# Food for thought: the expanding universe of cookbook indexing

## Gillian Watts

*Gillian Watts has been indexing cookbooks since 1999. She draws on 15 years of experience to describe the joys and pleasures of the genre as well as pitfalls and offers lots of good advice and tested tips to make the task easier and the outcome better.*

I have been indexing cookbooks since 1999, starting with a couple of nutrition-focused books on healthy menopause and baby care. Since then I've indexed 148 cookbooks and health/cookbook hybrids. Before I ever got into editing as a profession, I was one of those 'born indexer' types who alphabetized her spice jars. I had a Time-Life series of cookbooks, *Foods of the world*, which consisted of about 20 separate books. I found it frustrating trying to remember where my favourite recipes were when I had, for example, some sweet potatoes I wanted to use. So I went through all the books and made up index cards, locating the recipes according to their major ingredients. That same principle holds for your standard cookbook index.

My clients include large trade publishers, specialized cookbook publishers, magazines for homemakers, and various individuals and organizations. The topics range all over the place: bread machines, gluten-free baking – and gluten-free bread machine recipes – Indian and Southeast Asian, yogurt-making, cheese-making, slow cooker, barbecuing, soups, sandwiches, etc., etc.

## Why index cookbooks?

It's a big market. Especially with the ever-increasing interest in healthy food, cuisines from other countries, and celebrity chefs, today's output of cookbooks is enormous. Toronto's only specialized cookbook purveyor has closed, but if you wander into a mega-bookstore you'll see that the cookbook section is choc-a-bloc with both new and old titles. And now my biggest employer has branched out into combination health and recipe books aimed at people with a vast range of conditions, from diabetes to gluten intolerance to fibromyalgia, as well as books focused on specific nutritional components and recipes for parents of children of all ages.

Cookbook indexing is also comparatively easy – provided you already know how to index, I should add. While combination health and diet books do have indexable content beyond the recipes, and it is useful to have some knowledge of the health and medicine field, the medical information tends to be pretty straightforward. As for the recipes, there is not a lot of text to read and virtually no conceptual content, so it's not a strain on the intellectual faculties. Because this type of indexing is relatively easy, it can also be done quite quickly, so you can churn out an index for a speedy (though not necessarily large) source of revenue.

And it's fun. Each book poses different challenges and leads you into a different world of sensory delight. As you work, you can imagine savouring the ingredients and making the dishes – although this can lead to frequent snacking.

## The process

Know the client's preferences before you begin. With a new client, I have a look at other books by that publisher to see what approach(es) they have used before. If I think the method or style can be improved, I discuss it with my contact person. Sometimes they have gone with a certain approach because no one really thought much about it, perhaps simply carrying on using the style of the first index(es) they had done.

Read over and mark up the text. Many indexers prefer to index directly from the PDF, but I like to do a separate mark-up on paper, as it somehow allows me to better visualize the ingredients and their relative importance in a dish. It also helps me to spot and easily mark typos, which is useful for the client and warns me if there are any issues that need to be resolved immediately, such as inaccurate or inconsistent recipe titles.

Enter the raw data in your indexing software (I use CINDEX). As a matter of practice, I over-index. It's easier to go back and cut material than to go through everything again and add something later. I also break down topics that I may well unify later – such as *cranberries, fresh* and *cranberries, dried* separately, or every type of cheese or seafood. Since most of my clients prefer a letter-by-letter sort, one of my secrets for making things easier in CINDEX is to initially use lower-case singular words for the main ingredient entries, which enables auto-complete to speed things up no end. Here's a sample entry in a 'raw' index:

almond. See also almond flour; almond paste
    Agave Almond Muffins, 349
    Almond Butter Bran Muffins, 336
    Almond Tres Leches Muffins, 257

<div align="right">(draft index to Saulsbury, 2010)</div>

In this example, this puts almond before almond flour so I don't have to type in the whole word almonds to get the entry in the right place. Of course, I have to remember to go through and change all those singulars to plurals, but that's part of the editing stage. (Another tip: if you've got tomatillos, add a temporary hidden character – such as tomat{z}illo – to force it to sort after tomato, so you can take full advantage of auto-complete.)

I prefer to use lower case for entries unless they are recipe titles, as that lets the ingredients stand out in the crowd. Sometime you have no choice in the matter, if the house style is to capitalize all entries. If that's the case, I usually argue for lower case (not always successfully). I'm also not a fan of the following style of index, as I think the recipes have titles for a reason and they are more memorable that way.

Pecan(s)
    coffee cake, pecan-sour cream, 127
    muffins, date and pecan, miracle, 50
    muffins, pumpkin-pecan, 54
    turnovers, honey-glazed pear, 163

<div align="right">(Claman, 1999: 336)</div>

This sort of index, in my opinion, is harder to read quickly and the syntax gets mixed up in a most disconcerting way.

Besides a letter-by-letter sort, most of my clients prefer only one level of subentries, which makes sense in what are often multi-column indexes. When a second level of subentries is added, the multiple indents can get very confusing and lead to ridiculously short lines. I think I have had to go to two levels only once, in a massive book that covered a huge range of foods and techniques.

In certain cases it may be useful to distinguish page locators with special formatting (italics or bold). In the case of an encyclopedia-type book, it might be the main entry for a certain ingredient, or perhaps it's where a particular technique – for example, in a book on decorating cakes, or how to fold a samosa – is illustrated. Some clients want locators for photographs of the dishes included in the index, but I find that's rare. In *The science of good food* (Joachim and Schloss, 2008) a few recipes were included among the very useful encyclopedia-style articles; in that case, a different colour and typeface were used to make them stand out.

I usually save my first version as '[name] Index 1' and then make a copy called 'Index 2.' Then I do a quick onscreen edit of Index 2. For example, if I have indexed types of herbs individually and they occur rather sparsely, I gather them under herbs, fresh. That's when I turn apple into apples and nut into nuts (and restore tomatillo) to get them in the right order. That's also when I eliminate single entries under a particular food type, for example, moving the only recipe under dates to fruit, dried or making Rabbit Stew a main entry because there are no other rabbit dishes.

I then print out Index 2 and edit it on paper. I like to do a manual check of cross-references as well as getting CINDEX to do it, because sometimes there are conceptual relationships that the software is incapable of evaluating. I check the validity of entries (should they even be included?) and eliminate duplication. Maybe a recipe is listed under more than one type of cheese: should I put it under the general heading cheese or go with the dominant flavour?

If there's an uncomfortably long list under a particular ingredient (tomatoes are a frequent offender), I use Find All and list them in page order, then go through the recipes to weed out less important instances. I try to establish a particular amount per serving as a benchmark, but if the ingredient figures prominently in the flavour profile or is mentioned in the recipe title, even if only a small amount is included, it gets indexed anyway, as it's obviously important to the author.

Unless you have extra space to fill, it's a good idea to get rid of titles that begin with cooking techniques (*Roasted, Baked, Boiled* and so on). People usually look up the food, not the technique. Exceptions can be made for books devoted to one particular ingredient, such as fish or potatoes. It's a good idea, though, to keep titles that start with *Stir-Fried* or *Slow Cooker*, as those techniques are more likely to be sought out specifically. Or if space permits and it's appropriate, it may be useful to create separate entries for such topics.

I transfer the changes from the paper edit to Index 2 and re-save it as Index 3, which I then compress to see whether I have a reasonable number of entries for the pages allocated (something I also keep track of during the entire process). It's important to remember that the number of *entries* is not the same as the number of *lines* the index will take up. Especially in cases where the recipes have very long descriptive titles – for example, *Mustard maple salmon with watercress quinoa and glazed carrots* (an imaginary recipe) – there will be line turnovers. I generally try to make the number of entries come to about 85 percent of the lines available, and then cross my fingers that it won't have to be set in tiny type to make it fit.

I export my finalized index to Word RTF format and then convert it to a Word document, which is what my clients seem to prefer (whether I add tags for italics and bold is up to the client). My last step before submitting the index is to read it over on screen in Word, looking for spelling errors, bad entries that may have resulted from a particularly complex change situation in the previous step (see Table 1), punctuation and formatting problems, and so forth. I make any corrections in both the Word and CINDEX versions so that I have an accurate archive copy in case I am called upon to index a subsequent edition.

**Table 1** Fix these entries!

Cheese and Tomato Strata, 123
cheese, Cheddar
    Cheddar Delight, 25
    Cheese and Tomato Strata, 123
    Cheesy Macaroni, 202
Cheesy Macaroni, 202
. . .
Turkey Casserole, 86
Turkey Casserole (var.), 86

I email the index to the client, along with a list of typos and errors found in the pages. If an index doesn't fit the pages allocated, it's important that it's the indexer who makes the cuts, as that's the only person who knows how the parts fit together. It's always useful to have some ideas for cuts in the back of your mind, just in case. It may even be necessary to give up some pet entries (ones that you think are important); staple products and flavourings are usually the best bets.

The indexer doesn't always (or even usually) have control over the ultimate product. When you have a look at your index in the printed book, you may find that the italics have disappeared, that there are no 'continued' lines, or that it's been rendered in many narrow columns and/or in minuscule type. But sometimes indexes are beautifully presented and very readable and you feel no shame in showing them off.

## Some general tips for aspiring cookbook indexers

You have to know how to cook, and you have to have a fairly adventurous palate if you want to be a versatile cookbook indexer. If you enjoy eating foods from different cultures or dietary variations (for example, vegan or raw), trying new ingredients, and experimenting with new recipes, you're well equipped.

Start with a standard staples list – the things you *won't* be indexing – but be flexible according to the subject (see the sample in Table 2). When I'm working on a book that includes a few gluten-free recipes, for example, I'll list sorghum flour, rice flour, and other alternatives to make things easier for readers who need to use them.

Which foods you choose to index will vary with the cookbook type. A book on chocolate may have separate entries for all the different kinds of chocolate, while one on meat may not have any such entries at all (though in my experience there's always some chocolate somewhere). Some of the quite specialized topics I have worked on include coconut products, Indian cooking, Celtic food and drink, quinoa (500 recipes!), and muffins (750 recipes!!).

When deciding whether to index something, consider what influence the item will have in the recipe. For example, 1/4

cup cilantro has a lot more flavour punch that 1/4 cup parsley, and a lot more influence if it's part of a two-cup sauce recipe rather than an eight-serving meat stew. It's important to be able to imagine from reading the recipe what the dish's taste profile will be like. What flavours or textures will stand out, possibly to the extent that some people will want to avoid the recipe? Some examples are distinctive flavours such as lemongrass or ginger, or problematic ingredients (for some people) such as hot peppers, dairy products, or wheat.

Also consider how the ingredients are used. Soft, bland cheeses such as cream cheese, ricotta, cottage cheese, and mascarpone are used quite differently from more savoury cheeses such as Cheddar and Brie. I often list them separately for that reason, and under their non-inverted names, because people often search for them that way. If there are minimal entries for each but they are all desserts, I'll group them.

Especially in the case of books for parents or those whose topic is a specific health problem, foods that are normally considered staples become relevant for their nutritional content. For example, people with certain conditions may need to increase their caloric intake by eating foods high in fats, or to add more calcium to their diet through dairy products.

As mentioned above, if the ingredient is in the title, even if only a little is included in the recipe, consider indexing it. However, I draw the line when there are only one or two entries for that ingredient (capers, anyone?). Don't clutter the index with trivialities, even if they do sound yummy.

You need to be familiar with the raw materials – what's available, and how readily (for instance, cuts of beef) – or at least know how to find out about them. A case in point is chile peppers (also known as chili, chillies, and numerous other variants). Are they hot enough to make a dish really spicy, and thus represent a come-on for heat-lovers and a warning to delicate stomachs? Then you may want to index them (or not). The Scoville scale (see Table 3) is a useful tool here.

Browse the grocery store aisles and check out 'ethnic'

**Table 2** A sample staples list

| | |
|---|---|
| beer (less than 1 c.) | oils |
| breadcrumbs | onions* |
| butter | peppers, bell (1 c. or 1 pepper) |
| carrots (1 c. or 2 carrots) | |
| celery (1 c. or 2 stalks) | potatoes (1 c. or 1 per serving) |
| cheese (less than ¼ c. or garnish) | |
| | sour cream* |
| eggs (3 or less*) | soy sauce |
| flour (except gluten-free) | spices |
| garlic (less than 1 clove per serving) | stocks and broths |
| | sugar |
| ketchup | vinegars |
| leavening agents | wine (less than 1 c.) |
| mayonnaise* | yogurt (less than 1 c.) |
| milk and cream* | |

* unless principal ingredient

**Table 3** The Scoville heat scale for peppers

| Scoville units | Pepper type |
|---|---|
| 15–16 million | pure capsaicin |
| 2–5.3 million | pepper spray |
| 2–2.2 million | Trinidad moruga scorpion |
| 0.85–1.04 million | naga (bhut) jolokia ('ghost pepper') |
| 876,000–970,000 | Dorset naga |
| 350,000–577,000 | Red Savina habanero |
| 100,000–350,000 | habanero, Scotch bonnet |
| 100,000–200,000 | Jamaican hot pepper |
| 50,000–100,000 | Thai bird's-eye, malagueta, chiltepin, piri piri, pequin |
| 30,000–50,000 | cayenne, ají, Tabasco |
| 10,000–23,000 | serrano, Aleppo |
| 3,500–8,000 | jalapeño, chipotle, guajillo, espelette, Fresno, Hungarian wax |
| 2,500–5,000 | Tabasco sauce |
| 1,000–2,500 | rocotillo, poblano, Anaheim, pasilla, gochujang |
| 100–500 | pimento, peperoncini, banana, cubanelle |
| 0 | bell pepper |

markets for new and interesting things. Ask about them and try them out. And, of course, if you have no idea about an ingredient, the Internet is packed with advice on just about everything.

## Choosing and using your entries

Cookbooks are often intended for publication in different countries where the terminology may be different. For example, courgette or zucchini, aubergine or eggplant? You need to know what the American terms *hominy* and *grits* mean, and *masa harina* and other terms from Mexican cooking, which has such a strong presence in the United States. And there are a myriad different terms for types of sugar. As in all indexing, you have to keep your readers in mind. Will terms need cross-references or double-posting so users can find what they are looking for? A useful list of British equivalents of American terms is provided by Michèle Clark in ASI's *Indexing specialties: cookbooks* (Nickerson, Leise and Hudoba, 2009). (The same volume has a chapter by Cynthia Bertelsen on indexing ethnic cookbooks.) I keep a running list of terms I encounter, which is now five pages long. Table 4 has a sample.

Double-post recipes with titles that start with not-really-descriptive words (see examples below). In title entries under the ingredients, reverse the order to put these words at the end – they just get in the way of quick scanning. However, attractive or evocative terms such as *Easy*, *Decadent*, and so forth should be allowed, as those types of recipes are often exactly what the reader is looking for. Basically, omit non-useful information – or rather, invert it. So *Fred's lemon pie* becomes *Lemon pie, Fred's* and *Terrific veal stew* becomes *Veal stew, terrific.* That being said, the un-inverted title can have its place in the sun as a main entry, thus making sure that the author can still acknowledge important people (such as Fred). Or, in the case of the popular *Best of bridge* series, so diehard fans can find their favourite whacky-titled recipe such as *Mad about cabbage rolls* or *'Death to dieters' chicken lasagna*. Table 5 gives some examples.

Use your software's abbreviations tool for entering recipe elements that are frequently encountered (see some examples in Table 6). Some were added to my list because I indexed an entire book on a particular subject (the ones on muffins and quinoa spring to mind). I find them especially helpful for accented words and combinations of keystrokes that are hard on the fingers or prone to be mistyped.

Sidebars and information boxes often have useful information that can be gathered under *about* or wherever you are listing general references to ingredients (see below). In a

### Table 4 UK and North American food terms

| British | North American |
| --- | --- |
| cream, double | whipping (35%) cream |
| cream, single | table (18%) cream |
| filo | phyllo |
| fish slice | metal spatula |
| flour, plain | all-purpose flour |
| flour, wholemeal | whole wheat flour |
| kitchen paper | paper towels |

### Table 5 Recipe title modifiers: which to keep, which to invert

| Invert | Allow |
| --- | --- |
| people's names | country and region names |
| Traditional | Decadent |
| Old-Fashioned | Hearty |
| Scrumptious | Country |
| Divine | Easy |
| Special | Quick |
| Favourite | Basic |
| (The) Original | Fresh |
| Classic | Refreshing |

general cookbook with flags for special dietary needs, it can be useful for readers if you list the dishes under *gluten-free* or *vegetarian-friendly* or whatever is appropriate. In the case of one book, the author wanted all the vegan-friendly recipes listed under that heading, in spite of the fact that it included a good 75 percent of the recipes! Oh, well, the client is always right.

Cross-references are important, especially when ingredients have alternative names or fresh and dried versions are used very differently. Some examples are peas and beans; cilantro/coriander; squid/calamari; rice vs. wild rice; and chocolate vs. white chocolate.

Sub-recipes can be indexed if they have proper titles and there's room, but I don't give them the full Monty treatment, and I especially don't list them if the main recipe is already under the heading in question. For example, for *Raspberry cheesecake with champagne lemon sauce*, the whole recipe will be under *lemon* because it's a primary flavour component, but I would also put *champagne lemon sauce* under *wine* and maybe on its own as well.

Group similar ingredients if necessary for space economy or if only one or two entries occur under the specific ingredient. Some good group items are *berries*, *nuts*, *seafood* (for crab, scallops, etc.), and the generic *tomato* to include both fresh tomatoes and sun-dried, tomato paste, tomato juice, and so on. Sometimes, especially for fruits and especially in dessert cookbooks, I cheat and use a 'flavour profile' entry rather than the actual fruit. For example, *apple* can include apples, applesauce, and apple cider and/or juice.

When it comes to *about* entries, a number of approaches are possible:

- List the locators after the main heading.
- If there are *about* subentries such as *toasting*, force the sort so they fall just after the main heading.
- Use an *about* subentry, which is likely to come first without even forcing the sort. This is a time-honoured practice, so readers will get it.

### Table 6 A few abbreviations

| ai | Aïoli | bs | Basic |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| bb | Barbecue | cau | Cauliflower |
| bk | Breakfast | cc | Chocolate chip |
| bm | Bread machine | cd | Canadian |
| bou | Bouillabaisse | cf | Crème fraîche |

Keep the metatopic simple and general. The introductory material of a cookbook is often about cooking or preparation techniques or about the ingredients. If it's a utensil-based book, there will be information on using, cleaning, and so forth. There is no need to get elaborate, as this material often takes up very few pages.

In combination health and diet books, you can sometimes end up with rather unappealing juxtapositions of symptoms and recipe ingredients, especially in the case of gastrointestinal diseases. Such a situation demands creativity in your wording. In extreme cases, it may be necessary to create two separate indexes in order not to ruin the reader's appetite!

Make general entries for types of food too – for example, burgers, cookies, or appetizers – even if they are in the table of contents. People don't like having to switch from the index to the contents page and back again. A page range is usually sufficient unless the client requests otherwise.

## Acknowledgements

## Text references

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## Some useful references

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Other useful sources include cookbooks in your own kitchen that have good indexes, and find out what your client uses as a basic reference.

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# Culinary indexers' reference sources

## *Catherine Sassen*

*The author presents a bibliography of reference sources recommended by culinary indexers.*

## Introduction

A good index is important to cookbook users. Many of us have experienced frustration in trying to find a recipe that we know is in a particular cookbook, even though we cannot locate it in the index. For example, in a review of *Beyond bacon: paleo recipes that respect the whole hog*, Schindler (2013) wrote:

> Whoever did the book's index should be sent to bed without dinner. The index is terrible. We knew there were biscuit recipes somewhere in here... but no listing for biscuits? Oh, it's under homestyle biscuits in the Hs. Italian sausages are listed between Insanely awesome meatloaf and Italian tomato pork chop, NOT in the Ss.

Cookbook users also complain about recipes that are indexed under categories that do not make sense to them. For example, in a review of *Low carb-ing among friends cookbooks*, vol. 1, Holly (2012) lamented that a piecrust recipe was listed only under 'miscellaneous' in the index.

To create a good cookbook index, the indexer must be familiar with culinary indexing techniques as well as culinary terminology. Culinary indexers may consult reference sources on these topics to make their indexes helpful, accurate and consistent.

## Research questions

The purpose of this research study was to answer the following questions:

Food for Thought: Integrating vs. Mixing. The mixing approach combines factor sleeves to construct the multi-factor portfolio. Mixing (Top-Down) Approach to Multi-Factor. following page) represent the universe of stocks, ranked sions of prior research, which mainly favor the integrating. across the same two dimensions of momentum and value. approach. We select the companies with the best fit across the two factors: 1) recent winners, in the case of momentum, and 2) cheapest, in terms of value. "An index approach allows for ease of performance attribution so investors can readily understand the drivers of returns, ex post." risk-adjusted returns, but this outperformance only mate-rializes when concentration is high and the stocks in the portfolio are well balanced in each of the factor exposures. I loved everything about Food for Thought: the grumpy cat, the hilarious banter between Keegan and Emmett, the beet explosion (yes, BEETS; don't ask), and the rather HUNGRY, dirty (very dirty in more ways than one!) sex. Hell, I even liked Christine the girlfriend, especially after she left. I thought the origin of the cookbook and how it can be 'owned' by different people is better explained in this one (compared to R.J. Scott's). Recipes for the Heart: Mystical Meals and Dangerous Desserts, by Granny B is copied and passed on to family members, friends, relatives … and each recipe for different kind of situations: For Rainy Days, For Courting … Maybe it started small, just two people, but family could be expanded with friends and other people who are important. KORG Germany have published the The Pyjama Cookbook, a free digital collection of food and drink recipes by musicians and friends within the synth sphere. "As our small team of Verena, Lydia, Max and I clamber to get KORG Germany off the ground, we occasionally swap cooking recipes," explains CEO Tatsuya Takahashi. "The aim of The Pyjama Cookbook is to share the favourite concoctions from our friends from all parts of music, in the hope of instilling solidarity and encouraging friendship during these extraordinary times. Well. It's also just for laughs. Food for Thought shows cooks how to prepare healthy food ethically and why we need to do so - the damage from excessive consumption of palm oil, for example. The recipes are tempting and not at all 'worthy', and this is a well-presented case for ethical and fair trade eating.' (The Bookseller). Book Description. Inspired by ethically sourced, sustainable ingredients available from your local suppliers, Vanessa shows how what you cook can make a real difference to those who produce it and to the environment. Recipes are simple, unfussy and easy to cook at home - making everyday classics ethical and sustainable. See all Product description. 18. Food For Thought. 19. Voyages Of The Rabid Beagle. 20. [no title indexed]. 21. Africa. 22. The Norwich Saga. 23. [no title indexed]. 24. [no title indexed]. 25. Food For Thought. 26. Hallelujah I'm A Battered Scone The Mammy. 27. Books I Have Used As Bog Paper Alec. 28. [no title indexed] Alec. 29. Paper Wraiths. 30. The Life Man Doctor Death. 31. [no title indexed] Gideon Stargrave.