

How perfect is *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid* (1746)?

Janet Broos & Ton Broos

Although the Dutch Golden Age of the 17th century produced many paintings with copious displays of food, the few existing cookbooks do not reflect this opulence. It was not until 1746 that a cookbook was published in Amsterdam entitled *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid* ('The Perfect Dutch Kitchen maid'), which gave us an extensive and more complete look into the historical Dutch kitchen. This was a success story from the start. The reasons for this are manifold. Publisher Steven van Esveldt was a shrewd businessman who published many successful literary masterpieces by Cervantes, Defoe and Fielding as well as Dutch novels and magazines.

There is some discussion as to who the author of this work might be. The first possibility is an anonymous lady from The Hague, who is mentioned on the title page, but could not be further identified. A second possibility would be either Hermanus van den Burg or Jan Willem Claus van Laar, who were frequent hack writers for Steven van Esveldt, but no conclusive evidence for their authorship can be found either. The work rather appears to be the result of a concerted effort of many writers, including housewives, who handed notes and manuscripts directly to the publisher. He had editorial help in producing the work, as is mentioned in the *Appendix* in a later edition.

Looking at the in total more than 600 recipes, we find a well-organized collection of ingredients and cooking methods, some of them taken from previous cookbooks, followed by cures for medical conditions and rules of etiquette. Several remarkable examples are mentioned in more detail, and the reader can literally get a taste of the book by following some of these recipes which are given in the original and a modernized version.

Key terms: *Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid*; Historical Dutch cuisine; Steven van Esveldt; Hermanus van den Burg; Jan Willem Claus van Laar; 18th century recipes modernized.

That good food and literature go well together was also the opinion in the 18th century.¹ In his introduction to *Tom Jones* (1950 [1749]) Henry Fielding compares fine writing with cooking, although human nature might be in the way sometimes and

An objection may perhaps be apprehended from the more delicate, that this dish is too common and vulgar; for what else is the subject of all the romances, novels, plays, and poems, with which the stalls abound? [...] In reality, true nature is as difficult to be met with in authors as the Bayonne ham, or Bologna sausage, is to be found in the shops.

(Fielding 1950 [1749], 2)

Fielding wrote his novel from 1746-48, the period when in Amsterdam a book came out with the pretentious title *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid* ('The Perfect Dutch Kitchen Maid', further also referred to as VHK). We do not think that Fielding knew this work, but it is an interesting notion to realize that he had spent two years at Leiden University in 1726-1728 (Fielding [1749] 1950, VI). Although the Dutch kitchen might have a less than stellar reputation nowadays, the beautiful still lifes of painters like Van Schooten or Van Dijck with their colourful *ontbijtjes* 'breakfast pieces', Pieter Claesz and Willem Heda with *banketjes* 'banquet pieces' or *pronkstillevens* 'still lifes of display' by Willem Kalf and Jan de Heem show us, in the words of art historian Julie Hochstrasser,

a rich panoply of foods, drinks, and tableware in the painted meals of Dutch still life of the seventeenth century – as on real Dutch tables throughout the land during this, their Golden Age – represent pride.

(Hochstrasser 2007, 4)

We do not find this splendor represented in the cookbooks of the period, which are few and far between, and express utility over pride. Culinary writing has to acknowledge the superiority of culinary painting. The tradition in Dutch cookbooks goes back to at least 1510 when in Brussels the *Boecxke van cokerye* was published by Thomas van der Noot. Another 16th century cookbook was called *Receptboecxken*; the word *recept* is here closer to 'prescription' than 'recipe' because it contains more apothecary than kitchen subjects, especially about 'confitures'. (Note that Modern Dutch uses just the one word *recept* for both 'recipe' and 'prescription'.)

The 17th century produced more cookbooks, and the French influence is obvious. A popular work was *De Verstandige Kock of Sorghvuldige Huyshoudster*

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper given at the annual CAANS-ACAEN meeting in St.Catharine's, Ontario on May 28, 2014.

(‘The Sensible Cook or Careful House Maid’) published in 1667, reprinted several times in Amsterdam and Antwerp, even as late as 1802 (Van ’t Veer 1966, 182). This could be regarded as the definitive cookbook of its time, but it has relatively simple recipes (Molen-Willebrands 1996, 213).

Half the number of books are associated with or written by medical doctors, who warn for or against the bad effects of coffee, tea and chocolate, stimulants that gained in popularity towards the end of the century (Schivelbusch 1981). We see a change in the 18th century when the housewives are becoming the standard, and several writing *mevrouwen* ‘housewives’ brought their notebooks to the publisher. *De Schrandere Stichtse Keukenmeid* (‘The Clever Kitchenmaid from Sticht or Utrecht’) appears in 1754, *De Volmaakte Geldersche Keukenmeid* (‘The Perfect Kitchenmaid from Gelderland’) in 1747. Both were collected from *eene voorname dame* ‘a prominent lady’ according to the title page. Later in the century we read *De Vriesche Keukenmeid* (‘The Frisian Kitchenmaid’) in 1772, *Nieuwe Vaderlandsche kookkunst* (‘New Patriotic Art of Cooking’) in 1794 and *Aaltje, de Volmaakte en Zuinige Keukenmeid* (‘Aaltje, the Perfect and Frugal Kitchenmaid’) in 1803 (Van ’t Veer 1966, 179-187).

From the 19th century comes a quote from famous poet Jan Pieter Heije, the author of Dutch classic songs like *Zie de maan schijnt door de bomen* (‘See the moon shining through the trees’), and *De Zilvervloot* (‘The Silver Fleet’), who writes that the secret to a mother’s cookbook is *zindelijkheid en overleg* (‘cleanliness and judgment’) (Heije 1865, 107). J.J.A. Gouverneur, translator of Toepffer’s famous comic book *Mr. Vieux Bois* as *Mr. Prikkebeen*, stated in the magazine *De Huisvriend* in 1863 this opinion: “*De Volmaakte Hollandse Keukenmeid was in der tijd een orakel*” (‘VHK was at the time an oracle’) and “*hoeveel stichtelijks in zulk eene gastronomische verhandeling liggen kan*” (‘how much edifying can be found in such a treatise’) (Gouverneur 1863, 16). These gentlemen anticipate the opinions of later cookbooks like “*Kookboek van de Amsterdamsche Huishoudschool*” (‘Cookbook of the Amsterdam Science School’) (Wannée 1910) and “*Het nieuwe Haagse Kookboek*” (‘The new The Hague Cookbook’) (Stoll & de Groot 1995). Until recently, many Dutch mothers grew accustomed to their authoritative opinions and practices. Perhaps they reflect the Dutch character in its most essential form: neat, clean and not too extravagant.² Vinegar became the substitute for lemon juice, legumes for a variety of meats or roasts, and no more expensive spices. Housewives moved to the simpler formula of one piece of meat, potatoes and vegetables, although the Dutch were perhaps ahead of their time in loving the now fashionable kale.

² Both classical cookbooks of the Dutch cuisine are according to Wikipedia (2015) “marked by their moderate use of seasoning” and “food should be nourishing but it should not be a burden on the household budget.”



Figure 1. Front cover of *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid*.

Source: http://dbnl.nl/tekst/vol002volm01_01/.

By the time Heije and Gouverneur wrote their lines, *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid* had already gone through 12 editions, as publisher Van Loon in Tiel announced in *De Opregte Haarlemsche Courant* ['The True Haarlem Newspaper'] on 16 September in 1859 (Van 't Veer 1966, 185).

What was the reason for this success? We have to go back to the 18th century and look at the work itself. The title page is very informative and detailed, as was the fashion of the time:

De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid.

ONDERWYZENDE Hoe men allerhande *Spyzen, Confituren* en *Nagerechten*, zonder de ongemeene kosten, zelfs voor de Roomsgezinden op Visdagen en in de Vasten, gezond en smakelyk kan toebereiden: Hoe men alles tegen de winter inlegt. Wat men in de SLACHTTYD doen moet: En hoe men *Mol* en versch *Bier* des zomers goed kan houden.

BENEVENS,

Eenige vaste tekens waar aan men zien kan of het Vleesch, ten tyden der Vee-Pest, gezond is of niet.

EN

Hoe men een ordentelyke TAFEL zal schikken wanneer men zyn vrienden onthaald; met eenige *Figuren*, van opgedischte Tafels, opgeheldert.

Als mede eenige

HUISMIDDELEN

Voor de Verkoudheid; om allerhande Koortzen onfeilbaar te genezen; om het Gezicht te versterken & c. Nevens de toebereiding van eenige zagte Spyzen en Dranken tot verkwikking van zieke menschen.

‘The Perfect Dutch Kitchen maid.

Educating how one can prepare healthy and tastefully all kinds of food, preserves and desserts, without extreme expenses, even for the Catholics on fish days and during Lent: How one preserves for Winter. What one has to do in Slaughtering Season: and how one can keep Mol (a kind of beer) and fresh Beer in Summer.

Also

some indications to determine whether the meat is healthy or not during a cattle plague.

And

how one should lay the table when entertaining friends, explained with some examples of dished up tables. Also some household remedies

for the common cold and the failsafe healing of all kinds of fevers, to strengthen vision etc., as well as the preparation of some soft foods and drinks to invigorate sick people.’

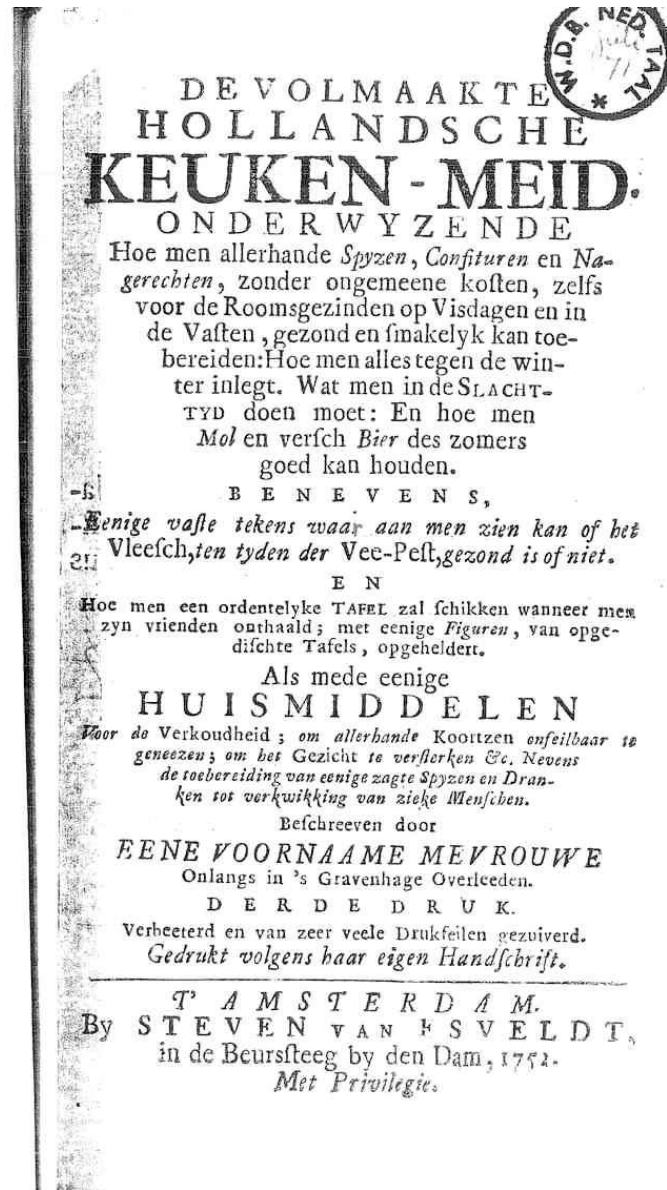


Figure 2. Title page of *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid*.

Source: <http://dbnl.nl/tekst/origineel.php?ec=vol002volm01&v=01&s=0000>.

Before we examine some recipes, we want to make some observations on the publisher's history and the possible author of the book. In an advertisement in *Amsterdamsche Saturday Courant* of November 20, 1745, and 's *Gravenhaegse Maendagse Courant* two days later, the publisher Steven van Esveldt announces the publication for 12 *stivers* or 60 cents (Van 't Veer 1966, 105). A common laborer made one guilder a day, i.e. 100 cents or 20 *stivers*. Three months later, a

second part called *Aenhangzel* 'Appendix' is added, and published for 12 stivers each. Within a year there is a second edition and in 1761 we notice a fifth edition, with a copyright privilege of the States of Holland and West-Friesland, the two most important provinces in the Dutch Republic, to grant the exclusive rights for another fifteen years. Copyright was not countrywide and not always enforced. To protect this success story from competitors, the privilege in the edition threatens that a pirate edition was punishable at 3,000 guilders, one third for the officer in charge, one third for the poor, and one third for the owner of the copyright, i.e. the publisher (VHK 1965, 149-153). This Van Esveldt was an adventurous publisher, printer and bookseller, responsible for Dutch translations of Cervantes, Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, international 18th century classics, and a version of the *1001 Nights*. He published early Dutch novels like *De Middelburgsche Avanturier* ('The Middelburg Adventurer'), *De Oude en Jonge Robinson* ('The Old and Young Robinson'), *De Soldaat van Fortuin* ('The Soldier of Fortune'), but also magazines, political pamphlets and other non-literary works throughout the century (Buisman 1960, cited in Mateboer 1996).

Who is the author of this cookbook? We have three candidates. Our first indication comes from the title page which reads: "*Beschreven door eene voornaame mevrouwe, onlangs in 's Gravenhage overleeden*" ('Written by an important lady, recently deceased in The Hague') and "*gedrukt volgens haar eigen handschrift*" ('printed following her own manuscript'). In the dedication it is mentioned that a very virtuous lady of one of the most prominent families in Holland has realized that this book serves as a guide to make her daughters into good housekeepers and to have capable kitchen maids. She was asked to give a copy of her notebook and, writes the unknown author, a friend redacted and organized it. There are already books like this but they deal mostly with preparation of food from France, Italy and Germany which is "*zeer strydende met de Hollandsche wyze, die vry wat gezonder, alzo smakelyk, en minder Kostbaar is*" ('contrary to the Dutch way, which is much healthier, also more tasteful and less costly'). An initial poem is "*Dankzegging aan de schryfster*" ('Thanks to the female author') and signed by C.W.L.I.V. (De Sitter 1903, 336-345).

A study in 1966 took this to be Lady I.L. Wassenaar Catwijk, but this remains far from certain, because the author's dedication to the female users is signed by "*Uwen Ootmoedige, dog onbekende Dienaar en Vriend*" ('Your humble, but anonymous servant and male friend'). Also, *eene voornaame mevrouwe* 'an important lady' appears on this, but also on the title page of other works (Van 't Veer 1966, 106-111, 186) and seems contrived. A second candidate is a hack writer called Hermanus van den Burg, who was indeed a writer for Van Esveldt. He refers in one of his magazines to *De Keuken-meid* as 'his' cookbook, so the evidence is thin. Also, the publisher could have easily inserted some advertising for his

publication in his own magazine and Van den Burg was a well-known author (Tol 1988, 88; De Blauw 1974; De Blauw 1977).

Our final candidate is a writer named Jan Willem Claus Van Laar, which would fit the four initials of the introduction's poem in anagram (Jongenelen 2001, 113). We also have testimony of a colleague called Jan Wagenaar, who in a pamphlet refers to him mockingly as the author of the *weergaloze* 'unparalleled' *Volmaakte Hollandsche Keukenmeid*. Political pamphlets were one of Van Laar's other products that got him into jail and banishment from the states of Holland and West-Friesland. His adventurous ways led him to the East Indies and Curaçao to escape bailiffs, which he had been doing since his 'Company of Commerce and Navigation' went under in 1720. His writing career was one of ups and downs. He wrote a successful crime trilogy and later works are of great variety and mostly published under pseudonym. There was a period in his life when he got married, moved to Middelburg and became a brewer. He therefore had the knowledge of the title page *hoe men Mol en versch Bier des zomers goed kan houden* ('How to preserve mol and fresh beer in Summer'), which makes for another argument in favor of his authorship (Jongenelen 2001). However, it all sounds interesting but not enough for a complete and final verdict.

The complete '*Keuken-meid*' consists of three parts. The second part called *Aanhangzel* 'Appendix' has some extended recipes from part one, and the *Kunst om allerhande Tafel geregten voor te snyden* ('art of how to slice several dishes'), and *de Wyze om allerhande Tafel-goed Konstig en cierlyk te vouwen* ('different ways how to fold 'tableware' or napkins artfully and elegantly'). The title page also mentions that these are gathered from several ladies and maids. In fact there are six names mentioned in abbreviated form like *Rook-worst van Mevrouw Graafl...* 'smoked sausage from Mrs. Graafl...' or *Koekjes van Mevr. G...* 'Cookies from Mrs. G...' which makes us believe that Van Laar might be the author, but more likely the compiling editor of material sent to the publisher. The third part '*De Volmaakte Grondbeginzelen*' ('The Perfect Principles') is a watered down version of parts one and two, and sold separately for those who think the others too expensive. It does not seem farfetched to regard the publication in several editions as a work in progress, started by an imaginative publisher who employed one author, or more, including housewives, who handed notes and manuscripts to the publisher for this very successful enterprise.

The book is divided in seven chapters and starts with the handling of meats, followed by baking, then frying and roasting, preserving fruits, frying or sautéing meat, fish and vegetables, salting and preserving for Winter time, and cooking and boiling soups etc. The culinary historian Annie van 't Veer discovered that 89 recipes have been lifted or rewritten from a cookbook of 1701 called *De Geoeffende en Ervaren Keukenmeester, of de Verstandige Kok* ('The trained and

experienced Kitchen Master or The Sensible Cook'). Van 't Veer calls this "een onhandig ingedeeld boek" ('a clumsily organized book'), with many duplications, and "hij heeft het niet afgemaakt" ('he has not completely finished it') (Van 't Veer 1966, 110). From the second part of the title it seems obvious that this would go back to a popular work called *Den Nederlandse Hovenier* 'The Dutch Gardener' and especially one part called *De verstandige Kok, of Sorgvuldige Huyshoudster* ('The sensible cook or Careful Housekeeper'). This was first published in 1662, and had many editions until 1802 (Molen-Willebrands 1996). A wonderful edition called *The Sensible Cook. Dutch Foodways in the Old and the New World*, translated and edited by Peter G. Rose, came out in 1989 (Rose 1989). It describes in detail food preparations, cooking methods and delicate dishes on both sides of the Atlantic, as she explains and compares recipes. Nicolien van der Sijs (2009) writes somewhat condescending in her *Cookies, Coleslaw and Stoops* that "The largest contribution made by the Dutch to American English proves to have been in the area of foodstuffs, where no fewer than 28 loanwords have been adopted. This is rather surprising, given that the Dutch are hardly renowned for their culinary achievements. (117)" One recognizes cookie, cruller, olykoek, pannicake and waffle, which are 17th and 18th century examples, while coleslaw and brandy are still used on a daily basis.

Our *Volmaakte Keukenmeid* has a coleslaw of red cabbage with vinegar and oil or butter. It is one of the grand total of some 625 recipes. Although not a direct version of *De Verstandige Kock* ('The Sensible Cook'), one notices that many recipes run parallel, comparable to encyclopedia entries which often look alike. Compare for instance these recipes for asparagus:

Aspergies worden slechts ghekoockt/niet al te murruw en dan gegeten met Olie/Azijn/ en Peper/of anders met gesmolten Boter en geraspte Notemuskatén. (Rose 1989, 44, 48)

'Asparagus are just boiled, not too well-done, and then eaten with Oil, Vinegar, and Pepper or otherwise with melted Butter and grated Nutmegs.'

Neemt sparsjes en snyd die heel klein zo verre ze goed zyn om te eeten, en fruit ze met booter, en giet 'er dan room over heen, dekt het toe en doet 'er dan wat geraspte notemuscaat over is heel goed.

(VHK 1, 94)

'Take asparagus and cut them into small parts as far as they are good to eat, and sauté them with butter and pour cream over it, cover it and add some grated nutmeg, is very good.'

Melted butter and grated nutmeg over asparagus is still a popular Dutch delicacy that has come down through the ages.

Predecessors are hardly ever acknowledged, although our book refers once to another publication:

Men moet niets opdisschen dat oud of buiten den tyd is; maar het geen eerst uitkomt, is altoos het raarst en het aangenaamst, ook mag men altyd vruchten voordienen zo lang die te krygen zyn, al waren het Wintervruchten; maar men moet altoos met de ALMANACH DER HOVENIERS te raaden gaan, want dit kleine maar fraaije en nuttige Werkje zal ons goede onderrichting daar van geeven, en ieder behoorden dit achter deeze *Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-Meid* te voegen, dewyl het van een algemeen gebruik is.

([VHK 1, 138](#))

‘One should not serve anything that is old or out of season, but what comes out first is always the rarest and most pleasant; one can also always serve fruits as long as they are available, even in Winter; but one should always consult THE ALMANACK OF GARDENERS, because this small but nice and useful work will give us good instruction, and everyone should add this to the *Perfect Dutch Kitchen Maid*, because it is for general use.’

The Almanach referred to is a translation of Bradley’s *A general treatise of husbandry and gardening* (1745), translated by C.S.A.V.L. (probably Van Laar, and published by Van Esveldt) (Anonymous 1965, 138).

If you by now are confused by the different editions and publications, we sympathize and will move to a closer look at the book’s content. The many pieces of advice one reads throughout the book are impressive in the amounts of salt for pickling, sugar for preserving, and smoking, to make sure there is enough food for winter time. There is also an abundance of spices, which do not seem to be used for masking bad food, but definitely for enhancing the taste. Take for instance the recipe for Bread Pudding:

Neemt 12 eijeren klopt die heel klein en doet ’er wat zout, een weinigje saffraan, suiker, nagelen, foelie en notemuscaat onder; een goed gedeelte korenten met fyn gesneden nier-vet, met twee witte-brooden die geraspt zyn: mengt die te saamen wel onder een, en doet ’er een weinigje brandewyn by om het luchtig te maaken, doet het dan te saamen in een doek of in een zakje en bind het maar niet styf toe, en kookt het gaar, is zeer goed, met saus gegeten.

([VHK 1, 114](#))³

³ VHK 1 and 2 refer to the different parts of the 1965 facsimile edition, each with their own pagination.

'Take 12 eggs whisk them and add salt, some saffron, sugar, cloves, mace and nutmeg; a good part of currants with finely chopped kidney suet, and two loaves of grated white bread; mix it all and add a little brandy to make it light; put it together in a cloth or bag and bind it, but not too tight, and cook it. Is very good, eaten with sauce.'

To prepare all kinds of dough for crusts for pasties and tarts one used coarse dough, fine dough and filo dough. The coarse dough is used for venison, made from rye flour, with butter, water and salt, rolled with a stick; that crust is never eaten. The finer dough is made for tarts and lids for pasties, made from flour and butter and the filo must be well kneaded.

An interesting part of the book pays attention to *huismiddelen* 'household remedies'. Here is one for *derdendaagsche koorts* 'third day fever' or malaria, which was not uncommon in Holland: purgation with different salts, four times a day with wine or beer and rye with milk (VHK 1, 71-72). Of course there were no stoves or cooking ranges and cooking in front of an open fire affects your vision. Here is a noteworthy remedy to strengthen it in a remarkable way: hard boiled egg white, and rosewater, mixed with vitriol of burnt copper, filter this through a piece of muslin, repeat a few times, squeeze it in a wine glass and put drops in the eye for eight days. If the ailment is older, then one should boil man's urine in a small red copper kettle and rinse the eyes daily in between the drops (VHK 1, 73).

A remedy for a cold can be found in "*borst-suiker*", made from sugar with rainwater and "*drie stuivers saffraan*" ('3 stivers worth of Saffran'), or "*in plaats van saffraan, een kruidnagel of 20 fyb gesneden*" ('instead of saffron, 20 cloves, finely chopped'). A cough-mixture can be made from "*Anys-drop, en een pond witte Gom, en een boetelje roosewater, en doet dat te zaamen in een aarde pot, en zet het een dag of vier te trekken*" ("Anise-liquorice with gum and rosewater to be put in an earthenware pot for four days, to steep") (VHK 1, 74). Here is the secret for the young miss to get a beautiful skin:

Neemt de kruim van het beste witte brood, legt dat in geite melk te weeken; zet het dan in den oven of in een Taarte-pan om te bakken, en neemt het 'er uit eer het half gaar is. Wryft dit kruim zo klein als gy het krygen kunt, en weekt het op nieuw in wat geitemelk, doet daar het wit van zes eijeren by, en zet alles op een klein vuur of heeten asch om 'er een watertje van overtehaalen, het geen het vel ongemeen blank maakt, en alle vlakken weg neemt.

([VHK 2, 48](#))

‘Take the crumbs of the best white bread, soak it in goat’s milk, then put it in the oven or in a cake pan to bake, when it is half done, take it out, rub it to reduce it, soak again in some goat’s milk, then add the whites of six eggs, put it all on a low fire or hot ashes to make into a liquid, which makes the skin very white and takes away spots.’

The remedy against deafness which happens from cold and head colds caused by sudden change in temperature is surprisingly simple:

Neemt wilde Menthe die men in de weiden vind; wryft daar van 3 a 4 bladeren in uwe handen, en steekt ze in uwe ooren, dog men moet alle twee uren versche neemen, dan zullen alle de zinkingen daar na toe trekken.

[\(VHK 2, 49\)](#)

‘Take wild mint that one finds in the field; rub three or four leaves in your hands and stick them in your ears, but you have to take fresh ones every two hours, and all head colds will pull towards it.’

Some Dutch people might remember *winterhanden* or *wintervoeten*, the tingling sensation that comes with cold hands and feet. Our preventive cure is “*Neemt Vossen-vet en wryft daar in het najaar en des winters dagelyks uwe hande of voeten mede, dan zal men nooit Winterhanden of Wintervoeten krygen*” (“take fox grease and rub your hands and feet daily during Fall and Winter, then you will never get ‘winter hands’ or ‘winter feet’”) (VHK 2, 49).

There may be some surprising things to eat: pigeons, finches, bunting, lark, woodcock, thrush, or plover, to name the most exotic ones. Of course one ate every part of the animals, including brains, ears, tongues and feet. Fish is organized in salt water and fresh water fish and many different kinds are mentioned. Sometimes to show consideration for Catholics and fasting time or Lent, the egg sauce is substituted with butter, mustard and vinegar, and of course meat sauce is replaced.

Of interest are also the ingredients that are not mentioned. Most obvious are tomatoes, not consumed before the end of the 18th century. One will not find potatoes either in this cookbook. They were available in most part of the Netherlands – Clusius had them already in his botanical garden in the 17th century – but they were looked down upon. The competitor of the potato was the Jerusalem artichoke. In 1750 the kitchen maid of Haarlem’s mayor was fired for serving potatoes to the family (Born 1989, 177). By that time cane sugar in cone form had also overtaken honey as sweetener. Water is always referred to as rainwater, which is a clear indication that no other water from a pump, canal or

river, or shipped in barrels was trusted. For meals, even breakfast, one drank beer or wine.

There are recipes for rice pudding and a way of cooking rice which sounds familiar.

Neemt een rond blik trommeltje of doos daar de deksel wel op sluit; doet die half vol met Ryst, en sluit het wel toe en kookt dan dit doosje in een ruime keetel met water, zo zal de Ryst zeer malsch worden, en van het water dat door de pori van het blik trekt, uitzetten, en zo wit als sneeuw blyven, is excellent.

(VHK 2, 88)

'Take a round tin can or box with a lid that fits well; fill it halfway with rice and boil it in a big kettle with water. The rice will get soft from the water seeping in through the pores, expand and will stay as white as snow. Is excellent.'

The rice may have been imported from France or Italy, or the Dutch colonies. At the end of one sausage making recipe the author mentions a way to send pork sausages to the East Indies:

[...] zo legt men ze in een goed wel ter degen digt gekuipt vaatje, dat men eerst uitbroeid, en met kruidnagelen op een test met vuur gelegd en onder het vaatje gezet, ter degen door en door laat droogen, en dan laat men het vaatje koud worden. Men gebruikt dan ook gedroogt zout: en het vaatje moet wel ter degen vol zyn en digt toegekuipt worden: en men laat het met loot bekleden, [...].

(VHK 1, 15)

'[...] put them in a wooden barrel that is dried over a fire, and put on a firepan with cloves, dried through and through, until the barrel is cooled. Use dry salt and pack the sausages close together and close it off. Cover the tub completely with lead, [...].'

To our great surprise we also found a recipe for atjar, mixed pickles used in *rijsttafel*. They call it Azia and it has ingredients like cabbage, oil, garlic, kurkuma, beer, vinegar and mustard seed. There is also "*Soja, zo goed als die uit Oost Indien komt, hoe men die maaken zal*" ('as good as it comes from The East Indies, how to make it'): a sauce from beef stock, with cloves and beer, saved in bottles (VHK 2, 65-66).

It seems obvious that the book is not used by or intended for the poorer classes, who were not able to read, or could afford expensive spices or alcoholic beverages. Table manners are also an indication of an upper and middle class

reading public for this cookbook. In the evenings one did not eat anything hot, and only light food. In what was called a 'collation' or light meal, everything was served cold, with the exception of earthnuts, chestnuts and asparagus. The order of the food at every meal was usually first the boiled, then the stewed, then the fried or roasted food, accompanied with *assietes*, 'bowls' or plates with vegetables, and dessert at the end. The rich had of course more than one *gebraad* 'roast': duck, pigeon, pheasant or pork etc (VHK 1, 133-137).

Some rules for guests must be observed and the Appendix-edition of 1763 finishes with "*WETTEN wegens het CEREMONIEEL Omtrent het drinken der gezondheid*" ('Laws concerning the ceremonies for toasting at each others' health') (VHK 2, 135-137). Offer a glass of red wine beforehand, which is good for the stomach, sharpens the appetite and welcomes the friends. Wish each other *smakelijk eten* 'enjoy your meal' and one can drink to each other's health. If the company is larger than 20 it is foolish to drink to each individual's health, as one has to drink more than one feels like, or one has to drink stale wine. It is against good manners to kiss a lady after drinking to her health, or to thank her with a kiss. Even more ill-mannered is it to get up from the table and go and kiss young ladies sitting far away; it is *vies* 'dirty', to kiss a young lady with an unwashed mouth, and it makes a chaos at the table. It is ill-mannered to press someone to drink wine or force to finish one's glass. With the last glass one should thank the host and wish other guests to have enjoyed the meal. One should never get up from the table without thanking God. One should also not fold one's serviette, because that is the servant's job.

Can one say that *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid* is perfect? The preface in the 1763 edition pronounces that it may be called perfect repeatedly, also because it has been revised and approved. From a chef's point of view, we believe there are perfect recipes in this work, to make a complete diner, lacking nothing. From a writer's point of view, the authors under consideration might think otherwise, as they were hackwriters and they never made a lot of money. From a publisher's point of view, one may call it a success story for hundreds of years, because even the facsimile edition by Sijthoff's went through three publications, in 1965 and 1973. Antiquarians still offer editions ranging from Eur 300-1750. The book was Dutch, with the *spekpannekoek* 'bacon pancake' as a typical example, but also international as the mainly French terms like *blancmanger*, *farceren*, *fricassee*, *ragout*, *crème brûlée* etc. indicate, but also *olypodrigo* (from Spanish *Olla podrida* 'hotchpotch') and *Spaanse pap*. Parts of it can also be called a how-to book. Despite the publisher and his professional writing team, the style is not very literary, more directing, as most recipes start not surprisingly with a repetitive *neemt* 'take'. Its 17th century predecessor is equally strict, but our '*Keuken-meid*' is much more instructive and detailed in

amounts and time. The finishing touch is frequently an abrupt ungrammatical but funny sentence *is goed*, 'is good' in many varieties, as if the cook gives her final approval. What makes the book also perfect is the respect that we got for the women who had to work in the kitchen. They not only had to cut and knead and bake and can and smoke, but also kill the chicken, debone the animal, use all parts of a pig's head, besides winterize food in several ways. We have to take a deep bow for them.

We would like to close with our choice of some interesting recipes in original and translated versions, also in modern application. They are easy to make and each, to quote the *Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid*: *is zeer goed* 'is very good'.

Witte Frikassé, hoe men die stooven zal

Neemt een aan stukken gekapt hoen, en legt het in een half pintje Room met wat water om wit te trekken: doet dan klein gekorve Chalotten; wat voelie, heele peper, 2 ansjovissen met wat boter in een stooftan, en laat het te zaamen een weinige fruiten. Neemt dan uw hoen uit de Room zonder te verzygen, en legt het in die stooftan, met wat Room en wat klein gehakte petercelie daar by, en laat het dus langzaam stooven tot dat het gaar is, ook kan men 'er Champignons in doen. Als men het op zal doen zo neemt men eenige dooiren van Eijeren fyn geklopt, en roert die wel met de helft van een half pintje Room onder een, met wat Limoen-sap 'er onder, en dan giet men dat daar over, en men schud het wel om; en de rand belegt men met schyffes van Limoenen. (VHK 2, 97-98)

White fricassee, how to stew or braise it

Take a cut-up chicken, and put it in a half a pint of cream with some water to blanch it: then put finely chopped shallots, some mace, whole pepper, two anchovies with some butter in a stewpot, and let it brown a little. Take the chicken from the cream without draining it, and put it in the pot, with some cream and some finely chopped parsley, and let it stew slowly until tender, one can also add mushrooms. When one is ready to serve, so take a few egg yolks nicely stirred and mix it well with half a pint of cream, some lemon juice with that, and then one pours it over it, stirring it well together; one covers the rim with slices of lemon.

White Fricassee, in modern application by Janet Broos

1 cut up chicken-1 cup light cream-1 cup chicken broth-2Tbs.butter-2 large shallots sliced-¼ tsp.mace-½tsp.salt-¼tsp.pepper-½lb.mushroom sliced-6 parsley

stems tied together-1or2 beaten egg yolks-1-2Tbs.cream-1tsp.lemon juice-
chopped parsley for garnish.

Bring cream and chicken broth to a simmer in a pot large enough to hold a chicken. Add chicken pieces, cover and blanch for 5 minutes. Set chicken aside, save cream/broth mixture. Melt 2 Tbs. butter in another pan, add shallots and cook until translucent, add salt and pepper, mace and mushrooms, cook until softened. Pour broth mixture into the shallots/mushrooms and bring to a simmer, then add chicken pieces. Add parsley stems, cover loosely, and cook over medium heat until chicken is tender, about 30 minutes. Just before serving, add the remaining cream and lemon juice to the beaten egg yolks and add this to the chicken, but do not let the pot boil.

Grieffoen, hoe men die in een schootel braaden zal

Neemt het vleesch van een Kalfs-Rib, maar zo veel vet als mager; doet hier onder wat zoetemelks-pap, 1 a 2 dooiren van Eijeren, en kapt het wel door een met wat kervel en droog kruid; maakt 'er balonnen van en legt ze in een schootel. Neemt dan wat vleesch-nat, een stukje booter met wat gestootte kruid, maakt daar een saus van die wat gebonden is; giet 'er een gedeelte over heen: zet het dan te braaden, met vuur onder en boven; en als het gaar is doet men het restant der saus daarover heen, is zeer goed. ([VHK 2, 34-35](#))

Gryphon, how to fry it in a dish⁴

Take the meat of a calf's rib, as much fat as lean, mingle it with some sweet milk porridge, one or two egg yolks and mix it well together, with some chervil and dry herbs, make balls out of it and put them in a dish: take some meat juice, a piece of butter with some chopped herb, make a sauce that is somewhat thick, pour a part on top: then brown it with heat both under and on top; and when it is done, one pours the rest of the sauce over it, is very good.

Gryphon, or Veal Meatballs, in modern application by Janet Broos

1 slice good white bread-¼ cup warm milk-1 lb. ground veal-1-2 egg yolks-1½ Tbs. fresh chervil-1¼ tsp. each dried rosemary and oregano-4 Tbs. unsalted butter -±1½ cups warmed beef broth-2 Tbs. flour.

4 It is unclear why this recipe for meatballs is called Gryphon.

Mash together the white bread with the warm milk until well blended. Set aside. Put the ground veal in a bowl, add 1Tbs.of the chervil and half of the rosemary and oregano. Add the egg yolk and the bread mixture, mix well until relatively firm. Make $\frac{3}{4}$ inch round balls. Brush veal balls generously with some of the beef stock. Melt two tablespoons of butter in a sauté pan and brown the meatballs. Melt the remaining tablespoons of butter in another pan. Sprinkle in the flour to make a roux i.e. cook together until lightly colored. Off heat add some of the warmed beef broth until well blended. Return pan to heat and keep adding broth until desired consistency. Once the meatballs are nicely browned, add sauce with the remaining chervil, rosemary and oregano. Bring to a simmer, reduce heat to medium-low and cook for about 30 minutes. Is good-Is very good!

Caneel Wafeltjes, hoe men die bakken zal

Neemt een kop beste bloem van Tarwe meel, een half pond gesmolte boter, twee loot gestote kaneel, een half vierendeel suiker klein gewreven en een ey, en dat te saamen wel doorkneet, en daar bolletjes van gemaakt, en in het yzer laaten bakken, is zeer goed. (VHK 1, 28)

Cinnamon wafers, how to bake them

Take a cup of finest wheat flour, half a pound of melted butter, two half ounces ground cinnamon, a half quarter sugar finely ground and an egg, and all together well kneaded, and made into little balls, let bake in the iron, is very good.

Cinnamon Wafers, in modern application by Janet Broos

1 cup all-purpose flour-1 cup sugar-1/4 teaspoon salt-2 Tbs. ground cinnamon-1 cup unsalted butter-1 egg lightly beaten.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Put the ingredients in a large bowl in the order given. Mix well. The batter will be somewhat thick. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. With two teaspoons, drop the batter on to the cookie sheet. Bake for about 20 minutes or until nicely browned. Yields about 20-25 cookies.

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About the authors

Janet Broos was born in Philadelphia and worked in many administrative capacities at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, USA. Among her many interests are the culinary arts and she published her own collection of recipes in *Gracie's Soup and other favorites* (self-published, 2004). She also edits the Newsletter of the Netherlands America University League in Ann Arbor.

Ton Broos studied Dutch Language and Literature at the universities of Amsterdam and Nijmegen. He taught Dutch at Sheffield University (UK) and was until recently Director of Dutch Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, USA. He has published on Jacob Campo Weyerman's *Biographies of Painters* (Rodopi, 1990) and other 18th century Dutch literary subjects. Other publications include Anne Frank's literary interests, and translations of the medieval plays *Elckerlyc* (Medieval Institute Publications, 2007) and *Mariken van Nieumegen* (Medieval Institute Publications, in press).

De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-Meid (1746) est-elle parfaite?

Bien que l'Âge d'or néerlandais du XVII^e siècle ait produit de nombreuses peintures montrant une table chargée de bonne chère, les rares livres de cuisine datant de l'époque ne reflètent pas une telle abondance. C'est seulement en 1746 qu'un livre de cuisine a été publié à Amsterdam, avec le titre *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-Meid* (la fille de cuisine hollandaise parfaite), qui nous donne un aperçu étendu et plus complet de la cuisine néerlandaise d'alors. Ce livre a connu tout de suite un grand succès, et ce, pour diverses raisons, y compris le fait que son éditeur, Steven van Esveldt, était un homme d'affaires avisé. Il avait publié de nombreux chefs-d'œuvre littéraires – Cervantes, Defoe, Fielding – en plus de romans et de magazines néerlandais.

On ne sait pas qui est l'auteur de cet ouvrage. C'est peut-être la Dame haguenoise anonyme qui est mentionnée sur la page de titre mais qu'on n'a pu identifier, ou bien peut-être Hermanus van den Burg ou Jan Willem Claus van Laar, des plumitifs réguliers de Steven van Esveldt, mais cela non plus ne peut être prouvé avec certitude. L'ouvrage semble plutôt le résultat de l'effort concerté de beaucoup d'auteurs, dont des ménagères, qui auraient remis des notes et manuscrits à l'éditeur directement. Dans l'Appendice d'une édition subséquente, celui-ci a reconnu l'aide rédactionnelle dont il a profité pour créer le livre.

En examinant les recettes – il y en a plus de 600 – nous trouvons un recueil bien organisé d'ingrédients et de méthodes de cuisson, dont quelques-uns sont tirés de livres de cuisine antérieurs, suivi de traitements de diverses

maladies et de règles de convenances sociales. Plusieurs exemples remarquables sont donnés ici en détail, et le lecteur peut littéralement goûter du livre en suivant quelques-unes de ces recettes, que nous donnons dans leur forme originale et en une version modernisée.

Hoe volmaakt is *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid* (1746)?

Hoewel in de Nederlandse Gouden Eeuw vele schilderijen werden geproduceerd waarop overvloedige hoeveelheden etenswaren worden tentoongespreid, wordt deze overdaad niet teruggevonden in zeventiende-eeuwse kookboeken. Pas in 1746 werd in Amsterdam een kookboek uitgegeven onder de titel *De Volmaakte Hollandsche Keuken-meid*, waarin ons een uitgebreid zicht op de Nederlandse keuken wordt geboden. Dit boek was om een aantal redenen vanaf het begin meteen een enorm succes. Uitgever Steven van Esveldt was een gehaaide zakenman die vele succesvolle literaire meesterwerken publiceerde, waaronder Cervantes, Defoe, en Fielding, alsmede Nederlandse romans en tijdschriften.

Er is enige onzekerheid omtrent de auteur of auteurs van dit werk. De eerste kandidaat is een anonieme dame uit Den Haag, van wie melding wordt gemaakt op de titelpagina maar die verder niet geïdentificeerd kan worden. Een tweede mogelijkheid is een van de twee schrijvers Hermanus van den Burg of Jan Willem Claus van Laar, die beiden veelvuldig in opdracht voor Steven van Esveldt werkten, maar ook voor hun auteurschap kan geen sluitend bewijs worden gevonden. Het lijkt er meer op dat het werk het resultaat is van een gezamenlijke inspanning van een groot aantal individuen, onder wie huisvrouwen, die hun aantekeningen en manuscripten direct bij de uitgever aanboden. Hij had redactionele assistentie bij de productie van het werk, zoals vermeld wordt in de Appendix van een latere editie, maar het is niet duidelijk van wie.

De meer dan 600 recepten in het boek omvatten een goed georganiseerde collectie van ingrediënten en bereidingswijzen, waarvan sommigen zijn overgenomen uit eerder gepubliceerde kookboeken, gevolgd door een collectie huismiddeltjes voor diverse medische aandoeningen en etiquette-regels. Een klein aantal opvallende recepten wordt in meer detail behandeld, en de lezer kan letterlijk een voorproefje van het boek krijgen door het volgen van deze recepten waarvan naast de originele ook een gemoderniseerde versie gegeven wordt.