Indexing Recipe Titles

Introduction

Recipe titles name the main units of cookbooks, and indexing them is the cookbook indexer's main task. But it's important for indexers to understand how different a task cookbook indexing is from indexing most nonfiction texts. Although I know of no studies of cookbook index use, I will venture some opinions based on my own observation of how I use cookbook indexes and on informal discussions with other users, including indexers as well as index users with no awareness of indexing practice. It would be interesting to design a usability study to investigate how readers use cookbook indexes and see whether such a study supports these ideas.

Browsers versus Searchers

Cookbooks differ from most trade nonfiction books in that they are reference books, resembling encyclopedias and directories. This has two significant implications for indexers.

First, most cookbook users, when they take a book from the shelf, are turning to a text they have used before, often many, many times. This use contrasts with that of most nonfiction books, which are read once cover to cover, and then put away, perhaps never to be read again. Cookbook readers use cookbook indexes in two ways. Those who are looking at a book for the first time, or are looking for a recipe they have not made before in a book they have used before, will *browse* the index, looking for recipes that share a common feature—potato recipes, or cake recipes, or Mexican recipes.

Browsing index users are best served when the indexer posts each recipe title as a subheading under every category or ingredient main heading that is relevant, whether the main heading word(s) appear in the title or not. All soups, no matter whether they are called "consommé" or "broth," "chowder" or "gazpacho," must be found under "soups"—via cross-references, if nothing else. "Cioppino" must be listed as a subheading under "stews" and "seafood" or "shellfish" or "crab," depending on its exact ingredients.

The second type of readers are those who have used the cookbook before and are looking for a recipe with which they are already familiar. They will *search* the index, looking for the specific recipe in question. Because cookbooks get more repeat use than most nonfiction books, the ratio of searchers to browsers is much greater. So it is particularly important to serve searching users in constructing a cookbook index.

Searchers know exactly what they are looking for. This means giving them initial access points in the index that are as specific as possible. When I was learning to index, Nancy Mulvany once told our class, "Never penalize a reader for knowing exactly what they're looking for." When I talk to nonindexers about indexes, the most common frustration they mention is knowing exactly what they're looking for, but not finding a main heading for it. They are forced to search through subheadings, hoping to find the information buried somewhere.

Recipe Titles As Work Titles

Although most cookbooks contain some nonrecipe material, they are essentially collections of discrete documents with clear beginnings and ends—the recipes. The recipe title is a work title, analogous to the title of a song, movie, or novel. It is presented to the reader as such, located prominently and printed in special, large type. Titles are memorable to readers as units, because they are official labels for the recipes and because of their visual weight on the page. Furthermore, titles are works of authorship; indexers are not free to edit or rewrite them. Very slight rewordings and inversions are allowable, but not wholesale rewriting.

Browsing index users won't yet be familiar with the titles before leafing through the book or consulting the index. Searching index users, however, are likely to remember a title as an unbreakable unit with fixed word order. Think of *War and Peace* or "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." We remember titles like these as phrases; it would never occur to us to look them up in an index under "peace" or "diamonds." In general, you will serve searchers well by posting main headings for recipe titles at the first word of the title phrase.

While recipe titles appear in indexes as main headings, they also appear as subheadings (or sub-subheadings) under main headings for ingredients or recipe categories. The indexer's job is to determine all the relevant index locations for each recipe. One recipe might easily need to be posted in five or six different index locations, one reason well-written cookbook indexes require a generous amount of space.

Indexing recipe titles means balancing two ways of thinking about access points in the index: providing multiple main headings as access points for browsers (these will be ingredient names and recipe categories), with recipe titles as subheadings, and providing specific main headings as access points for searchers (these will be recipe titles in their natural word order).

Distinctiveness and Memorability

Memorability of recipe titles, and the likelihood that readers will remember them as unbreakable units, depends on where they lie on a continuum that reaches from the merely descriptive (Tofu and Winter Squash Stew, Red Lentil Soup) to the extremely distinctive (Garnets in Blood, Hopping John).

Searching index users looking up a familiar recipe for the stew might look under any of the main elements of the title—"tofu" or "winter squash" or "squash" or "stew," depending on what aspect of the recipe is uppermost in their mind. The indexer will be serving both browsing and searching index users by posting this recipe title as a subheading under each of its elements:

> Tofu
> > and winter squash stew
>
> Winter squash
> > tofu and winter squash stew

Squash
    tofu and winter squash stew
Stew
    tofu and winter squash

Titles like these that appear as subheadings under an ingredient do not usually require a separate main heading. The entry for "Tofu" may have ten or twenty subheadings, but it still isn't necessary to have a one-line main entry "Tofu and winter squash stew" that follows it.

Very distinctive titles are need different handling. No searcher is going to look for Garnets in Blood under "blood" or Hopping John under "John." These titles need to be posted as main headings as is, in their natural order, and as subheadings under all relevant categories and ingredients (desserts, pomegranates, red wine; black-eyed peas, rice, etc.). Foreign recipe titles that have become known to English-speaking cooks are also distinctive and should be posted as main headings: Aïoli, Baba Ghanoush, Chow Mein.

Modifiers and Attributions

Between the two extremes are many recipe titles that begin with modifiers (Cold Cucumber Soup, Best-ever Chocolate Cake, Wheatless Pancakes) or attributions (Lindsey's Almond Tart, Toll House Cookies, Eliza Acton's Gingerbread). There is some evidence to suggest that English-speaking index users do not invert adjectival phrases when searching for them (Wellisch 1995, 75), which is an argument for posting index entries for such phrases at the modifier as well as at the noun. Even so, generic descriptive terms like "cold," "hot," "quick," and "fresh" do not usually merit posting at the modifiers.

Modifiers describing basic cooking techniques may also fall in this category— "roasted," "baked," "fried." Such modifiers are so generic that they are not particularly memorable to searching index users, who I believe are most likely to look for recipes titled this way under a main ingredient or the recipe category. Browsers are not likely to turn first to such modifiers as relevant browsing categories. So even when there are no index space limitations, it is not advisable to index modifiers of this type.

There are exceptions, however. Context matters; depending on the scope and focus of the particular cookbook, a modifier that would be generic and irrelevant in one book might be relevant in another. If the book is dedicated to soup recipes, "cold soups" may be a relevant category. Likewise, in a book containing only beef recipes, cooking techniques may well be relevant categories so that recipe titles beginning with "roast" or "braised" or "grilled" should be posted at the modifier.

Other modifiers are more specifically descriptive: wheatless, best-ever, low-fat. Best indexing practice is to index titles like these under the modifier, as well as everywhere else where they belong. Browsing readers might very well want to find all low-fat or all wheatless recipes. Also, modifiers like these are memorable, so searching users may look first for the modifier.

Place adjectives may indicate a recipe category browsers will expect to find: Mexican dishes, Thai dishes. Recipe titles beginning with these adjectives should be

posted there—as well as any Mexican or Thai dishes that do not contain those words in their titles. (If Mexican or Thai cooking is the entire focus of the book, however, the place names become generic and therefore irrelevant in the index.) More specific place names (Southern Fried Chicken, Provençal Fish Soup, Boston Baked Beans, Cape Cod Cranberry Pie) should also be indexed under the place name. Names of regions usually indicate relevant recipe categories that deserve main headings.

Specific place names (Boston, Cape Cod) may not be relevant as browsing categories, but deserve main heading postings because the place name is memorable and distinctive so searchers may well look up a familiar recipe that way first. Recipe titles with extremely distinctive modifiers (Black Bottom Pie, Green Goddess Dressing) must always be indexed as main headings at the modifier.

Like other modifiers, attributions may be more or less specific and distinctive. Names of restaurants and of well-known people (well-known to cooks, that is) deserve posting as main headings:

> Commander's Palace Bread Pudding Soufflé, 172
> Carême's Hazelnut Pithiviers, 208

A problem arises when personal names are used in full in the title: Eliza Acton's Gingerbread, M. F. K. Fisher's Ginger Hottendots. Should these be indexed under the first or last name? Though I often see such recipes indexed at the first name, I prefer to make a [last name, first name] main heading and list the recipe as a subheading:

> Fisher, M. F. K., Ginger Hottendots, 279

A reasonable argument can be made for either practice, depending on whether you're thinking of searchers (who might be thinking of the title as its natural-order fixed unit) or browsers (who might be asking themselves if any of Fisher's recipes are in the book). When the recipe title is listed as a subheading, it doesn't work to invert the name; it is better practice, though not essential, to move the whole attribution to the end:

> Cookies
>   Ginger Hottendots, M. F. K. Fisher's, 279

Attributions to nonidentifiable people (Grandma's Banana Bread, Bob's Barbecue Sauce) are less distinctive; I don't consider it essential to index them under the attribution, although if space is generous there's no harm in doing so.

Ingredients in Titles—Which to Index?

Styles of titling recipes vary greatly among cookbook authors. Often, most titles in a book will be quite straightforward, descriptive, and concise. But sometimes authors like to include long strings of ingredient names in the recipe titles:

> Citrus Salad with Lemongrass, Toasted Almonds, and Mint

Montauk Chowder with Clams, Wild Striped Bass, Tomatoes, and Yellow Finn Potatoes

With titles like these, it's always difficult to know when to stop indexing ingredients. The primary one or two will usually be obvious, but what about minor ingredients? Ask yourself, "Would a searching reader look for this particular recipe under this ingredient?" and "Would a browsing reader want or expect to find this recipe when looking up this particular ingredient?"

Your task is to identify which ingredients are either key to the recipe, making the dish what it is, or so distinctive, though minor, that a reader might look them up to see what may be done with them. The recipe must be indexed as a subheading under both of these ingredient types.

In deciding whether or not an ingredient is "key," consider these points: How much of the ingredient is called for? The more of it, the more important it probably is. Is it integral, cooked in the dish, does it add a final touch at the end, or serve as a garnish? Would the recipe be recognizable without it? Could the cook easily substitute something else for it?

Minor but distinctive ingredients include less-common herbs, spices, fruits and vegetables; unusual uses or combinations of familiar ingredients; ethnic ingredients; and trendy ingredients. In deciding whether to index them, ask yourself, might someone have this on the shelf and be wondering what to do with it? Is it a currently trendy ingredient, such as pimentón or Meyer lemons? Is it an ingredient that cooks might have passionate feelings about one way or the other—so they might want to either find or avoid all uses of it? If you don't have a cook's knowledge and intuition, these may be difficult questions to answer.

I disagree strongly with the authors of *Recipes into Type* (Whitman and Simon 1993, 141–42), who give several examples of ingredients mentioned in titles that they say should not be indexed. My disagreement is not only with the particular examples given, but with the underlying logic. For instance, they suggest indexing "Game Soup with Pears" under "game" and "soup" but not "pears," because "No one is going to look under pears to see what to do with them and come up with game soup."

This is just the sort of minor-but-distinctive ingredient that I believe is highly indexable. Nuggets of surprising information are just as indexable as logical, expected information. After all, that's why browsers browse—to see what might turn up. Also, because this is such an unusual use of pears, a searching reader who has made the recipe before might well look it up under "Pears" because that's what's most memorable and unique about the dish.

A caution: Watch out for indexable ingredients that are not mentioned in the title. Even titles that list several ingredients may not include an ingredient that proves to be indexable upon careful perusal of the recipe. Just as you can never be certain that section heads in other kinds of nonfiction are accurate indicators of the text that follows, you can never be sure a recipe title gives an accurate description of the recipe. Tempting as it may be to index from the title alone, part of the indexer's job is to review the ingredients list and the instructions with care.

Subsidiary Recipes

Often, a recipe will include a subsidiary recipe that may or may not be mentioned in the title. A subsidiary recipe may be indexable for several reasons: it adds distinction to the main recipe, making it a memorable part of the title; it may be separated from the main recipe so that a cook might make it for a different use; or it may be a standard recipe that in another book might be given on its own, but in this book happens to appear only as a component.

Sometimes subsidiary recipes are clearly identifiable because they have separate ingredients lists, sometimes titled; other times their ingredients and preparation will be buried within the main recipe. Here are some examples of subsidiary recipes that are included as part of the main recipe title:

> Monkfish Braised in Red Wine with <u>Potato Puree</u>
> Pancakes with <u>Honey-Almond Butter</u>
> Roasted Red Pepper Soup with <u>Polenta Croutons</u>
> Five-Tomato Salad with <u>Gorgonzola and Chive Toasts</u>
> Coconut Layer Cake with <u>Divinity Icing</u>

Recipes within recipes should always be indexed if they appear in a recipe title, even if they have not been formatted as separate recipes with their own ingredients lists and instructions. Here I differ again with the *Recipes into Type* authors. For "Hot Broccoli Salad with Caper Sauce," they say that "Caper Sauce" should not be indexed "unless [it] is a subsidiary recipe with its own title" (Whitman and Simon 1993, 141); they mean that for it to be indexable, it should be set apart typographically as a titled recipe with its own ingredients list.

Omitting a subsidiary recipe like this results in poor indexing, in my opinion. A searching reader might want to make the sauce to put on pasta, and not remember what the cookbook author did with it. Or, a browsing reader may just love capers, and want to find anything in the book that includes them.

Like ingredients, indexable subsidiary recipes may not be mentioned in the title. If they are clearly identifiable separate components, they should be indexed as follows, in addition to the entry for the main recipe:

> Chocolate Buttercream, in Dobos Torte
> Hollandaise Sauce, in Eggs Benedict

Index Style and Wording of Titles in Subheadings

There are just a few widely used styles for cookbook indexes. Sometimes (often, in my own experience) the indexer will have a choice as to which style to use. Differences among the most common styles mostly have to do with capitalization and whether or not recipe titles are inverted or shortened, or "quoted" exactly as they appear in the index. This "exact quote" style (this is not an accepted name for it, just my own way of referring to it) seems to be quite prevalent these days. A main entry in this style might look like this:

Fennel
    Braised Fennel, 374
    Fennel and Potato Gratin, 265
    Fennel Soup, 208
    Winter Greens with Mushrooms and Fennel, 140

If a style that allows inversion or shortening of titles is used, the entry could look like this:

Fennel
    braised, 374
    and potato gratin, 265
    soup, 208
    winter greens with mushrooms and, 140

The exact quote style has two major drawbacks for indexers. It requires more space for the index because every word in each title must be kept, creating considerable repetition (look at repetition of the word "fennel" in the first example above). The space difference can grow quite large, because the repeated word may often result in a turnover line.

Also, the indexer does not have the freedom to reword the titles when they appear as subheadings; this means keywords cannot be brought to the front. This is an important point. Subentry lists are a common characteristic of cookbook indexes; relatively few main headings lack subheadings. Often they end up as quite long lists, even a full column or more, and they can be difficult to navigate. Unless a subentry list is very short, recipes with shared characteristics will not sort together. Compare these two main entries:

Crab(s), 15–66
    Back Creek Inn's Crab Quiche, 53
    Baltimore Style Crab Imperial, 63
    Black and Blue Crab Cakes, 38
    Crab Soup at Cross Street Market, 110
    Deviled Crab, 66
    Eastern Shore Crab Salad with Cantaloupe, 180
    Faidley's World Famous Crab Cakes, 35
    Smithfield Crab Imperial, 64
    Virginia She-Crab Soup, 113

Crab(s), 15–66
    Cakes, Black and Blue, 38
    Cakes, Faidley's World Famous, 35
    Deviled, 66
    Imperial, Baltimore Style, 63
    Imperial, Smithfield, 64
    Quiche, Back Creek Inn's, 53

Salad, Eastern Shore, with Cantaloupe, 180
Soup, at Cross Street Market, 110
Soup, Virginia She-Crab, 113

The first example follows the exact quote style. In it, similar recipes are scattered away from each other: two crab cake recipes, two soups, and two crab imperial recipes. In the second example, these similar recipes have been brought together in the list because the indexer has the freedom to bring a keyword to the front of the subheading. The longer the subentry list, the more important it becomes to organize it in this way.

In the index from which these examples were taken, the main entry for "Crab(s)" actually runs to more than a full column, and similar recipes would be widely scattered among the many subheadings if rewording were not allowed. The exact quote style works best for short, diverse cookbooks; encyclopedic cookbooks should never use this index style, and it can be quite problematic for single-topic cookbooks, which also tend sometimes to long subentry lists. Because of the constraint on wording, the use of sub-subheadings doesn't work with the exact quote style. Sub-subheadings are quite common in cookbook indexes; they are very helpful for grouping similar recipes in subentry lists, and they are essential in indexes for encyclopedic cookbooks.

If you are using a style that allows rewording of titles in subheadings, you will often have choices about how to do so. Usually it's clear which word in a title is significant and should be relocated to the front. Often this simply means sending modifiers and attributions to the end:

Tart(s)
almond, Lindsey's
quince, Coach House
rhubarb-orange
Cake(s)
chocolate chiffon
devil's food, Mom's
nut, fabulous Athenian

Or the keyword may be a modifier:

Beef
Boiled
Cold, in Aspic
Filet of, Braised and Stuffed
Filet of, Sautéed
Stew, with Onions and Beer
Chicken
breasts, broiled
breasts, sautéed
deviled
roast, with forty cloves of garlic
roast, lemon-stuffed

In many cases there is more than one good way to reword a title. Indexers must consider each main entry with its list of subheadings separately, not try to find a rewording style that can be used throughout the index. Logical subheading organization will always depend on that particular set of recipe titles—what elements they share, and how they are worded.

Many recipe titles list two ingredients connected by a hyphen or "and." If possible, the order of ingredients mentioned in titles should be kept as given, but when ingredients have more or less equal importance to the recipe, order may be switched in reworded subheadings:

> Artichoke and Potato Ragoût, 65
> Potato(es)
>   and Artichoke Ragoût, 65
>
> Spoonbread with Corn and Green Tomatoes, 118
> Corn
>   Spoonbread with Green Tomatoes and, 118
>
> Banana-Strawberry Smoothie, 648
> Strawberry(ies)
>   -Banana Smoothie, 648
>
> Apple-Lime Tofu Cheesecake
> Lime
>   Apple-Lime Tofu Cheesecake
> <u>but not</u>
> Lime-Apple Tofu Cheesecake (because the lime is clearly a subordinate
>   ingredient)

It's important to make sure that subheadings "read" properly. When editing the index, ask yourself whether the subheadings make sense. Have you made deletions or rearranged word order so that a reader is going to wonder what you mean? The longer the subentry list, the more care is required in rewording sensibly, because the main heading the reader needs to visually complete the subheading will be farther away.

Some recipe titles just don't make much sense as subheadings if you delete a word, and these should be given in full, even if you are otherwise deleting and inverting:

> Banana(s)
>   Dried Cherry Banana Bread
> <u>not</u>
> Banana(s)
>   Bread, Dried Cherry
>
> Chicken
>   Stir-fried Tamarind Chicken and Shiitake Mushrooms
> <u>not</u>

Chicken
    Tamarind, Stir-fried, and Shiitake Mushrooms

I believe titles that use hyphens or a serial comma to group more than two ingredients should also be given in full. If one ingredient is deleted from the subheading, it doesn't read properly, possibly because it gives an impression of completeness even without the main heading word:

Rhubarb
    -Orange Tart
    and Raspberry Crisp
    Rhubarb-Cherry-Berry Pie
<u>not</u>
Rhubarb
    -Cherry-Berry Pie
    -Orange Tart
    and Raspberry Crisp

Artichoke
    Artichoke, Potato, and Shallot Ragoût
    Gratin
    Soup
<u>not</u>
Artichoke
    Gratin
    Potato, and Shallot Ragoût
    Soup

Conclusion

The cookbook indexer, like any indexer, must consider the varied needs of the book's audience. Because they are reference works that get a great deal of repeat use, cookbooks have an unusually large proportion of repeat readers. For me, the most significant division among cookbook index users is that between first-time readers or those who are looking for a new recipe (the browsers) and repeat readers who are looking up a familiar recipe (the searchers).

Cookbook indexers, when indexing recipe titles, must always balance the different needs of browsers and searchers. Browsers need multiple access points under all relevant ingredients and recipe categories; searchers need specific access points, including main headings for memorable recipe titles in their given word order.

To serve browsing readers, the indexer needs the skill to identify relevant ingredients (key ingredients, indexable minor ingredients) and relevant recipe categories, which vary according to the scope and focus of the particular cookbook.

To serve searching readers, the indexer must make judgments about the distinctiveness and memorability of particular recipe titles in order to decide where a searcher is most likely to look for them. Also, the index will function best for both types

of users if the indexer has the freedom to logically organize long subentry lists by bringing key title words to the front of the subheading so that similar recipes sort together.

References

Wellisch, Hans. 1995. *Indexing from A to Z.* 2nd ed. New York and Dublin: H.W. Wilson.

Whitman, Joan, and Dolores Simon. 1993. *Recipes into Type.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers