Altering Cooking and Eating Habits during the Romanian Communist Regime by Using Cookbooks: A Digital History Project

Ina Ghita

Department of Education, University of Barcelona, Spain

Abstract: This digital project examines the role of a cook book, Sanda Marin's *Carte de Bucate*, first published in 1936, as a vehicle for social education in Communist Romania. The book was censored and transformed during the Communist regime as two interconnected phenomena were taking place: the reinforcing of the ideology of the Communist model and an increasing economic crisis that led to scarcity of food. The paper also pays attention to how the language and tone used in the book changed depending on the understanding of gender roles in different decades. In spite of Communist claims of an equal division of responsibilities, procuring of food and cooking was considered a woman's task. By addressing equal responsibility in the public sphere, not at home, the progress toward gender equity reached after the War was completely erased during communism since women had to work and also be responsible for all domestic duties at home, a situation that has been similar in other eastern European countries to this day.

Keywords: cookbooks, Romania, communist regime, women, digital history.

Modification de la cuisine et des habitudes alimentaires en utilisant des livres de recettes durant le Régime communiste en Roumanie : un projet digital d'histoire

Résumé: Cet exposé présente un projet digital qui explore le rôle des livres de recettes alimentaires comme véhicule de l'éducation sociale en Roumanie communiste. L'auteur examine comment l'un des livres de recettes roumains : *La Carte de Bucate* de Sanda Marin, publié originellement en 1936, fut édité, censuré et transformé durant le régime communiste, alors que deux phénomènes séparés bien que reliés avaient lieu : le parti communiste cherchant à renforcer l'idéologie du modèle communiste, et la pénurie croissante des denrées alimentaires causées par la crise économique grandissante. L'auteur examine aussi le changement du langage et du ton du livre selon l'évolution perçue des rôles des genres au cours des différentes décades. Bien que le parti communiste prétendait diviser également les tâches et les responsabilités entre homme et femme, l'achat de la nourriture et la cuisine étaient encore considérés comme responsabilité des femmes. En abordant la division des tâches dans le domaine public seulement, et non au foyer, le progrès vers l'égalité des genres après les deux Grandes Guerres avait été complètement oblitéré durant l'ère communiste alors que les femmes avaient un emploi journalier et assumaient la responsabilité complète des devoirs domestiques. Cette attente persiste encore aujourd'hui dans maintes familles roumaines et en Europe de l'Est.

Mots-clés: les livres de recettes; la Roumanie; le régime communiste; l'histoire numérique.

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Alterando hábitos de cocina y comida durante el régimen comunista rumano por medio de los libros de cocina: un Proyecto de historia digital

Resumen: Este proyecto digital examina el papel de un libro de cocina, *Carte de Bucate* de Sandra Marín, publicado por primera vez en 1936, como un vehículo de educación social en la Rumanía comunista. El libro fue censurado, editado, y transformado durante el régimen comunista al mismo tiempo que dos fenómenos interconectados tenían lugar: el re-enforcement del modelo comunista como ideología y una creciente crisis económica que llevó a la escasez de alimentos. El trabajo también presta atención a cambios en el lenguaje del libro y en el tono usado dependiendo del cambio de los roles de géneros en décadas diferentes. A pesar de la retórica comunista sobre la división igualitaria de las responsabilidades, la compra de comida y la cocina eran consideradas responsabilidad de la mujer. Dado que se proponía igual responsabilidad en la esfera pública y no en la casa, el progreso hacia igualdad de género que se había alcanzado después de la guerra fue completamente borrado durante el comunismo, las mujeres tenían que trabajar afuera y ser también responsables de las tareas domésticas, situación que ha sido similar en otros países del este de Europa hasta estos días.

Palabras clave: libros de cocina, Rumanía, régimen comunista, mujeres, historia digital

Editor's note:

This is a pdf version of a digital native work. For a fuller appreciation of the work, we encourage you to view the html version, which is currently housed at:
<https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/public/journals/6/content/ghita/index.html>.

Cookbooks are given modest attention and value and are often overlooked as instructional books. They are perceived as having little academic value, and they are categorized as hobby or entertainment publications. At their best they are perceived as manuals for teaching practical skills: prepping, cutting, boiling, mixing ingredients, choosing the correct cooking temperature. Yet cookbooks have a hidden role, that of teaching their readers, not only how to cook and appreciate certain dishes, but also teaching them how to behave and think in a specific way. As a vehicle for social education, cookbooks teach culture and help conserve doctrine.

In recent work (Ghita, 2016), which culminated in the creation of a digital project that can be viewed at <https://thisfoodie.com/dhp>, I investigated and discussed how food consumption patterns, as well as cooking and eating habits have changed in Romania during

the communist era. The project looked at how one of the most popular Romanian cookbooks, Sanda Marin's *Carte de Bucate*, published for the first time in 1936, has been edited, censored and transformed during the communist regime, as two separate, yet interconnected, phenomena were taking place: the communist party reinforcing the ideology of the communist model, and the increasing economic crisis, which made basic foodstuffs increasingly scarce.

A process of educationalization (Tröhler, 2016) through food and cooking occurred, during the communist regime, as cookbooks, like all books of the era, were adapted to the communist ideology. The cookbook changed from its original version in 1936 to 1969, when it was last edited: recipes were removed completely when they seemed too cosmopolitan and the names of some recipes changed, in an effort to make them sound more Romanian (*éclair* became *ecler*, *charlotte* became *șarlotă*); quantities and ingredients in traditional recipes were scaled down as the ingredients necessary to make them became more difficult to procure (such as *cozonacimoldovenești*); recipes that sounded too foreign disappeared completely (*Beignets*, *Chateaubriant*, *Kugelhupf*); and new recipes were introduced, using new ingredients to replace (at that time) difficult to find ones (such as *aterini prăjiți*) or suggesting new recipe variations with available ingredients (replacing fresh fish in recipes with canned tuna, using a mortadella-like soy salami instead of beef and pork, using white beans instead of fish roe).

The digital project presented in this paper also aims to become an educational tool by presenting cultural history in a way that supports critical thinking and encourages idea exchange, while at the same time engaging and motivating users.

One of the reasons for which I chose to explore Romanian identity and history by creating a project focused on food, is that the topic of food makes participation more accessible to a variety of users. Non-academic users rarely contribute to research in highly specialized fields, yet in the field of food studies, scholars can benefit from the knowledge of their students or the society at large (Pilcher, 2016).

From a theoretical point of view, Pilcher (2016) noted that the connection between taste and social distinction became a central focus in sociology, when Pierre Bourdieu observed that taste preferences internalize group values, which in turn express and help maintain social hierarchies (p.863).

In the context of the communist regime, where the communist leadership aimed to reshape and reorder the societal structure, where individualism was suppressed in favour of collectivism, yet at the same time, where Ceaușescu's regime of nepotism and corruption was installed (Hitchins, 2014), any particular changes in the way of eating and cooking, and thus changes in taste preferences, can shed light upon cultural changes difficult to observe in other collections of numbers, statistics and facts.

The main historical question, which this digital project addresses, refers to those parts of the identity of Romanians that may have been suppressed and lost during the communist regime. One of the ways I am exploring this question is by looking in detail at how Marin's cookbook changes during the communist regime. Another is by addressing cooking and taste preferences during communism and comparing them with food preferences a hundred, respectively two hundred years previously. Finally, the digital project is open to both scholars

and non-scholars to share and discuss their own opinions and ideas regarding Romanian food and taste and how it might have changed in the last decades.

Project Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The data used in this project were: five editions of Sanda Marin's cookbook published in 1943, 1954, 1966, 1968 and 2005, and two other popular Romanian cookbooks published in 1749 and 1984, respectively. This data was overlaid with food production and consumption data from The Yearly Statistics Volume of the Socialist Republic of Romania (Anuarul Statistic al

Republicii Socialiste Romania), 1985, Romanian newspapers of the era (Scînteia) and other publicly available archival data further mentioned in this chapter. Archival interviews, video footage and photographs are also used to illustrate this digital history project.

The data has been analysed by using the historical method, where a fact from the past is transformed through selection, analysis, and interpretation into a fact of history through the following steps: 1) identifying the problems to clarify, 2) gathering primary and secondary sources, conducting archival research, and 3) using theoretical frameworks and conceptual tools to build an interpretation (Carr, 1961).

Project Limitations

This digital history project had some limitations in terms of time and resources. Digital history projects are usually complex constructs built over a long period of time, usually by teams of researchers and specialists who share their work between creating content, representing data, coding and design. This project is an application of theoretical concepts and design principles described in previous work (Ghita, 2016). While the application of these concepts takes its most straightforward shape in my work to date, the concepts can be applied in similar ways using more sophisticated data visualization, interactivity and storytelling applications.

Another limitation of this project is using an edition of Marin's cookbook published in 1943, which has been described (Marin, 2005) as being very similar to the original 1936 edition, as the original is not currently available in Romanian national public library or archives.

As Potter and Romano (2012) suggested, investigating contemporary history can be more demanding and challenging than writing history about times and people long gone. Such challenges include constructing narratives in the absence of real moments of closure, working with, and interpreting in context, new kinds of sources that were not available a few decades ago, and ensuring data privacy when collecting information.

In the following sections of this paper, I give an overview of the historical and cultural context after World War II, and of some of the most popular Romanian cookbooks in the last three centuries. Second, I give an overview of the data used in this project. Third, I describe the digital history project, which can be accessed online at <https://thisfoodie.com/dhp>, specifically discussing the ways in which the project was designed to support critical thinking and idea

exchange, as well as the ways in which it was designed for being interactive and motivating users to engage with the content.

Food in Communist Romania

Romania before, and Romania after communism, are two very different countries (Hitchins, 2014). After World War I, Romania had a King linked to the major houses of Europe and a Queen who was Queen Victoria's of England own niece, as well as a foreign policy that "skilfully balanced relations with the Allies and the Axis" (King 2007).

In 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote "The Communist Manifesto". Feeling that the working class was being exploited, they envisioned a world where the proletariat would rise against the bourgeoisie and establish a new society. In 1917 the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, changed their name to the Communist Party and started promoting their ideals to other socialist parties in Europe.

Communist leaders watching the military parade in 1966, image source: Fototeca online a comunismului românesc, 271/1966

The Romanian Communist Party (RCP) was formed in 1921 and was at the time only a minor force with very little prospect of ever reaching mass recruitment, yet after World War II, in the context of the rise of power of the USSR and the defeat of Germany, with soviet troops present in the country, the RCP saw a mass enrolment (Gilberg, 1990). In 1947 the RCP took power over the country by forcing the 26-year-old King Michael I of Romania to abdicate, subsequently creating a defamation campaign against the "cowardly" king (Boia, 2014). In 1965, after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej, who was Romania's first communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu came to power, instituting national communism, "a hybrid form of Marxism-Leninism that represents a blend of traditional values, elements of Marxist classics and the particular (and peculiar) personal aspects that Ceaușescu brought to the development of the theory" (Gilberg, 1990, p. 49). King (2007) describes the communist regime in Romania as:

“a totalitarian system from its founding to its fall, (...) one based on the continual violation of human rights, on the supremacy of an ideology hostile to an open society, on the monopoly of power exercised by a small group of individuals, and on repression, intimidation, and corruption” (p.627).

Communist propaganda – Nicolae and Elena; Ceausescu planting a tree, image by Gabriel, shared with CC BY 4.0

The communist model in Romania was imposed by the Soviet Union, and did not take shape from within the society, a fact of which the majority of the population was aware. Romanian communists aimed to fundamentally reorder the societal structure, the lifestyle and the spiritual life of the peasant. Individualism was suppressed in favour of collectivism; individual farms were transformed into factories and peasants into factory workers (Hitchins, 2014). As one of the main goals of the social restructuring work done by the Communist Party in Romania was the creation of classes, the emphasis was put on developing the working class, on obedience and conformity. The school curriculum was selected to represent the socialist ideology and the import of western books or ideas was prohibited (Whitmarsh & Ritter, 2007).

Ceaușescu ruled the country until the revolution of 1989, when, after ordering the army to crush the rebellion using any means necessary, including the killing of numerous demonstrators, he was captured, quickly judged in a sham trial, found guilty of genocide against the Romanian people and swiftly condemned to death by a group of communists led by Ion Iliescu, who became the next Romanian president (Hitchins, 2014).

During Ceausescu's regime, nepotism and corruption, together with despotism and the cult of personality, became a new way of life (Hitchins, 2014). After 1989, the country was still ruled by former communists. Members of the secret services (Securitatea) became powerful businessmen, leaving behind a communist mentality and a legacy of corruption. "Romania's misfortune" suggests King (2007), was "a system built not just by a band of miscreants but by an entire country that spent the second half of the twentieth century at war with itself (p.723)." From 1965 to 1989, Ceaușescu implemented a series of changes in the development strategy of Romania, one of which was to focus on the industrialisation and urbanisation of the country, to the detriment of agricultural investment (Gilberg, 1990). As a result of this policy,

from 1948 to 1984, 27 % of the country's population moved from rural communes to cities and towns (Anuarul Statistic al Republicii Socialiste Romania, 1985), depending on the government to manage the production and the sale of food as opposed to procuring it themselves.

The period from 1960 to 1975 was a period of relative consumer abundance when Romanians reported that they could buy luxury products such as French cognac, American Whisky, and black caviar; and they had access to new electro-domestic products, such as vacuum cleaners and washing machines (Massino, 2012). Yet, by the end of the 1970s, these products became unavailable and basic food items had started to become scarce (Massino, 2012).

The tradition of studying food consumption in Romania was interrupted and even forbidden during the communist regime (Petrovici and Ritson, 2000). Consumption data was "protected" and counterfeited, with data consumption on foodstuffs often overestimated. Therefore, the data available from 1944 to 1989 is unreliable and sometimes non-existent.

The prolonged underinvestment in agriculture quickly led to a dramatic lowering of production. In the early 80's, Ceaușescu decided to pay Romania's foreign debt by exporting gasoline, clothing and foodstuffs, which had dire consequences for Romanians, as quality produce and meat went to export, while only second and third quality foodstuffs were available to Romanians (Hitchins, 2014, Massino, 2012, Gilberg, 1990).

From the beginning of the 1980s, meat, oil and sugar started to be rationed, as basic food products became insufficient for the population consumption. On the 17th of November, 1985, Ceaușescu published in the national newspaper, *Scînteia*, the new "scientific diet", which aimed at convincing Romanians that they were eating too much, and drastically reduced their allowed consumption of basic food products such as meat, wheat and flour, oil and fruit (see fig.3) (*Scînteia*, 1985).

The "scientific diet" described the maximum limits of foodstuffs permitted to each citizen, yet, in reality, not all the listed foodstuffs were always available (Massino, 2012). People needed to queue for hours in order to get their rations of sugar and eggs or buy bread, milk and meat, which were increasingly difficult to find (Gilberg, 1990).

The "scientific diet" allowed each individual a maximum daily intake of 150 grams of meat (the equivalent of a piece of meat the size of the palm of a hand), three grams of margarine (butter was very difficult to find), or half a teaspoon, five and a half teaspoons of oil, two cups of flour, 1 medium sized potato, a small piece of fruit the size of a tennis ball, and once every three days, an egg. Soap and detergent were also rationed, allowing individuals to use around three grams a soap per day and ten grams of detergent, which approximates to washing a full load every ten days.

The “scientific diet”, published in 1985, delineated the maximum amount of each ingredients an individual was allowed to consume, in one year.

As industrial laborers were considered to do the most productive work in the communist society, they were given priority in terms of housing and distribution of food. On the black market, high status workers had access to a variety of goods through closed stores (magazinele inchise), while workers in restaurants and factories, who had access to food, would use those for personal and bartering needs. For the rest of Romanians, the most common means of procuring food was the queue (Massino, 2012).

As foodstuffs became more and more scarce, the daily experience of preparing food became a burden for women, who were in charge of cooking for the whole family (Massino, 2012). They had to make do, cooking using seasonings and inferior meat trimmings, canned fish and meat, soy salami and produce of inferior quality. The egg ration turned baking into an activity reserved for festivities or special days.

A local newspaper ad portrays a smiling, perfectly coiffed woman, pointing at the vegetable section of a food shop along with a copy that reads: "Fresh vegetables and legumes: they can always be found at Braila Factory", image by Gabriel, shared with CC BY 4.0

A quote from Masino's (2012) interview with a Romanian woman from Brasov, Romania, illustrates how challenging cooking or following a recipe had become:

"I'd come home, sit down on the chair in the kitchen, and begin to invent meals... because I couldn't follow a cookbook... hmmm... I don't have parsley... I can't make this because I don't have cheese... so then I prepared food that you wouldn't find in any recipe... I would make the first and second course and I only had potatoes... I'd add a vegetable... some eggs with flour... and also make a (n.red: pretend) goulash soup" (p. 242)

In his autobiography, Sandru (2013) remembers the foodstuffs that were available to him in his day to day life:

“Basic food staples were available in communist Romania, some in more abundance than others, for which people had to wait long lines, come rain, come shine. Vegetables and fruits were available only in season. The variety of food was limited, and most of the daily diet was about the same. I recall my daily diet being bread and milk in the morning; a sandwich with lard, or butter, or marmalade, for lunch and bread with fried potatoes or cabbage, or soups, for dinner. On Sundays, my family had a chicken or other meat in soups or stews. And my mom baked a cake for sweets. Try this diet for a month. One benefit is that you might lose weight” (p. 87)

By looking at the instituted rations, the consumption pattern changes, the personal interviews and how the most popular cookbook at the time was censored and edited, together with other societal issues happening at the same time, we can see a glimpse of what it must have meant to live anormal life during the communist dictatorship.

Despite Communist claims of dividing work and responsibility equally, procuring food and cooking was considered the responsibility of women during communism and after 1989. During the interwar period, feminism and the equality of the genders were concepts considered important in the making of public policy (Bucur, 2008). During both world wars, women experience an initial period of economic and emotional vulnerability, yet as women took the role of heads of the household and breadwinner during this time, they became more independent and self-reliant and have started to question traditional gender roles at the workplace and at home (Wingfield & Bucur-Deckard, 2006).

By 1945, the communist regime in Eastern Europe stopped any kind of progress in closing the gap between the Communist rhetoric of gender equality and the reality, by only addressing labour division in the public sphere, but not at home (Bucur, 2008). Women held a workday job and were also responsible for all domestic duties at home, expectation that has carried out in many families, until today. The main argument was following the laws of nature and helping women achieve their main functions in the new society: maternity and running the household. (Wingfield & BucurDeckard, 2006). The Communist Party put a great emphasis on the role of women as Mothers of the People, encouraging families to have many children, even when the resources were scarce. Mothers of more than ten children, for instance, would receive a state medal and called “Hero Mothers”. It is why, Bucur argues, in the years after 1989, feminism felt like yet another imported foreign, capitalist concept and not as a national philosophy.

Some of the most Important Cookbooks in Romania

Calistru (2011) saw eating as one of the most insightful ways of looking into the everyday life of a people. A cookbook is a tool created to offer lifestyle solutions, which is then crystalized into a form of culture (p.21).

The oldest Romanian cookbook was *Carte întru care să scriu mâncările de pește i raci, stridii, melci, legumi, erburi și alte mâncări de sec și de dulce, despre orânduiala lor* a three hundred year old manuscript written in chirilic letters (Gaster, 1749), volume later transcribed

to the latin alphabet by Ioana Cantacuzino, in her volume *O lume într-o carte de bucate: manuscris din epoca brâncovenească* (Cantacuzino, 1997). The cookbook is

a collection of 293 culinary recipes; some translated from Italian, French and German and adapted to the ingredients available to the Romanian cook (Calistru 2011).

Gaster cookbook (1976)

recipes by ingredient

In 1841, writers Costache Negruzzi and Mihail Kogălniceanu published the first edition of another well-known collection of recipes, *200 de rețete*

cercate de bucate, prăjituri și alte trebi gospodărești (Negruzzi & Kogălniceanu, 1942). The cookbook featured 200 recipes, out of which only four were fish-based and nine for freshwater lobster (*rac*). 31 recipes were for meat-based dishes, out of which the majority feature beef and mutton and only very few using as a main ingredient pork ham. 18 recipes asked for poultry as the main ingredient, while 27 recipes were dedicated to vegetable-based recipes. A big portion of this cookbook, 80 recipes, featured pastry recipes, such as pies, cakes and jellies (*zalatină*). The cookbook also featured six recipes for soup.

Negruzzi & Kogălniceanu cookbook (1841)

recipes by ingredient/type

In 1936 Sanda Marin (Cecilia Maria Zapan, born Simionescu) published her *Carte de bucate*, a cookbook that was going to become one of the most popular Romanian cookbooks in the next decades until today. Sanda Marin was born in December 1890 into a rich family of intellectuals, the daughter of natural sciences, professor Ion Simionescu and music high-school teacher Florica Musicescu. She later married Mihai Zapan, professor and doctor in chemistry. She had studied literature and music in Paris and fluently spoke French, English and German. In the 1930's Marin moved back to Romania, where, disappointed by the cookbooks she could find on the market at the time, decided to write one and to prove that cooking can also be art (Boerescu, 2017).

Marin cookbook (2005)

recipes by ingredient/type

Livia Bodea, the coordinator of the latest edition of Marin's *Carte de Bucate* (Marin, 2005) described Marin's cookbook as "the most lasting Romanian cookbook" (Sanda Marin, o doamnă cu bun gust, n.d.). Bodea believed Marin wanted to also teach good manners with her Cookbook, such as properly setting the table, or pair wine with food. The book was present in every kitchen and its popularity turned it into a sort of magical tool for fixing any problem in the kitchen. The cookbook originally had a cosmopolitan dimension which can be attributed to Marin's international education and travels. However, during 1944 and 1989, when The People were expected to only think and eat with the detailed direction and the approval of the Party, the book was drastically censored: anything that sounded foreign was removed or renamed and the quantities used in the original recipes were halved or replaced (Sanda Marin, o doamnă cu bun gust, n.d.).

A comparison of the three cookbooks, showing the number of recipes based on meat & fish, crustaceans, vegetables, and desserts.

Marin's Cookbook

Marin's Cookbook changed numerous times during the communist regime and even in the years after the regime ended. The volume was first published in 1936 at the editorial *Cartea Românească*^[1] and contained more than 1400 recipes. Until 1945 it had already been published in at least 13 editions^[2], with a preface written by writer, lawyer and gourmand

Alexandru Osvald "Păstorel" Teodoreanu^[3]. Teodoreanu was rumored to have authored the cookbook, as he was already publishing short stories that included recipes in literary magazines, and he was a well-known intellectual of the era.

From 1950, which coincides with the moment the Romanian Communist Party took full party control over the country, the book was edited by a new editorial, Editura Tehnică, which published four editions in the 1950s and another three in the 1960s, with the last edition being published in 1969^[4]. The 1954 edition, called by Bărnă in the preface of the 2005 volume (Marin, 2005), "the austere edition" only featured 855 recipes and started with an introduction written by Mircea Petrescu.

The 1966 edition, published after Dej's death and one year into Ceausescu's rule of the Communist Party and of the country, started with a highly edited version of Petrescu's preface, signed by assistant-dietician Roda Vişinescu. This edition featured 1324 recipes, some published in the original edition and other new recipes. The 2005 edition featured 1486 recipes, including the recipes in the original edition, but also some recipes introduced in the 60s volumes.

The three prefaces, written by Teodoreanu, Petrescu and Vişinescu, are very different: while the first is rich and entertaining, including anecdotes and an almost literary description of the ingredients (as was the Teodoreanu's style), the last two are increasingly rigid, instructional

and have an marked educational purpose: giving detailed instructions about the quantity of food individuals in different work situations should use and how to avoid diseases that appear as a consequence of bad eating habits.

Teodoreanu's preface included long descriptions, such as:

"From the mountains, to the Danube and the sea, Romania presents the most varied land in scenic landscapes and riches, among others gastronomical ... All kinds of livestock and poultry, game, fish, fruits, obtained by the mercy of the Creator of this blessed land, where phrases like 'butter and honey flowed in the streets' symbolize a mythical state of affairs.

The Black Sea, with its mackerel (which is from the Danube, but also of saltwater ...) with its Pinchuk's gobies, horse mackerels, red mullets, rays, Old World silversides, mussels and shrimp and its rivers and lakes with freshwater lobster of all sizes, from the Căldărușani one, big as a stag beetle, to the Brateș, Dorohoi or Brașov ones, big as a lobster, then trouts, hucks, sterlets, carps, sturgeons, perch, northern pike, tench, dwarf catfish; with its giants mountains and wooded valleys, teeming with pelt game and moving with feathered game, with its vineyards and orchards filled with the most wonderful kind of fruit, from the lemon of Balchik to the bramble-berries, raspberries, strawberries, and wild strawberries of the Carpathians; its flocks and herds across the whole country, not to count the wheat and corn in eternal abundance, could satisfy a whole continent..." (Marin, 1943)

The preface, poetic in itself, also included an anecdote about a friend who wanted to offer Teodoreanu six pheasants, as he was unable cook them, "because his cook was stupid and his wife learned", and a confession that, as a result of reading the cookbook, the writer was going to ignore his doctor's advice, go to a restaurant and order "everything I am not allowed to eat, starting with freshwater lobster (strictly forbidden!), to spite the doctor" (Marin, 1943). More than three decades later, Teodoreanu published his own cookbook, *Gastronomie*, where recipes are described in his usual style, through a mix of stories, poems and legends, volume in which he again mentions and praises Marin's cookbook (Teodoreanu, 1972).

Petrescu's introduction (Marin, 1954), on the other hand, was completely different. It was focused on the importance of having a balanced diet, which was considered as being of "great social importance" (p.4). Petrescu addressed the woman cook (*gospodină*) directly and mentioned the importance of cooking economically and described in detail the "rational and balanced" diet. Petrescu compares the human organism to a machine needing fuel:

"From an energetic point of view, the human organism can be compared to a thermic machine, because the energy produced by the organism results from the oxidation of the food substances, which can be compared with the fuel necessary for a machine. But, unlike the thermic machine, the human organism can function for a limited time even without food, using its own substances for producing the energy necessary for its normal functioning" (p.4-5)

Vișinescu's introduction (Marin, 1966) was even more educational, the instruction featuring more than ten pages describing in painstaking detail the nutritive specifics of different foodstuffs, the ideal amount of food each individual should eat depending on their

age and lifestyle. Her preface uses strict, cumbersome, medical language and it could have been easily confused with a chapter in a medical nutrition book:

“The quantity of protein necessary for 24 hours, for an adult who performs moderate work is 1-1.5 g for each kilogram of body weight. For example, for a man of 1.70m, 70-105 grams of protein are necessary. Of course, the protein ration varies from an individual to another. Thus, for example, children, teenagers and pregnant women need 1.5-2 g of protein each for kilogram of body weight, the same as those who work in a toxic or contaminated environment”(p. 7)

This precision in Vișinescu’s introduction is striking, since by tradition, Romanian cookbooks published before the second half of the 20th century contain vague indications in the terms of quantities used (Neț, 2017), volume, dimensions, lengths of cooking time, addressing readers who already know how to cook and using descriptions such as “add a little bit of sugar, as much as it needs” (Negruzzi and Kogălniceanu, 1842) or “add cornmeal as it requires” (Marin 1943, 1954).

Apart from teaching women how to cook, Marin’s cookbook, being the most popular Romanian cookbook and the one book everyone had in their personal library, became an educational tool in the repertoire of communist ideology during the communist dictatorship, suggesting that cooking and the procurement of food was the responsibility of women.

Romanian cookbooks have often been a vehicle for neologisms to make their way into the language, many of them using the new words much before the words were formally introduced in the Romanian Dictionary (Chivu, 2012). Following the Turkish and Greek neologisms, acquired during the second half of the 19th century, the changing political environment of the 20th century brought new words borrowed from French and German.

From 1936 to 1969 the cookbook has gone through many changes. Some recipes were removed completely as the ingredients necessary to make them became more difficult to procure. At the same time, recipes that sounded too foreign disappeared completely, such as Beignets, Chateaubriand, Kugelhupf, Bouiabesse. The 1954 edition lists four recipes for cooking eggs, while the other editions list over 20, for example. A whole section on flavoured butters published in the 1943 edition disappeared from the 1954, 1966 and 2005 editions. The 1943 edition featured 70 recipes for fish, while the 1954 edition only listed 30. The 1966 edition featured only 67 recipes.

Illustration of the cake tin used to make Blancmanger and Bavarois (Marin, 1943) This illustration disappears from the next editions published in the 50s and 60s

Some of the names of recipes changed, in an effort to make them sound more Romanian (éclair became ecler, charlotte became șarlotă and quantities and ingredients in traditional recipes were scaled down or halved. The recipe for Moldovan Cakes (cozonaci moldovenești) published in the '43 edition and presumably in the original edition, asked for 100 egg yolks and 3-4 eggs and 5 kilograms of flour. This recipe disappeared in the 1954 and 1966 editions. The reason for its removal from the list of recipes is simple: the egg rations made it impossible for anyone to cook it. In the 1954 edition, the recipe was replaced with a new one called Cozonaci economici (economical cakes), which only asked for three eggs for each kilogram of flour and replaced the original 250 grams of butter with only 100 grams of pork lard (untură).

Apart from recipes disappeared completely, new recipes were introduced, using new ingredients (aterini^[5] prăjiți), or suggesting new recipe variations for available ingredients (such as potatoes). Many recipes introduced in the 1954 edition use less ingredients and are called “economical”, such as omletă economică (economical omelette), which only asked for four eggs and a little bit of baking yeast, as opposed to the original recipe with six eggs^[6]. Other new austere recipes were salată de icre imitate (imitation caviar salad) or pateu imitat (imitation pâté), which taught new ways to create “caviar” from semolina and pâté from eggs and onions.

The 2005 volume, described by the editors as the “complete edition”, featured recipes initially published in the 1936 edition, but also some of the more economical recipes introduced in the 1966 edition. The 1943 edition thus has more than 1400 recipes listed in its index of recipes, while the 2005 edition lists almost 1500 recipes. The 1954 edition only lists about 800 recipes, while the 1966 edition lists 1324 recipes, where many of the original recipes were removed and new ones, more fit to the economical landscape of the Romanian cook, were introduced.

In the preface of the 2005 edition, Oana Bărnă noted the disappearance of those recipes that could seem “too opulent, too cosmopolitan, or maybe both” (p. 7), and the introduction of new recipes, some very simple, such as mashed beans (salată de piure de fasole) or Russian recipes like piroști orvatușchi. Bărnă noted that in the later editions some of the ingredients and quantities had been changed: tuna was later changed to fish in oil, goose liver became poultry liver or any kind of liver, ham is replaced with soybased sausage (parizer), white pepper is replaced with just any kind of pepper (p.7).

Designing the Digital Project

The design of this digital project had two considerations: first, to create a space where critical thinking and idea exchange would be supported, and second, to design for interactivity and motivation.

Critical thinking is defined as “the process by which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them” (Paul & Elder, 2004).

Critical thinking is linked to critical inquiry as Dewey (2004) sees it: a tool which individuals within a democratic society use as they work together to solve each other's

problems. (Bruno-Jofré & Johnston, 2014, p. 4). Through the use of critical inquiry, as Dewey sees it, individuals extract the ideal traits of existing societies and use them to criticize the undesirable features of their own society and find ways to improve them (p.47). Dewey's philosophy is part of the pragmatist school of thought.

In an effort to recreate Habermas' public sphere, within this digital history project, the project is publicly accessible and offers users the ability to comment and share their ideas in the same space where the digital history project is hosted, via an embedded, moderated comment system. To create a space that supports critical thinking, the data presented is linked to their sources, so that users can access the original sources (when they cannot be presented on the website due to copyright issues). Throughout the project, users are invited to share their own point of view, their own interpretations and memories. A section of the project invites users to share their personal histories related to food, identity and culture in communist Romania.

A second important consideration for the design of this project was to create a virtual environment that would be interactive and that, though its experience design would motivate users to explore it. The whole project is interactive, in the sense that the communication is always two-way, made possible by the comment system embedded in the project, but it also allows users to interact with the data presented. On the "Educationalization of cooking" page some of the text is only readable when the accordion-like structure is opened. The act of making a choice closes another part of the text, in an effort to suggest users to decide about what they want to read. and in which order.

The whole project is built within the concept of learner hero, having some of the secondary sections of the digital project available only through further exploration of the microsite. An "about the author" page is only available when hovering with the mouse over the "About this project" section and some of the recipes mentioned here are hidden throughout the microsite.

Users can interact with the data used to create the info-graphics through which the narrative of the project is constructed.

Immersion is built through storytelling, photography and video footage of the era, and where photography was not available, with illustrations from the communist era. Last but not least, the project includes an autobiographical signature, describing the author's point of view, purpose and assumptions.

Another consideration in this project was to engage users and pull them into an individual experience. For this reason, the project does not use a classical drop-down top menu and instead has a non-linear design, which allows users to choose which sections to explore and the order in which to explore them, while all the sections are connected through various intralinks. Users are invited to share their own story and they are asked questions such as "How do you think the way you cook today was influenced by the communist regime in Romania?" and "Is there a recipe your grandmother or grand-grandmother used to make you or used to talk about that nobody else is talking about? Have you asked them?"

Description of the project

The digital project has 6 main sections: a) About the Project, b) Why does Food Matter, c) The Educationalization of Cooking, d) Food in Communist Romania, e) Sanda Marin's Cookbook and f) Share Your own Story.

The "About the Project" section gives an overview of the project goal and research questions.

In the section entitled "Why does Food Matter" I describe how cooking and food consumption could be relevant to understanding identity and culture and I include three interactive visualizations of the types of recipes, organized by ingredient. As the users scrolls down through the page to discover new content, the info-graphics, start moving, populating the space with data. This section also includes a photo of the original 1749 manuscript, as well as a link to an archive where the manuscript can be read its entirety.

The section focused on "The Educationalization of Cooking" describes the concept of educationalization and presents a part of the story through the interactive "accordion" described above.

"Food in Communist Romania" aims at recreating the atmosphere of the socio-cultural context through text, archival photography, propagandist illustration and a video created by Romanian TV station Realitatea TV, showing archival footage of empty food shops (alimentara) and commentary from Romanians remembering the never-ending quest for food during communism. This video is embedded from the station's YouTube Channel, which allows users of the digital history project to watch the video on the same platform they are on, while still respecting copyright laws. The interviewees of the program listed the kind of food you could find in the shops: pig legs (informally called sports shoes), chicken wings, claws and necks, rice, semolina and tomato sauce and canned shrimp. The canned shrimp was many times the only food displayed in food-shops, described by one interviewee as "shutters of canned shrimp". One interviewee remembered that since the shops were mostly empty, the shops seemed to be made only out of glass. The video also includes a short communist propaganda video, where the food shops looked full and an offvoice praised the plenty and rich lifestyle of the Romanians. Clicking on the video leads to user to the YouTube channel where the video, an episode of a larger series, was originally published. This section also offers a visualization of the "scientific diet" proposed by the Communist Party in 1985, as well as jokes from the era and some of the quotes included in this chapter.

The section called "Share Your own Story" includes an autobiographical signature and invites users to contribute their own stories and ideas, as well as to ask their mothers, grandmothers and grand-grandmothers about food they used to cook when they were younger.

As per its scope, the project includes only a few sections, but the way it was built, affords it to grow, becoming visible to new readers and enriching the conversation about food in Romania. In the future, a blog section will be created and the project will include a version in Romanian.

Discussion

In the world of digital humanities, and specifically digital history, there is a need for moving beyond using technology to plot data and show content. There is a need to go beyond offering read-only experiences. It is important to use digital technology in ways that afford a two-way conversation between the user or the digital history project and the historian.

I believe history, like many other humanistic disciplines, such as philosophy, can benefit greatly from debate, conversation and sharing of ideas. It is only through dialogue that problems within a content, be it a digital history project, or an entire society, can be identified (Habermas, 1989) and it is through dialogue and sharing of ideas that solutions for solving the can be identified (Dewey, 2004).

There are other benefits that emerge from creating digital history projects and virtual environments that afford a two-way communication and invite users to share their opinions. I believe everyone could benefit from knowing, understanding and remembering more history and that, in part, it is the job of the historian to not only write history, but also write it in a way that is accessible for a variety of readers. By creating a habit of having a two-way conversation with readers, historians can identify and address any areas of their speech that are difficult to understand or frequently misunderstood.

As Pilcher (2016) writes, it is uncommon for non-specialist to participate in the creation of the sciences, yet in the case of history in general, and cultural history in particular, inviting non-specialists to participate in the process of writing history can act both as a way to verify the thesis of the historian, but also as a way continuously build history, including new, relevant data.

“Everything is repeated, in a circle. History is a master because it teaches us that it doesn’t exist. It’s the permutations that matter” says Umberto Eco in his volume, *Foucault’s Pendulum*. Many are aware of and even agree with the formula of “history repeating itself”, yet maybe more conversations should be started on the topic of the fluidity of history; how it transforms through time, as more evidence is discovered and new interpretations are given to the already existing evidence. Allowing for a multitude of voices and perspectives to help bring meaning to historical evidence can only enrich history.

Implementing habits of dialogue and continuously creating new points of contact between individuals and groups in a society can help us get closer to the ideal of an intentional democracy, as Dewey (2004) understood it.

Yet in today’s western societies there is very little that the individual can say or do regarding the way reality is understood, problems are identified, and policies are implemented. Groups of interest have replaced individual expression (Habermas, 1989) and, even though modern democracies are built with the idea of integrating a variety of opinions when making decisions for the whole society, the actual participation of the individual is limited to a vote every four years. Polls and surveys, and the whole notion of “the public opinion” are constructed pieces of information, designed to tell the story the organizers are interested in

hearing. Polls and surveys are an illusion of individual representation, as they are organized in accordance to a specific agenda, of a specific group. Another characteristic of this way of integrating “public opinion” is that the focus is put on the voice of the loudest (or the voice of the many), not necessarily on the nuances in the voice of the individual.

The result is a passive society, where individuals are rather told what they think, than invited to contribute, build an argument, and share their points of view.

Future study

In regard to the data used in the digital history project, the fact that none of the content in the cookbooks had been digitized, made processing it much slower and cumbersome. It was beyond the scope of this project to digitize the content in these valuable cookbooks, yet I believe such a work would be beneficial for comparing and visualizing the differences and similarities between, not only Marin’s edition, but the older cookbooks.

One particular direction for future research could be investigating how the use of fresh herbs and condiments change throughout the centuries in Romanian cuisine. I have found many herbs I had not previously heard of in the older cookbooks presented in this project and I noticed how certain condiments, specifically dried spices, only start appearing in cookbooks, later in the history of Romania.

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Footnotes

- [1] Oana Bârna dated this first edition of Marin's cookbook in the preface to the 2005 edition (Marin, 2005).

- [2] The author of this thesis has deduced the number of edition by consulting both the 2005 volume, where Bărnă mentioned „at least 12 editions before (probably) 1945” and consulting the exemplaries that were listed in Romania’s National and Metropolitan libraries, as well as for sale, second hand, in Romanian online book shops.
- [3] Teodoreanu published in 1972 his own cookbook *Gastronomie*, where recipes were described through a mix of stories, poems and legends (Teodoreanu, 1972).
- [4] Both the author’s individual research and Bărnă in the 2005 edition preface suggest the number of editions and the corresponding years of publishing mentioned here.
- [5] Old world silverside is a type of small saltwater fish, that appears in Marin’s cookbook in the 1960s, at the “Editura Tehnică” editorial, but not in the earlier editions published at the “Cartea Românească” editorial
- [6] All the editions mention that the recipes are calculated for six people.