



# The National Cook Book (American Antiquarian Cookbook Collection)

*Hannah Bouvier Peterson*



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Born in 1811 to a prominent Philadelphia Quaker family, Hannah Bouvier was particularly concerned with making her recipes as useful and practical as possible, drawing them up in the “most concise and simple manner,” sacrificing “style to minute detail; not even avoiding repetition where it might render directions more explicit.” She noted correctly that in many contemporary cookbooks, the cook was forced to wade through a “formidable amount of reading before she can learn the process of making a pudding,” and others at the opposite extreme “are so brief in their explanations [they] are ever liable to misconception.” Bouvier’s training in mathematics and popular science advanced her goal of making the recipes as easy to use as possible for American women of the day, utilizing only readily available utensils and ingredients and encompassing only “purely American” cooking. She was also deeply concerned about cooking for the sick and convalescent and included a significant section with recipes prepared according to the directions of an eminent local physician.

As might be expected of a scientist, the book is thorough and comprehensive, including recipes for soups, fish, meat, vegetables, sauces, pickles, pastry, sweets, tea cakes, cakes, preserves, and miscellaneous dishes, clearly organized with both a detailed table of contents and index, unlike many contemporary cookbooks that lacked both.

This edition of *The National Cook Book* was reproduced by permission from the volume in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Founded in 1812 by Isaiah Thomas, a Revolutionary War patriot and successful printer and publisher, the society is a research library documenting the lives of Americans from the colonial era through 1876. The society collects, preserves, and makes available as complete a record as possible of the printed materials from the early American experience. The cookbook collection comprises approximately 1,100 volumes.



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#### **David Stokes:**

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