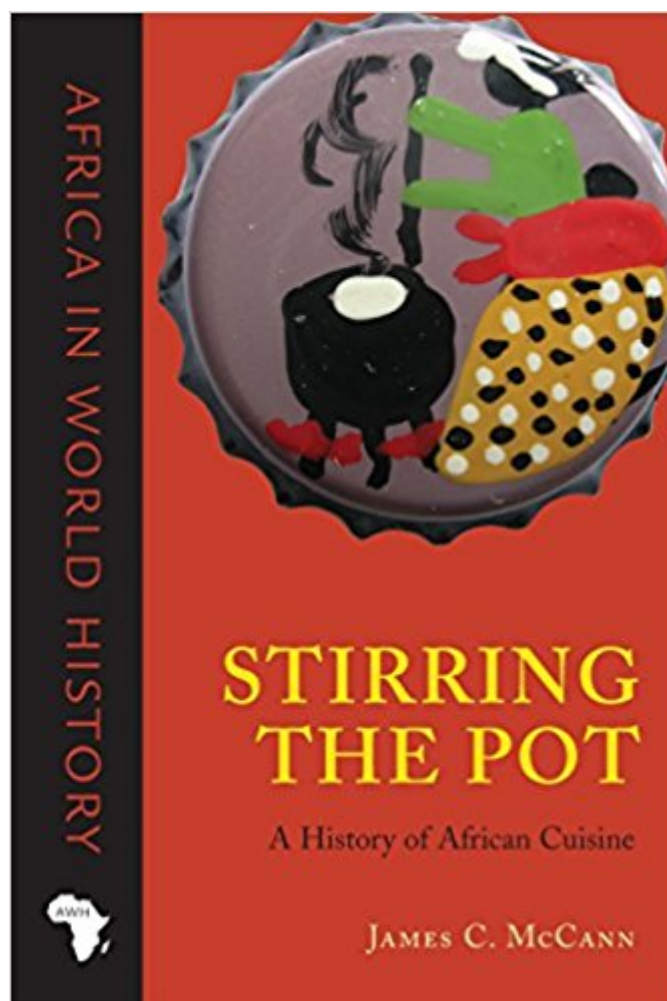


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# Stirring The Pot: A History Of African Cuisine (Africa In World History)



## Synopsis

Africa's art of cooking is a key part of its history. All too often Africa is associated with famine, but in *Stirring the Pot*, James C. McCann describes how the ingredients, the practices, and the varied tastes of African cuisine comprise a body of historically gendered knowledge practiced and perfected in households across Africa's diverse human and ecological landscape.

McCann reveals how Africa's tastes and culinary practices are integral to the understanding of African history and more generally to the new literature on food as social history. *Stirring the Pot* offers a chronology of African cuisine beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing from Africa's original edible endowments to its globalization. McCann traces African cooks' use of new crops, spices, and tastes, including New World imports like maize, hot peppers, cassava, potatoes, tomatoes, and peanuts, as well as plantain, sugarcane, spices, Asian rice, and other ingredients from the Indian Ocean world. He analyzes recipes, not as fixed ahistorical documents, but as lively and living records of historical change in women's knowledge and farmers' experiments. A final chapter describes in sensuous detail the direct connections of African cooking to New Orleans jambalaya, Cuban rice and beans, and the cooking of Americans' "soul food." *Stirring the Pot* breaks new ground and makes clear the relationship between food and the culture, history, and national identity of Africans.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Well-written, clear, and informative, *Stirring the Pot* provides a compelling, readable history

of food and cuisine in Africa. . . . a remarkable book. . . . Amy Bentley, associate professor in the department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, New York University . . . . Published as part of an Africa in World History series brought out by an academic press, Ohio University Press, and aimed primarily at students and scholars, *Stirring the Pot* nonetheless considers a large swath of the world's foodways and history in a valuable and, for many readers, new way. Despite the foodie fever currently gripping the culture, there doesn't appear to be a whole lot out there about African cuisine. . . . Wilson Quarterly . . . . Historian McCann alters the typical proportions of books on food, with 27 select recipes supplementing generous portions of the history of cuisine in Africa and beyond. The author emphasizes disparate influences on Africa's foodways, including encounters between the continent's peoples and states along with seminal transformations wrought by post-1492 global circulation of crops. . . . Summing Up: Highly recommended. . . . Choice . . . . (Stirring the Pot) makes the reader both intellectually and physically hungry. . . . Canadian Journal of History . . . . In this compelling study, James C. McCann provides a profound and novel way to examine history and historical change not only in Africa but also in the Atlantic basin. . . . This book allows readers to peek into the African cooking pot in order to better understand the constituent parts and nuances of African cuisine, as shaped by geography, history, trade across ecological zones, and migration (forced and voluntary) across oceans (Atlantic, Pacific, and the Mediterranean). . . . American Historical Review . . . . The author of the Gourmand award-winning book *Stirring the Pot* is one of the biggest experts when it comes to the agricultural and cooking history of Africa. . . . Gourmand Magazine . . . . (McCann's) close reading of a feast offered in 1887 by Tatyu, the wife of Ethiopian king Menelik II, is an exemplary investigation of state patronage and Ethiopian cuisine. The author's use of details is eye-catching. . . . There has been a desperate need for this kind of study for over two decades, so McCann has done African studies a service by writing such a readable book. . . . Notes & Records . . . . *Stirring the Pot* is a welcome addition to the sparse literature on African history, food and foodways, and popular culture. . . . The book is aimed at a wide audience, ranging from mature secondary-school students through undergraduates and general readers, but graduate students and academics will also find its detailed documentation helpful. . . . Gastronomica

James C. McCann is a professor of history and the associate director of the African Studies Center at Boston University. He is the author of *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New*

World Crop, 1500&#150;2000, which was the winner of the George Perkins Marsh Prize for Best Book in Environmental History; and Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa, which has been used in classrooms on five continents.

This book is inspiring. It goes beyond food culture to give a positive vision of Africa. Six years after, there are now more books on Africa and food, but none has yet shown so much depth and inspiration. It should be read carefully, as the author releases interesting wisdom in a very humble and restrained way.

The author has written a very well footnoted text for a mostly academic audience but many of the passages quoted are still relevant to us today. Does a great job of filling in the huge blanks on who eats what and how in Africa. Extensive work on Ethiopian culture and cuisine as well as other less well known tribal food customs.

Fast safe shipping, item arrived as described. Would buy from again. Many thanks!

with its great descriptions of food, especially Ethiopian. Very interesting and informative book, part history and part cookery, with recipes, about west africa and east africa, mainly Ethiopia. The book gives information I never read before on cookery of the past. The author relates how the foods native to Africa were mixed with the foods from the new world to make African cuisine, that cooking methods and foods were passed from one region to another, that different methods produce different textures and tastes, that often we cannot know why one people cook rice this way and another that way, that eating is always associated with ritual and custom. It is not enough for humanity to eat to live, we want to assign social and spiritual meaning to food and eating. The part about Ethiopian cookery is the most extensive I have come across. In addition to describing and listing the dishes in detail, the author goes into, albeit briefly, how food linked to national identity. He mentions how the rich and the poor eat differently. This sort of observation is common to Western history books, and this is the first time I read about in the African context. He also talks about how some dishes were developed by certain ethnic groups and then were adopted by other peoples and became regarded as national dishes. The book also discusses how in Africa, unlike in Europe, excellent cooking did not become a male preserve. At some point in Europe, when cooking became an art, there developed the tradition of the excellent chef, always a man. This happened when going to restaurants became widely practiced, first by the upper class, and when cooking became

professional and expert. The author says that in Africa, cooking is still domestic and part of home. Only Ethiopian food has spread to restaurants all over the western world. But he reveals that in west africa, people eat from stalls a lot, including children on their way to school, who eat breakfast like that, as a regular part of life. This reminded me of Ruth Goodman's book on Tudor times, in which she relates that people purchased their meals from vendors on the street, and ate on their way. It was actually cheaper than cooking at home. the author does not say why there are Ethiopian restaurants and why there are no or very few, Ghanaian or Nigerian restaurants, for instance. There is a lot more research to be done on that topic of African cooking history. But this is an excellent book on a little known subject.

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