

**“WHEN SCIENCE STRIKES THE KITCHEN, IT STRIKES *HOME*”:
THE INFLUENCE OF SARAH TYSON RORER
IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA KITCHEN, 1880-1915**

by

Sarah Berndt

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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To my Grandma, Donna Long—
For inspiring in me a fascination with all things old and domestic

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ABSTRACT

The prolific teaching and publishing career of Philadelphia cooking instructor Sarah Tyson Rorer (1847-1937) highlights how Progressive Era food reformers encouraged women to conceptualize their roles within social reform, food preparation, and the scientific study of nutrition. This thesis analyzes cookbooks, magazines, and advertisements through three case studies of Rorer's writing. The first looks at home canning as a reaction to increased mechanization in the kitchen. The second examines the lard alternative Cottolene as a vehicle for promoting domestic science ideology. The third case study focuses on the impact of published cooking texts through *Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick* cookbook.

Sarah Tyson Rorer positioned herself as a cultural broker of *progress* between industry, the medical field, and women working in home kitchens. As a member of a group of cultural gatekeepers introducing domestic science to the public, Sarah Tyson Rorer negotiated the normalization of increased industrial technology in the home through: her evangelism of nutrition as a popular science, her promotion of Progressive Era food and gender ideology, and her cultivation of an authoritative celebrity persona. Critical analysis of one woman's cooking literature reveals broader patterns of how food reformers encouraged ideal social behavior and adoption of new kitchen equipment and food products. Her work contributes to our understanding of how people use text as an object to navigate gender, power, and social change.

INTRODUCTION

Flipping open to page twenty-six of May's edition of *The Ladies Home Journal*, the housewife of 1897 Encounters an article entitled, "Markets Estimates and Servants" by Sarah Tyson Rorer. In an authoritative, confident voice, the author offers expert insight on all matters domestic and culinary. She advises her reader which fish to buy this month, how best to use cherries and currants, and methods for managing a family of six with two servants.¹

Thinking about this interaction from a materialist approach, we see the magazine functioning as an object and the text illuminating practices of seasonal food preparation. Broadly, the study of material culture includes food and food production, but food is inherently ephemeral in nature because we consume the evidence. Prescriptive cookbooks and women's magazines of this era provide material evidence to better understand American Progressive Era foodways. Cookbooks and magazines are important to study because they reveal the social norms and cultural ideals that food reformers wished to convey to their readers.

Philadelphia Cooking School Principal, Sarah Tyson Rorer (Figure 1), presented herself as a cultural broker between what she perceived as the external world of industry and medicine, and women's roles in their homes. As one member of a group of cultural gatekeepers introducing domestic science to the public, Sarah

¹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Market Estimates and Servants," *The Ladies' Home Journal*, 14 (May 1897): 25.

Tyson Rorer negotiated the normalization of increased industrial technology in the home through her evangelism of nutrition as a popular science, her promotion of Progressive Era food and gender ideology, and her cultivation of an authoritative celebrity persona. Critical analysis of one woman's cooking literature reveals broader patterns of how food reformers encouraged ideal social behavior and adoption of new kitchen equipment and food products. Analysis of Rorer's work is important to material culture scholarship because her promotional advertisements and cooking literature contribute to our understanding of how people use text as an object to negotiate gender, power, and social change.

American social reformers of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries focused on diet as a direct means of influencing American well-being. Sarah Tyson Rorer and her contemporaries contributed to the social and political movement of American Progressivism by maintaining that women's individual actions in their homes could make a difference on a national, systemic level. As the quote suggests, "When science strikes the kitchen, it strikes *home*, and everyone gets the benefit."² Food reformers sought to influence national food discourse by incorporating education, science, and progress in the domestic kitchen. The concept of *Progressivism*, to quote Helen Zoe Veit's *Modern Food Moral Food*, "relied upon expert authority to generate solutions to social problems, and upon bureaucracies to

² N.K. Fairbank and Co., *Cottolene, The New Shortening for Sale by All First-Class Grocers Everywhere* (Chicago: N.K. Fairbank and Co., ca. 1894), n.p.

carry out solutions.”³ Within this construct Rorer functioned as the expert authority on food preparations, translating government, industry, and medical information to her readers. She generated solutions testing foods and processes, and shared her knowledge by conducting public demonstrations, teaching cooking classes, and publishing. Before the events surrounding WWI catalyzed Progressive Era thinking, Progressive conversations had already started to bubble. Looking at the earlier decades of the American Progressive Era, food reformers arose out of popular concern for the sanitation and health standards of industrially processed foods. They played an essential role in guiding housewives through their decision-making about their family’s foodways and health during a period of fundamental change to the way that Americans understood, purchased, prepared, and consumed food. Without female cultural gatekeepers like Rorer and her contemporaries, Progressive ideology, would not have infiltrated the domestic sphere as effectively. These women bridged the perceived divide between the professional realm of science and medicine and the domestic realm of their target reader’s lived realities. While food reformers like Rorer generalized their advice to cater to a very narrow archetype of the American female population, they cultivated female reader’s trust and related to their daily experiences in a way that male professionals did not. At the same time they also had access to education and training that equipped them with the knowledge to translate scientific scholarship to a general audience.

³ Helen Zoe Veit, *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 3.

Rooted in Protestantism, Progressive rhetoric conflated morality and health. The morality infused in Progressive rhetoric bridged the generational shift from religious to scientific thinking. Not only could food be made rational through scientific study and reason, but it could also be made moral through practices of abstention and self-discipline. One way Rorer and other reformers attempted to rationalize food was through ‘economic nutrition,’ encouraging homemakers to choose foods and menus that were frugal, simple, and wholesome. Food allowed the homemaker to promote physical, social, and moral growth, with emphasis placed on a scientific perspective and promotion of dominant Anglo-Saxon, American middle-class ideals.

Within the broader topic of Progressive Era food reform, this thesis focuses on the career of one woman, whose writing and public persona reveal attitudes on food preparation and appropriate avenues for women to perform their roles as a wife or mother. A household name from the 1880s through the first quarter of the twentieth century, Sarah Tyson Rorer (1847-1937) is most commonly associated with opening the Philadelphia Cooking School in 1883. The school, trained domestic staff and middle-class Philadelphian housewives in practical cookery and functioned as a catalyst to her prolific teaching and publishing career.

“Mrs. Rorer,” as she referred to herself in publications, features in this study because her work highlights how women were encouraged to conceptualize their roles within social reform, food preparation, and the scientific study of nutrition. Her career began during the emergence of nutrition as a popular science and domestic science as a dignified vocation for housewives. Rorer dedicated her career to facilitating the development of these two fields before new voices eventually overshadowed her authority.

Rorer's readers and students consisted primarily of white, middle and upper-middle class housewives. The concept of a housewife was changing at this time because the American middle and upper class had to move away from the practice of employing domestic labor. Women formerly employed as cooks and housekeepers were finding better-paying jobs with better conditions, and as a result, fewer women were willing to work in domestic service. Sometimes for the first time in their lives, housewives now had to prepare food in their kitchens and clean their own homes. In response, the Domestic Science Movement emerged as a reform effort to professionalize and dignify housekeeping as a worthy pursuit for the educated middle-class housewife. Literature and advertisements of the era elevate the abilities of the housewife above those of the woman hired as a cook because formal education was often perceived as superior to practical experience.⁴

With the goal of teaching domestic skills and healthful, American eating, cooking schools and popular literature evolved to educate middle-class women in food preparation and domestic arts.⁵ From the reformer's perspective, food preparation

⁴ Rorer writes about the complexities of kitchen labor and, hired domestic staff at the Philadelphia Cooking School. Though she intended to train students for domestic service cooking professions, she met resistance, "I have never had a cook graduate from my school. While I am ashamed to say this, the ladies do not encourage the cooks to come...I have in my school four or five excellent cooks, whose mistresses send them for special dishes; but again, that is from a selfish standpoint and not for the cooks' own good. I cannot get the cooperation of the housekeepers sufficiently to start a cook's school; have tried over and over again, and the servant problem will be unsolved until the housewife takes sufficient interest in the so-called cooks to have them properly educated." See: Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Answers to Questions," *Household News* 3 (May 1895): 203.

⁵ , Though the original function of cooking schools was also to educate women hired as domestic servants. See: Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

linked to female virtue and household work remained highly gendered. Existing scholarship addresses Progressive Era foodways and the women who shaped the Domestic Science Movement, but the material culture relating to these women and their work has received relatively little attention. A study of cooking literature as an object in the kitchen has the potential to reveal patterns of use and behavior beyond the text, speaking to broader social and cultural issues.⁶

Sarah Tyson Rorer features in this study because her authoritative voice highlights how women readers of cookbooks and magazines were encouraged to conceptualize the connections between reform, food, morality, and a scientific perspective on diet. Mrs. Rorer facilitated the emergence of the fields of nutrition and domestic science through prescriptive writing and product promotion. She leveraged her career and reputation to establish herself as a popular household name and cooking authority. Building from biographical work, Rorer's writings provide primary sources to explore how her work contributed to discourse on the modernization of the kitchen.

Literature Overview and Methodology

The following section highlights contemporary scholarship essential in framing my argument. Sources draw from three broad bodies of scholarship: biographical literature on Sarah Tyson Rorer, scholarship contextualizing domestic science at the turn of the twentieth century, and analysis of popular women's periodicals over the span of Rorer's career.

⁶ Veit, *Modern Food Moral Food.*; Shapiro, *Perfection Salad.*

In comparison to her better-known contemporaries such as Fannie Farmer or Sarah Josepha Hale, Sarah Tyson Rorer has received relatively little scholarly attention. Emma Weigley's 1977 Dietetics dissertation, *Sarah Tyson Rorer: The Nation's Instructress in Dietetics and Cookery*, focuses on the legacy of Sarah Tyson Rorer within the foundation of dietetics. A biography drawing from primary source documents, Weigley addresses the body and scope of Rorer's work, as well as her public perception. Weigley concludes that Sarah Tyson Rorer did not so much seek to change women's roles, as to add dignity to their work in the home. Based on Rorer's writings, I agree with Weigley's conclusion that she sought to dignify and professionalize housework. However, Weigley does not acknowledge that Rorer also subverted many of the popular expectations for women by separating from her husband and pursuing a career outside of her home. Emma Weigley's work provides the biographical foundation for my research, to which I add a material analysis of Rorer's writings and a detailed look at three of her specific endeavors.⁷

In 2004, Rorer enthusiast Pamela Vaccaro published *Beyond the Ice Cream Cone The Whole Scoop on Food at the 1904 World's Fair*, in which she examines primary sources to explore Rorer's participation in the St. Louis World's Fair. She uses Rorer's promotional literature to argue that food manufacturers tried to influence fairgoers' consumer choices through educational literature and food samples. Both

⁷ Emma Seifrit Weigley, *Sarah Tyson Rorer: The Nation's Instructress in Dietetics and Cookery*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1977).

Weigley and Vaccaro provide a foundation of biographical research to build from, but they do not connect Rorer's work to material culture discourses on Progressive Era food reform and the Domestic Science Movement.⁸

Most recently in 2008, Kiyoshi Shintani wrote a history dissertation, *Cooking Up Modernity: Culinary Reformers and the Making of Consumer Culture, 1876-1916*. The author looks at prescriptive literature to examine the relationship between consumerism and foodways, focusing on the work of culinary reformers Janet Hill, Fannie Farmer, and Sarah Rorer. Shintani's writing provides much of the historical context forming the foundation for material analysis of Rorer's work. My work draws from Rorer's rich primary source record and moves beyond the biography. Reframing Rorer's work using a materialist approach, demonstrates her influence in the reception of industrialism in the kitchen.

Culinary reformers saw industrialism as a double-edged sword, encouraging their followers to embrace or resist new technologies and food products. As technology and health concerns transformed food and food production, contradictions arose in women's complacency with and resistance to the industrialization of the kitchen. Culinary authorities, frequently taking the form of cookbook authors or cooking school instructors, used their reputation to act as translators and advocates in the development of scientific cookery. Marketing and advertising changed in response to Pure Foods Movement demands for consistency, sterility, economy, and

⁸ Weigley, *Sarah Tyson Rorer*.; Pam Vaccaro, *Beyond the Ice Cream Cone: The Whole Scoop on Food at the 1904 World's Fair* (New York: Enid Press, 2004).; Kiyoshi Shintani, *Cooking Up Modernity: Culinary Reformers and the Making of Consumer Culture, 1876-1916*, PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2008, 16.

predictability. The Pure Foods Movement was a subset of Progressive Era food reform in which advocates sought increased transparency in the contents, preparation, and health of food products. Shifting from marketing local to national brands, reciprocal endorsement relationships formed between cooking authorities and pure food manufacturers. Sarah Tyson Rorer's product endorsement played a role in promoting the "taming of food" through prepared food and technology. In this context, Rorer *tamed* food by imbuing recipes and dishes with the dominant middle-class American cultural ideals of simplicity, rationality, and digestibility. Her product endorsement demonstrates the impact of Mrs. Rorer's advice and reputation on women's changing roles as the household buying agents and consumers of new kitchen products.⁹

Connecting to broad changes in technology and consumerism, this thesis narrows in on the how canning equipment, shortening, and cookbooks fit within the changing middle-class kitchen. Female-targeted content in popular magazines has been a place for scholars to examine the relationship between advertising and women's roles as consumers.¹⁰ A prolific writer, Rorer wrote or edited more than two dozen cookbooks over the span of her career (ca. 1880 to 1926). Many of her books were written, then published by the Philadelphia firm, Arnold and Company. However, several of her cookbooks resulted from a manufacturer's commission. Rorer wrote cookbooks and leaflets incorporating a manufacturer's brand name food product, offering her endorsement and presenting a variety of recipes demonstrating

⁹ Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*, 204.

¹⁰ Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

its potential use. She served as an editor and regular contributor to four women's magazines: *Table Talk* (1886-1892), *Household News* (1893-1897), *The Ladies Home Journal* (1897-1911), and *Good Housekeeping* (occasional contributions from 1914-1926). Rorer wrote magazine articles primarily in short thematic series, concentrating on one or two topics every month for a period of three to twelve months. Additionally, she gained a reputation for publishing answers to inquiries from magazine readers.

In product endorsement, both Rorer and the manufacturers benefited. Manufacturers could market their products with the seal of approval from a trusted household name, while cooking authorities could effectively brand themselves by attaching their names to products in line with their pure food convictions. Mrs. Rorer explains that manufacturers sent products to her cooking school in the hopes of receiving endorsement. She tested the product and wrote a note of approval pending her satisfaction.¹¹ This dynamic speaks to how domestic science proponents and manufacturers inspired change in the kitchen through the marketing of new foods and equipment.

Printed cookbooks and ladies' magazines reached broad audiences on a local and a national level. Women could subscribe to Rorer's magazines or purchase her cookbooks at a local department store. Prescriptive literature does not tell us whether the authors and editors of cookbooks directly influenced their readers, but they do allow the scholar to examine presentations of ideas and reformer ideals of domesticity, gender, national, and class identities. The text reveals how editors and authors viewed the domestic sphere in the context of the social, political, and industrial world around

¹¹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Response to Inquiries," *Table Talk Magazine*, September, 1889: 362.

them.¹² Cookbooks and magazines present ideal behavior through the authoritative lens of the mostly white, upper middle-class female authors, to which Rorer is no exception. In other words, Rorer's writing cannot be viewed as an accurate portrayal of domestic reality because we cannot know how much of her advice readers used.

Some historians argue that the value of studying cookbooks is in understanding how cookbooks were authoritative, normalizing, and disciplining expressions of power, instructing their users how to prepare appropriate and healthy food. "They therefore served the normalization and legitimization of proper white and middle-class womanhood and manhood, American citizenship, heterosexual marriage, and the nuclear family."¹³ According to Sarah Leavitt, cookbooks presented the illusion "that women held the power to reform their society through first reforming their homes."¹⁴ Scholars can study Rorer's food reform perspective to analyze the class and gender power dynamics that reinforced the boundaries of women's identities in relation to food preparation.

Cookbooks provided a source of escapism where readers could imagine a reality different from their own. The cookbook or magazine provided a space where identity formation occurred, either reaffirming a reader's current identity or portraying

¹² Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 2003), 3-4.; Sarah Leavitt, *From Catharine Beecher to Martha Stewart: A Cultural History of Domestic Advice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5.

¹³ Katherina Vester, *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities* (University of California Press, 2015), 8.

¹⁴ Sarah Leavitt, *From Catharine Beecher to Martha Stewart: A Cultural History of Domestic Advice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 5.

aspirational ideals. They constructed a *correct* way to prepare food for a husband and family, infusing culinary instruction with social and gender norms. Housewives could imagine a reality different from their own, consuming the contents of the ideal world painted by prescriptive literature.¹⁵ Advertisements in cookbooks and magazines indicate what trade looked like on local and national levels, what kinds of ideals were being promoted, and what values or desires advertisers sought to cater to. As the writers of promotional cookbook literature and letters of endorsement, culinary authorities served as gatekeepers to consumer audiences. They exerted influence by choosing which advertisers to include in magazines, expressing a moral obligation to educate women on defending themselves and their families from adulterated food and corrupt commerce. By selectively promoting or excluding advertisements, prominent food reformers used their reputations to actively shape the food industry.¹⁶

In the same vein as cookbooks, magazines targeted to female audiences also exerted power, drawing subscribers back in month after month by balancing an emotional tone that both encouraged and fostered anxiety in readers. According to

¹⁵ Bower, "Romanced by Cookbooks," *Gastronomica*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (May 2004): 38-42. ; Rebecca Sharpless, "Cookbooks as Resources for Rural Research," *Agricultural History* 90 no. 2 (Spring 2016): 197.; Jessamyn Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Gender Roles, Domestic Ideology, and Cookbooks in the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* vol. 32 no. 3 (Spring 1999):531.

¹⁶ *Household News* proclaimed, "Its advertising pages have been entirely free from quackery and fraud. It has refused to enrich itself at the expense of its patrons' health and moral, and it has succeeded." See "Publishers' Department," *Household News* 4 (July 1896): x.; Sharpless, "Cookbooks as Resources," 206.; Shintani, 132-135.

historians of women's magazines like Jennifer Scanlon and Helen Damon-Moore, magazines of the Progressive Era encouraged conformity and complacency.¹⁷

Magazines and cookbooks of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presented a homogenous picture of what it meant to be an *average* American woman. This flattened stereotype generalized across region, race, age, ethnicity, education level, and economic level.¹⁸ Scholars like Jessamyn Neuhaus have encouraged social and culinary historians to go beyond the study of how individual women subvert text that promotes social norms, to investigate the construction of gender norms within cooking texts.¹⁹

In the context of Progressive Era foodways, Sarah Tyson Rorer's contributions to food discourse in magazines and cookbooks reveal power dynamics in the construction of gender identity and social norms. The work of culinary and gender social historians provides a theoretical framework through which to examine identity and power in Rorer's work.

Katharina Vester, in *A Taste of Power* explores the constructions of gender identity through food discourse. While acknowledging the limitations on his theories regarding gender blindness, Vester uses Michel Foucault's ideas about power to explain how cookbook writing can be interpreted as an expression of power. This approach applies to Rorer's position of power in her writing. Looking to Vester's

¹⁷ Jenifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5.; Damon-Moore, *Magazine for the Millions*.

¹⁸ Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*, 5.

¹⁹ Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart," 530.

interpretation of Foucault, power is a network of discourses with no center, some discourses being privileged over others. She states, “Power relations organize themselves into effective strategies and eventually may crystallize into institutions, such as those that produce experts: culinary institutes or a genre such as cookbook writing.” The status of the expert, in this case Sarah Tyson Rorer, is dependent on the expert maintaining unchallenged authority. We see this dynamic play out particularly in the way she responds to magazine subscriber inquiries with authoritative expertise on all matters domestic. Within the limits of their identity, experts have the authority to influence the discourse, and Mrs. Rorer uses her authority to influence the discourse to further domestic science and dietetic agendas.²⁰

Examining constructions of gender within Rorer’s work, historians like Susan Strasser and Ruth Schwartz Cohen have blurred the historic distinctions between domestic and industrial spheres. Susan Strasser argues that industrial society ushered in mass production and mass distribution of new products between 1890 and 1920. As men increasingly left the home to work and women stayed in the home to work, the idea of separate spheres emerged. The separate, private sphere of women’s work is and was an illusion because household work was affected by the world of industry. Factories introduced industrial products to help people adjust to urban industrial life, yet domestic science authors, “held to the ideology that set the working world of women apart from that of men.”²¹ Ruth Schwartz Cohen adds to this argument by

²⁰ Vester, *A Taste of Power*, 7.

²¹ Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 5-6.

asserting that the home has historically been a space in opposition to industrialization, an escape from the outside world. However, “we are thus victims of a form of cultural obfuscation, for in reality kitchens are as much a locus for industrialized work as factories and coal mines are.”²²

Proscriptive texts perpetuated ‘traditional’ gender roles by instructing individuals on “attitudes and desires that should have been ‘natural’ to men and women,” denaturalizing the attitudes and desires in the act of writing prescriptive literature about them. Scholars like Neuhaus challenge us to question assumptions about gender and recognize that ‘male’ and ‘female,’ ‘public’ and ‘domestic’ are all cultural constructs.²³

Assumptions about gender roles remain largely unquestioned in Rorer’s work, yet the construction of gender identity and the reinforcement of gender norms in Rorer’s work enable a better understanding of the domestic science and dietetic ideologies presented in prescriptive domestic literature.

Mrs. Rorer’s cookbooks and magazine articles demonstrate how technology and food products connect to the broader scope of kitchen modernization. Many scholars have studied the material culture of Progressive Era foodways, Ruth Schwartz Cowan, for instance presents a theory of the *technological system* relating technology to the kitchen. Her theory simply asserts that objects function together within the context of the kitchen. In the context of Sarah Rorer’s work for example, the

²² Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1983), 4.

²³ Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart,” 547.

cookbook is only useful if it can function with measuring scoop, the oven, the stove, a fuel source, etc.²⁴

Cowan's technological system theory speaks to Ian Hodder's theory of entanglement and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, both of which focus on the relationality between humans and things. In Hodder's definition, entanglement is the network of dependencies and dependences between humans and things. "In a practical, everyday way, the chains of human-thing dependence provide us with opportunities and constraints. We seek pragmatically to make things work."²⁵ Human-object dependencies become important within Rorer's work when considering text (the magazine and the cookbook) and images (advertisements) as objects.

Outline

In my thesis, I state that Rorer's writing negotiates the incorporation of domestic science practices and industrial technologies in the kitchen, therefore I am approaching Sarah Tyson Rorer's work by asking three guiding questions. First, how does Sarah Tyson Rorer as one of several authors of prescriptive cooking literature, encourage women to embrace or reject the modern kitchen? Second, how did Rorer as a culture broker use product endorsement to promote domestic science ideology? Finally, how did she affect the introduction of industrialized technologies and food products? Elaborating on these questions, the following three case studies each highlight a theme in Sarah Tyson Rorer's work.

²⁴ Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, 13.

²⁵ Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 91-94, 98.

The first case study examines the reception of new industrialized technology through home canning as a response to industrial, mechanized canning. Looking at home canning as a developing technological process of the era, Mrs. Rorer's published writing places canning in the context of domestic science. In particular, Rorer wrote seasonal articles on canning in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and endorsements for Kerr canning jars. She also published two editions of *Canning and Preserving*, a cookbook released in 1887 and 1912. In these writings, Rorer and her contemporaries give advice on the economy of home canning, what kinds of equipment to use, and the importance of a sterile environment. Using Rorer's work, and the writings of other cooking authorities of the time, this chapter considers the tensions between home canning and factory canning in terms of frugality, sterilization, and the resistance to increased mechanism in the household.

The second case study delves into the incorporation of new food products in a study of the production and promotion of Cottolene, a lard alternative made from beef suet and cottonseed oil. A new food product, marketed to pure foods advocates. Mrs. Rorer wrote a cook book of recipes endorsing N.K. Fairbanks and Co., the manufacturers of Cottolene. Advertisements for the product often featured next to her articles in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Probing advertisement imagery and period literature, this section highlights how Cottolene embodied sentiments of purity and cleanliness in its materiality.

Finally, the third case study focuses on the culmination of Rorer's decades long interest in dietetics with *Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick*, a cookbook written

towards the end of Rorer's writing career in 1914. The book was written as a tool to be used in the kitchen, giving diet recommendations for specific illnesses and ailments. The writing models food reformers' belief that one's overall well-being linked to diet and digestion. Studying the book as a tool of food preparation, and Mrs. Rorer's legacy within the origins of American dietetics, this case study considers the impact of food reform literature and the scientific approach of Progressive era cooking instructors like Sarah Tyson Rorer.

Taken as a whole, cookbooks, shortening, and canning equipment represent facets of Mrs. Rorer's work that speak to the broader context of change within kitchens and food preparation during the Progressive Era. Using product promotion and writing for a popular audience, Sarah Tyson Rorer leveraged her reputation as an authority figure to popularize nutrition and domestic science in the discourse on housewives' incorporation of scientific food preparation and new technologies. Without her voice of authority, manufacturers and medical professionals would not have had the same access to female consumers. They did not convey the same relatability and empathy for the housewife's plight that Rorer used to gain trust and build a reputation among her readers. The subsequent chapters relate Rorer's work to broader patterns of idealized social behavior and the incorporation of industrialism in the kitchen in the Progressive Era.

Chapter 1

“WHAT TO DO WITH THE FRUITS OF JULY”

Culture brokers, like Sarah Tyson Rorer, used their expertise to negotiate the normalization of industrialized technologies and food products through the publication of cooking instructions and recipes. The discourse between domestic science home canning advocates and industrial canning corporations reveals mixed reactions to increased mechanization in the kitchen. An analysis of Rorer’s prescriptive literature demonstrates how transitions in food preservation technology and methods reflected and shaped Pure Foods attitudes concerning sanitation, health, and food quality.

Rorer defines canning and preserving in her July 1901 article in the Ladies’ Home Journal, “Canning, Preserving and Jelly-Making,” writing,

Canning refers to vegetables and fruits sterilized and hermetically sealed in tin cans, glass jars, or bottles. The word preserving refers to fruits put in a thick syrup made from sugar and water, and kept in ordinary tumblers or jars.²⁶

Home canning was a relatively new process within the last twenty years at that point, and a variety of popular methods existed for preserving food. Sarah Tyson Rorer’s writing negotiated a paradox within the discourse on industrial technology entering the home. On the one hand, home canning rejected the increased presence of factory-canned foods. On the other, it represented advancements in the mass-manufacture of preservation equipment. She used her authority to promote home-canning methods as an act of aligning one’s self with domestic science values. Rorer’s definition of

²⁶ Sarah Tyson Rorer. “Canning, Preserving and Jelly-Making,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 18 (July 1901): 20.

canning and preserving makes more sense examined in the context of food preservation with which her readers were familiar.

Pre-canning preservation methods include salting, drying, burying, smoking, and fermenting.²⁷ One of the earliest written recipes for canning is recorded in Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* published in 1747. Her recipe "To keep Green Gooseberries till Christmas," instructs bottles to be filled, sealed with a cork, and boiled in water up to the neck.²⁸ According to H.G. Muller in the chapter on "Industrial Preservation," in *Waste Not Want Not*, the bottling method became a widely practiced method of home food preservation because the pH level of acidic fruits like gooseberries remained low enough to prevent the growth of common food poisoning toxins.²⁹

Historic narratives often overlook contributions to preservation science by women like Glasse, while French scientist Nicolas Appert receives the credit for his thorough investigation of the process of bottled food preservation. He published his findings in his 1800 work, *L'Art de Conserver pendant plusieurs Annees toutes les Substances Animales et Vegetales*.³⁰ Shortly after this development, in 1810, Perter

²⁷ H.G. Muller, "Industrial Preservation," Anne C. Wilson, *Waste Not Want Not: Food Preservation from Early Times to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 104.

²⁸ Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (London: Printed for the author, 1747), 130.

²⁹ H.G. Muller, "Industrial Preservation," Anne C. Wilson, *Waste Not Want Not: Food Preservation from Early Times to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 123.

³⁰ Muller, *Waste not Want Not*, 123-124.

Durand invented tin canisters for canning. Progressing quickly, Robert Ayars opened the first American cannery in 1812.

The industrial canning industry began developing in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but it was not until 1858 that John L. Mason patented the glass Mason jar.³¹ In 1884, the home canning movement gained momentum with the Ball Corporation's manufacture of glass jars for home canning.

By 1903, companies like the Kerr Glass Manufacturing Corporation specialized in producing home canning equipment featuring the endorsement of Mrs. Rorer. Her canning cookbook, articles, and product endorsement of canning equipment informed the selection of home canning as a case study that speaks to the tension of industrial technology in the Progressive Era kitchen. On the back of their twenty-page pamphlet on, "Economy Jar Home Canning Recipes for Use Every Day of the Year," Kerr Glass Manufacturing Company features testimonials for their glass home canning jar. The manufacturer states,

There is hardly a day we do not receive recipes and suggestions for various new and novel uses for the Economy Jar. Send in your new recipes. We shall issue new recipes and information of value to the housewife. Send us your name and the names of your friends. We will put you on our mailing list and will send you our various booklets, pamphlets, etc. It would take a five hundred page book in smallest type to print all the testimonials we have received. The following are a few taken from thousands.

Read What These Authorities Say/ Mrs. Sarah Tyson Rorer has used them four years. She says: 'I tried the Economy Jar and was

³¹ John L. Mason, United States Patent: 22,186 - "Glass Jar," November 30, 1858.

exceedingly pleased with it. I canned peas, beans, tomatoes, carrots, besides a number of fruits, and not one jar spoiled.’³²

Rorer’s message appears among testimonials from her peer group: Marion Harland, Janet Hill, and Elizabeth Towne, underneath which are testimonials from named housewives across the country and in South America. The manufacturer provides no context for Rorer’s endorsement, and no sense of whether she had any incentive to write a letter to Kerr Manufacturers. The inclusion of Rorer’s testimony indicates the persuasive power of her reputation as a cooking authority, and her influence in shaping preservation methods of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Food preservation methods through the nineteenth century included four main categories: chemical, dehydration, refrigeration, and canning.³³ This chapter analyzes the canning of fruits and vegetables to the exclusion of canned meats or pickled products because Mrs. Rorer focused primarily on fruits and vegetables in her published literature.

In preserving, sugar is added to fruit pound for pound and stored in covered ceramic jars. The presence of sugar prevents the growth of yeast and bacteria, thus prolonging the edibility of the fruit. This method traces back to the English tradition of using pots for food preservation.³⁴ While Rorer explicitly refrains from comparing the

³² Kerr Glass Manufacturing Company, “Economy Jar Home Canning,” (Portland: Kerr Glass Manufacturing Company, 1910). Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive. University of Michigan Special Collections Library.

³³ Muller, *Waste Not Want Not*, 104.

³⁴ Peter Brears, “Pots for Potting: English Pottery and its Role in Food Preservation in the Post-Medieval Period,” Anne C. Wilson, *Waste Not Want Not: Food Preservation*

healthfulness of other preservation methods to canning, such as the chemical process of salting, she does not condone making fruit “deadly sweet with sugar.”³⁵ Similarly minded pure food reformers like Maria Parloa, condemn the “old fashioned” methods of preserving fruit with sugar, advocating instead for the occasional use of sugar in canned goods.³⁶ The shift from sugar preservation to canning results largely from the change in preservation technology. Though aware of the detrimental health effects of excess sugar, food reformers embraced home canning technology in part because it enabled sparing use of sugar in preservation.

The concept of preserving without sugar perplexed some of Rorer’s followers as is evidenced by the inquiry published in the July 1894 volume of *Household News*. A magazine subscriber identified as W.W. of Philadelphia writes to Rorer,

You say the quantity of sugar used in preserving has nothing to do with keeping the fruit, yet jams in which I use only a half pound of sugar to the pound, or pint, did not keep, and I cooked them, at least, six hours.

To which Rorer replies,

Our subscriber has misconstrued my meaning by using a different word. I say, in my “Canning and Preserving,” that the quantity of sugar used in canning fruits has nothing to do with the keeping of fruit. Remember that jams and preserves are not canned. Fruit can be canned

from Early Times to the Present Day (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1991), 32-65.

³⁵ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “My Best 250 Recipes,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 21 (June 1904): 38.

³⁶ Maria Parloa, *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies* (Chicago: The Saalfield Publishing Co., 1917), 66.

without one particle of sugar but to preserve it without making it sterile you must use pound for pound.³⁷

This exchange demonstrates the shift in preservation methods and increasing concern over the quantity of sugar used in fruit canning and preserving. Rorer's distinction between *canning* and *preserving* becomes important because the two terms represent different methodologies and techniques in the history of preservation methods.

Progressive Era Canning

Published twenty-five years apart, the first and second editions of Mrs. Rorer's book date to different points in the timeline of home canning methods. In 1887, when the first edition printed, hot-pack canning prevailed as the most popular method of home canning. Hot-pack canning involved ladling cooked fruit or vegetable contents into pre-sanitized jars and sealing the contents (Figure 2). When Rorer published the second edition in 1912, the text reflected changes in the technology of preservation methods. In addition to hot-pack canning, Sarah Tyson Rorer expanded her canning and preserving chapters to detail procedures for cold-pack canning, a more efficient method that allowed fewer risks of contamination during the preservation process. In cold-pack canning, the homemaker placed produce in lidded jars and sterilized the jars with boiling water, producing an airtight seal and eliminating the additional preparation and potential contamination of ladling the cooked foodstuff into prepared sterile jars (Figure 3).³⁸

³⁷ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Answers to Inquiries," *Household News* 2 (July 1894): 544.

³⁸ A 1917 Canning book published by the International Harvester Company explains, even when the products, the jars, the rubbers, and the cover have been sterilized there

Home canning promoters advocated for cold-pack canning as a method that took the drudgery out of canning, stating, “We no longer dread the canning season. Canning by this method is an interesting, business-like proposition: not drudgery.” This sentiment indicates that open-kettle canning was thought to be laborious and outmoded by the time that home canning efforts were revitalized during WWI. In reality, cold-pack canning only removed one step from the process.³⁹

In a 1920 text, *The Story of Canned Foods*, by James H. Collins, the author credited the development and popularity of home canning with the demand for canned products after the Civil War. He viewed home canning as a distinctly American practice, demonstrating American superiority.⁴⁰ Collins wrote from a perspective within post-WWI Progressive Era America, thus his opinions reflect popular nationalistic sentiment.⁴¹ Proponents of home canning connected women’s roles as the keeper of familial health with the production of food in the kitchen. Sarah Rorer and others posited that healthy, wholesome meals were essential to household harmony and morality.

is still danger of bacteria getting in while the cooked product is being dipped from the kettle to the jar. See Grace Marion Smith, *Home Canning by the Cold Pack Method* (Chicago: International Harvester Company of New Jersey, Agricultural Extension Dept., 1917), 12.

³⁹ Alternative methods of canning include using an oven and a sheet of asbestos, “Cover the bottom of the oven with a sheet of asbestos, the kind plumbers employ in covering pipes. It is very cheap and may usually be found at plumbers’ shops.” See Smith, *Home Canning by the Cold-Pack Method*, 13-14.

⁴⁰ James H. Collins, *The Story of Canned Foods* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. 1924), 239.

⁴¹ Veit, *Modern Food Moral Food*.

The **Happiness** of the world is in the hands of women, because poorly fed people become ill-tempered and quarrel; become dissatisfied and indulge in drink, questionable amusements, and bad company; become sick and perhaps lose health permanently; become discouraged and quit. Quit work, quit home, quit morality and manhood and character, quit trying – just quit... Community Life, Health, Business, Efficiency, Happiness – it is a large order, but it hinges absolutely and undeniably on the diet; and in the country, at least, the diet hinges partly on Home Canning in club work.⁴²

Mrs. Rorer's advice aligns with the pattern of other domestic science advocates of the time. Her stance on home canning altered slightly between the first and second editions of her *Canning and Preserving* book. In the foreword of the 1887 edition, Mrs. Rorer infused her language with a moral weightiness, rallying her readers to combat the "age of adulteration and the evils of factory food," with the "simple operation" of home canning.⁴³ She took this language out of the foreword of the second edition of the book, perhaps in response to the ways in which industrial canning practices and industrial canning marketing changed over those twenty-five years.

Just as it seemed like home canning would be completely eclipsed by prepared foods outside of the home, the United States entered WWI in 1917. Five years after Rorer published the second edition of *Home Canning*, the First World War inspired a resurgence in the popularity of home canning. Progressive Era reformers encouraged women to grow their own food in home gardens and can produce as a means of

⁴² Smith, *Home Canning by the Cold-Pack Method*, 42.

⁴³ Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Canning and Preserving* (Arnold and Company, 1887), preface.

reducing waste.⁴⁴ Period literature sang praises of home canning as a method for women to tangibly contribute to war efforts,

Wastefulness, bad at any time, today is a crime against society. Saving food should be practiced in every home... You can successfully can vegetables and fruits of all kinds. There is no excuse for wasting products of the garden, field and orchard. Can them. Our people will need them at home – our soldiers will need them at the front.⁴⁵

The same moral instructive tone carried through, but the emphasis shifted slightly in WWI literature from the housewife as an independent, isolated provider for her family, to canning as a community effort.

Though domestic science experts presented the “simple operation” of canning as efficient and economical, the reality may have been less so. Sarah Tyson Rorer responded to regular reader inquiries in monthly editions *Table Talk*, *Household News*, and the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Seeking advice on fruit canning, Mrs. A.S.G. of Marsailles, Illinois wrote that she felt discouraged because she always failed to get all her jars to seal air tight - even though she used Mason jars. In response, Rorer writes,

I can see no good reason why you should ever fail in getting a single can air tight. Have your cans thoroughly washed and scalded; scald also the tops; stand each jar on a folded towel; fill it full to overflowing with hot fruit run a knife blade, or a long spoon handle, around the outside of the fruit, that is, all the fruit in the jar, allowing all the bubbles to follow the knife and explode. Then, if necessary, add a little more of the liquid. The can must be full to the very top; screw on the top tightly. Wipe the jar and stand it aside; next morning, give it another screw.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Home Canning by the Cold-Pack Method*.

⁴⁵ Smith, Introductory to *Home Canning by the Cold-Pack Method*.

Make sure that it is thoroughly tight. Mason jars are perfectly good. I cannot remember of ever losing a can of this kind.⁴⁶

This example demonstrates a disconnect between materials and technique. The reader identified as Mrs. A.S.G. felt she did not possess adequate skill to effectively manipulate the canning materials and obtain sealed jars. Rorer blamed her failure on a lack of proper technique, outlining each step in correct detail. Thus, to fulfill the efficient, economical promises of home canning, a certain degree of technical skill was necessary beyond a mere ability to read instructions. This example demonstrates that the Mason jar as a tool, was only as effective as the technician filling it.

Home Canning Responds to Industrialization

Home canning demonstrates how the Domestic Science Movement both embraced and rejected the increased presence of factory manufactured products in the home. For example, the industrialization of transportation caused loss of seasonality in fruits and vegetables. Produce travelled across the nation from warmer climates with longer growing seasons, to the East Coast. Rorer and other reformers on the East Coast lamented the loss of seasonality as going against the laws of nature, saying that one should only can or preserve as an alternative to what one could eat fresh.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Answers to Inquiries," *Table Talk* 6 (December 1891): 475.

⁴⁷ Rorer is careful to point out that fresh, raw fruits are preferred over cooked, though she takes the time of year into consideration when writing canning articles in monthly periodicals. In a September 1898 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* she writes, "September is really the last month in which vegetables are in proper condition for pickling or preserving. After that time, tomatoes become watery and corn is not so sweet." See Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Pickling and Canning for Winter," *Ladies' Home Journal* 15 (September 1898): 20.; "culinary reformers viewed industrial growth as a double-edged sword." See Shintani, 76.

In contrast, domestic science authorities embraced new technology in home canning equipment like self-sealing lids and wide-mouth glass jars. The presence of new technology in cookbook recipes helps cultural historians measure the adoption of innovations and examine the implications of contradictions in prescriptive literature advise.⁴⁸

Before the Food and Drug Act of 1906 passed, canned food production operated without regulations, and manufacturers were not held to standards of cleanliness or product quality. Canned foods acquired a dubious reputation for inconsistencies in quality. In response, companies like the Franco-American Food Company in New York City advertised that women could tour their facilities and inspect the sanitation standards for themselves. In the front page of Sarah Tyson Rorer's *Good Ways in Cooking: A Manual for the Family* cookbook, an advertisement (Figure 4) features a "No Admittance," sign next to an illustration of a cobwebbed door to a canning factory. The text of the ad continues,

How familiar this sign! How well it helps to hide the unclean mysteries of many canning factories! / But here's a contrast! Our mammoth canning kitchen (we like this name better than factory) is open for / inspection from morning till night, and we will be glad to send a card of admittance to any reader of this book who cares to write for it.⁴⁹

The Cleveland Baking Powder Company commissioned Sarah Tyson Rorer to write *Good Ways in Cooking* in 1889. This canning advertisement, couched within a

⁴⁸ Jane C. Busch, "Learning by Pinches and Dashes: Using the Cookbook as a Research Document." *History News*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1997): 22- 25.

⁴⁹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Good Ways in Cooking: A Manual for the Family* (New York: Syndicate Trading Co. Press of George H. Buchanan and Co. 1889), Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive, University of Michigan Special Collections Library.

promotional cookbook, pinpointed popular anxieties. The manufacturer appealed to the housewife's concern for transparency and cleanliness, claiming that their 'kitchen' stood apart from other canning 'factories.' Manufacturers like the Cleveland Baking Powder Company spoke to cleanliness, safety, and the comfort of one's own *kitchen*, using the same mechanisms as food reformers to win-over housewives.

Industrial canning companies combatted distrust by producing their own promotional literature. For example, The Burt Olney Canning Company in Oneida, New York published a cookbook in 1907, *Burt Olney's Soups Salads and Desserts: Their Making and Serving*, which promoted images of brightly-lit, pristine factories, with well-groomed women working diligently to sanitize, assemble, and pack canned foods. Though women made up the primary working force, the cookbook author phrased the responsibility of sanitation and quality as the male canning executive's responsibility. Sources like these present a contrast in gender dynamics within the professional canning industry. In Figure 5, *Main Packing Room*, the caption reads,

Here the food is going into the cans, thousands and thousands of them at one time. Yet all is order and system and the output satisfies the most exacting taste. The up-to-date canner can afford no slip-ups. The nation's health are in his keeping.⁵⁰

The book goes on to talk about: using heat as the only preservative, sorting out impure vegetables, preserving fruit fresh from the field, and the sterile conditions of the facility. The photographs and their captions directly address popular concerns with factory canning, allowing the consumer to see behind the scenes and into the tin can through photography.

⁵⁰ *Burt Olney's Soups Salads and Desserts: their making and serving* (Oneida: Burt Olney Manufacturers, 1907). Winterthur Library.

The *actual* safety of home versus industrial canning remains beside the point, because what mattered was the *perception* of safety. That being said, home and industrial canning were not necessarily mutually exclusive. The popularity of home canning responded to the increased presence of industrially canned goods and industrialized food transportation. The insecurities that arose in response, stem from the distancing of food production from the consumer. In a sense, home canning reacted against this distancing process by subverting the patterns of industrialization. Rather than blindly accepting factory canned food, women bought factory produced canning jars, lids, and supplies to preserve their own food.

Seeming contradictions arose in cases where, for instance, a reader wrote to Sarah Rorer in a June 1891 issue of *Table Talk* asking if it was practical to can soups. In response, Rorer replied that canning soup represented more work and challenge than was practical, and prepared soups in the market were cheaper and better.⁵¹ Thus, Rorer did not universally reject factory-canning as long as it fit within her food reform value system of economy, frugality, and purity.

Canning represented both the traditional and modern, a rejection and an acceptance of industry in the home. This dichotomy worked in the context of food reformers like Sarah Tyson Rorer because they were not trying to maintain old traditions but move forward with new standards of health, safety, quality, science, and technology. Rorer did not oppose industrialism, she opposed the adulteration of industrial products unchecked by regulations.

⁵¹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Housekeepers' Inquiries," *Table Talk* 6 (June 1891): 229.

Economy and Frugality

Cooking authorities viewed industrial products as acceptable if they furthered domestic science objectives. Economy and frugality reappeared as prevalent themes in Rorer's writing, and industrial canning equipment took the place of homemade equipment only where the industrial alternative saved enough time, energy, and resources. For example, the John L. Gaumer Company of Philadelphia advertised their, "Revolution in Canning: Mudge Patent Canner," in multiple issues of *Household News*, offering a copy of Rorer's *Canning and Preserving* with purchase. The advertisement described the canner as, "...driving out old methods. Uses steam instead of boiling. Cooks from the top instead of the bottom. Retains the delicious flavor of fruits and berries. Preserves their form."⁵² A subscriber, Mrs. A.R. of Plainfield, Illinois, asked, "Has Mrs. Rorer had any personal experience with the Mudge cannery?" Rorer answered,

Yes, two years' experience. I purchased one at the close of the World's Fair and have had it in constant use ever since. We not only use it for canning, but for cooking vegetables. They are much more tasty than cooked in any other way. This year I tried Strawberries without sugar or water, and they are beautiful and like fresh berries. If you wish to can your own fruit and vegetables I should by all means advise a cannery, it saves so much time.⁵³

Thus, from Rorer's perspective, the use of patented canning technology was permissible for home canners because the machinery produced more efficient, better quality results. Her endorsement did not contradict her advice to repurpose existing

⁵² John L. Gaumer Company, "Mudge Patent Canner," Advertisement, *Household News* 3 (June 1895), n.p.

⁵³ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Answers to Questions," *Household News* 3 (June 1895): 239.

kitchen supplies because from her perspective both options fit within her value system of efficiency and economy. This insight speaks to how Rorer and others used object endorsement to navigate the tension between Progressive Era moral codes and the influx of industrial products. The Mudge Cannery represented an economical investment in efficiency and quality, while repurposing common kitchen supplies represented frugality and resourcefulness.

Home canning proponents praised the frugality and simplicity of home canning, countering arguments that canning was cost inhibitive or required extensive commercial equipment. Writers like Sarah Tyson Rorer described how the homemaker could adapt ordinary kitchen materials for home canning. “Homemade outfits are constructed of such utensils as wash boilers, tin pails, milk cans, metal washtubs, and lard pails. Such canners should have well-fitting covers and false bottoms or lifting platforms of metal or wood.”⁵⁴ With a little ingenuity and the additional purchase of glass jars and rubber seals, the housewife could prepare canned food in a modestly equipped kitchen.⁵⁵ Arguments for homemade canning outfits responded to the influx of commercial canning sets. By the early twentieth century, commercial manufacturers developed home sets with specialized equipment made to make the process more

⁵⁴ Oscar Herman Benson, *Home Canning by the One-Period Cold-Pack Method* *Farmers Bulletin no. 839* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1918), 6, ZZC 106158 Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Home Canning by the Cold-Pack Method*, 14.

convenient. This type of canning equipment continued to permeate the market through the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁶

In Anna Barrows' 1907 book *Principles of Cooking*, the author included a list of utensils recommended for stocking a modest kitchen. She lists one dozen glass jars, a kettle, and strainer, among other objects.⁵⁷ With the addition of a homemade rack for the bottom of the kettle, a kitchen could be prepared for home canning.⁵⁸ Maria Parloa gave instructions on constructing a homemade wooden rack in her 1907 book,

The wooden rack, on which the bottles rest in the washboiler, is made in this manner: Have two Strips of wood measuring 1 inch high, 1 inch wide, and 2 inches shorter than the length of the boiler. On these pieces of wood, tack thin Strips of wood that are 1 ½ inches shorter than the width of the boiler. These cross-Strips should be about 1 inch wide, and there should be an inch between two Strips. This rack will support the jars and will admit the free circulation of boiling water about them. Young willow branches, woven into a mat, also make a good bed for bottles and jars.⁵⁹

The home canner could purchase a commercially made metal rack independently or as part of a canning outfit, but the domestic science tenets of self-

⁵⁶ Perhaps due to the larger scale of the operation, canners working outdoors seem to have made more use of commercially produced hot-water bath canning equipment, which included a sterilizing vat, lifting trays, fire box, and smoke pipe. By 1915, manufactured steam-pressure canners were widely available, and recommended as the safest method for successful sterilization.

⁵⁷ Anna Barrows, *Principles of Cookery* (Chicago: American School of Home Economics 1907), 161.

⁵⁸ Parloa, *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies*, 28.; Rorer, *Canning and Preserving* (1897).

⁵⁹ Parloa, *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies*, 29.

sufficiency and frugality encouraged the adaptation of found materials. In addition to a wooden rack (Figure 6), Maria Parloa offered further suggestions for creative reuse in canning. For example, she outlined instructions for making a fruit pricker (used to keep the skins of fruit from splitting) out of a cork and needles, and suggested using iron rings from an old carriage wheel to raise the kettle off the heating element. Another author suggested making packing paddles from bamboo cane or an old fishing pole. The canner used packing paddles to position the produce in the jar and take excess air bubbles out of the liquid. Home-made implements emphasized resourcefulness and the importance of technical skill in following a recipe to achieve successful results.⁶⁰

Home canning granted women a certain amount of economic agency outside of the home. Women could sell canned goods locally as a source of supplemental income, or ‘pin money’ as Rorer referred to it. Reformers and the United States government particularly encouraged young women in rural communities to join local canning clubs, producing, exhibiting, and marketing their work for sale within the community.⁶¹ Starting as a Department of Agriculture initiative around 1910, girls canning clubs started as a means of encouraging young women to earn an independent income, learn about commercial initiatives, gain practical homemaking skills, and

⁶⁰ Parloa, *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies*, 26-33.; Ola Powell, *Successful Canning and Preserving; Practical Hand Book for Schools, Clubs, and Home Use* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1917), 71.

⁶¹ Smith, *Home Canning by the Cold-Pack Method*, 35-37.

participate in pure food production at an economical cost.⁶² The clubs were designed to keep girls interested and invested in staying in rural communities instead of moving to cities. Typical of Progressive Era reform efforts, the government implemented reformers' solutions to the perceived problem with rural migration by encouraging young people to stay invested in rural communities.⁶³ Economic concerns and the (im)practicality of home-canning complicated the dynamics between purchasing factory and home-canned goods.

The equipment required in home canning demonstrated how reformers could use materials to convey domestic science principles. What kinds of materials did one require to can at home in the decades between 1887 and 1912? The essential equipment included: a kettle, wash boiler, glass jars with lids, rubber seals, and a stirring or ladling utensil.⁶⁴

Beginning with the kettle, Mrs. Rorer and others recommend a porcelain-lined or granite kettle for cooking fruit or jelly. Kettles were to be lined in enamel or

⁶² United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, "Girls Demonstration Work: The Canning Clubs," (Washington D.C., April 29, 1913).

⁶³ Home canned products in grocery stores cost more than factory canned, and supply was limited to the amount that the clubs could produce, but Collins maintains that people were willing to pay more because their product tasted better. See Collins, *The Story of Canned Foods*, 240.

⁶⁴ Other authors list common kitchen utensils such as a tin strainer, cheesecloth, jelly bag, towel, or pie plate. These items increase the efficiency and convenience of canning processes. For instance, cheesecloth and jelly bags both aid in removing unwanted peel or seeds from fruit that is to be made into jelly. A towel and pie plate could be used to rest glass jars before they are filled. See *Ayer's Preserve Book* (Lowell: Dr. J.C. Ayer and Co., 1891).; Rorer, "Canning Preserving and Jelly-Making," 20.

porcelain, to avoid a chemical reaction between the acid of the fruit and the metal in the pan. A broad, shallow kettle allowed for even and quick cooking of the contents. In addition, the design of a kettle retained the color and flavor of fruits because the immediate contact with even, intense heat made for better results.⁶⁵

As the technology in home canning equipment changed, the types of jars and lids that domestic science writers like Sarah Tyson Rorer recommend also changed. In her 1887 edition of *Canning and Preserving*, Rorer recommended large-mouth glass jars with porcelain-lined lids or glass tops. By 1912, her recommendations changed to reflect new jar designs. Rather than porcelain-lined lids, she instructed canners to use glass or metal lids.⁶⁶ In an article written in 1906 for the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Rorer explained, "The jars must positively have solid glass or solid metal tops. A porcelain lining leaves a space between it and the upper lid, and it is almost impossible to have this space free from contamination".⁶⁷ A wide-mouth funnel prevented overflow and spilling the contents onto the jar rim or lip of the lid.⁶⁸ In the 1907 book *Principles of Cooking* by Anna Barrows, the author differentiated between lightning jars with

⁶⁵Maria Parloa, a contemporaneous cooking figure, writes in her 1904 (reprinted 1905 and 1917) book *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies*, "In preserving, canning, and jelly making iron or tin utensils should never be used. The fruit acids attack these metals and so give a bad color and metallic taste to the products." See Parloa, *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies*, 9.; Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Canning and Preserving* (Philadelphia: Arnold and Company, 1887), 8.

⁶⁶ Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Canning and Preserving* (Philadelphia: Arnold and Company, 1912).

⁶⁷ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "How to Can Fruits and Vegetables," *The Ladies Home Journal* 23 (July 1906): 30.

⁶⁸ Rorer, *Canning and Preserving* (1887), 8.

spring-clasped glass covers and mason jars with a screw top lid, saying that the lid of the lightning jar was easier to remove than the sticky lid of the mason jar.⁶⁹ By 1915, Alexander Kerr patented the two-piece disposable metal canning lid, marking a turning point in home canning. Before that, the only options available were lids made of glass or one-piece zinc porcelain-lined caps, all of which were more difficult to sterilize and seal.

Home canning proponents recommend glass jars over tin cans because glass jars did not require a special apparatus to seal the cans, and glass jars could be reused. To process canned goods in jars, the homemaker only needed a washboiler - a tall, multipurpose metal pot that could hold enough water to cover the tops of the jars during the sealing and sterilization process. In contrast, tin cans could only be used once, then discarded. Manufacturers and grocers preferred to sell cans because they were easier to pack, handle, and transport. While glass canning jars were both industrially manufactured products, the difference between glass and tin canning referenced tangible and visible divides between home and industrial canning. In a metaphorical sense, the clarity of a glass jar represented the pure, colorful, healthy contents of home-canned produce (Figure 7), as opposed to the impenetrable tin can with its outsourced contents.⁷⁰

According to Mrs. Rorer, the initial investment in materials paid off in the long run, “Twenty-five cents’ worth of rotten rubbers will cause the loss of ten dollars’

⁶⁹ Barrows, *Principles of Cookery*, 37.

⁷⁰ Oscar Herman Benson, *Home Canning by the One-Period Cold-Pack Method* *Farmers Bulletin no. 839* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1918), 10, ZZC 106158 Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

worth of vegetables. This is not economy”.⁷¹ Understanding the limitations of reusing rubber seals, canning authorities recommended purchasing new seals for each re-use of a jar. Unlike glass, metal, or porcelain, rubber could not be sterilized for reuse. Thus, the recommended materials reflected the evolution of canning technology and embodied domestic science values of frugality and efficiency. Culinary authorities promoted materials suited to multiple functions and reuse, thus impacting the evolution of canning equipment and technique.

Nutrition and Science

Mrs. Rorer’s advice on healthful canning evidences how home canning discourse fit into larger pure food reform efforts and the scientific study of nutrition. For instance, Rorer critiques acid levels and digestibility of specific fruits and pickled produce. She responded to one reader inquiry about pickling with the following,

I would not recommend much pickling. Acids must be used carefully or the lining of the stomach may be destroyed. In my own family I have discarded such things entirely. I have not had a pickle in my house for at least twelve years, and never expect to have another. A salad takes the place, is fresh and green, and much more wholesome.⁷²

Continuing with her concern for digestibility, Rorer also condemned preserving powders as poisonous, speculating that the time saving additive was an indigestible adulteration due to its artificial contents.

⁷¹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “How to Can Fruits and Vegetables,” *The Ladies Home Journal* 23 (July 1906): 30.

⁷² Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Answers to Question,” *Household News* 3 (September 1889): 396.

Antiseptics sold under the name of fruit preserving powders which 'keep' fruits in cold water for months are to be condemned as injurious. They prevent the digestion of other food with which they are mixed in the stomach.⁷³

She instead favored simplicity and purity of ingredients, at several points admonishing the addition of excess ingredients like sugar to canned and preserved products,

Canned or preserved fruits, as well as jams and kindred articles, are to be condemned on account of the mass of sugar used. With fruits it is more prone to fermentation, and even if the sugar is inverted we have a far greater amount than can be cared for by the liver, and here is the origin of the 'torpid liver' we hear so much about. The liver is not torpid, it is simply overworked.⁷⁴

To Rorer, food preparation and nutrition were inextricably linked. She advocated for the scientific study of food both in its chemical makeup and in its preparation. This approach furthered the domestic science ideal to promote food preparation as a dignified pursuit for the educated housewife.

Sterilization reoccurred as a prevalent theme in prescriptive canning literature. For their audience, food reformers like Sarah Tyson Rorer painstakingly explained the effects of bacteria, yeast, and mold on the safety of canned food products. Mrs. Rorer's language in her directions indirectly conflated cleanliness, with morality and ability. She instructed in a July issue of *The Ladies' Home Journal*, "If the housewife understands the real definition of sterilization the canning of vegetables becomes an

⁷³ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Mrs. Rorer's Method Lessons, Seventh Lesson: Best Methods of Canning and Preserving," *The Ladies' Home Journal* (July 1903): 26.

⁷⁴ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Fruits as Foods and Fruits as Poisons," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 15 (June 1898): 25.

easy process”.⁷⁵ Using both moral and scientific language, she bridged earlier nineteenth-century notions of the woman as the transmitter of morality in the home and later Progressive era notions of the housewife’s role dignified by science and economic education. She emphasized the importance of a sterile canning environment using phrases like “surgical cleanliness.”⁷⁶

To her audience, the concept of germs may have seemed foreign or novel because the discovery of germs as the cause of disease started developing in medical science over the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Rorer took care to transmit her scientific knowledge in clear, digestible terms for her readers, explaining bacteria and yeast in analogies. For example,

There are constantly floating about us in the air a great variety of wild yeast plants together with the bacteria. If a single plant, or the bud of a plant alights in a favorable place, as on the under side of the lid, or at the edge of the jar before the lid is fastened down, it is quite sufficient to cause fermentation in a can of corn or peas, or in any materials containing sugar.⁷⁷

Though she explained the mechanisms of microorganisms in several articles and both editions of *Canning and Preserving*, spoilage remained one of the most frequent complaints from subscribers who sent in canning concerns. For example,

⁷⁵ Rorer, “Mrs. Rorer’s Method Lessons,” 26.

⁷⁶ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “What to Do with the Fruits of July,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 17 (July 1900): 24.

⁷⁷ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Canning, Preserving and Jelly-Making,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 18 (July 1901): 20.

Inquiry No.1489, published in the September, 1891 issue of *Table Talk* came in from A.H.M., of Webster Grove, Missouri. The inquirer writes,

Have your canning and preserving book, but find no recipe for preventing mold. Am in the business myself, make my living that way; if there is any way of keeping perfectly free from it will you kindly tell me?

To which Rorer responds,

There is not the slightest necessity to have the mold form on the fruit, if the fruit is properly canned. Scald out the jars with the lids, put the fruit in while they are steaming hot, cover the jars at once, and there is not the slightest danger of losing a single jar. The mold frequently comes from the accumulation of dust on the inside of the lids and jars; consequently, if the jars and lids are steamed, this difficulty is overcome.⁷⁸

In the wider scope of canning literature published in the early Progressive Era, Mrs. Rorer's approach to sterilization fit the trend for explaining safe canning practices through pragmatic analogies. Sarah Tyson Rorer and other writers of the period conveyed the dangers that yeast, mold, and bacteria presented to successful canning.⁷⁹

To conclude, the dynamics between home canning materials and food reformers demonstrate some of the dependencies and dependences between humans and things in Hodder's *entanglement* theory. Reformers depended on advances in home canning technology and sterilization to support domestic science tenants. At the

⁷⁸ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Housekeepers' Inquiries," *Table Talk* 6 (September 1891): 347.

⁷⁹ A resurgence in popularity of home canning occurred with the onset of WWI, when authors wrote books on canning like Maria Parloa's 1917 edition of *Canned Fruit Preserves and Jellies*.

same time, canning technology shaped the way that food reformers presented health and nutrition. Canning materials provided opportunities and constraints to the field of domestic science, and Rorer as an actor in this human-thing network, navigated the dynamics between factory and home-canned goods. The title of the chapter (originally the title of a canning article written by Rorer in *The Ladies' Home Journal*) “What to do with the Fruits of July,” picks up on themes of self-sufficiency, economy, and seasonality promoted in Progressive Era prescriptive literature. From the perspective of Rorer’s prescriptive literature, the process of canning produce in the home embodied domestic science ideals. Therefore, material developments in canning equipment contributed to and limited the embodiment of these ideals. Continuing the discussion of Mrs. Rorer’s impact on Progressive Era food and health, the next case study examines the marketing and acceptance of a food product.

Chapter 2

“THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR IS LARD”

The second case study unfolds with an exchange between Mrs. Rorer and a subscriber in the “Household Inquiries” section of the magazine, *Household News*. In May’s issue, subscriber Mrs. E. W. S., East Orange, N. J., directly challenged Rorer’s advice, writing,

I see by your magazine, March 18, 1895, that you advocate or at least think that dairy butter makes better pastry than lard. I have never been successful with butter but am very particular about my lard. When I use butter, my pastry is less delicate.

Rorer retorted,

In answer to this, I would say that I have never seen a piece of pastry made from lard that was even eatable. Puff pastry *cannot* be made from lard or a lard substitute, Pastry made from butter is delicate and flaky like sheets of tissue paper, and is free from grease or greasy appearance. Pastry made from lard has that peculiar taste of lard, which of course spoils everything. I do not consider lard an eatable product under any circumstances, and am sure that in less than ten years the majority of people will be of the same opinion.⁸⁰

This exchange reveals tensions deeper than the technical advantages of using lard, butter, or vegetable oils. Rorer’s distaste for lard spoke to wider cultural concerns with health and nutrition. Culture brokers like Mrs. Rorer influenced the incorporation of

⁸⁰ The original exchange referenced by the subscriber comes from the March Household Inquiries section of *Household News*. Mrs. S., of Wilmington, Del., wrote: “Why is pastry made from butterine not as light and puffy as when made from good butter?” In response, Rorer wrote, “On account of the suet it contains...Butterine will, however, make tender and brittle pastry, and is far better than lard. Try the Diamond Butter Oil; pouring cupful over one quart of flour, then adding just enough ice water to mix; roll out and use.” See Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Answers to Inquiries,” *Household News* 3 (March 1895): 106.; Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Answers to Inquiries,” *Household News* 3 (May 1895): 200.

novel, brand name products through product endorsement. Lard alternatives presented one choice through which women negotiated their roles as household purchasing agents in the emerging consumer culture.

In her book *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market*, Susan Strasser argued that the basis for contemporary consumer culture formed in new relationships between manufacturer, consumer, and retailer. She explains,

On the one hand, the power that brands gave manufacturers was constrained by consumers' close relationships with local merchants and retailers' connections with wholesalers. On the other, to promote Strong brand identification, manufacturing corporations established reputations and relationships with consumers as surely as the corner grocer did through personal contact and personality. The triumph of these new relationships during the forty years or so around the turn of the century created the basis for contemporary consumer culture.⁸¹

The relationships between brands, advertisers, retailers, and individual consumers created a complicated network in which figures like Sarah Tyson Rorer played an essential role. The large manufacturer depended on the small retailer to carry their product in their store so that the consumer could purchase it. The consumer looked to her local grocer or favorite cooking authority for guidance on which product to purchase. Though Strasser does not specifically reference the Progressive Era cooking authority in this overview of contemporary consumer culture, the female authors and editors promoting domestic science served as cultural brokers and

⁸¹ Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press 1998), 28.

translators of new brands to readers of popular magazines and cookbooks. Thus, manufacturers depended on each of these stakeholders to retain brand power and influence in the market.⁸²

The production and promotion of Cottolene, a manufactured, brand-name product, provides a case study through which to explore these dynamics in practice. In 1898, the N.K. Fairbank Company, based out of Chicago, began manufacturing a lard alternative made of agricultural waste products cottonseed oil and oleo stearine. Cottolene contained ninety percent cottonseed oil and ten percent beef suet. Cottonseed oil came from the oil pressed out of seeds separated from the boll in cotton processing. Beef suet came from fat removed from the head and neck of the cow in meat processing. Both ingredients originated as byproducts of their primary industry. Literature of the period described Cottolene shortening as pale yellow in color with the consistency of butter. The substance reportedly tasted and smelled less offensive than lard, though become rancid if improperly stored in a hot environment.

Through tactical advertising and endorsement, the manufacturer promoted *Cottolene* as an economical, sanitary, and healthy replacement for lard. Sarah Tyson Rorer added authority and legitimacy to the emerging brand through the power of her reputation as a culinary authority. Advertisement alone would not convince consumers to change their habits. Therefore, Rorer's role as a culture broker was integral to the brand's success. As consumers increasingly relied on food products prepared outside of the home, they made choices in the marketplace based on recommendation, taste, consistency, and a perception of health and purity. This case study demonstrates how

⁸² Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*.

Sarah Rorer used her public influence to affect the discourse on housewives' incorporation of new food products like *Cottolene*, using cookbooks and endorsement as a vehicle for promoting domestic science ideology.

Compound shortenings emerged at a time when consumer suspicions of adulterated hog lard ran high, and Pure Foods advocates increasingly expressed concern for the transparency of food ingredients. As new products entered the market, consumers began purchasing lard alternatives manufactured with complicated factory mechanics. Cooking school instructors like Sarah Tyson Rorer and Marion Harland helped trigger the normalization process, replacing factory refined lard with factory produced shortening. Cultural brokers like Rorer could translate the constructed benefit and advantages of new food products to female consumers in ways that magazine advertisement alone could not achieve.

Pointing to the incorporation of new foods in written recipes, Rebecca Sharpless explains the normalization of new food products in American cuisine in her case study on rural cookbooks,

Cookbooks and recipes, like every other aspect of human existence, are subject to fads and fashions. a newly available ingredient or cooking tool might spawn a slew of recipes from cooks wanting to appear au courant. in the late nineteenth century, chafing dishes were all the rage, while pressure cookers, fondue pots, and other such impedimenta appeared periodically in American kitchens with accompanying recipes. New foods, such as sweetened condensed milk and flavored gelatin, struck home with American cooks, who then wrote them into recipes.⁸³

⁸³ Rebecca Sharpless, "Cookbooks as Resources for Rural Research," *Agricultural History* 90 no. 2 (Spring 2016): 197-198.

Sarah Tyson Rorer participated in this process by testing Cottolene in her Philadelphia test kitchen. She found it satisfactory enough to recommend, and her writings introduced cooks to various ways of using the product. In other words, advertisements, cookbooks, and endorsements shaped how consumers perceived Cottolene. Advertisements manipulated and hid from consumers the nature of Cottolene's ingredients as reused industrial waste. The N.K. Fairbank Company divorced the process of production from the act of consumption through marketing. Using the power of their reputation, food reformers like Sarah Tyson Rorer impacted the introduction of lard alternatives by writing letters of approval and promotional cookbooks. The resulting success further distanced consumers from the agricultural processes of food production.⁸⁴

The N.K. Fairbank Company

Capitalizing on the potential of cottonseed oil and oleostearine, the N.K. Fairbank Company began producing *compound shortening*. *Compounds* referred to any shortening product that combined vegetable fat with animal fat. Compounds resulted from the mechanization and refinement of byproducts from other industries (in this instance, cottonseed and oleostearine). N.K. Fairbank became the first company to successfully advertise cottonseed oil as a primary ingredient in compound shortening, containing 80-85% cottonseed oil and 15-20% oleostearine. They developed the first product marketed as a lard compound in 1884, eventually

⁸⁴ Though the economic incentives involved in the arrangement are unknown, Rorer wrote the product into an entire book of recipes using Cottolene.

introducing the Cottolene brand in 1887.⁸⁵ However, Cottolene did not receive public attention until the Philadelphia Food Exposition of 1891, where N.K. Fairbank introduced their new cooking fat, “Golden Cottolene.” A Kansas newspaper described the company’s transition from lard to compound,

For twenty-five years this company was like-wise the leading lard producer of the world and abandoned lard merely because a new world was to be conquered. With keen business perception they saw in cotton seed oil the basis for a still larger business in a more healthful, more economical and in every way more desirable food product than lard. When this new product was perfected and their plans carefully arranged they turned their attention from the lard business, and with a courage born of the confidence that they had produced what the world had so long demanded, viz, a substitute for lard, they launched Cottolene.⁸⁶

Nathanial Kellogg Fairbank founded N.K. Fairbank and Company as a lard refinery, processing and marketing hog fat from the meat packing industry in Chicago (Figure 8). Lynette Boney Wrenn outlined the timeline of cottonseed oil compounds in her book, *Cinderella of the New South: A History of the Cottonseed Industry, 1855-1955*,

During the 1870s, the N.K. Fairbank and other lard producers lost much of the firmer types of pork fat to the new margarine industry, but they gained the hardening agent, oleo stearine, a byproduct of oleo-oil manufacture. Meat packers made oleo oil from the margarine trade by separating the liquid and solid components of beef fat.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, “History of Soy Oil Shortening,” *History of Soybeans and Soyfoods, 1100 B.C. to the 1980s* (Unfinished Manuscript 2004), 2.

⁸⁶ *The Leader Courier from Kingman*, “The Largest in the World,” (Thursday, April 18, 1895): 5.

⁸⁷ Lynette Boney Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South: A History of the Cottonseed Industry, 1855-1955* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press 1995), 80.

In other words, the margarine trade directly competed with the lard trade for resources. Using two manufacturing byproducts: oleo stearine and cottonseed oil, N.K. Fairbank produced a new compound shortening that replicated lard and competed with margarine. N.K. Fairbank made a product that looked and tasted like lard, but they recognized that success hinged on convincing women of Cottolene's superiority to lard.

Sarah Tyson Rorer and Cottolene

Rorer served as editor of *Table Talk* when the magazine published its first mention of N.K. Fairbank's new product, *Golden Cottolene*, at the Philadelphia Food Exposition of 1891. The article stated, "It is pure cottonseed oil and beef suet, and needed no other indorsement than was afforded by the principals of the Philadelphia and Boston cooking schools."⁸⁸ After debuting at the Food Exposition, the first Cottolene promotional materials started circulating as early as 1892. In one of the earliest endorsements for the cooking fat, Eleanor Kirk, a writer and working women's rights activist, highlighted many of the primary selling points,

This new and hygienic substitute for that curse of the kitchen – lard – is made of the best beef suet and purest cotton-seed oil. Housekeepers of even average common sense know that these materials are not only harmless, but that, if any kind of fat is necessary for human consumption, these are the best that can be found. Lard has produced more scrofula, made more dyspeptics, and spoiled more complexions than any other substance ever used, and now there is happily no further necessity for it. Lard heretofore has been almost indispensable in the construction of pie crust and for frying purposes. But Cottolene does all this work better and without danger to health. Cottolene is also a

⁸⁸ Mrs. M.C. Meyer, "Philadelphia Food Exposition of '91" *Table Talk* 7 (1892 January): 15.

perfect substitute for butter. This last most expensive cooking luxury need no longer be added to pie crust, molasses cake, etc., etc. It does not take as much Cottolene for pie crust as lard, and now one can eat a piece of well-made pie without the fear of blotches and trichinosis before one's eyes. Cottolene will do everything that lard and butter have done, and without injury.⁸⁹

To add legitimacy to their product, the company sought endorsements from celebrities like Kirk, and leading female cooking experts across the country. In addition to advertising in popular women's magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Harper's Monthly*, N.K. Fairbank published several cookbooks. Most notably, the company sought out Sarah Tyson Rorer to edit their first cookbook. *Home Helps* originally released in 1898 and eventually published in three editions (second edition in 1900, and third edition in 1910). In the 1898 edition of *Home Helps* Sarah Tyson Rorer's letter of endorsement featured prominently after the title picture and her signed photograph. Introducing the product, she said,

I have the honor to inform you that, after several thorough and careful tests of Cottolene, I was highly pleased with the results. I used it in every and all the ways that one would use lard—even in the preparation of sweet cakes, and found it almost absolutely tasteless. Having as high a boiling point as pure animal fats, I also consider it an important frying medium. By chemical analysis we find it to be a pure and unadulterated article, and a much more healthful product than lard, and as a substitute for the same I heartily recommend it. Yours truly, / SARAH TYSON-RORER, / Principal Philadelphia Cooking School.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ N.K. Fairbank and Co., *Cottolene, The New Shortening for Sale by All First-Class Grocers Everywhere* (Chicago: N.K. Fairbank and Co., ca. 1894), 10.

⁹⁰ An abridged version of the same letter appears in the 1900 and 1910 editions. In subsequent editions, Rorer no longer featured as the primary voice of Cottolene, but rather shared the spotlight with other prominent cooking instructors: Mary J. Lincoln, Linda Ames Willis, Helen Armstrong, and Marion Harland. Among them, Mrs. Mary J. Lincoln also published a cookbook for N.K. Fairbank in 1907, entitled *Pure Food Cookbook*. See: Sarah Tyson Rorer, Foreword in *Home Helps: A Practical and Useful*

Why did the N.K. Fairbank Company seek out Sarah Tyson Rorer to endorse their burgeoning product to a female consumer market? The company had a refinery located in Philadelphia, and they may have attempted to use her local following to create brand loyalty among Philadelphia consumers. In addition to building a reputation as a trusted local figure, Sarah Tyson Rorer was also a nationally recognized celebrity whose endorsement could reach female readers across the country. Not surprisingly, Cottolene advertisements appear in magazines edited by Mrs. Rorer, often next to articles authored by Rorer herself. This visual connection between ad and article reinforces the power of Rorer's reputation and association with the merits of Cottolene.

However, Mrs. Rorer changed her recommendation patterns outside the context of cookbooks and articles directly connected to the N.K. Fairbank Company. Instead of recommending exclusively Cottolene, she often instructed cooks to use lard, suet, or Cottolene. For example, In the recipe book she compiled after the Illinois Corn Exhibit Model Kitchen at the Woman's Building of the Columbia Exposition in Chicago, 1893, Mrs. Rorer referred to cottolene shortening as an improper noun rather than a proper brand name. This discrepancy may indicate that Cottolene was commonplace enough that cooks were already familiar with the products, and Rorer could refer to the fat by its brand name in the ingredient lists. Both the presence of Cottolene and acknowledgement of the N.K. Fairbank Company in the Corn Exhibit cookbook indicate that Rorer approved of the product. She was not endorsing Cottolene in an official capacity and therefore did not explicitly recommend its use

Book of Recipes with Much Valuable Information on Cooking and Serving Breakfasts, Luncheons, Dinners and Teas (Chicago: N.K. Fairbank Co., 1898).

over the use of butter or lard. It seems that Mrs. Rorer's brand loyalty extended only as far as officially sanctioned endorsements because she saw no conflict in recommending lard and Cottolene at the same time. This practice may appear contradictory to the contemporary reader, but Sarah Tyson Rorer's loyalty remained to her readers above all else. Inconsistencies in recipes prove that she prioritized Pure Foods values of economy, frugality, and quality over brand loyalty. Like the tensions between factory and home-canned foods, a cooking authority could contradict their endorsement of a product if it fit within their Progressive values system.⁹¹

Consumers' Response

Cottolene endorsements highlighted themes of good digestion, economy, and convenience, and rational eating. While Mrs. Rorer, other cooking celebrities, and physicians reinforced selling points, female consumers were already picking up on the critical marketing objectives. In 1892, after Cottolene's debut at the Philadelphia Food Exposition, a *Table Talk* subscriber asked if Rorer recommended Cottolene. Rorer responded that, "Cottolene is a perfectly clean production of cotton-seed oil and beef suet. It fries quickly, is economical, and wholesome"⁹². Abandoning their connections with lard, the manufacturers turned around and competed directly with the product they formerly produced. Cottolene contained industrial waste products inedible until they could be chemically altered. The quick acceptance of Cottolene as an

⁹¹ Sarah T. Rorer, *Recipes Used in Illinois Corn Exhibit Model Kitchen, Women's Building Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893* (Chicago: Illinois Women's Exhibition Board 1893), 7.

⁹² Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Housekeepers' Inquiries," *Table Talk* 7 (1892 April): 141.

improvement on lard testified to the innovation of the company's marketing strategies. They appealed to women's desire for science and progress in their kitchens by highlighting the nutritious benefits, simultaneously using symbolism of purity and wholesomeness to pure food ideologies of morality. While Rorer endorsed Cottolene, she also endorsed other lard alternatives and continued recommending lard in recipes.

Competition between lard, vegetable oils, and margarine created complicated relationships between cooking authorities, consumers, and manufacturers. Controversy over adulterated lard in the late nineteenth century instigated N.K. Fairbank's transition to a new product. They switched from lard to shortening, turning around completely to create a product that competed directly against lard. Together with Armour and Co., they made approximately 90% of all lard compounds sold in the late 1880s.⁹³ By 1887, N.K. Fairbank had become the largest single consumer of cottonseed oil for use in shortening, absorbing 20% of the annual US oil output. Shortening took approximately half of all cottonseed oil produced by that time.⁹⁴

Rorer's complicated endorsement patterns in the 1890s demonstrate the complexity of the transition in the public sphere from lard to lard alternatives. For example, she endorsed Diamond Butter Oil in *Household News* (Figure 9).⁹⁵ Using much of the same terminology Pure Foods as Cottolene promoters, like: pure, wholesome, and digestible, Diamond Butter Oil emphasized the vegetable makeup of

⁹³ William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, "History of Soy Oil Shortening," *History of Soybeans and Soyfoods, 1100 B.C. to the 1980s* (Unfinished Manuscript 2004), 2.

⁹⁴ Shurtleff and Aoyagi, "History of Soy Oil Shortening," 2.

⁹⁵ *Household News* 3 (1895 January): n.p.

the cottonseed oil product. Ads mentioned that Mrs. Rorer used Diamond Butter Oil in her cooking school and in her lectures. At this point, Rorer appears to have attached her name to this product, a direct competitor to Cottolene. A subscriber from Washington D.C. wrote in an 1895 issue of *Household News*, “Where can I purchase oil for cooking at a reasonable cost? I never use lard for cooking, and do not like the odor of Cottolene. Rorer responded,

The Diamond Butter Oil is a perfectly pure cotton seed oil; has a sweet nutty flavor, and is the best cooking fat I have ever used. It can be purchased at Alfred Young’s, and I think, at Cornwall’s in your city, I presume other grocers keep it, but I am not familiar with the Washington stores.⁹⁶

The subscriber directly mentioned her distaste for Cottolene and Rorer made no effort to defend the product. While she may have approved of Cottolene, N.K. Fairbank had not yet negotiated her brand loyalty in the form of a cookbook publication. Rorer’s product endorsement was arguably an economic arrangement and not purely a moral obligation to pure foods reform. Cottolene hit the market two years before and represented one of several vegetable-oil based alternatives to lard. While she did not convey a strong opinion about using one lard alternative over another, Rorer adamantly encouraged eliminating the use of lard. The same subscriber wrote: "What kind of oil do you use for frying in place of lard, which I understand you never use? Shall I use oil same as lard?" Rorer responded,

Yes ; you use oil much the same as you would use lard. In New York, when you saw the frying of the oysters and raglets, I was using pure cotton-seed oil. Diamond Butter brand — the best oil of its kind it has ever been my pleasure, so far, to find. But may I add for myself, I do

⁹⁶Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Answers to Inquiries,” *Household News* 3 (April 1895): 157.

not fry—and I am sure the world would be much better if all the frying-pans were by law abolished. In answer to the question, "Can I use butter for frying?" I must say, No. Butter burns at a very low temperature, and is then no longer butter, and will, if used but a little while continuously, produce indigestion. Use oil for frying chicken, and with a half teaspoonful of kitchen bouquet, your sauce will be a rich brown. Clarified butter is best for cooking purposes, but do not use it for severe heat. Life is now too short for the work we have to do, why shorten it ? or why be so miserable while we live? A well-fed individual is always happy, the whole world is sunshine, even on the darkest day. The stomach is the " log " upon which the " see-saw " rests ; when the board is well-balanced, we are happy; when not, it is an effort to keep going, and we soon tire.⁹⁷

Rorer and her readers continued this dialogue over time. Rather than the one-sided, prescriptive conversations we see in her cookbooks and articles, Mrs. Rorer's answers to reader inquiries demonstrated how some women responded to and negotiated the transition to lard alternatives. In an 1896 article, she talks about lard as an outdated product,

Believe me, the time is not far off when our maids will hold certificates according to their profession, and our housewives must fall into a more scientific way of living. Now Mrs. Jones puts lard in her bread because she likes a heavy, greasy, soft bread. She trains her maid to make it so. After a little, this maid goes to a house where such materials are never used—a grade higher—and the poor girl is discharged on account of inefficiency. Let us have a standard, not of palate, but of science.⁹⁸

Rorer labeled lard as inefficient and contrary to science; however, less than a year later she recommended saving meat drippings (suet) as a waste conservation measure. In this context, vegetable-based oils and shortening were a hygienic option,

⁹⁷ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Answers to Inquiries," *Household News* 4 (January 1896): 14.

⁹⁸ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Domestic Economy for Farmers' Wives," *Household News* 4 (November 1896): 399.

but a luxury that the thriftiest of housewives may not have felt she could afford.⁹⁹

While Rorer adamantly refused to use lard in her own home cooking, she saw no contradiction in talking about how women could more effectively and economically use lard in their own cooking. Even if she did it unconsciously, Mrs. Rorer recognized that not everyone was going to switch away from lard overnight. She advocated for more ‘hygienic’ alternatives while simultaneously acknowledging the deeply ingrained practice of using lard in the kitchen.

Like her negotiation of home canning technology, Rorer’s encouragement to switch to products like Cottolene shaped women’s adaptation to industrial manufactured food products in the kitchen. Convincing women to switch from the traditional products that had an identifiable, familiar source to an industrial product took skill and a deep understanding of one’s audience. Cultural brokers like Rorer worked in conjunction with the emerging field of mass media advertising to convince middle and upper-middle class cooks and housewives that they needed to transition.

Cottolene as an Industrial Product

In *Cinderella of the New South*, Wrenn traces the historical account of the American cottonseed industry. As she explains, the invention of the cotton gin in 1834 gave cotton processors the ability to mechanically separate the seeds from the fibers of the cotton boll. With the resulting surplus of cottonseed, manufacturers developed creative solutions to transform cottonseed from a waste product to the second most

⁹⁹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Small Leakages of a Household,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 14 (Sept 1897), 24.

valuable cash crop in the South.¹⁰⁰ Black, male laborers processed Crude cottonseed oil in oil mills in southern states. It was a laborious, dirty process demanding long hours for little profit. In the second half of the nineteenth century, in to the twentieth century, oil mill owners exploited the labor of mill workers. To process the seeds, machinery first removed the hull from the meat of the seed. Next, steel rollers crushed the meats, flattening them to a flake and a “cook,” heated the mixture to remove oil. By the 1880s, machinery in oil mills advanced to the point where a steam powered or lever-pulled cake former extruded a cake of cottonseed onto a pressing cloth. A hydraulic powered press pressed the oil out of the cakes before a worker scraped the pressed cake off the pressing cloth.¹⁰¹

According to a 1928 Department of Agriculture estimate, it took an average of one ton cottonseed to yield forty gallons of oil. At this point in the process, the resulting crude oil had a dark red color, unpleasant odor and flavor. The crude oil processor shipped the oil from the southern oil mill by tank rail car to a refining facility. Shortening manufacturers often chose to locate their refining facilities in northern cities. N.K. Fairbank & Co., for example, had refineries in Chicago, St. Louis, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Montreal.¹⁰²

Before it could be consumed as a food product, cottonseed oil had to be refined. Chemists played a key role in developing the processes necessary to closely replicate lard by neutralizing the smell, taste, and color of cottonseed oil. Major

¹⁰⁰ Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, xvii.

¹⁰¹ Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, 43-53.

¹⁰² Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, 51, 75.

advancements in cottonseed oil chemistry came in 1879 with N.K. Fairbank's hiring MIT educated chemist, W.K. Albright. Albright found a new way to bleach cottonseed oil using fuller's earth to remove the color. Before that, N.K. Fairbank bleached the cottonseed oil in vats on the roof of their building.¹⁰³ Additionally, in 1883 Albright invented cooling rolls that prevented crystallization and improved texture. Rapid cooling and beating the Cottolene gave the product a creamy texture that more accurately replicated the consistency of lard.¹⁰⁴ Chemistry continued to impact the shortening industry into the following decades as chemist Henry Eckstein developed a deodorizing technique in 1891 to remove the disagreeable odor when frying. A closer taste, consistency, and color to animal fat meant that the company could use a higher percentage of cottonseed oil, the less expensive component in their product. These chemistry developments gave the company an advantage over their competitors, allowing them to become the world's largest compound producer.¹⁰⁵

However, effectively replacing lard required more than replication. The manufacturer's wording in a 1905 *The Ladies' Home Journal* advertisement indicates N.K. Fairbank's awareness of the need to create a product that appealed to something deeper in the psyche of the consumer.

Nature's Gift from the Sunny South/ Cottolene/ Shortens your food –
Lengthens your life/ An Ounce of Prevention Is Worth A Pound Of

¹⁰³ Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, 80.

¹⁰⁴ Shurtleff and Aoyagi, "History of Soy Oil Shortening," 2.

¹⁰⁵ Competing refineries kept their methods secret, the N.K. Fairbank Company going as far as to label their tank cars with "Garden City Dairy Company of Chicago," to obscure the tank's contents. See: Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, 81-82.

Cure / Human nature is hard to solve. People who are most particular about adapting the weight of the wearing apparel to the season and its conditions, who would never think of going out in a storm without an umbrella and rubbers, who would not sit in a draft for a farm, will calmly sit at the table and stuff themselves with lard-soaked food and not realize for an instant that it is likely to give them a full-fledged case of indigestion and clog their whole inner machinery. Lard is produced from hog fats, sometimes impure, always ingestible, and there's a good day coming then no one will think of using it for cooking. Cottolene is the only rational frying and shortening medium in the world. It is made from refined vegetable oil and choice beef suet – everything about it is digestible and conducive to health.¹⁰⁶

To appeal to “human nature” and “people who are most particular,” N.K. Fairbank chemically altered cottonseed oil through a series of bleaching and cooling processes. They wanted to contrast lard and Cottolene as impure versus natural, but in reality, both products resulted from manipulation through technological and factory processes. Advertising Cottolene as “Nature’s product of the Sunny South,” stretched the truth. Cottonseed oil may have originated from a cotton plant, but the process of getting it to the consumer was anything but direct. Expelling and processing the oil was a dirty, laborious, mechanical process made possible through chemistry, large-scale manufacturing equipment, and the labor of oil refinery workers in poor and dangerous conditions. Yet Cottolene dominated the shortening and oil market until the development of hydrogenated vegetable fats.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the development of hydrogenation enabled manufacturers to use only vegetable fats, rather than using a percentage of oleostearine. Saturating the fat molecules with hydrogen makes them more stable and

¹⁰⁶ N.K. Fairbank Company, “Cottolene: An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure,” Advertisement, *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 22 (January 1905): 59.

less likely to go rancid. The properties of hydrogenated oils can be controlled as opposed to animal fat which varies based on age, diet, time of year of animal.¹⁰⁷ Manufacturers no longer had to rely on the high prices demanded by meatpackers for animal fat.¹⁰⁸ The release of all-vegetable shortenings like Snowdrift and Crisco in 1911, eventually lead to the decline of Cottolene.

Cottolene exemplifies how marketing impacted the acceptance of unfamiliar manufactured food products. In *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, Susan Strasser explains the development of consumerism in the American market stating, “A population accustomed to homemade products and unbranded merchandise had to be converted into a national market for standardized, advertised, brand-named goods in general.” The story of Cottolene demonstrates this shift from customer to consumer in American culture in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁰⁹ While it seems that a manufactured product contradicts the home-grown, home-made philosophy of domestic science, manufacturers like the N.K. Fairbank Company produced a demand and a loyalty to their brand by creating the perception of necessity.¹¹⁰ Utilizing the reputation of national figures like Sarah Rorer, they took a product made of industrial scraps and effectively replaced a household staple. To do so, the manufacturer diverted attention from the raw materials and masked the process involved in

¹⁰⁷ Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, 83.

¹⁰⁸ Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*, 82.

¹⁰⁹ Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 6-7.

¹¹⁰ Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 17, 27.

producing the fat. Selectively omitting and manipulating information was inherent to the medium of magazine advertisement. The advent of nationally circulated subscription magazines made Rorer's product endorsement, Cottolene's branding, and targeted advertising power possible.

Cottolene and Magazine Advertising

N.K. Fairbank focused their advertising efforts on mass general interest magazines geared toward women, like *The Ladies Home Journal*. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, a literate, urban middle class produced a demand for national news, political and social commentary. Cheaper paper pulp prices and technological advancements photographic reproduction like half-tone lithography, reduced publishing prices and made literature like cookbooks and magazines more affordable.

The earliest U.S. women's magazines, like *Godey's Ladies Book*, appealed to an elite audience, in part because of the two-dollar annual subscription price and the content aimed at an educated upper-class female audience. The ten-cent magazine became a reality by the 1880s with improvements in national railway transportation and the Postal Mailing Act of 1879 establishing favorable mailing rates for periodicals. More affordable magazines reflected their cheaper price by featuring practical, helpful hints. The transition from the days of *Godey's Ladies Book* and *The Ladies' Home Journal* represented a larger generational shift. Women like Sarah Tyson Rorer and Marion Harland came of age during the reign of *Godey's Ladies Book*, but ended up writing for the practical, advice-based magazines like *The Ladies' Home Journal*. "In a culture where at least some women were undertaking new tasks, and where women were often separated from traditional sources of advice and

information, helpful-hints literature was potentially more and more relevant to many women's everyday activities.”¹¹¹

By the end of the nineteenth-century, more women participated in the reading public, and publishers produced content specifically geared toward women as a special interest group. Gender segregation in reading magazines increased with the development of women's magazines and the function of reading for women broadened to include more helpful-hints, news, and reform ideals. Magazines like *The Ladies Home Journal* published materials written by authors like Sarah Tyson Rorer, which shaped and reinforced readers' existing value systems.¹¹²

The Ladies' Home Journal was the first United States magazine to reach one million subscribers. The middle-class readership targeted by the *Journal* was largely white, native-born, Protestant, wives of business men with families. This group identified around shared morals, value systems, homes, child rearing activities, and patterns of consumption. The American middle-class was a “self-conscious socio-cultural group,” in other words, being *middle-class* was both an economic and a social distinction. Magazines like *The Journal* contributed to the discourse on what it meant

¹¹¹ Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions: Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post, 1880-1910*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 22.

¹¹² Damon-Moore, *Magazine for the Millions*, 20-26; Salme Harju Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace: Edward W. Bok and The Ladies Home Journal* (Baton-Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), xi-xiii.

to belong to this group by appealing to readers' social reform conscience. The act of reading reinforced identity, and set parameters for social norms.¹¹³

The magazine was a product to be sold, and as business men, publishers appealed to the needs of both subscribers and advertisers. The magazine provided a medium for presenting new consumer products to a national market. According to Steinberg in *Reformer in the Marketplace*,

Advertisers demanded large circulation figures and respectable editorial content that would provide large circulation figures and respectable editorial content that would provide "good company" for their advertisements. The readers, who were generally middle class, wanted to be entertained, kept abreast of contemporary issues, and given information they could put to practical use. They were also receptive to political and social reforms that could soothe their consciences and effect piecemeal changes but would not fundamentally disrupt the patterns of their lives. The successful middle-class magazine effectively gauged the limits of the two audiences.¹¹⁴

Recognizing the potential of magazines as a mechanism for advertising manufactured consumer goods, advertising agencies began to develop. Publishers like Cyrus Curtis at *The Ladies' Home Journal* worked with the advertising agencies to sell space in magazine pages and convince manufacturers of the effectiveness of advertising. Advertising agents created ads that spoke directly to consumers, increasingly female consumers. The "Feminization of American purchasing"¹¹⁵ refers

¹¹³ Damon-Moore, *Magazine for the Millions*, 23.

¹¹⁴ Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, xii.

¹¹⁵ Edward Kirkland, *Industry Comes of Age: Business, Labor, and Public Policy, 1860-1897* (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1967), 273, as cited in Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, xii.

to the shift to women purchasing household goods from male-oriented general stores. Manufacturers of products manufactured on continuous-process machinery addressed ads directly to women. Consumer culture and magazines for women progressed in tandem, national markets, growing businesses, improved transportation, and communications infrastructure laid a foundation for mass markets. Thus, women's magazines were highly identified with consumption. Women were responsible for outfitting and maintaining the middle-class home, and advertising in the 1880s began to commodify household needs previously identified as private, like cooking and eating.¹¹⁶

In the ten years between 1896 and 1906, N.K. Fairbank purchased fifty-eight advertisement spaces for Cottolene in *The Ladies Home Journal*. The time frame coincided with Rorer's tenure writing for the Journal from 1897 to 1911 (Refer to table in Figure 10). Cottolene ads often appeared next to Rorer's articles, and frequently offered a free copy of Home Helps for subscribers who wrote in requesting a copy.

Targeting female consumers, Cottolene advertisements featured reoccurring themes: the physical qualities of Cottolene, the rational qualities of Cottolene, and the emotional merits. Every ad contained at least one or a combination of these themes: presenting Cottolene as a superior alternative to lard; advocating for the pure food characteristics of the product; encouraging informed consumer decision-making (with a bias towards Cottolene); lauding the health and digestive benefits; and outlining the physical qualities of the natural ingredients. N.K. Fairbank ads identified Cottolene as

¹¹⁶ Damon-Moore, *Magazine for the Millions*, 20-26.; Steinberg, *Reformer in the Marketplace*, xi-xiii.

a natural product, masking the realities of the industrial manufacturing process. Advertisers identified Cottolene as a product of scientific advancement and technology. Freedom from reliance on lard promised to improve consumer's quality of life. Highlighting the benefits of: economy, good digestive properties, healthfulness, taste, and happiness, advertisers masked the negative elements of industrial manufacture, like: poor labor conditions, waste, and chemical manipulation of the ingredients.

Part of the Consumer Revolution ushered in the development of packaged products produced under a brand name. Rather than buying in bulk, consumers could purchase shortening in a tin pail with the Cottolene emblem. Advertisements described the physical packaging of Cottolene and the rationale for selling the product in pails. According to advertisements, the tin pail prevented strong odors from contaminating the smell and taste of the shortening. The packaging (Figures 11 and 12) reinforced Pure Foods values by indicating the product contents, and visually referencing white, pure, wholesomeness. Many of the ads referenced the steer's head in cotton-plant wreath as a mark of authenticity to ward off counterfeit attempts. A soft-eyed, youthful calf gazes out over a halo of delicate cotton bolls. The emblem, encircled by red and gold, sits at the center of a white label. The image communicated the contents of Cottolene, suet for the head and neck of steer and cottonseed oil. It communicated the innocence of a youthful calf and the symbolism of the purity in the color white. Rather than purchasing a quantity of lard by weight, consumers bought Cottolene as a branded product, purchasing the imagery and value system wrapped up in the brand.

The most prominent theme in N.K. Fairbank's shortening advertisements was Cottolene's superiority to lard. An advertisement in a July 1900 issue of the Ladies

Home Journal (Figure 13) connected Cottolene to technological and scientific advancements,

In the production of white Cottolene we have more than kept pace with the advancement and improvement of the times. While Cottolene is to all other shortening and frying mediums as the express train to the stage coach, or the electric light to candle light of older times. It is purer, more efficacious and healthful than any other cooking fat.¹¹⁷

Emphasizing a shift from old to new, the manufacturer connected compound shortening with examples of industrial technology. Factory produced goods were changing cooking and household work for American women. Lard represented the old way of keeping house, and Cottolene the new.

Cottolene advertisers emphasized the botanical origins of the ingredients, claiming Cottolene as a product more directly linked to nature than lard. The illustration (Figure 14) opposite the introduction page of the 1910 edition of N.K. Fairbank Company's *Home Helps: A Pure Food Cookbook*, depicted an expansive cotton field, with an overflowing basket of cotton in the foreground. The words, "Natures gift from the Sunny South. The Source of Cottolene," framed the image. Idealized images of cotton fields emphasized the plant-based ingredient in compound lard, while ignoring the complex and ugly realities of the cotton industry at the time. The earlier edition of *Home Helps* featured a halftone image of African American field workers gathering cotton in large baskets (Figure 15). As Susan Strasser explains in *Never Done*, "The increased availability of consumer goods only partially obscured the fact that the profit motive outweighed the well-being of workers and

¹¹⁷ N.K. Fairbank Company, "Try This! White Pure Wholesome Cottolene," Advertisement, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, 17 (July 1900): 24.

consumers.”¹¹⁸ These ads idealized the labor required to produce cottonseed oil for Cottolene, ignoring the racial and economic exploitation of the black bodies used to produce the product.¹¹⁹

Advertisers also marketed Cottolene as a rational product. For instance, a Cottolene ad appeared to the side of a Sarah Tyson Rorer article in the November issue of *The Ladies' Home Journal* 1898 (Figure 16). The advertisement illustrated a man wearing a graduation cap representing, “Brain,” over an image of a man with crossed arms and rolled shirt sleeves representing, “Brawn.” The text of the advertisement reinforced the idea of Cottolene as a rational, logical choice,

Brain and Brawn best nourished when food proves digestible.
Digestion's best aid is the pure, clean, vegetable shortening and frying
medium – Cottolene. Makes every dish it enters wholesome and
delicious; welcome alike to everybody in every walk of life.¹²⁰

The language informed female consumers that they too could nurture strength and intelligence with the help of Cottolene. Cottolene was not only rational from an intellectual standpoint, but from an economic perspective as well. Prominently displayed on the tin, the word “economical,” played on the perception of consumers’ interest in frugality. Because the cook could use one-third less Cottolene than butter or lard, a pail of Cottolene lasted longer than a pail of lard in standard cooking.

¹¹⁸ Susan Strasser, *Never Done* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 7.

¹¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of race in the processing of cottonseed oil and production of Cottolene, see: Wrenn, *Cinderella of the New South*.

¹²⁰ N.K. Fairbank Company, “Brain and Brawn,” Advertisement, *The Ladies' Home Journal* 15 (November 1898): 30.

Marketing their brand as rational and economical through advertisement, N.K. Fairbank created a perceived need for Cottolene. According to a newspaper article published a few years after the introduction of Cottolene,

The N.K. Fairbank Company attribute their success to the merit of the articles they produce; to the fact that their products are staple necessities of life, not luxuries, and to careful, thoughtful, persistent newspaper advertising which they continue through all seasons, in hard times in and in good.¹²¹

The company acknowledged that newspaper advertising and a perception of need contributed to the success of their product. Even a domestic science advocate reinforced the idea of Cottolene meeting a need in the market. In a pamphlet advertising Cottolene as a new product, Marion A McBride said,

It is not every cook who can use butter of the best quality for all cooking. It is right here that the danger lies. The housekeeper thinks she cannot afford the best grade of an article and yet fancies she must have that article at all hazards. people who are at all sensitive cannot eat food containing those ingredients. Cottolene is a preparation which comes into the market to meet just this need. The product is made of cotton-seed oil and beef suet, is the same consistency as lard, and looks like it, except in color, which is creamy. Cottolene is delicate in preparation and is used in place of lard or butter in cooking. For frying it is unsurpassed, as a rich brown color is easily secured.¹²²

Advertisers and proponents lauded Cottolene's beef suet content as superior to lard because lard was thought to be difficult to digest, and Cottolene was thought to be

¹²¹ *The Leader Courier from Kingman*, "The Largest in the World," Thursday, April 18, 1895: 5.

¹²² Marion A McBride, quoted in, N.K. Fairbank Company, *Cottolene: The New Shortening for Sale by All First-Class Grocers Everywhere* (Chicago: N.K. Fairbank, 1900), 13.

more digestible. The product tagline, “Cottolene Shortens your food – Lengthens your life,” summarized N.K. Fairbank Company’s argument for the healthfulness of their product as compared to lard. Attacking the greasy, smelly, offensive qualities of lard as an indication of healthfulness and digestibility, advertisers encouraged home cooks to conclude that cottonseed-based cooking fats were preferable to animal fats. Instructions indicated that the cook use one-third less Cottolene than butter or lard. Therefore, in terms of the quantity of fat ingested, it was indeed a healthier alternative. In reality, frying, baking, and cooking with lard alternatives was not as healthful as it was advertised to be. Cooking with an excess of fat, especially hydrogenated oils in plant-based cooking fats, contradicts the nutritional science behind the perceived health benefits of shortening.

Dependability struck a chord with Progressive Era Americans because the meatpacking industry was notoriously unscrupulous about the quality of meat products produced. Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, published in 1906, responded to increasing concerns with working and food conditions in the Chicago meatpacking district. Cottolene claimed to be purer than lard because of its light-yellow color, less offensive taste, and inoffensive smell. Lard could go rancid, and Cottolene had less chance of spoiling. Quality standards for shortening and lard gained the attention of Congress, resulting in regulation requirements for labeling ingredients.¹²³ N.K. Fairbank Company identified consumer’s concerns highlighting lard as less dependable than Cottolene,

¹²³ Congressional hearings on an 1888 bill to require proper branding of shortenings.; Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1906).

A Vegetable Lard as a Substitute for the Animal Material “Packing house lard as now manufactured is a highly objectionable food product. It is questionable whether hog lard as ground out and melted up in our large modern packing houses, located at the different stock yards of the United States, is either healthful or clean. Cottolene, on the other hand, is pure, refined and clarified cotton-seed oil with an admixture of choice selected beef suet.”¹²⁴

The introduction of lard alternatives prompted scientific analysis of the nutritional qualities in competing products. In an 1896 study published by the American Chemical Society, chemists include Cottolene in an experiment on the combustion points of butter and lard. The experiment attempted to find measurable ways of detecting adulterations in manufactured fats, concluding that, “There are few precise physical or chemical data by which to decide the desirability of one fat over another for culinary use.”¹²⁵ A scientific perspective on nutrition was important to culinary reformers like Rorer. She took these types of studies into consideration when recommending products. Advertisements catered to this concern for digestion and purity. For instance, the series of six advertisements reproduced in Figures 17-22 were published each month from October 1903 to March 1904 in *The Ladies’ Home Journal*. Each advertisement illustrated a tale of a different archetypical character and their encounter with Cottolene. *The Cook* spins a tale of a cook who was dismissed

¹²⁴ N.K. Fairbank Company, *Cottolene: The New Shortening*, 11.

¹²⁵ Similarly, a female nutritionist, Ella Louise Rau wrote her 1916, Master’s Thesis in Nutrition at the University of California, determining the conditions governing the absorption of fats by fried foods. Specifically, she studied Crisco, Cottolene, olive oil, and lard. While Rau’s results and the American Chemical Society results were both inconclusive, their experiments demonstrate an interest in the scientific study of fats used in the kitchen. See Emil Alexander Schweinitz, *The Use of the Calorimeter in Detecting Adulterations of Butter and Lard* (New York: American Chemical Society 1896).

because her habits are too old fashioned and she refuses to use Cottolene. The cook represented a shift from old to new. *The Baby* in the second advertisement snuck into the pantry to eat biscuits made with Cottolene, to the approval of his mother. Here the message was that pure food households use Cottolene. The next issue played on the connection with *Simple Simon*, contrasting the old way of making pie with the new. *The Lady*, was the picture of good breeding and refinement. She used Cottolene to fry doughnuts for her husband, an allegory of ideal domesticity. *The Housewives*, disagree on all matters apart from Cottolene, a comical yet relatable scene placing Cottolene in an everyday context. Finally, *The Dyspeptic* suffered from indigestion at the negligence of a cook who fed him lard. The ad connected Cottolene to wellbeing and happiness. In sum, the series of six archetypes represented many of the reoccurring themes in Cottolene advertisements. Advertisements were not the only way that consumers could be convinced of the merits of lard alternatives. In fact, cooking authorities often cautioned consumers against accepting products without a critical eye to quality and value.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, Connecticut, published a Bulletin in January, 1918 on Economy in Feeding the Family: III Food Oils and Fats, by E.M. Bailey. The bulletin, targeted to “citizens of Connecticut,” presented scientific analysis meant to inform the consumer of the classification of various fats and statistics on adulteration and chemical make-up. Summarizing many of the Pure Foods Movement values, the introduction to this bulletin outlined the desired outcomes,

It is intended that our analyses should guide the consumer to intelligent purchasing; aid him to a better appreciation of comparative food values, and foster alertness to the deceptions of flashy labels and cunning advertising literature. Particularly at this time we desire to help him to

co-operate in the program of economy that is being urged upon us...The fats chiefly used by our grandmothers for culinary'- purposes were the rendered fats of hogs or beef, known respectively as lard or beef suet. To-day the housewife has a large array of shortening compounds at her disposal.¹²⁶

The pamphlet encouraged informed consumerism, looking beyond advertising and labels. This may seem like common sense to the contemporary reader, but brand-specific packaging and advertising were new to consumers of the era. Compound lards like Cottolene succeeded in the marketplace due to manufacturer's ability to appeal to Pure Foods sentiments in their marketing. With an increasing variety of lard alternatives on the market, products had to meet scientific scrutiny, nutritional expectations, and transparency of contents to meet with housewives and critics approval. The manufacturer obtained approval in part through smoke and mirrors because the process of producing Cottolene remained hidden, and the reality of working conditions and manipulation of ingredients were not clearly conveyed to consumers. As Strasser argues, culinary authorities and manufacturers exploited the authority of domestic science expertise using guilt and fear to create artificial needs to sell goods.¹²⁷

The Legacy of Cottolene

Cottolene's reign was short lived in the grand scheme of lard alternatives. By 1911 Proctor and Gamble Company found a method of producing shortening with one hundred percent vegetable fat, eliminating the need for oleostearine. Cottolene was

¹²⁶ E.M. Bailey, *Economy in Feeding the Family: III Food Oils and Fats* (Ne Haven: Connecticut Agricultural Station, 1918).

¹²⁷ Strasser, *Never Done*, 8.

quickly eclipsed, and eventually disappeared from the marketplace. The story of Cottolene still lingers in ephemeral materials like packaging tins and copies of Rorer's *Home Helps*. Cottolene embodied the history of Progressive era advertising and popular health and quality concerns of the time. Packaged in the trappings of scientific advancement, economy, and quality ingredients, the N.K. Fairbank Company created a perception of need in consumers. Mrs. Rorer was instrumental in the success of Cottolene because she added the legitimacy and authority necessary to replace a traditional product with a mechanically produced product.

Chapter 3

MRS. RORER'S DIET FOR THE SICK

How did someone like Mrs. Rorer become a cooking celebrity and household name? This case study explores how publications influenced the material culture of the kitchen and the formation of Sarah Tyson Rorer's celebrity. As the Cottolene case study introduced, cookbooks and magazines are more than the sum of their text; they are objects that shape the preparation of food as well as the preparer. Like home canning equipment or compound shortening, the cookbook functioned as a new tool in the Progressive Era kitchen. Looking at the materiality of cookbooks and magazines associated with Rorer, we can further understand the impact of her influence and the role of her voice in the American Progressive Era home. The following chapter argues that Sarah Tyson Rorer intended her cookbook *Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick* as a tool to legitimize her own perspective on diet and nutrition. She sought to elevate dietetics as a profession and empower women to use domestic science in their care for the convalescent.

In the wider scope of Sarah Tyson Rorer's body of work, *Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick* represents a departure from her traditional cookbooks aimed at teaching food preparation to cooks and middle class housewives. *Diet for the Sick* speaks to Mrs. Rorer's interest in the scientific study of food as medicine and her dedication to the emerging field of dietetics. The book culminated the author's longstanding interest in nutrition, evidenced by a history of health and wellbeing articles written over the span of her career.

Per Rorer's view of nutrition, diet could be used to restore health and treat disease. Her philosophy on food preparation advocated for simplicity, eliminating

complexity and excess and paring down to the nutritional essentials. She wrote, “My ideals were those created and guided by modern methods that teach simplicity, regularity, and exactness.”¹²⁸ Food in its simplest form was the medicinal key to health and wellbeing. She advocated for an approach to dietetics in which disease could be isolated, analyzed, and treated with an individually prescribed menu. In the author’s view, dietetics existed outside the realm of everyday food preparation, and occupied a specialty cooking status. A separate cookbook reinforced Rorer’s stance that recipes in *Diet for the Sick* were only to be consumed by invalids.¹²⁹

Illness and Recovery

Rorer attributed her interest in dietetics to a lifelong fascination with the medical field. She grew up assisting her father with his chemistry work, and she recalled wanting to pioneer a new path as the first female pharmacist. Studying at a men’s college, Rorer eventually decided that her gender prohibited her from the pursuit. She explained,

But I hadn't any idea how difficult it would be... Women who did things that other women didn't do were ridiculed, and not much respected. I was very sensitive to this attitude, and soon gave up trying

¹²⁸ In a response to an inquiry, Rorer explained her stance on simple food preparation, “The object of the modern cooking school is to teach people a better and simpler way of living. If you have learned to make only fancy desserts and do fancy cooking, you certainly did not select the best school. It was to relieve women from the monotony of the kitchen and to plead for a simpler living that the modern cooking school was started.” See: Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Mrs. Rorer’s Answers to Questions,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal* 15 (October 1898):36.; Sarah Tyson Rorer, “How I Simplify Cooking,” *Good Housekeeping Magazine* 58 (April 1914): 423.

¹²⁹ Shintani, 94.

to be the first woman pharmacist. Then, as it happened, I was visiting some relations in Philadelphia who took me to see the newly organized cooking school connected with the New Century Club.¹³⁰

In her biography on Mrs. Rorer, Emma Weigley explains how Rorer continued to spend time reading in the medical libraries at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Self-educated, she felt she had sufficient knowledge to speak to students and readers on issues of dietetics. Supplementing her informal studies, decades of on the ground experience bolstered her scientific recommendations on food selection and preparation specific to condition, “As an assistance to my thirty years' experience in feeding the sick, I have read most of the recent works on diet, and have added any new ideas that have been well tried out.”¹³¹ Many culinary authorities possessed a formally education, which enabled them to pursue the scientific study of cookery. But Rorer’s background with chemistry and pharmaceuticals distinguished her perspectives on domestic science and dietetics from other domestic advice writers of the era.¹³²

In addition to a scholarly interest, Rorer had personal experience accommodating and experimenting with convalescent diets because her family members suffered from poor health. She had digestive problems herself, and digestion remained a central theme in her writing. For instance, in a June 1905 edition of *The Ladies' Home Journal*, Sarah Tyson Rorer gave readers a more personal glimpse into her views on diet and wellness (Figure 23). The article, “How I Cured My Own Ill-

¹³⁰ Elise Biesel, "The First Cook in the Land," *Good Housekeeping* 58 (March 1914): 420-421.

¹³¹ Rorer, Foreword in *Diet for the Sick*.

¹³² Shintani, 35-36.

Health,” outlined Rorer’s personal experiences nursing convalescent family members and treating her own headaches, poor digestion, and typhoid fever. She attributed her illness and recovery to food choices, stating that on her former diet she should not be alive. Rorer wrote,

I soon regained my health, and in two years had a little better health than I had ever before known. Year by year, on less food, more carefully selected, thoroughly masticated, I gained Strength, until now I find no difficulty whatever in working from fourteen to sixteen hours a day, almost three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.¹³³

She described her medical recovery in phrasing similar to a spiritual conversion, explaining her life before and after the influence of scientific cookery. Shintani evaluates the religious undertones in Rorer’s work, concluding that,

In spite of the secularization of American society, religion and morality persisted, and many cooking reformers underscored their secular work with spiritual rhetoric. The Protestant ethos of salvation remained throughout the nineteenth century, but science, not religion, would lead Americans into salvation.¹³⁴

Reinforcing this conclusion, spiritual language permeated Rorer’s writing,

Now and then I find a person, perhaps an invalid, who grasps at every suggestion that tends to better health, like a drowning man at a Straw; and I can see those persons now, healthy, Strong, and ready and willing to scatter broadcast the better methods of living. The better methods are always the simpler ones.

In every community in which I have lectured one or two women would take hold of the work as energetically as I did, and give the glad tidings

¹³³ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “How I Cured My Own Ill-Health,” 22 (June 1905): 38.

¹³⁴ Shintani, 67.

to others. It is, however, a most difficult subject on which to preach
reform.¹³⁵

Drawing from Protestant constructs of Salvation familiar to her readers, Rorer explained how the hopeless invalid could find new life and redemption in the teachings of domestic science.¹³⁶

Diet for the Sick connected Rorer's work to broader social trends in professionalization of the workplace and gender dynamics in science and medical fields. The study of dietetics progressed because of the work of advocates like Rorer, who presented and explained healthcare and disease prevention. In a socio-cultural era bridging the religious and the scientific, Rorer and other culture brokers, used religious language to imbue dietetics with a sense of importance and legitimacy. The printed word as a cookbook transported scientific ideas of nutrition, health, and invalid care from author to reader. Thus, the object as a transmitter of ideas played a role in the transition from religious to scientific discourse.

Emma Seifrit Weigley describes how Rorer's personal experience impacted the development of Rorer's participation in the Philadelphia medical field. According to Weigley, Rorer built a local reputation for herself teaching cooking classes at the New Century Club and giving lectures at the Women's Medical College and Franklin Institute in the early 1880s. As a result of her growing reputation lecturing on diet, young doctors from the Jefferson and University of Pennsylvania hospitals contacted

¹³⁵ Rorer, "How I Cured My Own Health," 38.

¹³⁶ Rather than rejecting urban middle-class amenities, Rorer advocated "refined simplicity" to counteract excessive materialism. In other words, she employed the Protestant ethos of frugality and self-control to try to bring order to the homes of the urban middle class. See: Shintani, 85.

her about teaching private, informal cooking class in her home.¹³⁷ Expanding her operation, Rorer established the Philadelphia Cooking School on 1525 Chestnut Street over the winter of 1883.¹³⁸ At her new headquarters, a group of Philadelphia doctors approached Mrs. Rorer to run a new service for invalids traveling in to Philadelphia to be treated by well-known physicians. These patients stayed at downtown hotels that couldn't meet their dietary needs, so the physicians paid Rorer and her staff to deliver meals to them from the cooking school kitchen. She consulted with patients who had complex dietary problems because doctors did not have the time or cooking knowledge to construct individualized diets. Beyond pressures on their time, male physicians lacked the skills to cross nineteenth-century gender barriers and give advice on meal preparation.¹³⁹

A short time later in 1886, Rorer finished the manuscript of her first cookbook, and published *Mrs. Rorer's Philadelphia Cookbook* through the publishing firm Arnold and Company.¹⁴⁰ In the foreword Rorer stated, "References to Sick Diet or Medicated Food have purposely been avoided, as there is in preparation a work on Dietetics, which will contain all the recipes collected and tried during my connection with hospitals."¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Weigley, 23-24.

¹³⁸ Paraphrasing from Weigley, 33.

¹³⁹ Shintani, 96.

¹⁴⁰ Weigley, 35.

¹⁴¹ Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Mrs. Rorer's Philadelphia Cookbook* (Philadelphia: Arnold and Company, 1886), viii.

From the onset of her publishing career, Rorer envisioned a book devoted to the diet and care of the sick. In both *Table Talk* and *Household News* Rorer mentioned plans for a cookbook with recipes for the sick as early as 1892,

Before entering upon the inquiries this month I would like to make an announcement. An inquirer last month wished to know when the new cook-book would be published. My answer was: "Not for some time." This little answer was evidently misunderstood. Many persons have inquired at various stores for the new edition. Allow me to announce that there will not be a new edition of Mrs. Rorer's cook-book. I could not possibly give plainer recipes than in the old one, and when I make a new book it will be an entirely new one, not containing a single recipe that may be found in the old. But this new book is only in thought, not a scratch of the pen has been done toward even its beginning. I do hope to have "The Sick Diet" book ready for publication in September.¹⁴²

Not only did the subject matter interest her, it also met a need in her readers who wrote in asking advice on how to feed specific medical conditions. Among the articles she wrote for *Table Talk*, *Household News*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, and *Good Housekeeping*, Mrs. Rorer frequently addressed diet, nutrition, and health.

Many Inquiries are made from time to time concerning Mrs. Rorer's New Book Diet for the Sick. It is now being revised preparatory to being placed in the printer's hand. The original scope of the book has been entirely changed, and when the finished work is finally published, it will be found that it was well worth waiting for. Those desirous of securing a copy can send their names and addresses to us, and we will notify them of the date of publication. Their orders will have preference.¹⁴³

Rorer's publishers Arnold and Company advertised the upcoming publication in 1896, but it would take another eighteen years before Arnold and Company published her

¹⁴² Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Housekeepers' Inquiries," *Table Talk* 7(May 1892): 169.

¹⁴³ Arnold and Company Publishers, advertisement, *Household News* 4 (1896): xxii.

Diet for the Sick. In the interim, Rorer wrote extensively on diet and treatment of illness.

Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick

The prescriptive nature of Rorer's writings limits the ability to decipher how women responded to her advice in their actual meal preparation and domestic activity. A deeper study of the material culture of the Progressive Era kitchen could help parse out the real behavior from the ideal behavior prescribed in cookbooks and magazines. These primary source articles contribute to our understanding of cultural ideals and norms. As Jane C. Busch explains about using cookbooks as research documents, critical analysis allows the researcher to uncover the ways in which cookbooks are used to sell something: a product, the cookbook itself, or a set of ideas. Within their pages, cookbooks reveal implicit and explicit agendas. Readers exercise the agency of choice when deciding what to prepare and which advice to follow. Looking at the cookbook from a variety of perspectives, the cultural historian can look beyond the author's text at: advertisements, patterns of use, number of editions published, and format of the advice. These indicators help scholars better understand how cooking literature was used as a source of inspiration, a platform for imagination, or a sounding board of domestic reform ideology.¹⁴⁴

Women did in fact write to Rorer asking for advice on how to prepare food for certain illnesses and conditions. For instance, *Table Talk* published a series of eight monthly articles written by Rorer from 1887 to 1888. In the "Dietetics: Food for

¹⁴⁴ Jane C. Busch, "Learning by Pinches and Dashes: Using the Cookbook as a Research Document." *History News*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1997): 23.

Invalids” series, Rorer answered reader inquiries about how and which foods to prepare for specific medical conditions. Subscribers wrote in asking about adulterated foods to avoid, a list to be eaten by people troubled by constipation, what to feed a child with rickets, suitable food for the dyspeptic, a liquid food diet for a brother taken with typhoid fever, proper diet for a diabetic, whether to allow a feather bed to a convalescent and how to select a good nurse. In her response to a request for a diet suited to the dyspeptic, Rorer began by breaking down recommendations in daily recommendations of grain and carbon, recommending more nitrogen for manual labor to build muscle tissue. She emphasized plain, simple living, and a balanced diet, concluding that scientific food choices were the best prevention and medicine. As she explains, “If we could but make the cooks of the nation, we would care not who made its apothecaries.”¹⁴⁵

Reader inquiries demonstrate that some of her readers shared her belief that food was vital to wellbeing. They sought her out for food advice, because she filled a niche that medical professionals did not advise at the time. A subscriber from Harrisburg, PA asked for a list of liquid foods suitable for typhoid fever, and a recipe for milk and barley water ordered by the doctor. The request indicates that dietetics existed in a liminal state between the professional medical sphere and the home. The doctor, like the doctors Rorer worked with in Philadelphia, recommended food specific to the condition of typhoid fever, but did not offer further instruction. At the same time, readers did not ask Rorer for medical advice beyond diet. Thus, *Mrs.*

¹⁴⁵ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Dietetics Food for Invalids,” *Table Talk* 3 (December 1888): 28.

Rorer's Diet for the Sick filled a perceived need in the professionalization of dietetics and the scientific study of nutrition in the home.

The author reemphasized this in the foreword, “My sole desire in writing this book has been to assist those persons who must care for their sick at home, and the doctor and the nurse, without trespassing on the domain of either.”¹⁴⁶ Rorer explained her objective for the text of one of her last books released in October of 1914. Three years later, Lenna F. Cooper and Lulu C. Graves founded the American Dietetic Association, ushering in change towards defining dietetics and nutrition as professional fields. Rorer spent several years working on this tome of cooking and dietetic knowledge, assembling a volume organized in three sections. Physically, the book numbers 557 pages, comparable in size to her most ambitious cookbooks like *Mrs. Rorer's Philadelphia Cookbook* or *Mrs. Rorer's New Cookbook*, but in the broader scope of her published writings, *Diet for The Sick* was unique in its format and intended function.

The table of contents laid out the three main sections of the book: Part One – Diseases, Part Two – Recipes, and Part Three – Physicians' Ready Reference List. The first section, “Diseases,” gave a description of common diseases and overview of feeding requirements, lists of foods to eat and avoid, selected menus with suggested dishes for breakfast, dinner, and supper. Conditions ranged from diabetes to consumption to pregnancy, arranged by type. The “Recipes,” section gave ingredients and preparation instructions for each of the recipes recommended throughout the book. Some of the recipes highlighted the use of patent food products manufactured

¹⁴⁶ Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick* (Philadelphia: Arnold and Company, 1914), 7.

for the convalescent diet. Arranged alphabetically by disease, the third section, “Physicians; Ready Reference List,” condensed the information given in the previous two sections for quick reference. According to the author, the third section was, “arranged to facilitate the work of the physician, and conserve his time.”¹⁴⁷

Materiality of the Cookbook

Mrs. Rorer’s Diet for the Sick was folded in duodecimo dimensions (approximately 5x7 3/8 inches), and bound in buckram cloth (Figure 24). Buckram cloth has durable qualities such as heavy weight, mildew and water resistance. From a publishers’ perspective, buckram withstood heavy wear and tear. As a tool in the kitchen, the binding materials could evidence the publisher’s consideration of the cookbook’s function in a kitchen environment.¹⁴⁸

The modern cookbook as we know it today developed over the nineteenth century, an innovation Mrs. Rorer witnessed over her career. The modern cookbook incorporated standardized units of measurement, heating, and timing, where earlier cookbooks often lacked specific quantities or scientific standardization. A cookbook prescribed the use of other materials in addition to food. For example, standardized measurers (Figure 25), like a half pint measuring cup, tin or glass was necessary to follow cookbook instructions exactly. Using Ruth Schwartz Cohen’s concept of

¹⁴⁷ Rorer, *Diet for the Sick*, 459.

¹⁴⁸ According to advertisements for Mrs. Rorer’s other cookbooks published by Arnold and Company, the dimensions and price of the book were similar to her other volumes, but the use of buckram cloth was unique. Her other cookbooks specify only a cloth binding. See: *Boston Cooking School Magazine of Culinary Science and Domestic Economics*, 19 (March 1915): 661.

technological system, the cookbook operates within the kitchen as part of a system in which “each implement must be linked to the others to function appropriately.”¹⁴⁹

Yet again, the double-edged sword of industrialism ushered in this change through the introduction of uniform stoves and uniform measuring systems. By the time Sarah Rorer began her writing career, cooks of the late 19th century had stoves and ovens with uniformly regulated temperature, as opposed to earlier wood or coal fueled stoves. Cookbook formatting responded to material changes in the kitchen. Standardization also fit within the ideology of culinary reform because it encouraged scientific rigor and methodology in the kitchen. The cookbook of the 1880s and 1890s thus reflected the concept of progress in the kitchen.

Highlighting the importance of the modern cookbook in the kitchen, Rorer published and elaborated on a subscriber’s inquiry:

Your book has already been received and paid for itself in the knowledge it has imparted. I have tried over twenty recipes, and failed in none. My nurse and ex-professional cook rather smile at my devotion to the book, but I tell all my family and cook, all of whom believe in mixing the ingredients together according to experience, smile at implicitly following a recipe, that I can't afford to do so until I have some guide to give me experience... I find that cooks frequently produce perfect dishes the first time they try a recipe, but after that they do not like to be measuring the ingredients, so guess at the quantities, and therefore results are not so good.¹⁵⁰

The subscriber, a woman who hired a cook in the past, found herself navigating food preparation in her own kitchen and relying on the cookbook for instruction. She did not cook from habit or experience as the nurse and cook did in her anecdote, rather,

¹⁴⁹ Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, 13.

¹⁵⁰ Sarah Tyson Rorer, “Housekeepers’ Inquiries,” *Table Talk* 6 (March 1891): 111.

the subscriber represented the generational shift in the roles of middle-class housewives. She relied on domestic science principles of exactness and precision, trusting the authority of Rorer's voice through her cookbook. In response, Rorer reinforced the subscriber's reliance on the cookbook,

... it is of just as much importance to measure one's ingredients for dishes to be served on the table, as it is for the chemist to weigh out his drugs. Again, a guessing cook is always a slow and extravagant cook. Measuring takes but a moment, and then she knows that it is exactly right, while guessing requires so much time for tasting that the cook invariably loses hours... Follow your recipes closely and carefully, learn to work quickly, and you will never regret your care the longest day you live... I should as soon think of employing an uneducated born doctor as a born cook. If I could impress this fact upon all housekeepers and cooks in the country, we would not be a nation of dyspeptics, neither would we be a nation of consumptives, for we would soon learn to feed ourselves in such a manner, that our organizations would be perfectly nourished, and we would be well in body, soul and mind.¹⁵¹

The cookbook, in Mrs. Rorer's opinion, was an educational tool necessary in the proper preparation of healthy food. As part of a technological system, the cookbook functioned with standardized measures and improved fuel sources.¹⁵² She emphasized the scientific precision of recipes, comparing cooking to chemistry and medicine. She wanted to convey that a cookbook, more specifically a *recipe*, was essential to health and efficiency. The cook or housewife could not expect to succeed without the guidance of the professional culinary expert.

Beyond the content of a cookbook, the physical properties and presence of the cookbook reflected contemporary concerns with science, progress, and social reform.

¹⁵¹ Rorer, "Housekeepers' Inquiries," *Table Talk* 6 (March 1891): 111.

¹⁵² Cowan, *More Work for Mother*, 13.

The inquiry response demonstrated following a written or printed recipe as a way of embodying domestic science values. Comparing measuring to chemistry, cooking was held to a scientific standard, and the cookbook functioned as a necessary tool in the process.

The publishing history of Mrs. Rorer's cookbooks reveals more about the physical properties of the cookbook within its use context in the kitchen. Sharpless explains the significance of the standardization of cookbooks,

As the field of home economics developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, recipes became more standardized, with precise measurements and step-by-step instructions. Cooking experts were determined to make their work more of a science and less of an art. With the growth of American consumerism, corporations hired professional food writers to assemble cookbooks that would best showcase their products. Thousands of those ephemeral corporate cookbooks reside in archives, with countless more hidden in kitchen drawers and shelves.¹⁵³

Rorer may have been the cooking expert to generate the content, but she relied on the partnership of Arnold and Company Publishers to produce many of her cookbooks. The number of editions published and where they could be purchased indicate the book's popularity. Analysis of advertisements within the cookbook indicate which manufacturers wished to affiliate their products with the tenets of the cookbook or reach a similar target audience.

Arnold and Company Publishers was in the heart of the publishing district of Philadelphia, in the Old City. At 420 Sansom Street, Arnold and Co. published all of Mrs. Rorer's independent cookbooks. The publisher's name was prominently

¹⁵³ Busch, "Leaning by Pinches and Dashes," 22.

displayed in advertisements and title pages of Rorer's work, but Arnold and Co. also operated with printers G.H. Buchanan in the same building. The two companies merged to operate a joint publishing and printing business in 1886, and worked together on all of Mrs. Rorer's cookbooks.

While the intended goal and function of Sarah Rorer's writing was printed in bold black ink in the foreword, determining the actual reception and audience of the volume proves more difficult to determine. Looking at advertisements for *Diet for the Sick*, we get a better sense of who was intended to purchase the volume, and where. Published in the 1914 October issue of *American Cookery* (formerly the Boston Cooking School magazine), Arnold and Company Publishers advertised Mrs. Rorer's work,

Out October First, Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick Contains : A full and comprehensive treatment of the various diseases of the body, imparting a knowledge of great value and assistance in caring for the sick. What to Eat and What to Avoid in each case. How to properly select and prepare the foods recommended. There are hundreds of recipes for the making of the most tempting and nutritive dishes, giving a wide variety to the daily menu of the invalid.

The completion of this book by Mrs. Rorer marks an era in the life of this remarkable woman. It has been a long time in preparation, but she would not let it go from her until the last word had been said on the subject. For years she has been teaching the housewives of this country, through the medium of her lectures and books, how to live properly, by setting before them the best methods of cookery, and the best ways and means for preparing and using foods economically. Now she crowns all her efforts by teaching how to care for and feed the unfortunate sick.

The book is written in Mrs. Rorer's usually clear and lucid style, so that what she has to say can be readily understood and put into practice.

Bound in buckram cloth, large 12mo, 557 pages/ Price Two Dollars,
net/ For sale by all bookstores and department stores, or of/ Arnold and
Company, Publishers/ 420 Sansom Street, Philadelphia¹⁵⁴

The advertisement encourages housewives to purchase the book, emphasizing the value of the purchase, and the credibility of Rorer's work. We also learn that department stores and bookstores carried copies of the volume, indicating the ease with which a consumer could access the book.

Cookbooks and Treating Illness

Historians of cookbooks reference Amelia Simmons' 1796 *American Cookery* as the first American cookbook, written by an American for an American audience. American cookbooks of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries frequently contained home remedies and treatments for illness. *The Diet for the Sick*, while unique in its thoroughness and length, was not an entirely novel idea. It was common to include domestic advice, food preparation, and remedies for illness in the same places through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁵⁵ For example, in her diary kept between 1785 and 1812, Martha Ballard recorded events of her daily life as a midwife in present-day Maine. In the diary, she included remedies for illness, treatments for various ailments, and recipes for preparing food. Later nineteenth century authors continued to incorporate food and treatment for illness, in books that went beyond cookbooks, but acted more as domestic references for household management. *Mrs. Beeton's Household Management*, published in 1861 in London, was a popular

¹⁵⁴ *American Cookery* 19 (Oct 1914), 179.

¹⁵⁵ Sharpless, "Cookbooks as Resources," 199.

reference for running a Victorian household, and remained one of the most popular cookbooks through the nineteenth century. Among chapters on managing servants and methods of English cookery, *Mrs. Beeton's Household Management* contained chapters on invalid cookery, and managing disease in children. Recipes for the sick were written in paragraph form with general measurements and a description of how to prepare the dish. No mention was given of treatment for specific ailments.

Thirty-five years later, *Fannie Famer's Boston Cooking School Book* (1896) was one of the first modern cookbooks, incorporating methods of scientific measurement, ingredient lists, an authoritative voice, and scientific instruction. *Mrs. Rorer's Philadelphia Cookbook* or her *Diet for the Sick*, employed all these marks of modernization, describing ingredients, measurements, and detailed preparation instructions. Recipe books started including standardization in the 1880s with the development of standardized measurers. Recipes in printed cookbooks reflected this change by listing ingredients separately from cooking steps.¹⁵⁶

Standardization was a means of achieving consistent, dependable results, and cooking authorities advocated for standardization of measurement, stove mechanics, and ingredients as a way of ensuring that anyone could successfully learn to cook.¹⁵⁷ In treating the sick with food as medication, scientific attention to measurement and process were important. Thus *The Diet for the Sick* and cookbooks with similar goals used recipes to guide readers to better practice of domestic science.

¹⁵⁶ Sharpless, "Cookbooks as Resources," 205.

¹⁵⁷ Neuhaus, "The Way to a Man's Heart," 531.

Rorer was not the first author to recognize a need for a book on scientific cookery for the sick. Physicians and other cooking authorities wrote similar cookbooks, with similar formatting and instruction. For example, Fannie Farmer wrote *Food and Cookery for the Sick and Convalescent* in 1904. Her book catered to trained nurses in her cooking classes and mothers. The book was similar, but not laid out by condition like *Diet for the Sick*. Instead, Farmer laid out her book by food or by specifics for infant care, diabetes, more general advice on convalescence and common conditions and illnesses. An earlier volume published in 1882, Dr. C.H. Gatchell, M.D. wrote *How to Feed the Sick: or Diet in Disease: for the Profession and the People*. Aimed at a professional and lay audience, this book also follows a similar layout to *Diet for the Sick*, describing treatment and dietary recommendations by condition. It differed in that it is not as much a cookbook as a diet treatment book. It is possible that Rorer took inspiration from the format of references like Gatchell's in *Diet for the Sick*.

The release of *Diet for the Sick* met positive review. The following ad tells us at least two important things: first, Rorer reached at least one of her target audiences, primarily housewives. Second, her books could be purchased in bookstores and department stores. Though she formed her reputation in Philadelphia, the advertisement of her cookbook in nationally-circulated magazines speaks to the national scope of her work and the pervasiveness of her voice. Printed in *The Boston Cooking School Magazine of Culinary Science and Domestic Art* in 1914, the ad read:

Every Woman who cooks/ Or wants to know how/ Or who employs a cook/ surely ought to own a Mrs. Rorer Cook Book/ Mrs. Rorer's New Cook Book Cloth \$2.00; by mail \$2.20/ Philadelphia Cook Book Cloth \$1.00 by mail \$1.15/ Diet for the Sick Buckram Cloth \$2.00 by mail

\$2.15/ Just published. A truly wonderful book, and essential in every home.¹⁵⁸

Indicating intended audience and use, the opening sentence points to women as the target audience, women ranging in economic status from cooking for themselves, to employing cooks in their households. The phrasing utilizes popular domestic reform rhetoric to pressure the reader to own Mrs. Rorer's cookbooks if she is interested in being a proper housekeeper and caretaker of her family. Stating that *Diet for the Sick* is "essential in every home," tells us that the book is intended for household use.

Rorer wrote that she was interested in offering a resource to medical professionals as well as her usual audience of middle class housewives, however, she was not universally successful at tapping into the professional medical audience. Not all doctors and medical professionals took Mrs. Rorer's domestic science advice as seriously as did her devoted periodical readers. For instance, in a May 1920 edition of *Good Housekeeping*, Dr. Henry Wiley, voice of *Dr. Wiley's Question Box* answered a reader's inquiry on pot roast as a cause of cancer. The subscriber wrote,

Now along comes a friend with the depressing news that Mrs. Rorer has figured out that the French who, she says, have a greater percentage of malignant growths than any other race, are so because of their great predilection for pot roasts and gravies. What is your opinion on this point? / Mrs. G. R. N., Long Island

In response, Dr. Wiley wrote,

My opinion of gravies, stews, and pot roasts depends upon two things: the degree of hunger with which I approach them, and the excellence with which they are prepared. I am a great admirer of Mrs. Rorer and her ability to cook, but when she gives French gravies, pot roasts, and

¹⁵⁸ *Boston Cooking School Magazine of Culinary Science and Domestic Economics*, 19 (March 1915): 661.

stews as the cause of cancer, she is getting into very deep water. Everything under heaven has been given as the cause of cancer, even the League of Nations. These are all idle dreams. If you are hungry and have a good pot roast, eat it without fear. You may die of cancer, but not because of the pot roast.¹⁵⁹

While her credentials as a domestic expert go unquestioned, Rorer may not have received universal respect for her medical opinions from contemporaries in the medical profession. She saw herself as a scientist of sorts, but as historians like Kiyoshi Shintani have noted, American culinary reformers of the late nineteenth century operated within a middle-class culture of professionalism. Male professionals derived a sense of authority from promoting science as a preservative agent of community welfare, while women made space for themselves within the limits of the professionalism of the domestic sphere. Domestic science provided women a space in the professional sphere, though the expertise of the culinary authorities created a dichotomy between the professional and the amateur. The amateur could not be trusted to follow a recipe accurately or feed her family well, while the professional, educated and experienced in domestic science, could be trusted with the health and well-being of one's family.¹⁶⁰

One could interpret that Mrs. Rorer, in her role as an expert, used Foucaultian constructions of power to establish authority within the institution of the culinary

¹⁵⁹ Harvey W. Wiley, "Doctor Wiley's Question Box," *Good Housekeeping Magazine* 65(May 1920): 90.

¹⁶⁰ Paraphrased from Kiyoshi Shintani's discussion of Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: N.W. Norton, 1976), Shintani, 35-37.

school, and maintain her authority by applying her expertise to the pages of the prescriptive cookbook. As Neuhaus explains,

“Cookbooks are the voice of authority recipes are the directions for detailed behavior. When these authorities of the kitchen also sought authority over the meaning of women’s roles by gendering certain foods or informing women of the inevitability of cooking duties, it was in fact a plea for authority.”¹⁶¹

Applying the culture of professionalism to *Diet for the Sick*, Rorer stretched her authority as far as she dared within the confines of contemporary gender power dynamics. As historians like Shintani have stated, “cooking provided women with the opportunity to expand their field of activities within the prescribed women's sphere.”¹⁶² Rorer gave advice on treatment of medical conditions from the perspective of food science, not encroaching on the physician’s authority, but using the cookbook as a tool to spread her authority and promote her methods of food preparation.

Sarah Tyson Rorer’s Legacy

Rorer, as a woman of her generation, pushed the boundaries of professional constraints for women. She achieved financial independence through her own career, established and ran several businesses, and cultivated a following of readers and disciples who sought out her advice. Yet, she hit a barrier in regards to medical advice. Rorer was never afforded the opportunity to formally study medicine because of her gender, though by the end of her life, women were increasingly admitted to the medical field as dieticians and nutritionists. In the Progressive Era medical field,

¹⁶¹ Neuhaus, “The Way to a Man’s Heart,” 547.; Vester, *Taste of Power*, 7.

¹⁶² Shintani, 43.

women could speak to domestic medical concerns on nutrition and nursing, but men had the public voice of medical authority.

Though works like *Diet for the Sick* attempted to equip the housewife with a scientific, professional skillset, the book ultimately emerged at a time when the responsibility for healthcare was leaving the home and becoming professionalized. Thus, the tenets of progress, science, and modernity Sarah Rorer advocated over her career were the very advancements of modern life that eclipsed her work by the end of her career. The cookbook was intended to serve as tool, an object used in the kitchen throughout food preparation, to translate and navigate the scientific, exact process of preparing food for the sick.

Rorer's dreamed for the discipline of domestic science to parallel or exceed the practice of medicine in importance. She saw food as so important to well-being that she devoted her career to popularizing dietetics through lectures, lessons, magazines and cookbooks:

...Philadelphia opened a cooking school, and I was enrolled in the very first class. Before I had taken the second lesson, I saw the great possibilities of right living and a well-organized school of domestic science. In fact, I saw, a hundred years ahead, the influence that this knowledge would have over the health and homes of the people: how the study and application of domestic science would broaden the housewife; and how it would make cooking a profession, perhaps not second to medicine.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Sarah Tyson Rorer, "How I Cure My Own Ill-Health," *The Ladies' Home Journal* 22 (June 1905): 38.

CONCLUSION

In sum, Sarah Tyson Rorer presented herself as a cultural broker between what she perceived as the external world of industry and medicine, and women in the domestic sphere. Her work proves that these spheres were not separate but fluid, and progress permeated the kitchen as well as the laboratory. Analysis of her work adds to material culture scholarship by contributing to our understanding of how people use text as an object to negotiate gender, power, and social change. To the exclusion of other identities and perspectives, Rorer perpetuated the dominant narrative of white, middle-class, Protestant normality through her writing. Her idea of the everyday, American woman only fit a narrow subset of the population who had access to and interest in the resources, and lifestyle she offered. Rorer “tamed” food to fit a cultural construction of Americanness imbued with Progressive Era ideas of reform, simplicity, and rationality.

Revisiting the questions posed in the introduction, Sarah Tyson Rorer, encouraged women to embrace or reject the modern kitchen by constructing a voice of authority in magazines and cooking literature. Her writings on home canning exemplified the negotiation between industry and tradition, and she embraced industry as far as it aligned with her value system. Rorer, as a gatekeeper, used product endorsement to promote domestic science ideology. Her participation with compound shortenings for instance, affected the introduction of industrialized technologies and food products in an emerging consumer culture. Home canning and Cottolene present an interesting contrast because the processes oppose one another. In home canning, the

process is transparent, appropriated from factory canning, and controlled by the housewife. In Cottolene, the production is masked, removed from the home and packaged with labels and brand names. The aspects of production not mentioned in the advertising, reveal as much as the information that is included, like the nostalgic white-washing of cottonseed processing, in comparison to the exploitation of cottonseed oil laborers. While counterparts, home canning and Cottolene do not contradict one another because they both demonstrate how Rorer encouraged women to position themselves to accept or reject changes to the Progressive era kitchen. Finally, a critical analysis of one woman's cooking literature reveals broader patterns of how food reformers used the medium of cookbooks and magazines to introduce domestic science to the public. Mrs. Rorer intended *The Diet for the Sick* to function as a tool in the kitchen to aid homemakers, cooks, and medical professionals in the preparation of food for the sick. This cookbook demonstrates Rorer's negotiation of gender power dynamics and the professionalization of the field of dietetics.

In his discussion on the psychosociology of food consumption, social theorist Roland Barthes interprets food as a signifier of cultural meaning. As a signifier, food is more than the composition of its ingredients, it is a system of communicating certain characteristics of a given institution or society.¹⁶⁴ In the context of the three case studies presented, Barthes' theories on food as a signifier explain how the materiality of food contributes to or constrains the socio-cultural meanings associated with it.

¹⁶⁴ Roland Barthes, "Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption," Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, *Food and Culture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1979).

Rorer's recipes listed more than ingredients, they carried social meanings attached to Progressive Era constructions of identity and health. For instance, with home canning, the visibility of the produce through the glass canning jar signified the freshness and wholesomeness of its contents compared to the impenetrable tin can. Cottolene was grounded in the physical differences from lard, the smell and texture imply purity. Finally, *Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick* contained recipes for food that is distinct, the aesthetics of beef broth or gruel connoted the treatment of illness. While prescriptive cooking literature does not reveal how women conceptualized or enacted their role in the kitchen, studying the materiality of Progressive Era food and food preparation reveals how ideas and behaviors were presented. Through the presentation of these mores, cultural dynamics of race, class, and gender are exposed (or conspicuously absent). Her writings placed expectations on women to have the economic and social means to hire domestic help, yet also perform a full spectrum of kitchen duties themselves. Rorer sought to empower women to learn about scientific food preparation and find dignity in their role as a housewife. Whether she was successful in that goal or not, her writing ultimately reflects larger transformations in kitchen labor from domestic staff, to tools, to machinery. For better or worse, Sarah Tyson Rorer's work in domestic science and nutrition paved the way for future generations of women to continue shaping the material culture of the kitchen.

FIGURES



Figure 1 *Mrs. Rorer*. March 1914. From: Elise Biesel, "The First Cook in the Land," *Good Housekeeping Magazine* 58 (March 1914): 420. Public Domain, Digitized by Google http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google



Figure 2 *Filling Jars With Stewed Tomatoes Using Wide-Mouthed Jars.* July 1903. From: Sarah Tyson Rorer, "Method Lessons: Home Canning," *The Ladies Home Journal* 20 (July 1903): 26. AP2 L13 F Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

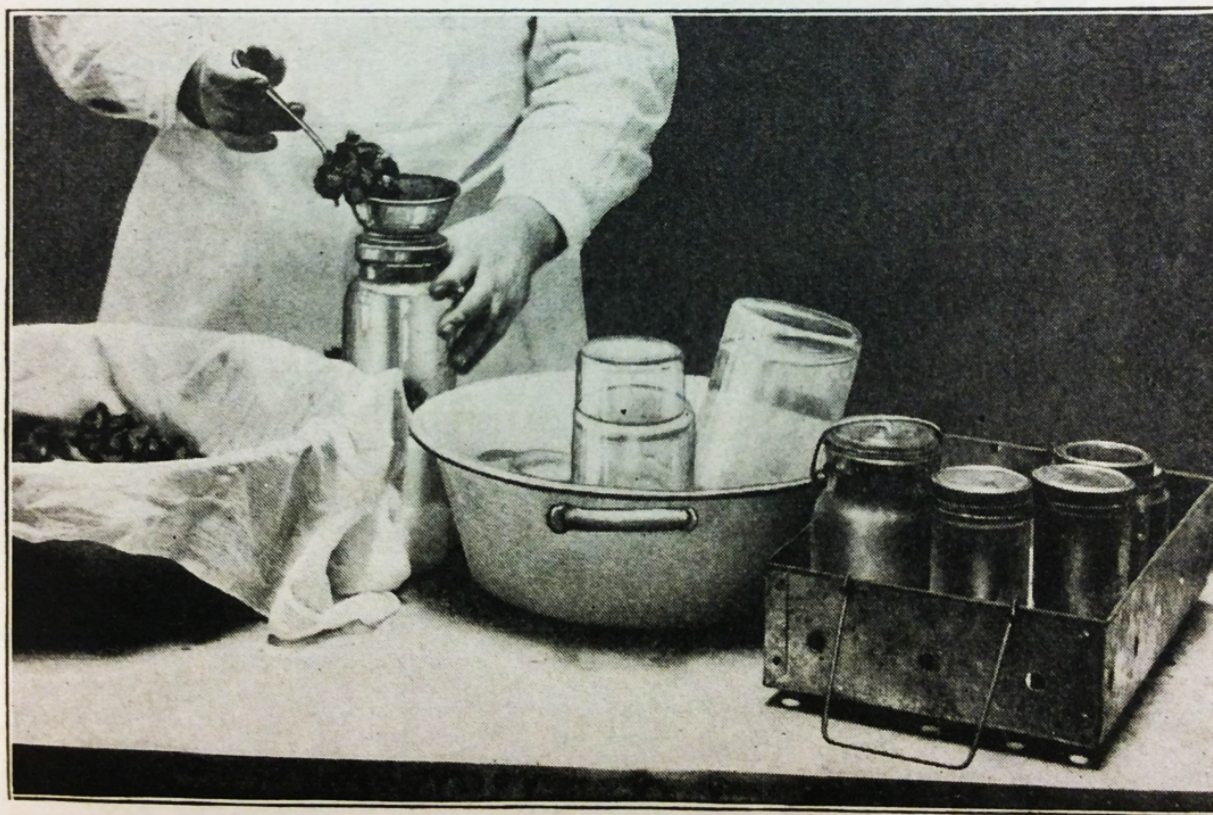


FIG. 4.—Packing blanched and cold-dipped product into jars. Note empty jars to be packed inverted in pan of hot water. They are thus kept clean and hot.

Figure 3 *Packing blanched and cold-dipped product into jars.* 1918. From:
Oscar Herman Benson. *Home Canning by the One-Period Cold-Pack Method Farmers*
Bulletin no. 839 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1918), 7. ZZC
106158 Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.



Green Turtle, Terrapin, Chicken, Consommé, Purée of Game, Mulligatawny, Mock Turtle, Ox-Tail, Tomato, Chicken Gumbo, French Bouillon, Julienne, Pea, Printanier, Mutton Broth, Vegetable, Beef, Pearl Tapioca.

First-class grocers keep them, but look out for imitations.
None genuine without the trade-mark on the label.
A sample can sent on receipt of the price of postage, 14 cents.
Packed in quart, pint and ½ pt. cans, and in quart glass jars.

“No Admittance.”

How familiar this sign! How well it helps to hide the unclean mysteries of many canning factories!

But here's a contrast! Our mammoth canning kitchen (we like this name better than factory) is open for inspection from morning till night, and we will be glad to send a card of admittance to any reader of this periodical who cares to write for it.

The Franco-American Food Co.,

West Broadway and Franklin St., New York City.

Franklin Street Station, Sixth Avenue Elevated Road.

FRANCO AMERICAN
FOOD CO'S

French Soups



Figure 4 “No Admittance”. 1889. From: The Franco-American Food Company. “No Admittance.” Advertisement. *LIFE Magazine* 17 (June 4, 1891): 362. Public Domain, Digitized by Google.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89063017883;view=1up;seq=1>



MAIN PACKING ROOM

Here the food is going into the cans, thousands and thousands of them at one time. Yet all is order and system and the output satisfies the most exacting taste. The up-to-date canner can afford no slip-ups. The nation's health are in his keeping.

Figure 5 *Main Packing Room. 1907. From: Sophie Hurd. Burt Olney's Soups Salads and Desserts: Their Making and Serving. Oneida: Burt Olney Manufacturers, 1907. ZZC 106118 Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.*

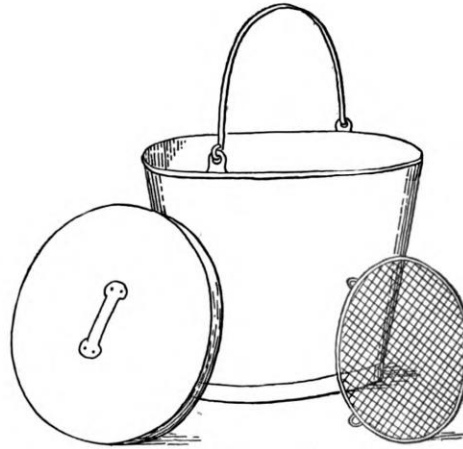


FIG. 53.—An ordinary bucket used as a processor.

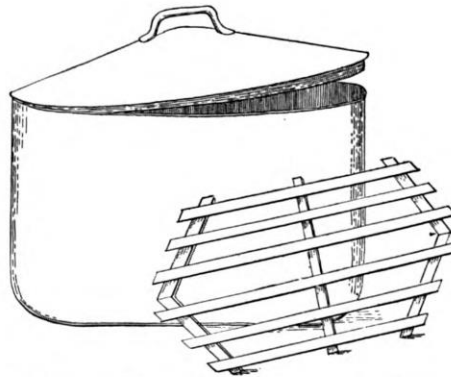


FIG. 54.—A wash-boiler with false bottom makes a convenient processor.

Figure 6 *A Washboiler with a False Bottom Makes a Convenient Processor.*
1917. From: Ola Powell, *Successful Canning and Preserving; Practical Hand Book for Schools, Clubs, and Home Use*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company. 1917, pg 78. Public Domain in the United States, Google Digitized.
http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-us-google



FIG. 50.—Well-packed jar of peaches.

Figure 7 *Canning in Glass*. 1917. From: Grace Marion Smith. *Home Canning By the Cold Pack Method*. Chicago: International Harvester Company of New Jersey, Agricultural Extension Dept., 1917. 12. Public Domain. Digitized by Google.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015004995745>



Figure 8 *Fairbank's cherubs--Presented with the compliments of N.K. Fairbank & Co., lard refiners, Chicago & St. Louis. ca. 1890. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/93504536/>. (Accessed March 30, 2017.)*

DIAMOND



BUTTER OIL

can be used to advantage wherever Butter, Lard or Olive Oil are used in cooking, and for all culinary purposes

Only one-half as much **Diamond M. & P. Butter Oil** required as of lard or butter. It is tasteless and odorless and contains no animal fat. It is recommended by the highest authorities on hygiene, medicine and cookery, as an anti-dyspeptic.

Used and highly endorsed by **Mrs. Rorer** in her Cooking School and in her lectures everywhere.

Ask your grocer for it; take no other; if he does not keep it, insist on his getting it, or write to us and we will see that you are supplied.

MADE ONLY BY
THE MERCHANTS AND PLANTERS OIL CO.
HOUSTON, TEXAS

When writing advertisers please mention Household News.

Figure 9 *Diamond Butter Oil*. 1895. From: The Merchant and Planters Oil Company. "Diamond Butter Oil." Advertisement. *Household News* 3 (Feb 1895): 43. Public Domain. Digitized by Google. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b2863634>

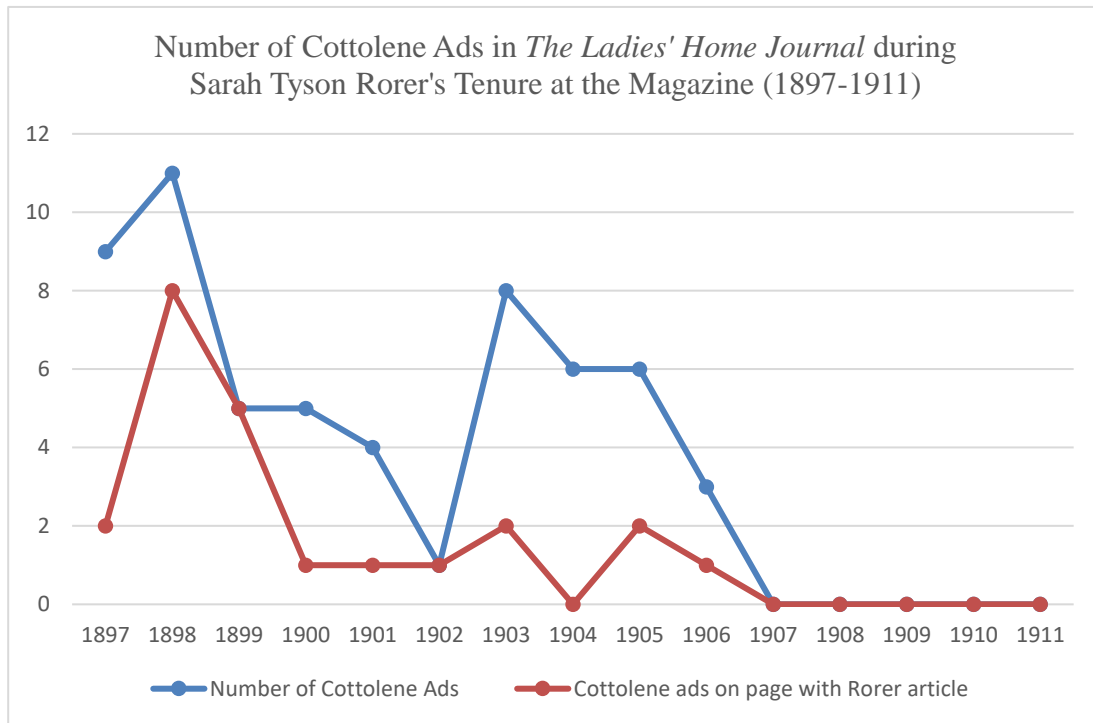


Figure 10 Number of Cottolene Ads in *The Ladies' Home Journal* during Sarah Tyson Rorer's Tenure




Figure 11 Cover. 1910. From: Mrs. Mary J. Lincoln, Lida Ames Willis, Mrs. Sarah Tyson Rorer, Mrs. Helen Armstrong and Marion Harland. *Home Helps: A Pure Food Cook Book*. Chicago: N.K. Fairbank Company, 1910. Public Domain. Book property of author.



Figure 12 Detail of: *Cover*. 1910. From: Mrs. Mary J. Lincoln, Lida Ames Willis, Mrs. Sarah Tyson Rorer, Mrs. Helen Armstrong and Marion Harland. *Home Helps: A Pure Food Cook Book*. Chicago: N.K. Fairbank Company, 1910. Public Domain. Book property of author.

Try This!



IN the production of white *Cottolene* we have more than kept pace with the advancement and improvement of the times. White *Cottolene* is to all other shortening and frying mediums as the express train to the stage coach, or the electric light to candle light of olden times. It is purer, more efficacious and healthful than any other cooking fat. When your food is shortened with or tried in

WHITE
Pure
Wholesome
COTTOLENE

It looks best, tastes best, digests best, because a combination of pure refined vegetable oil and selected beef suet is cleaner, more nutritious and more easily digested than impure and greasy animal fats which may contain disease germs, or cause dyspepsia. Try a pail of white *Cottolene* and you will use nothing else.

Cottolene is now sold only in sealed tin pails of three sizes—small, medium and large—with our trade-marks—"Cottolene" and steer's head in cottonplant wreath—on every pail. It is not genuine if sold in any other way. Consumers should beware of the many cheap and inferior imitations, and should always ask for and insist on getting the genuine *Cottolene*.

Made only by

The N. K. Fairbank Company

Chicago St. Louis New York Boston
Pittsburg Philadelphia Baltimore New Orleans
San Francisco Montreal

FREE! Our latest booklet, "A Public Secret," mailed free to any address on request. For card & stamp, we will send free our Chicago recipe book, "Home Hints," edited by one of the best cooking authorities.

Figure 13 *Try This! White Pure Wholesome Cottolene.* 1900. From: N.K. Fairbanks Company. "Try This! White Pure Wholesome Cottolene." Advertisement. *The Ladies' Home Journal* 17 (July 1900): 24. AP2 L13 F Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

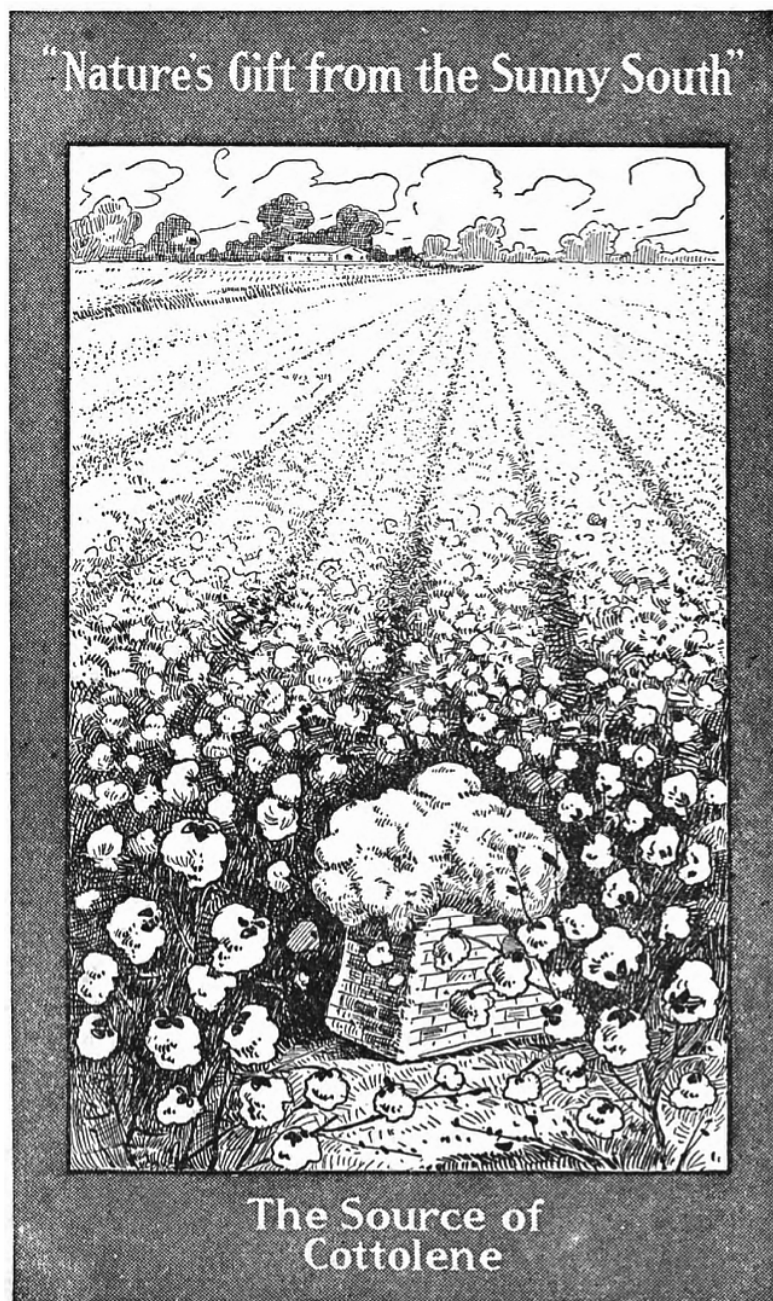
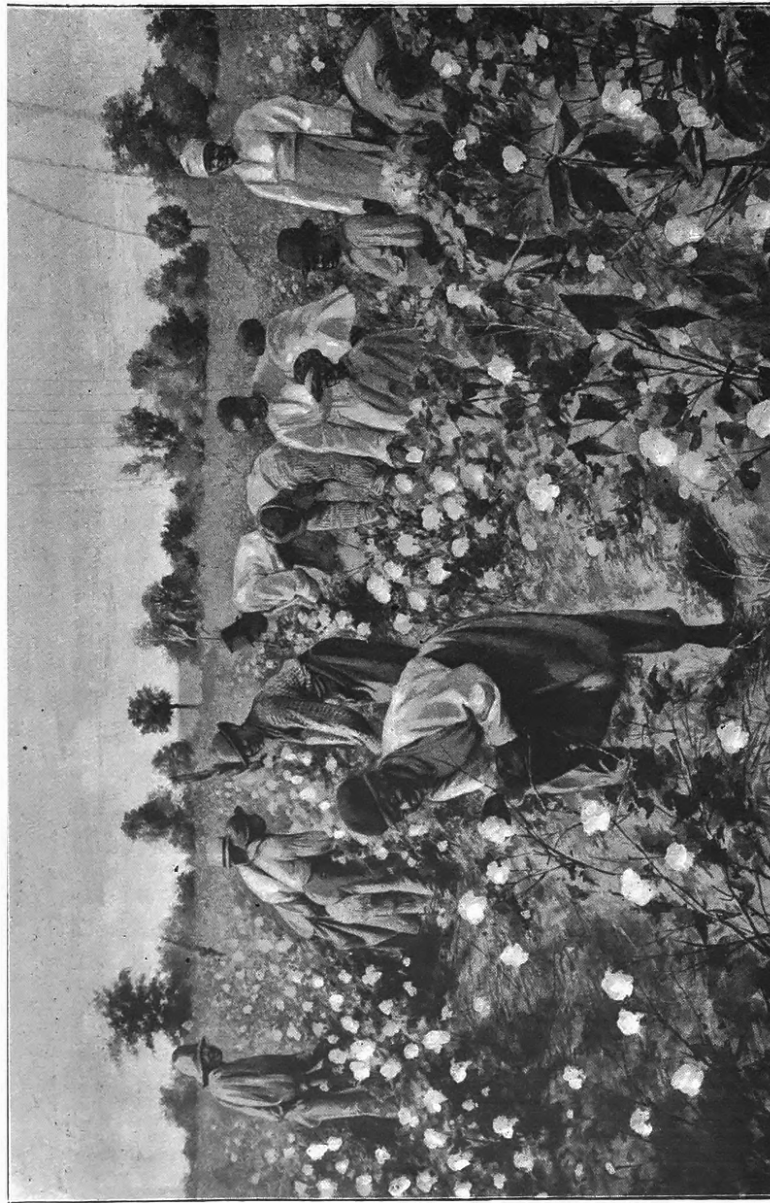



Figure 14 *Natures Gift from the Sunny South: The Source of Cottolene*. 1910.
From: N. K. Fairbank Company. "Nature's Gift from the Sunny South: The Source of Cottolene." Advertisement. Mrs. Mary J. Lincoln, Lida Ames Willis, Mrs. Sarah Tyson Rorer, Mrs. Helen Armstrong and Marion Harland. *Home Helps: A Pure Food Cook Book*. Chicago: N.K. Fairbank Company, 1910. Public Domain. Book property of author.



I saw a field that seemed to me at first
 One glistening mass of roses pure and white,
 With dewy buds 'mid dark green foliage nursed,
 And, as I lingered o'er the lovely sight,
 The summer breeze, which cooled that southern scene,
 Whispered, "Behold the source of Cottolene!"


Figure 15 *The Source of Cottolene*. 1898. From: Sarah Tyson Rorer, *Home Helps: A Practical and Useful Book of Recipes with Much Valuable Information on Cooking and Serving Breakfasts, Luncheons, Dinners and Teas*. Chicago: N.K. Fairbank Co., 1898, 73. Public Domain, Google digitized http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-google

BRAIN



AND

BRAWN




best nourished when food proves digestible.
Digestion's best aid is the pure, clean, vegetable shortening and frying medium—

Cottolene

Makes every dish it enters wholesome and delicious; welcome alike to everybody in every walk of life.

The genuine Cottolene is sold everywhere in one to ten pound yellow tins, with our trade-marks—"Cottolene" and steer's head in cotton-plant wreath—on every tin. Not guaranteed if sold in any other way.



MADE ONLY BY
THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY
Chicago. St. Louis. New York. Montreal

Figure 16 *Brain and Brawn Cottolene*. 1898. From: N.K. Fairbank Company.
"Brain and Brawn Cottolene." Advertisement. *The Ladies' Home Journal* 15
(November 1898) : 30. AP2 L13 F Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur
Library.



THE COOK

Why is this Cook so angry? She has been given notice to leave.
Is she not a competent Cook?
She is Experienced and Capable, but she is an old Foggy and will not use Cottolene for Shortening.
Oh, how foolish!


She has made all the Family Ill with her Greasy Griddle Cakes, her Soggy Biscuit, her Lard-Soaked Doughnuts, and her Tough Pastry, and now they say she has Got to Go!

Why will she not use Good, Pure, Nutritious Cottolene?
Because "The Way of the Transgressor is Lard."

Cottolene will be found at good grocers. Sold only in sealed pails. 20-page Cottolene Primer, illustrated in colors, from which above is reproduced, sent upon receipt of 2c stamp

Made only by THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY, Dept. D, CHICAGO

Figure 17 *The Cook*. 1903. From: N.K. Fairbank Company. "The Cook."
Advertisement. *The Ladies Home Journal* 20 (October 1903) : 46. AP2 L13 F Printed
Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.




THE BABY

See, this is a Baby.
 How he must be Petted and Indulged.
 Not he. He has a Scientific Mother who Studies Hygienic Twaddle and every
 Sixty-nine Minutes he Receives one and three-quarter ounces of a Patent Food.
 Does he Eat Nothing Else?
 No. His Mother wishes to get his Portrait in the Advertising Annex of the
 Magazines.
 But he now seems to be Eating a Biscuit or Two.
 Yes. His Mother is Out, and his Nurse is Reading a novel. So he has sneaked
 to the Pantry and is Helping himself.
 Will not the Biscuit make him Ill?
 Oh, no. They are made of Cottolene instead of Lard, and they could not possibly
 Hurt even a Patent-Food Baby.
 What will his Mother say?
 She will say: "Cottolene will Happen in the Best-Regulated Families."

Cottolene will be found at good grocers. Sold only in sealed pails. 20-page Cottolene Primer, illustrated in colors, from which this is produced, sent on receipt of two-cent stamp.

Made only by THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY, Dept. D, CHICAGO

Figure 18 *The Baby*. 1903. From: N.K. Fairbank Company. "The Baby." Advertisement. *The Ladies Home Journal* 20 (November 1903) : 47. AP2 L13 F Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.




SIMPLE SIMON

Here we see Simple Simon.
 You remember he met a Pieman.
 Were the Pieman's Pies made with Cottolene?
 Oh, no; that was long ago, before Cottolene had ever been heard of.
 Then the Pieman's Pies were made of Lard?
 They were.
 They must have been Heavy, hard and very unpleasant eating?
 They were.
 Did Simple Simon eat them?
 He did. That is why they called him **SIMPLE** Simon.
 Poor Fellow! In his day there was no Cottolene, but now "Cottolene
 covers a multitude of Pies."

Cottolene will be found at good grocers. Sold only in sealed pails. 20-page Cottolene Primer, illustrated in colors, from which this is reproduced, sent on receipt of two-cent stamp.

Made only by THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY, Dept. D, CHICAGO

Figure 19 *Simple Simon*. 1903. N.K. Fairbank Company. "Simple Simon." Advertisement. *The Ladies Home Journal* 20 (December 1903) : 43. AP2 L13 F Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.



THE LADY

Oh, see the nice Lady.
 She seems to be Well-Fed, Well-Bred and Well-Read.
 How Daintily she goes about her work. Oh, she is Frying Doughnuts.
 Yes. She uses Cottolene for Shortening and also to Fry them in, so it
 is Dainty work and the Result is Airy, Puffy Doughnuts.
 Not Greasy and Heavy like the Ones Mother used to make.
 But where are the Doughnuts?
 Well, you see, they were so Good, she ate them up as Fast as she
 Fried them.
 Oh, what will her Hungry Husband Say?
 He will Laugh, and Say:
 "Out of the Frying Pan into the Fryer."

Cottolene will be found at good grocers. Sold only in sealed pails. 20-page Cottolene Primer, illustrated in colors, from which this is reproduced, sent on receipt of two-cent stamp.

Made only by THE N. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY, Dept. D, Chicago

Figure 20 *The Lady*. 1904. From: N.K. Fairbank Company. "The Lady."
 Advertisement. *The Ladies Home Journal* 21 (January 1904) : 49. AP2 L13 F Printed
 Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

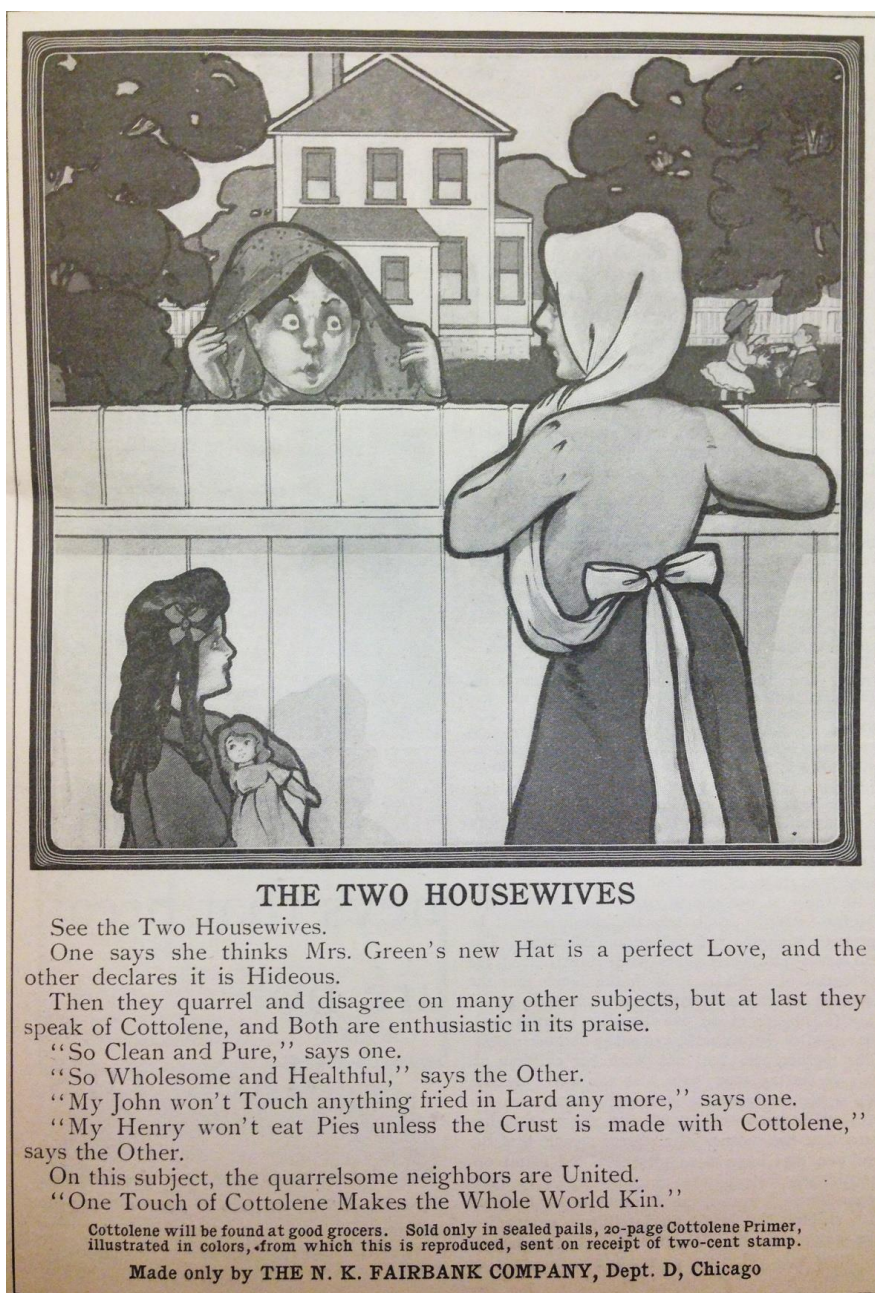


Figure 21 *The Two Housewives*. 1904. From: N.K. Fairbank Company. "The Two Housewives ." Advertisement. *The Ladies Home Journal* 21 (February 1904) : 35.
 AP2 L13 F Printed Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

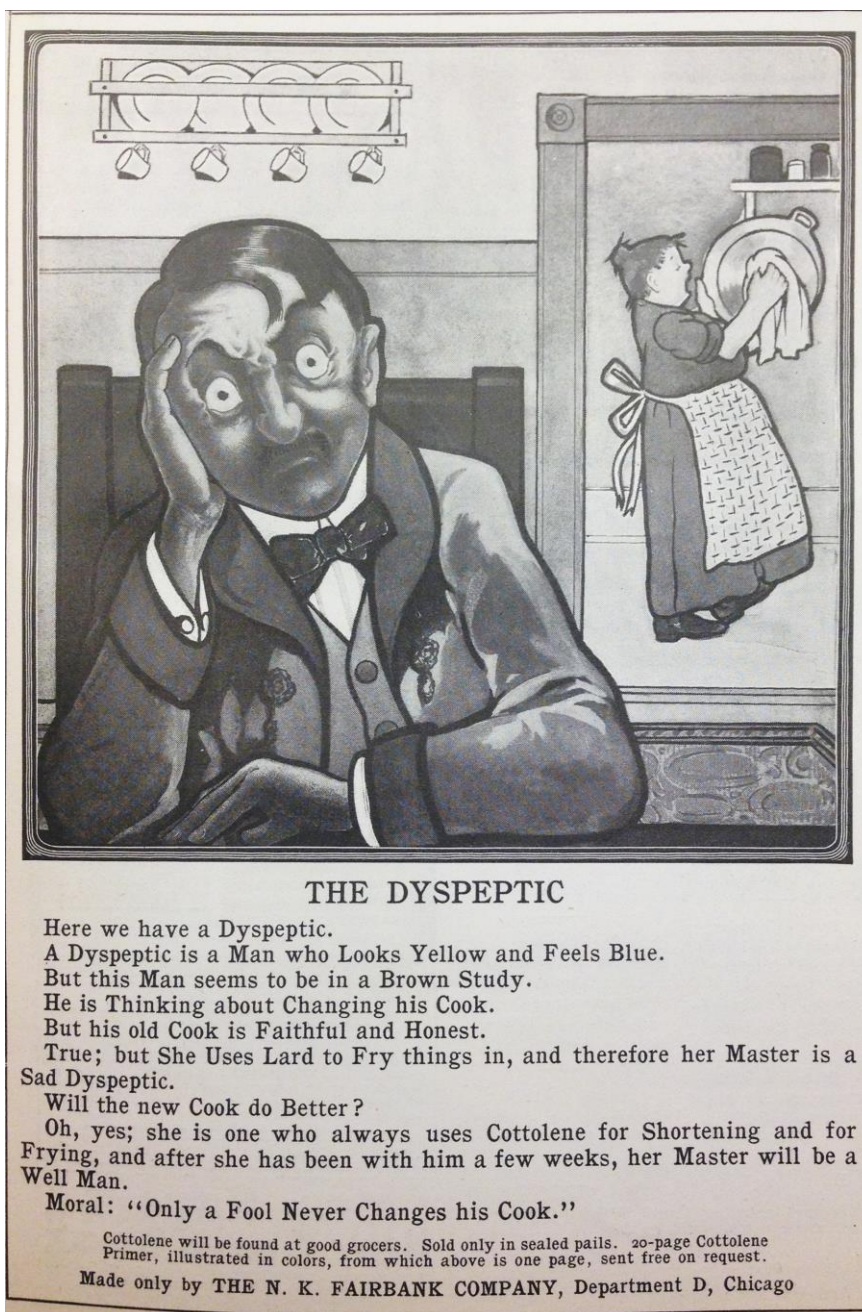


Figure 22 *The Dyspeptic*. From: N.K. Fairbank Company. "The Dyspeptic."
 Advertisement. *The Ladies' Home Journal* (March 1904): 39. AP2 L13 F Printed
 Book and Periodical Collection, Winterthur Library.

By Mrs. S. T. Rorer

**FOR
FOUR
CENTS**

(to cover postage) will send daily tin containing sample of

**Huntley & Palmers
Celebrated
Nursery Biscuits**

A most delicious and digestible food for children and invalids. Wholesome and appetizing. Easily assimilated and extraordinarily nutritious. Recommended by the highest medical authorities.

Wholesaler of leading grocers

**FRANCIS D. MOULTON & CO.
20 Broadway, New York**

This beautiful 14-inch enterprise tin, two 13-inch tins in match box and post, upon receipt of 4c, will send you 25. The first tin is limited in Hot and Green on York

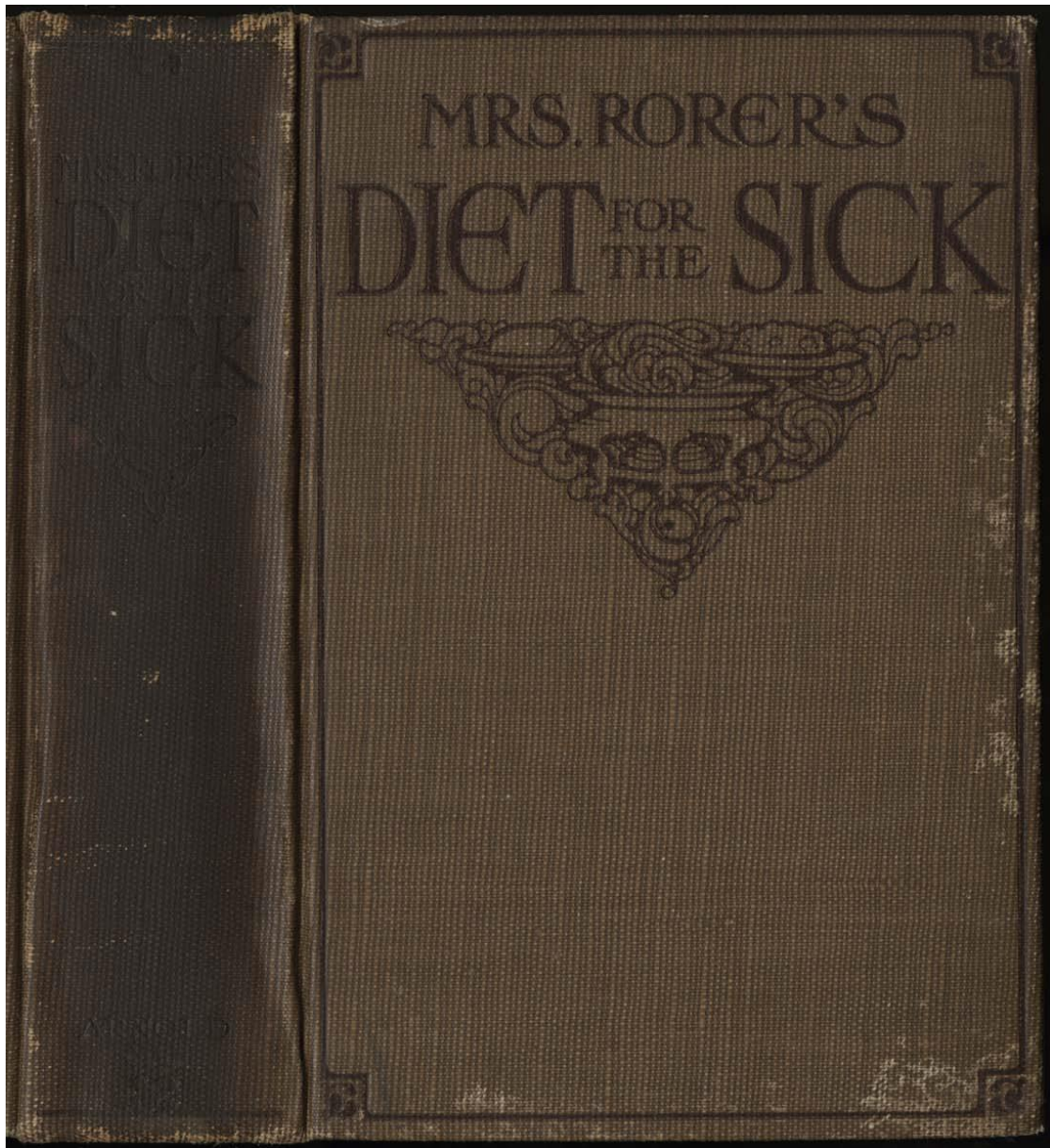
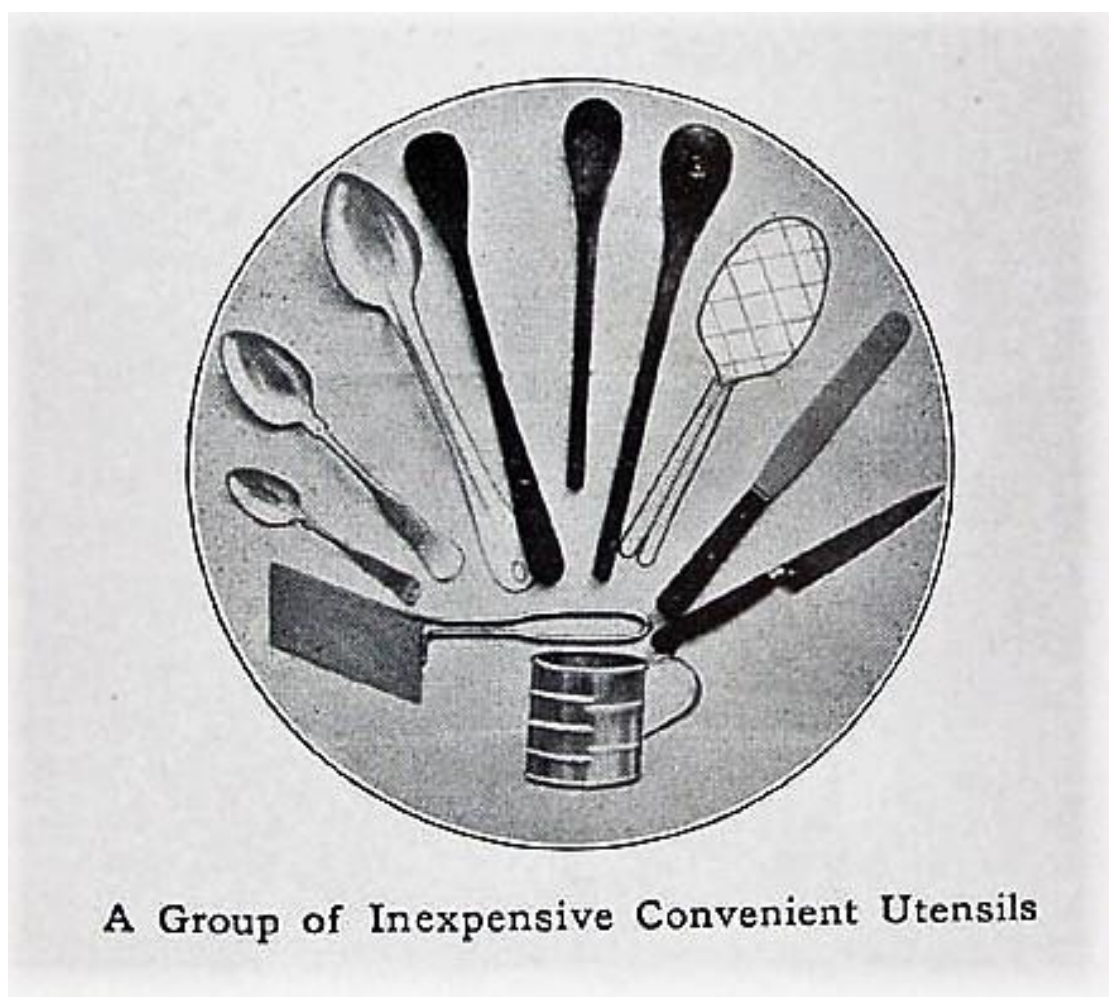


Figure 24 Cover, Rorer, Sarah Tyson Heston, "Mrs. Rorer's Diet for the Sick; Dietetic Treating of Diseases of the Body," *VT Special Collections Online*, accessed April 12, 2017, http://digitalsc.lib.vt.edu/HFDBooks/RM219.R7_1914. In the Public Domain.



A Group of Inexpensive Convenient Utensils

Figure 25 *A Group of Inexpensive Convenient Utensils*. 1902. From: Sarah Tyson Rorer. *Mrs. Rorer's New Cookbook*. Philadelphia: Arnold and Company 1902. 49. Public Domain, Accessed Internet Archive, Digitizing Sponsor University of Toronto, <https://archive.org/details/mrsrorersnewcook00roreuoft>

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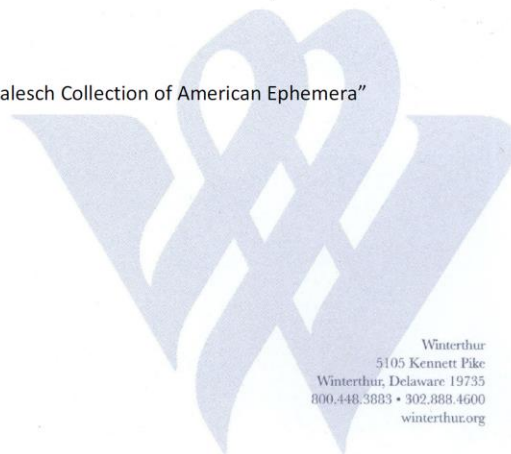
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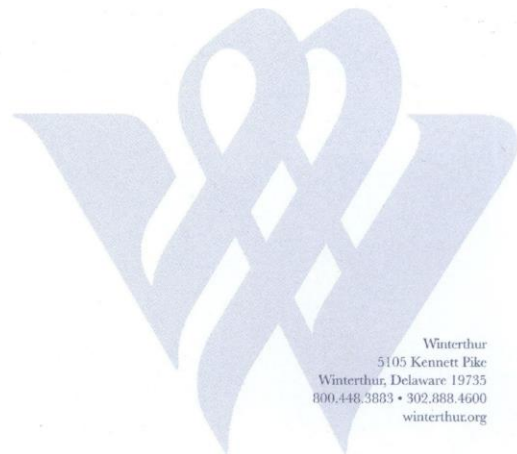
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Smith, Grace Marian.

Chicago : International Harvester Company of New Jersey, Agricultural Extension Dept., 1917.

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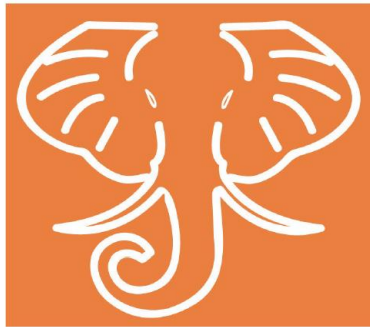
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