"Recipes Like Floating Islands:" Recipe, Autobiography, and Memory in The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book

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Abstract/Artist's Statement
My project is an exploration of various dimensions of *The Alice B. Toklas Cook Book*. The cook book is a cook book, but it is also a collection and an autobiography. The recipes in the book originated in Alice's physical recipe collection box which began when she was a child and continued throughout her life. The autobiographical narrative develops out of the memories that were created around each recipe. Because of the compilation of memories that are attached to each of the recipes in the collection, Alice writes her life story through her recipes. Each recipe represents a person, place, and specific time in her life. As she uncovers and reads her recipes, her memories are catalyzed and thus her life writing act proceeds as well. Julia Child, MFK Fisher, Brillat-Savarin, and Proust are a few food minded writers who help shed light on both the cook book function and memoir aspect of *The ABT Cook Book* in my paper. All of the stories in the book come out of the recipes but memory is the driving force that arises out of those recipes. The recipes appear as one critic said, "like floating islands," which is to say, seemingly haphazard. But the haphazardness of the recipes is a manifestation of the way Alice remembers her life – the recipes lead her narrative.

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