

**The Sifter – what is it?**

The Sifter is a finding aid, a searchable database, to assist people with food related questions. At present it includes over 7,000 authors and 7,000 works with details about the authors and about the contents of the works. The central documents are cookbooks and other writings related to getting, preparing, and consuming food, and the activities associated with them, as well as writings about cultural and moral attitudes.

It is based on the Wikipedia model, whereby users help to input the data, review it and make any needed corrections or edits. The more data is entered, the more comprehensive the search results will be. We hope that many people from different backgrounds, languages, cultures and professions will contribute. Information can be entered in many languages, including Chinese, Sanskrit, Scandinavian to name a few, since the Sifter supports Unicode. English is used as the language that ties all the other languages together so that when you search for “tamarind,” the English as well as the Urdu and Thai references will also be caught.

**Who is the Sifter for?**

Researchers of every age, cultural background and area of expertise who wish to explore the place of food and drink in human lives.

People interested in food whether it be the ingredients used in one author’s books or what cooking techniques appear across time or what authors were active in 1850 in England and India.

Contributors including anyone interested in adding to The Sifter may register. For example, if you have an interest in Spanish cooks in Madrid from 1900, you can add the authors, their relevant details and related works and then the details in their works so that others can discover them. Then you can search the data for trends, popular spices, or links with other authors.

**What is in the Sifter?**

Its source publications are printed and manuscript cookbooks, periodicals, and any other writings that shed light on how and why people have cooked and eaten as they have done since before the invention of writing. In addition to cookbooks it includes works on architecture, medicine, etiquette, agriculture – anything, in fact, that will shed light on the universal human occupations of producing, preparing, and consuming food. It is hoped that future contributors will include a yet wider range of materials: novels, travel literature, poetry, music, etc.

**What is not in the Sifter?**

It does not contain the texts of books or recipes. Rather it has the details about these, such as dedications, table of contents, recipes and in greater detail, the particular details of the recipes such as ingredients, actions and equipment. At present the entries are mostly of cookbooks, though in time it will also include periodicals, advertising, pamphlets, community cookbooks, menus published separately or incorporated, etc.

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