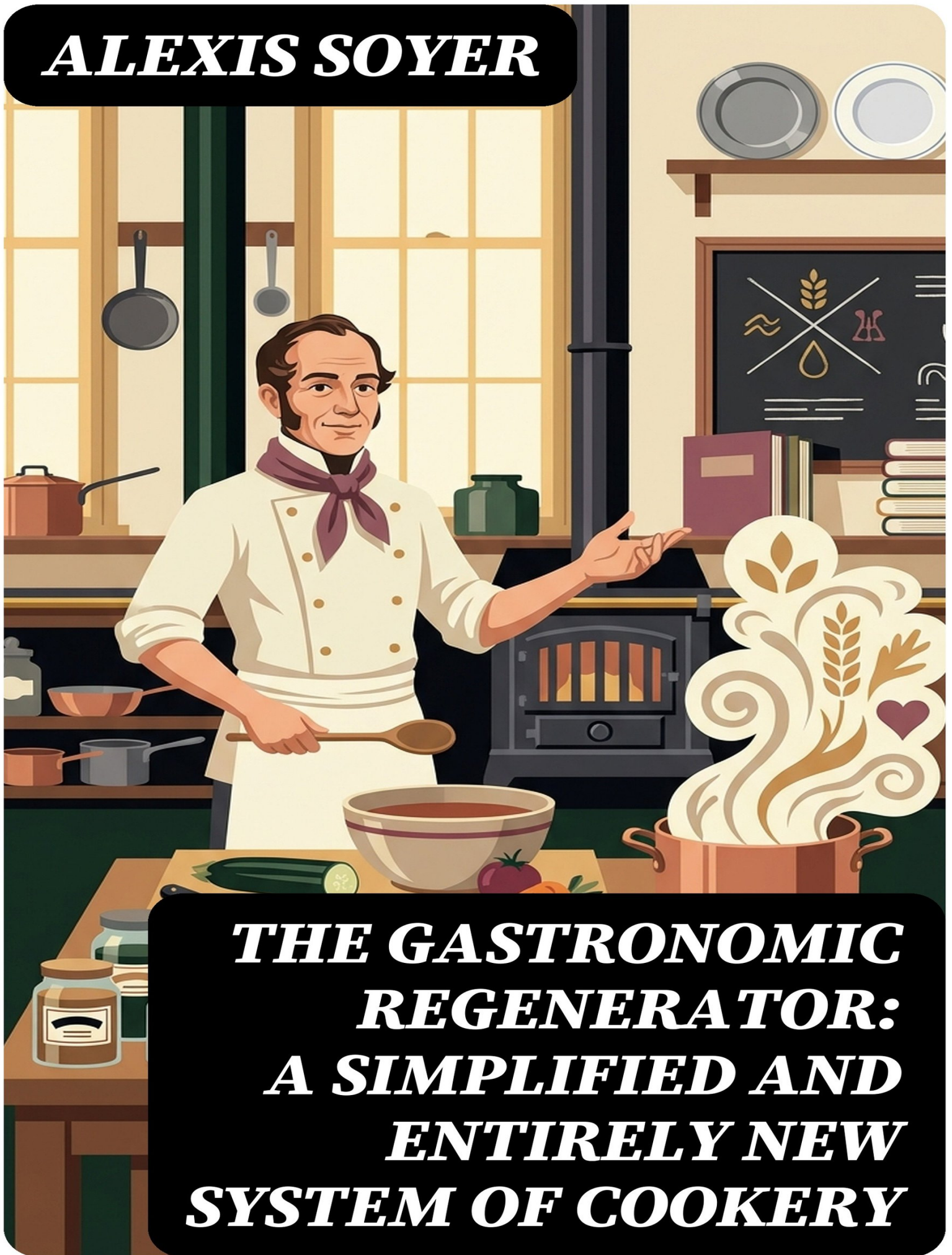
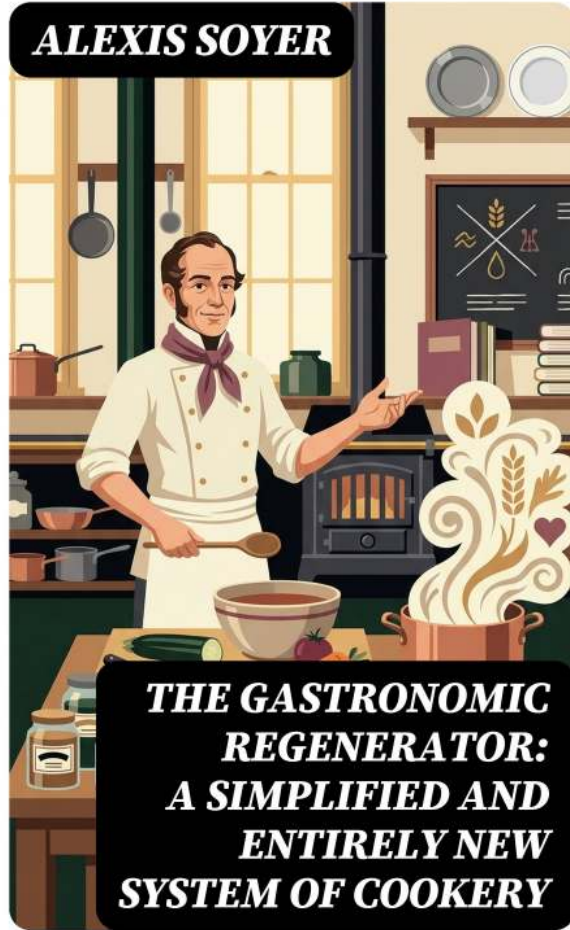


**ALEXIS SOYER**



***THE GASTRONOMIC  
REGENERATOR:  
A SIMPLIFIED AND  
ENTIRELY NEW  
SYSTEM OF COOKERY***

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**Alexis Soyer**

# **The Gastronomic Regenerator: A Simplified and Entirely New System of Cookery**

**Enriched edition. With Nearly Two Thousand Practical  
Receipts Suited to the Income of All Classes**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Lucas Finch*

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# Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

**[The Gastronomic Regenerator: A Simplified and Entirely New System of Cookery](#)**

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

# Introduction

## [Table of Contents](#)

Between ceremony and efficiency, *The Gastronomic Regenerator* turns the splendor of the grand table into a disciplined, teachable craft. Alexis Soyer presents cookery not as a mystery guarded by a few but as a living system that can be learned, replicated, and improved. The book's promise rests on a double movement: it respects the art of cuisine while arranging it into practicable steps, so that elegance arises from method rather than caprice. Readers meet a culinary mind intent on order, clarity, and generosity, a chef who treats the kitchen as both workshop and stage, where precision enables confidence and pleasure.

Published in 1846, this work belongs to the genre of the comprehensive culinary manual, composed during the Victorian era when professional kitchens were formalizing their practices. Soyer, a French-born chef working in London and known for his tenure at the Reform Club, wrote amid the bustle of large urban dining rooms and ambitious domestic households. The setting is not a single narrative place but the professional kitchen itself, with its hierarchies, tools, and rhythms. The context is one of expansion: public institutions, clubs, and private tables demanded consistency at scale, and this volume addresses that demand with organized instruction and considered design.

At its core, the book offers an architecture for practice: recipes arranged with method, directions that anticipate difficulties, and guidance that treats the reader as a

colleague rather than a novice. The voice is authoritative yet conversational, shaped by long experience and an evident wish to demystify. Soyer's style values clarity of process, sequencing, and verification of results, encouraging repetition that breeds skill. The tone remains urbane and confident, oriented toward service as well as craft. The reading experience is cumulative and practical, yielding a sense that complex preparations become manageable when divided into intelligible steps and executed with care.

The organizing idea is system, and with it the belief that excellence can be reproduced without dulling creativity. Soyer articulates how techniques relate, how one preparation supports another, and how small economies of movement create large advantages in timing and texture. He treats the kitchen as a network of interdependent tasks, from stocks to sauces to finished dishes, each calibrated to reinforce the rest. The emphasis falls on discipline as the ground of freedom, enabling refinement to emerge through order. In this way, the volume bridges craft tradition with modern process thinking, offering a framework that rewards attention and patience.

Equally central is the book's ethical sense of hospitality, expressed through respect for labor, materials, and guests. Soyer writes for kitchens that must serve many, insisting that precision is a form of care and that economy is compatible with delight. He shows how preparation creates dignity for those who cook and reliability for those who dine, arguing that standards protect both. Rather than chasing novelty for its own sake, the work prizes consistency, proportion, and timing. The result is a pedagogy of excellence, where mastery is not a solitary brilliance but a shared practice enacted day after day.

For contemporary readers, the value is twofold: it is a working reference for methodical cooking and a primary document of nineteenth-century professional organization. Those exploring technique will find models for planning, coordination, and scaling that remain recognizable in today's kitchens. Those interested in cultural history will encounter a record of how institutions fed their communities and how taste was formalized. The book rewards close study because it explains not only what to do but why order matters, a lesson applicable to projects well beyond cookery. It is a manual for making complexity coherent under the pressure of service.

To read *The Gastronomic Regenerator* today is to witness a pivotal moment when culinary art claims the tools of system without surrendering flair. As a chef of international reputation writing in 1846, Soyer translates professional knowledge into an intelligible, repeatable form, offering both instruction and inspiration. The book matters because it shows how standards can be shared across teams and venues, how excellence scales, and how care is communicated through detail. It stands as a testament to the craft's durability and adaptability, inviting readers to approach the kitchen with rigor, curiosity, and confidence rooted in method.

# Synopsis

## [Table of Contents](#)

The *Gastronomic Regenerator: A Simplified and Entirely New System of Cookery* by Alexis Soyer, first published in 1846, is a comprehensive culinary manual that seeks to rationalize and elevate cookery through clarity, order, and practicality. Written by the celebrated chef of London's Reform Club, it presents a coherent "system" that moves from first principles to refined applications. Soyer positions the work for professional kitchens and well-run households alike, promising methods that conserve labor while achieving elegance. The book's organization and breadth propose a bridge between haute cuisine and everyday service, setting the stage for a detailed exposition of technique, planning, and tasteful presentation.

The early sections articulate Soyer's governing approach: simplify processes, establish *mise en place*, and ensure consistency by attending to equipment, heat, and preparation. He emphasizes cleanliness, economy of motion, and the thoughtful selection of utensils and fuel, arguing that good outcomes spring from order. Practical notes on kitchen arrangement and the sequencing of tasks frame the recipes that follow, encouraging readers to adopt a disciplined rhythm. Rather than relying on vague tradition, the text promotes method, proportion, and observation, asserting that the cook's control over time and temperature is the cornerstone on which successful soups, roasts, and sauces depend.

Foundational preparations receive pride of place, with stocks, glazes, and essences treated as the indispensable base of the cuisine. Soyer details how carefully constructed broths and reductions support a broad family of soups and sauces, from the delicate and clear to the richly concentrated. Clarification, skimming, and judicious seasoning recur as procedural anchors, linking purity of flavor with technical care. By foregrounding these building blocks, the book shows how complex results can flow from well-made fundamentals, and how a limited set of bases can be recombined to yield variety without confusion, guiding the reader from simple potages to more elaborate compositions.

From these bases, the work advances into fish, shellfish, meats, game, and poultry, treating each category with attention to freshness, butchery, and appropriate heat. Roasting, boiling, stewing, frying, and braising are set out as choices shaped by texture and character rather than habit. Soyer underscores seasonality and market judgment, steering cooks to match method with ingredient quality. Preparations range from unadorned dishes that respect natural flavors to ornate centerpieces designed for formal tables, yet the same governing logic applies throughout: mastery of fire, proper reduction, and well-timed service produce dishes that are at once precise, economical, and pleasing to the eye.

The vegetable and farinaceous sections broaden the repertoire with legumes, roots, greens, rice, and pasta, showing how careful cooking and simple dressings can balance richer courses. Eggs, savory entremets, and farinaceous puddings expand possibilities for intermediate and concluding courses. In parallel, the pastry and confectionery chapters supply pastries, tarts, cakes, creams, and other sweet dishes, integrating the baker's craft into

the same systematic framework. Attention to texture, contrast, and temperature recurs, teaching readers to compose meals that progress harmoniously. Soyer's treatment aims to demystify complex preparations while preserving refinement, so that everyday fare and luxurious sweets share a common vocabulary of method and proportion.

Beyond individual recipes, Soyer offers sample bills of fare and guidance for assembling menus suited to season, guest number, and occasion, with notes on pacing, service, and the adaptation of portions. He discusses scaling preparations and using remnants prudently, casting economy as a mark of professional competence rather than constraint. The managerial perspective extends to kitchen workflow and the timing that coordinates multiple courses, illustrating how planning underwrites finesse at table. By pairing elaborate banquet models with modest household patterns, the book shows how the same principles can govern both spectacle and simplicity, reinforcing the claim that a coherent system enables reliable excellence.

The *Gastronomic Regenerator* endures as a landmark of nineteenth-century culinary literature, capturing both a chef's practical intelligence and a moment of institutional dining culture. Its blend of procedural clarity, respect for ingredients, and attention to organization helped shape later English-language cookery, even as tastes and technologies changed. Readers encounter not only recipes but an argument for method as the path to grace and economy. Without depending on novelty for its effect, the work retains relevance as a training text and historical record, illuminating how a rigorous approach can connect professional standards with domestic aspirations and make sophisticated results reproducible.

# Historical Context

## [Table of Contents](#)

Published in London in 1846, *The Gastronomic Regenerator* emerged from the kitchens of the Reform Club, where Alexis Soyer served as chef from 1837. Born in 1810 in Meaux, France, Soyer trained in Paris before relocating to Britain in the early 1830s. In London he became one of the best-known professional cooks of the era, noted for elaborate banquets and public demonstrations. His book presented nearly two thousand recipes alongside practical guidance for organization and service. It spoke to a metropolitan audience whose appetite for refined cuisine, professional instruction, and codified technique was growing in step with the city's expanding elite institutions.

The Reform Club, founded in 1836 and housed from 1841 in Charles Barry's purpose-built premises on Pall Mall, embodied Whig and later Liberal politics as well as modern hospitality. Clubland dining functioned as a stage for political networking and display, and Soyer helped define its culinary identity. He designed the club's celebrated kitchens, reorganizing work into specialized stations to serve large numbers with consistency. In this context, *The Gastronomic Regenerator* doubled as a manual of professional standards. The book's emphasis on menu planning, provisioning, and staffing mirrored the institutional rhythms of London clubs, where punctuality, regularity, and spectacle were indispensable.

Mid-nineteenth-century Britain was transformed by industrialization and urban growth. Railways, expanding

rapidly in the 1840s, shortened supply chains, bringing regional produce, meat, and fish more quickly into London. Wholesale markets such as Covent Garden, Smithfield, and Billingsgate fed a commercialized food economy that supported grand hotels, restaurants, and clubs. Improved logistics and preservation expanded the range of ingredients available to professional kitchens. Soyer's system responded to these conditions by standardizing procurement, storage, and preparation. The *Gastronomic Regenerator's* detailed directions for stocks, sauces, and foundational preparations assumed a steady flow of quality inputs and a brigade capable of repeatable, disciplined production.

The book entered a crowded print marketplace that was redefining domestic and professional knowledge. Eliza Acton's *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (1845) had just set new standards for precise measurements and clear instructions for home cooks. French culinary prestige remained strong in Britain, with the methods of chefs such as Marie-Antoine Carême widely emulated. Soyer positioned himself between these worlds. The *Gastronomic Regenerator* offered the repertoire and refinements of a premier club kitchen, yet wrote in English for a broad readership beyond the trade. Its menu models, seasonal guidance, and hierarchical recipe structure linked elite French technique to British dining practices.

Public attention to hygiene and efficiency shaped Soyer's professional environment. Edwin Chadwick's 1842 sanitary report spurred reforms in ventilation, water supply, and cleanliness in urban establishments. At the Reform Club, Soyer introduced innovations in kitchen layout, ventilation, and heat management that increased safety and output. The *Gastronomic Regenerator* reflects this engineering mindset: it treats cookery as organized labor, dependent on

orderly spaces, measured heat, and reliable utensils. Its sequence from base preparations to finished dishes echoed contemporary notions of system and control. By unifying method with management, the book conveyed cookery as a technical discipline rather than a merely domestic art.

Food policy debates framed the book's moment. In 1846, Parliament repealed the Corn Laws, moving Britain toward freer grain imports during a period of high prices and scarcity. Simultaneously, the Great Famine devastated Ireland (1845-1852). Soyer soon took public roles in responses to hunger, designing a model soup kitchen in Dublin in 1847 and publishing charitable recipes aimed at economical nutrition. While *The Gastronomic Regenerator* is primarily a grand professional manual, its attention to economy, yields, and large-batch preparations aligns with these concerns. It presupposes accountability in provisioning and invites readers to see culinary skill as relevant to public welfare as well as luxury.

Within a decade, wartime exposed institutional weaknesses in British catering. During the Crimean War (1854-1856), Soyer traveled to the Black Sea in 1855 to reorganize army kitchens and introduced the portable Soyer Stove, adopted for field cooking. His later writings described methods for hospitals and barracks. *The Gastronomic Regenerator* anticipates this trajectory: its systematic recipes, economies of scale, and emphasis on stocks and soups suited mass service as well as banquets. By building a transferable framework of processes and ratios, the book provided tools that could migrate from club dining rooms to military camps, hospitals, and other large public institutions.

*The Gastronomic Regenerator* went through multiple editions and consolidated Soyer's reputation as Britain's most prominent chef. Professional cooks, caterers, and

ambitious households used it as a reference for sauces, joints, pastries, and menu composition. Its blend of display and discipline epitomized Victorian values: faith in progress, trust in expert systems, and an appetite for order amid rapid change. At the same time, its stress on economy and organization acknowledged anxieties about cost, nutrition, and public health. The work both reflected and helped shape its era, presenting cookery as a modern science of management that could serve pleasure, politics, and social need.

# **The Gastronomic Regenerator: A Simplified and Entirely New System of Cookery**

[Main Table of Contents](#)

PREFACE.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

IMPORTANT. DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPOSITION OF THIS WORK.

SOYER'S NEW MODE OF CARVING. &c. &c. &c.

DIRECTIONS FOR CARVING.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL WAY.

SADDLEBACK OF VENISON.

CARVING OF POULTRY.

THE TENDON SEPARATOR

DIRECTIONS FOR LARDING.

MEAT AND POULTRY.

FISH.

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT.

HOW EVERYTHING SHOULD BE IN COOKING.

BRAISED ROAST TURKEY, CAPON, OR FOWL.

AMATEUR RECEIPTS.

Ris de Veau aux Pistaches à la Dr. Roots.

Potage froid, ou Salade à la Dr. Roots.

Roast Swan à la Norwich.

THE GRAVY.

ANOTHER RECEIPT.

THE GRAVY.

Cock a Leekie à la Wemyss.

BOUQUET DE GIBIER, OR SPORTING NOSEGAY.

CADEAU FOR CHRISTMAS.

OLIVE-BRANCH BETWEEN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

NUMBER OF STEWPANS AND OTHER KITCHEN UTENSILS  
REQUIRED IN THE KITCHENS OF WHICH I HAVE GIVEN

PLANS, COMMENCING WITH THE COMPLETE BATTERIE DE CUISINE OF THE REFORM CLUB.

ENGRAVINGS.

THE GASTRONOMIC REGENERATOR.

SAUCES.

No. 1. Brown Sauce.

No. 2. Espagnole Sauce.

No. 3. Brown Sauce from all sorts of meat.

No. 4. For thickening Brown Sauce without making a roux.

No. 5. Velouté.

No. 6. Velouté, a plainer way.

No. 7. Veal Stock, White Sauce, or Bechamel.

No. 8. Sauce Allemande; (or German Sauce blanche.)

No. 9. Demi-Glace.

No. 10. Sauce au jus d'Estragon.

No. 11. Jus d'Estragon clair.

No. 12. Sauce au jus de Tomates.

No. 13. Sauce au jus de Champignons.

No. 14. Sauce demi-provençale.

No. 15. Sauce au jus piquant.

No. 16. Sauce au jus d'Echalote.

No. 17. Sauce au jus d'Orange.

No. 18. Sauce au jus de Bigarades.

No. 19. Jus lié demi Currie.

No. 20. Jus lié aux Concombres.

No. 21. Jus lié aux Truffles.

No. 22. Jus lié aux Anchois.

No. 23. Jus lié aux fines Herbes.

No. 24. Jus lié aux petits Navets.

No. 26. Sauce aux fines Herbes.

No. 27. Sauce piquante.  
No. 28. Sauce Robert.  
No. 29. Sauce Robert demi-provençale.  
No. 30. Sauce à l'Italienne.  
No. 31. Sauce à l'Italienne (white.)  
No. 32. Sauce Poivrade.  
No. 33. Sauce poivrade demi-provençale.  
No. 34. Sauce à la Batelière.  
No. 35. Sauce à la Réform.  
No. 36. Sauce au jus de Groseilles.  
No. 37. Sauce aux Tomates.  
No. 38. Sauce à la Tartare.  
No. 39. Papillote Sauce.  
No. 40. Sauce à la Diable.  
No. 41. Sauce Corinthien.  
No. 42. Sauce Provençale chaude.  
No. 43. Sauce à la Maître d'Hôtel.  
No. 44. Sauce à la Ravigote.  
No. 45. Sauce à l'Indienne.  
No. 46. Curry Sauce.  
No. 47. Sauce Soubise.  
No. 48. Sauce Soubise (brown).  
No. 49. Sauce à la Milanaise.  
No. 50. Sauce ou Ragout à la Financière.  
No. 51. Sauce aux Truffles.  
No. 52. Sauce aux Champignons.  
No. 53. Sauce à la purée de Truffles.  
No. 54. Sauce à la purée de Champignons.  
No. 55. Sauce Perigeux.

No. 56. Sauce Bechamel à la Crème.  
No. 57. Sauce au Suprême.  
No. 58. Velouté de Gibier.  
No. 59. Sauce à la purée de Gibier.  
No. 60. Sauce au fumée de Gibier.  
No. 61. Demi-glace de Gibier.  
No. 62. Sauce Matelotte.  
No. 63. Sauce Genevoise.  
No. 64. Sauce à la Beyrout.  
No. 65. Sauce à l'essence de Poissons.  
No. 66. Sauce à la Hollandaise.  
No. 67. Caper Sauce.  
No. 68. Lobster Sauce.  
No. 69. Oyster Sauce.  
No. 70. Muscle Sauce.  
No. 71. Melted Butter.  
No. 72. Anchovy Sauce.  
No. 73. Shrimp Sauce.  
No. 74. Demi Maître d'Hôtel Sauce.  
No. 75. Fennel Sauce.  
No. 76. Egg Sauce.  
No. 77. Lobster Butter.  
No. 78. Anchovy Butter.  
No. 79. Maître d'Hôtel Butter.  
No. 80. Ravigote Butter.  
SAUCES AND GARNITURES OF VEGETABLES.  
No. 81. Purée de Choux de Bruxelles.  
No. 82. Sauce aux Choux de Bruxelles.  
No. 83. Aux Haricots verts.

No. 84. Petit Pois à l'Anglaise.  
No. 85. Petit Pois au Lard.  
No. 86. Purée de Pois vert.  
No. 87. A la Palestine.  
No. 88. Palestine à la Bourgeoise.  
No. 89. Palestine au Maigre.  
No. 90. Purée d'Artichaut.  
No. 91. Purée à la Palestine maigre.  
No. 92. Navets Vierges.  
No. 93. Ragout de Navets à brun.  
No. 94. Purée de Navets à blanc.  
No. 95. Purée de Navets à brun.  
No. 96. Sauce aux Chou-fleurs.  
No. 97. Purée de Chou-fleurs.  
No. 98. Macédoine de Légumes.  
No. 99. Macédoine de Légumes, brown.  
No. 100. Jardinière.  
No. 101. Pointes d'Asperges en petits-pois.  
No. 102. Purée d'Asperges.  
No. 103. Concombres à blanc.  
No. 104. Concombres à brun.  
No. 105. Purée de Concombres.  
No. 106. Epinard au Jus.  
No. 107. Blanched Mushrooms.  
No. 108. Purée d'Oseille.  
No. 109. Ragout aux jeunes Racines.  
No. 110. Ragout de petits Oignons.  
No. 111. Ragouts de petits Oignons à blanc.  
No. 112. Garniture de fond d'Artichauts.

No. 113. Garniture de Haricot blanc nouveau.

No. 114. Gros Oignons farcis.

No. 115. Stewed Cabbage Lettuce.

No. 116. Chou braisé and Chou-crouste.

No. 117. Stewed Celery for Garniture and Celery Sauce.

No. 118. Choux-fleurs for Garnitures.

No. 119. Chicorée, or Endive Sauce.

#### APPENDIX TO THE SAUCES.

No. 120. Force meat of Veal.

No. 121. Force meat of Rabbits.

No. 122. Force meat of Fowl.

No. 123. Force meat of Game.

No. 124. Force meat of Whittings.

No. 125. Panada for forcemeats.

No. 126. Force meat of Cod's Liver.

No. 127. Veal Stuffing.

No. 128. To prepare Cockscombs.

No. 129. To boil Rice.

No. 130. To blanch Maccaroni.

No. 131. Croquettes de Pomme de Terre.

No. 132. Glaze.

#### POTAGES OR SOUPS.

No. 133. Clear light Broth, or first Stock.

No. 134. Consommé, or clear Soup.

No. 135. Brown Gravy.

No. 136. Potage à la Victoria.

No. 137. Potage à la Louis Philippe.

No. 138. Potage à la Prince of Wales.

No. 139. Potage à la Comte de Paris.

No. 140. Potage à la Princesse Royale.  
No. 141. Potage à la Saxe Cobourg.  
No. 142. Potage à la Comtesse.  
No. 143. Potage à la Gresham.  
No. 144. Potage à la Colbert.  
No. 145. Potage à la Clermont.  
No. 146. Potage Macédoine de Légumes.  
No. 147. Potage à la Jardinière.  
No. 148. Potage à la Julienne.  
No. 149. Potage aux petits Navets à brun.  
No. 150. Potage à la Printanière.  
No. 151. Potage à la Jérusalem.  
No. 152. Potage à la Marcus Hill.  
No. 153. Potage aux pointes d'Asperges et Œufs pochés.  
No. 154. Potage à la Brunoise.  
No. 155. Potage à la Nivernaise.  
No. 156. Potage à la Palestine.  
No. 157. Potage à la purée de Navets.  
No. 158. Potage à purée d'Asperges.  
No. 159. Potage à la Crécy.  
No. 160. Potage à la purée de Choufleur.  
No. 161. Potage à la purée de Concombres.  
No. 162. Potage à la purée de Pois verts.  
No. 163. Clear Giblet Soup.  
No. 164. Potage aux Queues de Bœuf (clair).  
No. 165. Potage aux Queues d'Agneau.  
No. 166. Potage aux Queues de veau (clair).  
No. 167. Potage à la Duchesse.  
No. 168. Clear Grouse Soup.

[No. 169. Clear Partridge Soup.](#)  
[No. 170. Clear Pheasant Soup.](#)  
[No. 171. Clear Woodcock Soup.](#)  
[No. 172. Clear Hare Soup.](#)  
[No. 173. Potage clair à la Poissonnière.](#)  
[No. 174. Grouse Soup.](#)  
[No. 175. Pheasant Soup.](#)  
[No. 176. Partridge Soup.](#)  
[No. 177. Hare Soup.](#)  
[No. 178. Purée of all kinds of Game, mixed or separate.](#)  
[No. 179. Giblet Soup.](#)  
[No. 180. Potage à la Reine.](#)  
[No. 181. Potage à la Regente.](#)  
[No. 182. Soup Mulligatawny.](#)  
[No. 183. Potage Queues de Veau à blanc.](#)  
[No. 184. Potage Queues de Veau à l'Indienne.](#)  
[No. 185. Potage Tête de Veau à l'Indienne.](#)  
[No. 186. Potage Queues de Bœuf à l'Indienne.](#)  
[No. 187. Potage Queues de Bœuf à l'Anglaise.](#)  
[No. 188. Potage aux Huîtres.](#)  
[No. 189. Potage aux filets de Soles.](#)  
[No. 190. Potage à la Poissonnière.](#)  
[No. 191. Potage d'Anguille.](#)  
[No. 192. Potage de Homard.](#)  
[No. 193. Potage à la Chanoinaise.](#)  
[No. 194. Potage Pâte d'Italie.](#)  
[No. 195. Potage au Vermicelle.](#)  
[No. 196. Potage à la Semoule.](#)  
[No. 197. Potage au Riz.](#)

No. 198. Potage au Macaroni.

No. 199. Potage au Macaroni en rubands.

No. 200. Turtle Soup.

No. 201. Clear Turtle Soup.

No. 202. Mock Turtle Soup.

METHOD OF CLEANING SALT-WATER FISH.

METHOD OF CLEANING FRESH-WATER FISH.

POISSONS.

No. 203. Turbot, to boil.

No. 204. Turbot à la Crème.

No. 205. Turbot Sauce homard.

No. 206. Turbot à la Hollandaise.

No. 207. Turbot à la Mazarine.

No. 208. Turbot en matelote Normande.

No. 209. Turbot en Matelote vierge.

No. 210. Turbot à la Religieuse.

No. 211. Turbot à la Crème (gratiné).

No. 212. Turbot à la Poissonière.

No. 213. Turbot à la Crème d'Anchois.

No. 214. Small Turbot à la Meunière.

No. 215. Turbot au gratin à la Provençale.

No. 216. Brill au naturel.

No. 217. Brill à la purée de Câpres.

No. 218. Brill à la Hollandaise.

No. 219. Brill aux Câpres.

No. 220. Brill à la Meunière.

No. 221. Brill sauce Homard.

No. 222. Brill à la Billingsgate.

No. 223. Brill au gratin.

No. 224. Brill à la crème d'Anchois.  
No. 225. Filets de Brill à la Juive.  
No. 226. Filets de Brill en matelote.  
No. 227. John Dorée.  
No. 228. John Dorée à l'Orléannaise.  
No. 229. John Dorée en matelote Marinière.  
No. 230. John Dorée à la Crèmière.  
No. 231. John Dorée en Ravigote.  
No. 232. John Dorée à la purée de Crevettes.  
No. 233. John Dorée à la Batelière.  
No. 234. John Dorée à la Crème (gratiné.)  
No. 235. John Dorée à la Hollandaise.  
No. 236. Saumon.  
No. 237. Saumon au naturel.  
No. 238. Crimped Salmon au naturel.  
No. 239. Saumon en matelote Marinière.  
No. 241. Saumon à la Hollandaise.  
No. 242. Saumon à la Cardinal.  
No. 243. Saumon à l'Amiral.  
No. 244. Saumon en matelote Saxone.  
No. 245. Saumon à la Beyrout.  
No. 246. Saumon à la Pêcheuse.  
No. 247. Saumon à l'Ecillière.  
No. 248. Saumon à la Crème d'Anchois.  
No. 249. Saumon au gratin à la Provençale.  
No. 250. Saumon à la Crème (gratiné) .  
No. 251. Sole en matelote Normande.  
No. 252. Sole au gratin. [5]  
No. 253. Sole à la Poltaise.

No. 254. Sole à la Hollandaise.  
No. 255. Sole aux fines herbes.  
No. 256. Sole à la Maître d'Hôtel.  
No. 257. Sole a l'Italienne.  
No. 258. Soles plain fried.  
No. 259. Sole à la Colbert.  
No. 260. Sole à la Meunière.  
No. 261. Sole à la Crème d'Anchois.  
No. 262. Filets de Soles en matelote.  
No. 263. Filets de Soles au gratin.  
No. 264. Filets de Soles à la Maître d'Hôtel.  
No. 265. Filets de Soles à la Hollandaise.  
No. 266. Filets de Soles à l'Italienne.  
No. 267. Filets de Soles en ravigote.  
No. 268. Filets de Sole à la Orlie.  
No. 271. Cod-fish au naturel.  
No. 272. Cabillaud aux Huîtres.  
No. 273. Cabillaud à la Béchamel.  
No. 274. Cabillaud à la Collégienne.  
No. 275. Cabillaud à la Noble Dame.  
No. 276. Stewed Cod à l'Ecossaise.  
No. 277. Cabillaud entier à la Bourgeoise.  
No. 278. Cabillaud à la Rachel.  
No. 279. Slices of Cod à la Montefiore.  
No. 280. Cabillaud à la Crème (gratiné .).  
No. 281. Cabillaud à la Provençale.  
No. 282. Cabillaud à la Juive.  
No. 283. Cabillaud à la Hollandaise.  
No. 284. Salt Fish.

**143** A small, informal measure used in historical recipes denoting a spoon smaller than a teaspoon; quantities varied, but it generally indicates a very small amount (orders of magnitude smaller than a teaspoon).

**144** A traditional British dish made by frying together leftover potatoes and brassicas (especially cabbage) with any remaining meat, commonly served hot from leftovers.

**145** An older anglicized spelling for curry powder, a blended spice mix created in Britain to approximate South Asian curry flavors and used widely in 19th-century 'currie' preparations.

**146** A pickled vegetable relish (often chopped cauliflower, gherkins and onions) in a mustardy, vinegary sauce; a popular Victorian-era British condiment still available today as 'piccalilli.'

**147** A cut of beef from the hindquarters of the animal, commonly roasted or sliced; in modern butchery it corresponds roughly to rump or part of the sirloin/round area.

**148** A type of pastry that is intermediate between puff pastry and plain (short) pastry, made to give some flakiness without the full labour of traditional puff pastry; used here for pie coverings.

**149** An older spelling of 'eschalot' or 'échalote', meaning shallot — a small onion-like allium used widely in French and European cooking for a milder onion flavour.

**150** Named retailers or makers of household and kitchen equipment referenced by the text; likely London suppliers or manufacturers of coffee filters or similar utensils in the 19th

century (the author states uncertainty between the two names).

**151** A silver coffee-serving pot or vessel for pouring and presenting coffee at table; in the period this often referred to an elegant metal pot rather than a modern coffee press.

**152** The name given in the text for a 15th-century cleric installed as Archbishop of York in 1470; the spelling reflects period forms (George Neville was a member of the Neville family associated with the Earl of Warwick).

**153** Sir Henry Pottinger (1789–1856) was a British soldier and diplomat notable for his role in China, including negotiating the Treaty of Nanking and serving as the first Governor of Hong Kong in the 1840s.

**154** An adjective used in the 19th century to describe objects styled after a pagoda; here it refers to a pagoda-inspired table ornament or dish with an Orientalizing design.

**155** A French name meaning 'birds'-nest soup', referring to the Chinese delicacy made from swiftlet nests (edible bird's nests), long regarded in Europe as an exotic and delicate soup.

**156** A French idiom meaning 'in the manner of a dowager' (*douairière*), used here to describe settling into an armchair in the comfortable, stately way associated with an elderly widow.

**157** A fanciful dish title in the book; 'Macédoine' in culinary usage denotes a mixture of diced vegetables or fruits, so the phrase evokes a composed 'cream of Great Britain' presented as a medley.

**158** A title for the wife of the Duke of Sutherland, a high-ranking British aristocrat; multiple individuals held this title in the 19th century, so the exact person depends on the date referenced.

**159** Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen (1792–1849) was queen consort to King William IV of the United Kingdom (reigned 1830–1837), commonly known as Queen Adelaide in mid-19th-century Britain.

**160** French form of Mary Stuart (Mary, Queen of Scots, 1542–1587), a 16th-century Scottish monarch often referenced in later European culinary namesakes.

**161** Refers to Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1819–1861), consort of Queen Victoria; his name was commonly used for 19th-century dishes and culinary dedications.

**162** A culinary style named after the Battle of Marengo (14 June 1800); the eponymous dish (e.g., Chicken Marengo) is popularly attributed to Napoleon's cook and believed to date from around 1800.

**163** Cross & Blackwell was a British food manufacturing and preserving firm prominent in the 19th and 20th centuries, known for sauces, condiments and canned goods; Soho Square indicates their London commercial address used for distribution in this period.

**164** The Reform Club is a well-known London gentlemen's club on Pall Mall, founded in the 1830s and associated with liberal political and social circles; in the 19th century it housed dining and social facilities where Soyer worked as a chef.

**165** Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617–1682) was a celebrated Spanish Baroque painter noted for religious works and genre scenes; 19th-century critics often compared later painters to 'Murillo' as a measure of warm color and sentimental realism.

**166** *Der Freischütz* is a German Romantic opera by Carl Maria von Weber that premiered in 1821 and was influential across Europe; the reference indicates a contemporary musician (Weber) admired the subject's performance of music from that opera.

**167** Refers to the German ducal title of Saxe-Gotha; in the mid-19th century this likely denotes Ernest (Ernst) I, Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1784–1844), a ruling German prince of that era.

**168** S. A. R. is the French abbreviation for 'Son Altesse Royale' (His Royal Highness); the Duke of Cambridge at this time was a British royal title held by Prince Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge (1774–1850).

**169** A large, historic cemetery in London opened in the 1830s as one of the city's 'Magnificent Seven' burial grounds and noted for many Victorian monuments and interments.

**170** François Vatel was a celebrated 17th-century French steward and maître d'hôtel famed for organising elaborate court banquets; his name became synonymous with culinary dedication and an oft-recounted tragic anecdote about his death after a banquet fiasco.

**171** An older spelling of 'Lacrimae Christi' (literally 'tears of Christ'), a traditional wine from the Campania region of southern Italy that was historically prized as a table and dessert wine.