29). I conceptualize the edible witness as feminine, a choice that reflects both the historical reality that across marginalized communities—Gullah Geechee, African American, and other ethnic minority communities alike—culinary labor and intergenerational knowledge transmission have been predominantly women’s domain, and the broader theoretical tradition that locates women’s domestic labor as a site of cultural authority and political resistance (see, e.g., hooks 2015; Fleitz 2010). The pronouns thus carry an argument: the modest witness’s claim to speak for everyone is a masculine privilege, while the “edible witness’s” situated, partial, and embodied authority is grounded in a specifically feminine tradition of communal knowledge-making.

The “edible witness” inverts this logic at every point. She makes no claim to transparency or neutrality. She speaks from an explicitly situated and partial position—from a specific kitchen and a certain community. She is visibly invested and very present in her own testimony. She does not claim objectivity but bases her authority on sensory and communal knowledge accumulated through years of cooking and feeding others. *Unlike the modest witness, who evacuates his own presence in order to speak for everyone, the edible witness speaks precisely as someone—as a member of a particular community. Her partiality is not a distortion of the truth but a condition of access to a kind of truth that the modest witness, precisely because of his performed neutrality, cannot reach.*

The “edible witness” names a mode of testimony that operates across three registers at once: epistemological, political, and embodied. It is epistemological because it proposes the kitchen as a legitimate site of knowledge-production. Kitchen is a site

in which the accumulated sensory and intergenerational wisdom of a community constitutes a form of knowing that deserves to be taken as seriously as any inscribed, institutionally validated form of knowledge. It is political because it opposes a history of systematic dispossession—a history in which the culinary knowledge of marginalized communities has been simultaneously devalued as informal and domestic, and appropriated as raw material for the cultural production of others. And it is embodied because the transmission and reception of this knowledge cannot be fully separated from the bodies that carry it: the hands that cook and the senses that receive.

Each abovementioned theoretical anchor illuminates a different facet of what it means to be an “edible witness” under conditions of marginalization: that food is always more than food; that the body is an archive; that the kitchen is a political space; and that testimony requires a receiver. The idea of “edible witness” unites all these assertions in a single concept—one that is simultaneously a person, a practice, and a testimony. By doing so, the term proposes a framework through which culinary texts produced by marginalized communities can be read not as peripheral cultural artifacts but as central acts of cultural and historical testimony.

2. The Gullah People: A Brief Overview

The Gullah people are descendants of enslaved Africans who were forcibly brought to the South Carolina coast and sea islands to work cotton, indigo, and rice plantations. Charleston’s Gadsden’s Wharf was the largest single point of entry for enslaved Africans into North America, with over 40% of all captive Africans entering the U.S. through the city. Isolated on sea islands and remote plantations for centuries, the Gullah developed a rich, distinct culture blending West African heritage with European and Native American influences—including their own creole language, intricate sweetgrass basket weaving, African supernatural traditions, and subversive folklore such as the Br’er Rabbit tales, which were later co-opted and commercialized by White authors without credit. Today, the Gullah face serious threats to their survival as a culture: gentrification, aggressive land speculation, rising property taxes, and the erosion of their heritage by coastal development. In response, in 2000 the Gullah Geechee people formally proclaimed themselves a nation, while the U.S. Congress passed the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act in 2006, allocating \$10 million to preserve historic sites, language, music, and culinary traditions.

The Gullah’s most far-reaching contribution to broader American culture is culinary. Enslaved Africans brought with them ingredients, techniques, and agricultural knowledge that became the backbone of Southern—and ultimately American—cooking, including okra, collard greens, black-eyed peas, grits, red rice, and peanuts, as well as iconic dishes like gumbo and jambalaya. As cookbook author and Edisto Island native Emily Meggett observes, many dishes now considered simply “Southern food” would

not exist without the skill and creativity of Gullah Geechee ancestors—meals that West Africans from Senegal to Liberia still recognize as closely related to their own culinary traditions today. Despite this enormous influence, Gullah contributions were historically erased, with White Southern cookbook authors incorporating Black recipes without attribution—a pattern of cultural exploitation that Gullah descendants and scholars like Michael Twitty and Jessica Harris are actively working to correct and reclaim.

Gullah culinary heritage, understood through the lens of “edible witness,” is not simply a collection of recipes but a centuries-long act of communal testimony. Each dish—each preparation of okra, red rice, or black-eyed peas—constitutes a form of witnessing in which Connerton’s incorporated memory is activated anew with every cooking. The systematic erasure of Gullah authorship by White Southern cookbooks is precisely the suppression of testimony that the “edible witness” concept names and resists: it is the severing of witness from testimony and the theft of knowledge without acknowledgment of its source. The Gullah kitchen is precisely the kind of embodied and politically charged archive that “edible witness” describes: a space in which survival and self-assertion, in hooks’s sense, are inseparable from the act of cooking and feeding.

3. Emily Meggett’s *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking*

Rarely are cookbooks simply collections of recipes; frequently, they offer a wealth of additional cultural and historical information. They serve as a medium for sharing ideas and memories; and in doing so, they operate rhetorically. In this sense, cookbooks communicate with readers through the main text and supplementary elements, such as titles, dedications, prefaces, illustrations, and afterwords. Analyzing these elements of Meggett’s cookbook might enhance our understanding of and appreciation for the cultural dimensions embedded within her cookbook.

The title itself—*Gullah Geechee Home Cooking: Recipes from the Matriarch of Edisto Island*—not only identifies the work and indicates its content (“Gullah Geechee” and “Home Cooking”), but more importantly, it entices the public—here, mention of remote “Edisto Island” renders the recipes intriguingly exotic. This aligns well with Theophano’s (2002, 6) observation that “for many of us, reading a cookbook is like following a sensate trail to another world remote in space and time.” The true appeal of a cookbook often resides in the narratives woven between the recipes, in the anecdotes and stories. Cookbooks often shape notions of belonging and identity by highlighting geographical connections and socio-cultural hierarchies. The rhetoric of place and social position evident in the title—“the Matriarch of Edisto Island”—is accentuated by the inclusion of two photographs at the book’s beginning: one of the South Carolinian landscape and the other of the author. The eponymous matriarch is shown standing on a typically Southern porch in a white apron, thereby constructing a sense of place. She is situated within domesticity but also at the threshold of the household (bridging private and public spaces). This

alludes to home, rather than restaurants, as the domain of Gullah cuisine (Dixler 2016), and highlights the cookbook's purpose: to share her home cooking with the outside world. This construction of place is not incidental to the testimonial project: in terms of "edible witness," situatedness is a condition of authority. Unlike Haraway's modest witness, who forsakes location to claim universality, Meggett's credibility derives precisely from her rootedness in a specific kitchen, on a specific island, within a specific community.

The second photograph is accompanied by a dedication, an established tradition in publishing cookbooks (Notaker 2017, 135). Dedications are usually "directed to a person of authority" (Notaker 2017, 135). Here, the dedication follows this standard pattern, offering laudatory comments on the author's culinary prowess: "You were always bound to get something good to eat. I thought she was God, could make anything. I wanted to be just like her" (Meggett 2022). This divine comparison highlights the matriarch's culinary mastery. That this opinion is voiced by the author's oldest grandchild rhetorically reinforces the conception of cooking as a gendered practice and home-cooking as a means of preserving cultural traditions, echoing the book's title. The dedication highlights themes of reverence, emotional connection, the crucial role of women in family life, the preservation of cultural traditions, and the formation of personal identity and communal connections as aspirations for the cookbook.

The fact that Meggett opens her cookbook with her grandchild's voice praising her also prefigures the relational framework of "edible witness." Most dedications in cookbooks follow a conventional pattern: the author speaks first, addressing someone—"To my mother," "To my family," and so on. Meggett does something structurally different. Instead of opening with her own voice, she grants the first words to a receiver—her grandchild—who acknowledges her authority from within the community that the testimony concerns. In Felman and Laub's terms, testimony requires a "you" who enables and co-constitutes the witnessing. Without a receiver, the witness speaks into a void and the testimonial circuit remains incomplete. By opening with the grandchild's recognition rather than her own self-assertion, Meggett embeds her authority in a pre-existing relationship. The testimony does not arrive self-certified; it arrives pre-validated from within the community. This is precisely the condition under which testimony can be received rather than merely heard.

Preceding the recipes, there are four sections that serve to set the stage for the rest of the cookbook. In the first—"Welcome to Edisto Island" the author fosters a sense of familiarity through sharing personal stories about agricultural life on the island, family traditions, and specific memories, connecting these to the island's broader culture and history. Meggett seems to combine the strategies that, as Carrie Tippen (2018) suggests, make a rhetorical appeal to "communicate authenticity," specifically referencing "geographic specificity, personal connection, and 'honesty.'" The matriarch's tone is inviting and conversational, such that readers feel they are welcomed into her Gullah domestic

life on the Edisto Island. Meggett's choice (2022) to open her cookbook with this image: "When you cross the Dawhoo Bridge that connects Edisto Island to the rest of South Carolina, you're in Heaven. Heaven on Earth, that is" suggests Gullah Geechee culture inhabits a sacred preserve insulated by the protective water surrounding her island from any cultural contamination from the mainland. Recognizing this deep connection to place, Meggett (2022) explains: "what makes the Gullah Geechee people particularly special is how long we've been able to hold on to our old ways, including the way we speak and the way we eat." Their place-based identity is reflected and refracted in their culinary repertoire, illustrating that, as Cook and Crang (1996, 140) argue, "foods do not simply come from places, but also make places as symbolic constructs." This intertwining of food and place enacts one of the core epistemological claims of "edible witness": that culinary knowledge is inherently situated, that it cannot be extracted from its geography without losing something essential to its meaning and authority.

Meggett asserts her identity not only as a Gullah but also as a woman, emphasizing the intersection of cultural and gender experiences that shape her narrative. Through the invocation of her grandmother's advice, such as "Don't ever cook enough just for you, 'cause you never know who gonna come through that door" (2022), the author communicates the rhetoric of hospitality, inclusiveness, and shared responsibility. In so doing, she endows food with the values, traditions, and social bonds central to maintaining a strong, cohesive community: "I believe that food is one of the most important ways we take care of each other, and I'll tell ya, nobody leaves my house without a to-go plate" (2022). At the same time, she acknowledges her place in a matrilineal line of women who cooked and took care of their own: "I grew up eating some of the same meals that my great-great-grandmother prepared in the 1840s, meals that existed even before her time" (2022). This matrilineal continuity is the living form of what Connerton calls incorporated memory: knowledge that is not stored in texts or institutions but transmitted through the repeated, embodied performance of cooking across generations. Meggett's lineage reaching back to the 1840s is not a sentimental detail but a testimonial claim: this knowledge survived because bodies carried it forward. This experience of physical nourishment and spiritual support is at the core of what Elizabeth Fleitz (2010, 2) terms "a vital, life-affirming community that respects their [women's] authority and experience, something most women were unable to have in the public sphere of society for many years."

In a similar vein, Susan Leonardi (1989, 340) explains that for women sharing recipes is a community-building practice. By publishing her cookbook Meggett (2022) joins this community of Black female chefs:

Many Black women—including those whose names have been lost to history—paved the way for cooks like me to find a career that could support my family and give me the

chance to do something I'm good at. Abby Fisher, Zephyr Wright, and Edna Lewis are some of the women whose contributions have changed the face of American cooking, and I'm grateful that we not only know their names, but know of the tastes, love, and joy they shared with others through food.⁵

Meggett's inclusion in the culinary pantheon is further underscored by a series of paintings by Natalie Daise, which pay homage to six women celebrated as the mothers of South Carolina and Gullah cuisine. Included in this series is "Matriarchs of the Low-country: Emily Meggett," a 2023 work acquired by the South Carolina State Museum (Allen 2024). Choosing a culinary figure, rather than a political or literary one, to be memorialized in this way reinforces the epistemological claim which is central to "edible witness"—that the kitchen is a site of knowledge and cultural production, not just domestic labor, not just cooking, but a place where a community's history, identity, and wisdom are generated and preserved. When the South Carolina State Museum acquires a painting memorializing Emily Meggett—a home cook, not a politician, writer, or civic leader—they implicitly endorse that epistemological claim. Museums are arbiters of cultural significance—they decide whose contributions are worth preserving in public memory. Thus, the acquisition of Meggett's portrait places the Gullah kitchen on equal footing with such prestigious domains as literature, politics, and/or civic leadership, which dominant culture has traditionally recognized as legitimate sources of historical knowledge.

The author intends her cookbook to celebrate the rich cultural and historical heritage of the Gullah Geechee people, highlighting their contributions to American cuisine and history. By writing cookbooks, Gullah women, much like Mormon women studied by Bishop (1997, 96), "create a rhetorical situation that calls for affirmation and perpetuation of their worth." The cookbook also enables her to leave a personal legacy, sharing her life's work and experiences with a broader audience. As a curator of Gullah culture, Meggett (2022) confesses:

To me, sharing home cooking is what truly represents Gullah Geechee food. I want future generations to understand the cooking and the culture of this place, and to understand that cooking is much more than about how something tastes—it's about the heart and soul behind the stove.

Her desire to connect with readers on a personal level, inviting them into her home and culture through food ("Welcome to my home, my heaven, and my life through food"),

5 Since I am using a Kindle edition of Meggett's *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking* and the format does not support fixed pagination, all quotations from this source are cited by author and year only.

reflects her broader goal of fostering understanding of and appreciation for Gullah Geechee culture.

Rosalyn Collings Eves (2005, 280) claims that “cookbooks function rhetorically as memory texts: to memorialize both individuals and community, to invoke ‘memory beyond mind,’ and to generate a sense of collective memory that in turn shapes communal memory.” This function is central to the second section—“The American Story of the Gullah Geechee People.” Meggett shares her journey of self-discovery regarding her Gullah Geechee heritage, weaving personal anecdotes with historical facts about her people, evoking a profound sense of collective, communal memory. Employing a reflective narrative voice, the matriarch crafts an autoethnographic cookbook that educates readers about the rich history and culture of the Gullah Geechee people.⁶ With her cookbook Meggett (2022) challenges the American grand narrative that has long excluded African American contributions, providing a perspective that honors the voices and presence of those who have been silenced, unrecognized, and invalidated:

Too much of American storytelling has ignored this country’s sins. It’s ignored slavery, its obsession with invalidating African culture, and its inability to recognize just how much African Americans have helped to build, develop, shape this country. It’s time to recognize the Gullah Geechee history that’s part of American history.

Here, Meggett speaks unmistakably as an “edible witness.” For Felman and Laub, testimony’s deepest function is not merely to recount experience but to insist on the reality of what official discourse has suppressed—to bring into the record what the record has refused to hold. Meggett’s cookbook does exactly this: it does not supplement the dominant American historical narrative but directly challenges it, asserting that the culinary knowledge of the Gullah Geechee people *is* American history. As she explains, “Food often tells the stories that society will not.” Her culinary testimony works to reverse the act of erasure. This is the epistemological claim at the heart of edible witnessing.

The next chapter—“How to Use This Book”—serves several functions. First, Meggett shares her experience with and deep-rooted knowledge of Gullah Geechee cooking: “I learned how to master recipes and make them my own” (2022). Second, the chapter evokes emotions via personal anecdotes, emphasizing the centrality of community and family in cooking while simultaneously enabling readers to connect with her cultural heritage. These insights open space to consider Meggett’s memory of cooking with her mother: “When I was a child, I watched Mama cook, and eventually started to cook right

6 This approach to cookbooks authored by ethnic/racial minorities aligns with May Louis Pratt’s (1991, 35) approach to autoethnographic texts “in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them.”

next to her. You never cooked just for yourself; you were always cooking for family and loved ones” (2022). This recollection is a precise instance of what Connerton means by incorporated practice: knowledge acquired not through reading or instruction but through co-presence and bodily imitation (watching and replicating gesture). The daughter’s body learns from the mother’s body; the knowledge is transmitted not as information but as performance.

This personal recollection is consistent with Floyd and Forster’s (2003, 7) conclusions, drawn from Michel de Certeau’s and Luce Giard’s research, that “food and its preparation [require] a multiple memory; a memory of apprenticeship, of witnessed gestures, and of consistencies,” emphasizing the generational transmission of knowledge and the communal nature of cooking. And finally, the chapter utilizes logos by providing clear, logical explanations and practical advice, emphasizing the benefits of seasonal ingredients and the empirical use of the senses in preparing meals. Her advice about adjusting a rice dish based on its texture and feel demonstrates a practical and intuitive approach to cooking. Apart from natural talent, Meggett (2022) acknowledges the importance of the continuous process of improvement and experimentation: “I learned how to make food that everyone on Edisto loves—and I mean *loves*. This came from talent and instinct, but also from learning, changing, and being willing to make mistakes and try again.” This same experiential approach is evident in Meggett’s (2022) encouraging readers to trust their instincts and not fear mistakes, boosting their confidence to experiment and personalize her recipes: “Trust yourself. And if something doesn’t work, you can always try again, just like I have.”

Meggett (2022) advocates a communal and generous rather than individualistic approach to cooking, promoting values of hospitality and community by encouraging readers to share their culinary creations: “When I cook, I cook for three things: for passion, for family, and for community. That means I cook big, and I cook by memory.” Food affects relationships and social interactions, so cooking in large quantities is not merely about feeding others; it also reflects underlying social values and dynamics (Shuman 1981). Meggett’s decision to cook big is not a sign of extravagance, decadence, or wastefulness; it is a tradition rooted in the past when sprawling families enjoyed meals together at the table. As an old-school matriarch with ten children, her recipes are designed for large gatherings and may be too much for single people. In the true spirit of hospitality, she (2022) advises her readers: “sometimes you’re going to have a little extra. That’s okay! Give a loaf of banana bread to your neighbor. Share a bowl of oyster stew with a friend in need. And my, oh my, if you don’t share that big ol’ pot of red rice with your family?” This insistence on communal feeding extends bell hooks’s argument. For hooks, the homeplace is a protected interior—a site of resistance that is sustained within the household against a hostile outside world. Meggett’s practice of cooking beyond what her own household needs transforms the homeplace from

a shelter into something more active and outward-facing. If the kitchen is hooks's site of resistance, and Meggett deliberately refuses to keep its products contained within the household, then the act of feeding neighbors and community members builds on the political force of the homeplace.

The final section preceding the recipes—"Miss Emily's Essential Kitchen Items"—provides practical advice emphasizing the importance of using all five senses in cooking, as this sensory approach is crucial for mastering traditional Gullah Geechee recipes. This emphasis on the senses is not incidental: it is the embodied register of "edible witness" made explicit. Connerton's incorporated knowledge—the kind that lives in trained sensory responses rather than written instructions—cannot be fully transmitted to a reader who merely follows measurements. By instructing readers to cook by smell, touch, and feel, Meggett is attempting to draw their bodies into the same sensory engagement that the original oral transmission produced naturally through co-presence—the kind of knowing that cannot be learned from a page alone. And in doing so, Meggett is also producing what Felman and Laub's testimonial model requires: not a passive recipient who processes information, but an active receiver.

Meggett also advises readers to focus upon procuring and storing affordable essential ingredients, regardless of their financial status. She encourages readers to familiarize themselves with ingredients beyond their specific uses in recipes by understanding their seasonality and versatile applications. This section also underscores the value of resourcefulness and minimizing waste, reflecting a deep respect for locally sourced ingredients and sustainable cooking practices. There is some overlap with the "How to Use This Book" chapter; both emphasize the use of senses in cooking, the importance of cultural heritage, and the values of community and generosity.

Taken together, the prefatory sections of Meggett's cookbook enact the full testimonial logic of "edible witness." Each section positions Meggett as a situated, embodied, and politically engaged witness: she speaks from a specific place (Edisto Island), from a specific community (the Gullah Geechee), and from a specific tradition of knowledge (intergenerational, sensory, matrilineal). And crucially, Meggett addresses the reader as the essential recipient of that testimony—the "you" without whom the act of witnessing is rendered incomplete.

4. Transition from Oral to Written Recipes

In earlier times, recipes were primarily shared among close family members, especially women. Recipes were traditionally transmitted orally through close-knit relationships between Gullah women across generations. As Meggett (2022) explains:

I grew up in a generation that cooked from memory. Africans were known to pass recipes down orally, meaning they rarely wrote a recipe down on a piece of paper. This tradition

carried on into the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and when African Americans started creating new dishes in the United States, they would share recipes with their children and grandchildren by mouth, not through writing.

In terms of “edible witness,” oral transmission was the original and most complete form of culinary testimony. When a grandmother demonstrated a recipe through gesture and sensory guidance, she was transmitting not merely a set of instructions but an entire world of incorporated knowledge—the accumulated wisdom of a community inscribed in the body rather than on the page. This form of bearing witness was inherently relational and dialogic: it required the co-presence of giver and receiver, and the embodied back-and-forth that Felman and Laub identify as constitutive of testimony itself.

Now, the primary audience for recipes has shifted to commercial consumers, especially through published cookbooks. This transition to written documentation, tailored to fit the demands of the cookbook publishing market, marks a departure from the intimate bond of oral transmission. It was not until the 21st century that these cherished family recipes were documented in publications such as *Gullah Cuisine by Land and Sea* (2010), *Mama Doonk’s Gullah Recipes* (2018), *Bress ’n’ Nyam* (Gullah for “bless and eat”) (2021), and *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking* (2022). A *New York Times* article regarding the woman whose recipes are featured in the latter, matriarch Emily Meggett of Edisto Island, noted the historical significance of the publication with this headline: “A Cook Who Never Used a Cookbook Now Has Her Own” (Severson 2022).

The importance of oral traditions in preserving Gullah culinary heritage is affirmed by various cookbook authors. Theresa Jenkins Hilliard (2018, 8) shares her experience: “I learned to cook at an early age by watching [my grandmother, ‘affectionately known as Mama Doonk’] and my mother prepare meals.” She (2018, 9) fondly remembers that “No measuring spoons or cups were used by either my grandmother or mother. Meals were prepared strictly through the dictation of the senses.” This is Connerton’s “performative memory” in its purest form: knowledge that lives in the body’s trained responses rather than in written instruction, and that can only be transmitted through the co-presence and sensory engagement. Similarly, Meggett (2022) reminisced: “I didn’t measure ingredients, I learned how to cook my dish by how it felt.” However, their respective cookbooks include measurements for many recipes, with Hilliard remarking that this is a concession to contemporary cookbook conventions and reader expectations. Nevertheless, she (2018, 9) affirms, “in the true spirit of Gullah cooking, there are a few recipes without exact measurements.” Meggett (2022) echoes this sentiment, saying: “To me, this [intuitive] style of cooking will go further than measurements ever can, but I know those aren’t the ways of today. I provide measurements for most of these recipes, but sometimes, I leave it up to you. I encourage you to put your senses to use.” Charlotte Jenkins (2012, 16) agrees with this approach, recounting in

Gullah Cuisine: “I’d stand to watch [my ‘mama’] cook. And she’d instruct me. She said I was a pretty good learner. When she prepared something she’d show a person each step. Then she’d do the taste test. If the taste test failed, she’d say, ‘You murdered it.’” Matthew Raiford (2021, 5), the author of *Bress ’n’ Nyam*, says essentially the same thing about his mother, “who always said a recipe was not a rule but a guide.” These cooks embody a tradition that eschews rigid recipes and strict methods in favor of reliance on personal experience, instinct, and creativity; as Meggett (2022) aptly puts it, “Good cooks don’t measure. They use the imagination of the brain. Cook with the brain and heart. If you put in your heart, it will always come out good!”

For generations, the Gullah neither relied upon nor produced cookbooks. They were not needed. Orally transmitted collective memory sufficed. Gullah cookbooks published in recent years—paradoxically sold in the souvenir shops of the plantations where their ancestors once labored—articulate in written form what was previously conveyed only via oral tradition between families and the Gullah community. The shift from oral to written transmission embodies a contradiction that is central to edible witnessing: the very act of documenting testimony—making it accessible to a broader audience—potentially diminishes the embodied and relational aspects that gave the original witnessing its force. The standardized measurement replaces the grandmother’s knowing hand and intuitive knowledge; the printed page replaces the kitchen’s living archive. However, it is equally true that without this transition, the testimony might remain confined to an ever-shrinking community. Meggett’s careful navigation of this paradox—her insistence on sensory direction even within written recipes and her refusal to standardize what she calls the “imagination of the brain”—demonstrates her profound awareness that edible witnessing must be preserved as far as the written medium permits.

This commodification of Gullah culture aligns with bell hooks’s ([1992] 2015, 44) observation that, in a society dominated by commodity culture, ethnicity often gets reduced to a mere embellishment, a “spice” that adds flavor to the otherwise bland mainstream White culture. This is especially evident in the way White patrons consistently show a fascination with what dominant culture deems as “lowbrow,” “the Other,” or “primitive.” As hooks ([1992] 2015, 47) observes, when racial and ethnic identities are purveyed for consumption, both the cultural practices and the very bodies of individuals from these groups can become a sort of “playground” in which members of dominating races reaffirm their societal power by selectively engaging with the “exotic” or “other.” Building upon this insight, it can be posited that this white engagement is less about genuine appreciation and more about reaffirming power dynamics. By elevating traditional dishes or ingredients, white consumers not only exoticize them but also reinforce their own position atop the social or culinary hierarchy. This is done without meaningful recognition of the true worth of Black cuisine.

5. Contested Authenticity

An additional aspect concerning Gullah cuisine pertains to its position within the wider Southern culinary tradition. The integration often occurs without due respect or appropriate recognition, particularly when White Southerners adopt, borrow, or imitate Gullah dishes. Hillary Dixler, in her 2016 *Eater* article, draws attention to the cultural appropriation of Gullah gastronomy by Charleston's upscale dining restaurants, predominantly led by White chefs. Her critique, marked by disapproval, is echoed by Michael Twitty, quoted by Dixler (2016), who admonishes Charleston chefs for "projecting ownership and making it about them, not even considering the people who have been marginalized and exploited." Similarly, in Dixler's (2016) article, B. J. Dennis, a Gullah chef, articulates the link between authenticity and culinary appropriation, asserting that: "You may be able to do it, but somebody who's born into it has the soul for it." Dennis's formulation describes exactly what distinguishes the "edible witness" from those who merely consume or imitate her testimony. The White chef who appropriates Gullah recipes without acknowledgment is not bearing witness. He is performing Haraway's "modest witness" in culinary guise: he claims the authority to represent a tradition from which he is historically and culturally removed, while effacing the community whose incorporated knowledge he has absorbed. His authority rests on his ability to reproduce the dish; hers rests on the intergenerational bodily knowledge—the "soul" Dennis names.

This debate over the authenticity of African-American dishes, co-opted by White chefs to satisfy palates of predominantly White customers, harkens back to the earlier trend of cookbooks written by White Southern authors. Cookbooks as a genre extend beyond mere recipes, incorporating headnotes that elucidate the recipe's purpose. Carrie Tippen (2018) refers to these as "recipe origin narratives," intended to unveil the histories and creators of culinary traditions. However, headnotes in white-authored cookbooks routinely neglect the true origins of these traditions, which are deeply rooted in the culinary practices of the South's African American community. This omission of the historical and social context of their dishes' creation can be viewed as a form of "columbusing," which according to Brenda Salinas (2014), is the tendency of individuals from dominant cultures to "discover" elements of other cultures without acknowledging the source.

In the past, Southern matrons were frequently celebrated for dishes that actually originated in African American kitchens—a stark manifestation of the columbusing of Black American culinary repertoire. This appropriation may stem from a desire to enliven their own culinary traditions—a notion resonant with bell hooks' observations—but it may also be an attempt to disassociate cherished African American cooking from its unjust associations with perceived inferiority, lack of healthfulness, and substandard preparation methods. Oscar Wilde's aphorism, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness," captures the complex dynamics between Southern ladies' admiration and exploitation of Black cooks' culinary natural talents

and expertise. The appropriation of their cooks' recipes by White matrons, without due acknowledgment or compensation, reveals a dual narrative. On one hand, by adopting Black cuisine, these White ladies inadvertently acknowledge the culinary excellence of Black cooks. On the other hand, this act highlights their own culinary shortcomings. Their failure to properly honor the original creators of the dishes they appropriated allowed them to gain culinary and social capital. From the perspective of the "edible witness," this is the most systematic suppression of testimony: the witness is displaced and the testimony is preserved, while the "modest witness"—White, affluent, and privileged—assumes the vacant role of the recipe originator. The knowledge circulates under a new name and its creator is excluded from the record.

When African American cuisine is repackaged as Southern—or implicitly, White—cuisine, its disassociation with Black heritage conveniently serves the interests of those in positions of power. Fortunately, long-standing debate over the authenticity of dishes associated with both Black and Southern culinary traditions is showing signs of positive change in two key areas. Recent White Southern cookbook authors are providing "recipe origin narratives" that properly acknowledge the cultural and historical heritage of their recipes. For example, Nancie McDermott's *Southern Soups and Stews* (2015) pays tribute to Leah Chase, the esteemed proprietor of Dooky Chase's restaurant, acknowledging her influence on the culinary landscape of New Orleans and the broader South.

In contrast to the appropriation of Black recipes by White women, Meggett's cookbook stands as a powerful counter-narrative, addressing and subverting this legacy by ensuring that the origin of the recipes and associated cultural knowledge are clearly attributed to her and the Gullah Geechee community. In terms of "edible witness," Meggett's cookbook accomplishes what appropriation systematically suppresses: it names the witness and locates her in her community. Additionally, it insists on the situated and politically engaged nature of her testimony. Where the logic of cumberbund erases the original cook and substitutes the appropriating author as the source, Meggett's cookbook insists on tracing the knowledge back through the hands that produced it—the grandmothers, the traditions, and the island. Naming every predecessor is an act of counter-testimony: it refutes the fiction that the recipe originated with whoever wrote it down and simultaneously restores visibility to the community whose embodied, intergenerational labor the dish actually carries.

The acknowledgments section reveals that while Emily Meggett is the central author, the creation of the cookbook was a collaborative effort involving family and friends, including Becky Smith, her White neighbor who initially hired Meggett (2022) to cook while Becky summered in Edisto Island: "I have to give her credit for inspiring me." Her employer-turned friend emboldened Meggett to preserve and celebrate "all this wisdom, recipes, and these stories you [Emily] have in your head." The collaborative nature of her project, and her expressions of gratitude and humility, emphasize the importance of

giving credit where it is due and recognizing the collective effort involved in preserving a community's cultural heritage. By claiming authorship and credit for her work ("This is my book"), collaborating with her community, and emphasizing the cultural significance of her recipes, Meggett resists the erasure of Black culinary contributions. Her cookbook is an important cultural artifact that honors the legacy of Black cooks and ensures their stories and recipes are recognized and valued.

Since the 1970s, other Black chefs and culinary historians have called attention to the African roots of Southern cuisine. As Angela Shelf Medearis (1994, xiii) states, "My African ancestors are an invisible but strong presence in my kitchen. Part of their legacy to me and to America can be found in a simmering pot of spicy okra gumbo, in a delicious handful of peanuts, in a steaming bowl of black-eyed peas and rice on a cold New Year's Day." For Black chefs, culinary historians, and scholars, cookbooks have become instrumental in shaping their contemporary self-image and that of their community. Such cookbooks not only share recipes, they fulfill an educational role by narrating in part the complex history of the Black experience in America. Other cookbooks, such as *The Black Family Reunion Cookbook* (1991), are infused with historical insights into the lives of Black leaders, while The National Council of Negro Women's *The Black Family Dinner Quilt Cookbook* (1994) incorporates Harlem's history as well, and Phoebe Bailey's *An African American Cookbook* (2002) reaches back to culinary experiences during slavery. However, it is Meggett's *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking* that frames her as the custodian of centuries-old culinary traditions of the Lowcountry Gullah. She instructs "how to not just enjoy food, but respect its true origins" (Stewart 2023). Stewart (2023) contends that "in her life and posthumous legacy, she [Meggett] should join the ranks of a vanguard of Black women cooks, including Edna Lewis and Leah Chase, who redefined American cuisine through the lens of Black womanhood and cooking."

Each of these cookbooks bears "edible witness" in its own register—through recovering names and reclaiming traditions. In doing so, they assert—against a history of cumbering and erasure—that culinary knowledge has authors, and that the communities who created these traditions deserve to be named as their originators. Meggett's cookbook, perhaps more than any other in this corpus, invites readers—whatever their background—to become receivers of that testimony. In this sense, it exemplifies the full range of what "edible witness" can accomplish: not merely preserving the past but actively shaping how that past is understood and transmitted into the future.

6. Conclusions

This article proposes "edible witness" as a theoretical paradigm for reading culinary texts produced by marginalized communities as embodied acts of cultural testimony rather than mere repositories of domestic knowledge. Applied to Meggett's cookbook, this framework reveals a text that operates simultaneously on epistemological, political,

and embodied registers—a text that does not simply preserve recipes but bears witness to centuries of resilience and resistance. Meggett proudly claims that her enslaved African ancestors, not the genteel Southern women they served, first cultivated and cooked the dishes now served at celebrity chef-owned restaurants, and that families like hers kept that culinary tradition alive. Yet her approach in asserting cultural ownership is invitational rather than hostile: she welcomes the whole world to try cooking and tasting Gullah cuisine.

That invitation, however, is not made in a vacuum—it is extended against a backdrop of sustained appropriation that makes the act of naming and claiming all the more politically charged. The ongoing history of appropriation of Black Southern cuisine makes Meggett’s message urgent. As long as Gullah culinary knowledge circulates without attribution—absorbed into the category of “Southern food” and served in upscale restaurants by chefs with no connection to its origins—the “edible witness” remains a necessary and politically charged figure. She is the named, situated, embodied, and relational counterpart to Haraway’s “modest witness,” who would claim the same knowledge while erasing its source. Meggett’s cookbook insists that food does not exist outside of history, that every dish carries the memory of the hands that first prepared it, and that acknowledging those hands is not merely a matter of courtesy but of justice.

Works Cited

- Allen, Stephanie. “Collard Greens & a Sweetgrass Halo: State Museum Acquires Portraits of SC Cuisine Matriarch.” *Free Times*, 13 May, 2024.
- Bishop, Marion. “Speaking Sisters: Relief Society Cookbooks and Mormon Culture.” *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, edited by Anne Bower, University of Massachusetts Press, 1997, pp. 89–104.
- Bower, Anne. “Bound Together: Recipes, Lives, Stories, and Readings.” *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, edited by Anne Bower, University of Massachusetts Press, 1997, pp. 1–14.
- Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Cook, Ian, and Philip Crang. “The World on a Plate: Culinary Culture, Displacement, and Geographical Knowledges.” *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 1, 1996, pp. 131–53.
- Dixler, Hillary. “How Gullah Cuisine Has Transformed Charleston Dining.” *Eater*, 22 Mar., 2016.
- Eagleton, Terry. “Edible Écriture.” *Consuming Passions: Food in the Age of Anxiety*, edited by Sian Griffiths and Jennifer Wallace, Mandolin, 1998, pp. 203–208.
- Eves, Rosalyn Collings. “A Recipe for Remembrance: Memory and Identity in African-American Women’s Cookbooks.” *Rhetoric Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2005, pp. 280–297.
- Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992.

- Fleitz, Elizabeth. "Cooking Codes: Cookbook Discourses as Women's Rhetorical Practices." *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1–8.
- Floyd, Janet, and Laurel Forster. "The Recipe in its Cultural Contexts." *The Recipe Reader: Narratives – Contexts – Traditions*, edited by Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster, Ashgate, 2003, pp. 1–11.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan@_Meets_Onco-Mouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*. Routledge, 1997.
- Harris, Jessica B. *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America*. Bloomsbury, 2011.
- Hilliard, Theresa Jenkins. *Mama Doonk's Gullah Recipes*. Theresa Jenkins Hilliard Publishing, 2018.
- hooks, bell. "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance." *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Routledge, 2015, pp. 76–88.
- . *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Routledge, 2015.
- Jenkins, Charlotte, and William P. Baldwin. *Gullah Cuisine: By Land and by Sea*. Evening Post Pub. Co., 2012.
- Leonardi, Susan. "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster à la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie." *PMLA*, vol. 104, no. 3, 1989, pp. 340–347.
- McDermott, Nancie. *Southern Soups and Stews: More Than 75 Recipes from Burgoo and Gumbo to Etouffée and Fricassee*. Chronicle Books, 2015.
- Medearis, Angela Shelf. *The African-American Kitchen: Cooking from Our Heritage*. Penguin, 1994.
- Meggett, Emily. *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking. Recipes from the Matriarch of Edisto Island*. E-book ed., Abrams, 2022.
- Notaker, Henry. *A History of Cookbooks: From Kitchen to Page over Seven Centuries*. University of California Press, 2017.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." *Profession*, 1991, pp. 33–40. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469>
- Raiford, Matthew, and Amy Paige Condon. *Bress 'n' Nyam: Gullah Geechee Recipes from a Sixth-Generation Farmer*. The Countryman Press, 2021.
- Salinas, Brenda. "'Columbusing': The Art Of Discovering Something That Is Not New." *NPR*, July 6, 2014.
- Severson, Kim. "A Cook Who Never Used a Cookbook Now Has Her Own." *New York Times*, 9 May, 2022.
- Shuman, Amy. "The Rhetoric of Portions." *Western Folklore*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1981, pp. 72–80.
- Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Tippen, Carrie Helms. *Inventing Authenticity: How Cookbook Writers Redefine Southern Identity*. University of Arkansas Press, 2018.

Twitty, Michael. *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South*. Amistad, 2017.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

Generative AI was used only as a supportive tool for language refinement and limited idea development. The extent of AI use was discussed with and approved by the journal's editorial board. The author retains full responsibility for the content, interpretation, and final form of the paper.

* * *

Urszula Niewiadomska-Flis holds a Doctorate and D.Litt. from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland, where she serves as Associate Professor in English Studies. Her scholarly interests focus on representations of foodways in literature and culture, Southern studies, African American studies, and ethnic/immigrant literatures of the United States. She is the author of four monographs and numerous articles. Her monograph – *Live and Let Di(n)e: Food and Race in the Texts of the American South* (KUL Publishing House, 2017) – received “the 2018 American Studies Network Book Prize” from the American Studies Network (of the European Association for American Studies). Her subsequent monograph *Race and Repast: Foodscapes in Twentieth-Century Southern Literature* was published by the University of Arkansas Press (2022). She co-authored two monographs: *Pathologizing Black Bodies: The Legacy of Plantation Slavery* (Routledge, 2023) and *Chicanas: Pisarki Amerykańskie Pochodzenia Meksykańskiego* (the University of Warsaw Press, 2025). She edited volumes: *Ex-Centric Souths: (Re)Imagining Southern Centers and Peripheries* (Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2019) and *Dixie Matters: New Perspectives on Southern Femininities and Masculinities* (KUL Publishing House, 2013). A co-edited volume, *Food and American TV: Constructing Identity in Bite-Sized Narratives* (with Carrie Helms Tippen), came out with Routledge in April 2026.