

CATHERINE Dickens had been married to the world-renowned author

Charles Dickens for nearly sixteen years when the first edition of her menu book was published in 1851. The slender volume, entitled *What Shall We Have For Dinner? Satisfactorily Answered by Numerous Bills of Fare for from Two to Eighteen Persons* by 'Lady Maria Clutterbuck', was evidently well received. In October of that same year, she published a second edition and, four months later in 1852, she produced a revised 'new edition'. By 1854, Catherine updated the menus, doubled the recipe appendix, shortened her pseudonym to 'Lady Clutterbuck' and her publishers, Bradbury and Evans, were able to retain the price of one shilling. Judging from extant copies, the menu book was reissued again after some minor editorial changes in 1856 and 1860.¹

It is probably not surprising that Catherine Dickens's publication concerns the culinary arts, her husband's writing abounds in culinary references. As one literary critic noted, 'In the richness and variety of his treatment of food and drink Dickens is the indisputable master among the Victorian novelists.'² Other critics and historians have widely acknowledged Dickens's use of food as metaphor in his fiction.³ Yet there is little known about the Dickens family's own table.

As the subject of this culinary history, the bills of fare and recipes from Catherine Dickens's work illuminate the colourful palette of their upper-middle-class life. By their nature, menu books and cookery books are personal documents. While they do not verify that the author actually cooked or served the variety of courses suggested, they do express views of ideal meals under favourable circumstances. As such, these publications become period pieces that unwittingly chronicle attitudes towards food that are cultural, regional, socio-economical, and idiosyncratic. Catherine's publications serve as excellent examples.

Catherine probably wrote her menu books for the same readership as her husband's magazine, *Household Words*, which first appeared the year before. The majority of the 164 menus in the 1851 edition (and those in the subsequent editions) suggest small family dinners that would have been served from day to day; the few elaborate multi-course bills of fare may reflect the dinner parties the couple hosted at their homes in Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park and Tavistock House in Russell Square, where they moved in October 1851. The recipes in her appendix provide guidance for cooks, although the quirkiness of the recipe selection and some careless editing by the publishers make her publications somewhat homespun pieces, even if the lively introduction, attributed to Charles Dickens himself, and

the humorous pseudonym Lady Clutterbuck, taken by Catherine from a role she played in Dickens's amateur theatrical production of *Used Up*, a farce by Félix-Auguste Duvert, added verve and vitality. Evidence of lax editorial conventions and other mistakes include, for example, 'ditto' and '&ct.' used inconsistently. Spellings like 'brocoli', while used by some cookbook writers, may be overlooked, but others like 'croquits' for croquettes could reflect either Catherine's spelling or the typesetter's, and mistakes like 'Brosse' for Russe and so forth, were never corrected from the original 1851 edition. Complaints about compositors were not new. That very December, Dickens had written to Frederick Evans, the publisher, concerning mistakes in his own work. 'I declare before God that your men are enough to drive me mad!' he railed.⁴ In fairness, the men set type under enormous pressure and short deadlines, often working late in poorly lit rooms.⁵ To compound the problem, Catherine's handwriting is difficult to decipher.

The Dickens's' progressive outlook flavoured their dining-room. Her publication conforms with her husband's desire to improve the standard of British cooking and his advocacy of famine-relief foods such as American corn meal, nutritious soups, and an increased use of fish. Catherine's Scottish heritage is visible in the recipe section, particularly in the 1854 edition onwards, as are her adaptations of a few foreign dishes gleaned from their travels. Judging from accounts in diaries and letters written by some of the Dickens's' dinner guests, they entertained well and were among the early proponents of a less formal dining style.

In culinary matters, Charles and Catherine must have shared a similar philosophy. 'What shall we have for dinner?' would have been a frequently discussed question in the Dickens household as it continues to be today in our own homes. Their personal favourites, seasonal availability, previous menus, and returning guests would all factor into the conversation. From the individual dishes to the unusual pairings within each course, every detail would have been scrutinized. And just as their daughter Mary (Mamie) Dickens described her father's dinner critiques at Gad's Hill Place after her parents' separation, one imagines that Dickens had previously shared his opinions - humorously or not - with his wife. According to Mamie, when the house was filled with guests, the dinner menu was placed on the sideboard at luncheon:

And then he would discuss every item in his fanciful, humorous way with his guests, much to this effect: 'Cock-a-leekie? Good, decidedly good; fried soles with shrimp sauce? Good again; croquettes of chicken? Weak, very weak; decided want of imagination here,' and so on, and he would apparently be so taken up with the merits or demerits of a menu that one might imagine he lived for nothing but the coming dinner.⁶

What Shall We Have For Dinner? was in tune with the *zeitgeist* of the 1850s. The social and economic shifts of the Victorian era brought changes to all aspects of publishing. With the increased wealth accruing to the middle classes from manufacturing, colonialism, and other financially lucrative opportunities, a need arose to define their new stations. Even for the less affluent, the effects of industrialization on factory workers and middle managers and their adaptation to city life, were rapid since the upwardly-mobile wanted to develop social graces.⁷ Dickens himself requested a copy of *Hints on Etiquette and the Usage of Society, with a Glance at Bad Habits* from his publisher in 1836 when it was issued.⁸ He later purchased *Anecdotes of the Manners and Customs of London* in 1841.⁹ Dickens's motives for obtaining these books may reflect his interest in manners as an observant novelist, but may also mark his own social ambitions.

Beside etiquette books, household manuals became an important publishing category and reflected changes in women's domestic lives. Dena Attar argues that they set standards for comfort, cleanliness, and behaviour that signified middle-class respectability. As either the mistress of the household, or as domestic servants, women were required to uphold these high standards. By 1851, one in four married women (not widowed) was employed, and they had to juggle both their work lives and family responsibilities. According to Attar, women represented a readership interested in topics that ranged from entertaining guests socially to nursing their babies privately. They 'bought books in the millions seeking advice on household routines, managing servants, provisioning, decorating and furnishing their homes, marketing, planning menus and cooking,' among other topics.¹⁰

As Richard Altick points out, the general public's desire to read literally inked the presses. The sheer number of publications produced in the nineteenth century rose staggeringly. Meanwhile, groups such as the Utilitarians campaigned for a diet of Christian literature and uplifting, righteous themes in books and other family publications. Even the newly established public libraries fuelled debate over their mission and the appropriate literature for the lower classes whom they served. Passionate discussions centred around the suitability of various genres, from the Bible to cheap novels.¹¹

'Democracy of print' was a revolutionary concept espoused by Dickens and his circle that stressed open access to reading materials. They argued that everyone should be able to read for insight, information, and relaxation.¹² *Household Words*, 'A Weekly Journal Conducted by Charles Dickens', was launched a year before his wife's publication. The title was taken from a Shakespearean quote, 'Familiar in their Mouths, as Household Words', and the articles were 'designed for the instruction and entertainment of all classes of

readers'.¹³ 'A Preliminary Word', which he wrote for the first issue dated Saturday March 30, 1850, outlined his philosophy:

We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently preserving in ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time.¹⁴

His creed assured readers that the articles would be informative, entertaining, or both. Not surprisingly, the magazine also became Dickens's vehicle for advocating pertinent social reforms. He hoped to serve a broad audience, yet *Household Words* became primarily a journal for the middle classes. According to Richard Altick, the publication demonstrated a high literary level and, given the quality, was inexpensive at twopence a copy.¹⁵ Even American audiences enjoyed the articles that were reprinted in anthologies from 1852 onwards.¹⁶

Dickens generally wrote the serialized fiction, although other authors were solicited. He commissioned nonfiction from professional writers and knowledgeable specialists to supplement his staff's contributions. Articles on natural history, historical accounts, travel adventures, and topical matters provided engaging, yet instructive reading. Attitudes to wines, cooking, entertaining and English culinary foibles personally respected his views. Soberly or humorously, the articles also brought attention to appalling sanitary conditions, polluted water supply, fetid sewers, filthy meat markets, and problematic foodstuffs. *Household Words* both informed readers and attempted to galvanize legal action.¹⁷ In the years Catherine compiled her menus, Britain reeled from tremendous problems with spurious and adulterated food and beverages. 'Constitution Trials' summarized the extent of the problem:

The British consumer is a little angry on the subject of adulterations. From one side he is shouted at to mind his milk, and from another to beware of his bread; a sepulchral voice informs him when he lifts a cup of coffee to his lips that it contains chicory and coffins. In his tea, he is told to look for black-lead, Prussian blue and gypsum; in his wine, he is warned that there are drugs past reckoning; and in his cakes, he is kindly admonished; in his custards, prussic acid lies in waiting to destroy. Whatever the British consumer may feel inclination to devour, let him devour it at his peril.¹⁸

Other articles, such as 'Death in the Breadbasket', disclosed specific admixtures found in the most basic of foodstuffs.¹⁹ Obviously, *Household Words* was not alone in reporting deleterious conditions in London's (and other cities') food supply, but it reached an important audience.

Anne Lohrli believed that Dickens maintained tight control over the content, authors and editing. Over the years, his assistants included Richard H. Horne, Henry Morley, and Wilkie Collins. Four other journalists were among the regulars, Dudley Costello, Frederick Knight Hunt, Sidney Laman Blanchard, and William Blanchard Jerrold.²⁰ They contributed articles on culinary topics, as did Charles Knight, Harriet Martineau, and George Sala.²¹ (Leigh Hunt, Mark Lemon, and Mary Boyle, all actors in Dickens's amateur theatre productions, submitted work as well.)²² The food and wine articles have contributed substantially to our understanding of his wife's publication and provide an historical context for Catherine's work.

The editors of Dickens's letters and Michael Slater acknowledge that the introduction to *What Shall We Have For Dinner?* was more likely written by Dickens than his wife, judging by the clean, witty style.²³ Dickens's prose cleverly used the characters from the farce, *Used Up*. Adopting the pen-name of Lady Clutterbuck, he played humorously with social expectations. The device mimicked a trend, often used by male authors, such as Charles Day in *Hints on Etiquette*, to claim aristocratic respectability.²⁴ Etiquette manuals were particularly ripe for pseudonymous authorship, and the few writers with actual titles - Lady Campbell, Lady Greville, Lady Howard and Lady Grove - unwittingly lent credibility to the aliases.²⁵

The first publication of Catherine Dickens's book in 1851 is still shrouded in mystery, since the only copy that survives from that year is defined as a '2nd Edition'. The 'new edition' of 1852 (from which the transcript in this volume derives), just as all the other printings, is extremely rare. I have so far located only five extant originals and two copies of any of the editions in libraries across the world.²⁶ Curiously, the few letters from her husband to their publisher Bradbury & Evans contain no references to the writing or the printing of these editions.

What can a collection of mid-Victorian menus reveal about its author? After all, there is a vast difference between reading a menu and eating the meal, and a far greater gap between reading Catherine's menus and understanding the social dynamics surrounding their dining-room table.

Did, for instance, Catherine Dickens borrow menus verbatim from other cookery books, or were her meals more personal combinations? One soon realizes the difficulty in answering this question since only odd spellings or other markers would tie Catherine's menus to her contemporaries' publications. Because every culture has well-established dishes, these combinations are difficult to untangle as individual preferences. Some pairings have historic associations. One

menu, for example, that was consistently repeated through her editions, opened with cod and oyster sauce, and moved on to roast rolled ribs of beef, roast fowl, plum tart, and a few other flourishes including bacon, French beans, potatoes, toasted cheese, and a watercress salad. This combination was so common that nearly two decades earlier, her then fiancé Charles, who was travelling, ate similar fare: 'I have just ordered dinner in this curious den for five people, cod and oyster sauce, Roast beef, and a pair of ducks, plum pudding, and Mince Pies.'²⁷ Dickens's meal that evening was probably the wisest choice from the tavern's kitchen. His 1835 dinner and Catherine's 1850s menu mirror enduring British cookery, served on our own tables over a century and a half later.²⁸ The only noticeable differences today are the proportions; by our standards, the menus were enormous even for the hardest of appetites.

While bills of fare for both tavern meals and home dinners reflect the chef's, cook's, or homemaker's creativity, the menus also make a statement about the writer's worldliness and financial status. To this end, one wonders what were the Dickenses' food preferences. How did they change over time? And what, if anything, do Catherine's editions disclose about regional foods and agricultural availability?

Fortunately the Dickenses' letters provide supporting commentary on their home, travels, personal preferences, and social conventions. A wider cultural context is opened by Dickens's magazine, *Household Words*, and by contemporary cookbooks and other culinary sources that document Victorian daily life.

In order to identify the patterns and the frequency of foodstuffs represented in Catherine's menus, databases were created for all the editions. Admittedly, an analysis of this type assumes that her menus represent the dinners she would have liked to serve her family and guests or those she actually served. Beside the predictable pairings among the roughly 1,400 entries composing the bills of fare for each edition, Catherine's personal touches are evident. She has graciously pulled back the dining-room curtains, so we may glimpse her family enjoying dinner around their own table.

Not surprisingly, in all the versions of her book, Catherine demonstrates a decidedly British character. She consistently prefers the term 'bills of fare' to 'menus', enlists plain English names for dishes, and only occasionally opts for French terms or spellings (such as *rechauffé*, *Crème au Marasquin*, and so forth). She never uses titles in Italian or other languages. She did not necessarily create menus that paired dishes in strict symmetry (as required by the more formal *à la française* service), which suggests that their guests dined in the more 'modern' *à la russe* style. The informality and relative freedom the *à la russe* approach offered was transferred to the actual items Catherine could, and did, choose for the courses. While the family menus are similar to our everyday meals, the larger dinner party menus owed more to precedent and custom so that the

combinations Catherine offers may, at first, seem unfamiliar. But as one looks at the courses (grouped by the closer spacing of the lines in the bills of fare), the Victorian meal-pattern emerges and her creativity, or occasionally lack of it, is unveiled.

For anyone who remembers his or her first dinner party, the timing and coordination of the finished dishes were difficult skills to learn, but once acquired, proved invaluable. Catherine's cooking practices and menus reveal an author who knows how much juggling is realistic in a small kitchen with limited personnel. Like any experienced hostess and cook, Catherine writes the larger menus realizing that some items would be made ahead and served cold or at room temperature. For meat cookery, she balances preparations simmered on the stovetop, baked in the oven, or roasted on the bottle-jack (which require less surveillance) with those that demand the cook's constant attention.

To provide an overview of the cooking methods, the more numerous 1852 menus were chosen for the following chart. Since Catherine sometimes included the cooking techniques in the dish's title, it gives insight into the methods she used. Restraint, however, must be exercised when interpreting the relative significance of these cooking methods. For example, she does not mention steaming, braising, and potting, but doubtlessly these methods were used. Moreover, the statistical frequency of baking would soar if pies, tarts, baked macaroni, and so forth were included as they are roughly estimated under the category entitled 'baked desserts'. Since some items, especially desserts, would have been made before or after meal preparation, these would not influence the flow of the kitchen work during dinner service.

Catherine suggests frying half as often as roasting, but one cannot tell if she means pan-frying or deep-frying, except in obvious cases like fried potatoes, fritters, and so forth. Hashed meats were pan-fried, and preparations such as minced collops were so popular with the Dickens family, she provides a recipe in the appendix.

Beside traditional meat stews, vegetables and mushrooms are individually stewed (actually braised). With the exception of boiled puddings, boiling is reserved for meats, predominantly chicken, turkey, mutton, and knuckles of ham, which also provides well-flavoured stocks. While Catherine lists 'boiled' salmon and mackerel, she and her cook most likely poached the fish in an aromatic court-bouillon. The terms 'boiled' and 'boiling', were used similarly by contemporary cookbook writers.

Curries, although not strictly a cooking method, are singled out here since they represent a distinctive style. 'Curry-eating engagements' are mentioned in Dickens's notes to their friends John Leech and Frank Stone. These invitations may refer to a restaurant outing, but it is equally likely that curries featured at Devonshire Terrace.²⁹ Twenty menus offer curry dishes, and Catherine provides a

recipe in the appendix. Unlike the sentiments of 'Mrs. B' in Soyer's cookery book, Catherine has no preference as to the proper season for serving curry, that is, either to help cool in the summer or to warm in the winter.³⁰ She suggests the dish year round, with seafood curries of lobster or oysters as her most popular, and mutton and rabbit being a close second. In one menu, Catherine serves rabbit curry 'smothered in white sauce' in an over-the-top Victorian treatment, but she drops this combination in the 1854 edition and adds curried skate. Catherine, like most of her contemporaries, offers a curry dish to the menu only for variety. There is no evidence that a traditional ethnic meal with curries and condiments was prepared in the Dickens house.

Catherine broils fish, fowl, and mushrooms. She is also fond of stuffing meat, offal, and fish for menus serving up to ten diners. With few exceptions, she neither indicates the type or ingredients of the farce. In nearly twenty menus, she includes stuffed haddock, sheep's heart, roast fillet of beef or rump roasts and, the most popular, a stuffed leg of mutton.

She offers meat pies, made from rabbit or small game birds in roughly another twenty menus, and about half the time she serves the pies cold. Overwhelmingly, her favourite is pigeon pie, and one assumes she placed the spiky pigeon feet sticking out of the pie crust as was the customary to authenticate the contents. (This garnishing style continued to be shown in the colour-plates of Mrs Beeton's work a decade later.³¹)

For especially large dinner party menus (some with over thirty dishes), the middle-class hostess did not necessarily ask her kitchen staff to make or to cook all the dishes at home. Alternatives, like using the local baker's commercial ovens could be arranged for roasting large birds and joints. Elaborate meat pies, pastries, or jellies could also be purchased from the bake shops. Confectioners would provide ices and spectacular desserts, and fancy provisioners, taverns, and hotels also supplied full meals - as Dickens knew very well. On one occasion when he boasted about his punch-making, Dickens extended a dinner invitation in his wife's absence. He wrote to her saying, 'it will become necessary to furnish fully the table with some cold viands from Fortnum and Mason's.'³² The party, he later reported, was a success, 'Cold collation of pigeon pie, collared red partridge [a red-legged French partridge], ham, roast fowls, and lobster salads. One hot dish, consisting of a most immense heap of asparagus. Considerable quantities of punch were disposed of.'³³ We do not know how often Catherine bought prepared viands, but one suspects from her husband's letter that there were times when it was necessary.

In viewing the menus as a whole, several other generalizations may be made. Catherine designed the majority (roughly 80 per cent) of the bills of fare for small family groups. That is, out of the 164 to 174

menus in the various editions, over seventy were created for two or three persons, nearly forty for four to five diners, and about thirty for six or seven persons. Given the Dickens's household with three adults (Catherine, her husband, and her sister Georgy), the older children, in-laws, and visitors, these expanding menus could readily accommodate the variable configurations at the nightly dinner table. Invitations for Sabbath meals were extended weekly to family and close friends. 'My sister (being alone just now) usually dines with us on that day, and moreover my brother [Fred] whom I encourage so to do,' Dickens wrote to Mrs William (Catherine) Macready asking her to join them.³⁴

The Dickens's probably gave more dinner parties than most middle-class families since they enjoyed entertaining. When her bills of fare switch from an uneven number of diners to those for ten persons or more, Catherine reflects the more formal structure associated with entertaining. The remaining menus, designed for up to twenty persons, may reflect larger family gatherings (for christenings or birthdays), or those to entertain colleagues as celebrations of publications and other benchmarks.

Catherine's practicality as a menu-planner is evident. A third of her menus provide foodstuffs available all year long. These 'January to December' menus for two to ten persons offer convenience by using common pantry items and things easily obtainable at market. Because her household was often on the move from one temporary holiday home to another, she knew how to expand menus or produce meals for a larger company at short notice. Judging by how often pantry lists continue to be given in today's culinary magazines, we still appreciate this approach. Catherine's mainstays include soups from root vegetables, or first courses of sole or salmon, and entrées prepared from beef, mutton, and fowl. Long-keeping vegetables (carrots, onions, turnips, etc.), those with two growing seasons (like spinach), and those raised year-long (like watercress) fill out the courses. In these year-long menus, Catherine relies on steamed puddings, starch-based custards, and jam tarts for desserts. She often ends the meal with a cheese dish.

Sometimes Catherine just wrote 'vegetable' without specification. She also wrote a few menus with just meat, potatoes, and a sweet - with no apparent inclusion of vegetables. This is not unusual. If we compare British and American menus listed in contemporary cookbooks, the American literature, especially if published in New England and the eastern part of the mid-western states, tended to contain more vegetable dishes - albeit the same vegetables - than their British counterparts.

Catherine is not indifferent to the choice of foodstuffs, her bills of fare celebrate the change of seasons: more particularly after the new edition of 1852 which reorganizes all the menus into seasonal groups, adding under each menu the time of year it could be served.

(She also provides ten wholly new menus.) Her spring menus feature the first tender asparagus shoots, while early summer dishes highlight delicate peas, juicy cucumbers, and crisp cabbages before later harvests of cauliflower and broccoli. Only rarely does she suggest vegetables (artichokes and Brussels sprouts) beyond their apparent availability. As one might expect, her husband held strong opinions about foodstuffs out of season. 'I abhor the idea of - whether it be for Winter peaches, Spring lamb, Midsummer ice, [or] unnatural cucumbers,' Dickens commented once while asserting a point.³⁵

Even with today's culinary movements promoting fresh ripe local produce, seasonality may be an aspect of Victorian life we fail to appreciate fully. Mid-nineteenth-century cooks had far fewer choices during the off-season, and they maximized each month of the calendar as availability dictated. If the *Epicure's Year Book and Table Companion* may speak for the choices in the Dickens' time, 'the year opens well for the table. Butcher, fishmonger, poulterer, and fruiterer, present rich stores to the epicure. Butcher's meat is in perfection. Game is plentiful. The fishmonger has his richest show of the year. The garden and the hot-house supply a rare variety of vegetables, salads, and desserts.'³⁶

January in London offered ducks, geese, kid, partridges, snipe, teal, and pheasants for those who enjoyed the 'rich variety of game'. Small birds, like plovers and teal, and larger fowl, like wild ducks and geese, were thought to be at their best. Salmon, trout, turbot, sturgeon, cod, crevettes (shrimp), oysters, and smelts were at their peak. Accompanied by spinach, chicory, mallow, celery, cardoons, Brussels sprouts, salsify, and hothouse herbs, the market also held a variety of grapes, pears and apples. 'The weather invites to the solid and succulent' dinners rather than a 'light, dainty diet', the author remarked.³⁷

February is 'the month when our neighbours, at any rate, regale themselves the most freely; and when truffled poultry are poured into Paris' for Carnival. The 'perfumed highway from Périgord to Paris' was said to be replete with other succulent fungi, but Londoners had to settle for game and look forward to March when the 'opening spring brings new delicacies - with the violets'. Plump oysters were at their best. There was an abundance of fish, and vegetable gardens yielded fresh young asparagus, artichokes, tender lettuces, radishes and beets.³⁸

With the burst of spring in April, dramatic changes were seen in the kitchen. Young lamb and chickens were available with the first green peas appearing in the garden and asparagus coming into perfection. Hams were imported and the sea was bountiful with mackerel, each taking its place upon the table at the end of the month. The store of native fruits was ending, and the cook fell back on imports, forced varieties, or preserves from the pantry. May was a

merry month since 'the round of dining seriously begins'. Peas were now plentiful. There were young haricots, cucumbers, and cauliflower in the markets and growing more bountiful. Salmon, oysters, and sole added to the cook's credibility. Young pigeons, turkeys, and duckling invited combinations with asparagus or peas. While few of us realize it today, May was the month when eggs and butter were at their best. A simple omelette was the perfect way to 'wind up a little dinner delightfully'.³⁹

For the English epicure, June was described as a 'gracious' month 'to him who will eat in season, and who does not run after strawberries in January'. The garden produce and orchard fruits, particularly from the southern regions, took their honoured places. In June, veal and mutton were excellent. Turkey poult, chicken, duckling, quail, and pigeon were abundant. Whitebait was well in season, along with red mullet, crab, and a variety of vegetables.⁴⁰

July provided pears for the picking and the 'last kiss from the ardent sun' for apricots, peaches, and the orange flowers in bloom. Quail and lark helped an impatient diner wait for the autumn partridges. Tomatoes redden, melons and the greengage fruits ripened, while the 'almond lies like a pearl, in its green shell'. The juicy summer fruits continued to be picked through the month of August. Figs and peaches were now plentiful. The suckling roast pig was in all its glory, and grouse, leverets, young rabbits, and partridges were abundant once again.⁴¹

September was the month of game, particularly partridge, pheasant, and woodcocks, which were brought to the market with the autumn artichokes. Fishmongers had firm, fine-fleshed trout. October brought the rest of the game birds. Winter fruits such as plums, pears, quinces, apples, and nuts began to appear, and the first frost ripened the medlar. The cold offered abundant fish in fine condition, including mackerel and herrings.⁴² The increased cold of November fattened cattle, plumped turkeys and capons, and brought the oyster once again into perfection. December, 'the month of the year when every Englishman is a bon vivant,' put forth an abundance of fish, flesh, fowl, and game with both venison and boar in high season.⁴³

The seasonal information that Catherine provides in her menus is helpful in another way. Some of the odd placements of a few menus betray editorial changes that occurred when new menus were added to a succeeding edition. It is likely that two of her seasonal frames, 'All the Summer' and 'All the Winter', may have been inserted into the second printing of the 1852 edition, published as 'a new edition'. This suggests that there were two editions that year, as there had been in the previous year. If these menus were an after-thought, it would help explain why the overly large menus appear under the section for eight to ten persons. These were more likely intended for eighteen to twenty diners. The compositor (perhaps using the previous edition for formatting) may have inserted the menus

where they most conveniently fitted the space, rather than where they should have been placed (see the endnote for specifics).⁴⁴ Many of these misaligned menus were dropped in the 1854 edition, which tacitly acknowledges the problem of their placement.

Undoubtedly, helpful comments from readers, as well as time to reconsider her work, guided Catherine in her evaluation of the menus in the first edition and allowed her to revise the 1852 and 1854 versions quite heavily. The table on page 88 above summarizes the overall changes. One should note that, as of this writing, neither the first editions of the 1851 or 1852 publications are extant, nor are there known copies for the intervening years: 1853, 1855, 1857, 1858, and 1859. If her work was printed beyond 1860, no copies have been located to date.

For the 1852 editions, Catherine revises the bills of fare as she adds the seasonal time-frames for each, and rearranges the menus by seasons while occasionally substituting dishes. She also changes the title of the group of menus pertaining to banquets, raising the maximum number of diners from eighteen to twenty persons. However, the title page was never amended in any of the subsequent editions.

The single most important overall menu change is the reduction of toasted cheese. If Catherine was unaware that over a third of the 1851 menus ended with her husband's favourite dish, toasted cheese, she must have realized it soon after publication. By the following year, she replaces toasted cheese in twenty-four entries with several other dishes, including macaroni, sweet and savoury omelettes, cheese, fruit pudding, or prawns. She omits toasted cheese altogether in several other menus, and by the 1854 edition (and thence onwards), she eliminates or replaces fourteen more listings for toasted cheese.

The 1854 publication discloses other significant revisions, which were most likely inspired by the Dickenses' experience of living in France. They resided in both Paris and the seaside town of Boulogne. Catherine was clearly influenced by French traditions, particularly the culinary treasures of northern France that shared features with her Scottish heritage. Surrounded by extremely fertile agricultural land, Boulogne's cooking is rich in root vegetables. Stews, much like Scottish hotchpotch, are regional specialities - flavoured with juniper berries. Leeks, cabbages, and tender baby vegetables (known as '*hortillonnages*') are abundant. There were rich fish preserves, particularly of herring, which was served fresh, salted, and lightly cured as the legendary regional speciality called *harengs saurs*. Experts, called '*maître saureru*', mastered the secret preparation of brining the herring and smoking it over oak and beech. The Flemish wool trade, dating back to the Middle Ages, left its legacy on the food of Boulogne and Picardy. Meat, and plenty of it, dominated the cuisine. Lamb and mutton were particular favourites, with pork and pig's feet running a close second, so to speak. Beef *carbonnade*-style stews, with their heavy, somewhat sweet beers, added to Boulonnais

cooking, as did the sweet Flemish tarts using the sugar produced from sugar beets raised in northern France. Champagne was the crowning touch to any meal.⁴⁵

French recipes and food have a long history in British cookery books but, for the Dickens family, living in France made an indelible impression. Catherine adds distinctly French dishes to her 1854 edition. The new titles include *Blauquet* of Veal, *Vol au vent* of Sweetbreads with Cockscombs, Stewed Tripe, Pig's Feet with Truffles, *à la brochette*, Roast Haunch of Mutton with Laver, Marooned Mutton, Beef *Croquets*, and *Fondue* (which was actually a cheese soufflé). She uses *ramiquins*, *timballes*, and adds more *gratin* dishes to her menus.

Not only did the preparation styles reflect French recipes, but Catherine adds more variety in the foodstuffs. Salmon trout, red mullet, and curried skate make their appearance, as did the larding of both roast pheasant and fillet of beef. Tendrons of Beef, Beef Sandars, Lamb's Feet with Parsley and Butter, Marrow Bones, Broiled Bones, and Kidneys Stewed in Madeira all are added to the menus and recipes in 1854 edition.

Catherine's saucing changes as well. This is not to suggest that she, or their cook, adopted French sauces and the extreme reductions that transform an amalgamation of ingredients into Parisian classics. Her sauces are British with bright, seasonal elements that complement the main dish. With less reliance on shrimp and oyster sauces as standards, she expands her use of flavouring components with capers, fennel, and celery for three new sauces.

Catherine adds a wealth of soups (as well as some recipes for them) to the 1854 edition, including Clear Soup with Poached Eggs, Lettuce Soup, Winter Soup, Potato Soup, Vermicelli Soup, Vegetable Soup, Jerusalem Artichoke Soup, Julienne Soup, Semolina Soups, and a lean Soup *Maigre*.

In addition, she gives aspic and jellies more prominence in the menus, and for the first time suggests a garnish of plovers' eggs. Condiments, such as lemon juice and cayenne for fried oysters, are not new to the Dickenses, but Catherine adds them for clarification in the 1854 menus. Potatoes are as ubiquitous as in the earlier menus. However, she cites them less often as 'mashed and brown' and simply writes 'mashed potatoes'. Dishes of turkey legs are dropped altogether and there is less boiled fowl mentioned. She concludes meals with more fashionable Continental savouries, such as radishes served with spring onions, 'hung beef' grated on buttered toast, and thin slices of German sausage garnished with a salad of young greens. Anchovies and sardines are now accompanied with chilli vinegar, which may denote a change in personal preferences, dining fashions, or both.

Not only does the 1854 edition profit from the family's residence in France, but Catherine is more willing to promote British dishes as well. Her new entries include Baked Irish Stew, Peas Pudding, Roast

Duck with Peas, Small Mutton Pies, and Chicken Salad. She added a few desserts such as Queen's Pudding, Trifle Pudding, Brown Bread Pudding, and Strawberry Jam Creams. For some of these new entries, she includes the recipes.

Although Catherine's Scottish heritage is subtle in the early editions, by 1854 she confidently adds regional recipes and dishes to her menus. It is surprising that she had taken so long to include these items; not only were they traditional, but they were well known beyond Scotland.⁴⁶ The Dickenses had visited Edinburgh early in their marriage, when a public dinner was given in Charles's honour. The opportunity allowed Catherine to visit her birthplace and Dickens to see the sites, taste the foods, and drink the beverages. In his letters to friends, he mentioned 'oatcake, mutton, hotch potch, trout from the loch, small beer bottled, marmalade, and whiskey,' and that they 'dinned on eggs and bacon.'⁴⁷ Hotch-potch and trout were not mentioned in Catherine's first two editions, but she adds these two 'comfort foods', along with cock-a-leekie, in 1854.

As well as bills of fare, Catherine provided recipes: 'The Appendix contains Receipts for some dishes, the preparation of which may not be generally understood', and 'Useful receipts for dishes referred to in the preceding bills of fare'. Why did she select these particular recipes? How often were the dishes used in her menus? Were they from family receipts or borrowed from published cookery books? If she borrowed recipes, did she record them verbatim or give them an individual spin? Unfortunately the library inventory from Devonshire Terrace does not include cookery books (unlike those of William Makepeace Thackeray and George Augustus Sala).⁴⁸ Dickens's letters offered some clues, as does comparison of the recipes with contemporary printed books. The sources of some have been identified, and one expects others will be in time.

Although there is a certain difficulty in identifying a dish in the bills of fare that may go under several names, it is clear that the recipes in the appendix appear infrequently as dishes in her bills of fare. Asparagus soup, one of the most popular, only shows up in nine of the menus and others, like Spanish salad dressing or Scotch broth, are not listed in any menus at all, in any of the editions. Likewise, the sauces that Catherine recommends in the recipes, such as pungent brown sauce with leg of mutton, or caper sauce with boiled mutton, are not given in the bills of fare either. Perhaps she did not subscribe to the combinations herself, but it is more likely that her menus involve much cultural shorthand. Food combinations, then and now, are so embedded that a reader subconsciously supplies the excluded items. Bread(s), butter, condiments, beverages, fresh or dried fruits and nuts may have completed the Dickenses' meals, but

Catherine never mentions them. Even her contemporaries rarely provide that information, and often only in their general introductory remarks.

Altogether, Catherine's 1851 '2nd edition' contains an appendix with twenty-six recipes arranged in no apparent order. These are retained without changes for the 1852 editions onwards. They include: Maître d'Hôtel Butter, Maître d'Hôtel Sauce, Potato Balls, Horseradish Sauce, Italian Cream, Scotch Broth, Mutton Broth, Leg of Mutton with Oysters, Boiled Cauliflower with Parmesan, Swiss Pudding, Asparagus Soup, Salmon Curry, Prince Albert's Pudding, Charlotte Russe, Mayonnaise [of Fowl], Scotch Minced Collop, Cod Rechauffé, Eve's Pudding, Hominy, Kalecannon, Lamb's Head and Mince, Rice Blancmange, Scotch Mutton Broth, Spanish Pudding, Rump Steak à la Soyer, and Spanish Salad Dressing.

With the major revisions for the 1854 edition, Catherine adds twenty-one recipes. These are retained for subsequent editions. A few of the new recipes cater to her Scottish heritage, and some of the others reflect her trips abroad. The additions include: Cock-a-Leekie, Hotch Potch, Orange Fritters, Another Way (to make orange fritters), Potatoe [sic] Soup, Vermicelli and Vegetable Soup, Kidneys à la Brochette, Fondue (Simple Method), Tendrons of Veal, Strawberry Curd and Jelly, Stone Cream, Baked Irish Stew, Marooned Mutton, Queen's Pudding, Beef Sandars, Soup Maigre, Rump Steak Breaded or Beef Cutlets, Macaroni with Bacon, Timballe of Macaroni with Chicken and Ham, and Palestine Soup. She ends with Coffee for Thirty People. If Catherine had organized the forty-seven recipes into categories, there would have been twelve meat dishes, twelve sweets, ten soups-stews, three vegetable preparations, two fish dishes, and seven miscellaneous.

Catherine made some editorial changes in the 1854 edition; Scotch mutton broth is renamed winter soup, which avoids confusion with two similar titles (Scotch broth and mutton broth). She also omits the introductory paragraph for Swiss pudding that was placed six pages before the actual recipe in the 1851 and 1852 editions. Swiss pudding is the first recipe that most directly reflects their experience living in a foreign country. The original recipe's introduction begins with the statement: 'In many parts of the continent, as well as throughout Switzerland, it is customary to...', and then she describes the process of creating the dish. The second part of the recipe (placed six pages later) provides more specific instructions for layering the boiled apples with bread crumbs, sugar, nutmeg, and butter before baking. Only the second section is retained after 1854. The updated appendix probably reflects helpful commentary she received from friends.

Evidence from Dickens's correspondence suggests that family and friends ate the dishes included in her recipe section. In a dinner invitation to Mark Lemon, Dickens declares, 'the baked Irish Stew-

time next Monday, is 5'.⁴⁹ Was this a test-run for the recipe that found its way into her book that same year? The brief recipe for baked Irish stew is interesting in its own right. It reads more like a reminder of a familiar favourite than an actual set of instructions: 'An ordinary Irish stew, with a little gravy added, and baked until nicely browned; about half an hour.' Why was it necessary for Catherine to include it? The scant recipe seems absurdly simple but, in fact, it highlights a change in technology. In the additions to the 1854 recipe selection, Catherine inadvertently acknowledges an adaptation to the new kitchen ranges that offered experimental cooks more convenient baking ovens. These methods began replacing both stove-top cooking and browning methods that had required more of the cook's attention. True, the oven is recommended in Catherine's 1851 recipes, but she gives the alternatives, such as 'put them into the oven or before the fire to brown' when making potato balls, or her recipe entitled lamb's head and mince was made 'brown in a Dutch oven or with a salamander'. These methods no longer appear in the recipes she chose for the edition published only three years later. In addition, most of the new instructions include the length of the baking time needed.

The 1854 and later editions show other changes. The earlier (1851, 1852) recipes gave less exacting measurements, fewer techniques, and often omit baking temperatures or characteristics of the finished dish, but by 1854 that information is usually incorporated. Furthermore, she now chose recipes that rely on isinglass for moulded desserts like strawberry curd jelly and stone cream, unlike the original edition where Italian cream, for example, was not stabilized with any type of gelatin.

Catherine does not include one recipe for cake. Spanish pudding, a sweet bread enriched with butter and eggs that relies on yeast for leavening, is the closest she comes. Yeast-risen bread-cakes have centuries-long traditions and may reflect the tastes she developed in her childhood. Dried German yeast was available for cooks in the early 1850s, and provided a better alternative to the erratic quality of barm (beer yeast) purchased from breweries. The rich dough in the recipe Catherine offers is rolled with candied orange, finely chopped citron, cinnamon, and powdered sugar. Similar to a *savarin*, a sauce of clarified sugar flavoured with orange-flower water is poured over the bread to form a delicate glaze. Perhaps it was the citrus flavour that prompted the recipe's Mediterranean title.

Catherine's sweets rely on lemon, vanilla, and almond flavourings, orange-flower water, candied and fresh citrus, dried fruits, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, sweet wines and liqueurs. Her choice of seasoning is typical of Victorian taste, but nutmeg may also reflect her own husband's penchant for the spice. Dickens is said to have carried around his own nutmeg grater - most likely for punch-making.⁵⁰ In a few recipes where the garnishes of capers, herbs,

fruit, jelly, or flowers are suggested, one appreciates the aesthetic care Catherine must have expected in the presentation of the dishes.

The names of the recipes given in Catherine's appendices add an element of confusion when we try to tie them to other printed sources. Prince Albert's pudding for example, is usually a steamed pudding, but not in Catherine's version. The Prince Consort apparently preferred lighter puddings where suet was replaced with butter and ground rice for some of the flour. A version of Prince Albert's pudding is still popular today.⁵¹ Catherine's interpretation is a luxuriously rich orange-flavoured custard pie baked with top and bottom pastry. The crusts made the pie easy to serve when cold, as the recipe notes. Eliza Acton's recipe with the same title begins in like fashion, but her filling is lightened with beaten egg whites, stabilized with flour, contains raisins, and is boiled rather than baked.⁵² Catherine's may have been an old recipe given an updated name. It resembles Hannah Glasse's orange pudding, which was baked between puff-pastry.⁵³

Although the exact sources of many of the recipes are not yet identified, there are certainly eleven which she copied almost verbatim from available literature and five others that are close interpretations.⁵⁴ To her credit, Catherine acknowledges two authors, Alexis Soyer and 'Meg Dods' (Christian Isobel Johnstone). She also borrowed recipes from at least two other cookbook writers, Eliza Acton and Sarah Hale, whom she did not cite.

The flamboyant chef Alexis Benoît Soyer (1809-58) had the most profound influence on Catherine's work, but that may also be true of his contribution to Victorian cuisine as a whole. In 1830, as an ambitious young man in his early twenties, Soyer left Paris and became the chef to the Duke of Cambridge. Seven years later, he presided over the Reform Club in London. His interest in improving British cooking generally, and his desire to help the poor specifically, culminated in a government request for him to oversee the famine-relief soup kitchens in Dublin in 1847. By 1851, Soyer had already written three successful cookery books and was currently involved in opening his London restaurant called The Symposium, which catered to visitors attending the Great Exhibition.⁵⁵

Catherine openly acknowledges borrowing three of his recipes: cod rechauffé à la Soyer, salmon curry à la Soyer, and steak à la Soyer. Two other menu items (without recipes in her appendix) also use the appellation 'à la Soyer', suggesting she used his book *The Gastronomic Regenerator* for preparations of broccoli au gratin and loin of mutton rechauffé. In addition, she copied three other classic recipes from Soyer without specific acknowledgement: maître d'hôtel butter, sauce à la maître d'hôtel, and fondue. A popular accompaniment, maître d'hôtel butter flavoured meats, fish, and vegetables, and it is the base for the sauce à la maître d'hôtel. Catherine copied the sauce recipe nearly verbatim from Soyer, only

replacing his white stock with white sauce, begging the question whether she or the compositor copied the recipe correctly. Three years later for the 1854 edition, Catherine returned to Soyer's work and pinched the recipe for fondue (simple method), which was actually a preparation for a cheese soufflé.⁵⁶

Catherine also appears to have interpreted (rather than copied) Soyer's recipe for rump steak from the summary of cooking techniques that describe broiling. Soyer wrote the technique using the immodest voice of his alter ego 'Mrs. B' who says: 'I have latterly, in broiling rump-steaks, added that which, by a great many, is considered an improvement.' Catherine obviously felt the same way, but she deviates from Soyer's original recipe by using seasoned flour for dredging the steak, rather than the powdered biscuits and other seasonings such as shallot powder or mushroom powder with which he coats the cooked steak. When done, he places the steak on 'a very hot dish, with a little mushroom-ketchup, [and] a small piece of butter'.⁵⁷ Catherine chops shallots, which are sautéed in the pan juices with the addition of [mushroom] ketchup and a little butter, before the sauce is strained and served over the steak. Catherine's changes reflect practical adaptations for home cooks who relied on common pantry items rather than the expensive products available in a professional kitchen.

'Made-dishes' (essentially leftovers that repackaged yesterday's meal into today's repast) were praised by Soyer. He thought these entrées were 'dishes upon which, in the high class of cookery, the talent of the cook is displayed.'⁵⁸ Part of the skill was to create delicious, well-prepared food, the other was an equally valid quest for economy. As he put it, these dishes were clever creations made 'out of those parts which are rarely or never used in this country by the middle classes.'⁵⁹ Having emigrated from France, the contrast and wastefulness of English practices continually prompted him to target British attitudes. He hoped his suggestions, espoused in the enlightened letters of 'Mrs. B' to her formerly extravagant friend 'Mrs. L', would gently guide readers toward reducing the housekeeping expenses while serving more imaginative meals.

His view found an echo *chez* Dickens. Expensive cuts of meat were special fare reserved for special occasions. In Catherine's small menus, most likely family meals, she suggests more economical cuts, such as the shoulder, three times as often as she uses premium joints and roasts. In the 1851 and 1852 editions, she also includes turkey legs for these family meals. Like Soyer, Catherine combines the expensive cuts with made-dishes in fairly even ratios in meals designed for up to five diners, but for parties of six or more, she serves roasts and joints to save preparation time for the kitchen. Here her made-dishes fill out the menus and add more choice for the guests. For these company-dinners, the large saddle-cut that Soyer introduced was a favourite. In harmony with Soyer's sentiments,

Catherine rarely serves joints or roasts as cold dishes thus avoiding 'the domestic crime' of offering inappropriate dishes to guests in the winter.⁶⁰

Another author whose influence extended to Catherine's kitchen was Eliza Acton (1799-1859), from Tonbridge in Kent.⁶¹ Miss Acton had probably never met them, judging from Dickens's rather formal letter of 11 July 1845:

Dear Madam

I beg to thank you cordially for your very satisfying and welcome note of the tenth of January last; and for the book that accompanied it. Believe me, I am far too sensible of the value of a communication so spontaneous and unaffected, to regard it with the least approach to indifference or neglect - I should have been proud to acknowledge it long since, but I have been abroad in Italy.

Dear Madam/ Faithfully Yours⁶²

Presumably she had sent him a copy of her new publication, *Modern Cookery in All its Branches*, issued that January. Her book included regional Kentish recipes and a recipe attributed to Dickens's fictional character, which she entitled 'Ruth Pinch's beefsteak puddings, à la Dickens'. The 'cheerful, tidy, bustling, quiet little Ruth,' who kept house for her older brother Tom, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, was a popular persona. Acton's recipe accommodates Dickens's version of the dish as he described it:

And when she [Ruth] asked him [Tom] what he would like to have for dinner, and faltered out 'chops' as a reasonably good suggestion after their last night's successful supper, Tom grew quite facetious and rallied her desperately.

'I don't know, Tom,' said his sister, blushing, 'I am not quite confident, but I think I could make a beef-steak pudding, if I tried Tom.'

'In the whole catalogue of cookery, there is nothing I should like so much as a beef-steak pudding!' cried Tom: slapping his leg to give the greater force to this reply.

'Yes, dear, that's excellent! But if it should happen not to come quite right the first time,' his sister faltered; 'if it should happen not to be a pudding exactly, but should turn out a stew, or soup, or something of that sort, you'll not be vexed, Tom, will you?'

The serious way in which she looked at Tom; the way in which Tom looked at her; and the way in which she gradually broke into a merry laugh at her own expense; would have enchanted you.

'Why,' said Tom, 'this is capital. It gives us a new, and quite an uncommon interest in the dinner. We put into a lottery for a beef-steak pudding, and it is impossible to say what we may get. We may make some wonderful discovery, perhaps, and produce such a dish as never was known before.'

'I shall not be at all surprised if we do, Tom,' returned his sister, still laughing merrily, 'or if it should prove to be such a dish as we shall not feel very anxious to produce again; but the meat must come out of the saucepan at

last, somehow or other, you know. We can't cook it into nothing at all, that's a great comfort. So if you like to venture, I will.'

'I have not the least doubt,' rejoined Tom, 'that it will come out an excellent pudding; or at all events, I am sure that I shall think it so. There is naturally something so handy and brisk about you, Ruth that if you said you could make a bowl of faultless turtle soup, I should believe you.'

And Tom was right She was precisely that sort of person.⁶³

After returning with a choice steak from the butcher, Ruth set out to make the beefsteak pudding without guidance of a recipe:

First, she [Ruth] tripped down-stairs into the kitchen for the flour, then for the pie-board, then for the eggs, then for the butter, then for a jug of water, then the rolling-pin, then for a pudding-basin, then for the pepper, then for the salt: making a separate journey for everything, and laughing every time she started off afresh. When all the materials were collected, she was horrified to find she had no apron on, and so ran up-stairs, by way of variety, to fetch it...Such a busy little woman she was! So full of self-importance, and trying so hard not to smile, or seem uncertain about anything! It was a perfect treat to Tom to see her with her brows knit, and her rosy lips pursed up, kneading away at the crust, rolling it out, cutting it up into strips, lining the basin with it, shaving it off fine round the rim, chopping up the steak into small pieces, raining down pepper and salt upon them, packing them into the basin, pouring in cold water for gravy, and never venturing to steal a look in his direction, lest her gravity should be disturbed; until, at last, the basin being quite full and only wanting the top crust, she clapped her hands all over with paste and flour, at Tom, and burst out heartily into such a charming little laugh of triumph, that the pudding need have had no other seasoning to commend it to the taste of any reasonable man on earth.

As Ruth rolled out the top crust, John Westlock, whom she had not yet met but who would figure prominently in her life, walked into the apartment to talk to her brother concerning some business. When the men returned for dinner, Ruth already had set their humble table, but it 'wanted neither damask, silver, gold, nor china: no, nor any other garniture at all.' Ruth's 'first experiment of hers in cookery' was so successful they insisted 'she must have been studying the art in secret for a long time past and urged her to make a full confession of the fact.' Discussion of the pudding resumes later in the novel, but at the conclusion of this chapter, a cookery book with the page turned down for beefsteak pudding, was left anonymously as a present in the Pinches' parlour.

Dickens's use of butter and eggs to make the pastry crust, rather than suet and water, anticipated (or picked up on) the humour he unfolded six chapters later for his readers. John, smitten with Ruth, contrived to see her and invites the Pinches to an impromptu meal

(albeit one which he had carefully arranged in his apartment beforehand). John refers to the ingredients in Ruth's pastry crust:

'If I had known a little sooner,' said John, 'I would have tried another pudding. Not in rivalry; but merely to exalt that famous one. I wouldn't on any account have had it made with suet.'

'Why not?' asked Tom.

'Because that cookery-book advises suet,' said John Westlock; 'and ours was made with flour and eggs.'

'Oh good gracious!' cried Tom, 'ours was made with flour and eggs, was it? Ha, ha, ha! A beefsteak pudding made with flour and eggs! Why anybody knows better than that. I know better than that! Ha, ha, ha!'

It is unnecessary to say that Tom had been present at the making of the pudding, and had been a devoted believer in it all through. But he was so delighted to have this joke against his busy little sister, and was tickled to that degree at having found her out, that he stopped in Temple Bar to laugh.⁶⁴

Dickens's description in *Martin Chuzzlewit* was accurate enough for Eliza Acton to create a one-and-a-half-pint pie that both acknowledged Dickens's humour and provided a butter-egg pastry recipe in place of the standard.⁶⁵

The overwhelming popularity of Acton is easy to understand, her work is thoughtful, well written, and comprehensive. The mayonnaise recipe Catherine uses gives directions for assembling a cold dish rather than instructions for making the emulsified dressing and should have been entitled mayonnaise of fowl, or mayonnaise of chicken, as they appear in her menus. The preparation was most likely borrowed from Acton's recipe entitled 'fowls à la mayonnaise'. Catherine's directions simplify Acton's arrangement of cold roast fowl, wedges of lettuce and hard-boiled eggs, and she adds capers and anchovies as extra garnish.⁶⁶

For the expanded 1854 appendix, Catherine again turned to Acton for both Palestine soup (also called Jerusalem artichoke soup) and potato soup.⁶⁷ The directions were copied verbatim, only omitting the original list of ingredients. (The recipe title in Catherine's 1854 edition is misspelled as 'potatoe' but was subsequently corrected.) There are other recipes, for instance for potato balls, cauliflower, and kidneys à la brochette, with much affinity to Acton's own, although Catherine may have taken them from other works - if she did not write them herself - for they were widely popular.⁶⁸

Catherine also borrowed recipes from an American cookbook writer whom they met while touring North America in 1842. Sarah Josepha Buell Hale (1788-1879) was a women's rights activist and the literary editor of *Ladies Magazine* in Boston and later of *Godey's Lady's Book* in Philadelphia. She edited the American edition of Eliza Acton's *Modern Cookery*, and produced at least five of her own cookbooks and a book on etiquette.⁶⁹ Hale was among those who established Thanksgiving as a nationally recognized holiday, but she is probably

best known for her verse 'Mary Had A Little Lamb'. To honour the Boz, she prepared a poem entitled 'The Welcome of Philadelphia to Charles Dickens', for which he thanked her, writing from the Fuller's Hotel in Washington, DC:

My Dear Madam,

I left Philadelphia so hurriedly, that I had not time to reply to your earnest and gratifying letter.

Believe me, that I did not read your beautiful lines unmoved; and that you could not have devised a mode of pleasing me more, than by the production of such a tribute. I scarcely know how to thank you for it. As I am in that condition, however, wherein we are apt to feel that we cannot say enough, but in which a very little may be very expressive, I will only add that I thank you with my whole heart.

On second thoughts though, I must couple with these latter words, one assurance, no less truthful and sincere. It is, that you will never find me departing from those sympathies which we cherish in common, and which have won me your esteem and approval.

Catherine unites with me in cordial regards and best wishes. And I am always.
Dear Madam/ Faithfully/ Your friend⁷⁰

It is likely that Hale later sent some of her books, including cookbooks, to the Dickenses. Catherine took three recipes from her publication *The Ladies New Book of Cookery: A Practical System for Private Families in Town and Country*. Catherine copied verbatim the recipes for leg of mutton with oysters, mutton broth, and a partial recipe for charlotte russe, a popular dessert. Oddly, the portion of the charlotte russe recipe that Catherine selected only included the directions for arranging the savoy biscuits and filling the mould with the crême au marasquin. She omitted the vanilla cream recipe that substituted the cherry liqueur for vanilla extract.⁷¹ The complete recipe was never added in any of the subsequent editions.

Mutton broth is a misleading title since the recipe, in the manner of a *pot au feu*, creates a rich broth garnished with fresh parsley and thyme, as well as a second course of boiled mutton and mashed turnips, which was served with caper or parsley butter sauce. Catherine even repeated Hale's instructions for serving the broth to invalids - that is, 'persons in health'.

Sarah Hale's recipe for leg of mutton with oysters is by far the most intriguing. The unusual combination prompted the title for Sarah Freeman's book *Mutton and Oysters: The Victorians and Their Food*. Freeman highlights the recipe given by Catherine and provides an updated version.⁷² The combination of oysters and mutton has a long history. Mutton stuffed with oysters may be an adaptation from mid-seventeenth-century recipes for mutton sausage enriched with plump oysters.⁷³ The tradition carried over with the popular eighteenth-century cookery book writers who provided several variations on that

theme.⁷⁴ However, the recipes 'a shoulder of mutton stuff'd with oysters' in Charles Carter's *The Complete Practical Cook*, and 'to make a shoulder of mutton eat like venison' written six years later in *Receipts for Cookery and Pastry-Work* by the Scots cook, Mrs McLintock, come closest to Mrs Hale.⁷⁵ Catherine may have grown up with a preparation similar Mrs McLintock's in Scotland and added Hale's recipe to her appendix because it was more 'modern'. There is a certain irony in her selection of an American recipe, especially if Hale's was originally borrowed from a British source.

This dish does represent one of the few which we can link directly to Catherine's own dinner table. She served the stuffed mutton to family and friends. Charles particularly enjoyed it. A letter extends an invitation to Daniel Maclise:

I have been writing all day, and mean to take a great, London, back-slums kind of walk tonight, seeking adventures in knight errant style. Will you come with me? And as a preparation, will you dine with us at a quarter before 5? - Leg of mutton stuffed with oysters.

Reply 'Yes'.⁷⁶

The combination runs full circle since it was also included in *Little Dorrit* where John Chivery, the son of the prison's turnkey, was invited to dinner by Mr Agent Rugg, the debt collector: 'The banquet was appointed for a Sunday, and Miss Rugg with her own hands stuffed a leg of mutton with oysters on the occasion, and sent it to the baker's.' Although their guest did not eat much, Miss Rugg 'took kindly to the mutton, and it rapidly diminished to the bone. A bread-and-butter pudding entirely disappeared, and a considerable amount of cheese and radishes vanished by the same means. Then came the dessert.'⁷⁷

Judicious use of food may have reflected Catherine's Scottish training, but undoubtedly it humoured her husband's desire for household economy. Two recipes for made-dishes, Cod Rechauffé and Salmon Curry (already attributed to Soyer), among others such as Potato Balls, Marooned Mutton, Beef Sandars, Soup Maigre, and Timballe of Macaroni with Chicken and Ham, for example, followed the same principles of using leftovers. Likewise, Kalecannon was an artful assembly of chopped vegetables arranged in stripes and unmoulded from a melon-shaped tin.

Catherine's Scottish preferences are not evident until her revisions of 1854, although the first edition does include a Scotch broth that gives measurements first in Scotch pints and then in English quarts. In the recipe, Catherine succumbs to the use of pearl barley, which was readily available in London, rather than the preferred Scottish variety known as pot-barley. The Edinburgh author 'Meg Dods' states 'with her usual sagacity' that one capital defect of barley-broth cooked by 'Englishers and other unqualified persons,

is produced nine times out of ten by the bad quality of the barley often used in England. Nor does *pearl-barley* give the same consistency as *pot-barley* [italics hers].⁷⁸ 'Bere', that is barley to a Scot, is an invaluable grain used whole and milled for porridge, bread and baked goods or malted for beer and whisky making. If pot-barley held a place of honour in the Dickens household, it is not promoted in Catherine's book.

'Mistress Margaret Dods', the pen-name used by Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781-1857), was taken from the feisty cook in Sir Walter Scott's novel *St. Ronan's Well*. Scott based the character on Marian Ritchie, the brilliant cook at his local inn, The Cross Keys. According to Catherine Brown, Mrs Johnstone was a retiring person who had more success as the author of *The Cook and Housewife's Manual: A Practical System of Modern Domestic Cookery and Family Management* than with her novels. The Edinburgh cookery book was published in 1826 and went through numerous editions over the next century.⁷⁹ Johnstone preserved old Scots dishes and the traditional cuisine in succinct recipes with a passionate and authoritative commentary. It is possible that Catherine was given (or purchased) a copy before her marriage.

Catherine adds two well-known Scots recipes, hotchpotch and cock-a-leekie, to her 1854 edition. She acknowledges using 'Meg Dod's recipe' in the title for hotchpotch and makes only a few minor changes to the classic. The recipe, originally entitled 'Scotch hotch-potch' by Johnstone to distinguish it from 'winter hotch-potch', is modified by Catherine, who changes the spelling of 'peas' to 'pease', adds 'sprays of cauliflower' to the vegetables, and writes 'chops' rather than 'steaks' - although the terms were interchangeable.⁸⁰ Catherine also includes Johnstone's note under 'N.B.' with advice on keeping the parsley's colour.⁸¹

The source for cock-a-leekie has not yet been identified. The name for this thick soup of chicken and leeks came into use in the eighteenth century, but the preparation dates easily to medieval times when it was known to contain onions, prunes, and sometimes raisins. Cock-a-leekie may have been originally served as two dishes, chicken and a broth. By Catherine's time, the onions were retained, the raisins were lost, and the prunes remained controversial.⁸² In her 1833 edition, Johnstone observed that 'Prunes used to be put to this soup. The practice is obsolete.'⁸³ Evidently Catherine did not agree with her countrywoman. The recipe she chose states in italics: '*If prunes be liked*, throw in a quarter pound half an hour before serving.' The recipe notes that some cooks thicken with fine oatmeal, but if the leeks boil down, they provide the richness and consistency desired.

Henry Dickens recalled a joke his mother often told of a Scotswoman's view of Eve and the Garden of Eden. The story began with the woman patiently listening to a discourse on the beauty of

Paradise. In broad Scots, Catherine would retort: 'Eh mon, it would be nae temptation to me to gae rinning about a gairden stairk naked 'ating green apples.'⁸⁴ This story comes to mind when looking at Eve's Pudding in Catherine's recipes. A very common title on both sides of the Atlantic, the dessert combines apples, currents, citron, lemon peel, and nutmeg with breadcrumbs and suet for a hardy steamed pudding. Though stretching the point, one wonders if the title was part of the attraction since Catherine was known to have such a lively sense of humour.

Catherine may have written a number of recipes, particularly the shorter ones. The recipe for lamb's head and mince was probably Catherine's. Although the directions are scant, they are reminiscent of a traditional dish from her home town. In the eighteenth century, so-called sheep's-head clubs were fashionable in Edinburgh where the jellied head was prepared as it had been for centuries.⁸⁵

North American foods had a strong attraction to both Charles and Catherine. They each helped promote cornmeal in their own way. Catherine's recipe 'Hominy' says simply, 'Boil Indian corn in milk, add sugar or salt according to taste.' These are the shortest and most versatile set of instructions in the entire appendix, yet they represent one of the most historically significant entries in her publication. Although Catherine uses the term 'hominy', it is unlikely that she is referring to the regional speciality of the American south-west. Hominy, a Native American food made from dry corn kernels soaked in a lye solution to remove the seed coat, is boiled as a starchy vegetable called *pozole* in Latin cultures. Grits are made from boiling the roughly ground hominy. The Dickenses would have tasted them while visiting Fredericksburg and Richmond, Virginia. The Indian corn in her directions more likely refers to American cornmeal. The versatile cornmeal was, and still is, used as either a sweet porridge, as in New England Indian pudding, which the Dickenses would have tasted in Boston, or as a starch like polenta that they may have eaten in Italy.

In Britain, Indian corn (also called 'Indian-corn flour', 'Indian meal' or 'yellow meal') was imported in the late 1840s as a substitute for potatoes.⁸⁶ The British thought it was tasteless and dubbed the flour 'Peel's brimstone' after the government's initiative.⁸⁷ To counteract this aversion, wealthy, influential English liberals like Thomas Carlyle experimented with cornmeal recipes, but publicly declared the product unpalatable. Even Thomas Webster, who thought corn 'the noblest of the cereal grasses', stated that 'there are great differences of opinion as to its merits' in his 1847 edition of *The Encyclopædia of Domestic Economy*.⁸⁸ The negative reports prompted Dickens to publish 'A New Plea For A New Food' in *Household Words*.⁸⁹ The article by Harriet Martineau discusses the advances made in milling corn flour (cornmeal) and suggests that for English taste, it may be best to replace half to two-thirds of the

meal with 'wheaten flour'. One wonders if Catherine neglected to write a full recipe because her husband's magazine had already provided the information several months earlier to potentially the same readers. Martineau's version of 'American pudding' (New England Indian pudding) is:

Six table-spoonfuls of Indian-corn flour; one pint of milk scalded with an ounce of butter (or suet); stir in the milk and butter to the flour, and also two table-spoonfuls of molasses, and a very little salt; lemon-peel or citron is an improvement. Tie up in a basin, with a thick cloth, and boil four hours. If baked, it will take two hours. Eat with butter, molasses, or lemon. The flour should always be worked up with boiling water or milk.⁹⁰

Martineau did not cite her sources, but it is likely that she was familiar with Eliza Leslie's booklet, *The Indian Meal Book*, published first in London around 1847. The Dickenses had met Miss Leslie in Philadelphia and occasionally saw her father in France.⁹¹ Whether or not they exchanged publications cannot be determined, but the Dickenses would have known of her work.

'Common Cookery', another article in *Household Words*, gave 'stir-about' recipes using cornmeal: one sweetened with treacle (molasses) or sugar and butter, and a savoury porridge with red herring and herbs. Clearly cornmeal was a difficult sell for the English palate:

These are modes of preparation in high repute in America; but here, although Indian meal is cheap and plentiful - and were there the demand, it would be more plentiful still - we doubt if the poorest person in the kingdom would touch them.⁹²

Catherine gave but one recipe for a drink. Why she added 'Coffee for Thirty People' in the 1854 edition is unclear. The make-ahead preparation creates a concentrate that may have been reheated or diluted with hot water when served. Although odd by our standards, the logic is apparent. Since the lightest part of the grounds float as a suspension in the water, the addition of egg white would act like a particulate-filter - just as beaten whites clarify a broth for a consommé. Perhaps the Dickenses found that serving coffee to a house-full of dinner-guests required a foolproof preparation for the kitchen staff. As an article in *Household Words* implied, making good coffee was more than just an art form: 'A coffee-pot is not a coffee-pot now: it is a mechanical pneumatico-hydrostatic piece of apparatus. Let us not for one instant imagine that making a pot of coffee is a trifling affair, beneath the dignity of scientific cookery.'⁹³