

## **Subject-based Zine Finding Aid: Food & food-related practices**

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### **Introduction**

Among the many interesting and available themes within QPIRG's zine library, we chose to orient our project towards the ones focused on food and food-related practices, whether it be cooking, foraging, recipes, or gardening. Despite being a theoretically broad category, the QPIRG collection contained less than 20 zines that fell into our definition of the chosen theme. Therefore, we ended up selecting zines that centred food as a community-building resource. From the beginning of our search, we found that most of the zines introduce an idea of food and cooking that is independent from the modern consumerist trends. With the food industry becoming unsustainable and actively furthering the effects of climate change, the need for creative, ecological solutions has only grown. Schiller-Merkens and Machin (2023) highlight the importance of transforming the world of food production through knowledge sharing between citizens and organizations; a notable way to accomplish this is through independent literary works such as zines. The materials we selected from the QPIRG library record the importance of food accessibility and food politics, serving as instructional manuals that cover topics like foraging, urban agriculture, and creating meals from soil to table. As such, our collection of food-related zines embodies the theme we chose through culture, politics, and community, expressing the nature of knowledge-sharing solutions proposed by Schiller-Merkens and Machin.

Zines as a form of documentation represent a very personal way for people to write down ideas, memories, advice, and anecdotes. They are, through their often uniqueness and ephemerality, related to oral tradition (Galloway, 2018). Several of the zines we selected represent individual and communal documentation of traditional food and cooking, passed down through this very personal form of literature. Through our collection zines, we sought to gather information about sustainable consumerism and nutrition on a small scale. Perceptions of food and eating have undergone countless fluctuations throughout the decades, with concerns about calories, GMOs, ethical production, and farming. Tian Zeng's article (2024) on food well-being delves into the various factors that influence people's perceptions, including environmental contexts, personal opinions, and production. She highlights the need to understand the themes behind food well-being, notably

food socialization, literacy, and marketing. Our zine collection illustrates these themes by presenting personalized documentation of nutrition that encompasses the idea of preserving our own memories of food. Zeng writes of the availability and understanding of food within the industry, mirroring the content of our zines and showing an accessible, simple way to rediscover cultural and societal traditions. The food market has become overly defined by policies and labels, but the zines in QPIRG's collection help improve food literacy and preservation while providing an alternate view of the world of nutrition.

## 2. Overview of Items

In order to be selected for inclusion in the finding aid, zines had to be primarily about food. This included zine with discussions of food preparation, food culture, food security, gardening, and foraging. We excluded zines that discussed food in passing, including: one that was a transcript of a dinner party; ones that only had one recipe; and ones that discussed plants but not specifically edible plants. The assignment requirement of choosing 7-10 zines fit our category well, as there were only about 12 zines in total that were primarily about food. This meant that we only had to exclude zines that we didn't find interesting or that were too similar to ones already in the collection (ie. another 'Campus Crops' zine that was published in a later year). These decisions were made through consensus during our meeting at QPIRG.

The zines at the QPIRG zine library come from a diverse number of groups and individuals. Some of these were from specific activist groups trying to engage with the greater public about a time-sensitive problem, while other times these zines were part of a regular publishing schedule intended to inform people about general issues from a grassroots perspective. Food writing has always balanced the political and the communal, as people incorporate important topics like food security and class at a very grassroots level when engaging in recipe sharing or food procurement practices.

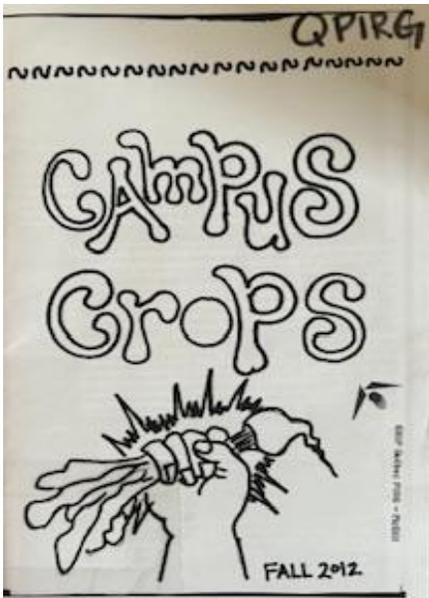
*Campus Crops* is a zine published by the student activist organization of the same name. This group runs a small garden on McGill's property and releases a zine each year with information about growing crops in urban areas, gardening tutorials, dumpster diving tips, and essays from members on the state of urban agriculture in Montreal. By contrast, the annual zine *Students Good Food Guide*, published by the Concordia Food Coalition, focuses on community-based food security efforts in Montreal, informs readers about resources for cheap or free access to food, and provides some nutritional information for eating a balanced diet.

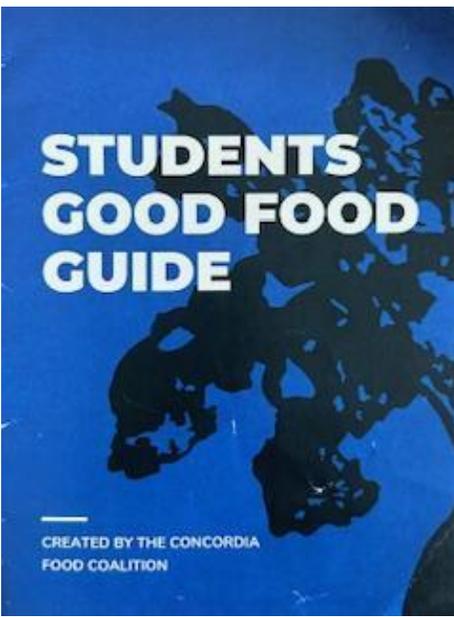
Some less formal examples of zines in this collection are local or personal recipe books. For instance, the zine *SWEET RECIPE: Check Out Some AWSOME Asian Food!!* might catch a reader's eye through its lighthearted and misspelled title. Inside, however, the author provides us with recipes from east and southeast Asia while simultaneously giving a detailed description of the historical period from which these dishes emerged. As the author is anonymous, we can only speculate as to why the zine was published in the first place, but the decision to provide historical contexts to Asian recipes is intentional, resulting in the document having greater

value as a tool for grassroots cultural exchange and education. *Cookings: Recipes by Kara* also focuses on the community aspect of cooking and provides simple vegetarian and vegan recipes with a focus on easily accessible dishes that can be adjusted to accommodate different members of the community.

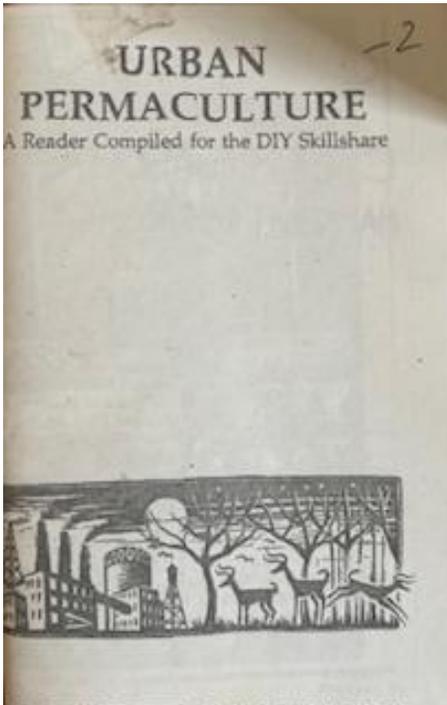
Given that there was no provenance, we did not have to, or have the option to, abide by respect de fonds. Therefore, we had the flexibility to make choices that we judged to make the resources easiest to find. Within the finding aid, the zines are first arranged by 'clusters' and within those clusters, they are arranged chronologically (oldest-newest, followed by N/A). The clusters are "food security", "urban gardening/foraging", and "cooking". While there is of course overlap between these categories, we used our professional judgement to determine what a resource was most about. Food access and food security zines discuss how users can access cheap or free food; urban gardening and foraging zines discuss how users can cultivate food and crops; and cooking zines include recipe zines and zines on the social history of cooking. We then chose to organize the zines chronologically within the clusters, as it best reflects how ideas have changed (or remained constant) throughout the years.

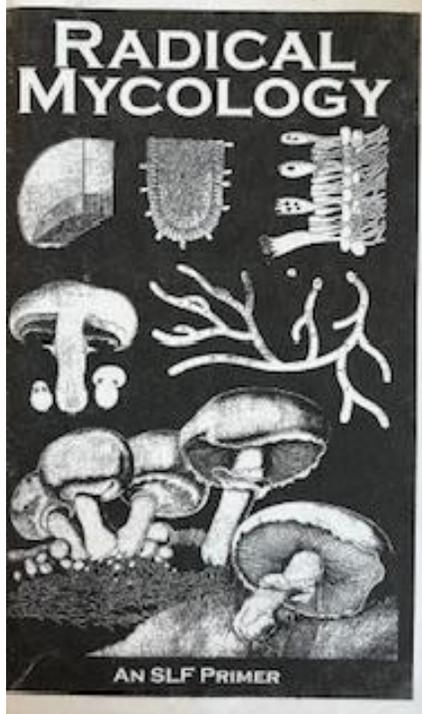
**Food Access/Security**

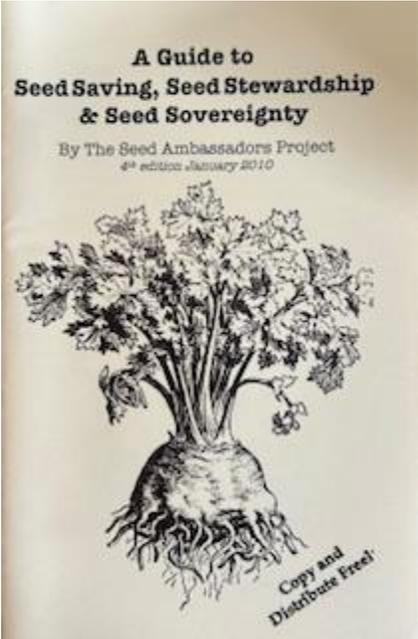
<b>Title</b>	Campus Crops	
<b>Date</b>	2012	
<b>Author/s</b>	Campus Crops McGill with contributors Anarcho-Asperge and Celery Volanas	
<b>Publisher</b>	Campus Crops McGill	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	420 CAM 2012	
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Anarchism; Student Activism	
<b>Description</b>	An instructional ZINE that compiles tips and hints for finding food such as setting up urban agriculture, dumpster diving, and growing gardens. It includes essays, tutorials, and testimonials.	
<b>Pages</b>	15	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Students Good Food Guide	
<b>Date</b>	2022	
<b>Author/s</b>	Concordia Food Coalition	
<b>Publisher</b>	Concordia Food Coalition	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>		
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Food Politics; Food Security; Food Share	
<b>Description</b>	A guide created by the Concordia Food Coalition to inform students on food politics and help students achieve food security. Includes a variety of topics on how students can get involved with helping the community, helping themselves, and important points about nutrition.	
<b>Pages</b>	22	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 4.2 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

*Urban Gardening/Foraging*

<b>Title</b>	Urban Permaculture: A Reader Compiled for the DIY Skillshare	
<b>Date</b>	May 2000	
<b>Author/s</b>	Clea and Sasha	
<b>Publisher</b>	DIY Skillshare Conference	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>		
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Gardening; Anarchism	
<b>Description</b>	An in-depth compilation guide to urban permaculture. Includes thorough DIY and at-home instructions on different techniques for successfully growing and cultivating plants – specially for food purposes. An anarchist take on how to become self-sustainable and more ecologically conscious about food sourcing.	
<b>Pages</b>	58	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Radical Mycology: An SLF Primer	
<b>Date</b>	2009	
<b>Author/s</b>		
<b>Publisher</b>	Spore Liberation Front	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>		
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Mushrooms; Scavenging; Food Politics	
<b>Description</b>	Description of edible mushrooms and fungi in the Cascadia region. Includes identification guides, recipes, tips on cultivation, dying and paper making instructions, ethnomycology, and 'sacred mushrooms'.	
<b>Pages</b>	36	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	A Guide To Seed Saving, Seed Stewardship & Seed Sovereignty	
<b>Date</b>	2010	
<b>Author/s</b>	Sarah Kleeger and Andrew Still	
<b>Publisher</b>	The Seed Ambassador Project	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>		
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Seeds; Gardening; Seed Saving; Plants	
<b>Description</b>	A detailed guide on how to engage with “Seed Saving”, “Seed Stewardship”, and “Seed Sovereignty”. Informative and complete for anyone looking for an entrance guide in getting involved with these acts and others within food politics	
<b>Pages</b>	38	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	SWEET RECIPE: Check Out Some AWSOME Asian Food!!	
<b>Date</b>	May 7, 2004	
<b>Author/s</b>	Edward Yeung	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 420 SWE	
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Asian Food; Asian Culture; Recipes; Cooking	
<b>Description</b>	A food ZINE that provides its reader with a variety of different East Asian and some Southeast Asian recipes. Also includes a detailed account on the history of the Chinese dishes in the ZINE and the different dynasties in which they were created or gained popularity within the country's culture.	
<b>Pages</b>	42	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Cookings: Recipes by Kara	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>	Cara	
<b>Publisher</b>	Cookings Cookzine	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 420 COO	
<b>Subjects</b>	Food; Cooking; Recipes; Vegetarian Cooking; Eating	
<b>Description</b>	A ZINE where the author, Kara, shares their go-to recipes. A tapestry of food and friendship and how to build community through plates (or bowls). Emphasis is given to vegetarian recipes that can easily be made vegan, making them accessible to varying palates and diets.	
<b>Pages</b>	46	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

**References:**

Galloway, Patricia. "Oral Tradition in Living Cultures: The Role of Archives in the Preservation of Memory." In *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, edited by Ben Alexander and Jeannette A. Bastian, 65-86. Cambridge: Facet, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.29085/9781856049047.006>

Schiller-Merkens, Simone, and Amanda Machin. "Knowing Food: Sustainability Politics, Food Policy Councils and the Co-Production of Knowledge." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 36, no. 3 (2023): 311-328. doi: 10.1007/s10767-023-09446-1.

Zeng, Tian. "Defining food well-being from the perspective of young Canadian consumers: an exploratory study." *Discover Food* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1-28. doi: 10.1007/s44187-024-00257-7.