**Digital Tools for Humanists, Working with AI**

**Summer School 2025 , University of Pisa**

**AI Meets the Archive: Refining Generative Tools for Historical Research**

**26 June 2025**

**Reading Recipes with Machines — LLMs and the 1747 *Art of Cookery***

**Tools:** Claude, ChatGPT, DeepSeek; Google Sheets or templates; network graphing tools (Flourish, Kumu); word processor

**Activity Objectives**

* Compare and assess how different LLMs (Claude, ChatGPT, DeepSeek) handle noisy historical texts.
* Reflect on the value and risks of AI-supported transcription, summarization, and metadata extraction.

**Historical Context**

* Hannah Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy* (1747) is “one of the most important culinary references in 18th-century England and the American colonies. Its widespread use shaped everyday cooking practices and continues to serve as a key document for historians of domestic life, economy, and gender roles.” (Internet Archives Catalogue entry).
* This exercise introduces students to the use of large language models (LLMs) to support the exploration of digitized historical sources. The focus is on evaluating how Claude, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek perform when reading, interpreting, and OCRing historical printed texts.

**Format**

* Individual students or small groups of three.
* Each group uses **all three LLMs** in the following fixed order: **Claude → ChatGPT → DeepSeek**.

* Full digitized version of *The Art of Cookery* (digital facsimile or web-accessible scan), accessible at: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/pn00ikji7hezkdd3zmy0v/The\_Art\_of\_Cookery.pdf?rlkey=0vke510u9i435skkh6e3lo7nl&st=y6dq0ngl&dl=0
* The file **ArtofCookery-threepages.pdf** with three sample pages. (Available at: https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/icphlwnduozkfu4yl0jpw/Pages\_from\_The\_Art\_of\_Cookery-1747\_forPISASS2025.pdf?rlkey=ehishvw3qp7qbgeg44sgleved&st=cdg51eqd&dl=0
* Access to Claude, ChatGPT, and DeepSeek.
* Worksheet at end of this.

**Activity Steps**

**STEP: Initial Engagement with the Source**

* Skim the *full* digitized version of the cookbook.
* Attempt to read 1–2 scanned pages manually (without machine help).
* Reflect on the legibility, typography, and 18th-century orthography.

**STEP 2: Submit 3-Page Sample to LLMs**

* Using **Claude**, then **ChatGPT**, then **DeepSeek**, do the following:
* For each model:
* Submit the file ArtofCookery-threepages.pdf**.**

**You can write your own prompts or you can use the list of prompts that I provide in Appendix 1.**

* Ask the model to **summarize one recipe** from the three pages.
* Ask the model to **extract a list of ingredients** from three recipes.
* Ask the model to **list the cooking techniques** mentioned in three recipes.
* Ask the model to **OCR the pages**, converting the scan into text.
* For each LLM, record:
* Quality and clarity of the summaries.
* Accuracy of ingredient extraction.
* Breadth and specificity of cooking techniques.
* OCR errors or anomalies.

**Error Review**

* Compare the OCR output to the original scanned pages.
* Identify 3–5 concrete OCR errors.
* Hypothesize reasons for each error (e.g., long 's', damaged type, archaic spelling).
* Reflect on whether those errors affected recipe interpretation or output from the model.

**Wrap-Up Reflection**

* Discussion:
* Which model performed best overall? In what tasks?
* How did OCR quality affect historical understanding?
* What might be the risks of relying on AI to interpret primary sources?
* Could these tools be used in scholarship? Under what conditions?

**Appendix 1: A list of prompts**

**File Upload Prompt**  
*“Please analyze the file ArtofCookery-threepages.pdf. This contains three scanned pages from Hannah Glasse’s* The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy *(1747).”*

**Summarize One Recipe**  
*“Choose one complete recipe from these pages and summarize it in 3–4 sentences, using modern English.”*

**Extract Ingredients from Three Recipes**  
*“From the recipes found in the document, extract a list of ingredients mentioned in three different recipes. Present them as separate lists for each recipe.”*

**Identify Cooking Techniques**  
*“Identify the distinct cooking techniques used across three recipes in the document. List them and briefly explain each one in one sentence.”*

**OCR the Document**  
*“Please perform OCR (optical character recognition) on the scanned pages and return the plain text as extracted from the images.”*

# Reading Recipes with Machines — LLMs and The Art of Cookery (1747) Worksheet

## Part 1: Initial Engagement with the Text (Pre-LLM)

1. What challenges did you encounter when trying to read a few pages of the original cookbook on your own (before using AI tools)?

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2. What struck you about the content or language of the recipes?

**LLM: Claude**

1. How accurate was the summary of One Recipe:

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2. How accurate was the list of Ingredients (from 3 recipes):

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3. How accurate were the Cooking Techniques Identified:

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4. OCR Output Sample (paste excerpt or describe quality) could it perform the task and how well:

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5. Noted OCR Issues:

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**LLM: ChatGPT**

11. How accurate was the summary of One Recipe:

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2. How accurate was the list of Ingredients (from 3 recipes):

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3. How accurate were the Cooking Techniques Identified:

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4. OCR Output Sample (paste excerpt or describe quality) could it perform the task and how well:

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5. Noted OCR Issues:

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**LLM: DeepSeek**

1. 1. How accurate was the summary of One Recipe:

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2. How accurate was the list of Ingredients (from 3 recipes):

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3. How accurate were the Cooking Techniques Identified:

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4. OCR Output Sample (paste excerpt or describe quality) could it perform the task and how well:

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5. Noted OCR Issues:

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**Part 3: Comparative Analysis & Reflection**

1. Which LLM provided the most accurate OCR? Why do you think that is?

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2. Which LLM gave the best interpretation of historical content?

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3. What kinds of errors did the LLMs make? What might have caused them?

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4. What are the risks of using generative AI to study historical sources like cookbooks?

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5. In what ways might these tools help or hinder a historian's research?

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