

‘You can’t make a Yankee of me that way!’ The Settlement Cook Book and Culinary Pluralism in Progressive-Era America

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Mary Antin, in her 1912 seminal immigrant autobiography *The Promised Land*, wrote about her mother’s cheesecake in Polotzk, extolling the virtues of both the cake and its accompanying nostalgia:

If you should attempt that pastry, I am certain, be you ever so clever a cook, you would be disappointed by the result; and hence you might be led to mistrust my reflections and conclusions. You have nothing in your kitchen cupboard to give the pastry its notable flavor [sic]. It takes history to bake such a cake (1997, p. 74).

Antin’s autobiography is a classic tale of acculturation, of a young Jewish immigrant who clings to the promise of America, and through the benefit of education and hard work, rises to success as a productive citizen of the state. As part of the great wave of Southern and Eastern European immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Antin benefited from the Settlement Movement, a Progressive attempt to Americanize new immigrants through a variety of educational, athletic, and artistic programs. These programs included cooking classes, which in part were meant to introduce immigrants to American ingredients and foodways. Antin herself attended such classes in Boston at Hale House, and while she eagerly embraced most things American, her nostalgia over her mother’s cheesecake and suggested dismay over the loss of this ‘notable flavour’ echoes the ambivalence felt by immigrants with feet straddling two worlds.

Despite Antin’s admonition against attempting her mother’s pastry, such Old World recipes nonetheless found themselves captured in New World cookery books, designed to both remember the past and influence the future. One such cookbook was *The Way to A Man’s Heart: The “Settlement” Cook Book*, a book that has seen forty printings and sold over two million copies (1901–1991). It is the most successful charitable cookbook in American history. *The Settlement Cook Book* (the name by which it is more popularly known) was the brainchild of Milwaukee’s Elizabeth Black Kander, known as Mrs. Simon Kander to those millions who bought and used her cookbook throughout the twentieth century. The cookbook came out of Kander’s cooking classes at a settlement house, the Milwaukee Jewish Mission. Kander, the upper-class daughter of Central European Jews, encouraged Eastern European Jewish immigrants like Antin to embrace New World ingredients (and New World manners).

As Marina de Camargo Heck notes, ‘Discourses about food are present in almost all memory work. The

reminiscences of culinary experiences are rich in aromas, colours, and tastes that resist not only the impact of time and technology but also cultural and geographical change’ (2003, p. 205). These flavours are coloured by nostalgia and memory, heightened with history. Antin, while ruminating over the lost cheesecake, admits that ‘[a]bstinence, as I have mentioned, is one of the essential ingredients in the phantom dish’ (1997, p. 75). However, the attempt at replication of a recipe was not what plagued many immigrants. It was the deliberate attempt, often by well-meaning Progressives (nonetheless agents of power), to *replace* the recipe that threatened both identity and memory. For example, to replace the rich Russian cheesecake with an unfamiliar American apple pie.

Turn of the century America was rife with attempts to determine an acceptable understanding of what it meant to be an American. Between 1880 and 1920, twenty million immigrants entered the country — the majority from Southern and Eastern Europe, including many Catholics and Jews — providing a stark contrast to the dominant White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) norm. These new immigrants challenged the ever-changing definition of America. A strong tension lay in what Americans viewed as the cultural influences on American identity: Anglo-Saxon lineage or cosmopolitanism. It was this disagreement that ultimately led to public and passionate debates over both metaphor and meaning.

Among those who favoured a more cosmopolitan approach to America’s increasing diversity were Jewish intellectuals Israel Zangwill and Horace Kallen. Zangwill, a playwright, popularized the term ‘Melting Pot’ with his 1908 play of the same name and wrote of America as ‘God’s crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming!’ Kallen opposed this ‘melting pot’ model of hybridity which ostensibly eliminates cultural difference, claiming that ‘Jews [...] in order to cease being Jews [...] would have to cease to be’ (1996). His alternative concept of cultural pluralism as detailed in his 1915 article in *The Nation* entitled ‘Democracy vs. The Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality’ suggests ‘cultures existing parallel to one another, each maintaining its integrity in light of the pressures of acculturation into a dominant model.’ Kallen notably argued that ‘whatever else he changes, [the immigrant] cannot change his grandfather’ (Kallen, 1996, p. 82).

Students of American history, as well as casual observers of contemporary American politics, will recognize this cyclical angst over ‘American’ identity. A quarter century

prior to signing the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin asked,

why should the Palatine boors be suffered to swarm into our settlements, and, by herding together, establish their language and manners, to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our language or customs any more than they can acquire our complexion? (1751, cited in Grant and Davison 1928, p. 26).

While much effort went into limiting immigration — effort that would pay off in 1924 with the passage of the severe Johnson-Reed Act — the question still remained on what to do with those already in the country. Much energy went into Americanization efforts — an idea that meant very different things to different people. One scholar claimed that Americanization ‘was really WASPification’ (Novak cited in Gleason, p 142).

Settlement workers, mostly women, were also actively engaged in attempting to instil American identity within their immigrant population. They too differed on what this identity might look like, as well as what place the cultures of the new immigrants should hold in society. Progressive food economists further wanted to change the immigrants’ food practices, while at the same time creating a coherent American cuisine. At the forefront of this reform was the New England Kitchen, created by home economist Ellen Richards and championed by settlement worker Jane Addams at the famed Hull House in Chicago. The New England Kitchen advocated an inexpensive, bland, and corn-based diet that was similar to what the Pilgrims might have eaten, but bearing little resemblance to the increasingly cosmopolitan, contemporary American diet of even the reformers.

Despite its popularity among Progressives, the New England Kitchen failed to change the eating habits of urban immigrants. Some claim that it was the New England boiled dinners that put off many of the customers, but it certainly seemed that the immigrant poor realized that more was at stake than dinner. ‘A young Irish boy, when pressed to buy an Indian pudding, responded, ‘you can’t make a Yankee of me that way!’” (Stage and Vincenti 1997, p. 24). Such immigrants were right to be concerned; that dinner often came with sides of religion and social engineering. Many settlements were religious in nature, most often reflecting the liberal Protestant ethos of many settlement workers.

Settlement work can best be described as the precursor to modern social work (Kander 1901). The Settlement Movement itself dates to mid-nineteenth century industrial England, yet the context in America was markedly different. The original British movement began with the downfall of feudalism and drew on two somewhat

contradictory impulses. The first was the ‘assertion of human brotherhood and spiritual equality’; the second was the necessity for politicians and philanthropists to ‘exercise far-reaching social control over those large and threatening segments of society outside the pale of the moral law and social codes’ (Carson 1990, p. 7). These competing motivations led to both improvement in welfare organizations, as well as a continuous paternalism throughout the movement.

The American context, and therefore its manner, differed significantly due to the characters at play. Settlement workers meant to help the urban poor, and in late nineteenth-century America, the urban poor translated to recent immigrants from Europe who had additional social and cultural needs. American settlement workers tended to come out of the Progressive Movement, a diverse set of reformist campaigns focused on political and social issues. Settlement workers tended to focus on the latter, often being inspired by the Social Gospel, an American Protestant movement calling for an ethical approach to social ills.

By 1910, American cities housed four hundred settlements. The most well-known of these settlement houses in the United States was the afore-mentioned Hull House, founded by Jane Addams (a nominal Quaker) in 1889. Kander herself was frequently referred to as the ‘Jane Addams of Milwaukee’, although these women differed in both method and motivation. Addams and her progressive contemporaries embraced the liberal concept of assimilation as an improved alternative to forced ‘Americanization’. Diversity at this time was regarded as ‘a condition rather than a permanent norm or theory’ and there existed a reciprocal relationship between settlements and universities (Lissak 1989, p. 2). Hull House’s experiments and experiences influenced theories developed by academics in education, sociology, and social psychology. A shared liberal view was that everyone, no matter their origin, was capable of becoming American by virtue of adopting the American idea (Lissak, p. 7). However, while many, including Mary Antin, advocated for the ‘gifts’ of immigrants, anxiety about new immigrants remained. The answer, many found, was rapid Americanization in culture: language, manners, and eating.

Pierre Bourdieu has noted, “The art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working class explicitly challenges the legitimate art of living’ (1984). Settlement workers kept close tabs on what the immigrants tended to eat, as foods seen as ‘foreign’ were often considered dangerous to both American health and culture. One such worker noted on the diet of an Italian family. ‘Still eating spaghetti. Not Americanized’ (Mink 1995, p. 90). That’s not to say that such exotic foodstuffs were off-limits to those of other classes. Historian Andrew Haley writes that middle-class Americans at the turn of the century ‘amused themselves by going ‘slumming.’ They set out in carriages [...] to ethnic

enclaves where they explored strange alleyways full of street vendors, [...] visited unfamiliar houses of worship and opium dens, and, almost invariably, experienced new foods' (Haley 2012, pp. 65–66). And yet, the closest thing to ethnic at most settlements was macaroni and cheese, widely seen as an American adaptation of an Italian dish.

Jane Addams and Hull House therefore fit the public perception of the cosmopolitan view by demonstrating an appreciation of immigrants' cultural heritage, holidays, and folklore (Haley, p. 6). Later scholars, however, suggest that the Hull House rhetoric of the cosmopolitan nature of American civilization, particularly what was called the 'contributive idea', was more tactical than a true concept of culture (Haley, p. 157). While liberal progressives would see themselves in opposition to the more racist and xenophobic Americanizers, they too saw Anglo-American civilization as inherently superior. While tolerant of the diverse cultures of the immigrants, they nonetheless imagined a fully assimilated American populace following their good works with the first immigrant generation. Indeed, Addams claimed that curing the ills of American democracy through settlement work was the responsibility of the 'better element' (Haley, p. 17).

It's important to note that Hull House was not an immigrant institution. According to one scholar of the settlement, 'It was an American institute that sought to integrate individual newcomers of different backgrounds into a cosmopolitan American oriented society by breaking down ethnic barriers and ending segregation' (Lissak 1989, p. 47). Diversity was therefore acceptable for individuals, but not for groups. Due to this focus, those youths who were ethnically affiliated tended to avoid it or go elsewhere. Jews were often among these ethnically affiliated dissenters.

R. Laurence Moore, in his work *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America*, demonstrates that the Jews were both an ordinary minority and an unusual minority in the U.S.; ordinary in that they arrived with relatively the same limitations and possibilities of other European immigrants, but unusual in that Jews had no plans to leave. Moore writes that Jewish immigrants paid the high price of admission for American security because such security was not for sale for them anywhere else (1986, p. 73). The new Eastern-European immigrants frequently found themselves at odds with the American descendants of an earlier wave of Jewish immigrants, those from Central Europe who arrived in the early to mid-nineteenth century. These earlier Jews tended to be more assimilated, wealthier, and less religiously observant. In the traditional narrative of these two groups of American Jews, the players are typically cast respectively as Russian and German Jews or, alternatively, 'downtown' and 'uptown' Jews.

While Eastern European Jews made up one third of Hull House's clientele, Yiddish culture was not only ignored, but often denigrated; kosher food was not available. Young Jews therefore avoided Hull House clubs and Addams subsequently assisted German Jews in

establishing both the Maxwell Street Settlement and the Henry Booth Settlement (particularistic Jewish settlements). Nonetheless, Eastern European Jews found these efforts patronizing and soon resented any 'guidance' from German Jews or Hull House (Lissak 1989, p. 86). 'Mixed in with the lessons on all of these subjects was the implicit message that, in order to prosper in America, the immigrants had to remake themselves from the inside out, using as a model the German-Jewish Americans who had preceded them' (Rose 1994, p. 7) Many of these Eastern European Jews, along with other marginalized new immigrants, had other ideas about how they should adapt to American culture.

The Jewish Elizabeth Kander differed from those Progressives who attempted to suppress the immigrants' foreign flavours by introducing an imagined New England simplicity with a similarly fictitious diet of cornmeal mush. Like her fellow domestic reformers, Kander too wished to quickly integrate these immigrants into American culture. However, she envisioned a multi-ethnic America and thus espoused a culinary pluralism — not to be confused with cosmopolitanism — that both reflected and reinforced such a gastronomic and civic reality. Kander wanted to strip 'ethnic' food of its foreignness while simultaneously extolling the virtues of ethnic diversity. Examining *The Settlement Cook Book* allows us to not only further our study of home economics in the Progressive era, but to see that by showcasing America's ethnic recipes, Kander, prior to Zangwill and Kallen, offered a theoretical framework for expressing the country's diversity as well as advocating for a place for Jews within the nation.

Kander, along with her colleagues at the Milwaukee Jewish Mission, parted ways from her contemporaries on the issue of food reform in several ways. It seemed to be an article of faith for many of Kander's Protestant peers that good food was a tool against vice; many of the food reformers were also temperance activists. Poor housekeeping, particularly bad cooking, was blamed for everything from poor health to divorce. But the main problem was seen as alcoholism, which itself led to all forms of social ills. Jane Addams asserted this theory:

It is part of the new philanthropy to recognize that the social question is largely a matter of the stomach: temperance workers are coming to feel that they cannot ignore the importance of proper nutriment for the body for with monotonous food [one] is apt to go to whiskey to whip up the digestion. (1893 cited in Jass 2004, p. 1)

Graham Taylor of the Chicago Commons settlement referred to its cooking school as the 'gold cure for the drink habit' (Jass, p. 150). In Marion Howard's 1906 novel, *The Distractions of Martha*, one character confides in another, echoing Addams and Taylor, 'I don't mind telling you that more men are driven to drink by bad cookery than by any other one thing' (p. 101). Ruth Austin from Gads Hill

Center (another Chicago area settlement) even went so far as to blame bad food for domestic abuse: 'I often think the cold sausage and bakery stuffs which comprise the supper of most of the working men might be responsible for many of the cases of wife beating in the neighbourhood [sic]'. (Jass 2004, p. 158). Domestic scientist Thetta Quay Franks blamed poor housekeeping for the uptick in divorce in her manual, *The Margin of Happiness: The Reward of Thrift* (1917). She cites a 1916 *Newark Evening News* article: 'Women's ignorance and neglect of homemaking arts were pointed out as a leading cause of family desertion, at a conference yesterday afternoon of social workers' (Kingsbury 2003, p. 90) The *Chicago Daily Tribune* further pleaded with women to 'Raise the standard of cooking, teach the youthful housekeepers how to utilize food products with the least waste and how to make food not only wholesome but how to make it dainty and toothsome, and much domestic wretchedness and misery will go away and never come back' (1903, p. A5). In every case, it was up to women's domestic skills to save their families from 'domestic wretchedness' by keeping their husbands from picking up the bottle.

While Kander shared these concerns up to a point, she also shared her coreligionists' criticism of the temperance movement. Jewish Progressives tended to be less engaged in this movement, partially because they were excluded from several of the movement's larger organizations and were therefore worried that the Protestant nature of the temperance movement was more in line with contemporary efforts to 'Christianize' American life. Jews also saw alcohol as less of a problem than other domestic issues, in particular, school reform. School reform was frequently linked to settlement work, as a major purpose of both was Americanization. It was widely believed that by 'teaching foreign-born girls "American" domestic virtues and foreign-born boys "American" industrial virtues, reformed schools would turn "little aliens" into "little citizens"' (Mink 1995, p. 78). This approach to cultural reform shared much with settlement workers' maternalist approach.

Kander primarily saw the need for domestic reform as necessary for upholding the reputation of the Jewish people. Kander had worked as a truancy officer and it was through this role that she saw into the homes of Milwaukee's poor. She exhorted: 'The women as a rule can neither cook or sew and consequently make miserable housekeepers. [...] [They] will always remain paupers until we can lift them out of the darkness of their ignorance and teach them at least some of the advantages of the schooling we have had' (Kander n.d. cited in Charaus 2010, p. 226). It is from this plea that Milwaukee's first Settlement House was born. The Milwaukee Jewish Mission, unlike Hull House in Chicago or Mary Antin's beloved Hale House in Boston, catered to Jewish immigrants and their children, primarily of Eastern European descent. Run by acculturated German Jews, this settlement, and others like it, attempted to attract those Jews who may have been put

off by other settlement houses. By 1910, twenty-four of the four hundred American settlement houses were run by Jews, prompted by both German Jewish concern and distaste for the new Russian arrivals.

Kander's dedication to the Americanization of her Russian coreligionists reflected the concerns of other acculturated Jews of the era. As one activist from the National Council of Jewish Women suggested with some concern, 'We who are the cultured and refined...shall be judged by the [...] Russian Jews, by the children of the ghetto' (Rogow 1993, p. 134). Notable Henry Street Settlement worker Lillian Wald similarly mourned, 'We are full of the troubles of our neighbors [sic]' (Diner and Benderly 2002, p. 238). Jewish reformers, in addition to hoping to enact positive changes in the lives of the needy, also feared an awakening of latent American anti-Semitism, brought on by the sheer visibility of these new Jews. Kander was no exception, spurred on by criticism she overheard gentiles expressing. In a speech to women from her synagogue, she asserted a need for a sort of 'politics of respectability':

Just because we are Jews, our lives and actions must be above reproach. We must be more honorable [sic], more straightforward than any other nationality. We must try and uplift our downtrodden and unfortunate brethren, not alone for their own sakes and for that of humanity but for the protection and reputation of our own nationality. Their misdeeds reflect directly upon us and every one of us individually ought to do all in his power to help lay the foundation of good citizenship in them (nd).

In other words, teaching the Russian Jews to be good Americans legitimated the true American-ness of Kander and her contemporaries. To be fair, Kander seems well aware that much of this philanthropy is in self-interest, asserting: 'It is a selfish motive that spurs us on; it is to protect ourselves, our own reputation in the community that we must work with tact, with heart and soul to better the home conditions of our people [...] and teach them habits of industry and cleanliness' (1900). Although Kander may have started out with a traditional settlement worker's mentality toward Americanization, her attitudes toward the immigrants and their foodways evolved over time.

As a Reform Jew, Kander believed that dietary restrictions were antiquated, irrational commandments out of step with modern life. Out of respect for her students, she praised the historical and hygienic reasons for *kashrut* rather than its religious purpose. Kander reported to the Board of the Jewish Mission, 'We were obliged to conduct lessons on the 'Kosher' plan — as the children adhered strictly to the orthodox rules of cooking' (1900). The early recipes taught in the cooking classes were clearly American, with the odd *kuchen* recipe, reflecting Kander's own Bavarian heritage. A sample lesson included from her

course in 1898 included ‘Hamburg Steak—Gravy, Boiled Potatoes, Mashed or Riced Potatoes, Fruit Cookies.’ Despite these non-Jewish menus, the classes were divided into *fleishig* and *milchig* (meat and dairy) lessons so as to avoid violating the strict kashrut of her test kitchen. After an incident where the original cooking teacher mixed up several of the utensils, leaving students quite dismayed, Kander took over the class herself, painstakingly overseeing the kitchen’s ritual purity despite her own personal abstention from the rules of kashrut. Kander wrote of kashrut without derision:

These were rigid rules, hard for the housewife to follow. It made it very hard for the people to abstain from food permitted to others but it must have developed in their control and strengthened their character. I don’t doubt that these very dietary laws of the Jews are responsible to a considerable degree for the physical and spiritual preservation of the Jewish people. The dietary laws of Moses were way ahead of their time, but were based on sound, common sense (nd).

The concessions made by Kander for her students marked the Milwaukee Jewish Mission as quite different from contemporaneous settlements. For example, the most recognition given to religious and cultural difference at Hull House was the serving of fish on Fridays and the occasional ‘weiner-wurst’ (Jass 2004, p. 188). As reflected by the make-up of her later cookbook, she did not intend for old recipes to be completely discarded, but her classes were meant to instruct her pupils in new ways of cooking, respectfully within the understood restrictions of traditional Jewish dietary laws. She was, however, quick to point out that the need for these laws were outdated with the advances made by domestic science.

While reminiscing about her beloved cheesecake, Mary Antin mused on this divide between Old and New World foods: ‘Do you think all your imported spices, all your scientific blending and manipulating, could produce so fragrant a morsel as that which I have on my tongue as I write?’ (Antin 1997, p. 74.) Antin is referring to the rise of domestic science championed by Kander, often referred to as ‘Home Economics.’ Ellen Richards, of the New England Kitchen, founded the AHEA, the American Home Economics Association in 1909, the goal of which was ‘the improvement of living conditions in the home, the institutional household and the community’ (Stage and Vincenti 1997, p. 17). Richards, also an instructor of sanitary chemistry at MIT, preferred the term domestic science. She further tried to popularize the concept of ‘oekology’, the science of right living (Stage and Vincenti, 27). It did not catch on.

The New England Kitchen was originally called the Rumford Food Laboratory when it opened in 1890, attesting to Richards’ scientific approach. While Richards was more interested in the scientific diet than in the

temperance movement, the lab was initially funded by philanthropist Pauline Agassiz Shaw in order ‘to provide, nutritious food to the working class in the hope of reducing alcoholism among the poor’ (Stage and Vincenti 1997, p. 23). Richards hypothesized that seventy-five percent of spices have been adulterated (1893 cited in Steinberg and Prost 2011, p. 96). Some believed that these adulterated spices could only be salvaged with the use of more liquor in cooking, thus creating a greater desire for alcohol. Whether this aversion to spice was a true public health concern or merely xenophobia is unclear. Richards also believed in social engineering and attempted to develop ‘euthenics’, the science of controllable environment, as a complement to the eugenics movement troublingly popular with progressives at the time.

Despite these scientific concerns, Richards believed that she could help the poor and working classes have better lives through right living and eating. She claimed that ‘[w]e must know how people live, how they cook, and what they buy ready cooked, what peculiar tastes and prejudices they have, in order to lay out any satisfactory plan to perform’ (Abel 1890, p. 5). Despite lip service to the desires of ‘the people,’ The New England Kitchen would ‘provide not only impeccable New England cookery but absolutely invariable New England cookery [...] Every portion of tomato soup and beef stew to be exactly the same from day to day’ (Richards 1899, pp. 67, 70). Somehow, this diet failed to catch on with many immigrant communities. Frustrated with the lack of interest in her scientific diet, Richards complained: ‘the very poor are of two classes — those who know how to live cheaper than we can feed them or can ever hope to feed them and those that do not care for clean, wholesome food’ (Stage and Vincenti 1997, p. 24).

Domestic scientists were not the only Americans concerned with health and its relation to eating, but the diets emphasized among the upper classes differed from the maternalistic anxiety over immigrant foodways. Additionally, these diets failed to take into concern the different needs of these populations. While public schools offered courses in Home Economics, Kander explained the specific needs of her Jewish pupils:

The ages of our protégés range from 13 to 15 years. All of them attended public schools, but do not attend the public school cooking schools mainly because they are not far enough advanced. Either they are not long in this country, or their attendance at school has been often interrupted, to enable them to help mother or to do the housework while mother goes out to help support the family, to tend the babies, or if they’ve been more fortunate in the selection of their parents and can afford to attend school long enough to be eligible to the public school cooking school their strict adherence to the Mosaic ethical and dietary laws, would prevent them from attending (Steinberg and Prost 2011, p. 83).

While there had been a few previously published American Jewish cookbooks by this time, *The Settlement Cook Book* became the first major American cookbook to include many Jewish recipes alongside dishes of ‘all nationalities’, as Kander herself declared, reflecting an optimistic spirit of America’s diversity. Kander was committed to showcasing recipes such as ‘Spaghetti Italienne’, ‘Old English Fruit Cake’, and ‘Pfeffernusse’ in company with ‘Matzos Pudding’. Even in the earliest editions, there were recipes for Potato Chocolate Torte (a Passover recipe, although not labelled as such). While there are many Jewish recipes in *The Settlement Cook Book*, it is not really a Jewish cookbook by intent. Indeed, despite emerging from a kosher cooking class, it is also not a kosher cookbook. It is purposefully an American cookbook, perhaps the first to attempt a culinary pluralism in this fashion. In some editions, traditional Jewish kugel recipes appeared in a section euphemistically called ‘Grandmother’s Puddings’. Alongside traditional Jewish recipes such as ‘matzo balls’ and ‘filled fish’ (gefilte fish), the pages were filled with recipes for such fare as ‘Frog Legs a la Newburg’, ‘Shrimp a la Creole’ and ‘Scalloped Oysters’.

It would be incorrect to suggest that previous American cookbooks eschewed ‘foreign foods.’ For example, Mary Randolph’s 1824 *The Virginia Housewife* included recipes for ‘polenta and rope vieja’ revealing that ‘American cuisine was never so xenophobic or bland as its critics often suggest’ (Elias 2017, pp. 13–14). This cookbook also contained two ersatz Jewish recipes, fish prepared in ‘the Hebrew fashion’. However, this cookbook was published years before a sizable Italian or Jewish population existed in the country (and thus preceded the later nativist anxiety). It therefore suggests a mild cosmopolitanism rather than an active pluralism. Kander’s selection of recipes, as well as her approach to her cooking classes, reflects Horace Kallen’s claim that Jews are ‘the most eagerly American of the immigrant groups [and] the most autonomous and self-conscious in spirit and culture’ (cited in Gilman 2006, p. 58). Donna Gabbacia notes, ‘While food was nowhere the centrepiece [sic] of pluralist thought — neither in Jane Addams’ Industrial Museum nor in Horace Kallen’s writings — culinary expressions of toleration nevertheless proliferated in the interwar years’ (1998, pp. 136). Kander therefore does not merely expand on cosmopolitan tastes, but further provides a democratizing menu.

Not only did Kander’s collection of recipes reflect its earlier regional origins in Wisconsin, but also the progressive agenda of its editor. The cookbook’s recipes reflected more what people were eating than what the other reformers were pushing. Kander, like many of her contemporaries, had sophisticated tastes and little experience with the Eastern European recipes of her pupils. In order to provide recipes that reflected the immigrant population, she had to actively research them. In an invitation to a nursery rhyme-themed party whimsically entitled ‘Goosie Kander Party’, she wrote: ‘Tell what your

mother used to cook. We’ll put it in our next cook book’ (1917). Kander’s vision of American diversity, what I term here as culinary pluralism, offers up ethnic or religious recipes alongside those of other cultures, granting none privilege over one another, with all contributing to the grand buffet of American possibility. Similar to Horace Kallen’s highly publicized and acclaimed cultural pluralism, this culinary pluralism preceded the philosopher’s proposal by well over a decade. As Diana Selig has written regarding the later cultural gifts movement, ‘Men dominated the ranks of social scientists but many of those who took the lead in implementing their ideas were women’. The pluralism espoused by Kander in her cookbook, therefore, can be seen as an example of what historian Sara Evans calls ‘politicized domesticity’.

The Settlement Cook Book outlived Elizabeth Kander and went on to great success throughout the twentieth century. A traditional bridal shower gift, this cookbook became almost ubiquitous in many mid-twentieth century American kitchens. One 1965 magazine writer declared: ‘There are two things no bride should be without. One, of course, is a bridegroom; the other, as every wise Milwaukee housewife knows, is a copy of *The Settlement Cook Book*’. Nostalgically referred to in memoirs, and discussed in today’s cooking blogs, *The Settlement Cook Book* enjoys a reputation as an invaluable reference, a culinary standby. Confirmation of this status could be seen when the 1976 edition was named to the James Beard Cookbook Hall of Fame, alongside *The Joy of Cooking* and *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook*. Vintage editions appear for auction on eBay, with no shortage of bidders, and a facsimile of the 1903 edition. When asked to account for the popularity of her cookbook, Kander replied, ‘Because *The Settlement Cook Book* is primarily an at-home cookbook. The recipes are tested in the home kitchen. They’re practical, economical and reliable. The directions are given in simple language and are easy to follow’ (1933). But Kander went a step further, adding ‘Because of America’s population, the dishes of all nationalities have been included’ (1933).

About the author

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