

DRINKS WITH DEAD PEOPLE

QUARANTINE EDITION

MARCH 19, 2020: [CONGRESS' COOKBOOK](#)

Home cooking is a good thing – and a necessity when you're supposed to be socially distancing. Thank the Congressional Republicans of 1962 for giving us their very own recipe collection to try!

THE STORY

In 1962, then-Congressman Gerald Ford lent his name to *The Republican Congressional Cook Book*, a collection of recipes and peppy political axe-grinding given to constituents.

"It is our hope that as you read this Cookbook and use its recipes," the book begins, "you will enjoy cooking, which is one of the few things not yet regulated by the Federal government." Ha!

The recipes are entertaining, putting the bizarre, convenience-focused culture of postwar American cooking on full display. (Canned goods! Adventurous Ethnic Recipes! Ham Loaf!)

Some sound great: Vermont's pancakes and syrup; Narragansett Bay clam chowder; hush puppies, Virginia spoon bread, jambalaya and chili. Others are...confusing (Rice, Tuna & Cheese Sauce, Missouri? WTF?). "General Eisenhower's Beef Stew" – which serves sixty people – gets its own page. (Eisenhower, by the way, was an avid cook and [loved to grill](#).)

The cookbook has more to communicate than cooking advice, though: there are more than a few policy jokes poking fun at the Kennedy administration's attitude on spending ("This Administration has turned the U.S.A. into the I.O.U.S.A."), and the last page of the cookbook lists the five "Basic Beliefs of Republicans," among them Government With a Heart:

"We believe that government must act to help establish conditions of equal opportunity for all people and to help assure that no one is denied the requisites for a life of dignity."

Read on [at the blog](#) for more detail and resources.

DISCUSS:

Does politics belong in the kitchen?

How does food help us understand people we're close to as well as those with whom we might not agree?

How do history and socioeconomics shape what people cook and eat?

What does it mean when ethnic foods are appropriated?

Gonna try making any of these?

Hi, I'm Betsy. Stuck at home? Let's learn history together, because the past helps us to understand that we are not alone. Weekday updates during #COVID19.

Questions? Comments? Say hello.

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READ MORE:

[The Republican Congressional Cookbook](#), 1962

[Postwar Potluck](#), National Museum of American History

["All the Presidents' Meals,"](#)
Foreign Policy

[What's on the Menu?](#), New York Public Library