Publishing a Community Cookbook

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Elizabeth F. Stabler
Introduction

In 2011, while I was Temple Librarian at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, I was asked to facilitate a committee of members who were interested in publishing a cookbook. The rabbi, the committee’s liaison, who had led a holiday cooking workshop suggested the project. The lay chairs of the Emanu-El Eats Committee set the standards and goals for the cookbook and organized all the work that goes into the project of compiling a community cookbook. In 2015, when I left Emanu-El, the cookbook was nearing completion. Because the lay chairs had resigned, I asked The Women’s Auxiliary of Temple Emanu-El to sponsor the project and agreed to edit the cookbook and see it through to publication.

Emanu-El Eats reflects the culture of a Reform American congregation in the 21st century. It is also a snapshot of a community, because staff as well as members contributed recipes. Its sum is much more than a guide to cooking.

Other organizations and institutions may wish to undertake such a project to honor, celebrate, or document their communities. It is well worth the effort. I hope this guide will help those who undertake the project.
Reasons to Publish a Cookbook

• Fundraising
• Publicizing an organization
• Recording family or institutional history
• Honoring a beloved cook or family member
• Celebrating anniversaries or special occasions
• Documenting Foodways and Customs
• Always wanted to publish a book
What a Cookbook Project Can Accomplish

A community Cookbook is more than an assemblage of recipes and cooking tips

• Community Building
• Goodwill
• Memorializing people
• Historical snapshot of the community, institution or organization
• Teaching and sharing customs
• Working across generations
First Steps

• Form a Committee with “worker bees”, not executives (a.k.a. delegators).
  • Make sure the committee has knowledgeable cooks on it.

• Explore Feasibility – is the project approved and has institutional support?
  • Coordinate with publications, marketing/publicity and development departments.

• What requirements or restrictions are there?
  • Levels of Kashrut
  • Use of names: conventions, titles, honorifics
  • Are there any restrictions on fundraising
  • May advertisements be solicited from vendors or community members?
Set Your Goals

If fundraising is the goal, focus immediately on costs- cookbooks usually pay for themselves AND bring in revenue. Cookbooks are funded by pre-sales.

Are there donors willing to sponsor?

Set standards for recipes
To avoid copyright infringements, stress that the cookbook needs original or family recipes.
Explain why recipes copied from periodicals, merchandise or books cannot be included.
Will there be a limit to the number of recipes one person can submit?
Will all recipes be included unless it can be proved they were copied verbatim or are otherwise problematic? For example, the ingredients may not be kosher or contain raw eggs.
Is the goal a balanced number of recipes for each section or will all be accepted?
Decide whether the cookbook will be a “Joy of Cooking” or a community compendium.
Quirky Submissions

This charming, historical recipe was submitted by a dear friend, now 101 years old and going strong. The note tells all. However, dear Jeanne Theodore did admit, as the book was in its final editing phase, that she had never tasted it.
Choosing a Cookbook Publisher
In Alphabetical Order

Cookbook Publishers
11633 W. 83rd Terrace OR P.O. Box 15920, Lenexa, KS 66285-5920
info@cookbookpublishers.com
Phone: 913.492.5900, 800.227.7282; Fax: 913.492.5947
Business Hours Mon-Fri 7:45 am  4:30 pm CST
At the end of this session I will pass out about 20 copies of this kit – while supplies last!
For Our Canadian Members

Gateway Rasmussen: The Cookbook Printer

Canada
385 DeBaets St.
Winnipeg, MB R2J 4J8
Tel: 204.632-1483
Fax: 204.224.4410
Toll Free: 1-800-665-4878
E-mail: info@cookbookprinter.com

United States
472 South 5th St.
Pembina, ND
58271 USA
Toll Free: 1-800-665-4878
E-mail: info@cookbookprinter.com
The handout packet from the presses may contain a how-to guide, price list, order form, coupon sheets, receipts for presales, publicity posters and a sample cookbook. Sample cookbooks can be very helpful in deciding on style and content but some will only send them after customers sign up. This press sends a sample cookbook which also functions as a publication guide.
Disclaimer: There are many good cookbook presses. Morris Press printed *Emanu-El Eats: A Congregational Cookbook from Temple Emanu-El, New York City*. I was very pleased by their service and helpfulness. The EEE Committee liked Morris Press best.
Spreading the Word

• Announce the project and launch a publicity campaign as soon as possible.
  Collecting recipes takes time.
  Cookbooks are financed by presales.
• Material for publicity can be downloaded from the presses’ websites.
  Hand out flyers at all events and approach everyone for a recipe.
• Build excitement for the project
  Publish submitted recipes in the organization’s newsletter.
  Throw a pot luck dinner using recipes people have submitted.
The Heart of the Matter – The Recipes

• Collecting recipes can be a challenge and will require contacting people – often!
• Whose recipes will be accepted?
• Will a recipe submission form will be used or will recipes be published as handed in.
• Presses offer recipe submission forms to download
• Not using may increase the committee’s workload.
• More recipes are likely to be submitted without forms.
• Be sure to obtain complete contact information with each recipe submitted.
• Who and how will the recipes be checked?
• What is the process for editing and formatting.
• How will the author be identified? Will you use titles or job descriptions?
• Is there a goal for how many recipes are needed for the cookbook?
• Will all the recipes be tested? How will this be organized?
My Philosophy for Collecting Recipes

• Community cookbooks should not aim to be “How to Cook Everything” reference books.
• The cookbook’s goal is to be a gift to the community. I think every recipe possible must be included even if it means having 12 brisket or pot roast recipes, 17 kugel but only 1 challah recipe.
• *Emanu-El Eats* has what many have pointed out to me as a “stupid recipe”. It was included because the note attached told of a 4-year’s delight in making Russian dressing 70 years ago with her father. How could I omit that?
• Another group of recipes was from someone who had made them with her son when he was little and they were very close. He is now quite disabled and estranged from his family. It was unthinkable not to include her submissions.
• In the years it took to complete *Emanu-El Eats* a few of the contributors died. I am so pleased we can memorialize these women of valor this way.
• Cookbooks are not just manuals for preparing foodstuffs; community cookbooks are for celebrating those who shared their traditions with us and the history behind the stories.
Designing the Book

How material is submitted to the publisher determines how the recipes are collected as well as the cookbook’s look.

Typeset or Press–Ready: the two means of submitting content for the cookbook.

• Typeset: either submit the recipes to the press for inputting and formatting or input them on the press’ online module. There are a number of formats to choose from but what they have to offer is limited.

• Press-ready: submit all the material digitally, formatted to conform to the press’ specs.
Designing the Book: Options for Typeset

Presses may offer for free:

- Categories and/or subcategory headings
- Recipe symbols to distinguish recipes from stock provided by the press.
- Page filler images and decorative artwork from stock images
- Index
- Table of contents
- Title Page
- One or more pages for photographs or art
- Liners for front and back inside page of ring bound and hardcover editions
- Cooking hints and tables
- An e-book copy for every purchaser of a printed cookbook
Submitting press-ready copy provides the greatest flexibility for design and content.

Can be less expensive unless there are other costs
Fewer free options
Must submit perfect copy to avoid correction fees
All recipes must be pre-formatted and typed according to specifications
May require engaging a typist, typesetter, art designer and proofreader
Designing the Book
Submitting Press-Ready Copy, Part II

• Is there a style guide or will recipes be word processed as is?
• Does the committee have the staff to do the word processing?
• Will the press’ stock covers and art work or will a designer be hired?
• Will you use abbreviations for measurements?
• Do you plan to have a note from the contributor? If so, before or after the recipe?
• Can someone in-house do the typesetting to conform to the formatting specs?
• Do you have to find a professional typesetter to lay out the book and conform to the specs?
• Proof reading is vital – must be done by several pairs of eyes but there will always be a mistake that sneaks in.
• Free options may be offered: title page, inside cover liners with or without cooking hints.
Designing the Book: The Cover and Bindings

- Padded 3-ring binders – most expensive
- Soft cover bound with coils or combs – the least expensive (and most classic)
- Hardcover bound with comb (Some presses imprint the comb) – mid-priced
- Stock covers, front and back – may be free
- Custom covers – extra charge
- Hard bound with spine
Designing the Book: Category Dividers

- Some companies may only offer dividers in designated categories for typeset copy
- Non-tabbed light weight dividers may be offered for free
- Non-tabbed heavy weight dividers – extra charge
- Full color stock dividers in standard categories may be offered free
- Tabbed dividers, either heavy or light weight – extra charge
- Dividers with custom recipe categories – extra charge
- Dividers with custom art – extra charge for both front and back
Custom Designed Category Dividers

The *Emanu-El Eats* Committee decided to use design elements from the synagogue’s sanctuary for the page dividers. The back of the dividers feature photographs of larger elements.
Everything is Ready. Now What?

• With lots of hard work and very good publicity, enough money has been collected to pay for the cookbook’s printing.
• All the calculations have been made, using the charts provided.
• The order form has been filled out and signed by the appropriate parties.
• The digital files or paper copy has been submitted to the press.
• Some presses – for example Morris Press – bills half the total 37 days from the invoice date and the rest 90 days after that.
• Reprints are usually available if the cookbooks sells out and more copies are required. Some companies keep the files for 10 years.
• The press may require a credit check but may also extend credit to nonprofit organizations.
Publishing Schedules

• All presses have standard production times.
• Morris Press, for example
  • Typeset on company module – 4-5 weeks
  • Typeset by company – 7-9 weeks
  • Press ready – 4-5 Weeks
• Some presses give discounts for publishing during slow months.
• A proof copy will be sent.
• There may be charges for corrections for press-ready
• Rush service may be available but it will cost more