Cookbooks are in many ways the workhorses of print culture. Typically segregated from other books in a household, their well-worn covers and stained pages testify to their role as manuals instructing readers in some of the most mundane activities of everyday life: selecting, preparing, and eating food. Yet, despite their prosaic qualities, cookbooks matter on many different levels. Through communicating a moral vision of how day-to-day life should be conducted, cookbooks contain an implicit, and sometimes explicit, politics. While this political message generally affirms and gives guidance on how to uphold conventional social relations and practices, there are times when cookbooks act as important beacons of social change, drawing far-flung readers into communities of dissent. Whether a cookbook should be understood as a document of protest depends not just on its manifest content but also on its physical characteristics, from typeface to illustrations to binding. Most importantly, the oppositional nature of a cookbook is related to the social worlds in which it is embedded, including those groups with which an author identifies, the publisher and distributors that make a book available, and the networks of readers that attribute meanings to a text.

In this chapter, we examine how vegetarian and vegan cookbooks in the United States, from the nineteenth century to the contemporary era, present a message of opposition to conventional systems of food production and
consumption, opposition that is meant to be integrated into routines of everyday life. Related to this, we examine a number of historical changes that have taken place in how that oppositional vision is communicated within the cookbook form. Through this, we seek to understand how the cookbook as a printed document contributes to the communication of dissent, the identification of social problems, and the formation of advice on how to achieve social change. We are not arguing that all vegetarian cookbooks are equally oppositional. Instead, locating where one falls on an oppositional spectrum entails paying attention to both the material form it takes and the social context from which it emerges.

This analysis is based on an examination of library catalogs and bibliographies,1 of actual cookbooks, and on research on the history of American vegetarianism and veganism more generally. We examined bibliographic information on the universe of vegetarian and vegan cookbooks published in the United States from 1800 to 2006, and made more direct study of a sample of approximately three hundred books.

A focus on cookbooks as a gendered form of print culture is perhaps the dominant analytical frame in scholarship on cookbooks.2 In a representative argument, Janet Theophano claims that women have used cookbooks as “vehicle[s] for constructing, defending, and transgressing social and cultural borders.”3 Here, there is recognition that cookbooks have been a means to express a moral vision and assert an association between food, food-related labor, and the larger social order. Yet this outlet is thought to be primarily confined to a world in which women are speaking to other women. Susan J. Leonard’s 1989 essay, “Recipes for Reading,” was influential in this regard, as she argues that recipe sharing has been a way for women to enter into a gendered discourse that downplays authority in favor of an invitingly informal and chatty tone.4

However, as we intend to argue, vegetarian and vegan cookbooks challenge the assumption that cookbooks rest firmly within the sphere of domestic arts and female culture. So many of them, especially the earliest and later ones, are not just addressed to women, nor are they all authored by women. It would be incorrect to consider them completely ungendered, as many do explicitly describe a special role for women in furthering vegetarianism, one which arises out of women’s responsibilities for feeding the family. And, as Maria McGrath discusses, some do make a connection between vegetarianism and female empowerment.5 Still, the majority do not tie their promotion of vegetarianism to assumptions about female skills or proclivities, and they indicate that men will be equally as interested in their advice as women, even when it is understood that women will be doing the actual cooking. Indeed, inscriptions in library copies of early vegetarian cookbooks demonstrate extensive male ownership of these books.6
Furthermore, vegetarian cookbooks are as much guides to a worldview and advocates of a lifestyle as they are straightforward recipe books. They frequently mix, in a single text, food philosophy and history with how-to instructions. They often discuss cooking and eating practices—not just as a key to an appropriate domestic life or to personal transformation, but as a way to actively promote much broader social and political change. Family responsibilities are only one theme among others that propose how both women and men can use food preparation to achieve social change. Thus, cookbooks can be devices for communicating political ideals and for mobilizing people—both men and women—to put those ideals into practice.

The opposition to meat eating, which characterizes vegetarianism, or to the consumption of any animal-based food product, which characterizes veganism, has several dimensions, and cookbooks usually make explicit reference to at least one of them. First are ethical concerns about raising and slaughtering animals; second are the health benefits that come from a vegetarian diet; third are the environmental problems that arise from the greater resources needed to raise animals compared to plants and that come from disposing of animal wastes and other by-products; fourth is the greater complexity of raising and processing animal-based food, which leads to dependence on a profit-minded industry; and fifth is a perspective that sees vegetarianism as a more natural or original diet; this latter argument is often couched in religious terms that pose vegetarianism as the diet ordained by God.

However, the scope of the vegetarian critique goes beyond these concerns, as such ills are believed to be connected to more far-reaching problems. As Mattie M. Jones wrote in 1864 in her *Hygienic Cook-Book*:

> The table! how vast an influence it exerts on human life and character; how much of the weal or woe of humanity clusters around it! In determining our physical, mental, and moral conditions, no other one thing in all the material universe has so vast a power as that which we take daily in the shape of food and drink. Much, very much, of the sickness, suffering, and premature death in the world; much of its vice, immorality, and crime, can, if traced to its starting point, be found to originate here.\(^7\)

These sentiments are echoed a century later in the 1974 *Back to Eden Cookbook*: “It is wrong habits of eating and the use of refined and adulterated foods that are largely responsible for the intemperance, crime, and sickness that curse this world.”\(^8\) Cookbooks thus contain a protest against, and theories for alleviating, the wrongs that humans do to themselves, to their fellows, to other living creatures, and to the natural world.

These cookbooks do not take what Arjun Appadurai calls a gustatory approach, meaning one that is independent of its moral and medical implications.\(^9\) Instead, moral and medical considerations are central. They integrate
nutritional information with economic analysis and ethical principles, generally in terms that the average American can understand. Especially after the initial period of growth in the nineteenth century, and up until the emergence of the vegan cookzine (a cooking-oriented zine), vegetarian cookbooks are less obtrusive than more traditional political manifestos, and indeed are organized so that the reader can, if he or she wishes, skip most of the philosophizing and go straight to the recipes. Still, even those that contain no overtly political content stand as a challenge to authority and convention by defying taken-for-granted assumptions about the desirability of meat. Meat has been at the center of the American diet since the colonial era; it communicates household prosperity and conformity with national culinary traditions. The population’s regard for meat is reflected in rates of consumption, which have risen steadily over time, reaching an average of 195 pounds per person in 2000. Up until recently, most professional nutritionists endorsed this preference for meat, while insisting that vegetarianism resulted in nutritional deficiencies. To reject all this accepted wisdom is to challenge basic ideals about how to achieve individual well-being and the general good.

Yet vegetarian cookbooks do not just operate at the ideological level. They are manuals for action, presenting the logic behind vegetarianism side by side with practical advice about how to adopt the vegetarian lifestyle. An understanding of their potential efficacy entails analyzing their status as print documents, which has been essential for cookbooks’ ability to reach an audience of both committed and experimenting vegetarians, to have their messages last over time, and to provide highly flexible instructions on dissent.

**Early Vegetarian Cookbooks**

Most of the existing scholarly literature on vegetarian cookbooks focuses on classic texts coming out of the 1970s counterculture. These cookbooks are certainly significant and worthy of attention, as we will later discuss. But we disagree with Sherrie A. Inness, who claims that the 1970s natural foods movement represented a shift away from promoting individual betterment to a focus on improving the world. That concern with improving the world was there from the start.

Perhaps the first English-language vegetarian cookbook was Thomas Tryon’s *Wisdom’s Dictates*, published in England in 1691. While most of this book was a treatise on vegetarianism, his section called “Bill of Fare” contained recipes. Like the rest of the book, the dense text of this section, unbroken by white space or illustration of any kind, communicates the seriousness of purpose contained within. Martha Brotherton’s *Vegetable Cookery*, originally published in England in 1812, was heralded as the first book actually devoted to vegetarian recipes. Brotherton’s book served as a guide for Americans who began to
self-identify as vegetarian in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The British were an important influence on the early American vegetarian movement, with direct contact occurring between British and American adherents, and with Americans reading and sometimes reprinting British tracts.

The first American-published vegetarian cookbooks appear in the 1830s. Similar to Tryon’s guide, these early books make a case for a vegetarian lifestyle, but grudgingly mention circumstances in which meat might be eaten. Unlike Brotherton’s book, they were not primarily lists of recipes or, as they were then called, receipts. Rather, the recipes were an addendum to the lengthy disquisitions on the importance of vegetarianism. Indeed, in his 1838 book, *The Young House-Keeper or Thoughts on Food and Cookery*, William A. Alcott, one of the best-known early American proponents of vegetarianism, deplored the large number of published books that were “little more than large bundles of recipes for fashionable cookery.” In contrast, his work intended to lay out important principles in regard to foods.¹⁸ Alcott’s 1849 *Vegetable Diet: As Sanctioned by Medical Men, and by Experience in All Ages, Including a System of Vegetable Cookery*⁹ puts more stress on his philosophy of vegetarianism, whereas *The Young House-Keeper* emphasizes more the qualities of different foods. But both include a final, modest section of recipes containing rather curt and undetailed instructions for preparing a variety of foods. Alcott solicited the recipes for *The Young House-Keeper* from members of the Ladies’ Physiological Institute, the women’s branch of the vegetarian association that Alcott helped to lead.²⁰ In the book, Alcott notes that he could have included hundreds of additional recipes, but “was unwilling to devote more space to matter of so little comparative importance.”²¹

A contemporary book, Asenath Nicholson’s 1835 *Nature’s Own Book*, similarly presents a section on recipes as something of an afterthought to Nicholson’s views on the complete way of life that conforms to the principles of Sylvester Graham, an influential food reformer. These principles were enforced in the temperance boardinghouse that Nicholson ran in New York City. Like the simple living Nicholson promoted in her boardinghouse, the look of her book, as was Alcott’s, was plain, even severe.²²

In the following decades, one of the more significant changes to take place in vegetarian cookbooks is that the proportion of text given over to recipes increases, while the amount devoted to explicating a rationale for vegetarianism declines. At the same time, illustrations begin to appear. A transitional text is *The New Hydropathic Cook-Book* (1854) by R. T. Trall, which integrated vegetarian convictions with Trall’s beliefs in water cure and opposition to alcohol. The recipe section is a little less than half of the book, and there are numerous drawings of the plants meant to be the basis of a vegetarian diet, though no images of the people who prepare or eat this food appear.²³ It is still the case here that the power of ideas, not the tastiness or attractiveness of recipes, was
meant to be the book’s strength. Later nineteenth-century vegetarian cookbooks place recipes front and center. Another new addition to this latter group is the appearance of advertisements on the inside covers and beginning and end pages. These announcements tend to be for other health-reform books and periodicals available from the cookbooks’ publishers, but could also include, as with Mattie M. Jones’s book, food items such as graham crackers, and cooking implements such as bread pans. As well as drawing cooking into a commercial context, such advertisements connect vegetarianism to a more diverse set of philosophies represented by the publications for sale.

What these changes also reflect is the trend, over time, to appeal to a broader audience than just people interested in debating vegetarian ethics. This is perhaps best seen with some of the earliest cookbooks written to emphasize recipes over philosophy: those associated with the Seventh-day Adventist Sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan. Beginning in 1876, this institute was run by John Harvey Kellogg, who also directed the first truly systematic and successful effort to commercialize meat substitutes. Both Kellogg and his wife, Ella, published cookbooks that drew upon and advertised Sanitarium products, such as Protose, Granose, and Nuttolene. Ella E. Kellogg’s 1892 book, Science in the Kitchen (figure 16), included many photographs of artfully arranged dishes, like Protose Salad or Nut Roast, meant to highlight the elegance of the foods resulting from the book’s instructions. In this book, Kellogg integrated recipes into an extensive discussion of digestion, nutrition, cookware, and other topics, with vegetarianism seemingly taken for granted. However, in her Every-Day Dishes, published in 1897, Kellogg devotes a mere 8 pages to introductory material, and the rest of the book, almost 150 pages, is given over to instructions on choosing and preparing food with a final, substantial chapter providing general advice about housekeeping, especially the need for thrift, cleanliness, and efficiency.

The ability to save money by forgoing meat was an abiding theme in vegetarian cookbooks of the early twentieth century. Cookbook authors’ frequent reference to thriftiness fit with their attempt to situate vegetarian cooking in the everyday concerns of the average homemaker. Lenna Frances Cooper, head of the Battle Creek Sanitarium School of Home Economics, used her 1917 book, How to Cut Food Costs, to tout the economizing advantages of vegetarian menus. In this volume, Cooper makes a direct argument for vegetarianism, not by appealing to ethics, but by emphasizing cost savings and nutrition. Another of Cooper’s cookbooks, The New Cookery, is likewise full of practical advice but devotes little space to a philosophy of food and food preparation. Her references to vegetarianism are veiled and easily overlooked by someone unfamiliar with her intentions. She writes,

we now know that the health and efficiency of the organism is not only maintained but is increased by the use of a lesser quantity of food and a smaller
<table>
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<th>BILLS OF FARE</th>
<th>459</th>
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**BREAKFAST**

- Fresh Fruit
- Browneed Granose Biscuit with Nuttolene
- Toasted Wheat Flakes with Baked
- Sweet Apples and Almond Cream
- Dried Apricot Toast Graham Bread

**DINNER**

- Protose and Potato Hash
- Baked Beans
- Dry Granola with Cream or Nut Cream
- Whole-Wheat Puffs Zwieback
- Stewed Fruit Nuts and Raisins

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**BREAKFAST**

- Bananas with Graham Crisps
- Fig Sauce on Toast
- Fruit Macaroni
- Corn Dodgers
- Zwieback
- Cream or Coconut Cream

**DINNER**

- Lima Bean Soup
- Potato with Parsnip
- Asparagus Baked Barley
- Stewed or Canned Fruit
- Raisin Bread Zwieback
- Prune Pie, Granola Crust

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**BREAKFAST**

- Cherries
- Coconut Crisps
- Fresh Berry Toast
- Granose Flakes with Poached Egg or with Meltose
- Zwieback Nuttolene

**DINNER**

- Asparagus Soup Stewed Potato
- Pease Patties with Tomato Sauce
- Zwieback Lettuce Salad
- Browned Granose Biscuit
- Coconut Sauce Fresh Berries
- Stewed Fruit Pudding

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**BREAKFAST**

- Fresh Fruit
- Granola Raisin Mush
- Cherry Toast
- Graham Crusts Zwieback
- Nuttolene

**DINNER**

- Plain Rice Soup
- Escalloped Potatoes Spinach
- Broiled Protose with Tomato Sauce
- Zwieback, Toasted Rolls
- Graham Bread
- Strawberries Pineapple Tapioca

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**BREAKFAST**

- Fresh Fruit
- Toasted Granose Flakes with Cream or Nut Cream
- Canned Grape Toast
- Breakfast Rolls
- Poached Eggs

**DINNER**

- Lentil and Tomato Soup
- Macaroni with Kornlet Potato Salad
- Asparagus with Green Peas
- Browned Granose Biscuit
- Strawberry Sandwich Stewed Fruit
- Nut or Cream Crisp

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Figure 16. Ella E. Kellogg, *Science in the Kitchen*, page 459.
proportion of protein than was formerly supposed necessary. . . . Housewives who have long been accustomed to providing meat and other “high protein” dishes for their families are oftentimes at a loss to know how to prepare a well-balanced meal without these articles and at the same time serve a palatable and attractive meal.28

Aside from an excerpt from Oliver Goldsmith’s poem “The Hermit,” which advocates pity for animals instead of slaughtering them for food, these remarks are the extent of Cooper’s commentary on vegetarianism. The real argument is intended to come from the recipes themselves, which feature meat substitutes. Battle Creek cookbooks and guides continue over the next several decades to make vegetarianism nonthreatening. From the turn of the twentieth century through the 1950s, there was a particular emphasis on faux meat dishes,29 suggesting to readers that they need not give up the cooking styles of average Americans.

The Influence of Social Worlds

With these cookbooks, we are not primarily referring to community cookbooks, those collections of recipes produced, often for fund-raising purposes, by local civic and religious groups and meant for their members’ own use.30 Instead, vegetarian cookbooks were generally authored by a single individual and intended for a wide distribution beyond the immediate community in which the author was situated. The dispersal of the audience is an important feature. As Donna R. Gabaccia notes in regard to ethnic enclaves, women who were closely tied to their communities learned to cook from their mothers and therefore did not need cookbooks.31 But vegetarian readers could potentially be isolated from other vegetarians and so could find cookbooks indispensable sources of information and confirmation of the soundness of their eating choices. And for those just experimenting with vegetarianism, the cookbook offered entrée into an otherwise mysterious world.

Nonetheless, most vegetarian cookbook authors did have ties to other vegetarians. As such, the nature of the opposition presented in these cookbooks is connected to the social worlds from which the authors derive. With some exceptions,32 these social worlds were primarily religious until the 1970s. Such groups were mostly Christian sects marginalized from the religious mainstream.33 Although American vegetarian cookbooks coming out of Eastern religions did not really emerge until the 1970s, occasionally non-Christians were represented: Jews, Zoroastrians, Theosophists.34 These religious communities impart a moral imperative to their instructions. Opposition to meat eating is thus understood as opposition to evil, which degrades not just the individual, but all of humanity. As Frank J. and Rosalie Hurd wrote in the widely read Ten Talents, published in 1968:
It was not until nearly 1,700 years after creation that the Lord allowed man to eat flesh. This was to shorten man’s sinful life of indulgence. Because of man’s unnatural craving for flesh, his life was rapidly shortened, so that by 3,000 years after creation the life span was only three score and ten—not much more than it is today.\(^3\)

By conceptualizing vegetarian practices as related to the divine, adherents gained not only the certitude but also the strength to stand up to the majority of the population, which consistently ridiculed vegetarian dietary practices. Religious authority is also capable of standing up to the authority of the scientific-medical establishment, which largely opposed vegetarianism, and the institutions connected to the conventional system of food production, which had the backing of various arms of federal and state governments, such as the US Department of Agriculture and the land-grant colleges. While proponents of vegetarianism often sought to use science to legitimize their arguments, they remained largely indifferent to the attempts by professional medicine to assert authority over all matters connected to health and illness. The moral authority of proponents of vegetarianism was bolstered by teachings that the spiritual benefits of a particular diet should take precedence over commercial concerns, in contrast to the obvious financial interests of physicians and conventional food companies in monopolizing knowledge about correct habits of eating.

The importance of religious communities for promoting vegetarianism was reflected in the publishers of vegetarian cookbooks, which were also mostly religious until 1968. The single largest group of books appearing before that date was published by affiliates of the Seventh-day Adventists.\(^36\) Most of the rest were either self-published\(^37\) or published by other religious or political organizations.\(^38\) This type of insider publishing was important as it allowed vegetarian communities the freedom to express sentiments that could alienate a mainstream readership and, therefore, be verboten to general trade publishers. There are occasional exceptions to this trend, with forays into vegetarian cookbooks by some prominent publishers, such as Little, Brown and Company’s 1912 reprint of *The Golden Rule Cook Book* or Dell’s 1943 book *275 Recipes for Meals without Meat*.\(^39\) However, several of these were less about a total way of life than about advice for meat-eaters about how to cook during Lent or how to make do without meat during wartime.\(^40\) 1968 was a pivotal year with a spurt of books published by mainstream trade publishers and meant for a general audience. This ushers in a new force in vegetarian cookbooks.

### The Counterculture Embraces Vegetarianism

The universe of vegetarian cookbooks expanded considerably when vegetarianism caught on among segments of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. The grounds for protest against meat eating did not change significantly, though the
emphasis did. Spiritual reasons receded somewhat, while a sense of anger at a profit-minded industrialized food system increased. The theme of exploitation is explicit, for example, in Helen Nearing’s *Simple Food for the Good Life*:

> We are not only killers; we are slave drivers and exploiters; we are food robbers. We rob the bees, for honey; we rob the chickens, for eggs; we rob the cows, for milk. Cattle in their wild state suckle their calves for fifteen months. Domesticated cows are pushed beyond their normal breeding capacity, separated from their calves often at birth and are fooled into giving us milk instead of to their calves.

On the other hand, what constituted a major change was the visual and rhetorical style of the cookbooks now being published. The old style tended to cram in as many recipes as possible, whereas the new style now displayed one or two recipes on a single page, suggesting that each recipe deserved contemplation and appreciation. In addition, photos receded and artwork increased. Drawings were often whimsical, emphasizing pen-and-ink or hand lettering.

In line with this was a tone that was, with some exceptions, very inviting and inclusive, more gentle than didactic. This approach reassured the reader that anyone could learn to cook vegetarian, and that one does not have to give up meat entirely to reap the benefits of vegetarian practice. The 1980 *Peaceable Kitchen Cookbook* stated: “Eating a meat-less meal on a regular basis, perhaps once or twice a week, can raise our awareness about hunger and its impact on millions of human lives. This in turn can point us toward concrete action in the realm of public policy.”

The reassurance that the reader was not being held to any test of purity was especially true of those books that had the largest following and came to define a countercultural vegetarian canon: *The Moosewood Cookbook*, *The Vegetarian Epicure* books, *Tassajara Cooking*, and *Laurel’s Kitchen*. For instance, in recounting her path to vegetarianism, and eventually becoming a vegetarian cookbook author, Carol Flinders of *Laurel’s Kitchen* writes: “I bought a natural foods cookbook, a very stern and uncompromising one that had me putting brewer’s yeast into everything we ate until an unnamed party confiscated the jar.” Through this vignette, she lets the reader know that her position will be forgiving of compromises of principle, while being less inclined to compromise on the taste and appeal of food. Similarly, *The Moosewood Cookbook* downplayed politics. Indeed, in her brief introduction, *Moosewood* author Mollie Katzen says firmly, “There is no specific dogma attached to the Moosewood cuisine.” These statements reflect their authors’ countercultural social worlds, in which consensus reigned on the need for social change, but divisions remained on how to achieve it. Showing a collective weariness with such battles, the vegetarian cookbooks of the era mostly chose inclusive flexibility over narrow partisanship.

The publishing history of *Moosewood* encapsulates the movement that was taking place, with vegetarian cookbooks emanating from self-publishing to
small presses to large commercial houses. *Moosewood* started as a photocopied bundle of twenty recipes that Katzen put together to hand out to customers who requested the Moosewood restaurant’s recipes. With an increase in the number of requests, one of Katzen’s friends, a man who owned a bookstore and a small press, agreed to print and sell them. With books rapidly selling, Katzen then looked for a national publisher and in 1977 decided to go with Berkeley’s Ten Speed Press. The commercial success of *Moosewood* helped to steer Ten Speed into the cookbook niche; it remains a major publisher of cookbooks today. Ten Speed is currently owned by Penguin Random House, and continues to sell new editions of *The Moosewood Cookbook*.

Publishers specializing in spiritual matters were still central in the counterculture era. This can be seen with Nilgiri Press, publisher of *Laurel’s Kitchen*, and Shambhala, publisher of *Tassajara*. But an increasing number of the major trade houses entered the vegetarian field. They included publishers of widely read books like *The Vegetarian Epicure*, published by Knopf; *Diet for a Small Planet*, published by Ballantine; and *The Findhorn Cookbook*, published by Grosset and Dunlap. With the entry of major trade publishers came better production values, and also a turn toward books that did not assume an insider readership. In other words, authors were now speaking not necessarily just to a counterculture but, as with Janet Barkas’s 1975 *Meatless Cooking, Celebrity Style*, published by Grove Press, to people interested in trying out vegetarianism without leaving the cultural mainstream. The clout of the trade publishers also translated into increased availability. Whereas vegetarian cookbooks had once been difficult to obtain, distributed primarily via mail order, health-food stores, or religious networks; they were now increasingly found in general bookstores. And whereas recommendations of such books had formerly been confined to specialized publications like *Let’s Live* magazine or *The Whole Earth Catalog*, mainstream periodicals were now starting to feature them in book reviews. By stepping out of the shadows, vegetarian cookbooks could bring their messages to the view of a larger segment of the population. But that opportunity also impacted the oppositional nature of a new generation of cookbooks.

**Speaking to the Mainstream**

Coming out of the 1970s, evolving aesthetic and rhetorical options for the vegetarian cookbook were fueled in part by the support of publishers, like Knopf, who had considerable marketing power and looked to make a place on the shelves for books beyond the “vegetarian niche.” This led to a more polished and conventional mode of presentation from cover to introductory text to the recipes themselves; a middle- and higher-class aesthetic and set of values infused the books. In this mainstreamed mode, vegetarian cookbook authors tacitly and explicitly accepted the role of meat in traditional American diets, and
labored within that framework to offer recipes and discourse that met the 
expectation of normative meat-centered meals by presenting “high protein” 
dishes that would still be “satisfying” and “substantial,” as well as “stylish” and 
up-to-date.

Consideration of the faux-meat centered recipes of the nineteenth century 
makes acceptance of meat’s predominance in the meal seem like old news. 
Within a certain set of the cookbooks published in the 1980s, however, including 
*The Mostly Vegetable Menu Cookbook* by Nancy B. Katz; *Enough Is a Feast: A Non-
Vegetarian Vegetarian Cookbook* by Elin Smith; or the oddly titled Times Books 
offering, *Jean Hewitt’s International Meatless Cookbook: Over 300 Delicious Recipes, 
Including Many for Fish and Chicken*,50 we see an interesting new blend of capitulation 
and quiet, maybe even optional, opposition: acceptance of a meat-eating 
community blended with the provision of a nonaggressive alternative to it. This 
came both from a vegetarian community of cooks and writers and from outside 
of it as well, with texts like Betty Crocker’s 1982 *Meatless Main Dishes* or Grace 
Gluskin’s *I Am Not a Vegetarian: Meatless Main Dishes for Meat Eaters.*51

Such texts celebrated the option of a meatless meal, for whatever reason 
home cooks may have had for making it. Less grounded in an identity or a 
social movement, vegetarian cuisine, as apart from vegetarianism, could be 
embodied with more fluidity than rigidity. Books with this focus, interestingly, 
gave those outside the vegetarian scope ways to both oppose and accept a 
vegetarian critique; perhaps an animal rights framework was resisted while a 
health rationale was taken on, or a part-time “cleansing” or spiritual argument 
could be embodied while a strong religiously located argument for veganism 
became “going too far.” Publication by a mainstream trade press did not nec-
essarily mean that an analysis purporting opposition to dominant food systems 
was absent. But the way in which that analysis was presented needed to be 
made more accessible to appeal to a broad audience, with oppositional elements 
sometimes being obscured with exciting graphical elements or sometimes re-
framed with text displayed as optional areas for consideration.

Of course, this gesture toward mainstreaming the vegetarian cookbook is 
only one facet in a steadily increasing publishing record through the 1980s and 
a booming one in the 1990s. Connected to it was an evolving interest in moving 
away from the ascetic portrayal of vegetarian cooking with books like *Recipes for 
Health and Pleasure: Delightful New Recipes for New Age Living—and Easy Digestion —
Plus a Total Plan for Zestful Vegetarian Nutrition* by David Phillips and *The New 
American Vegetarian Menu Cookbook: From Everyday Dining to Elegant Entertaining* by 
Paulette Mitchell.52 Books such as these took less assimilationist approaches to 
the acceptance of meat-based diets, and made instead a gambit toward modeling 
the change they wanted to see. Posed in positive terms as something newly 
normative, vegetarianism was offered as a mode of eating that not only fit into 
the American lifestyle, but could replace it.
Finding themselves in a more mainstream position in the 1980s, many vegetarian cookbooks notably kept up with trends in the publishing industry and in the culinary fashions of the time. While this meant that there were a great number of books about vegetarian cooking and the microwave or books about using other contemporary, quick-cookery methods, like *The Electric Vegetarian: Natural Cooking the Food Processor Way*,\(^5\) being au courant now also served to expand the vegetarian repertoire and its cultural capital. International cuisines in particular acted as themes for books and inspired many recipes within general vegetarian cookbooks. Both the vegetarian books coming out of publishing houses like Random House or Hearst,\(^5\) and those more located in countercultural spheres, were particularly drawn to the actual and imagined vegetarian cuisines abroad. These books used the compelling foreignness of international cuisine to fuel a vegetarian mode of eating that drew on traditions in physical, culinary, and often spiritual opposition to dominant modes of American eating.

Specific interest in Chinese, Japanese, and Indian cuisines gave authors a chance to give the culinary traditions of those countries a vegetarian focus, which was often grounded in religiously conceived systems of consumption. In mainstream books like Yamuna Devi’s 799-page mammoth volume, which was published by a subsidiary of Viking Penguin as *Lord Krishna’s Cuisine: The Art of Indian Vegetarian Cooking*,\(^5\) these religious influences were present but kept in the background in favor of foregrounding the exoticism of the foreign culinary techniques and ingredients. On the other hand, in books published in a countercultural space, like *The Hare Krishna Cookbook: Recipes for the Satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead* by Kṛṣṇa Devī Dāṣī and Śama Devī Dāṣī, republished throughout the 1980s, and *Zorba the Buddha Rajneesh Cookbook: Recipes from Zorba the Buddha Rajneesh Restaurants, Rajneesh Meditation Centers, Ashrams and Neo-Sannyas Communes Around the World* by Osho, religious motivation reigned supreme and was utilized to emphasize the rightness, the “Higher Taste,” as the International Society of Krishna Consciousness put it, of a vegetarian approach over dominant modes of eating and spiritual orientation.\(^5\)
One may become a vegetarian for a variety of reasons—humanitarian, health, or mere preference for such a diet; The principle is a matter of personal feeling, and varies accordingly. Veganism, however, is a principle—that man has no right to exploit the creatures for his own ends—and no variation occurs. Vegan diet is therefore derived entirely from “fruits, nuts, vegetables, grains and other wholesome non-animal products.”

For twenty years in England, vegan publications and cookbooks were produced by the [British] Vegan Society before the American Vegan Society was founded in 1960. The American branch of the society also recognized, early on, the importance of publishing recipes and cookbooks to further the mission of ending animal exploitation. Somewhat less rationalist in the Americans’ approach was that the branch linked an understanding of veganism to *ahimsa*, a Sanskrit word that describes a tenet of “no harm,” which is integral to Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism. In telling its own history, the American Vegan Society also identifies the Seventh-day Adventist Church as critical to the communication of vegan ideals and practice through food preparation. The sharing of information and resources needed to realize a vegan diet was an early priority, and the cookbook was seen as a powerful consciousness-raising tool. The cookbook additionally offered practical support to converts, interacting with them in the personal and private moments of the home as they prepared food for themselves and their families within the parameters of the vegan diet.

The number of specifically vegan cookbooks published through the 1980s was relatively small in comparison to vegetarian cookbooks and miniscule when taken as a number relative to all cookbooks published during the same time period. The handful that was published tended to be issued by smaller presses, often nonprofits like the American Vegan Society or Gentle World, Inc. Although often created with a mission of conversion, these cookbooks tended to be deeply immersed in a religiously, socially, and/or politically countercultural space. Linda Runyon’s vegan forager’s cookbook, *Lawn Food Cook Book: Groceries in the Backyard*, with its recipes for dishes like burdock burr casserole, would have presented any number of challenges to even a willing mainstream cook.

Harder to find are vegan cookbooks published by mainstream publishing houses at this time. Leah Leneman’s 1989 *The Single Vegan: Simple, Convenient, and Appetizing Meals for One*, published in the United Kingdom by Thorsons, a division of HarperCollins, and distributed in the United States by Sterling, is rare, not only for its vegan recipes but also for inclusion of the word “vegan” in the title. More common are books like Mary Estella’s 1985 *Natural Foods Cookbook*, published in the United States through Harper and Row, which had a subtitle of “Vegetarian Dairy-Free Cuisine” and was functionally a vegan cookbook.
In the absence of vegan cookbooks and the presence of social interest in veganism, which took root in radical subcultures, another significant element of the print record evolved: the cookzine. These documents are materials that could be overlooked by formal analysis of the publishing history, but that are critical to understanding the evolving rhetoric and aesthetic of vegetarian, and particularly vegan, cookbooks of the twenty-first century. According to ZineWiki, the communally constructed definition of a cookzine is that the term is a contraction of “cooking” and “zine,” and that a zine is an independently published booklet, with a cookzine “primarily composed of recipes, but [which] also discuss[es] the politics of food and eating, especially the vegetarian or vegan lifestyle.”\(^{63}\) The cookzine took on a place of subcultural primacy as a means of politically reframing the cookbook as something that should be accomplished internally, as has been done with music and other cultural substance of these communities. While zines evolved and existed in a variety of cultural spaces, the vegan cookzine was fostered particularly in a variety of localized DIY (do-it-yourself) punk scenes, in which the music, style, and politics were strongly oppositional to anything understood as the American mainstream.

Possibly the first cookzine—and certainly among the most enduring, still in print, and widely read of these early cookzines—was *Soy, Not Oi!* It was assembled by the Hippycore Krew, a punk co-op in Arizona in the late 1980s, and served as a punk rock treatise on veganism. It was a cut-and-paste, 100+ page document of recipes, music playlists, and illustrations, such as punks carrying grocery bags full of produce, and avocados in anarchist capes and gauntlets (figure 17). Its subtitle was “Over 100 Recipes Designed to Destroy the Government.”\(^{64}\)

The physical form of many cookzines is that they are visually and textually challenging in ways that sometimes make them the first thing seen on the page (e.g., the Vegan Death Squad’s *Eat Yr Goddamn Veggies or I’ll Fucking Kill You*, or Spoonfight’s *Vegan Manual to Kitchen Terrorism*\(^{65}\)), and sometimes they are enmeshed even within the recipes on the page. In another enduring example from the genre (*Please Don’t Feed the Bears!* a State College, Pennsylvania, cookzine from the 1990s, shown in figure 18), a recipe for spring rolls is preceded with a line, “Music: Jenny Piccolo-Information Battle to Denounce the Genocide lp” and followed, after the instruction to “Drain on paper towels,” by several lines:

Fuck your vision of a world where no one’s ugly and no one’s old
Fuck your version of a beauty that sets the standard for all the runners up
Fuck your definition of perfection, the smiling commodity that isn’t human, that isn’t allowed to step off the page and testify this isn’t real
Fuck your headless torsos
Fuck your young white skin
Fuck your tan shaved limbs “This isn’t real” Born Against.\(^{66}\)
The culturally uninitiated would be entirely forgiven for wondering how these song lyrics extend from the recipe given, but the inclusion of such collaged political and cultural materials in the cookzine is a defining feature that extends the idea of a resistance fed, literally, by veganism into other arenas of protest. In this way, zines offer a textual representation of the comprehensively oppositional life projected from the punk scene as ideal.

Notable also in the early punk cookzines was the involvement of men, with Soy, Not Oi! taking an explicitly feminist stance. The male cookbook author is not anomalous of course, but men have tended to be represented more heavily
as authors of professional cookbooks and as trained chefs. Subverting the tendency to see women as the ones who occupy the amateur cookbook writer role, and further challenging the notion of men as the party to cook for, these cookzines subtly critiqued the role of gender in the kitchen. In another cookzine that more directly played with gender, *Bark + Grass*, the author’s layout puts an essay on the sexual politics of pornography (inspired by eco-feminist Carol J. Adams\textsuperscript{67}) next to a list of “Animal Abuses,” which describes common animal products in foods and cosmetics and then segues into a conventional cookbook section on breakfast.\textsuperscript{68} It is accepted and expected that the cookzine form
transcends the basic function of sharing recipes. *Pain Pills for Bleeding Hearts*, for example, is cross-referenced by the Papercut Zine Library (Somerville, MA) under “Feminism,” “Health & sex,” “Queer/trans [issues],” and “Food/cookbooks.”

As much as these cookzines are in opposition to a conventional mode of consumption, they are also resistant to the vegetarian cookbooks that they have taken their cues from, a stance that made possible extrapolation of the concept of freeganism. The practice of freeganism was certainly active prior to the coining of the term, which happened in the mid-1990s and was expressed through zines like *Evasion* (1990s, serial), which gained wide circulation in the US political punk community. The zines were anonymously published accounts of meeting all needs and fulfilling desires without spending, or indeed, acquiring, any money. In a spirit similar to Abbie Hoffman’s 1971 *Steal This Book*, *Evasion* laid out ideas for scams, shoplifting, squatting in empty buildings or abandoned public spaces, and perhaps most significantly, acquiring food by dumpster diving, stealing, or gardening in spaces sanctioned or not. Freeganism combines the “do no harm” tenet of veganism with a differently actionable critique of the economic systems of food production, which, writers argue, are necessarily harmful in a capitalist system, whether or not food is vegan. The writer of *Evasion* summarized the politics:

> By what logic was food deadly the moment it entered a trash bag, or passed through the back door? Food that had been on the shelf hours prior. . . . Maybe I was the looney one. I mean, I could listen to abrasive anti-god music, display disturbing antisocial behavior, eat only plants, and somehow I was still tolerated. Until dumpster diving became my favorite hobby, then . . . exiled from middle class society. Which was fine. I didn’t need them, I needed their trash.  

The complex political framework opened by zines like this puts us in the position of reading recipes for raccoon roadkill casserole and having to understand them as politically, if not technically, vegan. And although a 2005 cookzine, *Cooking with Surplus ‘n’ Excess*, may present only vegan recipes, it still plays in this thematic space, critiquing veganism as politically damaged, privileged, white, judgmental, and socially and culturally isolating. The construct reaches back to a core vegan principal of ahimsa and finds space, potentially, for different foods, methods, preparations, and gathering techniques to express it.

The vegan cookzines open up, interestingly, another facet of opposition, one certainly to the mainstream generally, but also to the startling growth, in the 2000s, of explicitly vegan cookbooks put out by publishers large and small. On the one hand, large publishing houses, such as Macmillan and Chronicle Books, entered this arena. The *New Vegan Cookbook: Innovative Vegetarian Recipes Free of Dairy, Eggs, and Cholesterol*, by Lorna J. Sass and Jonelle Weaver, a glossy and picture-rich production, reflects many of the trends for these publications.
Its “newness” drew on a script that put forth veganism as something exciting and innovative, fresh and relevant to a modern cook. Sass, a longtime cookbook author with specific health-conscious and ecological approaches, who had previously written cookbooks vegan in effect but published under the vegetarian label, now had her first vegan-branded book; the word, apparently, was no longer taboo in a mainstream context. The look of her book stressed the fun and pleasure of its dishes, which she acknowledged one might eat for a variety of health or philosophical reasons as well. In this way, the message was framed broadly and aimed toward a wide audience and avoidance of any suggestion of the “rightness” of veganism, dwelling rather on its exciting possibilities.

At the same time, independent publishers were printing vegan cookbooks by subculturally affiliated authors geared toward mainstream audiences. The Arsenal Pulp Press How It All Vegan!, a bestseller with fourteen reprints between its 1999 first issue and continuingly popular tenth anniversary edition, serves as a useful archetype for exploration. The playful cookbook was certainly intended to have appeal beyond the community in which it was conceived, a subcultural space in which criticism for not being “vegan enough” was a legitimate cause of anxiety. In contrast, the mainstreamed audience that How It All Vegan! reached out to likely had to manage concerns on the other end of the spectrum—families and communities that struggled with acceptance of veganism at all, much less its perfect realization. The kitschy, “just kidding,” threat communicated textually, graphically, and personally by the book and its authors provided a fun and ultimately entirely nonaggressive way into veganism for readers outside a vegan-politicized community and offered them insight into the concerns, habits, and lived political and social experience of a vegan life.

Looking at the cookzines that were created in comparable social spaces, but which did not intend to transcend them, we can see some notable patterns in terms of aesthetic representations of veganism. The fork or the whisk almost as weapon, revolutionary symbolism, and similarly clear subcultural-style cues are present in both cookbook and cookzine, but in the zines, the winking, midcentury kitsch subversion of How It All Vegan! is turned toward a different and certainly more dissenting political and social end.

From what to buy and what not to buy, to why and even how to do so (or not do so), the ingredients of the vegetarian and vegan cookbook loom large. They are a defining element of the texts, and it is primarily around them that the political discourse of the cookbook takes shape, implicitly and explicitly. Taken as a group, American vegetarian cookbooks from 1800 to the contemporary era form a record in which difference, distinction, and dissent are described for vegetarian adherents and dabblers alike. Some of these cookbooks argue that
not only what we eat, but how the food is produced, distributed, purchased, and consumed are all political decisions with observable social impacts, and these cookbooks prescribe actions to remedy problems and reconceive the political landscape of food. Other cookbooks are framed by a social understanding of dissent against dominant modes of consumption, which include animal products, but are not themselves oppositional.

No matter the cookbook’s location on this spectrum of dissent, in its pages each reader is offered the opportunity to enact and embody a vegetarian politics through selecting ingredients, preparing dishes, and sharing food. Instruction may take shape simply, perhaps in the presentation of a recipe for an omelet without ham, a rather basic omission that may nonetheless feel like a complete reformulation of previous knowledge, or in the quiet familial training of meals shared. On the other end, a cookbook may take as its mission the training of readers to eat entirely outside corporate systems of food production. These cookbooks sometimes teach, sometimes proselytize, but always offer guidance toward the realization of something—personal, political, or practical.

The history of vegetarian and vegan cookbooks helps us better understand the relationship between print and protest. Uniquely, the cookbook serves as an important potential form of protest in its ability to be continually used and referenced; its durability creates an anchor for ideas and provides a means of expressing them in the action of cooking and sharing food. In this way, print is different from those singular, fleeting events in which people physically gather to announce their dissent. Print lasts even beyond the lifetime of its author, to be constantly rediscovered and referenced anew. For this reason, print allows conversation between socially, geographically, and temporally disconnected people, bridging differences that often render protest communities small and isolated. Again, uniquely though, as social as the book is in its ability to cross divides and bring people together, the reader interacts with it in very individual and personal ways. It is in moments of reader privacy that the book’s voice of dissent can be heard most loudly.

Therefore, it is important to recognize that print is not merely a medium for communicating ideas about dissent, which are then made “real” through practices of demonstrating, boycotts, or other familiar types of collective action. The book can itself be a form of protest, using formal qualities, such as a particular binding, typeface, and illustration, to announce a challenge to dominant assumptions about the way the world is and ought to be. The cookbook, with its great variability and flexibility of form, is especially conducive to being created in this way. Unlike a political manifesto, which is generally a single narrative that achieves its punch by being read in its entirety, the cookbook does not ask to be read as a comprehensive whole. Instead, it is designed to be modular, with recipes, background material, and maybe even song lyrics presented in bite-sized—but actionable—pieces. It is perhaps unpredictable, but
in this way it empowers readers and communities of readers to interpret, act, and embody its signs, symbols, and statements in a variety of ways.

Of course not all vegetarian cookbooks must be understood as an object of dissent. As we have argued, it is not just the final printed book, but the production process itself that changes the nature of protest. Authors, who are shaped by the social worlds in which they are embedded, use print in various ways to accomplish their purposes. The very aesthetic and rhetoric of protest get defined in the production process, with the result that a book’s alternative worldview may be stark or obscured, and its instructions for dissent may be pointed or indirect. As so much scholarship on reception has shown, there are no guarantees that the reader will follow instructions as given, but the aesthetic and rhetorical decisions made in production create books that present politics in ways easy or difficult for the reader to avoid.

Understanding food preferences and choices concerning what food to obtain and where to obtain it are generally considered to be matters of taste, but this is a formulation that naturalizes, and thus depoliticizes, the decisions made concerning food. Without historical context it might seem easy to locate the newly broad recognition of food as political as a more contemporarily accepted concept. Certainly this is not accurate; however, the location of this understanding as part of an extending “mainstream” American reality has become evident, and, with the exception perhaps of grocery stores and other sites of consumption (the restaurant, the food truck, the school), nowhere is this more demonstrable than in the print record of the cookbooks that ground social and political ideas about food in the practices of making it. There seems to be a recent coalescence of efforts to express ideas around how Americans could eat in a more sustainable fashion, covering organic agriculture, locally produced food, farmers’ markets, and the avoidance of dwindling supplies of fish. This oblique framework of sustainability certainly has encompassed vegetarian foods and even vegan foods as politically normative, at least on the leftward end of the spectrum. How this will manifest in the print record, the understanding of which must be expanded to include Internet discussion forums, blogs, photo sharing, and other personal and corporate social media output, remains to be analyzed.

Pursuit of this question makes the cookbook a continually compelling document for study. Investigation is possible from a variety of macroperspectives: the ebbing and flowing themes documentable in the publishing record, the rhetorical and aesthetic landscapes available for analysis across variously definable collections. Cookbooks are remarkably social texts, broadly and closely reflective of big ideas and standards of practice within private and yet performative spaces. Scholars have tended, perhaps because of academic interests that have skewed “feminine,” to be drawn toward the private moments indicated by the cookbook: marginal notes by users, again mostly by women, about their successes or failures, a family member’s likes or dislikes, a party menu, and so
on. These moments, however, are also equally expressive of social and political experiences in which food is considered, purchased, prepared, and shared, and in which the action almost always means more than just nourishment.

Notes


6. For example, see the two copies of William A. Alcott’s *Vegetable Diet: As Sanctioned by Medical Men, and by Experience in All Ages* (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon, 1838) at Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, [call numbers] 641.75 A35ve, 1838, c.1; 641.75 A35ve, 1838, c.2.

7. Mattie M. Jones, *The Hygienic Cook-Book Containing Recipes for Making Bread, Pies, Puddings, Mushes, and Soups, with Directions for Cooking Vegetables, Canning Fruit, Etc. to Which Is Added an Appendix, Containing Valuable Suggestions in Regard to Washing, Bleaching, Removing Ink, Fruit, and Other Stains from Garments, Etc.* (New York: Miller & Browning, 1864), iii.


15. Thomas Tryon, *Wisdom’s Dictates, or, Aphorisms and Rules, Physical, Moral, and Divine; for Preserving the Health of the Body, and the Peace of the Mind, Fit to Be Regarded and Practised by All That Would Enjoy the Blessings of the Present and Future World to Which Is Added a Bill of Fare of Seventy Five Noble Dishes of Excellent Food, for Exceeding Those Made of Fish or Flesh, Which Banquet I Present to the Sons of Wisdom or Such as Shall Decline That Depraved Custom of Eating Flesh and Blood* (London, UK: Printed for Tho. Salisbury at the Sign of the Temple, 1691).

16. [Martha Brotherton], *A New System of Vegetable Cookery: With an Introduction Recommending Abstinence from Animal Foods and Intoxicating Liquors, by a Member of the Society of Bible-Christians*, 2nd ed. (Salford, UK: Academy Press, 1821).


25. For example, John Harvey Kellogg, *The Hygienic Cook Book: Comprising, in Addition to Many Valuable Recipes for the Preparation of Healthful Food, Brief Remarks upon the Nature of Food, How to Make the Change of Diet, Time for Meals, Canning, Fruit, &c.* (Battle Creek, MI: Office of the Health Reformer, 1876).

27. Lenna Frances Cooper, *How to Cut Food Costs* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health, 1917).

28. Lenna Frances Cooper, *The New Cookery: A Book of Recipes Most of Which are in Use at the Battle Creek Sanitarium* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health, 1913), [2].

29. For example, Battle Creek Foods, *You Will Enjoy These Modern Recipes* (Battle Creek, MI: Battle Creek Food Company, [1940s?]).


35. Frank J. Hurd and Rosalie Hurd, *Ten Talents* (Chisholm, MN: Dr. and Mrs. Frank J. Hurd, 1968), 35.

36. For example, Glendale Sanitarium Kitchen, *Vegetarian Recipes* (Glendale, CA: Glendale Sanitarium, 194[6]).


38. For example, Constance Wachtmeister and Kate Buffington Davis, eds., *Practical Vegetarian Cookery* (San Francisco: Mercury, 1897); Unity School of Christianity, *The Unity Inn Vegetarian Cook Book: A Collection of Practical Suggestions and Receipts for the Preparation of Non-Flesh Foods in Palatable and Attractive Ways* (Kansas City, MO: Unity School of Christianity, 1923); and Unity School of Christianity, *Unity Vegetarian Cookbook Set a Vegetable Table* (Lee’s Summit, MO: Unity School of Christianity, 1958).


Neuhaus, *Manly Meals*, 108–10, on cookbook responses to meat rationing during World War II.


42. For example, Max Heindel, *New Age Vegetarian Cookbook* (Oceanside, CA: The Rosicrucian Fellowship, 1968).


65. Vegan Death Squad, Eat Yr Goddamn Veggies or I’ll Fucking Kill You (n.d.); and Spoonfight, Vegan Manual to Kitchen Terrorism (n.d.).
70. Abbie Hoffman, Steal This Book (New York: Pirate Editions, 1971).
72. Sy Loady, Cooking with Surplus ’n’ Excess: Featuring Recipes for Large Hauls of One Item, Gov’t Distro Food, Hiding Weird Stuff in Other Food ([San Francisco, CA: Sy Loady], 2005).
74. Tanya Barnard and Sarah Kramer, How It All Vegan! (Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp, 1999).