Wendy Wall, "Recipes for Thought: Shakespeare and the Art of the Kitchen"
2011 Shakespeare's Birthday Lecture

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Wendy Wall was introduced by Georgianna Ziegler. The Folger Shakespeare Library exhibition she refers to is Beyond Home Remedy: Women, Medicine, and Science *(January 21 to May 14, 2011).*

Thank you, Georgianna, for that lovely introduction. I can't tell you what an honor it is to be invited to speak to you on this special occasion. I live in Chicago, and in Illinois we mark this occasion a little bit differently. There was a state proclamation issued that said that Saturday, Shakespeare's birthday, was "Talk Like Shakespeare Day." Now, you can probably imagine what this produced, but let me just give you an example. I turned on the news and there was the local weather report that began "methinks the rain, it raineth every day." Now, I will promise to try to refrain from lapsing into Elizabethan diction. It will be tempting, but I will try to resist.

I first want to thank Kathleen Lynch, the director of the Folger Institute, for the kind invitation to speak here tonight, and Adrienne Shevchuk for arranging the visit. I also want to acknowledge Gail Paster, the outgoing director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, mainly because I can never really thank Gail enough for all that she has done for so many of us. She will truly be missed.

The Folger has long been a vital lifeblood for many people. It guides us toward new books and materials, toward ways to think differently about the books that we read and that we teach, and is a place for exchanging ideas. In my talk tonight, you'll notice that I've tried to sneak in a kind of enthusiastic show-and-tell of some of the materials that Georgianna was mentioning. *[These materials that I'm going to be showing you, many of the real live books are outside in the hallway, in the exhibit. So I encourage you to go and see those.]*

So let me begin by asking you to imagine a scene at the French court. The king is gravely ill and his retinue of eminent doctors agrees that nothing can be done to save him. Out of the blue, a stranger marches in and promises to cure the ruler. This person has had no formal training in medicine, this person is young and inexperienced, is not of high birth, not an acquaintance of the king's. This person is, to boot, a maiden—"a doctor she," as the play terms her.

In the second act of Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well,* Helena brokers a deal in which she gains the right to choose any husband that she wishes, and in exchange she risks her life to treat the king. In a moment that departs from almost all other scenes of health care on the Renaissance stage, this untrained woman succeeds. And a fairytale-like story of thwarted romances, riddles,

sexual duplicity, false deaths, resurrections, and covert pregnancies ensues. What is the secret of Helena's unexpected success? Simply this: that she possesses a recipe inherited from her father, "an art that allows her to ransom nature," as the play says -- "to rescue nature from time."

Let me turn to an equally intriguing Renaissance recipe, this one contained in a miniature published recipe collection called the *Ladies Cabinet Enlarged*, a book marketed to women who aspire to be "industrious improvers of nature by art," and you can see from the title page that it also promises to give you "rare secrets." Published 50 years after Shakespeare's Helena first took the stage, this recipe instructs the reader to crush violets, to form a coloring and flavoring agent for a paste of rose water and resin, that is then shaped to look like a real violet. The writer brags that this violet isn't comprised of artificial painted colors, but instead retains its own color and taste. In creating a paradoxical natural dye, the recipe renders an artificially reconstituted, yet natural, flower.

Certainly, it produces something that doesn't fit our modern classifications. It's part dessert, it's part home decoration, it's part preserved food, and it's part medicine. But it also posed a quandary to its contemporary audience—a bit of a brainteaser. If a violet is broken down and then reconstituted into a violet-shaped paste, is it a real violet or only a representation, or is it something else altogether?

This recipe invites the reader to ponder the relation of essences to forms, copies to originals, artifice to nature, materials in and out of time. *[And I was struck by the fact that this question seemed to me particularly raised by the proximity of certain recipes . . . Some would look exactly the same to me, but one recipe would say, "How to make a flower look like a candy," and the next one would say, "How to make a candy look like a flower." I was kind of confused on the difference.]*

While this recipe doesn't spectacularly cure a king or win a husband, it is nonetheless remarkable for how it offers a witty, edible, think-piece about how kitchen art can, as Helena did, reconfigure nature. What power did the Renaissance recipe hold?

As food scholars insistently remind us, recipes paint a vivid picture of an era, exposing debates about aesthetic styles; social, gender, ethnic, and national identities; and definitions of family and community. The fact that Helena's medical knowledge is called a recipe might surprise us, since we're accustomed to thinking of recipes in terms of food. Yet, as the exhibition just outside the doors of this theater makes clear, early modern recipes straddled and even broke down the boundaries between the medical and the culinary. If you stroll through the exhibit, you will discover some surprising ingredients used routinely by amateur and professional healers. Nutmeg, violets, yes, but snake skins, snails, skulls, breast milk, even urine? Demonstrating that

women from all social stations could be at the center of medical care in Shakespeare's day, the exhibit also strikingly shows that women's techniques and observations of phenomena were shared by the founders of modern science.

What more, I ask, can Renaissance recipes tell us? Tonight, I want to make a somewhat bold claim that seventeenth-century English recipes provided a site where people could meditate on some of the more complex philosophical issues that we are more typically accustomed to seeing in literary works. What's more, these recipes played an important role in advancing a new definition of knowledge itself.

Tasks like confectionary making, distilling, and baking served as what food philosopher Lisa Heldke calls "thoughtful practices," those activities that blur the line between intellectual and manual work. In everyday acts and in recipe writing, early modern people not only considered fundamental questions—how beings manipulate time and nature—but also tested and theorized categories of thought. Recipes, for me, provide a fascinating way to trace the evolution of taste, physiology, literacy, pleasure, and mortality across the seventeenth century.

Tonight, however, I come at these large-scale issues obliquely, by tackling a problem of more modest scope and one pertinent to our birthday honoree. What did it mean for Helena, the Shakespearean character who will go on to demonstrate that a recipe can truly help you move up in the world, to be introduced as someone who "seasons and preserves"?

These terms, seasoning and preserving, echo and resonate throughout Shakespeare's works with rich and varying implications. What I've discovered is that the recipe book, a genre usually seen as dry and technical, provides a clue to the linguistic richness of the Shakespearean text. In turn, literary writing exposes the curious brands of kitchen philosophy, science, and artistry enacted in apparently modest domestic activities. As we honor William Shakespeare on the occasion of his 447th birthday, I am attuned to what has been preserved over time in the kitchen, in the library, and on stage.

Let me first take you back in time. When we say the word recipe today, we tend to imagine food. If you're like me you conjure up glossy photo cookbooks that might transport you magically to Tuscany or Oaxaca or Provence.

The high-end consumer and celebrity culture organized around food has become such a fixture on the media landscape that some critics even talk about the efflorescence of food porn. And I think you know what I'm talking about, right? Those glossy pictures. While the first English recipe books similarly delighted in fantasy, they differ from modern cookbooks in their scope. For they included advice for making cleansers, toothpaste, cosmetics, ink, candles, soaps, even

parlor drinks. Their central subjects were, however, curatives and edibles. Reading a recipe book took one indiscriminately from baked pheasant to skin cream to dyes for gloves. From cures for headache, eye sore, bad breath, insomnia, bed wetting, and epilepsy to rose water, leg of mutton, tarts, omelets, rabbit pies, and yes, this oddity that I've called violet paste.

Why was this so? Mainly because the dominant physiological theory of the day embedded diet within the maintenance of health. Humoralism, derived from the writings of Greek physician Galen, was the overarching framework for understanding the body. It made the balance of the four fluids, each attached to particular properties (hot, cold, wet, or dry), the chief goal of eating. Deciding whether to add ginger to cucumbers meant thinking not simply, or chiefly, about flavor, but about the temperature and temperament of plants, creatures, and diners. Physiological theory thus made it difficult to classify a recipe exclusively as culinary or medical. In essence, foods were drugs. In a recipe book in the Folger that's actually outside at the exhibit, Susanna Packe recommends her preserved walnuts "more for medicine than a banquet." Notice the word "more": her walnuts can grace the table like a creamy tart, but they're better as a cough syrup.

[*And actually today, I was just reading a Renaissance recipe for roasted leg of lamb and it ended by saying it "is good in taste and excellent sovereign for flux in the rains." Which, to put it indelicately, was diarrhea. Kind of doesn't make you want to cook the lamb, I think, but there it is.]*

When Helena announces in *All's Well that Ends Well* that she inherited a special recipe from her father, she invites the audience to consider what was fast becoming a popular form of writing. In fact, Shakespeare altered his immediate source, William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure,* where the heroine has learned her herbal knowledge by watching her father work. Her knowledge is "learned at her father's hands." Shakespeare's Helena instead announces "My father left me some prescriptions of rare and proved effects, such as his reading and manifest experience had collected."

This pointedly written recipe might have made theater audiences envision the printed recipe books that saturated the book stalls nearby. For England led Europe in recipe book publication in the early seventeenth century. Now, this might surprise us today, since we tend to imagine English food as the boiled meats and bland puddings it would later become. Yet English people in Shakespeare's day had an appetite for intensely flavorful foods as well as an appetite for reading about food in print.

And this readership was, interestingly, not confined to male chefs in noble kitchens. England was the only country that marketed cook books to women at this time, and ostensibly to non-noble

people. Literate men and women from many social stations thus eagerly bought recipe books and compiled their own collections, which then circulated to family and friends.

On the day of her daughter's wedding, Mary Granville, for instance, modestly re-gifted the recipe collection she had inherited, which tracked the family's residencies in Spain. The fly leaf to this lovely book in the Folger, which I'm sure you can't read, but I wanted you to see how messy and annotated it was, says modestly, "Mrs. Anne Granville's book, which I hope she will make a better use of than her mother." And you see that she's actually written 'Now Anne Dewes," so she's re-signed it with her married name. Through fricassees, inks, and jellies, Granville preserved the spatial and social networks in which her family operated.

Many collections, in fact, commemorated the family through its hallmark flavors. Penelope Patrick memorializes her sister Jephson's biscuit cakes and Hopestill Brett, her mother's hogspudding.

When a woman named Sarah Longe, who was not from an elite family, describes a recipe for the caraway biscuits enjoyed by King James and his queen, she testified to the popularity of celebrity recipes. "This is a biscuit whereof King James and his queen have eaten with much liking." We today are not immune from the desire to dine with the rich and famous. This is a green ceviche, which was printed in *The New York Times* along with the recipe. It lets readers vicariously participate in the Obama White House State Dinner. In fact, there's the whole menu, and chef Rick Bayless made it; you can make it at home.

Acutely mindful of social status, many collections are beautifully crafted display objects, embellished with ornamental design. Most collections, however, are messy, annotated, insistently used, showing signs of wear. A drop of grease smears a word, pages dog-eared from use.

These texts belie our skepticism that women who cooked could also read. We don't often know who wrote these collections. Who was the opinionated Mary Bent, who could brilliantly camouflage a plain leg of pork as a fancy Westphalia ham? Who was this woman who imperially declared, "you may put a little pepper in preserved cucumbers if you please, but we do not"? Or who defiantly scribbled next to Cousin Patton's potted beef, "not good."

Although the provenance of many of these books remains a mystery, they offer plentiful evidence about their use. In blank spaces amidst the recipes, writers recorded family births and deaths, biblical verses, prayers. Some writers made claims for their own literacy: This image shows "Lettuce Pudsey, her Booke of receipts": "These following are written with mine owne hand." Others practiced fashionable handwriting styles. They occasionally made jokes. This is a

recipe called "To collar a pig" in a recipe book by Mary Forster, and underneath it someone has written "Grace Forster Junior is the hog in question."

I have to say my very favorite recipe is one that's at the University of Pennsylvania library and it's amidst all the recipes that are for regular cakes and things. It is called "How to make a right Presbyterian," and it starts out, "Take the herbs of hypocrisy and ambition, of each 2 handfuls . . . the spirit of pride and malice, 2 drams each." [*So it was obviously a satire.]* Some recipe books, however, just left a bare record of identity: a signature, I was here.

Recipe books, then as now, could be bearers of memory, carriers of status, sites for testing skills, and signs materializing human connections. Shakespeare's Helena would have stored her father's prized recipe in such a collection amidst culinary and medical ones. Such compilations, as scholar Catherine Field has shown, included recipes for the very disease tormenting the king in *All's Well*—the fistula, a pipe-shaped ulcer, often treated with herbal drinks and/or medicated dressings. *The Queen's Closet Opened,* ostensibly the recipes of Queen Henrietta Maria, published four different fistula recipes: two herbal distillations of honey, wine, and water mixed with roots, spices, and herbs like sassafras and sarsaparilla, and two bandages soaked in grease and powders, one powder made of ground ox horn and one of hedgehog ashes.

While the sheer technical skill and the herbal knowledge demanded by these recipes is impressive, one is struck as well by the intimate oversight practitioners exercised over patients. "In the time of taking it," this recipe concludes, and you might be able to make it out or might not, it's a little fuzzy, "All fish, white meats, fruit, wine, anger, and passion must be avoided." That is, just as drug labels today warn, the patient should not drink alcohol when taking the medication. The early modern healer, however, performed the label. Helena did not hand over a premade concoction to her royal patient, but instead had to handle his body and oversee his behavior, diet, and emotion. "Avoid cheese and fruit," she might have warned the king, but also no getting angry, no stress. It's quite a role for a poor physician's daughter to assume, to produce equilibrium in a king.

Yet to my mind, *All's Well that Ends Well* provides more than a fictional case study of the real historical practices of women. For before any recipe is introduced in the play, the audience is suddenly immersed in the intellectual concerns of what we might call a recipe world. When Helena appears in the first scene she weeps while being praised. Her guardian, the countess of Rosillion, explains that Helena seasons her own virtue and her father's memory by steeping them in salty tears. Here's the countess's lines, "Tis the best brine a maiden can season her praise in. The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart, but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood from her cheeks."

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You might remember that this is the way that Olivia is also introduced in Twelfth Night. She's crying, and they say she's seasoning a dead brother's love. The Riverside Edition's gloss on "season," "to preserve, a culinary image," indicates that Shakespeare introduces Helena by underscoring her ability to pickle or preserve her dead father's memory and her own qualities.

In trying to understand why the play's heroine is introduced as a sort of grieving Martha Stewart, ever so handy with brining, I first began to explore what "seasoning" meant. And it turns out the explanation is unexpectedly complicated. Its first meaning, to intensify flavor in a food, is fairly straightforward. Early English recipes reflect profusely flavorful food with meats simmering in spicy sauces of nutmeg, lemon, cinnamon, currant, cardamom, sugar, and vinegar.

A recipe in Elizabeth Fowler's collection states that one should "season ducks very high with pepper, cloves, mace, nutmeg, and salt." Nature, according to British cooks, demands liberal interference: *Herbs to Season, Herbs to Cure*—this was the title of one of the recipe books. Helena's weeping then appropriately heightens her praise. Yet "seasoning" also carried the opposite meaning, that of tempering extremity. Mixing ingredients to moderate the properties of substances or the complexions of those consuming them was crucial to Galenic physiology. Let's look at the recipe we just talked about, the one you want to "season very high." Pepper as a hot food, for instance, could temper or offset the coldness of ducks, or people with phlegmatic constitutions. Seasoning was thus a never-ending process of attenuating the characteristics of plants, food stuffs, and persons.

This meaning is on display when Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* famously pleads that "mercy should season justice" or when Lady Macbeth counsels her husband that sleep is the "season of all natures." Nature here is imagined to be a system of elements in a constant state of disequilibrium. Rather than merely supplementing the world, the cook is immersed within it to settle its potentially agonistic elements. And seasoning is the act of both intensifying and moderating differences.

But the primary definition of seasoning in this scene has more to do with temporality than with tempering, and you can hear the relationship between those words in the very sound. Renaissance recipe books tutor workers to ferret out the rules governing the organic world, to understand the precise months and times of day when plants and herbs had potency. In fact, the art of harvesting herbs was often presented as the foundational knowledge of housewifery.

John Partridge's wonderfully titled book, *The Treasury of Commodious Conceits and Hidden Secrets*, (doesn't that make housework sound very scandalous and titillating?)—devotes an entire section to the special time of herbs. He warns that gathering them out of time compromises their effectiveness. Gervase Markham opens the cookery section to his estate manual, *The English*

Housewife, with the all-important kitchen garden, explaining the proper year, day, moon, and weather in which herbs were to be sown and gathered. Perdita's classification of flowers in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* translates precisely this seasonal knowledge into social protocol, for she fits flowers to the age of each recipient at the sheep shearing festival. Portia in *Merchant of Venice,* on the other hand, converts herbal knowledge into a tip for aesthetic success: "The nightingale, if she should sing by day /When every goose is cackling would be thought/No better a musician than the wren. / How many things by season, season'd are,/To their right praise and true perfection?"

Value rests precisely in being in proper time. Yet passive submission to time becomes in recipe writing an urgent injunction to action. One must vigorously labor to "do" to be in the right instant. It was a labor that extended to souls readying themselves even for the mortal harvest. Hamlet demurs from killing Claudius in prayer when "fit and season'd for his passage." And when Isabella argues to stay her brother's execution in *Measure for Measure* she explicitly links humans to butchered animals. He's not prepared for death, she argues; "Even for our kitchens /We kill the fowl of season. Shall we serve heaven /With less respect than we do minister /To our gross selves?" Humans, who ripen and rot, must energetically act to be in season, to flavor themselves by inhabiting proper temporal structures.

Yet even in this modality, the word once again extended to encompass its opposite. For seasoning routinely involved exempting an organism from its natural temporal cycle, as Markham notes, I think somewhat poetically, for a recipe book: a meal must "hold limitation with . . . provision, and season of the yeere: for Summer affords what Winter wantes, & Winter is master of that which Summer can but with difficulty have." Sounds to me like Shakespeare's sonnets but in a recipe book. Giving winter what it wants, or lacks, was one of the most evident preoccupations of English recipe writing. For preservatives such as conserves, preserves, candies, and marmalades took center stage in recipe collections for 75 years.

Hugh Plat opens his popular and decoratively printed *Delights for Ladies* with "The Art of Preserving," a section that is almost double the length of those devoted to cookery, distillation, and cosmetics. I love the title of this book also, Delights for Ladies…I wanted you to see how pretty the book itself is … there's a visual appeal in many of the recipes that I would think of as functional. Listed under preserves is a quince paste; this is a quince paste that would have been stamped in a mold. English readers were obsessed with the preservative power of salt, alcohol, and sugar to make organic products available year round. So Helena's tears and the violet paste are both forms of seasoning that counteract the seasons.

Shakespeare draws on this semantic richness of seasoning precisely to meditate on humans' vexed attempts to outsmart time. Let's think about the moment when Pandarus recommends

Troilus to Cressida by saying, "Do you know what a man is, is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and suchlike, the spice and salt that season a man?" With looks, education, status, and morals going for him, Troilus seems, well, perfectly cooked, mature. Yet Cressida's response reconfigures her uncle's terms: "Aye, a minc'd man, and then to be bak'd with no date in the pie, for then the man's date . . . is out." She sassily chooses to pun on the word "date," a common preserved fruit in Renaissance recipes known for its ability to enhance flavor. Instead of a deliciously complete lover, Troilus becomes minced, chopped, and diminished in substance.

Cressida "unseasons" him first by seeing him as a bland pie with no tasty date and then past his prime—his date's out. When recipe writers state that one can better preserve oranges or violets by knowing precisely when they bloom or ripen at their fullest, they hint at this paradox. Mastering seasonal knowledge paves the way for unseasoning organic entities.
These are not only culinary, but philosophical, conundrums.

When Shakespeare conjures up a powerful recipe as central to the plot of *All's Well that Ends Well,* he lodges it in an imaginative framework about seasoning that motors the play's plot and its themes. As you might remember, Helena's curing of the king lands her the fabulous new title of countess but also a not so great husband, Bertram, who promptly abandons her and sets what's called impossible conditions for her to be his wife. To say that he is a reluctant groom is a bit of an understatement. His bitter version of when hell freezes over is that Helena must extract a ring from his finger and have his child before he will sexually consummate the marriage. In the second part of the play, Helena replays her miraculous cure of the king by aggressively and miraculously satisfying these impossibilities, going so far as to switch places in the dark to have sex with Bertram, who thinks he is seducing another woman. To say that Helena is a woman who goes for what she wants is a bit of an understatement. All is well only when Bertram, baffled by sexual deceits, riddles, and his wife's seeming resurrection from the dead, throws up his hands in wonder and succumbs to the marriage. It is an unusual way for a play to end.

The language of recipe saturates the play's opening, where characters discuss whether humans can effectively stay time or are subject to repetitions that only confirm loss. Will her son leaving home make her relive her husband's death, the countess wonders, in the play's opening lines. This doubled loss is then connected to the mortality of the king, a ruler who has "persecuted time with hope." The torture of time, and the recursive repetition of the past, spark the countess to think of her recently deceased and beloved physician, Gerard De Narbonne, who, she says, almost "made nature immortal." It is within this chain of associations of humans battling nature that she introduces his daughter, Helena, our heroine, whose tears, as you remember, flavor her virtue, whiten her cheeks, and preserve her father's memory. The fact that Helena only seems to

preserve her virtue and her dad by mourning, when she's really actually just desperately in love, is less important for my purposes than the language the countess uses.

For the countess tellingly repeats the word "seasoned" twenty lines later, when mourning that her son Bertram is, alas, "an unseason'd courtier." The inexperienced Bertram will require Helena's housewifely skills to ripen in a kind of courtier-like courtesy. With Helena as the agent who seasons, and Bertram the material awaiting seasoning, Shakespeare establishes poles of activism and passivity important to the play. But these are immediately linked to two opposed modalities of time: Helena's way of flavoring things is to grace the past and the present and Bertram's lack of seasoning isn't just a state of emotional inexperience; it's a reference to a deferred paternal inheritance that he has not yet assumed. The entire first scene is about the pressures the young feel to take up, exempt oneself from, or convert the past to fruition.

In case we have failed to grasp the rich discourse pressuring the scene, the knave Parolles promptly offers a spirited argument against virginity, using the same puns on dating that we saw in *Troilus*. "It is not politic to preserve virginity . . . . Your date is better in your pie and your porridge than in your cheek," he tells Helena saucily. "And your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French-withered pears -- it looks ill, it eats dryly." With the date doing double duty as flavor and a sign of the clock ticking, Parolles makes people both the agents and objects of a food-saturated temporality. Better to eat the flavorful date than to embody it and be a withered pear. Within this conundrum, everyday operations seem to visibly enact and perhaps counter the frightening mutability humans experience in their bodies, the fear that they are merely a name or a shadow of the past.

In *All's Well,* such problems can be managed; they can be seasoned. When the plot turns to Helena's wondrous recipe, then, the play has already ushered the audience into the concerns expressed in recipe writing, meanings that might not be legible to modern readers who typically separate culinary from medical work . . . there's been a lot written on the medical aspect of the play and there's been a lot of people who have noticed the food metaphors. . . I'm trying to see the recipe as the sort of lynchpin that brings those together. Act One, Scene One ends with a soliloquy in which Helena rhetorically mixes eating and healing: "Our remedies often ourselves do lie / Which we ascribe to heaven," she declares. And then she basically asks, why do I have a love that I "cannot feed"?

The remedy for love, she decides, the way to *feed* appetite, lies in a restorative recipe. This is self-medicating at its finest! Her cure for love sickness blurs into a venture to cure a king, which then proliferates into the play's expansive gustatory and corporeal metaphors. Parolles feels like a pasty pie, Bertram seems a roasted meat. This is seen most strikingly when the men are described as "unbak't, doughy youth," vulnerable to being wrongly spiced. Like the unseasoned

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Bertram, they are kitchen material—morally raw, temporally unfinished, awaiting a cook's touch. Helena, on the other hand, is praised as the sweet marjoram seasoning the salad. And when she first declares the proverbial "all's well that ends well" titular message, it is, in fact, in the context of a seasonal mixed blessing: "Time will bring on summer, /When briars shall have leaves as well as thorns /And be as sharp."

The play's culinary-medical lexicon tracks issues that have intrigued critics: Helena's extremely unorthodox idea of how to be an orthodox wife, the problem of transmitting the past, and the urgent comic imperative to make "all well," which the play only imperfectly accomplishes. It is when Helena is described as the king's "*preserver*" that the play consolidates its domestic metaphors, for then the countess's casual line about pickling tears is literalized. Helena has preserved nothing short of the body of a king, and by the end of the play has sweetened the gripping losses of time, which has been described as "consuming' and "bitter." Repositioning himself within this system, the king declares confidently, "I am not a day of the season."

To labor in the world of recipes was to safeguard foodstuffs, crucial knowledges, and, it seems, beings and identities; that is, like Helena, recipe writers showed how fluidly people moved from the preservation of things to the conservation of ideas and being. Let's return to Hugh Plat, who chooses to open his recipe book *Delights for Ladies* with a poetic manifesto claiming that housework arranges an exemption from the natural world: "When chrystall frost hath nipt the tender grape, /And cleane *consum'd* the fruits of every vine, /Yet heere behold the clusters fresh and faire, /Fed from the branch, or hanging on the line. /The walnut, small nut, and the Chestnut sweete, /Whose sugred kernels lose their pleasing taste, /Are heere from yeere to yeere preserved, /And made by arte with strongest fruits to last." "When crystal frost hath nipped the tender grape, and clean consumed the fruits of every vine / Yet here behold the clusters fresh and fair, fed from the branch or hanging on the line. / The walnut, small nut, and the chestnut sweet whose sugared kernels lose their pleasing taste / Are here from year to year preserved, and made by art with strongest fruits to last."

And so, even though the recipes that are going to follow are regular old recipes that are dry and technical, it opens with this very literary beginning. When Plat claims to have defeated the winter frost that threatens the tender grape, he means to say that he's offered fabulous recipes for preserved jams. But he also implies that his writing has etched the "tender grape" in print for posterity, spared from time's consumption so as to remain on the dining table and in the library; his recipe book is performing the housework or the art that it recommends. The preservation that the recipe book affords extends from the transformation of plants into durable forms, to the reduplication of knowledges across time and space, to the memorialization of persons and communities. Preservation, not ripeness, was all.

A woman named Sarah Hudson inflects Platt's claim differently when she opens her recipe book with this combined ownership mark and prayer: "Sarah Hudson her book, February the 15th day and the year of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ 1678. Sarah Hudson, god preserve her in all of her {voyages}, wheresoever she goeth, god preserve and keep her in all parts of the world, wheresoever she goeth and with whosoever she goeth." Hudson commands that she herself be divinely preserved, kept from illness or undesirable eventualities, from the Latin *preservare*, as she travels through time and space. After this poignant invocation, the book opens with 24 recipes for, what else, preserves: "To preserve red quinces," "How to preserve cherries without stones, " "To preserve raspberries, red or white," and so on. Hudson's invocation, her fascination with preserves, her recording of her name—these features that at first appear unrelated, in fact, semantically tease out the transformative possibilities carried out within kitchen work.

Of course, as Shakespeare's texts freely portray elsewhere, the picture was not so rosy if you imagine yourself the vulnerable object of a transformative cookery. Think of the most demonic hostess on the Renaissance stage, Lady Macbeth, who whips up a homey drink to drug King Duncan's guards as part of an assassination scheme. She imagines her concoction as vaporizing the guards' mental faculties, dissolving their memory and being into the fumes that she would have produced in her domestic labors. Or think of the beautiful rose that's so elegantly rendered in Shakespeare's Sonnet 5, which is saved from the seasons and granted eternity, but only when distilled into "a liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass." So this transcendence from the seasons is accompanied by an exquisite sense of loss.

Or, finally, consider Falstaff, who panics that the Windsor merry wives may have distilled his very being to butter. It's helpful to remember what Gail Paster has so compellingly outlined as the embodied ecology of early modern passions, the peculiarly material experience of emotions that made bodily fluids and organs actually roast in rage or convert to jelly with fear. Many of these internal psychological and physical operations, I would point out, were visibly staged in the mechanical operations of the kitchen, where fluids roasted, distilled, congealed, and concocted. While the housewife importantly oversaw diet and health care, she was also an expert in the vocabularies and frameworks through which the psyche and body were experienced.

When humoral theory waned in popularity in the seventeenth century, food as medicine gave way to food as cuisine. Curatives and edibles became taxonomically separated. One result was that the deep structural correspondences between emotion, bodily change, and everyday work detached, and began to read as mere metaphors. One didn't really roast in anger, after all, and managing foods conceptually departed from managing infirm bodies. But when *All's Well* was staged, Helena's seasoning still had a particular power, scope, and meaning for its audience. *All's Well that Ends Well*—the title, in fact, suggests this power: when relationships are supposedly "made well," the resolutions to erotic and social problems seem to flow out of the force of a

recipe. Shakespeare's title certainly invites skepticism: Is all really well in this world, where morality is so askew? Where the groom is so patently undeserving, where the king hasn't learned a thing, but ends the play by repeating the past mistakes?

While these questions uncomfortably linger, the play offers seasoning as a figure for the fantastical artifice that can potentially restructure time and nature. "All yet *seems* well," the king declares shakily in the final lines, since, he notes, "bitter" time is now made "*sweet*." I guess all has been conditionally seasoned.

All's Well is Shakespeare's most concentrated exploration of the power of the recipe, and thus far I have thought about this issue in the context of housework's relationship with temporality. Yet I would be remiss if I didn't point out that still more is at stake in Helena's recipe, nothing short of the very meaning of knowledge itself.

When trying to persuade the court that she should be granted the right to try her cure, Helena pointedly does not argue, as would have been expected, that her recipe is based on accepted medical authorities, on Galen or Paracelsus. Instead, she touts it as "approved"—in other words, as a practice verified by trial. By using this word, Helena enters into a hot-button health-care issue of the day, one that was bound up with an epistemological debate. She poses the question: By what authority did recipes offer knowledge?

Now, manuscript recipes are clear on this subject. They invite practitioners to verify information through hands-on experimentation, rather than accepting a truth that was authorized by testimony or proved by some logic. While some collections attribute individual recipes to a donor—to a countess or a physician –- they do not present this name as a guarantor of truth. Instead, the recipe—or the "receipt," as you've noticed it is called in Shakespeare's day—records and initiates a transaction that has an active receiver. Even though recipes are bossy and imperative ("Take a large hand," they order) in this very form of address they acknowledge that the reader might simply refuse the command and "take" something else instead, maybe a small duck!

As Sara Pennell has shown, recipes offer only conditional credibility. They transfer the task of authenticating knowledge to the reader. Recipes were by no stretch of the imagination finished products, but instead were seen as forms that asked to be received, tested, validated, refused, or approved. When women scribbled in the margins "approved" or "this I make," they acknowledged recipe information as something to be verified in certain circumstances. And you can see on the bottom left [*of this image*] there is "this I make" next to the lucatelius balsam. The Latin phrase *probatum est*, "it is proved," crops up—to my mind, surprisingly—all over household recipes, next to, for instance, Susannah Packe's recipe for preserved apricots.

Packe does not simply document that she received the recipe on good authority, or that it tastes good, but that the dish has a guaranteed shelf life. In her plum jelly recipe, Packe promises that the fruit, if boiled properly, will purify and you see that she's written at the bottom, "I have experienced it." While her assurances might seem to settle the matter, she implicitly asks readers, How do you experience it?, with "experience" naming an embodied, temporally bounded act. Recipe collectors thus are hardly passive recipients of collected wisdom. Elizabeth Freke petulantly boasts that her recipes are "Collected by me & most of them proved by Eliz. Freke." And Katherine Packer commands readers on her title page, "Read, gather, and make careful practice." As surely as recipes taught the best way to make an egg pudding or an ointment, they proliferated a method that was bound up with acts of making.

This might seem obvious for a forum so connected with practicality. Yes, but it becomes significant when put in the context of natural philosophy of the seventeenth century. In this domain, today called science, the standard way to authorize truth was by citation of ancient sources or by logic. In the Aristotelian model taught in the universities, *praxis* offered a limited lesser form of knowledge; certainty flowed from deductive paradigms. Medieval scholasticism treated experiments as mere heuristic demonstrations that confirmed the truth of a world constituted by abstract first principles. Experience was, perhaps counter-intuitively for us, what was generally known, the world's behavior, time and time again.

In the seventeenth century, however, various thinkers challenged these assertions by promoting inductive modes of inquiry and empirical engagement with nature. Rather than observing the world's ordinary course, experimenters sought to prove the characteristics of a natural object or system within a moment isolated in time and subject to human effects. For scholars such as Elizabeth Spiller, Peter Deer, and Loraine Dastin, the Baconian-identified scientific revolution replaced the Aristotelian notion of experience as what is generally true with a modern idea of experience as a singular repeatable act that follows determinable physical laws. And so this is… the standard story about the emergence of modern science; it's been challenged, and it's been qualified, but I think it still proves viable as an explanatory account.

My contribution is to confirm that the humble recipe participated in a massive cultural reformation by affirming *experimentation*. Though historians of science have largely not acknowledged it, the archive of extant manuscript recipe collections evidence an amateur, forward-looking knowledge production that took place outside of early modern universities.

A seventeenth-century Mexican writer, Sor Juana, stated this fairly directly. "What could I not tell you . . . of the secrets of Nature which I have discovered in cooking?" she asks. And she continues, "that an egg hangs together and fries in fat or oil, and that, on the contrary, it disintegrates in syrup. That, to keep sugar liquid, it suffices to add the tiniest part of water in

which a quince . . . has been boiled. . . .What is there for women to know, if not bits of kitchen philosophy?” She concludes: “If Aristotle had been a cook, he would have written much more.” Indeed, when undertaking routine domestic work, practitioners enacted what Antonio Pérez-Ramos calls "makers' knowledge," which is a combination of operational skill and propositional theory. One might venture into philosophy and chemical research in cooking supper.

While we today might be skeptical about whether these recipes worked—can distilled herbs really cure the plague? I ask, when I’m reading these books, we can rest assured that they were effective in advancing the modern notion of knowledge that would be taken up by reformers in creating the Royal Society. When Helena lauds her recipe's "prov’d effects," she is accused of being an "empiric"—a quack, or someone who relies on observation. Yet the king soon praises her as a "sweet practicer." Here he does more than offer a compliment; he grounds her sugary preservative art in cutting-edge scientific technique. "There’s something in it more than my father’s skill," Helena declares cryptically.

Which brings me back to the mysterious "something" of that violet paste recipe, which I now see as the “bed trick” of the kitchen. As I have written elsewhere, many Renaissance food recipes created theatrical displays that surprised viewers with substances that were seemingly alive *and* inert, natural *and* artificial, real *and* mimetic.

Contemplate, if you will, a pastry pie stuffed with live birds that fly out when you slice the pie open. A diner might have been mesmerized, if a bit hungry, when served this potentially messy dish. As *All’s Well* puts it, this is the riddle of the quick from the dead. And reading of those "doughy unbak’t" young men in the play makes me mentally leap to the many recipes instructing readers on how to mold pliable food stuffs into icons of social status. Here we see a recreation of a family coat of arms, tastily reproducible in the kitchen, which is served along with many other treats, including imitation sugar gloves, which were luxury products, and religious emblems. Or we might consider the wit of bacon and eggs that look real, yes, but, no, they’re made from marzipan! These are recreated by a culinary historian, Ivan Day, who made these bacon and eggs from almond paste mixed with sugar and various dyes.

Or consider sugar-shaped walnuts that are served on fake sugar platters, so you eat the walnut and discover it’s not a real walnut, but it’s just simply marzipan. And then, if you want, you can eat the plate afterwards, because it’s made entirely of sugar. These recipes present what *All’s Well* terms "the name and not the thing itself," or, as Bertram says, “both”: sweet food posing as savory, signifiers that you could admire and consume.

One final recipe will serve for a conclusion. If you were to make Markham’s roasted leg of mutton, which he confesses is “outlandish,” you would mix together a sweet, spiced egg-and-

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cream-based pudding. You would dye it vibrant colors, using spinach to make it green if you wanted or saffron to make it yellow. And you would encase it the skin of a sheep's leg. "Serve it up as a leg of mutton with this pudding, for indeed it is no other," Markham declares.

The reader might have scratched her head at this assurance. The mutton minus the meat is "no other" than what it is? And what would that be? This food substantially *is*, and *is not*. It is embedded within, but also miraculously enduring out of, nature and time. Such riddling recipes produced wonder as they probed the nature of representation, the playful blurring of matter and form, and the seasonings that held up for scrutiny the very idea of seasonality. Like the stage, recipes recorded and incited worlds of fantasy, while at the same time exploring the very nature of knowledge itself.

And so, fittingly, I return to where I began. Is it any wonder that Shakespeare uses a recipe to unfold the temporal action and tempering artistry in *All's Well*? Is it any wonder that the heroine who will do incredible feats is introduced as a culinary preserver, a kind of fantastical early modern desperate housewife? What we glimpse on this commemorative occasion tonight, taking us in and out of time, are recipes for thought -- on the page, in the kitchen, and on the stage. Thanks.