

archivists that researchers and practitioners in other disciplines are equally concerned with the trustworthiness and authenticity of information with which they work. But Lemieux and the other authors whose work is featured in *Building Trust in Information* also show that archivists can learn a great deal about their own craft by examining ways in which other disciplines work to preserve information about how data is created, selected, analyzed, and presented.

© Creighton Barrett  
Dalhousie University

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For more information, visit <https://interparestrust.org>.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, visit <http://www.springer.com/series/11960>.

## Preserving Family Recipes: How to Save and Celebrate Your Food Traditions

By Valerie J. Frey. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 2015. 320 pp. Softcover. \$26.95. ISBN 978-0-8203-3063-1.

If you are personally interested in preserving culinary history, you may want to consider reading Valerie J. Frey's *Preserving Family Recipes: How to Save and Celebrate Your Food Traditions*. If, like me, you are an archivist who has both personal and professional interests in collecting and sharing the culinary histories of families (and, by extension, family histories), you need to read this book. Through a blend of personal experiences, storytelling, and practical advice, Frey has written a book intended for the family cook, historian, genealogist, or some combination of the three, but it has some important takeaways for information professionals too. Frey brings her background as an archivist, educational consultant, and writer to the pages of this book. Her knowledge as an archivist gives her insight into the challenges of researching and preserving food history. Her experience teaching oral history workshops lends itself to advice for would-be family food historians on interviewing and recording family and friends. Her skill as a writer turns what could have been a straightforward book of advice into an invitation to join her on a journey of culinary discovery through her own family's history while giving the reader a chance to learn from her experiences. Equally as important, Frey has a passion for food and foodways that permeates the book.

*Preserving Family Recipes* is 320 pages of entertaining instruction for a wide audience. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the basics: deciding on a family cookbook project and its scope, considering approaches to the project, and, from the archival side of things, preserving materials for future use. Chapters 3 and 4 are about recipes: the difficulties of working with historical recipes, the trial-and-error efforts of adapting these recipes to modern ingredients and kitchens, and the challenges of re-creating food from different regions of the United States or international cuisine. Archivists will be most professionally “at home” in chapters 5 through 7. Chapter 5 includes information on completing oral history interviews with family members and creating video recordings with family cooks to capture cooking or baking processes. Chapters 6 and 7 contain details on primary and secondary source research on culinary traditions, recipes, and family history, as well as useful considerations for creating a family cookbook and sharing the end product. The book also includes three appendixes that put the preceding seven chapters to work. Over the course of the first two, Frey takes readers through her experience of testing variations on a recipe (on a “Quest for the Extraordinary Biscuit”) and tracing the evolution of biscuit recipes through historical research. The third appendix is an example, again from Frey’s knowledge, of gathering information about a particularly influential home cook.

Like a good cookbook, *Preserving Family Recipes* is written for use, and its organization reflects that. Cookbooks are essentially reference tools—cooks hunt through them for the ideal canapés to complement a cocktail party or to satisfy a weekend craving for banana bread. In the same sense, Frey has written a book that can appease a single desire (for example, re-creating a historic recipe). At the same time, one of the things I appreciate most about this book is its versatility. Like a “reference book,” it flows with a specific end goal in mind, much like use of a cookbook can lead not only to a single dish, but to a coordinated, complex meal (creating a compiled cookbook, with or without genealogy information). It does not need to be read beginning to end, and readers can learn a great deal from the book even if they are not setting out to create a final project. While the chapters may not all read entirely independently of each other—they do build off each other throughout—it is possible to move around, skipping chapters that may not be central to the goals of a particular researcher. Frey’s background as an educator makes her well aware of her intended audience and puts her in a place to offer instructive and helpful advice for new researchers on a range of topics including (but most certainly not limited to) project management skills for creating a cookbook, approaches to interviewing family members who closely guard recipes, and visiting an archives for the first time.

*Preserving Family Recipes* is not just about collecting culinary history and foodways knowledge. Frey makes an important link between family culinary history and family history more broadly, and she explores the ways in which

the two are connected and how genealogical research can contribute to a family cookbook. Chapters such as the one on conducting interviews can be taken beyond culinary history and into more general collection of family stories. The appendix that investigates an influential cook in Frey's life could be expanded into a much larger effort to document any family member's life generally. As an archivist who does instruction and outreach relating to a collection of culinary history materials, I talk about this relationship between food history and family history with all audiences. Food is an integral part of our families' lives, and many researchers who work with culinary history sources have some sort of personal connection to their topic. Foodways history can also be a great entry point into primary source research, as almost anyone can find a food-related topic to pursue.

Although archivists may not be Frey's primary audience, that does not mean we as professionals will get only a good read and some wonderful recipes from the book. I spent part of my time reading *Preserving Family Recipes* thinking about how and where the role of "archivist" fits into an individual's family cookbook project, as well as the implications of these projects for archives, especially those institutions focused on culinary history and/or local history. Entire sections of the book focus on the challenges and efforts of historical research, and Frey gives readers basic advice on visiting libraries, archives, historical societies, and other cultural heritage institutions, which I think is ultimately a hidden strength of the book. These persistent references serve as reminders for archivists that we play two important roles for the intended audience of family culinary historians: as guides to primary source research and our own collections, and as preservers of created content.

While the book offers some basics for conducting research—and provides some great advocacy about why archives matter in the process—we as information professionals are the experts when it comes to our collections. The needs of researchers working on historical family cookbooks may be broad, but whether they are interested in a person or a family, in the variations of a recipe, or in the culinary history of a specific region or time period, archivists are their tour guides through the shelves. For those involved in culinary history, *Preserving Family Recipes* can help archivists and researchers find common ground and a shared understanding of the project a researcher may be undertaking. For example, one potential challenge for researchers new to historic recipes that Frey addresses (much to my joy!) is that of measurements. If a nineteenth-century recipe calls for "butter the size of a walnut," just what does that mean? Frey includes a thorough table as a starting point, but culinary history scholars and archivists can encounter descriptions like this every day, and a single answer may not always exist. *Preserving Family Recipes* helps prepare researchers for the uncertainties of working with primary sources and reminds archivists

of lessons we may have to teach along the way. In other words, archivists and librarians have great potential to be collaborators with family history scholars, as we are with so many kinds of researchers.

For cultural heritage professionals, the book's advice for compilers who may wish to donate copies of their cookbooks also reminds us that archives have a responsibility as receivers and preservers of those materials. Frey gives an overview of the breadth and depth of work that can go into a historical family cookbook, work that should be protected for the future, beyond a family member's cookbook shelf. Family cookbooks can have much in common with community cookbooks which, as any culinary history-related archives can tell you, are not just about recipes. A family cookbook may be of value to future generations of that family, but it can also speak volumes about a location, a time, a favorite community or cultural recipe, or social activities. Whether compiled and published or handwritten, even for researchers working with nonfood topics, family receipt/recipe books, community cookbooks, and household ledgers can offer a wealth of information. Frey's book gives archivists insight into the process behind the creation of a family cookbook and a better understanding of the significance of potential donations.

Generally speaking, researchers, would-be family culinary historians, and genealogists have much to gain from *Preserving Family Recipes*, and it is well worth archives and library professionals knowing about and recommending. From a professional archives perspective, it is a bit of a niche publication. The book contains tidbits that could be useful for researchers in many subject areas, but it does not necessarily need a home in every reference collection. For institutions and individuals working with culinary history and local genealogy or family history, however, it will be a valuable reference tool for archivists, librarians, and researchers alike.

© Kira A. Dietz

Virginia Tech

## Digital Preservation Essentials

Edited by Christopher J. Prom with an introduction by Kyle Rimkus. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2016. x, 125 pp. Softcover, PDF, and EPUB. Members \$24.99, nonmembers \$34.99. Softcover ISBN 1-931666-95-4; PDF ISBN 1-931666-97-0; EPUB ISBN 978-1-931666-96-1.

*D*igital Preservation Essentials is one of the latest installments in *Trends in Archives Practice*, the Society of American Archivists' evolving modular series intended to fill significant gaps in the archival literature. The series currently