

A survey of Danish cookbooks 1616–1970

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Abstract

This article presents a survey of Danish first edition cookbooks printed between the years 1616 and 1970. The purpose is to offer a broad periodization which can be used as a backbone for further research into the cultural significance of food. In the article I conclude that the coming of different author groups constitute the most significant changes in the Danish cookbook genre and argue that these reflect larger societal transformations. These conclusions are founded on a quantitative survey combined with a qualitative study of the 753 available Danish cookbooks published 1616–1970.

During the cultural turn in the 1970s and '80s, food culture emerged as an area of study within the humanities and social sciences.¹ As part of their field studies, anthropologists had long documented cultural norms of eating, but food was given unprecedented attention with the advent of structuralism in the 1960s. In a number of influential texts, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), Roland Barthes (1915–80) and Mary Douglas (1921–2007) emphasized the dinner table as a fruitful site for studying the inner workings of communities. Barthes, for instance, notoriously proposed that “[o]ne could say that an entire ‘world’ (social environment) is present in and signified by food.”² In this way, food served as a microcosmos in which the social structures of any community

could be uncovered and studied.

Whereas the anthropologists studied the dinner table as a site for social integration, the works of sociologists have often highlighted the segregating forces inherent in food consumption. Although neither Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) nor Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) has treated food as an object of study in itself, both “conspicuous consumption” and the theory of distinction have become central to researchers who have turned their attention towards food as a means for constructing social boundaries.³

Thus, despite their differences, both the anthropological and sociological traditions embrace the idea that food is a way of communicating a sense of belonging. Sharing a meal can thus be likened to the sharing of ideals and serves as a central element in identity formations. This assumption also holds a potential for the study of history. Focusing on how people have ascribed meaning through (and to) food is

1. Peter Scholliers, “Twenty-five years of studying un Phénomène social total: Food history writing on Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”, *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 10 (2007): 449–71.

2. Roland Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”, i *Food and Culture: A Reader*, red. Carole Counihan og Penny Van Esterik (Routledge, 1997), 23. The piece originally appeared in *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 5, 1961.

3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, transl. Richard Nice (Cambridge Mass.: Routledge, 1984); Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994).

not only an entry into the bellies, but also, possibly, into the hearts and minds of people in the past.

Although promising in theory, approaching food as an all-encompassing social phenomenon also poses a practical problem to the historian. In writing cultural histories of food, we are first and foremost challenged by the fact that we – contrary to other scholars in the field – are not able to observe past meals. We might be able to savor potsherds and analyze the stomach content of bog bodies, but the bygone meal, along with the associated norms and ideals, is per definition elusive. This has led historians to employ new types of primary source material such as advertisements, menus, women’s magazines and cookbooks in order to gain insights into the meaning making involved in deciding what’s for dinner.

What is a cookbook?

Cookbooks belong to the realm of prescriptive literature and do not necessarily reflect common practices, now or in the past. But even if the cookbook is merely considered prescriptive, it holds important clues to the community that is assumed to use it. With its formulaic and didactic format, printed cookbooks enable the proliferation of standardized recipes across both geographical and social boundaries. For this reason, in recent decades, cookbooks have been recognized as a valuable source for the study of gendered, ethnic and national identity formations.⁴ Following this line of research, my case for the inclusion of cookbooks into the history of food is also founded on a basic assumption that changes in discourse reflect broader cultural transformations. By tracing the

4. Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, 1 (January 1988): 3–24; Anne Bower, *Recipes for reading: community cookbooks, stories, histories* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Janet Theophano, *Eat my words: reading women’s lives through the cookbooks they wrote* (New York N.Y.: Palgrave, 2002); Liora Gvion, “What’s Cooking in America?: Cookbooks Narrate Ethnicity: 1850-1990”, *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 12 (March 2009): 53–76.

macroscopic changes in the Danish Cookbook genre, I offer a broad periodization of first edition Danish cookbooks published 1616–1970.⁵

As far as we know, 1616 marks the year of the first Danish printed cookbook. The cut-off in 1970 has been selected for two reasons: first, the number of cookbooks increased significantly during the 1970s and ‘80s, rendering it virtually impossible to revise all publications within a reasonable timeframe; second, as Denmark became subject to the common food and agricultural policies of the EEC in the early 1970s, the conditions for discussing food radically changed. Thus, in many ways, the year 1970 marks the beginning of a new era to the cookbook and in Danish food history alike.

In determining which books to include, I have set up a number of guidelines. By means of the Danish National Bibliography⁶, I have reviewed all listed first edition publications of 16 pages or more that has been published in Danish within the changing national borders.⁷ This approach includes translations, but excludes the publications from former colonial possessions whenever these were written in languages other than Danish. In keeping with the guidelines of international bibliographers, measured by the number of pages, a book must consist of 2/3 recipes in order to be included in my bibliography.⁸ For the years 1616–

5. This article combines insights from two different research projects, focusing respectively on printed cookbooks from the 19th and 20th century. Partial results have previously been presented in Caroline Nyvang, “Medie og måltid: danske trykte kogeboøger i 1800-tallet”, i *Synet på mad og drikke i det 19. århundrede*, ed. Ole Hyldtoft (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2010), 145–231; Caroline Nyvang, “Danske trykte kogeboøger 1900-70. Fire kostmologier” (PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2013).

6. *Dansk Bogfortegnelse*, the Danish National Bibliography, was not started until 1841. But the Royal Library of Copenhagen has records of all legal deposit publications since 1697.

7. Publications with less than 17 pages are considered pamphlets, not books, according to the Danish National Bibliography.

8. See, for instance, Elizabeth Driver, *A bibliography of cookery books published in Britain, 1875-1914* (London: Prospect Books, 1989); Henry Notaker, *Printed Cookbooks in Europe, 1470-1700. A*

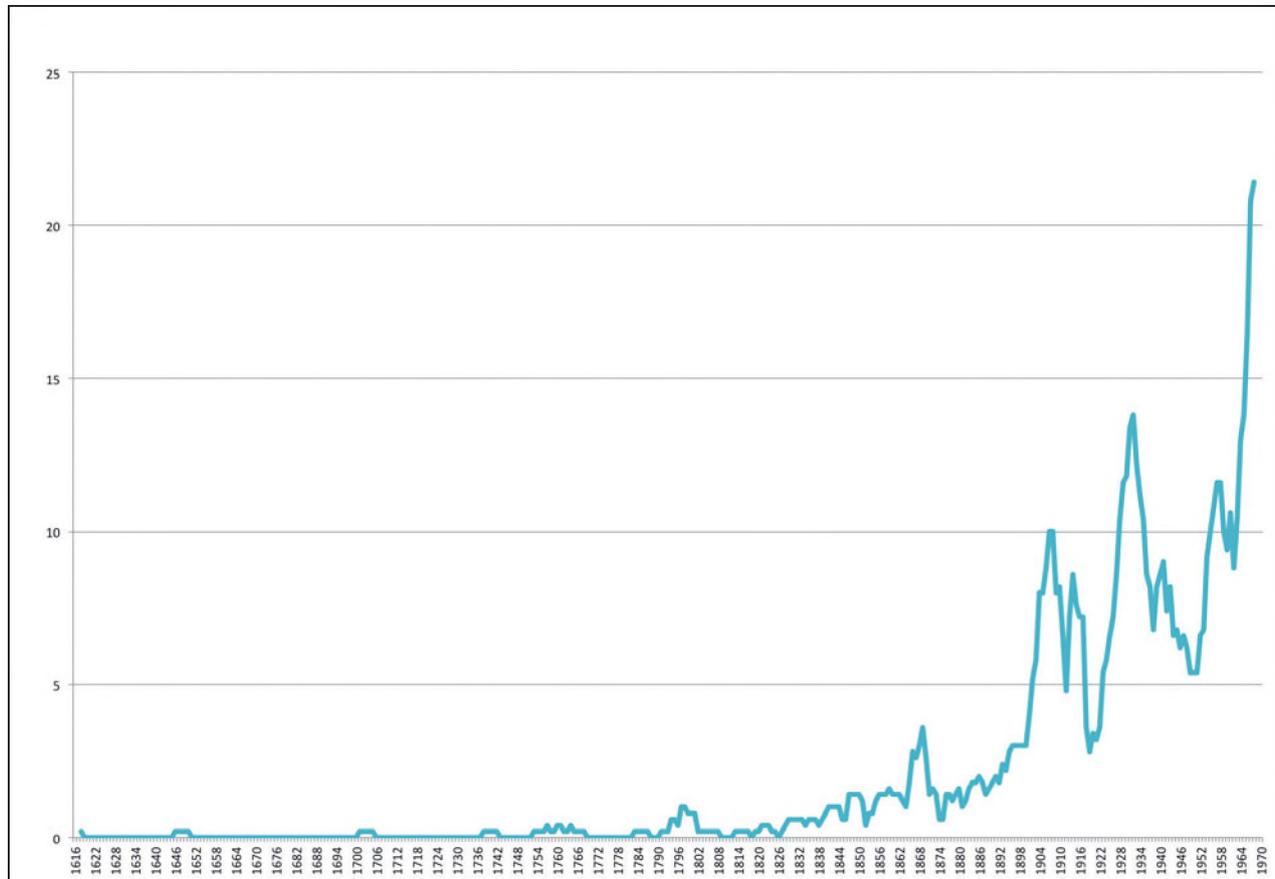


Fig. 1. Danish printed cookbooks 1616-1970. Sources: Nyvang, Caroline. "Medie og måltid: danske trykte kokebøger i 1800-tallet". In *Synet på mad og drikke i det 19. århundrede*, ed. by Ole Hyltoft, 145-231. København: Museum Tusulanum, 2010. Nyvang, Caroline. *Danske trykte kokebøger 1900-70. Fire kostnologier*. PhD thesis, University of Copenhagen, 2013.

1970, a total of 756 publications match these very criteria. Their distribution across time is shown in figure 1.

The graph shows a steady increase in the number of first editions published throughout the centuries. In economic terms, books can be considered a luxury good.⁹ Thus, with increasing incomes, the demand for books is expected to rise, in percentage terms even beyond the actual income gain. It is only fair to assume that this tendency would be augmented for

cookbooks as a subgenre. As has been pointed out by several researchers, when caloric needs are met, food increasingly seems to fulfill other wants. Nutritionist Eileen Satter, for one, has proposed a hierarchy of food needs in the form of a Maslowian pyramid. With this she argues that a sufficient, acceptable and reliable supply of foodstuffs are prerequisites to the interest in food as "good-tasting, novel and instrumental".¹⁰

Scholars within the field of cultural studies have proposed similar theories. In his famed *La Distinction* (1979), Bourdieu operates with an opposition between the taste for "necessity" and that for "luxury"

Bibliography of Early Modern Culinary Literature (HOUTEN: HES & De Graaf Publishers BV, 2010).

9. C. Hjorth-Andersen, "A model of the Danish book market", *Journal of Cultural Economics* 24, 1 (2000): 27-43 estimates that the income elasticity of books is close to 1.97.

10. Eileen Satter, "Hierarchy of Food Needs", *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 39, 5 (September 2007): 187-88.



Fig. 2. Frontispiece from *Den Kongelige Danske og i Henseende til alle Slags Maader fuldstændige Koge Bage og Sylte-Bog* [The Royal Danish and in Respect of all Manner Complete Cooking, Baking and Preserving Book], published by in 1766 by Marcus Looft, masterchef in Itzehoe.

(or “freedom”). Whereas the French working class of the 1960s – in Bourdieu’s study exponents of the taste for necessity – gives priority to food that induce a sense of fullness, the bourgeoisie, associated with the taste for freedom, emphasizes the visual appearance

of food.¹¹ Barthes, too, noted the dualism of food serving as both nutrition and protocol, and assumed that “its value as protocol becomes increasingly more important as soon as basic needs are satisfied”.¹²

Consequently, a certain level of economic surplus seems to be a precondition for both the demand for books and the interest in food beyond mere physiological needs. Viewed in this light, is it perhaps not surprising that the number of publications generally rose during times when the overall welfare increased and expenditures on food, measured as part of income, decreased for all income brackets.¹³

The graph does indeed show prominent peaks in the 1860s, at the beginning of the 20th century and in the late 1950s. These were all times of increasing prosperity, which is consistent with an idea that this would offset an increased demand for cookbooks. More notably, however, there are also peaks in times of dearth, e.g. during the First World War and the crisis ridden 1930s. Furthermore, years with a high publication rate include the war years 1915 and 1941, both of which saw a rate eight times higher than the mean for all the years examined. This indicates that the trend is not alone attributable to economic factors, and that something *else* or *more* is in play.

Despite the crude increase from 1616 to 1970, figure 1 also shows that Danish cookbooks were issued in surges separated by long periods of stagnating or falling publication frequency. A closer look at the books reveals that this pattern was first and foremost propelled by changes in author groups. These different author groups will be expounded in the following six sections, each representing a wave of publications:

11. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 173.

12. Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”, 25–26.

13. Nyvang, “Danske trykte kogebøger 1900–70. Fire kostmologier”, 9–10.

The Early Decades – Cooks and Copycats

As figure 1 shows, from the first cookbook was issued and until the last decades of the 18th century, printed cookbooks were still a rarity. In the 17th and 18th centuries, a mere 15 new cookbooks were published. In general, these were either composed by male chefs or compiled by printers.

The early cookbooks almost exclusively addressed male chefs and were mainly written by other male chefs, working at large estates or even in royal households, cf. Marcus Looft above (Fig. 2). Their recipes were short, without precise measurements and mostly resembled *aides-mémoire* for the well versed in the art of cooking and dishing out big banquet dinners.

The oldest preserved Danish cookbook was issued in 1616. The 80-page octavo, originally published in German as *Ein Köstlich new Kochbuch* in 1598, is symptomatic to the Danish cookbook genre during its first decades. The translation was allegedly published in Danish by Salomon Sartor (d. 1642), a Copenhagen based printer primarily known for his biblical works.¹⁴ The printer represents a second subset of “authors”, who at the time worked to disperse printed recipes to a Danish readership via translations. This was possible as the Danish book market was not yet subject to international copyright laws until the signing of the Berne Convention in 1903. Therefore, in part or whole, publishers could freely translate foreign books in order to sell them under their own name. Hence, the earliest Danish cookbooks were often adaptations of English or German recipes.¹⁵

1837-1880s: The Housewife Writer

In many ways, the printed cookbook had a literary breakthrough in the middle of the 19th century. Al-

14. Harald Ilsøe, *Bogtrykkerne i København og deres virksomhed ca. 1600-1810. En bio-bibliografisk håndbog med bidrag til bogproduktionens historie*, Danish Humanist Texts and Studies 5 (Museum Tusulanum, 1992), 43-47.

15. Caroline Nyvang, “Originaler og kopister: danske trykte kogebøger 1616-1900”, *Magasin fra Det kongelige Bibliotek*, 4 (2007): 15-21.

though it wasn't until 1900 that new cookbooks were issued each year, the publication rate rose steeply and geographically, too, publications were now widely dispersed. Until 1831, all but one cookbook had been published in Copenhagen, but by the end of the 1860s, almost all provincial towns were publishing cookbooks.¹⁶

The breakthrough of the cookbook can be ascribed to several factors. The 1840s is generally recognized as a transformative phase in the history of the Danish book. This period saw an increasing interest in the educative potential of the book, and a number of technological advances enabled a larger and cheaper production of books, which paved the way to both new authors and readers.¹⁷

As for the cookbook, the publication rate took off after Ane Marie Mangor (1781-1965) published her successful *Kogebog for Smaa Huusholdninger* [*Cookbook for Small Households*] in 1837. Targeting an audience amongst the middle classes, Mangor's recipes gave instructions for everyday dinners serving a small family of four to six people. Selling more than 260.000 copies in the 19th century alone, the recently widowed cookbook author was the first who was really able to make a living writing cookbooks.¹⁸ For a long time, Danish women had had a tradition for compiling and sharing handwritten recipes, but in Mrs Mangor and her cookbook they now had an impetus to present their personal collection to a publisher. Thus, with the opening of the book market, writing cookbooks became a feasible sideline business to housewives across the country, and the increasing number of

16. Caroline Nyvang, “Medie og måltid: danske trykte kogebøger i 1800-tallet”, i *Synet på mad og drikke i det 19. århundrede*, ed. Ole Hyldtoft (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2010), 150-52. The place of publication is an important indication of the actual dissemination of cookbooks of the time as most were sold directly out of the printer's shop.

17. Henrik Horstbøll, *Menigmands medie. Det folkelige bogtryk i Danmark 1500-1840: en kulturhistorisk undersøgelse*, Danish Humanist Texts and Studies 19 (Det Kongelige Bibliotek: Museum Tusulanum, 1999).

18. Else-Marie Boyhus, *Ilære som kokkepige: det danske borgerlige køkken 1880-1910* (Frederikshavn: Dafolo, 2000), 159.

cookbooks published in the course of the 19th century can be attributed to this new group of authors. Out of the all first editions published between 1837 and 1880, females wrote at least 92%.¹⁹

1880s–1920s: *The professionalization of Cooking*

In the late 19th century, women who had a professional affiliation with cooking replaced the autodidact housewife as the prime author of cookbooks in Denmark. The home economics movement, which swept the country from the 1880s forward, employed a large number of women.²⁰ Besides offering young girls a formal education in domestic work, teachers also made a significant contribution to the cookbook genre, allowing the publication rate to increase steeply at the end of the 19th and the early 20th century.

During the second half of the 19th century, many Danes moved from the countryside to the cities. With this urbanization family units generally became smaller while the distance to the older generations increased.

Young women were often left to their own devices, as they could no longer rely on the help and guidance from parents or grandparents. The authors of a new line of cookbooks sought to remedy this situation by giving readers a science based approach to housekeeping and organizing family life.

Moreover, these cookbooks were published in the wake of the transmission from a rural subsistence economy to a monetary household economy, which sparked a growing awareness of food's share of the household budget. Relying on caloric values relative to the price, a new measure at the time, authors would often list the content of their cookbooks according to the price of each dish, and in the recipes expenses

would appear directly from the list of ingredients. Thus, in the face of a new economic reality, authors associated with the domestic science movement would accentuate food as a powerful tool in budget management.²¹

1920s–40: *The Doctor's Cookbook*

The 1920s and '30s saw another surge in cookbooks, yet again driven by a change in authors. With an increased focus on dietary research and following the malnutrition scare of World War I, medical doctors increasingly looked to cookbooks as a means of propagating state-of-the-art information to a broad audience.

In the public and private health resorts, established in Europe during the interwar years, many doctors were given an opportunity to observe close-hand the role of food in obtaining and maintaining good health. Especially from 1925 and onwards, as the ability to identify vitamins improved, nutritional values were added to the recipes, and cookbook authors called for a reconfiguration of traditional Danish dinner ideals towards a plant based, uncooked fare. The pot and the pan was to be put aside in favor of graters and chopping boards, and doctors often favoured recipes for raw food and vegetarian dishes. In fact, in the 15 years between 1925 and the beginning of the Second World War, more than every fourth cookbook had meatless recipes alone.²²

The attention to micro- and macronutrient needs meant that meals were individualized in a previously unseen manner. Women, children and men with physically demanding as well as sedentary jobs had to eat according to distinct guidelines, and the social benefits of dining together was downplayed. In the doctor's cookbook, the meal thus took on a new ideal form in contrast to that of the domestic science move-

19. 65 new cookbooks were published in the years 1837–1880. Judging from the name on the front cover and/or the wording of the introduction, at least 60 of these had been written by women.

20. The first Danish home economics school was established in 1877 by Justine Saugman (1833–1920), who also authored the cookbook *Elevernes Optegnelser fra Thoreby Husholdningsskole* [*Students' Notes from Thoreby Home Economics School*] (1895).

21. Nyvang, "Danske trykte kogebøger 1900–70. Fire kostmologier", 61–84.

22. Caroline Nyvang, "Back to the Roots? Vegetarian Cookbooks as Countercuisine". Unpubl. conference paper, ESSCS (The London Consortium, 2010).

ment.²³ The coming of the Second World War provided a very effective hindrance to the doctors' endeavors, as vegetables and especially fruits became scarce due to import restrictions. Furthermore, the limitations on gas revoked slow cooking methods that were out of tune with the doctors' attempt to minimize vitamin loss.

1945-60s: Domestic Consultants

In the decades following the war, the domestic consultant became a seminal figure in Danish cookbooks. These consultants, many with a formal home economics education from the beginning of the 19th century, can be considered a second wave of the domestic science movement. However, unlike their predecessors, these women did not pursue teaching positions, but were mainly employed by the Danish food industry. Recipes provided an entrance into the pockets of the middleclass, and during the years of 1945-60, these domestic consultants accounted for a third of all Danish cookbooks, allowing the publication rate to once again soar.²⁴

In particular, the domestic consultants targeted women who worked outside of their home. During the economic boom of the 1960s, Danish women's labour market participation increased significantly. In compliance with the busy schedule of the working mother, domestic consultants embraced the convenience of prepackaged foodstuffs and new kitchen technologies, in turn introducing dinner manners and rituals that required less effort than previously.²⁵

23. Nyvang, "Danske trykte kogebøger 1900-70. Fire kostmologier", 103-14.

24. Caroline Nyvang, "Good Fare and Welfare. Perceptions of American and French Food in Postwar Danish Cookbooks", *Media food and identity*, ed. J. Leer & K.K. Povlsen, Critical Food Studies (Routledge, forthcoming).

25. Nyvang, "Danske trykte kogebøger 1900-70. Fire kostmologier", 117-34.

1955-70: *The bon vivant*

During the late 1950s, a number of trendsetting male intellectuals - e.g. actors, artists and journalists - began writing cookbooks, pushing the publication rate towards its ultimate peak in the late 1960s (figure 1). In lieu of any formal kitchen training, these authors rallied around the foundation of L'Académie de la Gastronomie au Danemark in 1964.²⁶

Contrary to previous publications, authors now invited guys into the kitchen. For the first time in Danish cookbooks, men were pictured in front of the stove and shopping for groceries. This shift in authority was, at least in part, driven by the fact that cooking was increasingly associated with art. Thus, the kitchen became a site for leisure and artistic production, and cooking could be deemed a creative outlet.²⁷

This reconceptualization of cooking also affected the recipes. The repertoire mainly included recipes for foreign dishes with a strong fervor for Mediterranean dishes. Furthermore, the recipes were short and rarely included precise quantities, but instead relied on tactile instructions such as "tender" and "a dollop". In keeping with the artistic spirit, users of cookbooks were thus encouraged to evoke their senses while cooking. Perhaps inadvertently, these cookbooks thus came to resemble the earliest Danish cookbooks published by male chefs.

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26. Due to its homage to French cooking, the organization has no formal English title.

27. Caroline Nyvang, "I den gode smags tjeneste. Den gastronomiske bevægelse i danske trykte kogebøger 1950-70", *Tidsskrift for Kulturforskning*, 2014, 3-4, 64-81.

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