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Margarine for Butter: Budget Cooking in America

abstract | *The 1960s and 1970s are known politically for Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” and economically for high inflation; since the 1970s, income inequality has continued to grow. This paper investigates the effect of this atmosphere on the ways in which people eat cheaply. It does this through analysis of nine budget cookbooks published in the United States before and after The Food Stamp Act. By comparing recipes in budget cookbooks to editions of Joy of Cooking, this paper argues that budget cookbooks teach readers how to cook common mainstream recipes inexpensively. The analysis finds that ingredients are often substituted, deleted, and added in different ways to achieve this cheaper goal.*

keywords | *Budget cooking, cookbooks, ingredients, food stamps, poverty*

Cheese Fondue

3 tablespoons butter or margarine
5 slices bread cut in cubes or strips
1 cup (1/4 pound) processed American cheese, shredded
1 large egg, beaten
1 cup milk
½ teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon dry mustard
Dash of pepper

“Alternate layers of bread then cheese in the casserole. Combine egg, milk and seasonings. Pour over bread and cheese ... Bake for 40 minutes. Makes 4 servings.”

—Budget Cook Book, 1964

Fondue

1 lb. Emmentaler or ½ lb. Emmentaler and ½ lb. Gruyère cheese
A clove of garlic
2 cups dry white wine
3 tablespoons kirsch
1 teaspoon cornstarch
Nutmeg, white pepper or paprika

“Have ready a bread basket or bowl filled with crusty French or Italian bread cut into 1 x 1 x ¾-inch pieces, making sure that each piece has one side of crust. At this point the guests, each equipped with a heatproof-handled fork—preferably two or three-tined—spear the bread from the soft side and dip the impaled bit into the well-warmed cheese ... Serve with fresh fruit and tea.”

—Joy of Cooking, 1964

INTRODUCTION Budget cooking takes many shapes and forms. In the above recipe comparison, a 1964 budget-minded cookbook gives the reader a cheap alternative for making “Fondue,” typically a fancy teatime meal eaten with guests. Cookbooks catering to readers on a budget are not a new phenomenon. Early American budget cookbooks include *Tempting Dishes for Small Incomes*, published in 1881, and *Dainty Dishes for Slender Incomes*, published in 1900.¹ But in the United States, a real social consciousness of cooking on a budget took off in the 1970s. A quick sorting of cookbook titles by decade from a Library of Congress online catalog keyword search of “budget cooking” reveals the following: Before 1900, five budget cookbooks were published; from 1900 to 1969, there were twenty-five; from 1970 to 2014, there were 223.² Comparing numbers of budget cookbooks published in the 1960s and the 1970s produces striking results: Four were published in the ‘60s

and forty-two in the ‘70s, which is a 950 percent increase.³ For reference, a keyword search in the online catalog of just the word “cookbook” yields 469 cookbooks published in the 1960s and 1,006 in the 1970s, which is only a 114 percent increase.⁴ This data suggests that from the 1970s onward, budget cooking was rising in the American public consciousness.

Economic Situation Looking at the broader political-economic situation in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, several trends explain this piqued and ultimately sustained interest in budget cooking. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson launched his “War on Poverty” legislation in response to a national poverty rate that reached 22.1 percent in 1959.⁵ One piece of legislation was The Food Stamp Act (P.L. 88-525). Food stamps were not a new concept; they had been issued from 1939 to 1943.⁶ But

the '60s saw resurgence in need for them, and a program was introduced in 1961, culminating in the 1964 Act.⁷

Economically, the end of the '60s saw persistent inflation that would not drop below 5.5 percent (except for two years) between 1969 and 1982.⁸ The average yearly unemployment rate jumped to 5 percent in 1970 from 3.5 percent the year before and did not drop again until 1997.⁹ Inflation means the general costs of goods—including food—increases over time.¹⁰ Looking at food alone, the annualized price increase from 1950 to 1968 was 1.3 percent; from 1969 to 1983, the annualized price increased 7.1 percent.¹¹ The price of food was rising dramatically in the 1970s, the same time the number of published budget cookbooks rose.

Budget cookbooks, however, continued to increase in number as inflation rates stabilized. The inflation rate remained low relative to the '70s, staying below that decade's low of 5.5 percent.¹² Similarly, the rate of increase in the price of food slowed, increasing only 2.9 percent from 1983 to 2013.¹³ However, the poverty and unemployment rates remained high. Although dropping from 1959's high of 22.1 percent, the poverty rate remained between 12.4 and 14.3 percent from 1969 to 2009.¹⁴ The unemployment rate never dropped below 4 percent from 1997 to 2007 and then shot up thereafter, peaking at 9.6 percent in 2010.¹⁵

High unemployment and poverty rates were accompanied by a widening gap between the upper and middle classes. The middle class's wealth largely stagnated or shifted downward as decently-paid blue-collar jobs disappeared and the ranks of the part-time service workforce increased.¹⁶ According to one account, "the inflation in food prices in the early '70s redirected middle-

class attention away from the cost of the shopping baskets of the poor and towards their own."¹⁷ While inflation rates stabilized and food prices increased only slightly, the income gap has expanded today, with 21 percent of families' wealth 6.6 times greater than that of the 46 percent in the middle.¹⁸ This gap in the '80s created a "budget-conscious" blue-collar market, and today consumers almost unanimously report price as an important or very important consideration when grocery shopping.¹⁹ This socioeconomic atmosphere of the widening gap is reflected in the sustained publishing of budget-focused cookbooks.

Cookbooks Cookbooks are important sources for understanding cooking and eating behaviors of the past.²⁰ Analyzed, they reveal a society's food preferences.²¹ They also provide credible information that can be correlated to a society's historic and social events.²² The political and economic histories described above mark important events and economic states in American history. This paper argues that the political and economic changes in America from the 1960s to the present decade were responsible for the dramatic and sustained increase in the number of budget cookbooks published from the 1970s on. Furthermore, it argues that the recipes found in this emerging genre of cookbooks mimic culturally common, mainstream recipes, as opposed to forging a completely new budget-cooking culture. Cheaper versions of mainstream dishes are created with cheap ingredient substitutions, additions, and subtractions.

This paper analyzes nine different budget cookbooks published in the United States from the 1950s to the

Books analyzed:

<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>
1951	<i>Econo-Meals: Budget Menus</i>	<i>Procter & Gamble Company (pamphlet)</i>
1964	<i>Budget Cook Book</i>	<i>Better Cooking Library</i>
1971	<i>The Food Stamp Gourmet</i>	<i>Wm. Brown</i>
1979	<i>Budget Cookbook</i>	<i>Mary Kowit and Steve Kowit</i>
1980	<i>Budget Saving Meals Cookbook</i>	<i>Donna M. Paananen</i>
1985	<i>The Food Stamp Gourmet</i>	<i>Carrie Bailey</i>
1996	<i>Good Cheap Food</i>	<i>Miriam Ungerer</i>
2012	<i>The Food Stamp Budget Gourmet Cookbook</i>	<i>Don J. Dinerstein</i>
2014	<i>Good and Cheap: Eat Well on \$4/Day</i>	<i>Leanne Brown</i>

present day. In order to compare budget cookbooks to their mainstream analogues, the paper also analyzes four editions of *Joy of Cooking* (1964, 1975, 1997, and 2006). *Joy of Cooking* is used because it has been an influence in American kitchens since its original publication in 1931. It was a nationwide bestseller in 1943 and reached the nonfiction bestseller lists in 1962 and 1997.²³ It is known as the “kitchen bible,” and each edition has evolved to reflect current trends in the kitchen and gained new recipes.²⁴ New editions are important as, according to Edith Hörandner, they “permit good conclusions to be made about altered cooking- and eating-behaviour.”²⁵ In this way, *Joy of Cooking* serves as a control for cultural shifts in cooking that should not be attributed to budget cooking per se. From this point forward, *Joy of Cooking* will be referred to as *Joy*.

METHODS

Document Analysis Document analysis is a qualitative research methodology that focuses on “discovery and description” to find underlying patterns, meanings, and themes in documents analyzed.²⁶ Such qualitative analysis relies on adaptable data collection, coding, analysis, and interpretation that uses categories to direct initial study but is open to constant discovery and comparison of new situations that arise in the documents.²⁷ Cookbooks as documents can serve as records of cooking and eating by societies from which they are published.²⁸ Cookbooks are large repositories of knowledge, and therefore examining a single facet of a cookbook or group of cookbooks, such as cataloging ingredients and their qualities, is a useful method by which to analyze their content.²⁹ This paper applies qualitative document analysis methods of adaptable categorization focusing on ingredients and their qualities to compare budget cooking to mainstream cooking methods.

Books and Recipes These cookbooks were chosen for analysis because they have the words “budget,” “cheap,” or “food stamp” in the title.³⁰ The analysis focuses on ingredient comparisons between recipes for the same or similar dishes in the budget cookbooks and *Joy*. As the book sample size is large, only chicken- and vegetable-based main dishes are included.³¹ For books that contain separate soup, egg, or vegetable sections, chicken- and vegetable-based dishes are only included if the authors write or imply that such dishes are good as main meals. Chicken- and vegetable-based dishes are analyzed for economic reasons. Of chicken, beef, and pork, chicken was the cheapest meat during most of the time period analyzed.³² The exception is the 1950s, when chicken cost more than beef.³³ Also,

consumption data show that from 1965 to 2012, beef and pork consumption declined while chicken consumption increased rapidly, from 33.7 pounds annually per capita in 1965 to 81.8 pounds in 2012.³⁴ It was expected, therefore, that chicken would be a popular meat protein in budget cookbooks. Non-meat proteins, mainly grains, legumes, and eggs, have remained cheaper than meat from the 1950s to the present.³⁵

Recipe Analysis First, a list of all recipe titles for main meal chicken- or vegetable-based dishes was compiled. This list was then compared to the index of the *Joy* published in the corresponding decade for the same or similar recipes. These recipes did not necessarily have the exact same title, as often titles in the budget cookbooks include people’s names or creative takes on common titles. In such cases, however, ingredients and methods were used to determine if recipes were comparable. Each recipe found in both the budget cookbooks and *Joy* was then coded by recipe title, number of servings, ingredients used, cooking methods, equipment required, preparation time (if given by author), cost (if given by author), and any additional notes (such as pictures, history of recipe, tips, etc.).

The following data analysis focuses on ingredients used in the budget cookbook recipes compared to the ingredients used in their counterpart *Joy* recipes. Specific attention is paid to ingredient substitution, addition, and deletion trends and what these trends say about budget cooking in light of economic data.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS Results appear chronologically by date published and appear by budget cookbook title. Each begins with a brief description of the book, followed by analysis and discussion of ingredients and trends.

Econo-Meals: Budget Menus *Econo-Meals: Budget Menus* is a small, thirty-four-page pamphlet released by the Procter & Gamble Home Economics Department in 1951. The cover states that these budget menus are “delicious,” “thrifty,” and “nutritious.”³⁶ The pamphlet opens with a two-page introduction addressed, “Dear Homemaker,” and states that the pamphlet was specially created for the homemaker to help her with one of her “most trying tasks today—meal planning within the family budget.”³⁷ Each page of the book provides a dinner menu with a main dish, sides, and a dessert, with recipes for one or two items from the menu.³⁸

Every recipe in *Econo-Meals* includes Crisco (vegetable shortening), as it is a promotional pamphlet cookbook for the product.³⁹ *Joy of Cooking* 1964 does call for shortening

as an ingredient in certain recipes but does not use it in the recipes analyzed.⁴⁰ Using Crisco as a fat ingredient in every recipe makes economic sense for a budget cookbook of this time, as Crisco in 1951 was cheaper than butter and vegetable oils.⁴¹

Of twenty-five main dish recipes, seventeen are found in *Joy*, three of which are chicken recipes and none of which were vegetable-based.⁴² In light of chicken actually costing more than beef in the 1950s (compared to the opposite in all preceding decades) and combined with meat consumption patterns showing beef was the highest consumed, these data is expected.⁴³ As prices change, consumption patterns change in response.⁴⁴

The three recipes are *Turkey Trazzini* (the cookbook notes it could also be made with chicken), *Individual Chicken Casseroles*, and *Southern Fried Chicken*.⁴⁵ Of these recipes, *Econo-Meals* compared to *Joy* uses fewer ingredients per dish and less kitchen equipment.⁴⁶ Specifically, *Econo-Meals* uses less meat per serving, showing frugality, and the Trazzini calls for leftover turkey or chicken, showing resourcefulness and a commitment to preventing food waste, and, therefore, money waste.⁴⁷ *Econo-Meals* also relies solely on salt and pepper for spicing dishes, while *Joy* calls for additional spices and herbs, such as parsley, paprika, and basil.⁴⁸ Ingredient comparison on the whole reveals that *Econo-Meals* recipes are basic versions of fleshed-out *Joy* recipes.⁴⁹

Budget Cook Book *Budget Cook Book* was published in 1964 to help home cooks budget money and time.⁵⁰ The introduction states that the word “budget” when concerning food can be frightening but reassures the reader that this does not have to be so.⁵¹ It further states that this book will show the reader how to make dishes economically and use prepared foods such as canned soups and cake mixes with new flavor twists and tricks to “fancy up” dishes and “give a gourmet’s touch.”⁵² These statements reveal that the author believes cheap food is assumed not to look or taste good and is not associated with gourmet food or cooking. This book strives to portray budget food as elegant, from the introduction to the pictures of prepared recipes on every page, with meals served on fine china set on tablecloths with vases of flowers.⁵³ The photos, combined with small black and white illustrations of fancy foods and cooking utensils around page borders, emphasize that *Budget Cook Book* strives to teach gourmet cooking.⁵⁴

The ingredients data align with the book’s gourmet-on-a-budget endeavor. Of the fifteen recipes both in *Budget Cook Book* and *Joy*, whenever butter is called for the

ingredients list, the recipe also notes, “or margarine.”⁵⁵ On margarine, *Joy of Cooking 1964* says it “lack[s] the desirable butter flavor” and produces different textures than butter in baking.⁵⁶ Margarine does not appear in ingredients lists for any recipe analyzed in this edition of *Joy* or the preceding three editions also analyzed.⁵⁷ Margarine was (and still is) cheaper than butter.⁵⁸ Butter in 1960 cost three times more than margarine, and so despite its shortcomings, margarine was an economical substitution for the budget cook.⁵⁹

Meat is another ingredient where *Budget Cook Book* cuts costs. One-third of the main dish recipes are chicken- or vegetable-based.⁶⁰ While consumption data in this decade still favored beef and pork, chicken was then more economical.⁶¹ Recipes in *Budget Cook Book* reflect this trend by either using less meat per serving than corresponding recipes in *Joy* or by using chicken instead of more expensive choices such as lobster and crab.⁶² Also, American cheese—a cheap cheese product—is used almost exclusively as the cheese ingredient for any recipe requiring cheese other than Parmesan.⁶³ These three main ingredient substitutions demonstrate how budget recipes mimic mainstream recipes with cheaper ingredients.

One noteworthy recipe comparison is the *Fondue*. The *Joy* recipe makes a traditional melted cheese dish in which one dips bread.⁶⁴ The *Budget Cook Book* recipe makes a bread and American cheese casserole.⁶⁵ No doubt cheaper without the Emmentaler cheese, wine, and kirsch, *Budget Cook Book* takes what is generally portrayed as a fancy dish and makes it a basic, cheap, and easy family meal with the same classy name.⁶⁶

The Food Stamp Gourmet Published in 1971 by Wm. Brown, this book was written in a decade that saw an explosion of budget cookbooks on the shelves, including several specifically catering to federal food stamp recipients.⁶⁷ This book states that it is written for people “who would like to eat excellent food, but must do it on a budget.”⁶⁸ It further states that it is called *The Food Stamp Gourmet* “because food stamps are now one of the most popular ways of eating cheaply.”⁶⁹ These statements cater to readers’ desires to still eat good food when not able to afford much; the author works to overcome the shame potentially associated with food stamps by calling them trendy.⁷⁰ In contrast to *Budget Cook Book* that mimics gourmet, fancy food, *The Food Stamp Gourmet* features cheap but hip and delicious food while striving to imitate mainstream dishes.

Strewn with caricatures of people from all walks of life, *The Food Stamp Gourmet* assumes the reader is new to

cooking.⁷¹ Each recipe lists the ingredients and equipment required, time needed, cost per serving, and in the margins again lists the ingredients one will need in each step alongside the actual cooking instructions.⁷²

Although written for a novice, budget-bound cook, *The Food Stamp Gourmet* mimics mainstream recipes in a cheap fashion. Of thirty total main dish recipes, seven include chicken, zero are vegetable-based, and five also appear in *Joy of Cooking 1975*.⁷³ These five reveal that, in order to cut costs, *Food Stamp Gourmet* recipes tend to use less meat per serving plus a smaller variety of ingredients than corresponding *Joy* recipes.⁷⁴ Like in *Budget Cook Book*, margarine is always listed as an alternative wherever butter is required.⁷⁵ Several recipes call for wine in both *Joy* and *The Food Stamp Gourmet*, but the author of the latter suggests using domestic dry white vermouth as a cheaper option.⁷⁶ *The Food Stamp Gourmet*'s dishes mimic the mainstream dishes' principal flavors and ingredients, but they do so cheaply with substitutes, lower quality, and less quantity of ingredients. And all with dignity: On Parmesan cheese in *Risotto*, the author instructs the cook to stir in a half cup of Parmesan, "if you have some and feel like it."⁷⁷ An essential ingredient in risotto becomes optional at the cook's discretion, preserving the elegance of the dish and the wallet of the cook.

Budget Cookbook Published in 1979, *Budget Cookbook* declares, "This book is a weapon against runaway inflation."⁷⁸ Readers can learn how to "shop for value," preserve foods, make substitutions for expensive ingredients, "prepare basic foods ... for a fraction of the price," and make "elegant" use of leftovers.⁷⁹ This book is written for families with limited money for food but with a bit of time to learn how to avoid high food expenses while still eating mainstream dishes.

Of seventy-seven main dish recipes, twenty-eight are chicken- or vegetable-based, and of those, thirteen have corresponding recipes in *Joy of Cooking 1975*.⁸⁰ Many cheaper ingredient trends are found in comparing *Budget Cookbook* and *Joy*. One trend is that several vegetable budget dishes only correspond to recipes in *Joy* that contain meat (while *Joy* has no vegetable alternative).⁸¹ Substitute meat ingredients include beans, cheese, and eggs.⁸² In 1970, fifty-nine cents could buy a dozen large eggs or one pound of pork chops.⁸³ Another trend is that *Budget Cookbook* recipes use less of an expensive ingredient per serving.⁸⁴ The most striking example is *Oven-Fried Chicken*: The budget recipe calls for one whole chicken to serve four to six people, while *Joy* calls for the same to serve

two.⁸⁵ Soups that are served thin and as starters in *Joy* are prepared heartier in the budget recipe and are expected to be served as main courses.⁸⁶ Recipes are made more substantial by adding more of the cheaper ingredients like onions and potatoes, as in the *Creamy Onion Soup* and *Cream of Mushroom Soup*.⁸⁷ The *Soufflé* budget recipe, like *Fondue* in *Budget Cook Book*, is just a bread and cheese casserole.⁸⁸ But with a sophisticated name like "soufflé," a simple and cheap dish is elegantly transformed into a more expensive-sounding meal. Lastly, the most common and basic money-saving trends are the substitution of regular oil for olive oil, margarine for butter, and milk combined with dry milk for cream; *Budget Cooking* uses the former, where *Joy* calls for the latter. These substitutions are found in every recipe, where *Joy* called for the latter of these pairings.⁸⁹

Budget Saving Meals Cookbook This budget cookbook was published in 1980. While the book lacks an introduction, short paragraphs prefacing each section, a few photos, and the recipes themselves all suggest the reader has a family and is cooking on a tight budget.⁹⁰ The reader also wants to put a healthy, cheap, yet elegant meal on the table, as implied by several references to gardening to obtain free vegetables and the photographs of meals served in nice dishes on cloth-covered tables set with flowers.⁹¹

Of fifty total main dish recipes, twenty-nine are either chicken- or vegetable-based, with sixteen also appearing in *Joy of Cooking 1975*.⁹² These sixteen recipes showcase several examples of mainstream recipe mimicry with ingredient cost shortcuts. First of all, ten of the fourteen vegetable-based dishes have meat in the corresponding *Joy* recipes.⁹³ Using less meat is a very economical way to cook, explained both in *Budget Saving Meals Cookbook* and by the economic data of the time.⁹⁴ In 1980, a dozen large eggs were eighty-three cents compared to beef at \$2.79 per pound.⁹⁵ Second, any recipe calling for butter in *Joy* either also suggests or only lists margarine in *Budget Saving Meals*.⁹⁶ Three, a smaller variety of ingredients is used in many of the recipes. Several examples are: the chili, which uses only beans for protein and water for the liquid, compared to meat and beans for protein and canned tomatoes for the liquid in *Joy*; the *Stuffed Eggplant*, which called for a one-pound eggplant compared to a two-pound eggplant for the same number of people in the *Joy* equivalent; and smaller amounts of the main protein used per serving in numerous recipes, such as the lentil soup.⁹⁷ Four, dry milk mixed with fresh milk is almost exclusively used in any recipe that may otherwise call for cream.⁹⁸ Looking at all sixteen of the recipes and their comparisons,

most recipes in *Budget Saving Meals* closely replicate the versions found in *Joy* with cheaper and/or fewer ingredients.⁹⁹

The Food Stamp Gourmet *The Food Stamp Gourmet*, published in 1985, is written for people on food stamps or on a similarly tight food budget. Each meal is designed to cost sixty cents per person per meal, the amount allotted by the National Food Stamp Program at the time.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, each recipe states the total cost of the meal for the number of servings listed.¹⁰¹ In the preface, the author declares, “many of these recipes are simplified versions of foods served in elegant restaurants.”¹⁰² The ingredients data support her claim. However, it is interesting to note that unlike several other budget cookbooks that have photographs of meals served in fancy dishes or black and white drawings detailing foods and kitchen utensils, this book has instead one small, humble sketch per page of an ingredient or utensil, creating an approachable space for anyone trying to learn to cook or cook cheaply.¹⁰³

Of twenty-four total main dish recipes, fifteen are chicken- or vegetable-based, and eight appear in *Joy of Cooking 1975*.¹⁰⁴ More than half of the total main dish recipes use cheaper protein ingredients, and more than half of the analyzed sample strive to replicate mainstream dishes. These recipes are generally simpler versions of *Joy* recipes. Counting all of the different ingredients used in the eight recipes in both books highlights this parallel. For the same recipes, *The Food Stamp Gourmet* uses eighteen different ingredients while *Joy* uses thirty-one.¹⁰⁵ A smaller range of ingredients for a seemingly diverse menu suggests simpler recipes. Looking at specific recipe comparisons also reveals this. One example is the *Cheese Fondue*. The *Joy* version begins with a history of fondue and its traditional Swiss methods, including the use of the “correct” kind of cheese (Emmenthaler) and alcohol (kirsch and white wine).¹⁰⁶ Also, it is to be served for brunch or afternoon tea.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, *The Food Stamp Gourmet* takes a different approach to fondue: The dish becomes dinner. It also uses less cheese per serving, permits the use of any cheese or “cheese food,” adds milk and eggs to make up for less cheese, and skips the kirsch and wine.¹⁰⁸ This fondue is cheap but puts an elegant-sounding spin on an otherwise plain bread, egg, and dairy main meal.

Ingredient trends in this budget cookbook are as follows: Water is substituted for stock; bouillon cubes replace any stock not replaced with water; and “cheese food” is an alternative every time cheese is required.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, all recipes analyzed are vegetable-based.¹¹⁰

This is because meat recipe analysis is limited to chicken and does not include recipes calling for unspecified meat, as is the case for most meat dishes in *The Food Stamp Gourmet*, to enable flexibility for cooks to buy what is cheapest and most available that day.¹¹¹ These trends all support the book’s efforts to provide recipes for elegant mainstream main dishes for less money.

Good Cheap Food *Good Cheap Food* was published in 1996 and has a different attitude toward food than the previous decades’ budget cookbooks. The emphasis is on local and fresh foods and mentions that they and other foods are cheap in section introductions.¹¹² But cheapness rarely manifests as a substitute of lesser quality. One example is the author’s unconvincing and circumstantial acceptance of margarine (where other budget books embrace it as an inexpensive alternative to butter).¹¹³ Another is her opinion on olive oil substitutes: She writes, “When it comes to olive oil, I don’t mean ‘salad oil’ unless specified, because the substitution would result in a fatal dullness.”¹¹⁴ Olive oil costs more than salad oil, but a sacrifice of taste for money will not be made.

Of 153 main dish recipes total, forty-nine are chicken- or vegetable-based, and thirteen are in *Joy of Cooking 1997*.¹¹⁵ These data do not strongly support economic or consumption data of the time—chicken and vegetable proteins costing the least and chicken consumption being the highest—nor does it support budget cookbooks mimicking mainstream recipes.¹¹⁶ The tone and content of *Good Cheap Food* is different from all other budget cookbooks analyzed. This book is for people who have an interest in food and cooking that goes beyond just feeding mouths for less money. It is 331 pages long, with lengthy introductions to each section, ingredient biographies, and recipes reading more like an extended conversation than an easy-to-use, practical reference book.¹¹⁷ The user of this book has the time to read and cook extensively and probably has a higher food budget than one governed by food stamps.

However, in looking at the ingredients data in *Good Cheap Food* compared to corresponding recipes in *Joy of Cooking 1997*, recipes do require less or the same number of ingredients the majority of the time, which keeps costs lower.¹¹⁸ Also, these recipes are very similar in ingredients, methods, and equipment to *Joy*, showing that not all recipes are completely original ideas.¹¹⁹

The Food Stamp Budget Gourmet Cookbook This book was published in 2012 for those hit especially hard by the

economic downturn in 2008—for those eating on a food stamp budget.¹²⁰ The book is available as an electronic book online for just \$2.99.¹²¹ *The Food Stamp Budget Gourmet Cookbook* features thirty-one main dish recipes and claims all can be made for less than five dollars per serving, cheaper than a fast food meal for one.¹²² The book is divided by cuisine categories: American, Asian, Italian, Tex Mex, and Vegetarian.¹²³ This is the first book to be divided in this way and reflects Americans' growing interest in ethnic cuisines, beginning in the 1960s among the upper class and later incorporated into the mainstream corporate food system.¹²⁴ (Cultural cuisine categories are more prevalent in *Joy of Cooking 2006* as well).¹²⁵

Of thirty-one main dish recipes, seventeen are chicken- or vegetable-based, and twelve have corresponding recipes in *Joy*.¹²⁶ This high number of chicken and vegetable dishes suggests price is often kept low by using a cheaper protein. A high number of corresponding recipes in *Joy* suggest *The Food Stamp Budget Gourmet* mimics mainstream dishes at lower cost. The ingredient trends seen in earlier published budget cookbooks are not as prevalent in these modern recipes. For example, margarine never appears; recipes always call for butter.¹²⁷ The same is true of olive oil: It is never substituted for by salad oil.¹²⁸ The book, however, introduces a new substitution. Calls for sea salt are always accompanied by “can substitute with regular table salt,” a cheaper alternative costing one-quarter of the price per ounce.¹²⁹ Another way prices are kept low is by recommending and providing recipes for basic packaged ingredients, such as tortillas and enchilada sauce.¹³⁰ In 2012, a package of eight flour tortillas cost \$3.59, while the amount of flour needed to make eight tortillas from the recipe would cost forty-two cents.¹³¹

A new trend is that several main dish recipes correspond to recipes in the appetizers section of *Joy*, such as egg rolls, quesadillas, chicken wings, and stuffed mushrooms.¹³² According to *Joy*, appetizers are either a first course (meaning there are more courses to follow) or served at cocktail parties.¹³³ Both scenarios suggest a food event beyond a normal dinner meal, and therefore the appetizer marks a special occasion. The use of traditional appetizer foods as the main meal in *The Food Stamp Budget Gourmet* elevates the meal's status and has the feel of a more expensive meal while suiting a tight budget.

Good and Cheap: Eat Well on \$4/Day This book was published in 2014 and is “designed ... to fit the budget of people living on SNAP” and the “untold millions more ... liv[ing] under similar conditions.”¹³⁴ As this introduction and

the title suggest, this book has recipes for cheap food but also good food, with many having corresponding recipes in *Joy of Cooking 2006*.

Of a total of thirty-one main dishes in *Good and Cheap*, there are twenty-two vegetable-based and two chicken recipes, with sixteen of those combined that also appear in *Joy*.¹³⁵ Like *The Food Stamp Budget Gourmet* (2012), margarine is never used, as butter is always called for, and olive oil is used wherever appropriate without suggesting a cheaper substitute.¹³⁶ Three recipes in *Joy* call for meat when *Good and Cheap* does not.¹³⁷ However, *Joy* offers both vegetable and meat versions of several more recipes for which *Good and Cheap* only has a vegetable version, such as tacos, dumplings, quiche, and fettuccini.¹³⁸ This suggests that vegetable-based main dishes are becoming more popular in mainstream cooking and corresponds to dietary choice trend data: In 2012, 5 percent of the American population was vegetarian compared to 1 percent in 1971.¹³⁹

By the number of ingredients required in each recipe, *Good and Cheap* and *Joy* are fairly equivalent, unlike budget cookbooks of previous decades that simply called for less.¹⁴⁰ However, further analysis reveals that the budget recipes are based on one or two fewer substantial ingredients than the corresponding *Joy* recipes (substantial ingredients being any ingredient that contributes significantly to the caloric content of the dish). The bulk of ingredients listed are spices that recur throughout the entire book.¹⁴¹ This is the main way these recipes are cheap: Fewer ingredients to buy means less money spent. Also, the focus on vegetables is economically logical for cheap meals: In 2014, the price range for fresh vegetables, spanning from potatoes to bell peppers, was sixty-seven cents to \$2.37 per pound; the price range for meat, spanning from whole chicken to steak, was \$1.55 to \$8.10 per pound.¹⁴²

Another way these recipes fit into a four-dollar-a-day budget is that they are flexible, and ingredient substitution is highly encouraged. Stated in the introduction, a “strict budget requires flexibility and a willingness” to buy and cook whatever is on sale at the time.¹⁴³ This leaves room for the cook to evaluate what is cheapest. For example, the recipe for *Dal* has separate instructions for the different types of lentils one may use;¹⁴⁴ the recipe for *Butternut Soup* recommends that any winter squash will be a fine substitute.¹⁴⁵ This built-in flexibility gives already cheap recipes the opportunity to be even cheaper.

CONCLUSION A national poverty rate of over 20 percent culminating in The Food Stamp Act of 1964 brought poverty and hunger to the forefront of the American

conscience. Soon thereafter, the economy in the '70s slowed and inflation rose quickly, turning the focus from helping the poor to budgeting for oneself.¹⁴⁶ These events are reflected in the jump in the number of budget cookbooks published. Although inflation rates decreased in the '80s, a large and growing portion of the population nevertheless could not shake the need to budget food expenses, with an increasingly poorer middle and lower class and high poverty and unemployment rates.¹⁴⁷ Budget cooking remained in the public consciousness; cookbooks with budget-focused titles continued to be published through the second decade of the twenty-first century. As the results and analysis show, this emergence of a newly popular cookbook genre did not, however, create an entirely new budget cuisine. Budget cookbooks largely mimicked culturally common, mainstream recipes in cheaper ways. Common methods included ingredient substitutions, deletions, and additions, such as margarine substituted for butter.

Prior research on budget cookbooks is limited or nonexistent. This paper analyzes ingredients from nine budget cookbooks with attention to economic decisions made by each author. Future research on budget cooking could address a wide variety of concerns. One approach may focus on audience and whether these books actually target and are read and used by populations that would benefit economically from their instructions; another option is to focus on the end products by preparing meals from budget cookbooks and non-budget cookbooks at the time, to better understand how cheaply mimicked meals cook up.

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