

we could "read" women's quilts as quasi-literary systems. Now I am suggesting that we extend our explorations to community cookbooks. Here we find a bridge between the two kinds of talents Florence Howe perceives in women's traditions: on the one hand, we have the "normative, everyday, talents of women living in a gender-limited world, in a subculture of patriarchy." Here Howe includes the spheres of parenting, friendship, love, community-building, reform work, and domestic arts—the garden, sewing, the kitchen, etc. On the other hand we have the "talents of women writing in a variety of forms, finding the themes and language with which to convey the experience of living in subcultures."<sup>59</sup> This category of "writing" refers to literature, and by literature Howe means the poetic, dramatic, fictional, and essayistic texts we honor as literary. In the many community cookbooks published by women since the Civil War, the boundaries between the two kinds of talents blur, and women from whom we might otherwise never hear tell us their stories.

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## Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines Community

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### Introduction

Recipes always retain their flavor. Since I started looking at "recipe language" several years ago, I have been enchanted by the many friends and colleagues who continue to pass along personal stories about cookbooks they have just unearthed or great-aunts' recipes they have inherited. They're dimly aware I might be professionally interested (always on the lookout for good "data"), but mostly they want to share a good story, one they know I will understand and appreciate. In a satisfying way, we are all bound by our language, history, family, food, and community. Recipes in many ways can reflect that. Filmmakers know this—witness the many movies in which food preparation and relationships are central themes, from *Tampopo* to *Like Water for Chocolate*.

While Hollywood may not come knocking, almost everybody has a story or two about a cookbook bestowed on them by their grandmother or

found at a garage sale. Most often, it's a community cookbook, treasured precisely because its unique tone and style differ from most commercial cookbooks, or because it offers a glimpse into a world that may not be our own. The presentation is often homespun, with insider references, line drawings of muffins, and topics of local interest. It is the language that often delights us; a "tumblerful of flour" seems more evocative than a precise measurement. I propose that we go a few steps past the delight we find in reading our own or others' community cookbooks and set about analyzing the language of recipes, seeking the linguistic components and the structure of recipe texts. The way language is used in the context of recipe discourse shapes our interpretation of many aspects of the cookbook, not only concerning things culinary but also how we view a particular community and its values.

Since the majority of community cookbooks today follow commercial models, I will start with the language of several pie crust recipes from commercial cookbooks. (The immense variation one finds in community cookbooks makes it more difficult to establish the kind of generalizations linguists are trained to look for in linguistic forms.) Once we have a solid sense of how the recipe is put together linguistically, we will look at versions of the same type of recipe from various community cookbooks. One way to look at a recipe is as a form of narrative—a particular kind of storytelling—and viewing it formally and structurally as a narrative enriches our reading of it. To get us into narrative mode, we will see how an existing narrative framework used by discourse analysts can serve as a guide for describing the discourse structure of recipes. Then we'll continue in an even narrower linguistic manner by noting the syntactic and semantic regularities of recipes, using the pie crust recipes for illustration. There are, of course, broader implications in looking at the language of recipes, particularly the way in which language constructs community, establishes personal identity, and tells us who belongs and who is the outsider. This will be touched on in the final section. Political or popular culture texts have long been considered suitable for scrutiny of this nature, and recipes should not be left out of the range of cultural artifacts that give us insight into the world around us, or our place in that world.

By looking at the language and structure of a recipe, we begin to see how a recipe can be viewed as a story, a cultural narrative that can be shared

and has been constructed by members of a community. It is no wonder that my grandmother often told me how she could "read a cookbook like a novel,"<sup>1</sup> how she "could get lost in it." I didn't understand it then, but she was a member of a larger community of cooks, with whom she shared implicit alliances and knowledge. Especially when it came to cookbooks put out by her friends in the church parish or by members of various charities in her hometown, this shared alliance was all the more real and immediate. She could "read" her cookbooks because they carried elements that fired her imagination, that drew her in, that caused her to reflect on her own behavior (as a cook), and to construct her identity (as a housewife and mother, which indeed was her occupation) in terms that were readily accessible to her and in relation to her peers. Her cookbooks took her beyond her own kitchen and into her community.

Examining cookbooks at the level of language use gives us many ways in which to investigate a cookbook's content and how it reflects the social mores and expectations of its time. We will see that recipes share common features, as well as exhibit vast differences. Especially as they are recycled over time and through different social contexts, the shared features of recipes can provide, like narrative, a form of cultural cohesion.<sup>2</sup> So, besides the dictionary definition of "recipe" with which we are all familiar, we will see that the humble recipe can be dressed up for scholarly purposes: it can also be viewed as a text form that is "locally situated" as a community practice, and as a text that embodies linguistic relationships and implies within these relationships a number of cultural assumptions and practices.

### Toward a Discourse Analysis of the Recipe

Discourse analysis in the manner practiced by many linguists can yield important insights into a text, even when that text is a cookbook. Analysis of this kind can show how the recipe is ordered, the way its small, internal units are related sequentially, and the interpretation that derives from particular sequences. (For example, in a question-answer sequence, a question leads us to expect a response.) The small parts of the discourse—the ingredients—work together to inform our judgments of what the text form "means." Examining a recipe in this way allows us to see what rele-

vance the text form has to the outside world of language users and how it is then used in many social and historical contexts. The recipe provides abundant opportunity to examine the intersection of language and social relationships. Jones and others justify expanding the realm of foodways research in part by citing the essential nature of food preparation in any culture, saying that any society's methods of "preparing . . . food often provide a basis for interaction, serve as a vehicle of communication, and constitute a source of associations and symbolic structures."<sup>3</sup> When this socio-anthropological view is merged with a linguistic approach, the possibilities for additional insight expand yet again, especially through a linguistic evaluation of the symbolic structures that constitute the recipe.

The recipe lends itself naturally to "variationist" study, a theoretical approach in which linguists consider how the same thing is said in many different ways. It is a way of understanding multiple underlying communicative (rather than propositional) messages and answering the question, "Why did she say it like that?" There is no lack of data for qualitative or quantitative analysis in this framework, whether the recipe comes by oral transmission or by written text. If one were to pursue a variationist line of research, one could choose a dish, for example, pie crust (as I do below), and note the potentially limitless ways it is linguistically presented by individuals or in cookbooks. The revelations come in an awareness of the differences.

The recipe can also be examined sociolinguistically, that is, by looking at how language is actually used by real people in real-world contexts. Since the world of cookery divides along professional and domestic lines, often incorporating gender and class distinctions, one could also specify various sociolinguistic variables (gender, age, race, nation or region of country, religion, class, occupation) and observe both similarities and differences based on these constraints. This is relevant in adding "meaning" to a recipe, since personal identity and social context play into what comprises a text or a textual unity, as Schiffrin says.<sup>4</sup>

The pie crust recipes here serve to illustrate how the recipe functions as a narrative form. By breaking the recipes down into their component linguistic and textual parts, we see how the language that describes an identical procedure—making a pie crust—differs radically in many ways. And while recipes may look similar or result in the same product, there is

still room for wide interpretation if we also consider the interactional structure inherent in any communicative exchange. The "communicators" involved, the pie crust maker (the cook) and the recipe compiler (the author), bring to the activity of cooking their own assumptions about the background and social identity of the participants. It is this constant mediation of context and text that makes the study of genres such as the community cookbook so rich.

There are other linguistic-based approaches to the texts. While the discussion here is synchronic—the recipes are all roughly from the same span of time—one could look at the material diachronically, cross-generationally, or cross-culturally (as many of the authors in this volume have done). One could also look at handwritten "receipts" handed down within families to determine if those recipe forms show linguistic aspects that reflect an oral tradition rather than linguistic structures that derive from printed, mass-media forms, as the samples here tend to demonstrate. The presentation of recipes on the radio or television also suggests intriguing linguistic possibilities (see Nelljean Rice's essay in this volume) that point to the larger question of the influence of mass media on community assimilation, differentiation, and affiliation.

### Distinctive Syntax and Semantics

To consider a broader interpretation of recipes as texts that reflect and affect cultural contexts, we must first examine what characterizes the recipe as a particular form—in other words, its linguistic building blocks. Recipes share a certain distinctiveness in their syntactic forms (the way sentences are structured) and their semantic realizations (what they mean), as well as in their formal discourse features.

The two recipes below demonstrate the language differences between a commercial recipe, in which the author works to engage the largely unknown readership through chatty prose, and a community cookbook recipe, in which the author assumes the background knowledge of her peers, the most likely audience for her recipe. The underlined words are the imperative forms syntactically characteristic of the recipe; the italicized phrases fulfill an evaluative function and vary considerably across similar recipes.

## HOT WATER PIE CRUST

Makes pastry for two 8-inch pies with top crusts or two 9- or 10-inch pies without top crusts.

When you mention a hot water pie crust, people look askance, for traditional pie crust recipes always emphasize cold ingredients and ice-cold water. And we're talking about **boiling** water here. But this makes a tender, flaky crust. At one stage, it looks like unappetizing putty, but don't worry about that. I make it in huge amounts, cut it into wedges, and freeze it for nearly instant pies. This is an old, old recipe, and it's been years since I have seen it published.

1 cup lard, very soft	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup boiling water
1 teaspoon salt	3 cups all-purpose flour

Place the lard and salt in a large bowl and beat a bit with a tablespoon until the lard is completely softened. You can also do this with an electric hand beater. Pour boiling water over the lard and blend again. Let this mixture cool to room temperature, but stir often so water and lard won't separate (*although it is not the end of the world if it does*). Stir in the flour, and form the mixture into a ball. If you use your hands, do it quickly. Chill for several hours or overnight, then let the cold dough sit out at room temperature for about 30 minutes before rolling out [etc].<sup>5</sup>

## NEVER-FAIL PIE CRUST

3 cups flour	1 tsp. salt
1 cup shortening	1 Tbsp. vinegar
1 beaten egg	7 Tbsp. ice water

Cut lard into flour. Add remaining ingredients and roll out as regular crust. Mrs. Norman Bunkleman<sup>6</sup>

The recipe is not an elite text form, so almost any reasonably aware individual could distinguish a recipe from, say, a sonnet or a press release or a legal document. But linguists sort out and name the obvious—especially when it allows a generalization about language that can fit numerous circumstances. In the case of the English-language recipe, the syntax is marked by a series of imperative verb forms that relate to what the recipe is bringing about, for example, “place the lard and salt,” “add the remaining ingredients,” etc. The imperative verb forms are the recipe’s most distinguishing syntactic feature and create internal cohesion between and among the discourse elements. When a *non-imperative* clause or sentence does occur, it plays a role in the narrative as an evaluative or descriptive marker rather than furthering the narrative action as the imperative forms do. Similarly, comments that are not explicitly an integral part of the recipe are typographically or textually set apart, serving as an auxiliary message to the reader. The use of the second-person singular (as in, “if you use your hands . . .”) also fulfills this function; it also reminds us of the pre-literate spoken transmission of recipes through the use of a pronoun (you) that characteristically distinguishes spoken discourse from written prose.

Generally in recipes there is an absence of temporal markers (now, when, as soon as, etc.) or tense shifts, although they can be present (*Laurel’s Kitchen* recipes are never without them).<sup>7</sup> Instead, we find that the sequence is relayed by the ordering of elements and is often made explicit with numbers that delimit the particular actions. When recipes deviate from the ordered list of procedural commands, there is a chance that the recipe could be confusing. For example, *Joy of Cooking*<sup>8</sup> often scatters variations on basic recipes elsewhere in a chapter, which is no problem for the expert, of course, but might be confusing for the novice. *Laurel’s Kitchen*’s pie crust recipe helpfully mentions what might go wrong during the procedure (“If it should stick to the table, slide a long, sharp knife underneath . . .”). This contingency might be confused with a necessary step, making comprehension of the sequence potentially problematic.

An optional descriptive or prepositional phrase can either follow or precede the imperative sentence, as in the instruction to “Cut half of the shortening into the flour mixture with a pastry blender” found in *Joy of Cooking* or advice such as “On a floured surface, roll out the dough . . .” from *Jane Brody’s Good Food Book*.<sup>9</sup> These phrases, which help explain the procedure initiated by the verb, are generally either locative (“on a floured surface”), which expresses the place where action is to take place, or instrumental (“with a pastry blender”), which expresses the means with which something is to be done.

The recipe possesses unique semantic features as well. The recipe’s descriptive language—or evaluation clauses, as I call them here—sets similar recipes apart from each other. It also requires a prior knowledge of the genre if these evaluation clauses are to be understood properly. When blending flour and shortening for pie crust dough, one has to know enough about the procedure and outcome to understand what is meant by evaluation clauses such as “the size of peas,” “the grain of cornmeal,” or

"like rolled oats," which refer to the texture of the flour-shortening mixture. How thick is "extra thick" or "desired thickness," and how much is "don't work it in too much"? Much of the description in a recipe is scalar; and knowing where on the scale the meaning of an evaluation falls would indicate the extent of familiarity a recipe user has with the genre. Also, some recipes incorporate more evaluative language than others. So merely counting the evaluative phrases would be another way to describe how different recipes get their point across.

The verbs indicating the actions of a recipe can also be problematic. We all know what "cut" and "clarify" mean, especially in the context of writing, but "cut shortening into flour" or "clarify butter" have meanings very specific to the context of cooking. Besides misinterpreting the semantics, in this case not knowing what action is instantiated by a verb, an inexperienced recipe user might also run into unfamiliar vocabulary, or directions or terminology, that simply cannot be understood unless one is a member of the subculture that knows how to cook.

### The Recipe and Its Narrative Components

Beyond its distinctive linguistic features, a recipe is also a narrative, a story that can be shared and has been constructed by members of a community. The recipe narrative not only transmits culture-based meaning, as do more traditional narratives, it can also be viewed as sharing many aspects of the formal structure of basic narratives. The temporal structure and sequential presentation of information in a recipe link it with the more traditional narrative framework as defined by sociolinguist William Labov.<sup>10</sup>

To view a text as mundane as the recipe as akin to the much-studied and much-pondered narrative is not as far-fetched as it might initially sound. Donald Polkinghorne attests to the "almost infinite variety" of stories that the narrative form can "accommodate and generate." Polkinghorne cites French semiologist Roland Barthes's belief that narratives, with their "ordered arrangement of all the ingredients," give cohesion and structure to existence on the individual and on the cultural level, something that comes into play with the recipe, as this chapter and others in the volume attempt to demonstrate. Note that Barthes uses the recipe as a metaphor to describe narrative, which underscores our cultural-cognitive awareness of the recipe as a formal unit.<sup>11</sup>

The recipe form we are most familiar with today—the list of ingredients and instructions on how to compile them—actually was not conventionalized until 1887 with the publication of *The Boston Cookbook*, which "tabulated ingredients at the head of each recipe and offered [details] to guide the housewife who might be confused by the meaning of 'butter the size of an egg.'"<sup>12</sup> Before that, the ingredients would not necessarily be listed separately but mentioned as they became relevant within the narrative, something you'll occasionally still see in recipes today. This "old-fashioned" model caused much chagrin for M. F. K. Fisher, the late celebrated food-and-culture writer, and she railed against it in her essay, "The Anatomy of a Recipe."<sup>13</sup>

Structurally, the recipe can be seen as a narrative form that roughly parallels sociolinguist Labov's classic depiction of a narrative and its composition. Labov's framework is intended to account for the structural similarities in stories. He determined the most narratives contain the following structural components: abstract, orientation clause, actions, evaluations, and coda. We will see how these structural components are realized in the recipe form. The conventional bipartite structure of the modern recipe (a list of ingredients and directions) leads us to add one other bit of narrative "hardware" to the inventory: the "list" (a discourse unit discussed at length by Schiffrin).

Table 1 breaks down the two sample recipes quoted earlier into their structural components. Note how the title (akin to Labov's "abstract") gives key information; the list items relate to procedural order; the orientation components reflect the effort on the author's part to facilitate understanding of the procedure; the actions, in spite of any brevity, are related temporally and sequentially; the evaluative components describe features of the recipe event that relate to identity or action; and the coda provides closure and describes the projected outcome. The community cookbook version of the pie crust recipe, in its brevity, obviously assumes that participants in that cookbook know each other and that it would be condescending to offer more explanation.

The *title* of the recipe is in effect what Labov would call the "abstract" of the narrative, affording the reader a summary of what follows and the proposition that what follows will lead to what is promised in the title. Implied by the title in modern cookbooks is the phrase, "How to make a . . .," which appears explicitly during the Renaissance in the form,

TABLE 1. *Narrative structure of two versions of the pie-crust recipe*

Structural component	Commercial version	Community recipe
Title	<i>Hot Water Pie Crust</i>	<i>Never-Fail Pie Crust</i>
List	<i>lard</i> <i>salt</i> <i>boiling water</i> <i>flour</i>	<i>flour</i> <i>shortening</i> <i>beaten egg</i> <i>salt</i> <i>vinegar</i> <i>ice water</i>
Orientation components	84-word paragraph preceding ingredients list; mention of hand beater	∅
Actions	<i>place, beat, pour, blend, let, stir, stir, form, chill, let</i>	<i>cut, add, roll</i>
Evaluations	included in orientation paragraph; marked by italics in (1)	<i>as regular crust</i>
Coda	<i>Makes pastry for two . . .</i>	∅

"To Make a . . ." Earlier recipe titles are less elliptical than today's; take, for example, this one from 1587: "A Tart to Provoke Courage in Either Man or Woman," or this one from 1608: "To Make a Walnut, That When You Cracke It, You Shall Find Biskets, and Carrawayes in It, Or a Prettie Posey Written."<sup>14</sup> Fisher, in her own analysis of the form, insists that the name or title "will perforce give some sort of description: for instance, one does not simply say 'Cake' or 'Bread,' but 'Golden Sponge Cake,' 'Greek Honey Bread.'"<sup>15</sup> Her dictum captures the essence of the narrative abstract, which is to "encapsulate the point of the story."<sup>16</sup>

The *orientation clauses* in a narrative place the actions being described in a particular context, providing information on place and time, the participants, and the nature of the situation. In the recipe, orientation clauses, generally located beneath the title and above the list, appear to be optional; in the pie crust data I describe here, only three of the nine recipes I exam-

ined (a mix of community and commercial cookbook recipes) have what could be construed as an "orientation clause." For example, *Jane Brody's Pumpkin Pie* recipe includes this clause (located under the title and above the list): "Although more caloric than the Pumpkin-Orange Chiffon Pie on page 631, this more traditional version still is considerably lower in fat and calories than the standard fare, but it retains the delicious flavoring and texture of a good pumpkin pie."<sup>17</sup> Note that this clause orients us to the health requirements of our diet, something that may be new for many cooks to contemplate, while grounding and reassuring us with references to the "traditional," "standard," and "good."

This orientation function is also fulfilled by many cooks' handwritten notes next to a particular recipe in their cookbook, for instance, "Bill made this for my birthday," or "tasted better with honey," or "yum!" in effect personalizing the recipe and making it part of the cook's personal story. Implicitly, the larger domain of the cookbook orients the reader—for example, I didn't, nor did I expect to, find a pie crust recipe in my Chinese and Italian cookbooks. Also, since *Jane Brody's Good Food Book* is subtitled *Living the High-Carbohydrate Way*, it is no surprise that her orientation clauses throughout the book refer to the recipes' nutritional attributes. Community cookbooks orient readers in this way, too, perhaps indicating that "this is the recipe so-and-so always brings to the annual picnic," or, "Ms. So-and-so won't tell us the secret ingredient in her fudge sauce, but she will share a fantastic recipe for oatmeal cookies."

The orientation clause, especially since it is usually found beneath the title or in accompanying remarks before the recipe, can also function as part of the abstract, indicating for the reader what the implications of following this recipe might be or noting something unusual in the ingredient list or action sequencing that has consequences that may be distinctive or out-of-the-ordinary in the cookery context, as I discovered with pie crust recipes made with whole wheat flour.

The elements of a *list* are "entities" that alone predicate nothing except this existence, as Schiffrin states, although the significance of list elements is relevant to the context in which they are found. Interestingly, in the recipe, the list items' external relationships become apparent in the "narrative" or instruction sequence when their place within the structure of the recipe is revealed. Perhaps this is because the list component is actually a somewhat artificial highlighting of an aspect of the narrative

that has become conventionalized in the written recipe format (as we have seen, it is only within the past 100 years that ingredients have been tabulated and listed first). In the recipe, the list items are essentially a collection of entities that bear some inherent relation to each other by dint of their adjacency and subsequent inclusion within a procedure (e.g., sugar and butter are often paired because they become *creamed together*) or within the recipe as a whole (no sugar and butter in a Thai dish, for instance). Sometimes, within the narrative text, there is a specific reference to a list item, often denoted by an asterisk (as in *Betty Crocker's Standard Pastry recipe*),<sup>18</sup> which notes a consequence specific to that ingredient. The recipe list is ordered either in terms of importance of ingredients or order of their use, although most cooks prefer order of use (Fisher finds it essential in a well-formed recipe), which speaks to the salience of list items in relation to the temporal sequences of the recipe narrative structure as a whole.

While the “complicating action” of the narrative—which answers the question, “what happened?”—is defined according to its temporal relation to adjacent clauses, the *instructional actions* of the recipe narrative are defined according to their temporal relation to adjacent elements of procedure. As in the traditional narrative, it is assumed that the elements of the event being described are presented in “proper order” and that temporal adjacency is key in discovering the underlying relationships of the text as a whole. In other words, preparing a dish is in effect moving through event space, the frame in which an event occurs. Each action is predicated on what precedes and follows it. When the order is breached, it undermines the well-formedness of the narrative, leading to possible misunderstandings. (Most cooks have experienced this in some form or other, they've been ready to follow the “next step,” only to discover that some crucial other action has not been done because the recipe did not alert them to the necessary timing.) Fisher, approaching the recipe from the user's and critic's viewpoint, testifies eloquently to the significance of order and adjacency in the recipe, underscoring the work many linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists have done in this regard with respect to the traditional narrative. She complains about recipes with the time element “askew,” that contain “no time sequence, no logical progression,” or that suffer from a “lack of time logic.” How can you receive, integrate, and respond to the story being told to you if you can't follow it?

Next to the narrative action clauses, the *evaluation clauses*—how the narrator gets her point across—are the most important (according to Labov). In a recipe, most evaluations occur within the instructional narrative sequence and relate to identity (e.g., looks like X or Y) or to action (e.g., beat ingredient X in such and such a way). There are also more macro evaluations in the preliminary description that illustrate some aspect of the outcome of the recipe, such as what other foods would go well with this particular dish or how long the recipe will take to prepare. While there can be some variation in how the recipe's informational actions are presented, the requirements of the particular named activity seriously constrain the options. This is not the case with evaluation clauses, which are the locus for the major differences among recipes and, as such, the components that warrant the most scrutiny. Evaluation clauses differ syntactically and semantically from instructional actions and offer a means by which to compare and interpret the recipe text in its social and historic contexts, especially when we compare the same dish from different sources. Evaluation clauses, in tandem with the list items and instructional actions, combine to offer a subjectivity and objectivity of experience that goes with the transmission of any subtextual messages inherent in the recipe. Because of the subjective nature of evaluation clauses, the reader's own background knowledge or shared or divergent assumptions potently mingle with the narrative evaluation, allowing unconscious judgments to be formed—about herself, her community, and her place in the world.

A sense of completion, psychological as well as literal, accompanies the conclusion of any narrative sequence. In the Labovian narrative, the *coda* (“And that was that”) signals the narrative's end.<sup>19</sup> In the recipe, the coda does not have to be made explicit for us to know that we have witnessed the entire cookery event, although it could be argued that a coda-type clause—such as “top with a sprig of parsley and serve,” or “serve the oatmeal sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar, if desired”—contributes to maximal well-formedness. It could also be argued, following philosopher H. Paul Grice's Maxim of Quantity (make your utterance as informative as possible), that a coda is necessary. After all, “serves 6” or “makes 3 portions for hungry eaters” is relevant information for enacting a satisfying recipe event. In cases where the coda is absent, we infer (again, in the spirit of Grice's Cooperative Principle, whereby communication is seen as

a cooperative occurrence among participants) through the knowledge of our requirements of the procedure, or through the layout and presentation of the cookbook, when the recipe has ended.<sup>20</sup>

A sentence such as “serves 6” still retains its coda function even when it is placed at the beginning of the recipe, as portion amounts frequently are, because we know it refers to the end result of the enacted event.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the reader’s attention to the contents of the recipe narrative is informed by the prior knowledge of some significant aspect of “the ending,” a foreshadowing technique that we also find in film, literature, and music.

Labov observes that some codas not only conclude the narrative but also “bridg[e] the gap between the moment of time at the end of the narrative proper and the present.”<sup>22</sup> The recipe coda, especially when it focuses the cook’s attention on the use to which the food will be put, in some sense functions as a bridge, returning the cook to the needs of the present time, the meal at hand and the participants sharing it.

### Analyzing Recipes

Breaking down the recipe into its narrative components and noting its syntactic and semantic characteristics is just the first step in analyzing recipes. The data can be evaluated from different perspectives, and it is as important to know the orientation of the research question as it is to find answers. For example, when I examined various pie crust recipes, I looked at them in terms of a certain “efficiency,” an admittedly Anglo-American construct. I determined that “efficiency” was a property of both structure and content: how easy was it to follow and understand this recipe; and what amount of evaluation and description would allow a person aware of cooking basics to interpret the instructions and make a creditable pie crust. Table 2, which follows, evaluates seven pie-crust recipes in terms of the narrative framework; my efficiency-oriented research bias and interpretations are reflected explicitly in the comments at the end related to each recipe.

Six of the seven recipes included in table 2 come from commercial sources that vary markedly. Two are from “standard” cookbooks that have long been part of the American cooking heritage (*Betty Crocker’s Cookbook*, *Joy of Cooking*); one is from a “standard” cookbook with a contemporary

orientation (*Jane Brody’s Good Food Book*); two are from “alternative” cookbooks with a nonmainstream message (*Laurel’s Kitchen* and *Recipes for a Small Planet*);<sup>23</sup> and one is from a small specialty cookbook intended to transmit certain “ethnic” information (*Pies from Amish Kitchens*).<sup>24</sup> These six cookbooks reflect, to some extent, the range of options available to most cooks from commercial sources. The seventh recipe is from a prototypical community cookbook: *A Garden of Eatin’*, produced by the St. Therese Christian Ladies in Appleton, Wisconsin, and circulated locally in the parish.

Concentrating on recipes from commercial cookbooks was a deliberate decision: it is important, at least for an examination of late-twentieth-century recipes, to be familiar with commercial models, upon which (structurally) most community cookbooks are based. It is relevant to see how community cookbooks compare with their commercial sisters, especially as the latter reflect various standardizing linguistic values of a literacy-based society. A larger awareness of recipes in all contexts, from which we can make generalizations, will give us more insight into a specific category. For example, the one community cookbook pie crust recipe that I include in table 2 and others I refer to later differ markedly from the commercial versions. This uniqueness might have been missed without a wider knowledge base.

Table 2 illustrates some of the differences among these seven pie crust recipes in a very schematic way. The recipes range from the barebones Never-Fail Pie Crust with minimal instruction in the community cookbook (*A Garden of Eatin’*) to *Jane Brody’s* highly evaluative and descriptive crust accompanying a pumpkin pie recipe. If one is evaluating recipes in terms of efficiency, which Fisher was doing in “Anatomy of a Recipe,” then the most effective blueprint for a pie crust may well be *Betty Crocker’s* Standard Pastry recipe, which includes thirty-two imperative sentence constructions (representing a great deal of detail) and straightforward descriptive elements. Despite a fairly high number of information elements in *Joy of Cooking’s* Basic Pie Dough, there are fewer instructions within the actual recipe, forcing a reader to look elsewhere in the chapter for the needed information, potentially gearing the recipe toward the specialist or someone with a more focused interest in the actual art of cooking who would probably not mind the “inconvenience.”

The two recipes that are labeled in table 2 as “regional/community” carry the fewest instructions, thus assuming proficiency on the part of the

TABLE 2.

	(Mid-Am. standard)	(Specialist standard)	(Regional/ community)	(Regional/ standard)	(Contemporary/ veggie)	(Alternative/ veggie)
Title	<i>Crocker Standard Pastry</i>	<i>Joy Basic Pie Dough</i>	<i>Mrs. B Never-Fail Pie Crust</i>	<i>Amish Never-Fail Pie Crust</i>	<i>Brody Crust</i>	<i>Laurel Pietrust</i>
Orientation clause	—	—	yes	yes	yes	—
List (in order)	shortening/ lard	all-purp. flour salt	flour shortening egg	all-purp. flour salt shortening egg	w. w. flour wheat germ margarine salt shortening butter ice water	w. w. flour salt shortening water
Action	water	butter	vinegar	ice water	vinegar	ice water
<i>Imperative sentence (Fronted) instr. /locative PP</i>	32	13	3	6	5	10 9
<i>Prepositional phrase</i>	—	—	—	—	3	2 1
<i>Definitival purpose clause</i>	—	1	—	—	3	4 1
<i>Temporal phrase</i>	—	—	—	—	2	—
Explicit list reference	x	x	—	x	x	x
Meta-message	—	—	—	—	—	—
Note	x	x	—	—	x	x
2nd Person Singular	—	—	—	—	—	—
Outside instruction	—	—	—	x	x	—
Meta-reference	—	—	—	—	—	—
See X	2	1	—	—	—	—
As shown X	—	1	—	—	1	—
Other	—	—	—	—	—	—

Evaluation	at	peas	cornmeal	—	—	rolled oats	not too much
moisten	—	cleanse bowl	lightly; tidy ball	—	—	criss-cross fashion; uniformly crumbly	just enough water; quickly;
roll	—	—	as regular crust	desired thickness	—	thick disc; to size	move gently
surface in pan	floured firmly	floured	—	floured	floured	—	—
bake	light brown	—	—	—	—	so it won't burn	—
Comments	detailed; straight- forward; best example	fewer instructions in recipe; can be found elsewhere	assumes proficiency, recipe is just a reminder	assumes proficiency (pies only)	descriptive: informational weight	confusing re: narrative structure (see analysis)	insufficient description to enact “event”

**Cookbooks***Crocker Betty Crocker's Cookbook*; New and Revised Edition (1979)*Joy Joy of Cooking* (30th printing, 1983)*Mrs. B A Garden of Eat'n*; St. Therese Parish (Appleton, Wisconsin) community cookbook (1971)*Amish Pies from Amish and Mennonite Kitchens* (1982)*Brody Jane Brody's Good Food Book* (1985)*Laurel Laurel's Kitchen: A Handbook for Vegetarian Cookery and Nutrition* (7th printing, 1980)  
*Planet Recipes for a Small Planet* (1973)

reader, perhaps because of the readership they are pitched for. The first author is probably aware of the abilities of her fellow cooks within the St. Therese Parish community, knowing that they can function in the kitchen without extensive instruction, while the recipe in *Pies from Amish and Mennonite Kitchens* is found in a collection of pie recipes only. Someone who couldn't already bake a pie would not buy this book, which is fairly small, hand-lettered, and not presented as a comprehensive tome on the pie-making procedure.

The two recipes labeled "alternative" in table 2 specifically call for whole-wheat flour (*Betty Crocker* allows for the variation in a note at the end of the recipe) in their ingredients lists, and their orientation clauses refer directly to possibly problematic properties inherent in the ingredient, suggesting that whole-wheat crusts are "marked" in the foodways context. These recipes also illustrate what happens to narrative continuity and coherence when particular elements of the narrative sequence are faulty. *Laurel's Kitchen's Piecrust* is confusing because a contingency (nonnarrative) action is inserted in text established for the narrative or instructional actions, and thus can be misconstrued as an actual recipe action. That it is a preemptive statement is not made explicit in the recipe's language. *Recipes for a Small Planet's* recipe contains insufficient narrative action sequences or evaluative description to enact the "event" of the Whole Wheat Pie Crust, unless the reader has made a pie crust before, knows the procedure well, and is using the recipe as a reminder. Someone "reading" this recipe would be hard-pressed to follow the "plot."

### The Role of Audience in Community Cookbook Language

For a reader to follow the "plot" the recipe must be more than merely explicit enough (since, as mentioned earlier, semantic attributes are scalar and their meaning dependent on the extent of the shared background knowledge of participants). This turns the spotlight on the audience and its role in the presentation, linguistic and otherwise, of the cookbook. If we look at a definable genre such as the community cookbook, we see a wide variety in approach and content, despite the shared overt reason for its production: fund-raising. As Charles Goodwin says, this is because the intended audience shapes the outcome.<sup>25</sup> As we begin to look at the broader implications of language use in the community cookbook, as we

see how the authors and addressees co-construct an artifact of their community, the role of the audience takes on greater importance in our analysis.

If the audience is a fairly large or generic one and the community cookbook collaborators have the means and interest to produce a volume that is to be seen as serious and comprehensive, then we find a work such as the Junior League of Pasadena's *The California Heritage Cookbook*. Its recipes are very explicit and detailed; its Basic Pie Crust (370) includes as well as explains the consequences of certain optional actions (which are barely if ever mentioned in smaller-scale community cookbooks), such as using dry beans to weight down the bottom crust so it won't puff up while baking, or brushing the crust with egg yolk to prevent sogginess from the filling. The book lacks other features of the genre, such as contributor names for each recipe, as well as linguistic features that mark the discourse as more informal and more personal, as one finds in cookbooks with a narrower distribution.<sup>26</sup>

The *California Heritage Cookbook* stands in contrast to smaller-scale community cookbooks, whose authors and addressees share a more symmetrical, peer-to-peer relationship and do not presume to set themselves apart, either by culinary expertise or editorial control. The audience is a known quantity, which explains certain omissions or inclusions in the text. It has already been suggested that Mrs. Norman Bunkleman's Never-Fail Pie Crust in the St. Therese Christian Ladies' *A Garden of Eatin'* is as abbreviated as it is because she is aware of the abilities of her peers.

*A Garden of Eatin'* also displays another feature common to smaller-scale community cookbooks; it speaks to the relationships community members share. The *California Heritage Cookbook*, as well as the other commercial cookbooks on which this discussion is based, each include a single recipe for pie crust. However, the *Garden of Eatin'* lists five different pie crust recipes (Never Fail Pie Crust, Pie Crust, Pastry, Pie Crust (very flaky), and Pie Crust, with a separate variation by another member of the community), suggesting an egalitarian approach to the construction of their particular cookbook. No one was in a position to choose which of the five to include, so all were accepted. In all five cases, the recipes are brief, and bear only structural resemblance to the commercial cookbook versions.

Brevity is also a feature in *A Synod of Cooks* from the Chichester (England) Diocesan Association for Family Social Work; there the pie

40. Ibid., 26. Occasional bilingual cookbooks or cookbooks incorporating bilingual elements did appear earlier, as in the case of *St. Paul's Bazaar Kochbuch und Geschaeftsfuehrer* (Chicago, 1882).
41. Ibid., 40.
42. *The Sephardic Cooks*, Congregation Or VeShalom Sisterhood (Atlanta, 1977).
43. *The Center Table*, rev. ed., Sisterhood Temple Mishkan Tefila (Boston, 1929).
44. Charles Camp, *American Foodways: What, When, Why and How We Eat in America* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1989), 29.
45. *Angel Food*, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church (Lafayette, LA, 1979).
46. Ibid., 68, 69.
47. *The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro*, National Council of Negro Women (Washington, DC, 1958).
48. *Pots and Politics: An Historical Cookbook*, Washington State Women's Political Caucus (Seattle, 1976).
49. *Canyon Cookery: A Gathering of Recipes and Recollections from Montana's Scenic Bridger Canyon*, Bridger Canyon Women's Club (Bozeman, MT, 1978).
50. Ibid., 14, 15.
51. Martin, *Recent Theories*, 127.
52. Deborah Cameron, introduction to *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1990), 4.
53. *A New Daily Food*, ed. Shillaber, 15.
54. *Legendary Cookbook*, Llano Fine Arts Guild (Llano, TX, 1985).
55. *Stirring Tales Spun by the Fire*, Ladies Aid Society of Grace M. E. Church (Albany, NY, 1902).
56. *The Dandy Cook Book*, Ladies Aid of Candia Village Church (Candia, NH, 1941).
57. Susan Sniader Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 6.
58. Romines, *Home Plot*, 296.
59. Florence Howe, introduction to "T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and the Future of 'Tradition,'" in *Tradition and the Talents of Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 17.

**Claiming a Piece of the Pie:  
How the Language of Recipes Defines Community**

Earlier versions of this chapter appeared in *Cultural Performances: Proceedings of the Third Berkeley Women and Language Conference*, Mary Buchultz et al. (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Women and Language Group, 1994), 133–43; and as a talk at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting (1993).

1. This analogy is often used by avid cookbook readers. A telling example makes it into print on a jacket blurb on *The Minnesota Ethnic Food Book* (1993), quoting Minneapolis restaurateur and cookbook author Giovanna D'Agostini (aka Mama D): "I read cookbooks like novels, and it's great to read a book as good as this one." Mama D goes on to endorse the book for its role in sustaining cultural continuity, saying that the book "will help us to preserve the traditional dishes of our mothers and grandmothers so that our children and grandchildren will enjoy the dishes we enjoyed."
2. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Recipes for Creating Community: The Jewish Charity Cookbook in America," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology* 9 (1987): 8–12; and David Remnick, "News in a Dying Language," *New Yorker* 64 (1994): 40–47, for parallels in their respective discussions of Jewish charity cookbooks and Yiddish newspapers.
3. Michael Owen Jones et al., "Foodways and Eating Habits: Directions for Research," *Western Folklore* 40 (1981): 12.
4. Deborah Schiffрин, *Approaches to Discourse* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1994).
5. Marcia Adams, *Cooking from Quilt Country* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1989).
6. *A Garden of Eatin'*, Ladies of St. Therese Catholic Church (Appleton, WI: 1971).
7. Laurel Robertson et al., *Laurel's Kitchen: A Handbook for Vegetarian Cookery and Nutrition*, 7th printing (Berkeley: Nilgiri Press, 1980).
8. Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, *Joy of Cooking*, 30th printing (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1983).
9. Jane Brody, *Jane Brody's Good Food Book: Living the High-Carbohydrate Way* (New York: Norton, 1985).
10. William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).
11. Donald Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 15.
12. Esther B. Aresty, *The Delectable Past* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 222.
13. M. F. K. Fisher, "The Anatomy of a Recipe," in *With Bold Knife and Fork* (New York: Paragon Books, 1968).
14. Aresty, *Delectable Past*, 47, 52.
15. Fisher, "Anatomy of a Recipe," 23.
16. Labov, *Language*, 363.
17. Brody, *Jane Brody's*, 632.
18. Betty Crocker's *Cookbook* (New York: Golden Press, 1979), 289.
19. Labov, *Language*, 365.

20. H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 41–58. It could be argued that a violation of any of Grice's conversational maxims, such as Quantity, Relevance, or Manner, is what causes the difficulty when a Recipe is perceived as hard to follow. The "speaker" has made erroneous assumptions about the "hearer's" ability to receive the message, about shared background.
21. Amy Shuman, "The Rhetoric of Portions," *Western Folklore* 40.1 (1981): 72–80, discusses the social consequences of food apportionment, illuminating its importance in social behaviors. This may be a conditioning factor in where and how portion amount is positioned in recipes.
22. Labov, *Language*, 365.
23. Ellen Buchman Ewald, *Recipes for a Small Planet* (New York: Ballantine, 1973).
24. *Pies from Amish and Mennonite Kitchens*, collected and ed. Phyllis Pellman Good and Rachel Thomas Pellman (Lancaster, PA: Good Books, 1982).
25. Charles Goodwin, "Audience Diversity, Participation and Interpretation," *Text* 6 (1986): 283–316.
26. *The California Heritage Cookbook*, Junior League of Pasadena (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).
27. *A Synod of Cooks*, Chichester Diocesan Association for Family Social Work (Hove, Eng.: n.d. [early 1990s]), 28.
28. Alessandro Duranti, "The Audience as Co-author: An Introduction," *Text* 6 (1986): 244.
29. We may not realize it today with the mass production of food, but even earlier in this century, egg sizes were not standardized, nor was flour uniform in terms of gluten and moisture content, and baking soda was preferred as a leavening agent over baking powder (see Aresty, *Deletable Past*). What is implied by something as apparently straightforward as a recipe ingredient may not be what it seems. To evoke Gertrude Stein, an egg is an egg may not be an egg.
30. For a discussion of the community cookbook as a social autobiography, see Lynne Ireland, "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography," *Western Folklore* 40 (1981): 107–14.
31. Allison Kyle Leopold, *Victorian Sweets* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1992), 12.
32. As in Ireland, "Compiled Cookbook"; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Recipes"; and Anne L. Bower, unpublished "Our Sisters' Recipes: Cooking Up a Community."

#### Growing Up with the Methodist Cookbooks

1. I could not have written this essay without the help of my parents, Ruth Rogers Romines and Elmer Romines, who spent many hours patiently an-

- swering my questions about the Methodist cookbooks and the history of Houston, Missouri. My sister, Marilyn F. Romines, generously helped me to recover and extend my cookbook memories. My cousin, Gayla Kay Romines Bratton, shared her mother's copy of the 1907 Methodist cookbook, and my friend Freeda Baker Stewart found and shared her (Baptist) mother's well-worn copy of the 1907 cookbook. I'm grateful for the long memories and vast expertise of my friends Edna Johnson Duff, Wave Campbell Akins, and Vera Kirkman Douglas, all longtime members of the Houston cooking community, who enthusiastically discussed this project with me. And I am especially thankful for the example and practice of my two grandmothers, Mayme Munson Rogers and Bess Mitchell Romines: good cooks and good writers, both.
2. *Cook Book*, Women's Missionary Society, M. E. Church (South Houston, MO, 1934), subsequently, CB'34.
  3. *Cook Book*, First Methodist Church of Houston, Missouri (1941), subsequently referred to as CB'41; *Cook Book*, Ladies' Aid of M. E. Church (South Houston, MO, 1907), subsequently referred to as CB'07; and *Methodist Church Cook Book* (Houston, MO, 1967), subsequently referred to as CB'67.
  4. CB'67, 98.
  5. Ibid., 28.
  6. CB'34, 29.
  7. Ibid., 102.
  8. CB'67, 90.
  9. CB'34, 84.
  10. CB'07, 24.
  11. CB'41, 6.
  12. Ibid., 36, 32.
  13. Ibid., 30.
  14. CB'07, 6.
  15. CB'34, 9, 36.

#### Speaking Sisters: Relief Society Cookbooks and Mormon Culture

1. Providence Second Ward Relief Society, *Joyful Cooking* (Providence, UT: Watkin's Printing, 1963); Millville Second Ward Relief Society, *Millville Favorites* (Olathe, KS: Cookbook Publishers, 1987); Lakeside Relief Society, *Country Thyme Flavors* (Olathe, KS: Cookbook Publishers, 1986).
2. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Mothers in Zion," Address at Fireside for Parents. Salt Lake City, February 22, 1987, 2–3.
3. *Country Thyme Flavors*, 1.