



Colonial Virginia's Cooking Dynasty

By Katharine E Harbury



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More diverse in scope than their modern counterparts, the cookbooks of colonial and antebellum America contained recipes, medical cures, and housekeeping information that women of that time deemed necessary for family life. The keepers of these domestic manuals recorded recipes and cures for their own use and the use of friends, daughters, and extended families. Because they reflect a range of daily living practices, such manuscript cookbooks serve as important social history documents. In *Colonial Virginia's Cooking Dynasty*, Katharine E. Harbury brings to light two cookbooks from eighteenth-century Virginia. Notable for their early dates and historical significance, these manuals afford previously unavailable insights into lifestyles and foodways during the evolution of Chesapeake society. One cookbook is an anonymous work dating from 1700; the other is the 1739-1743 cookbook of Jane Bolling Randolph, a descendant of Pocahontas and John Rolfe. In addition to her textual analysis that establishes the relationship between these two early manuscripts, Harbury links them to the 1824 classic *The Virginia House-wife* by Mary Randolph. Harbury provides an introduction to and analysis of

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

"Katharine E. Harbury offers us two more manuscript recipe books from the famous Randolph families of Virginia with the publication of *Colonial Virginia's Cooking Dynasty*. But more importantly and uniquely, Harbury has given us the social, economic, and political context into which they fit, creating a new pattern for future transcriptions. She makes a convincing case for the existence of a distinct gentry culture that finally turned its gaze firmly westward to form a new society in North America, with people who became Virginians instead of Englishmen living abroad. This they did in their grand new homes, dining rooms, kitchens, and with the food they served prepared from these cookbooks."—Sandy Oliver, publisher/editor, *Food History News*

About the Author

Katharine E. Harbury is a graduate of Beloit College and holds a master's degree in anthropology and historical archaeology from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. An avid reader of historical and archeological literature, Harbury has participated in archaeological excavations in England and the United States. Her work as a historical archaeologist in Virginia has focused on regional events from the colonial period through the nineteenth century. Harbury lives in Mechanicsville, Virginia.

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