Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine cookbooks from the United States in the era between 1950 and 1972 for evidence of product placement. The research describes instances of product placement that illustrate material consumer culture during that time period as it related to typical household cooking tasks. This evidence offers a glimpse into product marketing and consumer culture distinct from examinations of product placement in other media.

Design/methodology/approach – This research uses close reading of the texts along with critical analysis of the rhetoric used to support a particular view of consumer culture and material well-being during the time period studied.

Research limitation/implications – The use of product placement in cooking media has continued to present day, although currently it takes the form not only of placement in cookbooks but also in televised cooking shows and in online recipes. The use of cooking media for product placement is relatively under-studied, and is a particularly interesting form since ingredients, in particular, must be used in order for the books to be functional, yet they may or may not be branded. There is considerable variation in brand placements across books. However, a significant limitation is that the research covers twelve popular cookbooks of the era but the books chosen were from a convenience sample. The books chosen illustrate a broad range of product placement strategies, but a broader sample would allow for a more computational approach to the cataloguing of placement frequency.

Keywords – Product placement, cookbooks, food, consumer culture

Paper Type – Research paper

Introduction
Cookbooks over the course of the 1900s were, increasingly, technical manuals. As women’s roles shifted with successive waves of feminism, cookbooks became like self-contained cooking schools between two covers. Yet along with indispensable advice on how to concoct delectable delicacies, cookbooks also contained quite a bit of information about material culture, and that is the focus of this research.

This paper examines the incidence of product placement and references to consumer goods in late 20th century U.S. cookbooks, during the approximately quarter century from 1950 to 1972 concentrating in the 1950s and 1960s. These two latter decades were ones of explosive growth in packaged foods and changes in food technology, as well as key shifts in women’s roles in the U.S. toward employment outside the house, which spurred demand for prepared and packaged foods.

Two types of “product placement” are evident in these cookbooks. One is what marketers traditionally think of as product placement – specific inclusion of brand name products in the context of the medium, whatever it may be. At the same time, these books that are ostensibly technical manuals for the mastery of various dishes, and recipes contain a great wealth of knowledge about consumer culture of the times when they were published, albeit sometimes aspirational culture. Even when brands were not referenced, consumer products of various types often were. This second type of placement will also be explored here.

The next section includes a brief literature review on the shifts in women’s cooking roles during this period. Then the cookbooks and analysis are described. The results are then presented in detail, followed by a brief discussion of the incidence of rhetoric showing resistance to the consumerism that occurs in many of the texts. Finally there is a brief conclusion.
**Literature Review**

Second Wave Feminism is generally traced to the publication of Betty Friedan’s (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*. In the relative boom time of post-World War II America, as women were encouraged to return to their homes from their factory jobs, their potential frustration and disappointment was mollified with exhortations to embrace the creative endeavor of self-expression through their homes and home design (Friedan, 1963; Cowan, 1983). This endeavor largely consisted of purchase and consumption of the appropriate consumer goods – “The American housewife … was free to choose automobiles, clothes, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of” (Friedan, 1963, p. 18).

In response, Friedan and other early writers of the Second Wave encouraged women to get out of the kitchen and pursue careers, earning wages that could then be used to purchase time-saving prepared foods to take the place of the time they would formerly have spent in the kitchen. (Baxandall & Gordon, 2000; Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2005). Over the next twenty-five years, the marketplace embraced these social shifts, providing helpful products and services to enable women to pursue their dreams (domestic and otherwise). Some packaged foods companies even explicitly recognized that they played this role, as will be evident in the analysis presented here.

While the marketplace has morphed into the current plethora of packaged food options, at earlier stages it had to gain consumer acceptance in the shifting landscape of options. Some of this acceptance was gained as a result of vast expenditures on advertising and promotion, of course. Yet the subtle discourse of cookbooks turns out to shed additional light on this process in ways that one might not initially suspect. In her history of modern food supply, *Kitchen Literacy*, Ann Vileisis (2007) says “Our industrialized food system has grown under a covenant of ignorance - with consumers not asking and producers not telling” (p. 246). This is not the whole story – producers made quite overt forays into pantries and cupboards, and spoke of the superiority of their “scientifically developed” products. This research offers additional evidence of exactly what they were telling consumers during this pivotal period in cooking history.

**Methodology**

The agents of consumer socialization about cooking and food consumption are many. They include families of origin as well as households formed or joined in adulthood. Food industry members, from growers to food product manufacturers to grocers, also play a role in what consumers select and how they use foods. Cookbooks, cooking magazines, and more recently cooking shows and internet cooking sites, have a large impact on cooking practices and food attitudes in the United States, and possibly beyond U.S. borders. This study looks at one particular aspect of cookbooks – product placement – to describe the extent to which authors inserted product mentions into their narrative and recipes, either in branded or unbranded form.

The texts encompassed in this analysis are a group of cookbooks published between 1950 and 1972. The span of years is chosen to reflect roughly the quarter-century after World War II. The time range is restricted in order to capture that period when shifting social mores combined with rapidly-changing food technology to influence a significant shift in the food landscape for most American consumers. Women returned to homemaking after the war, but they did not stay in the kitchen for long. Increasing feelings of time poverty reflecting the Second Shift problem (Hochschild & Machung, 1997; Hartmann, 1995) created a ready market for new, convenient “helps” in the kitchen.

Given the hundreds of cookbooks published during the time period selected, how were a dozen of them selected from the potential field? In part, the group is a convenience sample of those readily available through private and public library collections. However, they were also largely selected from books that have stood the test of time in terms of being updated even up to current times, or possessing well-known names of various entities. Some were published by professional cooks, others by magazine publishers, and still others by consumer packaged foods companies. Most cooks familiar with legacy cookbooks in the United States would recognize most or all of these titles. A complete list of the texts is presented in Table 1 on the following page.

The books were read in their entirety and incidences of brand name product mentions were recorded. In addition, mentions of unbranded products were noted, as were general commentaries on consumption and material culture. The text examined included recipes as well as any accompanying narrative, which in many cookbooks formed a considerable portion of the text.
Table I
Cookbooks Included in the Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title (and abbreviations used in the text)</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Betty Crocker’s Picture Cook Book (<em>Betty Crocker</em>)</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Homes and Gardens Cook Book (<em>Better Homes &amp; Gardens</em>)</td>
<td>1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Bride</td>
<td>1956</td>
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<tr>
<td>The I Hate to Cook Book (<em>I Hate to Cook</em>)</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Margaret Rudkin Pepperidge Farm Cookbook (<em>Pepperidge Farm</em>)</td>
<td>1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Pillsbury Family Cookbook (<em>Pillsbury</em>)</td>
<td>1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy of Cooking</td>
<td>1964</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Home All-Purpose Cookbook (<em>American Home</em>)</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The French Chef Cookbook (<em>French Chef</em>)</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Cook Book of Favorite Recipes (<em>Sunset</em>)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
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Results

The two basic findings from this research encompass mentions of products either as a landscape or foundation of cooking – a picture of material culture - or as branded products in the more familiar sense of product placement. These two rather distinct phenomena will be discussed in separate sections. The view of consumer society presented is typical of the times – heteronormative, with cooking as a gendered activity undertaken primarily by women (except in special circumstances where men were allowed to participate, such as grilling food outdoors). Material culture was that of dominant White U.S. culture of Western European descent, where foods from Asia, Central America and even the Mediterranean region were often considered quite exotic.

Material Culture I – The Lists

One “grand narrative” that emerges from these books is a picture of privileged, material consumer culture where the consumer “deserves” all the material goods she can amass. One of the foundations of cooking and serving was the equipment upon which the latter activity relied. “[H]ow lucky is today’s bride! Precious silverware, delicate china ... gleaming crystal are all available. You have but to choose the patterns that are just right for you” (*To the Bride*, p. 12). Many of these books contain lists of needed equipment. In Chapter 20, *Better Homes & Gardens* goes into quite a bit of detail on proper table settings as well, discussing different types of dishes, linens, etc. They do not mention any brand names, though, and generally seem more concerned about conveying good principles than about the acquisition of equipment. The discussion centers around making sure the items used are appropriate for the particular circumstances – and at the simplest end of the spectrum, they even admit the possibility of using parchment paper for place mats.

*Betty Crocker* also included an extensive discussion of how to set a table (p. 38). This book shows various formal settings with all the requisite parts (multiple forks, plates, etc.) – but again no brand names are promoted. *American Home*’s section on entertaining (pp. 34-36) similarly includes a discussion on table settings and needed housewares, including whether it is proper to use stainless versus silver, without any reference to brand names. Indeed, *American Home* notes that sometimes it can be preferable to rent supplies – especially for larger parties – than to own and have to store all that equipment.

Overall, *To the Bride* is the most overt consumption manual of all the books studied here, and stands out as a singular example of cookbook as promotional space. The book is organized into chapters and sections, with the beginning chapters entirely about objects such as china and silver. A full twenty-five pages are devoted to these consumer goods before a serious consideration of food and food preparation begins. The purpose of the book is explicitly commercial – it is an instructional manual for filling out your lists with your bridal registry. *To the Bride* “will help you in choosing the right silver, china, crystal, and linens; the right appliances and kitchen equipment.” (p. 5) It also tells you to focus on quality, “why you should buy sterling silver, really fine china, crystal ...” (p. 5). In interpreting the commercial intentions of this text, it is useful to know that the publisher is Standard Rate and Data Service (SRDS). SRDS published a magazine similarly titled *To the Bride*, and it
appears that the publication of the book *To the Bride* was intended, at least in part, to provide a different promotional venue for some of the main advertisers in the magazine. The references to branded products function very much like sponsoring companies’ products in other venues such as sports or social events currently.

There is no sense of excess in *To the Bride*. If something doesn’t serve all purposes, the consumer was instructed that she should simply augment her collection with something else. For example, because she would be using her china every day, they also recommend having a set of earthenware dishes for things like outdoor dining and rougher use. So one needed two complete sets of dishes – and the earthenware was the add-on, not the expensive china. The need for linens was apparently inexhaustible – “it is almost impossible to have too many” (p. 28) and “It would be almost impossible to have too many towels” (p. 33). Interestingly, in this time before nostalgia marketing gained a strong foothold and when authenticity was less of an issue for consumers, store-bought solutions were touted as an easy way to amass large quantities of these and other items. “Yesterday’s brides brought to their marriage a huge store of quilts, blankets, sheets, pillow cases and towels ... usually hand-made. It is much simpler today. Your department store has everything you are going to want or need ...” (p. 28).

And that is not the last time these books exhibited a preference for store-bought items over hand-made.

Another text without a sense of excess is Margaret Rudkin’s *Pepperidge Farm*. While narrated as the history of the Pepperidge Farm company and her own life, this book clearly positions the brand as an icon of “the good life” of upper-crust, international society. Rudkin related the story of how the company Pepperidge Farm came about, from a start with whole wheat bread made in response to a search for dealing with allergies, the author mentions that the bread-making operation moved into the barn formerly used by her husband for his polo ponies (p. 201). In many regards Ms. Rudkin seems like an early version of another famous Connecticut denizen – Martha Stewart. In the Foreword, she bemoans the difficulties of writing a book while running the Pepperidge Farm company along with two houses (one in CT and one in Ireland) plus business trips and travel abroad (p. vii). Later, Part 5 of the book is entirely concerned with Ireland, home of the Rudkin ancestors, and the location of their second home. Dropping hints about the affluence of their ancestors, she includes mention of “the Rudkin family crest” and “one girl of the house whose marriage portion from her father was ‘gold sovereigns equal to the weight of herself in a pair of lead shoes’.” (p. 381)

The contemporary Rudkins seemed to also be a part of high society. “We had no sooner arrived than a large cocktail party was given by friends to introduce us to our neighbors, all of whom have fairly large land holdings for raising cattle and sheep or Irish hunters or racers as well as crops.” (*Pepperidge Farm*, p. 381) Dinner at a friend’s took place in an atmosphere of “red velvet curtains … mahogany dining table … maid in a neat starched cap … houseboy in a starched white coat” (p. 382). Modern consumer goods the Rudkins brought to the affair solidified their place in Irish society – “entertainment was supplied by my collection of stereo slides of American scenes. These were enthusiastically received, for no one had ever seen stereo slides before.” (p. 382)

*Joy of Cooking* also celebrated the elegant, consumption-fashioned lifestyle, if to a lesser degree and with some critical stance (discussed later). There is some echo here of the “lucky” homemaker who can still afford upscale goods and the household servants to use them. “Formal meals, given in beautifully appointed homes, served by competent, well-trained servants - who can be artists in their own right - are a great treat” (p. 9). The authors also included a nod to advice on the accoutrements of the table: “For versatility and effective contrast, keep your basic flatware and dishes simple in form and not too pronounced in pattern or color. Then you can combine them ... with varied linens, fruits and flowers” (p. 9). *Joy of Cooking* also included a discussion on place-settings and requisite equipment in order to conform to dining etiquette, and the materials list is extensive (p. 10). However, even in this fairly traditional discussion of role expectations for the hostess, *Joy of Cooking* took a slightly revised rhetorical stance: “a semiformal dinner with traces of classic service still graces the privileged household” (p. 11). Here, the authors recognized that this lifestyle was a privilege, rather than the norm.

Overall, it would appear that a typical family of the type targeted by these books would be expected to either take part or at least aspire to the material good life. However, there was some resistance to this whole lifestyle, as evidenced in *I Hate to Cook*. That author seemed to find the whole thing overwhelming and unwelcome: “those ubiquitous full-color double-page spreads ... Equally discouraging is the way the china always matches the food” (p. ix).

In contrast to the equipment required for serving food in an elegant atmosphere, the equipment required for preparing it often had a more utilitarian aspect. Many of these books provided extensive
lists of kitchen equipment and small appliances recommended for equipping the kitchen. To the Bride again was notable for including brand names, including Revere Ware for pots and pans. They even went so far as to recommend items that would sem useless for any but symbolic purposes, such as the pie plate, casserole dish, and oven platter recommended for the cook who had only a hot plate — and so no oven in which to use the aforementioned items. Should one take this to mean that in To the Bride’s era a woman could not be a good wife unless she had a pie plate, whether she could actually use it or not? It would appear that these items were an essential part of the role expectations for a young wife at that time.

Other books included recommendations on cooking equipment but were more practical in their approach. Joy of Cooking offered a list of “must have’s” that included both basic (items needed for cooking, for the oven, for preparation, etc., pp. 142-143) and also specialized (especially for cake baking, sauces, and cocktails) levels. The French Chef characterized this more practical approach well. It included a list, in one of the illustrations, of items needed by a competent cook — but significantly curtailed, with only 14 items (they were numbered) in it. The items listed did double duty or more - the French food mill included covered many bases. Yet author Julia Child seemed to sway back and forth between a decidedly pragmatic approach and hedonistic delight. In the former case, for example, she noted that in order to poach a whole salmon, “You don’t need a fancy fish poacher ... use a washtub” (photo pages, page 10). On the other hand, she discussed a decidedly indulgent purchase: “Here is an opportunity for you to use that fancy fluted antique mold you picked up in your wanderings” (p. 253). This sort of post hoc purchase justification is still familiar to many consumers.

Ultimately, though, with The French Chef while it was important to have the right equipment, the purpose was more a matter of getting the job done right than just for the sake of having things. So, for example, the cook needed a good baking dish, but Child also allows for different options in cooking some dishes so that one can use the equipment already on hand (see p. 28 for example). This was somewhat unusual, though, as most books opted instead for an approach that started with a basic equipment list and then offered suggested augmentations for kitchens from slightly more extensive up to fully equipped or “gourmet” (American Home, p. 20) level accoutrements (Better Homes & Gardens, Ladies’ Home Journal, Betty Crocker, and Betty Crocker used varying examples of this approach). Ladies’ Home Journal included a whole Appendix on “the guide to planning a perfect kitchen” (p. vi), which included equipment ranging from “A selection of good sharp knives” “A rubber scraper” and “an electric blender” (p. 225) to a “bain-marie” “metal flan rings” and “jelly molds” (p. 226).

These lists were so ubiquitous that again one saw I Hate to Cook using their discussion as a point of differentiation for her approach: “the less attention called to your cooking equipment the better. You buy the minimum, grudgingly, and you use it till [sic] it falls apart.” (p. x) Bracken went on to note the distress felt by those who might not revel in their kitchen wares: “We live in a cooking-happy age. You watch your friends redoing their kitchens and hoarding their pennies for glamorous cooking equipment and new cookbooks called Eggplant Comes to the Party or Let’s Waltz Into [sic] the Kitchen, and presently you begin to feel un-American.” (p. 27).

Material Culture II – Consumer Packaged Foods
Many of these books about “cooking” celebrated the use of consumer packaged foods as either end products or ingredients. These were promoted generally as time savers and as marvels of food science.

On the subject of time poverty, cookbooks of this era started to include more explicit recognitions of the expanding roles of women and the fast pace of modern life. Ladies’ Home Journal referred to women working outside the home, while Pillsbury noted both the rapid pace of life and women’s expanding roles: “In the rapid pace of modern living time becomes a major ingredient. It’s a safe bet that you are combining cookery with a career, clubs or causes that compete for your kitchen time. Your pride in preparing made-from-scratch dishes is a part-time thing.” (p. 5)

Many cookbooks referred to saving time either through use of efficient methods or with packaged, prepared foods. Pillsbury gave “interesting and nutritious ways of using convenience foods to save precious time and work.” (p. 2) References to “Mother” and “Grandma” were often given as points of contrast rather than exhortations to follow in their footsteps: “Not even Mother herself does it that way anymore.” (Pillsbury, p. 5) Furthermore, with the simple and explicit directions for food preparation given on the side of the product package for anyone to read, Mom was not the only one who could cook. (Pillsbury, p. 5)
The Pillsbury Company, with its extensive product line of packaged foods, had an obvious stake in promoting their use and did so throughout their cookbook. Interestingly, with less of an investment in specific products, the Ladies’ Home Journal took a refreshingly different approach. Instead of promoting the use of packages and cake mixes, they note “If you don’t have time to bake a fancy cake all at once … you can make a batch of fillings and icings 1 day, and refrigerate them. Another day, you can make cake layers.” (p. 159)

However, even Julia Child recognized that women were busy in many ways besides cooking. By the time The French Chef was published, Child gave a serious nod to fast-paced lifestyles (“this busy can-opener world” p. 119). In her case, the reader is left to speculate on why cooks were so busy, though – she referenced the phenomenon without further commentary.

One trend was not always noted explicitly – that women still seemed to bear the primary responsibility for cooking for the family. One author who did acknowledge this fact (rather humorously) was Peg Bracken, who states in I Hate to Cook:

…right here you usually run into a problem with the basic male. The average man doesn’t care much for the frozen food department, nor for the pizza man, nor for the chicken-pie lady. He wants to see you knead that bread and tote that bale … This is known as Woman’s Burden (p. 20).

In response to this situation, she recommended (1) fooling one’s husband into thinking one’s food was homemade and (2) not feeling guilty about prepared foods being more expensive, because the wife was probably good at, or saving money in, some other area (like being “cute,” or wallpapering, respectively, p. 21)

Along with the recognition that women’s roles were expanding and shifting, another reason for the promotion of packaged food products was the sheer volume of items entering the market. It is important to remember that Keith’s (1960) Marketing Eras model was based upon the Pillsbury Company, and was published as the company was moving from a Selling to a Marketing approach. It is therefore no surprise to see Pillsbury promoting packaged foods in their cookbook from that era, although with a relatively soft-sell approach. Speaking to women’s time stress, they noted “The food industry is aiding and abetting this new feminine image by giving you an array of short cuts that takes your breath away.” (p. 6) They portrayed a life of relative ease and convenience while not sacrificing traditional foodways: “Today we have pumpkin pie as close as the nearest grocery store – pumpkin in a can, pie crust in a package, spices ready to use and pasteurized milk in a sterile container” (p. 7). And the marvels extended beyond baking. “The meat you purchase today is now higher in protein and lower in fat and calories due to scientific developments in the meat industry.” (Pillsbury p. 14)

I Hate to Cook was firmly on the side of food product manufacturers too, embracing these new products enthusiastically. “You should give the prepared thing the benefit of the doubt and taste it before you start spiking. After all, those manufacturers have worked themselves loop-legged in their sunny test kitchens perfecting a formula that a lot of people like.” (p. 137) In Better Homes & Gardens the authors noted the virtual disappearance of the Saturday baking tradition in favor of store-bought loaves, and American Home went so far as to thank the food industry for providing solutions to cooking problems: “We are grateful to the food industry and their associations for giving us the wonderfully versatile products on our supermarket shelves.” (p. iii) The latter source went on to note that the scientific approach so highly regarded in other areas of American culture was also a benefit in the realm of food: “Research laboratories have revolutionized American cooking … For the consumer, it is often difficult to discriminate between the old and the new, to determine which product is best for a particular use.” (American Home p. 7)

To some extent, many of these cookbooks read more like shopping manuals than cooking manuals. There were sometimes extensive instructions on how and when to shop, including list-making and how to evaluate products in the store (Ladies’ Home Journal). American Home noted that “Shopping can be stimulating. The 8,000 or more products in today’s supermarkets can be both dazzling and confusing.” (p. 5) American Home subsequently offered a page and a half long guide to convenience foods of the time. And even though in some cases she rejected the joy of shopping, I Hate to Cook author Bracken noted that the options available in a contemporary supermarket were “truly an awe-inspiring [array] … to gaze down the opulent ready-mix aisle of the supermarket, its shelves brilliant and bulging with nearly everything you ever heard of, from Lady Baltimore Cake to Hush Puppies, all ready for you to add water to, mix, and bake.” (p. 102)
And what were these products for which cooks were shopping? Generally they can be categorized as canned, frozen, and dried goods. This era of cookbooks firmly embraced the can of “cream of …” soup as a key recipe ingredient in many baked dishes such as casseroles. Better Homes & Gardens included a number of recipes utilizing unbranded canned goods – vegetables, fruits, juices, etc. I Hate to Cook made very heavy use of packaged ingredients, including onion soup mix, canned vegetables, canned soup, chips, and sauces. Lest the prospective cook worry at all this packaged excess, Bracken noted: “Just shut your eyes and go on opening those cans.” (I Hate to Cook, p. 7) She even took on one of the most widely told marketing stories of that era – the importance of adding an egg.

I understand that the ready-mix people, through exhaustive surveys, learned that most women prefer not to have the entire job done for them … But as far as we are concerned – we ladies who hate to cook – they needn’t have bothered. We don’t get our creative kicks from adding an egg … (I Hate to Cook, p. 102-103)

Most of the books in this study included some packaged food items. American Home noted that many convenience foods could be used as ingredients in cooking (p. 7), and many of their recipes contained packaged foods ingredients, including bread crumbs, soup, gelatin, cream cheese, etc. American Home also included recipes to make with biscuit mix (p. 99) but do not mention any particular brand, despite the fact that Bisquick was already on the market. Sunset’s chapter on “Hot & Cold Soups” started with a section on “Ways to Alter Canned Soups.” Ladies’ Home Journal even included a list of packaged foods recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture as particularly good deals, including “frozen orange juice, frozen lima beans and peas, packaged and canned spaghetti, canned cherries, canned chicken chow mein, and devil’s food cake mix.” (p. 3)

Branded Products
While there was a great deal of general reference to consumer products and material culture in these books, some of the texts went so far as to recommend particular brands of consumer goods. For example, To the Bride even included a discussion of acceptable brands of silver, china, and crystal. On page 11, Pepperidge Farm mentioned Thermos bottles by name. Most of these books did not go so far as to offer brand recommendations for non-food products, though, and so this section of analysis will concentrate on the branded food products included in the texts.

Two types of books tended to include large numbers of branded food products – those from food manufacturers, and those from magazine publishers. However, there was quite a diversity of approaches even within those two categories.

With regard to the food manufacturers, the two most distinct examples were General Mills (Betty Crocker) versus Pillsbury. Both of these companies grew out of the American Midwestern grain processing industry, marketing various prepared baked goods and other products. The primary product promoted in Betty Crocker was Gold Medal Flour (starting on page 4). Two others were Softasilk Cake Flour and Wheaties (the cereal), and they mentioned these three products every time they mentioned flour or wheat cereal in a recipe. Interestingly, the reader wonders whether General Mills might not have been in the market with rye, whole wheat, or cornmeal flours at that point, because they did not suggest brand name products for any of those ingredients. As an additional promotion, on page 19 of Betty Crocker there was a photo that showed the following General Mills brands: Gold Medal Enriched Flour, Softasilk Cake Flour, Wheaties, Kix, Cheerios, Bisquick, Betty Crocker Soup, Betty Crocker Cake Mix, and Betty Crocker Crustquick (pie crust mix). In addition, Wheaties, Kix and Cheerios showed up again in recipes throughout the book. Other brands mentioned included “Duncan Hines” [1] – referenced as a person rather than a brand – as well as the Red Star Yeast Company and a variety of shortening, baking powder, and baking soda brands, as well as Kraft foods, and Swift meat company.

Pillsbury, in contrast, used a bit softer approach in their book, although they certainly intended it to promote the company and its desired positioning.

The Pillsbury Company buys the raw commodities of American farm agriculture and transforms them into modern convenience-food products for distribution to homemakers in most of the countries of the free world. It does so with the same close relationship with its customers that it had when the company first started almost a hundred years ago as a small flour mill on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minnesota … In intervening years, though
it has become a publicly-owned and widely-dispersed corporation, the Pillsbury family spirit
has prevailed and the sense of always being “best” is imbedded in Pillsbury employees
everywhere – in the plants, in the research laboratories and in the Ann Pillsbury Home
Service Center, where the recipes in this cookbook were developed and tested (Pillsbury, p.
2).

The company also clearly saw itself as a pioneer and market maker when it came to packaged food
products. “When Pillsbury put pancake mix on the market in 1919, they were starting a chain of events
that is apparently endless.” (p. 8) The book also mentioned a variety of Pillsbury brands and products,
including Pillsbury Sweet*10, Pillsbury Mashed Potato Flakes, Pillsbury Quick Crescent Dinner Rolls,
Pillsbury Hot Roll Mix, Pillsbury Quick Cinnamon Rolls with Icing, Best All Purpose Flour, and
Fudge Brownie Mix. However, despite the fact that this was Pillsbury’s book and flour was one of
their key products, they did not use the brand name of their flour in every single bread and cake recipe
in the book. Instead, they mentioned the brand names in the introductory sections only (like the
introduction to bread, where they mentioned their Pillsbury’s Best All Purpose Flour).

Also in this category was Pepperidge Farm. In one sense this entire book was a product
positioning story for the company. That said, it also mentioned some of their specific branded
products, such as “Pepperidge Farm Patty Shells” frozen puff pastry shells on page 88 and their
“Pepperidge Farm Stuffing” on page 265. These products were then used in recipes, and with the
stuffing product there was a whole story about how they got into that market in the first place: “In a
bakery you never know exactly how many loaves to bake …” (p. 265)

The other main category of cookbooks that included branded food items were those compiled by
magazine publishers. Of this list, To the Bride stands alone in the frequency of its inclusion of
numerous branded products. As has already been mentioned, these span the pages of the book from
introduction to end. On example was Chase & Sanborn coffee, which concluded just about every menu
given and also served as an ingredient in some dishes. Kellogg’s cereals were also heavily featured.

A sharp contrast would be Sunset. This cookbook was developed by having readers of Sunset
magazine send in their favorite recipes. In one hundred pages of recipes, there were zero brand name
products. Therefore, it was hardly inevitable that a magazine-sponsored cookbook would be the
product placement bonanza that To the Bride was.

To the Bride went even further than just including brands – it reified them. It supported the notion
that branded products were superior and certain brands were equivalent to even greater quality (p. 5).
For example, “… the name ‘Kellogg’ assures you that they are tops” (p. 86). This reference is a bit
ironic, since the book was referring to Kellogg’s pasta which is no longer on the market. To the Bride
also made typical heavy use of canned soups as ingredients. However, one speculates that Campbell’s
decided to sponsor the book since that brand was not mentioned in what was otherwise a very brand-
obsessed text.

A similarly understated approach was evident in Better Homes & Gardens, a publication of Better
Homes and Gardens magazine. The cookbook remained linked to the parent magazine, as every issue
contained “four punched-hole recipe pages ready for quick and easy insertion in your Better Homes &
Gardens Cook Book” (no page number, not italicized in original). It then told the reader where to write
to sign up for a subscription to the magazine. One could also order an extra binder and blank pre-
punched pages. On the following page were ads for more books from the Better Homes & Gardens
publishers. In a rare display of branded product placement, a photo on page 12 of Chapter 2 showed
Kraft brand cheese and Coca-cola. Otherwise generally this book did not promote brands, even when
there were clearly relevant branded products available. For example, Bisquick would have served as an
ingredient in recipes instead of the “Master Mix” recipe Better Homes & Gardens included on page 15
of chapter 3.

American Heritage is another cookbook related to a magazine – in this case, to American Heritage,
The Magazine of History. This book took a decidedly different approach, though, with the first nine
chapters (423 pages) all devoted to a history of eating and drinking in America, and recipes only
starting on page 424. This book also did not include branded products. Similarly, Ladies’ Home
Journal (a publication of Ladies’ Home Journal magazine) did not include many branded products,
although they were apparently fond of Teflon coated utensils and included that brand on page 351.

In general, one would conclude that most magazine publishers who put out cookbooks did not want
to offend any potential advertisers by including some brands to the exclusion of others. The notable
exception is To the Bride. Yet it was also apparent that industry thinking was not at all uniform on the
issue of how to include brands in cookbooks, given the very different approaches used by General Mills and Pillsbury in their respective books. These texts could be expected to include branded product references, since they were published by packaged foods manufacturers. However, even in those cases there was a significant variation in the extent of this phenomenon.

Resistance
While beyond the scope of the current project to explore in detail, it is important to mention that some of these cookbooks contained a significant critique of consumer packaged foods which stood in contrast to the companies trumpeting them as the solution to all modern cooking problems. As one would expect, the texts written by professional cooks were more likely to contain such criticisms.

The French Chef and Joy of Cooking were both anti-packaged foods. While they both acknowledged that American supermarkets were the culmination of worldwide marketing expertise and abundance, they also both thought that “the real thing” – made at home, prepared from scratch – was far superior. This includes mayonnaise (French Chef), sauces, and cakes (Joy of Cooking). The whole point of these books was to teach the cook how to prepare wonderful food – efficiently, yes, but not sacrificing quality for speed at any cost.

Joy of Cooking included some quite critical perspectives on market mediated food consumption. Both The French Chef and Joy of Cooking wanted to exhibit a stance of authenticity of knowledge, experience, and food culture. One example of this was a passage from Joy of Cooking relating an experience during a trip through Europe. “On a train trip from Palermo to Syracuse, a stranger leaned toward us to say in the most casual tone that this was the field where Pluto abducted Persephone and rushed her to his dark abode” (p. 175). The story went on to discuss Ceres, for whom “cereal” was named.

... how much greater those lamentations would have been had she known what today’s processing was to do to the grains that bear her name. Until a century ago the entire kernel, including the germ, could be ground between cool millstones without risking rancidity. Today, the heat of steel grinding necessitates removal of the germ (p. 175).

This critique of industrial food processing continued throughout the book. Joy of Cooking privileged foodstuffs produced in the home kitchen over those purchased in the marketplace. “It is a thrill to possess shelves well stocked with home-canned food” (p. 746). The authors of Joy of Cooking abhorred the waste and excess of American foodways. On page one, they noted “we, as well as the experts, are inclined to agree that most Americans are privileged to enjoy superabundance and that our nutritional difficulties have to do generally not with under- but overeating.” Of over-consuming generally they cautioned: “We are constantly encouraged to buy the latest gadget that will absolutely and positively make kitchen life sublime ... think hard before you buy so much as an extra skewer.” (p. 142)

Joy of Cooking criticized processed foods on both cost and nutrition. “If you buy ready-to-eat cereals, the grains have been highly processed. They are either exploded into puffs, under high steam, or malted, sugared, and shattered into flakes under rollers; or mixed into pastes and formed. You pay as much for the processing and the expensive packaging to keep these cereals crisp as you pay for the cereal itself.” (p. 175) They even took on marketing claims, telling readers “The word ‘creamery’ which sometimes appears on both sweet and salt butter packages is a hangover from the days when cream went to a place called a creamery to be processed. The word now carries no standard or type significance - it’s just meant to be reassuring!” (p. 509)

Conclusion
The struggle for consumer mindspace in the third quarter of the Twentieth Century played out in a variety of media, including television, radio, and print. This paper examines yet another medium – cookbooks – wherein consumer products and brands were attempting to entrench themselves in the consciousness of American cooks.

Cookbooks served as a platform for companies that could take more control over the narrative presented than they could through other media. If Pillsbury or General Mills published a cookbook, they did not have to grant page space to any competing brands. The ways in which food product manufacturers used that discretion in shaping the discourses in their books is not as uniform as one might expect, though. Similarly, media outlets that relied on food companies for much of their revenue took distinctly different paths when deciding how – and how much – to include packaged foods and
other cooking-related products in their books.

To read these books is to gain a fascinating insight into “the good life” of 1950s and 1960s America, where consumer culture was more monochromatic and social mores more strict. Yet the reader can also see evidence of the rapid shifts in both technology and the use of the fruits of that technology – especially prepared foods – that mirrored the significant social shifts occurring during that time. Women’s roles, American foodways, cooking, and eating were never going to be the same again.

Notes

[1] Author of Adventures in Good Eating, whose name later became a Procter & Gamble brand.


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