



What to Eat, and How to Cook It: Preserving, Canning and Drying Fruits and Vegetables (American Antiquarian Cookbook Collection)

Joseph Cowan

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Cowan's earlier works dealt with sexual hygiene and the evils of tobacco, but in *What to Eat, and How to Cook It* he turned to diet. Food and culinary practice had become more complex in American middle-class society by 1870, and Cowan's cookbook blasted his countrymen for eating "conglomerate mixtures," ingredients "mixed in all shapes, in all measures, and under all conditions." He believed that overly manipulated, processed foods led to a "clogged brain" and a "sickly and unenjoyable life." His conclusion was that, "To live a sweet healthy life implies the use of simple, nutritious food, cooked in a plain, simple manner, and as nearly in its natural relations as possible."

What to Eat, and How to Cook It is an almost exclusively vegetarian cookbook that advocates natural foods consisting mostly of grains, fruits, and vegetables, very simply prepared. Although lean roast beef is permitted in moderation, the list of banned foods is long and sobering: salt, spices, vinegar, tea, coffee, chocolate, fat, virtually all meats, and above all fish. Milk, butter, and cheese are considered "abnormal," but are allowed in some of the simple recipes. In addition to chapters on many grains, vegetables, and fruits, the book contains sections on food and drink for the sick, water, rules for eating, food not to eat, poisons in daily use, and preserving fruits and vegetables. The book also contains the first known recipe for frying green tomatoes, following the suggestion by New England farmers that this was a use for the many green tomatoes that remained on the vine after the first frost.

This edition of *What to Eat, and How to Cook It* was reproduced by permission from the volume in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Founded in 1812 by Isaiah Thomas, a Revolutionary War patriot and successful printer and publisher, the society is a research library documenting the lives of Americans from the colonial era through 1876. The society collects, preserves, and makes available as complete a record as possible of the printed materials from the early American experience. The cookbook collection comprises approximately 1,100 volumes.

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