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Five hundred years of cooking history

Anton Mosimann's unique collection of cookbooks and menu cards

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He is one of the best cooks in the world: the Swiss Anton Mosimann. His guests include crowned heads, politicians, presidents and celebrities from all over the world. He has cooked for five British Prime Ministers from Thatcher to Cameron and for four generations of British royalty, including at the wedding banquet for Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011. He is a perfectionist who leaves nothing to chance. These characteristics form the cornerstone of success of this bow tie-wearing master cook.

However, only a very few people know that Anton Mosimann possesses a unique cookbook library. The more than 6,000 items in his collection allow us to learn a great deal about culinary history over the last five centuries. The collection includes two editions (1516 and 1530) of the first printed gastronomic text, which was written by Platina, the Vatican librarian; and a work on the preparation of jam by Nostradamus, an astrologist and personal physician. But also in the collection are the first cookbook printed in German, the *Küchenmeisterei*, in an edition from 1516; and Alessio Piemontese's 16th century work known as *The Book of Secrets*, which was translated into German by Hanns Jacob Wecker from Basle. His wife, Anna Wecker, was the first woman to publish a cookbook.

Historic and royal menu cards, such as the menu for King George V's coronation in 1911, and contemporary Christmas greeting cards from Mosimann's club in London, make this a highly interesting exhibition. It is the first time that items from Anton Mosimann's collection are being put on public display. In addition to the 120 objects from Mosimann's collection, 25 children's cookbooks will be exhibited. There will also be small, sumptuous and sensuous sculptures and painted plates by the Swiss artist Kathryn Zellweger-Staehelin.

The cookbook

The cookbook market is booming like never before. Cookbooks are virtually flooding the market and every bookshop offers a rich assortment of them. For the cuisine of every country there is a recipe collection to match, with the obligatory beautiful colour photos. Whatever the topic, there is literature to match: starters, main dishes or desserts ... vegan, vegetarian, or molecular cooking. Of course, there is already the electronic version of the cookbook for the e-book reader, and apps for mobile devices. Cooking recipes anytime and anywhere: you can even cook along to YouTube recipes step by step. And don't forget the sought-after cookbooks by TV cooks. Meanwhile, in every country there are innumerable cookery shows in which cooks have become veritable television stars.

The cookbook is, by definition, a bound collection of preparation notes. It contains recipes, in other words, that facilitate the preparation of meals and dishes. Today, you will generally find several

cookbooks in every household. Depending on who they are intended for, they can vary in appearance. For professional cooks, there are the sober, detailed recipe collections. Alongside these, there are school cookbooks, text books with standard recipes for beginners that generally also provide an introduction to cooking techniques and product information, and books simply for hobby cooks. As a rule, the latter are opulently illustrated and take an anecdotal look at ingredients and eating culture.

If you take a look at cookbooks through the ages, you will recognize that they are a testament to changes in eating culture. Cookbooks allow us to identify fashions, preferences and aversions current at a particular time. For this reason, cookbooks reveal fundamental differences in the choice of dishes and their ingredients. The following recipe shows how nutritional habits have changed. The recipe is from Luise Rosenberg's *Praktisches Kochbuch für die gewöhnliche und feine Küche* (*Practical Cookbook for Everyday Cooking and Fine Cuisine* – 1887) and is no longer served today.

Roast badger: A young badger is said to be very tender and delicious, similar to a pork fillet. Marinade it for 2–3 days in vinegar with onions, carrots, sage and various culinary herbs, bay leaves, pepper, cloves, and salt, season and roast it like a young hare, but only for a short time due to the tenderness of its meat.

The history of the cookbook

Today, we can no longer say with certainty when the first cookbook was written. The oldest cookbooks are from the Orient. The earliest known cookbook is the Indian *Vasavarajeyam*, which may be as old as 3,500 years. Chinese notes on eating etiquette were recorded between 500 and 100 BC and, apart from detailed descriptions of meals and dishes, include some recipes which still appear on the menus of Chinese restaurants today.

The oldest extant Roman recipe collection is from the 1st century BC. *The Art of Cooking in 10 Books* (*De re coquinaria libri decem*) by Marcus Gavius Apicius was the definitive work for its time. In the first few centuries AD there is very little to be found out about cookbooks, presumably because recipes were passed on orally. It wasn't until the 14th and 15th centuries that writing down and compiling cooking instructions became fashionable again. This was because in the 12th and 13th centuries an eating culture evolved at the courts of the nobility that for the first time involved table manners. Subsequently, in around 1450, the fork began to be used at the court of the Medicis in Florence. At the end of the 16th century, rules were compiled for the skilful carving of meat, and finally something like teachings for a proper lifestyle for commoners evolved that was strongly tied in with culinary art and table manners.

In the Renaissance and during the emergence of the middle classes, simpler home-cooked meals began to be recorded. A handwritten record from Basle dated around 1460 preserves the recipe collection of "Master Hannsen, the Wirtenberg cook".

An important cookbook from those times, which is also regarded as the first printed cookbook, is *De honesta voluptate*, which was compiled in Italy in 1474 by the administrator of the Papal library, Platina, B. (i.e. Bartolomeo Sacchi). Since Platina was not a cook, he took almost half of the recipe collection for his cookbook from the handwritten records of the first cook of renown, Martino di Como. Di Como was born around 1430 in Torre, a small town in what is now the canton of Ticino, so by today's reckoning he could be counted as Swiss. The original handwritten document

is held at the *Library of Congress* in Washington. The exhibition also has on display the first Parisian edition of this cookbook, which is in Latin and dates from 1530. Cookbooks from this era have very little in common with recipe collections of today, but they already contained aspects related to health. Platina's book included a comprehensive guide to a proper lifestyle, with the aim of positively influencing well-being through healthy nutrition.

In the 17th century, the health aspect disappeared from cookbooks. The focus shifted to the enjoyment of the dishes and the representative purpose of the food at court. That is why recipes can be found in cookbooks of this era that describe the preparation of bears, peacocks, cranes and eagles. Dishes like this have been reproduced for the exhibition. At the close of the 17th century, modern French and Italian culinary style increasingly appears in German cookbook literature. The dishes became more wholesome, more value was placed on the natural taste of the products, and the art of sauces was adopted. Up until the 18th century, most recipe books were directed mainly at men. Men were able to read, house and home belonged to them, and consequently so too did the wife and servants.

In the 19th century, cookbooks were already being printed in relatively large numbers, with women also numbering among the authors. In this period, the first bestseller in cookbook history was published. The author was Wengern-born Henriette Davidis, who collected recipes over a period of eight years and published them under the title *Zuverlässige und selbstgeprüfte Recepte der gewöhnlichen und feineren Küche (Reliable and Proven Recipes for Everyday Cooking and Fine Cuisine)*. From 1847, this cookbook was published under the shorter title *Praktisches Kochbuch für die bürgerliche und feinere Küche (Practical Cookbook for Home Cooking and Fine Cuisine)*. It is documented that Davidis tested all the listed recipes herself and in some cases refined them. This work extensively uses the stock phrase *Man nehme ... (Take ...)* to begin the description of the food preparation, and this is responsible for the widespread use of the phrase in German cookbooks even today. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, this recipe collection was the standard cookbook in Germany; between 1845 and 1963 a total of 75 editions were published. A copy from 1847 is on show in the exhibition.

Cookbooks in the 19th century were also practical guides with helpful hints for organizing the household. They provided advice on nutrition and were aimed at a new target group. The need for young girls to receive training in the area of cooking grew as a result of the separation of household work from professional life and the trend from larger to smaller families.

Among the standard works of European cuisine that are still valid today is *Le Guide Culinaire*, which was written by Auguste Escoffier in 1903 and also forms part of the exhibition. In the 20th century, cookbooks that indicated exact quantities and temperatures became common and often provided step-by-step illustrations of how to prepare the dishes described.

Particularly from the turn of the 20th century until about 1960, cookbook forewords frequently pointed out how important it was that women devote themselves exclusively to the household and family.

Since the second half of the 20th century, the volume of cookbooks published has exploded. The most notable trend is undoubtedly the increasing number of illustrations. In some books, the quality of the instructions falls far short of that of the illustrations, which is presumably a reflection of the spirit of the times.

The recipe

The English term for cooking instructions, *recipe*, and the German word *Rezept* both point at the connection between the healing arts and nutrition, since they are from Latin and were first used as an instruction for medical prescriptions. In the chemical industry the related German word *Rezeptur* means formula, as in recipe for chemical substances used in the preparation of a new substance. In ancient Greece physicians wrote recipes not only for medicines, but also for food dishes.

On closer examination of old cookbooks, it soon becomes clear that actually using the recipes in the kitchen would have posed an insurmountable problem for the layperson. Apart from the often odd (from today's perspective) basic ingredients, exact indications of measurements and weights were missing. This shows that in the past cookbooks were written by professionals for professionals. This in itself explains the lack of information about quantities. It was presumed that the reader already possessed the technical knowledge and ability.

Cookbooks from the 15th and 16th centuries were not intended for the general public, but for cooks in the service of a gentleman or the well-to-do. The task of the cook was understood as being creative and experimental. He was not expected to rigidly follow fixed recipes.

It was not until the 19th century that it became common for quantities to be given in recipes. At this time, more and more cookbooks by women were being published.

Cookbooks for children and dolls

The first children's cookbook originated as a doll's cookbook. Doll's cookbooks emerged in the 17th century. They were in fact intended more as decorative objects for adults. It was not until the 18th century that doll kitchens were built for children too, originally as part of the beloved doll's house. Since the kitchen of the doll's house offered the most potential for play, it was soon produced as an separate toy. The tiny kitchens were functional, so girls were able to cook and bake. The doll stoves, initially just part of the doll's kitchen, soon appeared as individual toys as well, which greatly reduced the cost of purchase and the space requirements. Doll stoves were most widespread between about 1870 and 1940. Doll kitchens and stoves were ideal toys, but also had an educational purpose: young girls from wealthier backgrounds were being playfully prepared for their future roles as housewives in the kitchen. There were special cookbooks for doll kitchens. The book *Haustöchterchens Kochschule (Little Daughter's Cooking School)* stated: "What is at present a cheerful game for you will later also be a fond activity." Lovica von Pröpper wrote in her *Kochbüchlein für die Puppen-Küche (Little Cookbook for the Doll Kitchen)* in 1880: "... to be able to already acquire in a playful way quite nice basic knowledge of the noble culinary art and perhaps also retain a love of it ...". In the course of the 19th century, work in the home was increasingly understood as a profession that required training or a particular upbringing.

What all doll cookbooks share is their focus on the playful element and the fact that, in view of the tiny stove, it was possible to cook entire dishes with small quantities of ingredients. Up until the 1960s, doll stoves were predominantly functional and could really be used to cook. Today, children mostly play with replicas made of wood or plastic, which can only be used for playing.

The children's cookbooks in the exhibition contain realistic recipes that can also be found in normal cookbooks, often only slightly adapted. The oldest children's cookbook in the exhibition is from the period around 1870.

In 1856, a successful cookbook for children entitled *Puppenköchin Anna* (*Anna the Doll Cook*) was published. The author, Henriette Davidis, had also written the *Praktisches Kochbuch für die bürgerliche und feinere Küche*. Like the *Praktisches Kochbuch*, the children's cookbook became an enormous success and was reprinted in nine editions until 1898. The format of *Puppenköchin Anna* is clearly inspired by the *Praktisches Kochbuch*. There are chapters on soups, vegetables and potatoes, rice dishes, etc. As in the book on which it was based, the individual recipes are consecutively numbered throughout the chapters. The majority of the recipes are sweet dishes, predominantly made of milk, semolina, rice, eggs and apples. Most of the recipes are simple, do not require complicated work steps, and can be cooked on a doll stove. In contrast to the adult cookbook, all the ingredients are listed at the beginning of each dish. The following is a recipe for the doll stove from the children's cookbook *Puppenköchin Anna*.

10. Beer soup

One cup of beer, one egg, some rusk bread, and as much sugar as mother will allow for the soup. Boil the beer with a cup of water and the sugar. In the meantime, mix the egg yolk with a tablespoon of water in your little tureen, slowly pour in the boiled beer while continuously stirring, add the rusk bread, and you have a lovely beer soup with rusk dumplings.

In the same children's cookbook there is a second section on so-called flower cuisine, or dishes for dolls. It is based on common garden plants and grasses that would have been easily available for children at the time. This is creative play that is comparatively free of meaning – at that time and in this form an unusual and positively reformist approach.

From the 1930s, the range of children's cookbooks declined noticeably, and from the 1950s, cooking on an adult stove won through. The new children's cookbooks adapted to this trend, with recipes and quantities being adjusted to the larger stoves. From 1960, boys were discovered as a target group.

Undoubtedly the most important thing about cookbooks today is that the recipes in them succeed. This applies to cookbooks for both adults and children. Certain publishers attach great importance to the fact that their recipes have been developed and tested with children.

Mosimann's cookbook collection and how it began

The foundation for Anton Mosimann's unusual and valuable cookbook collection was the acquisition of the collection held by Adelrich Furrer, a renowned gastronomy expert of the 1960s. He worked for the Hilton Hotels Group and was responsible for all of the hotel openings at that time. His elaborate butter sculptures, which he used as centrepieces for his cold buffets, were among his trademarks.

At that time, Anton Mosimann received a private invitation from Adelrich Furrer to his home in Zurich. On this occasion, Furrer showed him his cookbook collection and told his wife that on his death young Mosimann should have first option on acquiring the entire collection. Adelrich Furrer passed away nine months after the meeting, and Anton Mosimann did in fact get the opportunity to purchase the entire collection of 800 books. This was only possible with the assistance of an extremely cooperative staff member of a financial institution, who granted him a loan. This would not be possible in this form today.

Anton Mosimann has continuously expanded the collection, which meanwhile comprises around 6,000 books. The collection tells the culinary history of the last five hundred years and contains rare works such as the Platina's *De honesta voluptate* and the *Küchenmeisterei*.

The collection is divided into two parts: the enthusiast's collection of rarities and the research library. The latter is eagerly used by cooks, gastronomy enthusiasts and others at Anton Mosimann's cooking academy in the London suburb of Battersea.

A work on the comprehensive collection has been written in collaboration with Hans Weiss, a Swiss antiquarian book dealer who specializes in gastronomy. In it, around 350 of the most important books on culinary history from Anton Mosimann's collection are introduced in greater detail. When browsing through the book you discover, for instance, that the astrologer and royal physician Nostradamus (1503–1566) compiled a number of recipes for the preparation of jams. There is also information on a former Basle resident, the physician and professor Johann Jacob Wecker (1528–1586), who wrote a book on wine, distillation, oils, etc. His wife, Anna Wecker, was the author of the first cookbook written by a woman (Amberg, 1597). Also included, of course, are famous cookbooks by, among others, Antoine Augustin Parmentier (1737–1813), Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755–1826) and Auguste Escoffier (1847–1935), which were relevant for the development of culinary history and are still relevant today. All of these books are on display in the exhibition.

Master cook Anton Mosimann and his incredible career

The culinary career of Anton Mosimann began at the age of 15, when he took up an apprenticeship at the *Hotel Bären* in Twann (Switzerland). Even then he loved developing his own dishes. It wasn't enough for him to follow existing recipes in cookbooks. After successfully completing his final exams, he started work at the five-star *Grand Hotel Villars*. The chef there was an absolute perfectionist, and Anton succeeded in always working to his complete satisfaction. Anton Mosimann already had the ambitious goal to reach the pinnacle of culinary achievement and to work only at places where he would be challenged and thus could continue to learn. After some years at grand hotels in Switzerland, Anton Mosimann went to Rome for a year to learn more about Italian cuisine. After that he worked for three years in a large hotel in Canada, and subsequently went to Japan, where, as master cook, he gained an insight into the local cuisine: It is light, honest, artistic, simply fantastic – and it left an impression on him that inspires him to this day. Back in Switzerland, Anton Mosimann worked in the kitchens of five *Palace Hotels*.

Another stage of his career was spent at the first three-star restaurant outside France, the *Villa Lorraine* in Belgium. Four three-star restaurants in France followed. Then, in 1975, Anton Mosimann became maitre chef de cuisine at the world-renowned *Dorchester Hotel* in London – at the age of only 28. Shortly before this he had been awarded a Gold Medal for his cooking at a competition in Lucerne. As a result of reports in the media, the young chef attracted the attention of then renowned Swiss gastronomy expert Adelrich Furrer, who sought contact with him. A short time later, the then maitre chef de cuisine of the *Dorchester*, Eugène Käufeler, told Adelrich Furrer that he was thinking of retiring and asked him if he knew of anyone suitable for the position. Adelrich Furrer recommended the young Anton Mosimann.

The cuisine of the *Dorchester* had been quite classical until then, rich and somewhat old-fashioned. As a result of the range of experiences that Anton Mosimann had gathered in his young years, it

was immediately clear to him that a breath of fresh air was needed in this kitchen. Accomplishing this was more difficult than it sounds, however. It was necessary to guide and motivate over one hundred members of staff in the kitchen area. What made it difficult was that quite a number of the cooks had already worked in the *Dorchester* for years and could not understand why this young person had been appointed to the position of maitre chef de cuisine. However, thanks to his talent, ambition and perseverance, Anton Mosimann succeeded in gaining two Michelin stars for the *Dorchester*. Up until then, no hotel restaurant outside of France had ever been awarded two stars. The award opened doors in the whole world to the new star cook. He received offers from Tokyo, Hawaii, Hong Kong and New York. However, Anton Mosimann decided to remain in London and set up his own business.

Mosimann's private club in London: a success story

After around thirteen years as maitre chef de cuisine at the *Dorchester* – under five owners, ten directors, and having meanwhile cooking up two Michelin stars – Anton Mosimann, at the age of 40, wanted to risk taking a new step. In 1998, the master cook in the bow tie bought an old, former Presbyterian church in Belgravia, an elegant district in the heart of London, and transformed it into an exclusive club restaurant simply called *Mosimann's*. His primary goal was to offer absolutely world-class cuisine. Anton Mosimann also ventured on entirely new paths in marketing and PR. He was the first to work with sponsors. Renowned companies could each hire a salon and design it according to their wishes. In return, they had the opportunity to advertise their name and products in the club.

The club members appreciate above all the excellent cuisine, and Anton Mosimann loves cooking for people who have an understanding of food and who value quality. He has developed his own cooking style which he calls *cuisine naturelle*. He dispenses with ingredients like cream, butter and alcohol. The focus is on the natural flavour of the individual ingredients, which are only cooked for a short time. Great emphasis is placed on the presentation of the dishes. Anton Mosimann aims to prepare the dishes so that they are appealing to the eye.

For Mosimann, discretion and quality are paramount. Meanwhile, the club has around 2,500 members. That is an impressive number, and Mosimann and his team are justifiably proud. To meet the high expectations of these guests, which include many celebrities from all over the world, you need to be innovative and skilled in communication. Whenever possible, Anton Mosimann greets his guests personally – usually in his cook's outfit and always wearing his bow tie. He has over 300 of these ties, which have become his trademark.

The guests expect advice, and it is important to convey an honest sense of welcome and that they are being offered only the best. It is equally important to maintain a certain humility toward the guests. The product must always be at the forefront.

This is a philosophy that Anton Mosimann has internalized, despite having cooked for Queen Elizabeth II and receiving the *Order of the British Empire* from her in 2004. Anton Mosimann has had the honour of cooking for the royal family on various significant occasions, for instance at the wedding banquet for Prince William and Catherine Middleton in 2011.

He has also cooked on frequent occasions for foreign heads of state at Downing Street, the seat of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, was so inspired by Anton Mosimann's culinary skills that he asked if he could take home a "doggy

bag". Kofi Annan, Adolf Ogi, Yasser Arafat, Queen Rania of Jordan, Elton John, Bob Geldof, Kate Moss and Mick Jagger also number among his guests, to name just a few on the unending list. Anton Mosimann is justifiably proud of having met and cooked for these well-known personages – he worked hard for decades to achieve what he has. Meanwhile, his two sons have joined the family business after having successfully completed training at the Lausanne Hotel Management School.

Facts & figures

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Admission.

CHF 7.00/5.00

Children up to 16 years of age are admitted free of charge and only the company of adults.

No additional charge for the special exhibition.

The entire building is wheelchair-accessible.

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