



The House Servant's Directory: A Monitor for Private Families (American Antiquarian Cookbook Collection)

Robert Roberts

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Published in Boston in 1827, this volume in the American Antiquarian Cookbook Collection is an American milestone—the first book written by an African American and published by a commercial publisher. Author Robert Roberts was butler and majordomo at the country estate of U.S. senator and governor of Massachusetts Christopher Gore.

“In order to get through your work in proper time, you should make it your chief study to rise early in the morning; for an hour before the family rises is worth more to you than two after they are up.” These are Robert Roberts’s first words to his readers in this classic resource for those employed as domestic servants. More household-management manual than cookbook, the book does contain recipes for making beer and punch, salad sauce, mustard, currant jam, syrups, and fruit-flavored waters of all kinds. There are directions for carving, marketing, choosing meats, fish and poultry, and preserving, and how to complete household chores successfully, clean everything in the house, behave properly, and prepare and serve food for family dinners and parties of all sizes. The book has suggestions for employers on how to manage domestic help (very unusual for the time), but Roberts was more interested in teaching young black men how to succeed in their work and ensure their advancement.

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