

CULINARY MEMORIES: A NEW TYPE OF EGODOCUMENT? *THE WRITINGS OF PASCHALIS RADOLIŃSKI, C. 1823*

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Summary. *This article examines a specific type of egodocument which focuses on food, cooking, and the experience of taste. It examines manuscript recipes that record personal experiences and often appear on the pages of other egodocuments, such as French livres de raison and Polish silvae rerum. It also refers to ‘culinary diaries’, which have already attracted scholarly interest in several countries as sources for the history of literature, writing and communication.*

The article analyses two manuscripts by Paschalis Radoliński, a nobleman from Greater Poland: a collection of recipes and a culinary diary. In the diary, food plays a central role in everyday life, serving as a medium for expressing emotions, exploring relationships, and conveying the author’s perspective on the world. The article interprets the text by using concepts and methods from cultural food history and the history of culinary writing.

Keywords: *egodocuments, culinary memories, manuscript cookbooks, food practices, Greater Poland.*

Kulinariniai prisiminimai – nauja egodokumentų rūšis? Paschalio Radolinskio raštai (apie 1823)

Santrauka. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamas specifinis egodokumentų tipas, kuriam daugiausia dėmesio skiriama maistui, maisto gaminimui ir skonio patirčiai. Jame nagrinėjami rankraštiniai receptai, kuriuose užfiksuota asmeninė patirtis ir kurie dažnai pasirodo kitų egodokumentų, tokių kaip prancūziški *livres de raison* ir lenkiški *silvae rerum*, puslapiuose. Taip pat minimi „kulinariniai dienoraščiai“, kurie jau sulaukė mokslininkų susidomėjimo keliose šalyse kaip literatūros, rašymo ir komunikacijos istorijos šaltiniai.

Straipsnyje analizuojami du Didžiosios Lenkijos didiko Paschalio Radolińskio rankraščiai: receptų rinkinys ir kulinarinis dienoraštis. Dienoraštyje maistas vaidina pagrindinį vaidmenį kasdieniame gyvenime, tarnauja kaip priemonė emocijoms reikšti, santykiams tyrinėti ir perteikti autoriaus požiūrį į pasaulį. Straipsnyje tekstas interpretuojamas taikant kultūrinės maisto istorijos ir kulinarinio rašymo istorijos sąvokas ir metodus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: egodokumentai, kulinariniai prisiminimai, rankraštinės receptų knygos, maisto vartojimo įpročiai, Didžioji Lenkija.

This article examines a specific type of egodocument which focuses on food, cooking, and the experience of taste. Printed cookbooks usually took the form of practical manuals in which authors confined displays of their own ‘self’ and references to personal feelings to prefaces, dedications, or rare and laconic remarks within the recipes themselves. Manuscript recipes, by contrast, relate to individual, personal experiences and were often written down on the pages of various kinds of ego-documents, such as French *livres de raison* or Polish *silvae rerum*¹. We combine an analysis of a manuscript col-

1 QUELLIER, Florent. Le repas de funérailles de Bonhomme Jacques. Faut-il reconsidérer le dossier de l’alimentation paysanne des Temps modernes? *Food & History*, 2008, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 9–30; DARASPE, Adélaïde. Construction identitaire et alimentation au Pays basque du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours. Thèse de doctorat (anthropologie). Université François-Rabelais de Tours. Tours, 2010; QUELLIER, Florent. L’après Jean-Louis Flandrin, une décennie d’histoire de l’alimentation en France (XVe–XIXe siècles). *Food & History*, 2012, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 89–102; CASHMAN, Dorothy. An Investigation of Irish Culinary History Through Manuscript Cookbooks, with Particular Reference to the Gentry of County Kilkenny (1714–1830). PhD thesis. Dublin Institute of Technology. Dublin, 2016; KERNAN, Sarah Peters; and MÜLLNERITSCH, Helga, eds. *Culinary Texts in Context, 1500–1800: Manuscript Recipe Books in Early Modern Europe*. Amsterdam, 2024.

lection of recipes compiled by a nobleman from Greater Poland with a reading of a specific culinary diary. In this diary, the author writes about food, which constitutes a significant part of his everyday experience and through which he narrates his life, emotions, and understanding of the world.

Such culinary egodocuments have already attracted scholarly interest in various countries. Researchers from different disciplines have written about 'culinary diaries', analysing them primarily from the perspectives of the history of literature, writing, and communication.

In what follows, we approach such a text by situating it, on the one hand, in relation to the author's persona and to the historical, local, and culinary context of its production. On the other hand, we seek to interpret it primarily through the themes, concepts, and methods of contemporary cultural food history, and, in particular, the history of culinary writing.

I. CULINARY MANUSCRIPTS

1. CULINARY TEXTS AS HISTORICAL SOURCES. Various types of culinary texts, primarily printed cookbooks, have long been utilized by historians. However, researchers often used them as sources of picturesque examples and flavourful quotations – a part of anecdotal everyday history and a means of popularising historical knowledge. Historians used culinary recipes, descriptions of grand feasts, and dietary advice to illustrate the eccentricities, irrationality, and incomprehensible excesses of people from the past. In contrast to grand history – which is understood as the great deeds of great men – they considered food history as inferior, requiring neither specialist knowledge nor in-depth research. After all, everyone is familiar with food...

On the other hand, culinary literature attracted the interest of erudite scholars and bibliophiles relatively early. They hoped that collecting as much information as possible – ideally, all that they could gather from written sources – would amount to knowledge in each field. Contemporary historians trace such tendencies back to antiquity, by pointing, for instance, to Athenaeus of Naucratis in the *Deipnosophistae* (*The Banquet of the Learned*) from the 3rd century CE. Similar initiatives include Renaissance projects such as Johann Wilhelm Stuckius's *Antiquitatum Convivalium* and Julius Caesar Bulenger's works². We may also assign the first printed cookbook, published in 1470 – the famous

2 ALBALA, Ken. Culinary history. In: ALBALA, Ken, ed. *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*. London; New York, 2013, p. 114.

work by Platina (Bartolomeo Sacchi), *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*, to the same category of scholarly attempts to compile all available knowledge³. This book is both a collection of culinary recipes and a learned compendium of natural, dietary, and historical commentary, drawing on the writings of ancient authors.

For positivist historiography, culinary texts were considered theoretical and subjective statements. Nevertheless, many authors still used them to illustrate the corruption of morals and the superficiality of life among both themselves and their readers.

In the *Annales* school of historiography, researchers neglected culinary texts as meaningful sources of knowledge about the past. The modernist project from the 1960s and 1970s of researching nutritional practices concerned with the quantities of consumed food and its nutritional value⁴. Researchers primarily used accounting records, shopping lists, and inventories of food consumed in large institutions such as the military, orphanages, monasteries, or hospitals. This wide-ranging project eventually brought food history into the academic mainstream, although it focused exclusively on the phenomenon's economic, natural, and demographic dimensions. By the late 1970s, scholars within the *Annales* circle began to highlight the need to address the cultural aspects of food history and the history of cuisine as well⁵.

Historians drew inspiration primarily from the work of anthropologists and sociologists, beginning with the brief remarks of Claude Lévi-Strauss and extending to the more elaborate frameworks of Mary Douglas, Jack Goody, and Stephen Mennell. Claude Fischler's 1979 theory of 'gastro-anomy' proved especially influential. The French scholar emphasised the unusual and extremely exceptional role of food in the lives of modern societies in developed countries. The end of famines, along with the abundance and overavailability of food, di-

3 PLATINA. *On Right Pleasure and Good Health: A Critical Edition and Translation of De honesta voluptate et valetudine*. Ed. Mary Ella Milham. Tempe (AZ), 1998; NOTAKER, Henry. *Printed Cookbooks in Europe, 1470–1700: A Bibliography of Early Modern Culinary Literature*. New Castle (Del.), 2010, p. 327–336; TOMASIK, Timothy J. Translating Taste in the Vernacular Editions of Platina's *De honesta voluptate et valetudine*. In: TOMASIK, Timothy J.; and VITULLO, Juliann M., eds. *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Turnhout, 2007, p. 189–210.

4 BRAUDEL, Fernand. Alimentation et catégories de l'histoire. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1961, vol. 16, no. 4, p. 723–728.

5 AYMARD, Maurice. Pour l'histoire de l'alimentation: quelques remarques de méthode. *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1975, vol. 30, no. 2–3, p. 433–434.

minished its economic value. At the same time, food ceased to play its traditional social and cultural roles – as a foundation of social bonds, a vehicle of authority, a means of communication, and a form of identity expression⁶.

Under the condition of ‘gastro-anomy’, food illustrates the classic dilemma of normlessness and excessive freedom turning into a problem. People eat what they want, when they want, with whom they want, and where they want. No longer do parents, grandparents, employers, religious leaders, or political authorities regulate these choices. This shift, however, contributes to the erosion of social cohesion and triggers a longing for a mythical, ordered food culture of the past. Traditional dietary habits, transplanted into a new social reality, often intensify these issues, fuelling the rise of obesity, food-related anxieties, and social atomisation.

The rise of industrial food production and mass distribution further undermined food’s capacity to sustain social ties or convey its former symbolic and functional meanings. Scholars such as Jean-Louis Flandrin, Paul Aron, and Massimo Montanari responded to this crisis by turning to previously overlooked culinary texts⁷. They treated these sources as entry points for exploring the history of taste – a subject which the *Annales* School had long dismissed as trivial, a frivolous attribute of socially marginal elites. However, even Fernand Braudel referred to ‘cycles of taste’ as exemplary of the *longue durée*, highlighting their economic and primarily commercial implications, such as the spice trade, the development of a commodity-based economy, and geographic exploration.

Flandrin and Montanari approached culinary texts primarily as cultural documents – expressions of knowledge and sensibility, reflections on aesthetics, religion, health, nature, and distinction. They saw recipes not merely as technical instructions, but, rather, as forms of communication that articulated the core values of a given culture. The rationale behind a recipe often points to broader principles, ideas, and ideologies, offering a lens through which one could narrate history and culture via perhaps the most universal of human experiences: eating.

- 6 FISCHLER, Claude. Gastro-nomie et gastro-anomie. Sagesse du corps et crise bioculturelle de l’alimentation moderne. *Communications*, 1979, no. 31, p. 189–210.
- 7 ARON, Jean-Paul. *Le mangeur du XIXe siècle: une folie bourgeoise: la nourriture*. Paris, 1973; FLANDRIN, Jean-Louis; and MONTANARI, Massimo, eds. *Histoire de l’alimentation*. Paris, 1996; MONTANARI, Massimo. *Food is Culture*. Transl. by Albert Sonnenfeld. New York, 2006.

2. DISCOVERY OF CULINARY MANUSCRIPTS. While scholars of the early modern period and later epochs typically began their explorations of the cultural history of food with printed cookbooks, historians focusing on antiquity and the Middle Ages had to turn to manuscript sources. Early culinary texts often appeared laconic and terse. They excluded personal elements, yet an analysis of taste aesthetics, natural knowledge, dietary principles, fasting regulations, and authorial sensibilities allows researchers to reconstruct insights into the authors' personalities, professional ethos, ideals of good household management, gourmet passion, or economic expertise.

A particularly compelling example emerges from the history of Platina's cookbook, first printed in 1470. Platina based his recipes on a manuscript by the renowned chef Martino da Como, who composed precise but impersonal and technical cooking instructions. Under Platina's pen – as a learned humanist and literary figure – these recipes transformed into an erudite narrative about the dietary habits and nutritional theories of ancient Greeks and Romans. The book also served as a record of social gatherings among members of the Roman Academy, with the author expressing his opinions and reflections in the first person.

Over time, this literary and personal model gave way to professional cookbooks authored by working chefs, most often palace kitchen masters. These texts frequently included ideological prefaces. The Polish *Kuchmistrzostwo* from around 1540 – whose manuscript copy we recently published – offered no such introductory remarks⁸. Stanisław Czerniecki took a different approach in his *Compendium ferculorum* (1682), writing enthusiastically about himself, his employers, the professional ethos of the cook, and the ideas guiding his craft. He used the text as a form of self-promotion, seeking distinction and the consolidation of his professional reputation – an effort that brought tangible rewards.

After an initial phase focused on editing and analysing printed cookbooks, scholars began turning their attention to culinary manuscripts. In texts authored by non-professionals, researchers identified evidence of how readers received printed works, documentation of everyday culinary practices, the dissemination of new dietary ideas, and the persistence of archaic models.

An illustrative example can be found in the extensive Polish manuscript *Zbiór dla kuchmistrza* (A Collection for the Head Cook), compiled in 1757. Prepared for Rozalia Pociąg, wife of the Lithuanian guard Antoni Pociąg, and

8 DUMANOWSKI, Jarosław; and BUŁATOWA, Switłana, eds. *Zbiór dla kuchmistrza tak potraw jako ciast robienia wypisany roku 1757 dnia 24 lipca*. Warszawa, 2021, p. 136.

their daughter, Princess Ludwika Honorata Lubomirska, the manuscript gathers a diverse range of culinary materials. On one level, it reflects erudite motivations, including transcriptions of some of the oldest known Polish culinary texts. Additionally, it documents personal interests and the social network of a noble family that collected recipes from neighbours, friends, and trusted physicians.

Among the entries appear recipes attributed to Stanisław Kazimierz Bieniewski, the Voivode of Chernihiv, dating from the 1660s and 1670s. Scattered throughout his economic notes, account records, planting schedules, and harvest logs, these recipes primarily focus on sweets and flavoured, sweetened vodkas. Although contemporaries in the second half of the seventeenth century already considered them archaic, the recipes traced their origins to the Italian collection by Alexius Pedemontanus, published in Polish in 1568⁹.

Bieniewski's account books reveal the practical, utilitarian purpose of these transcriptions. He used the recipes to prepare refreshments during diplomatic missions and negotiations with representatives from Moscow.

Culinary themes also emerge in classical narrative sources. Travel accounts, in particular, frequently describe food customs in foreign countries and the authors' struggles to adapt to unfamiliar cuisines. While traditional historiography treated these narratives as anecdotal sources for everyday life, scholars in the 1980s – most notably Jean-Louis Flandrin – began to analyse them systematically and comparatively within the framework of food history. After an initial focus on printed texts considered foundational or groundbreaking, researchers increasingly turned their attention to manuscript cookbooks.

3. WRITING, READING, AND EATING. The act of writing down culinary recipes usually stemmed from reading printed cookbooks or their manuscript copies and selections. It reflected personal experience, the practice of copying recipes from neighbours, relatives, or acquaintances, and always indicated the author's specific interest and active engagement.

A culinary manuscript could be carefully edited and intended for publication or at least for systematic use, as in the case of *Moda bardzo dobra smażenia różnych konfektów* ("A Very Good Fashion for Frying Various Confections")¹⁰,

9 DUMANOWSKI, Jarosław; DIAS-LEWANDOWSKA, Dorota; and SIKORSKA, Marta, eds. *Staropolskie przepisy kulinarne: receptury rozproszone z XVI–XVIII w.: źródła rękopiśmienne*. Warszawa, 2017, p. 22–24.

10 DUMANOWSKI, Jarosław; and JANKOWSKI, Rafał, eds. *Moda bardzo dobra smażenia różnych konfektów i innych słodkości, a także przyrządzania wszelakich potraw, pieczenia chleba i inne sekreta gospodarskie i kuchenne*. Warszawa, 2011.

compiled at the Radziwiłł court in the late seventeenth century. It could also take the form of working notes or marginal jottings on the pages of household accounts, *silvae rerum*, or other miscellaneous writings. Given the minimal Polish market for cookbooks – and only slightly broader for household guides, dietary manuals, and herbals – it is often possible to identify the sources of these manuscripts. Particularly popular were recipes included in Syreniusz's *Zielnik* from 1613, Marcin Siennik's 1568-dated herbal, or manuscript copies of recipes by Paul Tremo from the late eighteenth century. Authors also frequently referred to *Compendium ferculorum* (1682, reissued until 1821) and *Kucharz doskonały* (The Perfect Cook), published in 1783¹¹.

In general, as in the rest of Europe, Polish culinary manuscripts displayed a striking degree of conservatism and traditionalism. Even in the early nineteenth century, many of them still relied on texts from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. An actual turning point came only with the rapid and widespread reception of ideas promoted by Paul Tremo, the chief cook to King Stanisław August. Existing copies of his recipes contain no personal reflections. However, such elements appear in his printed French-language treatise on food preservation, of which we recently located the only surviving copy. By the late eighteenth century, culinary manuscripts had already begun to include a series of Tremo's recipes, which later appeared in printed cookbooks. From the time of Jan Szyttler, who began publishing in Vilnius in 1830, Tremo's recipes and culinary ideas reached a broader audience¹².

All of this occurred during a period of dynamic development in Polish culinary writing. Only at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century do we see the appearance of numerous culinary manuscripts. However, it is also possible that more of them have survived from this time. From the 1820s onward, the market for printed Polish cookbooks also expanded. The old-fashioned *Compendium ferculorum* and the French-based *Kucharz doskonały*¹³ gave way to new titles, better suited to the realities of the era and the sensibilities of contemporary readers.

One aspect of this phenomenon is the legacy of Paschalis Radoliński, a nobleman from Greater Poland, who left behind not only a collection of recipes but also a memoir, primarily devoted to food.

11 DUMANOWSKI, Jarosław; DIAS-LEWANDOWSKA, Dorota; and SIKORSKA, Marta, eds. *Staropolskie przepisy kulinarne*.

12 DUMANOWSKI, Jarosław, ed. *Przepisy Paula Tremo*. Warszawa, 2022, p. 71–76.

13 CZERNIECKI, Stanisław. *Compendium ferculorum albo zebranie potraw*. Ed. Jarosław Dumanowski. Warszawa, 2021.

II. PLACE AND PERSON

1. THE GENTRY OF GREATER POLAND. Paschalis Radoliński (1753–1828) belonged to the landed nobility of Greater Poland, a region located in the western part of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, centred around Poznań. This province, situated between Brandenburg and Silesia and in proximity to Saxony, ranked – alongside Royal Prussia – among the most economically developed and wealthiest regions of the country. Compared to other parts of Poland, especially those in the East, Greater Poland featured a high degree of urbanisation, robust trade relations with Prussia, Silesia, and Saxony, and a highly profitable agricultural sector.

Unlike in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the Ukrainian territories, large landholdings played a much smaller role in this region. The magnates of Greater Poland could not rival the great Lithuanian or Ruthenian families in terms of estates or income. However, over time, family ties, inheritances, and migration gradually closed the gap for some families. Despite the relatively high profitability of agriculture, focused mainly on urban markets and exports to Silesia, Saxony, and the port of Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland) in Prussia, the wealthiest nobles of Greater Poland remained behind not only the Ruthenian magnates but also the prominent noble families of Lesser Poland, particularly those around Kraków.

At the same time, the noble estate in Greater Poland displayed relatively little social differentiation. The region lacked the typical impoverished nobility found in many other parts of the Commonwealth – nobles whose economic standing and way of life closely resembled those of free peasants.

One distinctive feature of Greater Poland was the early development of the cloth-making industry, which encouraged extensive-scale sheep farming. Surviving estate inventories often list flocks numbering in the thousands. Wool production drove this activity, but it also resulted in a secondary benefit: a steady supply of mutton. Sheep farming remained a regional hallmark until shortly after World War II. Today, however, this tradition has nearly vanished due to the widespread use of synthetic fibres. As a consequence, the consumption of mutton and lamb – already reliant on imports – has almost entirely disappeared from the regional diet.

The eighteenth-century settlement of German colonists further accelerated agricultural innovation in the region, including the early spread of the potato. A linguistic remnant of this reception persists in the regional term *pyry* (originally *perki*), which – unlike *kartofle* (from German *Kartoffeln*) or *ziemniaki* (standard Polish) – derives from Peru, the plant's place of origin.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – and continuing into the present – the culinary traditions of Greater Poland have remained distinct. Dishes such as *czernina* (a soup made with duck or goose blood) and goose meat have maintained their popularity. A generally higher standard of living contributed to better access to food and higher levels of meat consumption in the region.

2. THE RADOLIŃSKI FAMILY. Paschalis Radoliński descended from the well-known noble family of Radoliński, bearing the Leszczyc coat of arms. One branch of this lineage held hereditary ownership of the town of Jarocin and its surrounding estates. The family's rise occurred relatively late, gaining momentum only at the end of the seventeenth century and reaching its full development in the eighteenth century. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, several members of the family had already attained a social position close to the magnate class. Their educational travels across Europe and their growing book collections reflected not only material wealth but also intellectual ambitions rooted in scientific and Enlightenment ideals. Rich collections of porcelain, specialised tableware, fashionable clothing in Western European style, 'Chinese' furniture, swords and canes in place of traditional sabres, as well as cellars filled with vintage wines, all pointed to a lifestyle characteristic of the aristocracy.

The Radoliński family reached the pinnacle of its status in the nineteenth century, when they constructed the grand palace in Jarocin, which still stands today. Hugo Radoliński (1841–1917) assembled an extensive art collection, founded a valuable library, and built a diplomatic career in the service of the German state¹⁴. Thanks to the Radolińskis of Jarocin, the writings of Paschalis – covering both culinary and religious topics – have survived. The palace, the preserved archives, and the family's extensive nineteenth-century library – shaped by a deep passion for collecting – ensured the survival of manuscripts left by a relatively modest and solitary nobleman. These materials offer a rare glimpse into the reflections, concerns, and everyday experiences of an individual from a social group that has left behind very few, exceptionally personal records.

3. A POOR RELATIVE. Paschalis Radoliński was a distant relative of the Radoliński counts of Jarocin. Five or six generations separated him from the family members who owned the town in the late eighteenth century. Their most recent common ancestor lived in the sixteenth century.

14 GALOS, Adam. Radoliński (von Radolin) Hugo Juliusz. In: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*. Wrocław [et al.], 1986, vol. 29. p. 720–721.

Paschalis held no hereditary estate; instead, he worked as a tenant of various landed properties. Through a series of financial transactions, he occasionally acquired estates or legal rights to them but usually sold them quickly to increase his capital. In Greater Poland, this practice was relatively common and did not necessarily signal poverty or social decline. Instead, it reflected the growing role of a cash-based economy and the increased circulation of financial capital. Nevertheless, when compared to the heirs of Jarocin, Paschalis clearly lived with more limited means¹⁵.

As a legal official, he maintained active contact with his wealthier, though distant, relatives. His career peaked with his appointment to positions in local noble courts – he served as the *regent grodzki* (castle court assessor) in Pyzdry. These offices functioned as auxiliary posts to the *starosta*, the official who oversaw county-level judicial and administrative matters and who personally appointed and dismissed his staff. Although theoretically lower in rank than titular and lifelong noble dignities, these roles required legal expertise and familiarity with judicial, financial, and property affairs. In practice, they offered substantial career opportunities and often resulted from personal ties to the *starosta*, who typically served as both a political patron and a major landowner.

Stanisław Karwowski, who wrote the family's history, could not understand why there was no grave of Paschalis in the family crypt in Jarocin. He attributed this to his alleged support for the Targowica Confederation of 1792 – a pro-Russian alliance that opposed Enlightenment reforms and quickly became a symbol of treason and disgrace. However, joining the confederation in western Poland did not carry the same connotation as it did in the eastern provinces, which Russia occupied at the war's outset. Moreover, Paschalis appeared on the list of the local confederation council merely because he had failed to attend its meeting. His involvement, therefore, seems to have been entirely nominal¹⁶.

Toward the end of his life, Paschalis settled in the village of Łobez near Jarocin. He remained unmarried and lived out his final years in solitude, surrounded only by his servants and the peasants of the estate he leased.

15 KARWOWSKI, Stanisław. *Historia rodu Leszczyców z Radolina Radolińskich*. Jarocin, 2010, p. 60.

16 WEGNER, Leon. Konfederacja województw wielkopolskich: poznańskiego, kaliskiego, gnieźnieńskiego i ziemi wschowskiej dnia 20 sierpnia 1792 r. w mieście Środzie zawiązana. *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk Poznańskiego*, 1863, vol. 2, p. 560.

III. PASCHALIS RADOLIŃSKI ON FOOD AND LIFE

1. PRAYERS, A COOKBOOK, AND CULINARY MEMORIES. The Radoliński family archive from Jarocin (now housed in the State Archives in Poznań) preserves three manuscripts authored by Paschalis Radoliński. The first is a collection of prayers and religious hymns. The second and most is a compilation of culinary recipes, while the third is a memoir written at the end of his life, in which the author reflects in detail on his daily worries, troubles with domestic staff, and above all, his thoughts on food¹⁷.

Radoliński's handwritten cookbook, dated around 1823, includes 274 recipes, most of which appear to be original compositions. Most of the other culinary manuscripts are usually collections of copied recipes from various sources, so his text stands out as exceptional. While it does contain transcriptions of recipes from *Compendium ferculorum* (1682, reissued until 1821) and from eighteenth-century cookbooks, the majority seem to be original or, at the very least, not known from any printed publication. It raises important questions about the sources of Radoliński's culinary knowledge and the nature of his interest in food and cookery.

The manuscript appears carefully composed and shows clear signs of editorial work. The initial sections follow a structured order typical of early modern menu design: first, soups; then, soup accompaniments (e.g., pastries); followed by boiled meats; and then braised and roasted dishes. Around the hundredth recipe, however, the original order begins to break down. The author begins listing sauces, side dishes, and various types of products, particularly poultry, beef, and fish. Recipes begin to repeat, although often in modified forms, and the initial logic of arrangement gradually disappears.

Among the mutton dishes, noteworthy examples include mutton tripe (*flaki baranie*) – a dish often mocked in Lesser Poland as a sign of poverty or poor taste – mutton roast presented as venison, mutton pâté (meat baked in pastry), and a variety of roasts and stews. Radoliński exclusively used meat from *skopy* – castrated and fattened rams; lamb never appears in the recipes. This practice of fattening rams had long remained a hallmark of the Greater Poland cuisine, and the word *skop* (later *szkop*) even became a pejorative term for a German in other parts of Poland. Goose dishes also display notable variety. The manus-

17 Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (hereinafter – APP), Majątek Jarocin – Radolińscy: Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Różne modlitwy, sygn. 3976; Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Notatki i opinie o kucharzu i parobkach, sygn. 3975; Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Przepisy kucharskie, sygn. 3974.

cript includes a recipe for *pólgęsek* (marinated and smoked goose breast), still regarded as a symbol of traditional cuisine in Greater Poland and Pomerania. In addition to numerous versions of *czernina*, Radoliński also describes roasted goose, stews, and various stuffed preparations¹⁸.

The early use of potatoes drew special attention from the author. He discusses serving potatoes as side dishes, arranging grated potatoes around dishes like tripe, preparing meatless potato soups, and serving potatoes with *sztuka mięsa* (boiled beef). A fascinating example is a recipe for veal cutlets, which reads more as a description of a dish eaten elsewhere than as a formal recipe. Radoliński focuses on the dish's appearance and tries to reconstruct key elements of its preparation based on memory¹⁹.

Similar patterns appear in other recipes where the author does not provide direct instructions but instead refers to commonly practised habits: "they make", "they place", "they cook", "they eat", and so on. This practical and personal tone – which is evident throughout a manuscript that is working, original, and functional – makes the collection especially valuable. Radoliński's cookbook serves not merely as a set of technical instructions but as a record of personal experiences, culinary encounters, and lived knowledge. Its full significance emerges most clearly when read alongside Radoliński's personal diary from 1822–1824.

The diary, spanning 280 small-format pages, documents Radoliński's daily problems and frustrations. He records his struggles with staff – especially cooks, the estate steward, overseers, and maidservants – and focuses on what he perceived as essential matters: obtaining, processing, preserving, storing, and preparing food. The manuscript also includes information on crop cultivation, animal husbandry, the sale of agricultural products, and various purchases, most of which relate directly or indirectly to food.

Written entirely in the first person, the diary unfolds as a continuous stream of complaints, grievances, and lamentations about idle, dishonest, incompetent, and ill-willed workers who, in the author's eyes, proved unable to carry out even the simplest tasks.

2. AN INTERTEXTUAL READING. Paschalis Radoliński's diary contains no references to politics or the affairs of the wider world. Instead, the text focuses on matters he considered truly important: real life, everyday

18 APP, Majątek Jarocin – Radolińscy: Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Przepisy kucharskie, p. 221–227.

19 Ibid., p. 199.

struggles, and deeply personal experiences. The central theme is food – its procurement, processing, and preparation. Positioned between the noble landowner and the food itself stands his domestic staff: cooks, maidservants, the estate steward, overseers, shepherds, and others employed on the estate. The entire diary reads as a nearly uninterrupted litany of complaints against this service. The challenges involved in food production and preparation allow us to situate Radoliński's cookbook recipes within the personal context of his expectations, frustrations, and daily needs – the diary centres precisely on the ingredients most prominent in his culinary manuscript.

One striking example of what Radoliński perceived as sheer incompetence – or perhaps deliberate malice – was the staff's decision to keep male sheep (rams) together with *wethers* (*skopy*, castrated and fattened rams) instead of housing them with ewes²⁰. *Wethers* occupy a central place in Radoliński's concerns: he raised them for wool and fattened them specifically for his own consumption. Alongside beef, mutton represented a dietary staple – one that, in his view, greedy and lazy servants routinely stole. Worse still, the staff stored leftover meat not in the cellar, but in the pantry, where it quickly spoiled. They regularly sold *skopy* to the butcher, and Radoliński meticulously documented their care.

Potatoes (*perki*, as he called them) also hold a significant place in his diary. Although their introduction to Europe in the nineteenth century eventually helped eliminate famine, Radoliński presents this global transformation through the lens of personal experience. While potatoes do appear in his cookbook, they had not yet become a staple in his diet. His descriptions reflect ongoing hesitation, experimentation, and an active search for practical culinary uses²¹.

The diary confirms that Radoliński primarily cultivated potatoes in his garden, alongside vegetables such as rutabaga and cabbage. He also experimented with field cultivation, although he found it more challenging. He expressed keen interest in potato farming and noted the challenges of harvesting them by hand, as the plough used for this task left too many tubers in the soil. Workers failed to form furrows correctly, misapplied fertiliser, and carried out tasks in the wrong order²².

20 APP, Majątek Jarocin – Radolińscy: Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Notatki i opinie o kucharzu i parobkach, p. 2–3.

21 APP, Majątek Jarocin – Radolińscy: Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Przepisy kucharskie, p. 45–46, 77–78, 125, 199, 305–306.

22 APP, Majątek Jarocin – Radolińscy: Papiery Paschalisa Radolińskiego. Notatki i opinie o kucharzu i parobkach, p. 10–12, 17.

Radoliński primarily used potatoes as livestock feed or for producing potato starch. He manufactured starch on-site, assigning the task to maidservants who, in his words, had no idea how to do it properly. This entry exemplifies the classic difficulties associated with adapting the potato to existing knowledge systems, expectations, and food customs in Europe. For a long time, many Europeans treated the potato mainly as a raw material for starch, used in bread production. This phenomenon – known as *panification*, or the tendency to view food primarily through the lens of bread – demonstrates how deeply embedded cultural assumptions shape dietary choices. These decisions result not simply from availability or necessity, but from ideas about what food *should* be.

One of Radoliński's chief concerns was the proper storage of potatoes. He complained about sorting, drying, digging storage pits, and his workers' general ineptitude. These failures resulted in massive food waste, a phenomenon he also observed in relation to other products.

Geese also occupy an important place in his writings. Left unsupervised by the staff, they repeatedly destroyed crops and harvests. Down feathers caused particular problems. Sheep, geese, and cows serve as examples in Radoliński's texts of animals used in highly versatile ways – yet caring for them demanded constant labour and close supervision. He wrote emotionally about the race against time and the unrelenting need to monitor and discipline his workers.

This intensely personal tone, charged with frustration, reflects a more profound sense of alienation. Radoliński continually measures himself against a socially hostile environment. His vivid descriptions of daily hardship, which he sees as a threat to his well-being and even his survival, evolve into a desperate plea for help – a chronicle of life lived under permanent strain.

3. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF LONELINESS AND OLD AGE THROUGH STORIES OF FOOD. Paschalis Radoliński's difficulties with sowing, planting potatoes, shearing sheep, fattening rams, storing food, and cooking stem primarily from problems with his domestic staff. In his account, these problems escalate into what he perceives as a vast conspiracy, a coordinated effort by cooks, stewards, maidservants, and labourers to undermine and persecute him.

His harshest criticism falls upon the cook, who not only wastes food but also, according to Radoliński, steals it and distributes or sells it outside the household. The cook appears more than fifty times in the diary, becoming the focal point of the author's daily existence – his actions, failures, and character form the centre of Radoliński's world. The cook prepares meals very late, fails to fulfil the duties outlined in his contract – including supervising the female staff –

and consistently disregards orders. When Radoliński urges him to dry apples (which eventually rot), he refuses to act. When instructed to weed carrots, the cook tells the women to weed parsley instead. Despite repeated requests to tend to the peas, there are none left for winter²³.

Radoliński frequently replaces his cooks, but the problems persist. One successor prepares dishes without sauces – “like a Bernardine monk”²⁴, as Radoliński complains – omits soups, uses burnt black butter, and generally fails to cook competently. Even when he makes soup, he neglects to clean the groats, leaving husks floating on the surface. The cook’s failure to supervise the maids results in a lack of poultry, cabbage, preserves, and beer. Meat vanishes soon after slaughter. Either they stole it, or the vegetables rot, never grow, or mysteriously disappear. The cook sniffs snuff constantly, his nose is always running, and he handles food with dirty, unwashed hands. Kitchen utensils remain filthy – which is evidence, according to the author, of deliberate malice²⁵.

One particularly detested cook, Tomasz, draws especially sharp condemnation: “He never obeys me. A dog by nature, a foolish, insolent. I have no root vegetables because he bought seeds from his drunken brothers. I spent several thalers, and nothing came up.”²⁶

Cooks, as Radoliński observes, prepare food for only one person – himself. He never married, had no children, and had no close family; he lived alone, surrounded solely by his servants and workers. The same laments – of deliberate defiance, ineffective pleading, lies, and provocations – recur throughout the text. His employees appear not only disobedient but actively hostile, mocking and provoking their employer.

A sense of disorientation and helplessness permeates his writing. He returns again and again to the same grievances, repeating descriptions of the staff’s “canine natures” and open defiance. Though his investigations into the improper fermentation of cabbage, the harvesting of fruit, or general laziness may contain elements of truth, the tone, repetition, and extremity of his reports suggest more profound psychological distress and emotional vulnerability.

Beneath the surface, signs of memory lapses, disorientation, and the burdens of old age become increasingly evident. According to Paschalis’ baptismal record, he was born in 1753, which would place him at 69 or 70 years of age in 1822–

23 Ibid., p. 4, 11.

24 Ibid., p. 248.

25 Ibid., p. 171–173, 179, 195–202, 215–227, 239–242, 247–257.

26 Ibid., p. 31.

1823. His burial record suggests he was 72 or 73 – which is an advanced age for that time. He was not only alone in the familial sense but also socially alienated from his surroundings. Once a legal official, a lawyer to wealthy landowners and aristocrats, a tenant and financial speculator managing large estates, he now found himself dependent on workers with whom he could no longer communicate. Everywhere he saw enemies, conspirators, and people of ‘dog nature’.

His repeated accusations, his detective-like pursuit of lies, plots, and provocations reflect more than simple disappointment – they point to psychological torment. Despite enormous efforts to restore order and control over his daily life, nothing seems to work. Pain permeates his egodocument – pain born from the loss of self, of personal agency, and of any power over his circumstances. Even when that power once extended only to sheep, geese, cabbage, or potatoes, it still gave his life structure. That routine – however small – was what kept him going.

CONCLUSION

The case of Paschalis Radoliński’s culinary writings – which is a hybrid collection of recipes and diaristic notes produced by a Greater Poland landowner around 1823 – demonstrates how such texts gain meaning only when historians systematically confront recipes with everyday experience. Read in this way, Radoliński’s entries reveal not a neutral repertoire of dishes, but a living practice of cooking, tasting, judging, and revising. His notes repeatedly translate prescriptive, often second-hand culinary knowledge into situated experiments at the manor table, where he carefully records successes, failures, and adaptations.

What makes this material particularly valuable as a historical source is its distinctly personal tone. Notes on the production, storage, and consumption of food here serve as a testament to the problems associated with old age, loneliness, and the social alienation of a nobleman surrounded only by plebeian servants.

Descriptions of the laziness, malice and genuine conspiracies of cooks and servants bear witness to the helplessness of a lonely older man. The nobleman and landowner feels deceived, or even persecuted, by his servants. The recurring accusations need not be entirely unfounded, since the older man’s powerlessness provided ample opportunity to take advantage of him. Taken as a whole, the text conveys an impression of at least obsession and a sense of being besieged, further intensified by the social alienation and humiliation of

a former noble court official, counsellor of a confederation, local politician and kinsman of the great of this world.

Paschalis Radoliński has told us this entire story through food, as described in his collection of culinary recipes and his original culinary diary. This food, however, speaks about him and his fate, offering a poignant account of his personal lot. It speaks of the loss of subjectivity and of a desperate, solitary struggle to preserve his 'self'. It is, therefore, on the one hand, a classical egodocument, yet through its specific appeal to everyday experience and to a specialised, though within his milieu widely understood, body of knowledge, it may pose particular difficulties for us in reading it.

Feelings, opinions, and explicit assessments permeate the text: culinary trials evoke satisfaction or disappointment; guests and household members become implicit tasters; and the author himself emerges as a reflective, emotionally invested observer of his own kitchen. At the same time, the manuscript possesses considerable social depth. It stages the encounter between a landowner's expectations, tastes, and cultural aspirations and the labour, skills, and improvisation of servants and kitchen staff. Food appears here not as a static list of ingredients, but as practice in action: planned, prepared, negotiated, delegated, and consumed within a complex social microcosm.

In this sense, Radoliński's manuscript constitutes an unusual, detailed, and multifaceted example of an egodocument centred on food. It combines the functions of a cookbook, a diary, a household record, and a space of self-fashioning, thereby complicating clear-cut generic classifications. The material invites us to ask whether we are witnessing the emergence of a new form – a specifically culinary egodocument – or whether we should instead understand it as a shifting subject-area within existing genres of life writing and domestic record-keeping. Whatever answer we give to this question, Radoliński's writings strongly suggest that food-related ego-documents deserve to be treated not as marginal curiosities, but as a significant and revealing corpus within the broader history of egodocumental texts.

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