



COOKBOOKS

COOKBOOKS, classical, in Persian. Relatively few books in Persian exclusively devoted to the preparation of food are known, even though references to a highly developed cuisine in Persia in premodern times are found in medical, religious, historical, and poetic texts (e.g., Ebn Qotayba, III, pp. 203-05). The poet Abū Eshāq (Boshāq) Šīrāzī (q.v.; d. 827 or 830/1423 or 1427) used culinary vocabulary and terminology in his satirical imitations of the works of the great masters of Persian poetry, including Ferdowsī, Sa’dī, Mawlawī, and Ḥāfeẓ. In his *Dīvān-e aṭ’ema* he praised various dishes and personified them or their ingredients. Even though in the course of a poem the ingredients of a particular dish are often given and sometimes a description of food preparation is implicitly provided, the *Dīvān* cannot properly be described as a cookbook, as its main purpose is not to inform and guide the reader in the preparation of food. The same is true of the poetry of Boshāq’s imitator Aḥmad Aṭ’ema (d. 850/1446-47; see Dabīrsiāqī, pp. 248-49), the earlier (9th century) Sufī Māzandarānī (Afšār, pp. xxv-xxvi), and the 20th-century *Dīvān-e Ḥakīm Sūrī* by Taqī Dāneš (d. 1326 Š./1947).

Although the Arabic cookbooks written under the rule of the ‘Abbasid caliphs (see, e.g., Ebn Sayyār; Ebn Razīn) include some recipes with Persian names and clearly derived from Persian cuisine (cf. Ṭabarī, tr., I, p. 41 n. 152), the earliest classical cookbooks in Persian that have survived are two volumes from the Safavid period. The older one is the *Kār-nāma dar bāb-e ṭabbākī wa ṣaṇ’at-e ān* “Manual on cooking and its craft,” written in 927/1521 by Ḥājī Moḥammad-‘Alī Bāvaṛčī Baġdādī for an aristocratic patron at the end of the



reign of Shah Esmā'īl I Ṣafawī (907-30/1501-24). The book originally contained twenty-six chapters, listed by the author in his introduction, but chapters 23-26 are missing from the unique surviving manuscript (University of Tehran, Central Library, ms. 9701; ed. Afšār, p. xxix). The author claimed that his book was the first text of its kind on “cooking and its craft” (p. 37). The recipes include measurements for ingredients; often detailed directions for the preparation of dishes, including the types of utensils and pots to be used; and instructions for decorating and serving them. In general the ingredients and their combinations in various recipes do not differ significantly from those in use today. The large quantities specified, as well as the generous use of such luxury ingredients as saffron, suggest that these dishes were prepared for large aristocratic households, even though in his introduction Bāvaṛčī claimed to have written it “for the benefit of the nobility, as well as the public” (p. 36). The *Kār-nāma* was most probably a manual for would-be chefs and apprentice cooks. Each chapter is devoted to one category or subcategory of food, including one chapter on *komāj* (pies); five chapters on *āš*, *šūrba*, and *harīsa* (varieties of potages and soups); six chapters on rice dishes; and chapters on *qalya* (fricassee), kabobs, and confections.

The second surviving Safavid cookbook, *Māddat al-ḥayāt, resāla dar 'elm-e ṭabbākī* “The substance of life, a treatise on the art of cooking,” was written about seventy-six years after the *Kār-nāma* by Nūr-Allāh, a chef for Shah 'Abbās I (r. 996-1038/1588-1629; Afšār, p. xxx). The introduction to the *Māddat al-ḥayāt* includes elaborate praise of God, the prophets, the imams, and the shah, as well as a definition of a master chef. It is followed by six chapters on the preparation of various dishes: four on rice dishes, one on *qalya*, and one on *āš*. The measurements and directions are not as detailed as in the *Kār-nāma*. The information provided is about dishes prepared at the royal court, including references to a few that had been created or improved by the shahs themselves; other famous contemporary cooks and their specialties are also mentioned (pp. 199, 201, 205-06, 215, 218, 223, 252). On the whole, however, *Māddat al-ḥayāt* is less useful than the *Kār-nāma* as a manual for cooks.

Sofra-ye aṭ'ema (comp. 1301/1883-84) was written by Mīrzā 'Alī-Akbar Khan Āšpazbāšī Kāšānī, chef at the court of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah Qājār (r. 1264-1313/1848-96), at the behest of Dr. Désiré Tholozan, the court physician, who was essentially interested in Persian foods and food preparation from a medical point of view; perhaps for that reason the author included a chapter



on food for the sick. In *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema* a greater variety of dishes is described than in its predecessors, especially dishes served by affluent families, including snacks. Āšpazbāšī also attempted to clarify the rather complex categorization of foods by dividing each chapter into several subchapters, which were in turn further divided and subdivided. Although written about three centuries after the two Safavid texts cited above, *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema* only occasionally includes detailed descriptions of recipes, and measurements are rarely given. Nevertheless, it is useful as a practical cookbook and in this respect resembles Bāvaṛčī's *Kār-nāma* more than Nūr-Allāh's *Māddat al-ḥayāt*.

Īraj Afšār has mentioned (pp. xxiv-xxv, xxxiv-xxxv) two other cookbooks, *Noska-ye šāhjahānī* (author unknown), written in India during the reign of the Mughal Šāh-Jahān I (r. 1037-68/1628-57), and a *Kār-nāma* by Nāder Mīrzā Qājār, written in the early 20th century. A number of other cookbooks dealing with Indian cuisine were written in Persian.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abū Eshāq Šīrāzī, *Dīvān-e Mawlānā Abū Eshāq Ḥallāj Šīrāzī*, ed. M. Ḥ. Ešfahānī, Istanbul, 1303/1885-86.

Ī. Afšār, ed., *Āšpazī-e dawra-ye safawī. Matn-e do resāla az ān dawra*, Tehran, 1360 Š./1981.

Mīrzā 'Alī-Akbar Khan Āšpazbāšī Kāšānī, *Sofra-ye aṭ'ema*, Tehran, 1353 Š./1974.

Ḥājī Moḥammad-'Alī b. Mīrzā Budāq Bāvaṛčī Baġdādī, *Kār-nāma dar bāb-e ṭabbākī wa ṣaṇ'at-e ān*, in Ī. Afšār, ed., *Āšpazī-e dawra-ye safawī. Matn-e do resāla az ān dawra*, Tehran, 1360 Š./1981, pp. 34-184.

M. Dabīrsīāqī, "Aḥmad Aṭ'ema," *Yaġmā* 20/5, 1346 Š./1967, pp. 248-51.

T. Dāneš Tafrešī (Žiā'-e Laškar), *Dīvān-e Ḥakīm Sūrī*, Tehran, 1317 Š./1938.



Ebn Razīn Tojībī, *Fożālat al-kowān fī ṭayyebāt al-ṭaʿām*, ed. M. Ebn Šaqrūn, Beirut, 1984.

Ebn Sayyār Warrāq, *Ketāb al-ṭabīq*, ed. K. Öhrnberg and S. Maroueh, Helsinki, 1987.

A. Mīrzāyef, *Abū Eshāq wa faʿālīyat-e adabī-e ū*, Dushanbe, 1971.

Nūr-Allāh, *Māddat al-ḥayāt. Resāla dar ʿelm-e ṭabbākī*, in Ī. Afšār, ed., *Āšpazī-e dawra-ye šafawī. Matn-e do resāla az ān dawra*, Tehran, 1360 Š./1981, pp. 187-256.

(Mohammad R. Ghanoonparvar)