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

Thanks to Frances Curry and Toronto members of the ISC/SCI, whose interest in cookbook indexing and thoughtful questions inspired me to put together this article. I would also like to thank my patient husband, Robert Barnett, for taking over the food preparation in our house because I’m too busy indexing cookbooks!

Text references

1 Which culinary indexing sources are recommended by culinary indexers?
2 Which culinary reference sources are recommended by culinary indexers?

Methodology

I developed an online survey to determine the culinary indexing sources and culinary reference sources recommended by culinary indexers. My questionnaire included citations selected from the ‘Resources for Culinary Indexers’ webpage (Culinary Indexing SIG, 2014) and Indexing specialties: cookbooks (Nickerson, Leise and Hudoba, 2009). I also searched the OCLC WorldCat (2014) bibliographic database for culinary resources published in the last ten years. I verified all print and online citations before including them in the questionnaire. I also provided space in the questionnaire for respondents to list other resources. The University of North Texas Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the survey instrument, which I created with Qualtrics software.

During the second and fourth weeks of January 2014, I posted messages in online indexing forums, asking culinary indexers to respond anonymously to an online survey. I sent invitations to Culinary Indexing Special Interest Group (SIG) members, to the Index-L discussion list, and to the ASI-L discussion list. By the middle of February, I had received 27 usable responses.

Limitations

Because this was an exploratory study, it cannot provide conclusions about all culinary indexers. The results of this survey represent only the survey respondents.

Because the goal of this research project was to identify specialized sources useful in culinary indexing, I have not reported general responses such as ‘the Internet.’ I also have not included responses about resources that are unavailable to others, such as ‘my cookbook collection.’ I have cited all other responses in this paper after verifying bibliographic information for accuracy and completeness. If a survey respondent gave an incomplete citation to a printed source, I have provided a citation to the most recent edition of the work cited.

Culinary indexing sources

Recipes may be indexed by type of dish, main ingredients, and recipe title. Other possibilities include geographic location or ethnic origin, health parameters, cookery methods, holidays and illustrations. An exploration of these categories raises many questions. For example, how do you define ‘main ingredients?’ How should you phrase a recipe title when entering it as a subheading under the name of an ingredient? How should you index a non-English language recipe title? To answer these questions, we turn to culinary indexing sources.

The following culinary indexing sources were recommended by survey respondents. The number in brackets at the end of each citation indicates the number of times that respondents recommended the resource. The source recommend most often was Indexing specialties: cookbooks (Nickerson et al, 2009).


Culinary Indexing SIG (2014) ‘Resources for culinary indexers.’ Available at: www.culinaryindexing.org/resources.html Includes links to culinary dictionaries and articles about culinary indexing. [N=2]

Culinary Indexing SIG (2014) Available at: http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/CulinarySIGlistserv/info Online forum for Culinary Indexing SIG members. [N=1]


Culinary reference sources

Indexers may consult culinary reference works to learn the meanings of unfamiliar terms in cookbooks. A good understanding of culinary terminology is required for proper indexing of ingredients and recipe categories. The vocabulary of the culinary world is expanding, with many new terms coming to our attention, especially from cuisines specific to geographic areas or ethnic groups. For example, many Americans became familiar with Indian, Mexican, Middle Eastern, Thai, and Vietnamese dishes in the 1970s as those cuisines gained popularity in the United States (Brenner, 1999).

Indexers also should be aware of variant terms for ingredients or types of dishes in order to make appropriate
cross-references in the index. For example, the terms ‘garbanzo bean’ and ‘chickpea’ are used interchangeably in many areas of the United States. In Great Britain, the term ‘aubergine’ is used for the vegetable called ‘eggplant’ in the United States.

Online culinary reference sources

Survey respondents recommended the following online culinary reference sources. The number in brackets at the end of each citation indicates the number of times that respondents recommended the resource. The most popular online culinary reference source recommended by survey respondents was The cook's thesaurus.

BBC food: www.bbc.co.uk/food/ Includes ‘Ingredients A–Z’ section with definitions and illustrations. [N=1]


The cook's thesaurus: www.foodsubs.com/ Lori Alden provides a 'cooking encyclopedia that covers thousands of ingredients and kitchen tools.' [N=13]

CooksInfo.com food encyclopaedia: www.cooksinfo.com/food-encyclopedia Culinary encyclopedia by food researcher Randal Oulton. [N=1]

Encyclopedia of spices: http://theepicentre.com/spices/ Includes information about 116 spices, including alternate terms in English and other languages. [N=6]

English-American recipe translator: www.cs.cmu.edu/~mbishop/engfood.html Provides a list of British culinary terms and their American equivalents. [N=4]

Food lexicon: food terms dictionary: translations into 7 languages: www.foodlexicon.net/ Presents food terms in English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, and Swedish. [N=4]


Gernot Katzer’s spice pages: http://gernot-katzers-spices-pages.com/eng1/ Presents information on 117 spices, including synonyms, botanical names, and translated names. [N=2]

Glossary of Indian food & cooking terms: www.cuisine-cuisine.com/Glossary.htm#58 Dictionary of Indian cooking terms (primarily in Hindi) with English language definitions. [N=5]

How to live gourmet: culinary terms: www.howtocookgourmet.com/culinary-terms.html Chef Kathy DuVault provides a dictionary covering a variety of topics including ‘ingredients, preparation methods, wine, cooking equipment, food history, food safety and sanitation, nutrition, prepared dishes, and many more.’ [N=3]


Linda’s culinary dictionary: http://whatscookingamerica.net/Glossary/GlossaryIndex2.htm Linda Stradley provides a glossary of food, beverage, and cooking terms. [N=1]


Print culinary reference sources

Survey respondents recommended the following print culinary reference sources. The number in brackets at the end of each citation indicates the number of times respondents recommended the resource. The most popular print culinary reference sources recommended by respondents were Larousse gastronomique: the world’s greatest culinary encyclopedia (Robuchon and Montagné, 2009), Oxford companion to food (Davidson and Jaine, 2006) and Webster’s new world dictionary of culinary arts (Labensky, Ingram, and Labensky, 2011).


Igoe, R. S. (2011) Dictionary of food ingredients, 5th edn. New York: Springer. (vii, 255 pp.) Provides concise definitions for more than 1,000 natural and artificial ingredients and additives. Emphasizes food science. [N=3]


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The Wise encyclopedia of cookery: one of the world’s most definitive reference books on food and cooking (1971) New York: W. H. Wise. (1,329 pp.) Older reference source for food and cookery terms. Includes index. [N=1]

Conclusion

‘In a cookbook, an index is second in importance only to the quality of the recipes. Without a good index, the recipes the reader is looking for cannot be located,’ wrote Whitman and Simon (2000: 133). Good culinary indexing stems from a thorough knowledge of culinary indexing techniques and culinary terms. We can strengthen our knowledge of these areas by consulting reference sources. This practice will help us to create indexes that are helpful to readers who are browsing, as well as to readers who know what they are trying to locate.

Note

Online links were verified on 20 May 2014. The survey instrument used in this study may be accessed at: www.theindexer.org/files/32/appendix.pdf

Other references


OCLC Worldcat (2014) Available at: www.worldcat.org/

Schindler, E. (2013) Review of Beyond bacon: paleo recipes that respect the whole hog by M. McCarry and S. Toth. Available at: https://tinyurl.com/koj9uhb


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THE 13 CHAPTERS in Indexing Specialties: Cookbooks discuss the importance of subject matter expertise, analyze the indexing needs of cookbook users, offer practical advice on writing quality indexes, review notable published indexes, and recommend other helpful sources.

Also included is an Introduction by editor Alexander Nickerson, who has been indexing cookbooks for more than 30 years and whose vision made this book possible.