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"The American Cookbook: A History" Book Review

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Short, Frances. **Kitchen secrets: the meaning of cooking in everyday life.**
Berg, 2006. 168p bibl ISBN 1845202767, $99.95; ISBN 1845202740
pbk, $34.95

In Kitchen secrets: the meaning of cooking in everyday life, Frances Short aims to discover how and why people cook, what they cook, what they think about cooking and its importance in their lives, and whether the oft-made assertion that home cooking is on the decline, if not dead, is true. The methodology that Short uses is to interview a group of thirty people (seven couples and sixteen individuals), have them give her a guided tour of their kitchens, and keep food diaries. Short uses this information, in combination with research from the literature she consults, to make various assertions on how we cook. Unfortunately due to the brevity of the book and the random and small group of individuals she uses as her subjects, the result is a mildly interesting look at how concepts of home cooking in historical and sociological studies compares to the cooking activities of thirty people in England in the early 21st century. The value of the book lies in its bibliography which cites many studies on this topic that scholars or those interested in this topic would find useful.