

Fairfax-Spencer family recipe book

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1694-1795



Title Statement

Fairfax-Spencer family recipe bookGuide to Fairfax-Spencer family recipe book C0202

Subtitle: Fairfax-Spencer family recipe book

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Publication Statement

Publisher: George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

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Fairfax, Virginia 22030
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Profile Description

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Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

C0202

Unit ID

/repositories/2/resources/193

Unit Date

1694-1795

Language

English

Abstract

This recipe book, owned by Elizabeth Fairfax Spencer, contains numerous cooking and medicinal recipes popular in 17th and 18th century England.

Creator

Fairfax, Elizabeth

Extent

0.25 Linear Feet 1 volume 12 3/8" L x 16 5/8" W

Physical Location

R45, C1, S1

Repository

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

No known copyright. The Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries believes that this collection is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made. (See <https://rightsstatements.org/page/NKC/1.0/?language=en>)

Acquisition Information

Purchased from Bristow and Garland in 2009.

Processing Information

Processed by Kristen Korfitzen in November 2011. EAD markup completed by Kristen Korfitzen in November 2011. Finding aid updated by Amanda Menjivar in May 2025.

Preferred Citation

Fairfax-Spencer family recipe book, C0202, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries.

Biographical Information

The Fairfax-Spencer family recipe book is associated with two women of the Fairfax family by the two inscriptions present on the front page. The first inscription, a memorial to Frances Lady Fairfax reads "Frances Lady Fairfax Daughter of Sr. Thomas Chaloner was baptized Feb'ry the 20th, 1610 and dyed Jan'ry the 2nd 1692. She was Sixty years Mrs of Steeton as appears by her Arms set up w'th Sir William Fairfax over the hall door 1633." The other inscription reads "Elizabeth Fairfax Hir Booke 1694." Lady Frances Fairfax was the daughter of Sir Thomas Chaloner by his second wife Judith Blount. Sir Thomas Chaloner served as Member of Parliament for Lostwithiel and St Mawes. He also acted as tutor to Prince Henry the eldest son of James the 1st. Around 1630 Frances married Sir William Fairfax. During the English civil war Sir William, along with Frances' brothers James and Thomas, fought on the side of Parliament. On September 18, 1644 Sir William was mortally wounded during the relief of Montgomery Castle. Lady Frances and Sir William had four children, sons William and Thomas and daughters Catherine and Isabella. Little is known of Elizabeth Fairfax but it has been surmised that she was the granddaughter of Frances and William, being the daughter of either William or Thomas. Elizabeth Fairfax married Thomas Spencer of Attercliffe Hall. The Fairfax family resided in Yorkshire.

Whether original owner of the book was Frances or Elizabeth Fairfax is unclear. In addition to the inscription attributing the book to Elizabeth Fairfax, the initials E.F have been stamped into the back and front covers of the volume, suggesting that the book did originally belong to Elizabeth.

Scope and Content

The book contains over two hundred recipes for cookery, medicine and household products. The recipes are handwritten on vellum. The recipes in the book have been written in by several different people and had been continually added until approximately 1795. Several of the pages have been cut out from the book, and several blank pages still remain where more recipes could have been added. The first half of the book is dedicated to cookery. Recipes for cooking include titles such as "To Make Biskets ye Lady Ingrams way," "To Make the Fine Great Cake," "A Dutch Pudding," and "Fritters." Some of the recipes have been numbered, but

this numbering is not consistent throughout the book. The second half of the book is dedicated to medicine and household products. Entries for medicinal remedies give recipes for salves, drinks and powders and common folk remedies. Titles for medicinal recipes include "Powder for Convulsion Fits, which was never known to fail when taken in time," "For ye Scurvey," and "To Preserve the Face from Puffying." Recipes for both cooking and medicine contain vague descriptions of measurements and procedures, but provide some information as to the cost of ingredients and commonly used units of measure for the time period.

Related Material

From 2016-2025, the Arts and Humanities team of Mason Libraries underwent the Fairfax-Spencer family recipe book project, producing an Omeka site that delves into the history of the recipe book.

Omeka site: <https://masonlibraries.gmu.edu/omeka-s/s/Cookbook/page/welcome>

The Special Collections Research Center holds other collections and rare books on the subject of cooking and the history of domesticity.

Keywords

Cooking
Yorkshire (England)
Cookbooks
Medicine
Manuscripts

Alternative Form Available

A digital version of the cookbook is available [here](#)

Arrangement

Organized according to recipe.