

Why Have a Cookbook Professionally Copyedited?

One of the greatest things about writing a cookbook is you don't have to be a writer to do it. But writers know something cookbook creators might not: *editing is key*. And when it comes to writing cookbooks, editing a cookbook can make all the difference to the book's success. After all, an error in quantity or a confusing instruction can affect the outcome of the recipe—and the usefulness of the cookbook.

As time-consuming as it may be, reviewing a cookbook for accuracy, clarity, and consistency is well worth the effort. Following are four steps why you should have your cookbook professionally edited:

1. Writing Errors

Some of the most common writing errors in cookbooks involve abbreviations of cooking terms and measurements. For example, tablespoon is often abbreviated with a capital T, whereas a teaspoon is a lowercase t. To avoid confusing the two, the copyeditor will consistently ensure to either write out the words or abbreviate them as "Tbs." and "tsp."

If something looks wrong, it probably is. That's why a good copyeditor will check the original recipe for accuracy. Sometimes, quantities, ingredients, oven temperature, and descriptions (such as "heaping" or "scant") are left out or copied wrong, which can change the recipe drastically.

Finally, spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors, while they may not alter a recipe, look unprofessional and can affect the book's readability. Careful proofreading will find and fix any errors in mechanics.

2. Clarity of Wording

Are the instructions clear? Do the words explain how to make the recipe without confusing the reader? For example, if a recipe calls for cooking an ingredient, this may mean sautéing, frying, baking, boiling, or broiling. The copyeditor will edit to specify the proper method.

Are ingredients specific? Is dill supposed to be dill seed or dill weed? Does the beef need to be a particular cut? Should the oats be rolled or quick? For many recipes, this may not matter. But the copyeditor will check to make sure.

Instructions that are out of order can also be confusing—and disastrous. If part of a recipe should be completed and set aside before the next phase begins, that should be noted. Or, if an oven needs to be preheated, the recipe should say so at the beginning,

not halfway through. Instructions should be easy to follow, organized, and reader-friendly.

3. Consistency

Is “cup” spelled out sometimes and abbreviated others? Are all numbers written as numerals? (Note: Numerals are more reader-friendly than written numbers, especially in ingredient lists and instructions.) Consistency is key, whichever style is chosen.

The ingredients listed should also appear in the directions as well. Are they the same? For example, if a recipe lists egg whites under ingredients, the directions should not say egg yolks. Ingredients should also be listed in the order they are used.

Consistency also applies to recipe book formats, which can take a number of shapes. The most common is a standard recipe format, where a list of ingredients is followed by step-by-step directions. Whatever format is used, the copyeditor will ensure it is the same throughout the recipe book.

4. Organization

Cookbooks aren’t just a compilation of recipes. They usually contain front and back matter, too. This might include a preface, acknowledgments, table of contents, index, and glossary. All of these sections must be reviewed for errors, clarity, and consistency.

Sidebars, or separate bits of information related to the recipe (such as helpful hints, baking tips, brief histories, etc.), will also be looked at in the editing process. A cookbook reader will pay close attention to sidebars, so getting them looking and sounding perfect is worth the work.

The copyeditor will make sure all cookbook sections are in order. For example, a cookbook should start with the preface and table of contents, followed with recipes that are organized in a sensible manner (appetizers, salads, main courses, and so forth), and end with an index. The editor will pay close attention to the recipe section of the book to verify that each recipe falls in its proper category.

Editing a cookbook for errors, consistency, clarity, and organization will help make the recipe book as useful and valuable as it can be. And for the book’s cooks and writers, there’s no better recipe for success than that!

Ready to get started? First ensure there’s nothing more you want to do to your cookbook and that it’s ready for this final stage of editing. Once you’re sure, simply get in touch with me to start the copyediting process. You will be sent an invoice for 50% of the overall fee for the edit, and when this has been paid and the manuscript provided, the copyediting process will get underway.

Fee: Cookbook copyediting fee: \$0.03 per word

Turnaround time: copyediting a cookbook is a thorough process requiring working in short bursts of intense concentration. Generally I anticipate 6-8 weeks+/-, depending on the exact length and complexity of the project.

Terms: 50% payment to start the project, balance due upon completion.