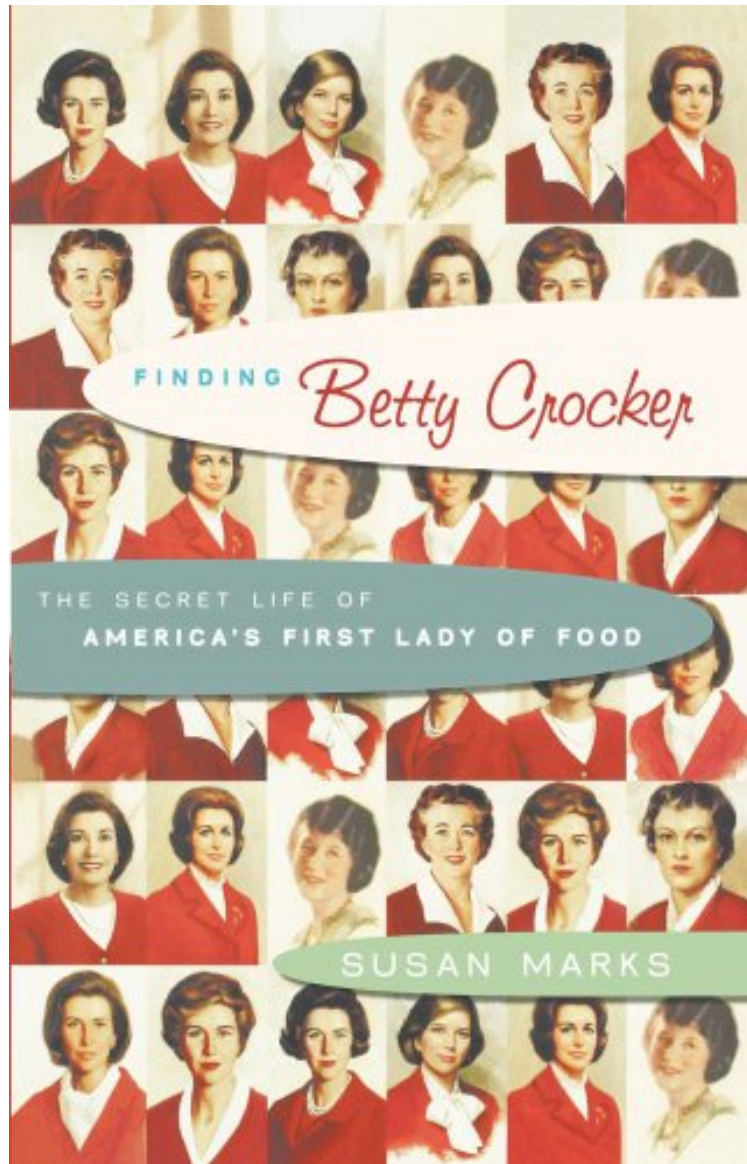


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Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food

Susan Marks

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Susan Marks : Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Finding Betty Crocker: The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. So EnjoyableBy Kay Dee JaylaI really enjoyed this book so much - the detailed history of Betty Crocker brings her right back into my living room. While there isn't much of a "story" to

the book, the history of the influence Betty had upon 20th century America is very interesting! I also found myself folding over corners of the book to recipes I want to try - and after I finished the book I went to eBay to buy an original edition of Betty's 1950 "Big Red" cookbook. I absolutely recommend this book to anyone interested in 20th century cooking Americana. A very enjoyable read. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Easy-going and interesting
By fanofhistoryMy wife gave me this to read after she finished it for her book club. I was expecting to be put to sleep with details of recipes and such, but I was pleasantly surprised to find. The book is a highly readable account that deals more with the social history of a largely bygone era of domesticity and female socialization--it's not really a lament, but there's clearly some nostalgia. This made for some great conversations with my wife (probably why she had me read it in the first place). 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. live in the Minneapolis area and LOVE to cook
By CustomerRead for a book club...live in the Minneapolis area and LOVE to cook. Brought back many great memories...Cooking for Two was the first cookbook I received 56 years ago as a new bride...still have two favorites that I use often

IN 1945, FORTUNE MAGAZINE named Betty Crocker the second most popular American woman, right behind Eleanor Roosevelt, and dubbed Betty America's First Lady of Food. Not bad for a gal who never actually existed. "Born" in 1921 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to proud corporate parents, Betty Crocker has grown, over eight decades, into one of the most successful branding campaigns the world has ever known. Now, at long last, she has her own biography. Finding Betty Crocker draws on six years of research plus an unprecedented look into the General Mills archives to reveal how a fictitious spokesperson was enthusiastically welcomed into kitchens and shopping carts across the nation. The Washburn Crosby Company (one of the forerunners to General Mills) chose the cheery all-American "Betty" as a first name and paired it with Crocker, after William Crocker, a well-loved company director. Betty was to be the newest member of the Home Service Department, where she would be a "friend" to consumers in search of advice on baking -- and, in an unexpected twist, their personal lives. Soon Betty Crocker had her own national radio show, which, during the Great Depression and World War II, broadcast money-saving recipes, rationing tips, and messages of hope. Over 700,000 women joined Betty's wartime Home Legion program, while more than one million women -- and men -- registered for the Betty Crocker Cooking School of the Air during its twenty-seven-year run. At the height of Betty Crocker's popularity in the 1940s, she received as many as four to five thousand letters daily, care of General Mills. When her first full-scale cookbook, Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book, or "Big Red," as it is affectionately known, was released in 1950, first-year sales rivaled those of the Bible. Today, over two hundred products bear her name, along with thousands of recipe booklets and cookbooks, an interactive website, and a newspaper column. What is it about Betty? In answering the question of why everyone was buying what she was selling, author Susan Marks offers an entertaining, charming, and utterly unique look -- through words and images -- at an American icon situated between profound symbolism and classic kitchen kitsch.

From Publishers Weekly "Your talks... have given me hope," wrote one listener to the Betty Crocker radio program during the Depression, and according to Marks's largely chronological "biography" (there was no real Betty Crocker), it was human connections like this one that made Crocker one of the most successful marketing tools ever. Filled with treasures from the General Mills archive; including letters sent to Crocker during WWII, reprints of famous recipes and advertisements, and portraits updated through the years; Marks's book introduces readers to the people who breathed life into Crocker's image as the happiest of homemakers. There's Samuel Gale, her inventor, and Florence Lindeberg, who provided her trademark signature in 1921. Other important figures include Neysa McMein, who painted the first Crocker portrait in 1936, and Adelaide Hawley, who played Crocker on television in the 1950s. Marks, who created a documentary film on Crocker, devotes a chapter to the Betty Crocker Kitchens and chronicles the products that Crocker's folksy persona sold to the world, like Bisquick and various cake mixes. In another section, she touches upon; albeit too briefly; Crocker's role in "the fundamental shift in American diets toward... factory-processed convenience foods." Light on analysis but abundant with anecdotes, this is a solid basic history for casual culinary, marketing and American historians. Photos, illus. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist The 1920s brainchild of a group of advertising types looking for a leg up in what came to be called the flour wars, Betty Crocker surpassed all expectations, not only by becoming the first lady of the kitchen but also by serving as a barometer of America's changing attitudes toward women's work. Entwined in Marks' absorbing review of Crocker's evolution are a sampling of favorite recipes and letters from Crocker's loyal radio, TV, and cookbook following, as well as photos showing Crocker's changing public face--from the earliest portrait in 1936 and motherly Crocker at her peak in the 1950s to the sleek, youthful, working-mom version, a computerized composite, trotted out to celebrate Betty's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1996. As this isn't in chronological order, it's sometimes hard to follow the arc of history, but plenty of readers curious about the "woman" behind the products decorated with the big red spoon will pick this up and have a grand time seeing how an icon came to be. Stephanie Zvirin Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved About the Author Susan Marks's interest in Betty Crocker began during her stint as a tour guide for the Minnesota Historical

Society, then evolved into a master's thesis, doc-u-mentary film project, and, ultimately, this book. Currently, she writes and produces videos for corporations as well as for nonprofits and the arts.