

### **“Every nice girl likes it”: Female Communities and Food in the American College Novel**

College fiction published during the late 1800s and early 1900s depicted the girls becoming part of a society, assimilating with the other girls, and growing within her college community, or “The Country of College” (*Marjorie Dean*). In the college novel, college is an inclusive, safe, isolated “Green world” that extends girlhood a little longer, an almost magical place of transformation and possibility. As one girl earnestly explains in *Betty Wales, Freshman* (1904): “Every girl has her own reasons for liking college-- but every nice girl likes it.”

College in girls’ fiction especially reflects new spaces, new roles for women at time, with emphasis on female-dominated community, and being part of that society was the most valued experience of college. The tradition of the “college spread” and the growing trend for female-owned, female-run, and female-patronized tea rooms emphasize girl- and woman-centric communion. College novels’ use of food and the new kinds of spaces in which food is prepared and consumed recontextualize the ideas of domestic spaces and housekeeping. It also provided new, radical venues for political and social action; girls’ college novels show plans for social work or activities which challenge traditional female expectations happening within the very traditionally female occurrences of tea parties, reclaimed places, and/or in secret. The effects of these food-communities helped create and modernize eating spaces into places of gender and social equality.