



BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

Time Travel Tuesday: All About Cookstoves

From hearth cooking to the first gas cookers, kitchens have been greatly upgraded over the last 200 years. Hearth cooking or cooking over a fireplace was common prior to the 18th century. There became an increasing need to improve this system to better use the heat from the fire.

Count Rumford, American born, invented what is considered the early stove in the 1790s. It was made of brick masonry but was too cumbersome to be used in domestic settings. In the 1850s cast iron became the prominent material for stoves and allowed people to have them in their homes. These stoves were smaller and burned coal and wood. In the 1880s, following the gas lighting industry, gas stoves became popular due to their smaller size and ease of use. A major convenience was that the gas could be saved by turning it off when the stove was not in use. In our 1890 Farm Manager's House at Billings Farm & Museum, we have a wood-burning cookstove.

Before the invention of the gas stove, homes with cast iron wood burning stoves would move them from the kitchen to an outdoor space called the summer kitchen. This would remove a primary heat source from the house and keep it cooler and more comfortable.

Who was Fannie Farmer?



Fannie Farmer, born in Massachusetts, became famous for her book *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, also known as the *Fannie Farmer Cookbook*, which was first published in 1896. She developed the concept of using standardized measuring tools for her recipes to ensure that those who were making them would come out with the same product each time. Her book contained much more than 1,850 recipes; it was full of chemistry, physics, and explanations for all different facets of cooking. Fannie Farmer became such a leader in her field that she was asked to lecture at Harvard Medical School on diet and nutrition. She went on to write several more books in her lifetime.

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Time Travel Tuesday Kitchen Quick Facts

- Count Rumford: inventor of the modern kitchen stove 1790s.
Originally made of brick, the stoves were too large and cumbersome to be used in domestic settings.
- 1850s stoves were mainly made of cast iron instead of brick, making them slightly smaller and more manageable. These were mainly burning coal and wood.
- 1880s stoves moved from wood and coal to gas, making them lighter and much smaller. Gas could also be turned off when not in use to save it for when it was needed.
- Summer kitchens were spaces where a stove would be put outside, sometimes in a structure, to keep the heat outside the house, and prevent the house from becoming too hot inside.
- Fannie Farmer, the author of *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*, also known as the Fannie Farmer cookbook, developed the concept of using standardized measuring tools.
- The cookbook contained 1,850 recipes.
- Fannie Farmer lectured at Harvard Medical School on diet and nutrition.



Hearth Cooking

Example of Count Rumford's brick cooking stove



Gas cooking stoves





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Berry Muffins

From: *Original 1896 Boston Cooking School Cookbook*

By: **Fannie Farmer**

Dry Ingredients	Wet Ingredients	Fruit
2 2/3 cups flour 1/3 cup sugar 4 tsp baking powder 1/2 tsp salt	1/4 cup butter (softened) 1 egg (beaten) 1 cup milk	1 cup berries

Cream the butter; add gradually sugar and egg well beaten; mix and sift flour, baking powder and salt, reserving 1/4 cup to be mixed with the berries and added last; add the remainder alternately with milk.

Modern addition: Bake in prepared muffin tins at 375 degrees for 20-25 minutes. **Note: cooking time and temperature were not included with recipes in the 1890s.