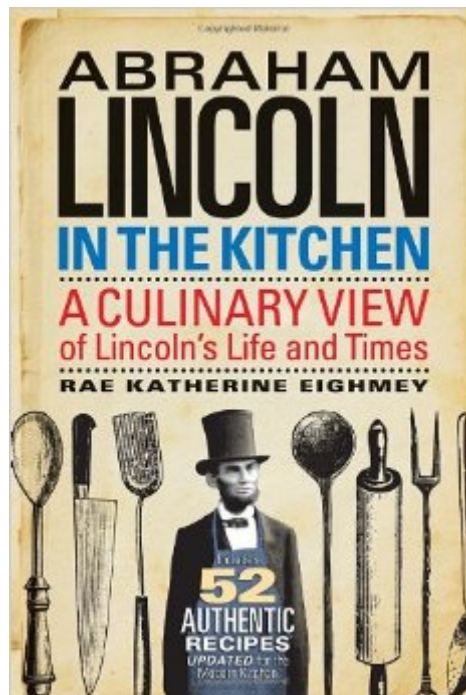


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# Abraham Lincoln In The Kitchen: A Culinary View Of Lincoln's Life And Times



## Synopsis

Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen is a culinary biography unlike any before. The very assertion of the title--that Abraham Lincoln cooked--is fascinating and true. It's an insight into the everyday life of one of our nation's favorite and most esteemed presidents and a way to experience flavors and textures of the past. Eighmey solves riddles such as what type of barbecue could be served to thousands at political rallies when paper plates and napkins didn't exist, and what gingerbread recipe could have been Lincoln's childhood favorite when few families owned cookie cutters and he could carry the cookies in his pocket. Through Eighmey's eyes and culinary research and experiments--including sleuthing for Lincoln's grocery bills in Springfield ledgers and turning a backyard grill into a cast-iron stove--the foods that Lincoln enjoyed, cooked, or served are translated into modern recipes so that authentic meals and foods of 1820-1865 are possible for home cooks. Feel free to pull up a chair to Lincoln's table.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

We all know that Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of the United States... but a cook? My curiosity got the best of me when I saw this title! I wanted to know what Mr. Lincoln cooked in the 19th century when there was no refrigeration as we know it today, old wood or coal fired cast iron stoves. Washing dishes by hand... poor lighting conditions. Well, I read the book and the recipes. Here are a few random recipes: "Soldier's Bread", "Irish Stew", "Slow Cooked Barbeque", "Almond Pound Cake"... and "Gingerbread Men". These have no secret ingredients and you probably have

most of the ingredients in your pantry. The picture I created in my mind was not far from dinner at my grandmother's farm in the 1940s! If you are a lover of cooking and experimenting with meals, this book will be a perfect addition to your cookbook collection. Go ahead... impress your dinner guests with one or two of these recipes. And, be sure to give Mr. Lincoln credit. Oh, and don't forget Rae Katherine Eighmey, the book's author for unearthing these 55 recipes. What an enjoyable experience this book brings.

I've always liked food history, but this was one part of it that I've never really looked at. The author takes us on a journey--a real one, not just a culinary one--along with her as she explores various places where Abraham Lincoln lived throughout his life, from his childhood home to his brief stay in New Orleans to his time in the White House before his tragic death. In each place, she examines how his home was constructed and what his kitchens were like, and from this research creates recipes based upon those we are sure Lincoln ate--and cooked, because apparently he was quite the experienced hand in the kitchen. I really liked her chatty, conversational tone, as well as her interesting notes about how she constructed her recipes. Of the recipes themselves, a few end each chapter, each highlighting some singularly representative dish from that particular chapter's area and time. Most of the ingredients are easy to get and the techniques involved seem very accessible to a lower-skilled cook, so those who want to try the recipes out will find an easy go of it. Along the journey, we also learn about the evolution of baking powder, what "milk sickness" was, and plenty of details about foodstuffs not often encountered nowadays, like pawpaws. The one real shortcoming of the book is the lack of illustrations. The author spends a great deal of time talking about how a particular stove looked, but a picture would have been worth a thousand words there. I'd have loved to have seen a pawpaw fruit. And it would have been charming to have had a photo of Mary Todd Lincoln in her youth to see. There are also no illustrations of the recipes themselves. I don't usually complain about that kind of thing, but this book just cries out for some serious pictures. I guess I can find all this stuff online; I just wish I'd had them in the book. In terms of the book itself, though, I think that's a fairly minor concern; the book is still fantastic. I think this book would function well in a history class, especially for middle- or high-school kids. It may shed new light on Abraham Lincoln's life and times for someone not versed in this era of history, and will definitely interest those interested in food history. The end of the book includes a lot of notes and suggestions for further reading--which will be helpful to those wishing to pursue the topic beyond the book. I enjoyed this book considerably and recommend it wholeheartedly to those interested in the subject.

Perfectly titled, Author and Food Historian Katherine Rae Eighmey writes a concise but detailed book *Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen: A Culinary View of Lincoln's Life and Times*. Although it is not meant to be another biographical sketch of the most revered figures in American history, one may ask what inspired Eighmey to write another book about Lincoln that has not already been written before? She happened to be working on a project about the Jemison Family of Tuscaloosa, Alabama during the American Civil War and sifted through a few documents in the archives at the University of Alabama and came across Mrs. Priscilla Jemison's pencil-scrawled notebook and the rest led her to her own familial experiences and past relative to food and recipes. The subtitle clearly states the central focus of the book, the 55 recipes that may have been eaten from Lincoln's palate and but not necessary cooked by the man from Springfield, Illinois. Eighmey takes readers on a journey to piece together history and biography and cultural studies to weave a narrative of time and place. Based on thorough research and a variety of sources from published sources, interviews of Lincoln's law partner and friend William Herndon, diaries and journals, and the book *Lincoln Among His Friends*, magazines of the day *McClures*, and government documents, Eighmey impeccably creates a vivid picture of Lincoln as a down to earth individual that enjoyed a good meal either at the White House or at his summer cottage to break bread with the soldiers. And Eighmey attempts to recreate and include similar or substitutes to prepare the recipes of the most delectable foods that harken to the time periods in which they were prepared and may have been eaten by Lincoln during the antebellum and Civil War periods. From his humble upbringing in Indiana to brief stops in Mississippi and New Orleans to Illinois and eventually to Washington and the battlefields of Virginia, there is much that Eighmey discusses in the book that relates to the food of the nineteenth century. All of the 14 chapters are worth discussing but there were two that were quite interesting such as Chapter 2 "Lincoln's Gingerbread Men," that emphasized Lincoln's love for gingerbread and a one moment in Illinois that involved mention of gingerbread and then Judge Stephen Douglas and issues surrounding slavery; included at the end of the chapter are three recipes one for Gingerbread Men and the other two for Tennessee Cake and Vinegar Sauce. And one other chapter worth noting is "Journey of Discovery, New Orleans Curry and New Salem Biscuits," this chapter is particularly insightful and shows a young Lincoln coming up in the world of politics as a young representative of Illinois who briefly lived in the town of New Salem in the 1830s and the people that he met and dined with remembered him as a humble man; Eighmey takes a few anecdotes from the 1927 book *Lincoln at New Salem* to revisit this time in his life and where he also created a patent for the flatboat after problems arose at the New Salem milldam. After reading *Abraham Lincoln in the Kitchen*, most likely readers will attempt to bake and cook one or more of the recipes included in the

book. But if one may not be a so-called foodie, the book is an enlightening historical narrative of another side of Lincoln and his times that history aficionados may not have realized about the man because of behind the façade of the tall, lanky, and intellectual figure, there is man with an appetite.

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