A recipe book is not just a book that contains sets of instructions for preparing a dishes. Recipe books can tell us the stories of the author(s), their knowledge and discoveries as well as the historical context that can be derived from these recipes. Several pieces of work have focussed on examining how recipes tell the stories of people and communities.

In the paper Cookbooks As A Social And Historical document – A Scottish Case Study it focusses on Scottish cookbooks published between 1890 and 1990 and how these recipes act as historical markers of major events and record technological advances in society. The results from the paper validated the claim that cookbooks are a social historic and cultural document stating that “although cookbooks might not record events in the society as historical facts nevertheless their contents are often a response to historical events.”

Intensifying Taste, Intensifying Identity : Collectively Through Cookbooks this paper was a study into whether community cookbooks implicitly rebuke a social order that devalues women’s work. In the paper some interesting points were made about the benefits of community cookbooks when the author observed the Lutheran church women developing their cookbook then took on a corporate process that gave a voice to the community through building the cookbook by organizing it, discussing experiences and producing and selling them. The cookbook developed by the Lutheran church women is not just a way to raise money for the church but it was also a way recognise each of ladies knowledge and experience of cooking and to share it with others that were interested.

Recipes For Reading is a collection of essays that demonstrate the different stories available in cookbooks and in particular community cookbooks. Several scholars contributed towards the book and with reference to recipes the book states that “the work of scholars in the arts, history, literature and woman’s study we have increasingly come to see them as readable with great benefit to our knowledge of women’s experiences and discourses.” The author explains from examining cookbooks that the “cookbooks tell stories – autobiographical in some cases, historical sometimes and perhaps factious or idealized in other instances.” And that within community cookbooks “women present their values wittingly or unwittingly”. Recipes for reading is evidence that cookbooks tell the stories of people and communities and is proof that this should be maintained into the 21st century in a modern format.

Eat My Words : Reading Woman’s Lives Through The Cookbooks They Wrote that focuses on cookbooks and the stories they tell with particular focus on 17th and 18th century cookbooks. Within Eat My Words I found a quotation that showed the benefits of community cookbooks which is “modifications and modernizations of old recipes and the invention of new dishes in a woman’s cookbook represent the combined effort of many people. Contributions may come from past generations and from individuals living side by side in small communities, connected to larger social circles, sometimes from one or more cultures and they come from an array of print media. And while we tend to think of cooking as a delight to our senses, the relationships formed through these culinary compositions are social, cultural and economic.”

The Meaning Of Cooking And Recipe Work For Older Thai and New Zealand women is a study that took place in 2000 and its findings were drawn from a collaborative and interpretive study. Focus groups were used to gather narrative data and in this context the researchers observed women engaging in and gaining pleasure talking about recipes. Within the paper there is focus on recipe work and in particular discussion of people sending in recipes and they noticed “accompanying the recipes, the woman submitted stories that provided temporal, generational and cultural makers. The stories told of treasured recipes devotedly prepared and passed down from one generation to the next.” In the paper they found the recipes and stories that went with them “suggests the potency and ubiquity of women’s recipe work”.

In the paper discussed above they also mention Meyers (2001) study of 412 women shows how recipes have become part of ensuring continuality of traditions across two or three generations of American and Canadian women. **Look into this study and references from papers discussed above.**

Recipe work has made it into the 21st century with websites like bbcgoodfood and pinterest being different ways to represent and share recipes on the web as well as several modern computer and phone applications to help manage your recipe box and share your recipes with others. Below I will explore the modern day applications and websites for recipe management.

All The Cooks is a social cooking application where you can add recipes and browse other recipes on the iphone.

Yummly is an iphone application where you can browse and discover new recipes. No ability to manage own recipes.

My Recipe Book an application to add and import recipes as well as browse them. No ability to share recipes lacks a social aspect.

Personal Cookbook is a recipe book manager to import and insert recipes but lacks social aspects. It is a way to back up recipes.

What’s 4 dinner is another recipe manager. Bulky, unsophisticated import. Enables you to group recipes.

Basil is another application with a nice interface with the ability to organize recipes and import recipes.

Many applications have cooking measurement tools and grocery list managers.

Pepperplate a recipe manager with no import feature.

BigOven import from websites, image of recipe, typing as well as browse other recipes such as nearby or popular recipes. Strong application but involves purchasing.

Paprika is an application which supports imports but is unsophisticated for unsupported sites.

Evernote allows you to explore and clip websites.

The applications often appear to enable recipe management or social aspects but none of the applications seem to make it work well for both. The applications do not enable multiple contributors which was one of the core aspects of recipes, the ability to pass on recipes, accept alterations, gain new recipes which all make up a good recipe book. Recipes For Life aims to enable this collaboration between friends, families or strangers with a similar interest to create a recipe book for life.