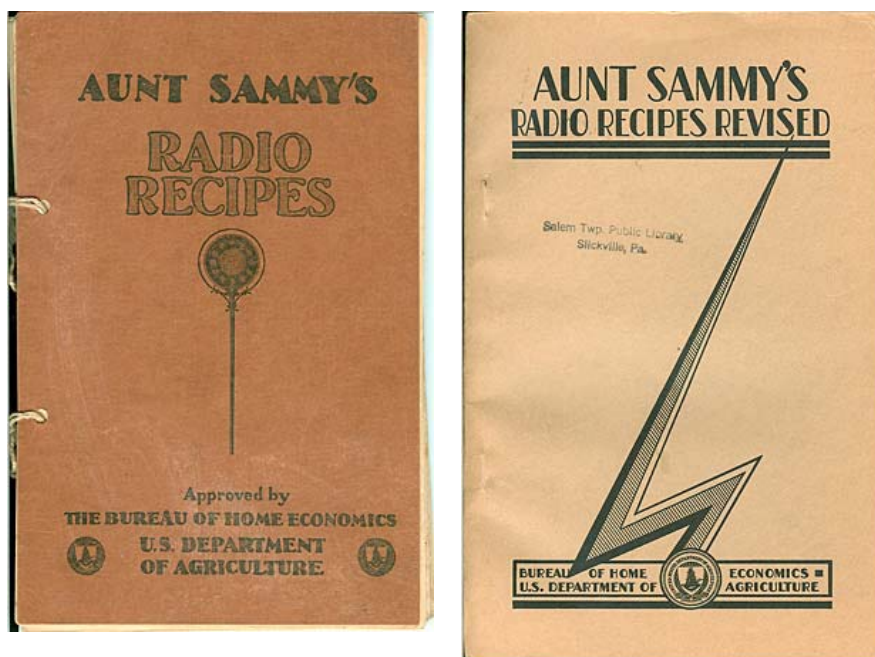


Reflections From the Past: Early FCS Radio Shows

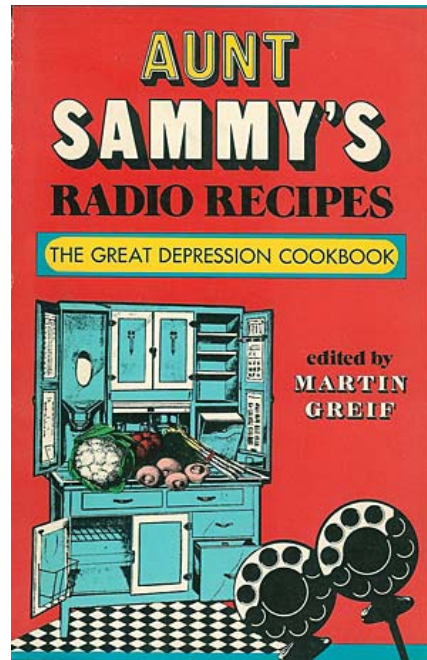
Jan Scholl (PA), 75th Anniversary Committee

Radio played a large role in family and consumer science (then home economics) programs. Freelance home economist, Ida Cogswell Bailey Allen, for example, was featured throughout the U.S. and wrote nearly 100 cookbooks for all kinds of publishers and companies. Her first publications distributed recipes giving substitutes for sugar, wheat and meat during World War I. During her radio years, she also published a weekly, *Radio Homemakers: The Magazine of the Air*. At least one radio recording still exists of *Ida Bailey Allen and the Chef*, and 24 of her radio homemaker talks (1926). She also wrote books on laundry, and personal grooming which was published in Spanish. Some of her books include information about how she got her start and aspects of her life and work.

It is very likely that Ida Allen influenced the format of the national radio campaign created at USDA by Ruth Van Deman (information specialist) and Fanny Walker Yeatman (Bureau of Home Economics) in the 1920s. The series featured a fictitious "Aunt Sammy" (wife of Uncle Sam). The program aired throughout the country and local Extension home economists read scripts that were prepared in Washington, D.C. By 1932, the radio show was on 194 stations throughout the U.S. Cookbooks, as support materials to the program, were found to be necessary to prevent many calls to the local Extension office, though specially designed blank bulletins were designed and distributed to jot down recipes. The first cookbook, with string binding, was published between 1926 and 1928. Later bound (6 ½ X 9 ¼") bulletins followed with menus, *Aunt Sammy Radio Recipes* (1931) with a microphone on the cover and *Aunt Sammy Radio Recipes Revised* (1932) with a lightning bolt on the cover.



In 1975, a hardcover book *Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes: The Great Depression Cookbook* was edited by Martin Greif, and in 1976, a 50th anniversary edition bulletin was published by USDA, *Selections from Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes and USDA Favorites*. The books were so popular that congressmen and women sent these bulletins to their constituents stamped with their names on them. After 1934, Aunt Sammy faded out and the radio show was renamed *Homemaker Chat*. The show was discontinued in 1946. The National Agricultural Library has both written and microfilm scripts of the series and the cookbooks are still readily available on E-bay.



Besides the national radio program, land-grant universities often created scripts related to home economics topics. In New York State, the fictitious Debra Domecom (an abbreviation of domestic economy) was popular for many decades. Extension radio programs remained popular throughout the 20th Century. Searching the *Journal of Extension* online will bring up many articles, showing how radio transferred information in times of need and particularly to low-income audiences.