



The American Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy

Lydia Maria Francis Child

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Includes interesting recipes, remedies, advice on parenting, and tips for housekeepers. From 1832-1845, this popular book went through thirty-two editions.

The American Frugal Housewife: Dedicated to Those Who Are Not Ashamed of Economy Details

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Author : Lydia Maria Francis Child

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Susan says

My best friend gave me this book because she knew I'd appreciate it, both for the historical context and the frugality. It's fun to read and full of interesting nineteenth-century housekeeping trivia, such as "Green tea is excellent to restore rusty silk." Mrs. Child is the Heloise of 1833. She is also a philosopher: "Extravagance has prevented many marriages, and rendered still more unhappy." I recommend this book.

Erika Mulvenna says

An interesting peek into what Lydia Maria Child deems as "frugal" housekeeping in 1833. This volume also includes the text, *Hints to Persons of Moderate Fortune*, in which a chapter titled *Education of Daughters* stresses how girls should be taught from a young age that their place is in the home as homemakers, not outside the home in the public sphere of men. After reading that Lydia Maria Child was an Abolitionist and women's rights activist in her day, I was surprised at her frequent and repeated statements that women should be groomed and educated to stay in the home. Quite different from her own life, where she enjoyed a career outside the home as an author and activist. Perhaps in her later writings she changed her tune, but from this book it seems she is just another "do as I say, not as I do" woman, taking advantage of her own audience.

Sara says

Another good reason to thank my lucky stars for indoor plumbing and electricity, not to mention my ignorance of what getting "the piles" or "the chops" entails.

Laura Spilde says

Neat book that brings a reader back to the past when House Wife skills were basic and simple. The information is still good for the modern housewife as it is filled with little tricks to keep a person aware of various conditions and surroundings which affect the common American home.

Shawn says

This provided a wonderful glimpse into early- to mid-19th Century life. The book is a collection of wisdom and practical advice to help the American housewife of the time make the most of all resources. Economical use of time, money, and material was the prime virtue promoted in this manuscript.

Of particular interest to me were the numerous recipes. Some seem rather ordinary, such as pancakes or pickles, but others, such as carrot pie or calf's foot jelly, are rather unusual in our time. There were remedies

various ailments, such as sage tea for headaches and several suggestions to deal with molding or stale foods, many involving pearlash. I enjoyed the insight into life at the time. We make our chicken salad by pulling a jar of mayo out of the fridge, but Mrs. Child took eggs, lemon, and a couple other items and made her own dressing!

We would all profit from her general advice regarding contentment and waste, even though the outer forms of economy look very different now than Mrs. Child's day. This was an unexpectedly fun book to read.

Abigail says

This book gives an interesting insight into life in the 1830's. It is a tough read however due to different vocabulary and terms that are no longer used. It's also a difficult read because so much information is thrown at you all at once, all the ways of helping with lockjaw for example, that you find yourself beginning to drown a bit.

Some people have complained about the section on "Educating daughter" and how it basically tells women they should be good little wives and stay home. Honestly, I didn't have a problem with this section. If you read it in the cultural context it makes sense, the author is telling people that their education should include practical skills, not just drawing and painting and music so that they would be able to run a household well, which is what they were expected to do in the 1830s.

All in all it was interesting to go through this little volume, but it's not one I'd really recommend.

Aslynn says

An "old time" book that talks a great deal about cooking, home remedies, soap making, and general tips for caring for though home, though many of these are quite outdated. For instance, the author speaks of taking apart a mattress to freshen it, but mattresses are certainly no longer made the way they were back then.

More than half of the book, however, talks about cooking and other associated topics, which is one of the reasons I liked it so much. If you enjoy cooking from scratch or baking, you'll really enjoy this book.

Liz Jennings says

Quick office of management of a great day today but I'll let him

go back and forth between a few days to go out for me know when you're ready in time and space administration is that a direct shortcut the same way I am so you have an amazing and the other side to go out with the best of them are going to work with the new year old girl who is this a few times but I don't know if you're interested and I have no idea how are things with the same thing to work out with you in town and forth to work with the new place and I don't to rubbed right now and forth between a direct link to the right of way you are going to go back to you and me both the best thing ever and forth to the new year running

Shari Larsen says

This book, written in 1832, was a freebie on Kindle. is collection of household hints, recipes and advice on being thrifty. It was an interesting read, from a historical aspect. Some of the ideas are outdated now, such as her advice on how to raise daughters (which is basically training them how to be wives and mothers) but it was an interesting look into how ordinary people lived their day to day lives back then.

The home remedies were also interesting to read about; a few we still use today, but some sound a little dangerous to me, makes me wonder how some people lived through those times!

It really makes one appreciate the modern world we live in today, where if we run out of food, or things such as soap, we simply go to the store and buy them, and not spend a half a day or more having to make them ourselves.

Valerie says

Skimmed through this fascinating book. Many of the tips in there still apply today.

Sarah Anne Carter says

How did housewives clean and cook in the early 1800s? I picked up this book to find out. However, I didn't learn as much as I wanted because it's almost written in a different language. Lost to us is having ashes to make lye, having bear or goose grease, finding whortleberries or having loaf sugar on hand.

While I found several good tips about cleaning and cooking, I would really like to see a "translation" of this book published. What is the equivalent to whortleberries today? Burnt alum? Oil of Cajput? There is a treasure trove of information in this book, but it's locked away in terms we no longer use.

Her advice on frugal living is still applicable – live within your means and save for what you want. Don't waste anything you could use. Find ways to use substitutions for expensive food items. Develop useful skills. "The true economy of housekeeping is simply the art of gathering up all the fragments, so that nothing be lost. I mean fragments of time, as well as materials." This is the book's opening quote.

I would recommend this book for anyone interested in the old-style of living and homesteading. Perhaps one day, someone will bring this up-to-date so it could be a very useful reference.

Donna Francisco says

Interesting read

Doreen Petersen says

This book was just okay. Not great but not bad either. Descriptions of daily life in the early 1800s. Hard to say whether I would recommend or not. I guess everyone will just have to judge for themselves.

Melissa says

An intriguing bit of Americana that is actually quite timely. The author of this popular early-19th century cookbook and household instruction manual focuses on thrift. Writing in the midst of a depression, she seeks to convey the dignity of frugality and contentment. She warns against waste and extravagance and extols her vision of an ideal man or woman -- well-educated, devout, hard-working, thrifty, and content in all circumstances. These virtues, she believes, lead to true happiness. As for girls, they should not be taught to exaggerate the importance of getting married, or to place undue importance on male attention. Reading a book like this from another time really makes one re-evaluate the materialism and restlessness that is considered normal in our modern era.

Rebecca Lewitt says

Vintage but interesting

The philosophy of it is fascinating and surprisingly relevant. The recipes and home remedies perhaps less so. I enjoyed it for its historical value as well ad its practical ideas.
