A
DOMESTIC
COOK BOOK:

CONTAINING

A CAREFUL SELECTION OF USEFUL RECEIPTS
FOR THE KITCHEN

BY

Mrs. Malinda Russell, an Experienced Cook
Paw Paw, Michigan, 1866

A Facsimile of the First Known Cookbook
by an African American

Introduction by Janice Bluestein Longone
"Malinda Russell—An Indomitable Woman—An American Story"

Copyright © 2007, William L. Clements Library
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Further reproduction prohibited without permission
Printed by Inland Press, Detroit, Michigan, April 2007
Malinda Russell

An Indomitable Woman—An American Story

Malinda Russell’s A Domestic Cook Book, published in 1866, is a fascinating first-person chronicle of a free woman of color in mid-19th century America. Hers was a life of ‘hard labor’ and travail, but she overcame all her hardships and setbacks with an indomitable spirit. It is truly an American story.

Like its author, the fragile copy of A Domestic Cook Book, housed in the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive at the Clements Library, is a survivor. To our knowledge, it is the only copy extant of the first cookbook authored by an African American.

In keeping with the theme of the 2007 Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History, “Ethnic and Regional Traditions,” publishing a faithful facsimile of Malinda Russell’s cookbook from the Clements’ unique copy seems a fitting way to pay tribute to her and make her cookbook better known to a wider audience. This facsimile is being given as a memento to Banquet attendees of the 2007 Symposium and will be available in a limited edition thereafter.

Who Was Malinda Russell?

All we know about Malinda Russell is what she tells us in “A Short History of the Author” and her “Rules and Regulations of the Kitchen.” Her story, outlined below, is remarkable, and I encourage you to read her first-hand account in this facsimile.

Malinda Russell was born and raised in Washington and Green Counties, eastern Tennessee. Her mother was a member of one of the first families set free by a Mr. Nodddle of Virginia. “My mother being born free after the emancipation of my grandmother, her children are by law free.”
When Russell was 19 years old, she set out with others for Liberia. When her money was stolen by a member of the party, she was "obliged" to remain in Lynchburg, Virginia. There she began working as a cook and a companion, traveling with ladies as a nurse. She also kept a wash-house and advertised in a local newspaper; she included a reproduction of one such ad in her book.

While in Virginia, she married a man named Anderson Vaughan, who lived for only four years thereafter. For the rest of her life, she used her maiden name. At the time of writing *A Domestic Cook Book* (1866), she was still a widow with one child, a son who was "crippled."

At some point after her husband’s death, Russell returned to Tennessee and kept a boarding house on Chuckey Mountain, Cold Springs, for three years. After leaving the boarding house, she kept a pastry shop for six years, and "by hard labor and economy, saved a considerable sum of money for the support of myself and my son."

Then, for the second time in Russell’s life a robbery forced a change in her existence. On January 16, 1864, her money was stolen from her by a guerilla party, who threatened her life if she revealed who they were. "Under those circumstances, we were obliged to leave home, following a flag of truce out of the Southern borders, being attacked several times by the enemy." After hearing that Michigan was the Garden of the West, she moved to the Paw Paw area "for the present, until peace is restored, when I think of returning to Greenville, Tennessee, to try to recover at least a part of my property."

The Genesis of *A Domestic Cook Book*

Russell was employed as a cook for the last 20 years of her life by the first families of Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. She learned her trade, she tells us, from Fanny Steward, a colored cook of Virginia, and she cooked after the plan of the "Virginia Housewife." This last is most likely a reference to Mary Randolph’s classic and very popular work, *The Virginia Housewife*, first published in 1824. It had at least 19 printings before the Civil War and is still in print.

Forced to leave the South because of her Union principles, Russell wrote her book "hoping to receive enough from the sale of it to enable me to return home." Now "advanced in age," robbed of her property, and with no means of support other than her own labor, she decided to write a cookbook "with the intention of benefiting the public as well as myself."

Russell ended her brief autobiography with the confident assurance that "I know my book will sell well where I have cooked, and am sure that those using my receipts will be well satisfied."

Perhaps because of Russell’s diverse background and varied travels, the "receipts" in her book are not distinctly southern. Nor do they appear to have been taken from Mrs. Randolph’s *The Virginia Housewife*. We have not been able to learn anything about Fanny Steward, the Virginia cook Russell mentions.

Most of the recipes could come from any part of the eastern United States of that period, although there are a few southern touches, such as "Sweet Potato Baked Pudding," "Sweet Potato Slice Pie," and "Pecan Cakes." Most recipes are for sweets, desserts, and baked goods, not surprising given Russell’s years of keeping a pastry shop. For this facsimile we have added an index of the approximately 265 recipes and medical and household hints in the cookbook to make it easier for modern culinary historians to use.
Discovering Malinda Russell

It is quite astonishing that this unique copy of A Domestic Cook Book has survived. I do not know how many hands it passed through between its printing in 1866 and our purchase of it and subsequent donation to the Clements Library several years ago. The book was found at the bottom of a box of material from the collection of Helen Evans Brown, a well-known California culinary figure in the last half of the 20th century. Her bookplate appears on a modern protective paper cover enclosing the book.

When my husband Dan and I received a call from someone on the West Coast wanting to know what we knew about A Domestic Cook Book by Malinda Russell, we answered honestly that we knew nothing about it—not even that it existed. But we very much wanted to purchase it. Fortunately, we were able to do so. When the book arrived, we were stunned at what it represented—an important and previously unknown piece of American culinary history.

Determined to discover more about Malinda Russell from the few tantalizing details she revealed in her "Short History," Dan and I spent our 40th wedding anniversary in Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina visiting historical societies, cemeteries, government offices, and other locales she mentions. Several times, we felt we had captured her or were very close, but in the end, we could not be certain we had unequivocally identified her from among the available documents.

Dan and I spent a great deal of time trying to solve the mystery of this remarkable woman. When we felt we could no longer devote the time necessary to collect any new information, I chose to write about Malinda Russell for an article in my "Vintage Volumes" column in the first issue of Gastronomica (2001). Some of the material in this introduction first appeared there.

The response to that article was a bit overwhelming. Many readers wanted to know more about the author and her cookbook. Given this interest, I hoped that someone would be able to devote the time and energy required to add further information to her story, although, alas, that has not yet happened.

Malinda Russell in the Context of 19th Century Black Culinary Literature

The Clements Library's unique Malinda Russell cookbook is one of the four 19th century culinary works by African Americans that have so far come to light. Although A Domestic Cook Book (1866) is now considered the first cookbook written by an African American, there are two earlier manuals on household management and hotel and dining room work authored by professional black men. Robert Roberts' The House Servant's Directory (1827) and Tunis Campbell's Hotel Keepers, Hotel Waiters and Housekeeper's Guide (1848). The final book by a 19th century African American is Abby Fisher's What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking (1881).

The House Servant's Directory by Robert Roberts was the first book of any kind by an African American printed by a commercial publisher in America. Of major gastronomic importance, the book was published in 1827 in Boston by Monroe & Francis, with two additional printings in 1828 and 1843.

Roberts was a butler in the household of the Honorable Christopher Gore, Senator and Governor of Massachusetts. His book is remarkable for several reasons. It offers one of the most detailed discussions of that period on the proper management of a fine, upper-class New England household. It gives advice to servants on how to behave, how to perform their work, and how to use the variety of new household utensils and equipment then becoming increasingly available. Although Roberts comments on the responsibilities of the employer, he is generally more interested in teaching other servants how to act.

His work is one of the first to help encourage young black men to become the finest professional house servants. He offers specific, detailed suggestions to them to ensure their advancement and tenure. In addition to his influence on black employment patterns, Roberts was active in various organizations promoting black interests.

One indication of the influence of The House Servant's Directory is its inclusion in the library at the Hermitage, President Andrew Jackson's home in Tennessee. One of a handful of culinary books in the Hermitage library, it shares honors with Mrs. Randolph's The Virginia House-Wife, the first southern cookbook.
Roberts' book has long been known to culinary bibliographers, and facsimiles and reprints are available. This book is of New England, there is nothing either African American or southern about the recipes.

Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee Institute. Tuskegee Institute's Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters and Housekeepers' Guide, published in Boston in 1848, is known to bibliographers, but it has been little examined due to its rarity.

Born in New Jersey early in the 19th century, Campbell attended an Episcopal school in New York and was trained for missionary work in Liberia. But he became increasingly opposed to the planned removal of blacks from America to Africa, "having long since determined to plant our trees on American soil."

Between 1832 and 1845, he became a social worker, reformer, abolitionist, and an active participant in anti-slavery causes. During this time, he worked in New York as a hotel steward, the last three years as the principal waiter at the Howard Hotel. Then, for an undetermined period, he worked at the Adams House in Boston. While there he wrote his Guide, one of the earliest manuals written by any American on the supervision and management of first-class restaurants and hotel dining rooms.

Campbell's book is evocative of a military manual. He gives detailed, exacting instructions, with illustrations, for the dining table service brigade. As careful as he is to instruct and train his waiters for their responsibilities, he is equally valuable in telling the employers that they also have a responsibility to treat their help with respect and dignity.

Hotel Keepers, Head Waiters and Housekeepers' Guide deserves to be better known, but only a few copies of the original exist, and, to my knowledge, there is no facsimile in print at present. Campbell is better known to American historians for his non-culinary contributions, including his many years as a powerful force in Reconstruction politics in Georgia.

Asby Fisher's What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking was printed in San Francisco by the Women's Co-operative Printing Office in 1881. Until the discovery of Malinda Russell's work, this book was considered the earliest black-authored cookbook.

Mrs. Fisher was an ex-slave who could neither read nor write. Born in South Carolina, she achieved fame in San Francisco, where she had a business of pickles and preserves manufacture. Her cookery was awarded medals and diplomas at several California fairs, including two medals in San Francisco in 1880 for "best pickles and sauces and best assortment of jellies and preserves."

Mrs. Fisher's collection of recipes, with origins in the plantation kitchens of the pre-Civil War South, was published with the assistance of named benefactors in San Francisco and Oakland. Her book is perhaps the earliest California imprint of importance beyond the confines of the state. Because of its scarcity it was little known until recently, but several facsimiles have made the book more widely available.

Uncovering the shrouded origins of the first known black cookbook in the United States is only one of the mysteries of American culinary history that remain to be solved. There are several other major questions to tempt the historically minded—books whose authors' identities and lives are hidden beyond what they themselves provide within the pages of their works.

Who, for example, was Amelia Simmons, the self-labeled "American Orphan," author of the first American cookbook (1796)? Who was Mrs. Esther Levy, "née" Esther Jacobs, author of the first Jewish cookbook in America (1871)? Or who was Mrs. W.R. Sanner, whose recipe collection is the basis of more than a dozen charity cookbooks published between 1907 and 1915 in states as diverse as Ohio, Nevada, and California? Each of these women deserves to be better known.

I am confident that making this facsimile of A Domestic Cook Book available to a wider public will stimulate further research that may allow that indomitable spirit, Malinda Russell, to take her rightful place at the American culinary history table.

Malinda Russell's story is an American story. She has overcome...
Acknowledgements

Many persons made the publication of this facsimile possible. Most notably, Malinda Russell and A Domestic Cook Book would never have come to light were it not for the loving support of my husband, Dan Longone, and the vision of John Dunn, director of the Clements Library.

Staff members and culinary docents at the Clements who have worked tirelessly on this project include:

Susan Berman
Shireen Coldiron
Pat Cornett
Ann Fowler
Clayton Lewis
John Thomson
Don Wilcox

Others who have made significant contributions include Lakshmi Shetty,
Teresa Sullivan, Brad Thompson of Inland Press, Ar Weinzeig, and
Zingermans Community of Businesses.

I am especially grateful to the Office of the Provost, the University of
Michigan, for making this facsimile possible.

Janice Bluestein Longone
Curator of American Culinary History
William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan
March 15, 2007
A DOMESTIC COOK BOOK:
CONTAINING
A CAREFUL SELECTION OF USEFUL RECIPES
FOR THE KITCHEN.

BY MRS. MALINDA RUSSELL,
AN EXPERIENCED COOK.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.

PRINTED BY H. O. WARD, AT THE "TECUMSEH" OFFICE,
PAW PAW, MICH.
1836.
A SHORT HISTORY OF THE AUTHOR.

I was born in Washington County, and resided in Greene County, in the southern part of Virginia. My mother, "Malinda" Russell, was a member of one of the first families set free by Mr. Noddle, of Virginia. I am the daughter of Karen, the youngest child of my grandmother. My mother being born after the emancipation of my grandmother, her children are free. My mother died when I was quite young. At the age of about nineteen, I set out for Liberia; but being refused by some members of the party with whom I was traveling, I was obliged to stop at Lynchburg, Virginia, where I commenced cooking, and at times traveling with ladies as nurse; and always received the praise of being faithful. The following is a certificate given me by Dott. More at the time I started for Liberia:

"We, the undersigned, have been acquainted with Malinda Russell, a free woman of color, for the last eight or ten years, and certify that she is a girl of fine disposition and business-like habits. Her moral deportment, of late, has been respectable; and we have little doubt that she will make a valuable citizen."  

About this time I married in Virginia. Anderson Vaughan, my husband, lived only four years. I have always been called by my maiden name since his death. I am still a widow, with one child, a son, who is crippled; he has the use of but one hand. While in Virginia, I kept a wash-house. The following is my advertisement:

"Malinda Vaughan, Fashionable Laundress, would respectfully inform the Ladies and Gentlemen of Abingdon, that she is prepared to wash and iron every description of clothing in the neatest and
RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE KITCHEN.

The Kitchen should always be Neat and Clean. The Table, Pantry Boards, Pot, and everything pertaining to Cookery, should be well Cleaned.

I have made Cooking my employment for the last twenty years, in the first families of Tennessee, (my native place,) Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. I knew my Receipts to be good, as they always have given satisfaction. I have been advised to have my Receipts published, as they are valuable, and every family has use for them. Being compelled to leave the South, on account of my Union principles, in the time of the Rebellion, and having been robbed of all my hard-earned wages which I had saved, and as I am now advanced in years, with no other means of support than my own labor; I have put out this book with the intention of benefiting the public as well as myself.

I learned my trade of Pastry Steward, a colored cook of Virginia, and have since learned many new things in the art of Cooking. I cook after the plan of the "Virginia Housewife."

MALINDA RUSSELL.
RECEIPTS.

Salt Rising Bread.
To a half pint warm water, a pinch of salt; stir to a thick batter and keep warm until it rises. To one pint of this rising add three pints warm water, a little salt, and a small piece of lard. Knead the dough until smooth, make into cakes, keep warm until it rises; bake quick, but do not scorch.

Soft Ginger Bread.
Two quarts flour, 3-4ths lb lard, 3-4ths lb sugar, three teaspoonsful cinnamon, two of ginger, one of allspice, one pint sour milk, molasses to make a stiff batter, one teaspoonful soda dissolved in milk.

Soft Ginger Bread.
One quart molasses, one cup sugar, 1-4th lb lard, three eggs, beat sugar and eggs well together; one gill sour milk, one tablespoonful soda dissolved in warm water, two tablespoonfuls ginger, floor enough to make a soft dough. Knead well, roll, and bake in a quick oven.

Cream Cake.
One and a half cup sugar, two cups sour cream, two cups flour, one or two eggs, one teaspoonful soda; flavor with lemon.

Sally Dough Cake.
Three cups sugar, one cup yeast, three cups sweet milk, three eggs; beat to a thin batter, set over night. When light, add one cup butter, flour to make a stiff batter. Keep warm until it rises the second time. Paper and grease the pan before rising the last time; bake in a slow oven.

White Mountain Cake.
One cup white sugar, two eggs, one-half cup butter, one-half cup sweet milk, one teaspoonful soda, one teaspoonful cream tartar, two and one-half cups flour.

Queen's Party Cake.
One quart sour cream, six lbs sugar, six lbs butter, five lbs flour, five lbs curd, one and one-half lbs eggs; one ounce cloves, one ounce cinnamon, one and one-half nutmeg, extract of lemon or vanilla, whites of eighteen eggs, yolk of ten eggs, one teaspoonful soda, two teaspoonfuls cream tartar, flour to stir quite stiff.

Plain Pound Cake.
One lb sugar, one lb flour, one nutmeg, 3-4ths lb butter, twelve eggs, half gill brandy. Paper and grease your pans well; bake in a moderate oven.

Cork Cake.
Three cups sugar, one cup butter, one cup sour cream, five cups flour, five eggs, one teaspoonful soda, one teaspoon cream tartar; flavor with lemon.

Sponge Cake.
One lb sugar, twelve eggs; take out one yolk; ten ounces flour; beat the yolks and sugar together well; beat the whites to a stiff froth; gradually mix together; flavor with lemon; bake with a gradual heat.

Dover Cake.
Two cups sugar, four eggs, one cup butter, one cup sour cream, three cups unsifted flour, one teaspoon cream tartar, one teaspoon soda; flavor to taste.

Washington Cake.
Three cups sugar, six eggs, one cup butter, one cup sour milk, one teaspoon soda, three cups flour, one teaspoon cream tartar; flavor with lemon or to your taste.

Bread Dough Cake.
One pint light bread dough, three eggs, two cups sugar, one cup butter, fill with fruit or caraway seeds; stir together well, put in cake pan, let it rise, bake moderately. This cake, if made with fruit and seed, will keep a long time.

Grated Bread Cake.
Grate one quart stale bread, six eggs, one and one-half cup butter; three cups sugar, one pint milk, two teaspoon cream tartar, one teaspoon soda, one grated nutmeg, three tablespoonful flour; bake in a moderate oven.

Cream Cake.
One cup and a half sugar, two cups sour cream, one teaspoon soda, three cups flour, lightly measured, one grated nutmeg; bake in a moderate oven.