

# Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume 3

Fall, 1988

## CHAA Members Picnic at Michigan's Seven Lakes Winery



Grandma's house turned into a winery. The wolf became a bee-chasing dog. And the food was more upscale than backwoods. But it was *Little Red Riding Hood Redux* for over 50 Ann Arbor Culinary Historians and guests who toted their gourmet delectables through the woods to the Seven Lakes Winery for the annual CHAA picnic last August.

Lilliana and Chris Guest, CHAA members and owners of the winery, provided table wines, desserts, and a winery tour. Their mutt, Perra, who catches live bees in his mouth, entertained. CHAA members gathered at picnic tables in Seven Lakes' country yard and shared edibles such as chayote-tomato salad (*The Cookbook of Uncommon Vegetables*), chicken Marbella and salmon mousse (*The Silver Palate Cookbook*), and fresh raspberries with creme Anglaises and ground nutmeg (*The Joy of Cooking*). Other delicacies were rice and roasted pepper salad; pasta salad with feta cheese, walnuts, and broccoli; seafood salad; macrobiotic tofu, whole wheat, and pasta salad; wild rice salad; crudites; and a sampling of Ziegler's breads.

The gracious Guests provided a wine bar which included a 1985 Seyval, a dry, medium-bodied, white wine; a 1987 Vignoles, a dry, full-bodied, white wine aged in oak; a 1987 White Cascade, a semi-dry, light-bodied, blush wine; and a 1985 Aurore, a very pale wine with a fresh, delicate flavor. Seven Lakes 1984 Aurore won a gold medal at the 1985 Michigan State Fair and Best in Class at the International Eastern Wine Competition at Watkins Glen, New York.

Lilliana, a professional baker, created a lemon mousse torte, a Spanish flan with whipped cream and blueberries, and a Costa Rican rum-soaked cake. Most picnickers returned for second, third, and fourth helpings and then reappeared quickly when Lilliana offered "carry out" leftovers.

With Chris as their guide, CHAA members enjoyed a complete winery tour. They followed the grapes through crushing and destemming, pressing and racking, yeast addition, tank fermentation, and aging in 60-gallon oak barrels.

Located on one hundred acres between Fenton and Holly in the extreme northwest corner of Michigan's Oakland County, Seven Lakes Vineyard grows 20,000

select grape vines. Although it has been licensed to make and sell wine only since 1983, its table wines have won medals for superior quality in competition against wineries across the eastern United States. Seven Lakes is the only bonded estate winery in Southeast Michigan. An estate winery makes wines entirely from grapes grown on its own land. Vignoles, seyval, vidal blanc, aurore, chancellor, cascade, de chaunac, suffolk red seedless, and buffalo grapes are all grown at Seven Lakes.

The winery will produce 7,500 gallons or 2,500 12-bottle cases of table wine this year, according to Chris. All Seven Lakes wines are for sale at the winery, as well as in wine shops and restaurants in Southeast Michigan. Besides its wine production, Seven Lakes grows eight varieties of choice eating and cooking apples on dwarf trees under 10 feet tall. Visitors may pick their own apples or buy them in the winery gift shop.

Seven Lakes is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday, except in the winter when the Guests advise an advance phone call to (313) 629-5686.

Judy Goldwasser

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# Greek Idyl

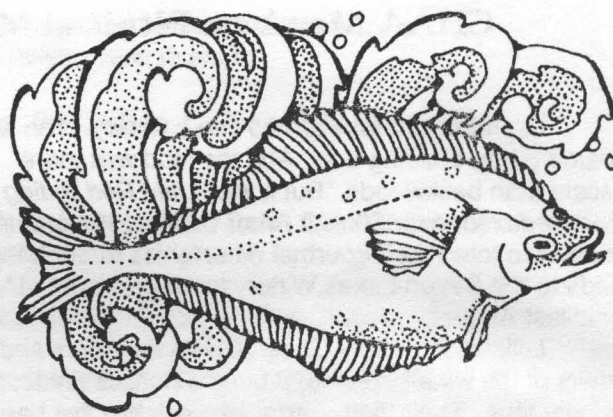
## Laurie Otto's Culinary Discoveries on the Island of Lemnos

Last April, I watched from my balcony as a stoop-shouldered woman carefully picked her path along the rocky dirt road that separates our house from a sparkling blue Mediterranean bay. In expectation of company, I set out a tray for serving the ritual foods that are the sign of hospitality in Greece: fruit preserves, a cool glass of water, cake, and sweet coffee. Today my guest would feel welcome. The orange peel preserves were thick and flavorful, and the freshly-made cake was rich with almonds gathered behind the house last summer.

Instead of accepting a chair, my guest moved quickly to the sink. Setting her voluminous handbag on the floor, she bent over and removed the contents item by item. I soon had a loaf of *lambropsomo*, braided sweet bread inset with crimson eggs, in one hand and a bag of the butter cookies called *koulourakia* in the other. While I admired her baking, my guest remained bent over, rising at last to heave a large, awkward, garbage-bag-wrapped object into the sink. Removal of the coverings revealed a baby goat, still warm from the slaughter. The surprise gift was one of hundreds of kids and lambs butchered for Easter, the most important holiday in Greece.

I had spent much of the preceding eight months learning to prepare foods favored on the rural island of Lemnos. Yet even after months of instruction, which included lessons in picking out meat on the hoof, the glassy eyes of a dead kid looking up from the sink were intimidating. I waited until after my guest left to start the butchering process. By pretending to cut up a big chicken (the only animal I knew how to butcher after a lifetime spent buying meat in American supermarkets), the task went smoothly and quickly. For Easter, the animal would usually be cooked whole, but I broke with tradition as we had plans to join friends for the customary Easter dinner of succulent lamb baked slowly in a wood-fired outdoor oven.

The kid was the source of many delectable meals. The internal organs (liver, spleen, heart, and kidneys) were cut into pieces; spiced well with salt, pepper, and oregano; slid onto skewers; wrapped in caul fat; and grilled over a slow wood fire. The meat was flavored with smoke from wild thyme branches and gained succulence from a basting of olive oil and lemon. The ribs were similarly grilled. The head and bones formed the basis for a magnificent egg-lemon soup. The boned and marinated back legs were perfect for souvlakia (shish kebab), and the front legs, braised in stock, garlic, and wild rosemary, were tender and juicy. The islanders say their meat is the best in Greece because the animals



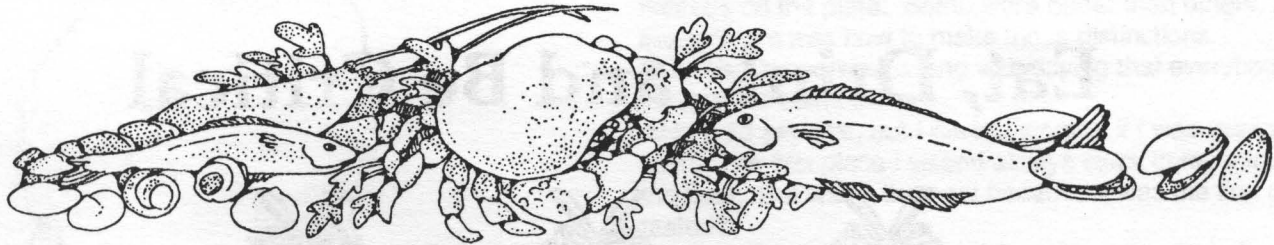
grow fat on wild greens glazed with salt from the ever-present sea.

The sea provides much of our food. In the early morning sunlight, I watch boats arriving at the quay after long hours spent on the fishing grounds. The air echoes with the sound of octopus being rhythmically beaten on a cement pier. At dock, the fishermen slowly separate fish from nets. As each animal is freed, it is tossed onto a growing pile of varied, dancing sealife. The occasional starfish, mollusk, or chunk of seaweed is quickly thrown overboard.

When the fish buyer's truck pulls onto the dock, it is time to view the daily catch and choose the ultimate in fresh fish. The nature of each day's catch is unpredictable. Sardines, red mullet, or bream, grilled over charcoal and basted frequently with olive oil and lemon, are a favorite meal. If the poison-spined scorpion fish is available, I make *kakavia*, the Greek equivalent of bouillabaisse. Tender langoustine of all sizes are available throughout the year, and with the onset of summer, shrimp and lobster can also be procured.

A morning walk on the beach may yield cockles, small razor clams, or crabs. Limpets are pried off the rocks and either cooked in their shells or eaten raw by the impatient. In the winter months, sea urchins are a special treat. Just before spawning in April, the urchin roe is especially flavorful. After breaking the spiny animal open, one first sips the sea water from the shell, and then shakes out the innards before savoring the salty-sweet sea taste of the roe. We usually allow two to three dozen per person. When the summer sun and warm water arrived in May, our table was quickly enriched by oysters,





razor fan mussels, sea squirts, and other food that we glean while snorkeling.

Other foods come from foraging in the countryside. Following the fall rains, snails rise from their homes in the earth to be gathered as a tasty accompaniment to homemade wine or ouzo. In the fall and winter, gigantic wild mushrooms can be gathered by the sackful. The cones of stone pines near our house are full of nuts. The tedious work of extracting the nuts is rewarded by a full flavor unknown to those who purchase pine nuts at the market. A variety of 20 or more wild greens or *horta* (literally "weeds" in Greek) make flavorful spring salads. Herbs grow everywhere on the hillsides; wild oregano, bay leaf, rosemary, thyme, and sage flavor our food.

The vegetable market is a local organic garden where I join the gardener in walking the rows to select whatever is in season and happens to be ripe on shopping day. The freshness and quality of the vegetables more than make up for the limited choice. During winter, only the distinctive Mediterranean celery, along with carrots, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, and leeks are available. In spring, one can gorge on artichokes, fava beans, peas, spinach, and lettuce. Tomatoes, cucumbers, green beans, and summer squash are ready before the first of June, with eggplant, peppers, and okra quickly to follow.

Food and friends are the mainstays of village life on Lemnos today, as they have been for countless generations. No gathering of friends, or welcome to a stranger, is complete without plenty of tasty snacks. The

occasion might be one of the many name days celebrated instead of birthdays, a special service at one of the tiny churches dotting the countryside, or a chance visit. All are relished as opportunities to pile tables high with an overabundance of food and drink. Women delight in preparing sweet and savory specialties as they were learned from mothers and grandmothers and in offering detailed recipes for each dish.

Thinking back over all the wonderful foods I have eaten in Greece, the simplest foods are the most memorable. Yet it is the simple foods, dependent on locally available ingredients, that will be hardest to reproduce in America. I expect to have especially fond and wistful memories of sitting in the sun on the beach, feasting on freshly-baked bread made from locally raised and ground hard wheat, accompanied only by soft, two-day-old sheep cheese, sun-ripened tomatoes bursting with flavor, brine-cured olives, and homemade wine.

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**About the author:** Laurie Otto, of Anchorage, Alaska, and Lemnos, Greece, has been a culinary historian in spirit and in fact for many years. Her marvelously evocative letters about her food experiences of the last year during her stay in Greece seemed too good not to be shared. Jan Longone asked Laurie if she might print some of the letters in the Newsletter; Laurie graciously went one step further and offered this article. We are most grateful to Laurie for her generosity and insight.

## Free Press Article Profiles Jan Longone, Attracts New Members

To our delight, the September 18, 1988, issue of the *Detroit Free Press Magazine* featured an interview with our own Jan Longone. After a brief description of Jan's bookshop, the Ann Arbor Wine and Food Library, and the Culinary Historians, Robin Watson asked Jan that persistent question, "What are culinary historians, and what is their goal?" Jan's answer could be the CHAA's motto: "We want to preserve the past and understand where we came from. We try not to emphasize the cooking aspect, but rather the historical aspect." Jan went on to discuss how food has shaped history, what food means to families, and current trends in culinary history.

Here are a few more of Jan's pithy comments: "Food history is what makes the world go around.... I love to think that something I'm doing in the kitchen was done by someone 2,000 years ago. That's the continuity of life.... Food can be very reassuring in giving a sense of history, relatedness, and continuity. I can relate better to what the Romans ate than what the astronauts eat."

The article ended with information on joining CHAA. Jan tells us we have many new members and newsletter subscribers as a result. If it is time to renew your subscription, please use the subscriber's insert -- or pass it along to a friend.

# Eat, Drink, and Be Critical



At the September, 1988, meeting of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor a panel of Ann Arbor restaurant reviewers and restaurant owners and managers engaged in a lively, informative exchange with an overflow crowd of more than 50 people.

The reviewers were represented by Connie Crump of *The Ann Arbor News* and Annette Hodesh, formerly *The Ann Arbor Observer* reviewer, who wrote her column under the name of Annette Churchill. Sandra Silfven, restaurant critic for *The Detroit News*, had been scheduled to speak but was unable to attend at the last minute. Two of Ann Arbor's finest restaurants were represented by Pat Pooley and Raquel Agranoff, co-owners of The Moveable Feast, and Terry McClymond, maitre d' and manager at Escoffier.

After brief introductions, Jan Longone, the moderator, opened the program for informal questions from the audience. A stimulating variety of questions and comments followed, and even after a 20-minute break for refreshments, the audience was eager to continue. The evening could easily have gone on longer, and many people stayed behind to talk to the panelists individually.



Here is a sample of the questions and answers that kept everyone entertained and informed for over two hours.

**Q:** Why restaurant reviews? Do they make a difference to the public, to the restaurants?

**Annette Hodesh (AH):** To the publications. There is something about the human race that cannot let go by an article on food. Sections on food in any publication are always the most popular, whether they are good or bad.

**Constance Crump (CC):** In *The Arbor News*, the restaurant reviews are more popular even than sports.

**Q:** How much control does the newspaper editor exercise over the restaurant critic?

**AH:** In my case, none at all, except to encourage me to review more and more restaurants, even when it became more expensive to eat out at restaurants frequently.

**Q:** What are the qualifications for a good restaurant critic?

**Pat Pooley (PP):** Here are some attributes I think a good

restaurant critic should have:

--They should know what they are talking about, i.e., if the restaurant is serving a classic dish, the critic should know what that classic dish should taste like.

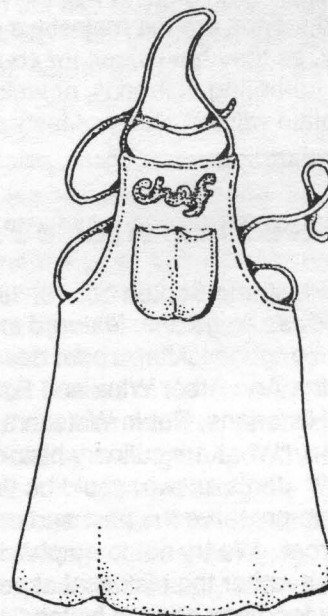
--They should be fair and compare like restaurants with like restaurants.

--They should educate the public about new restaurants and foods and help the public expand their gastronomic frontiers.

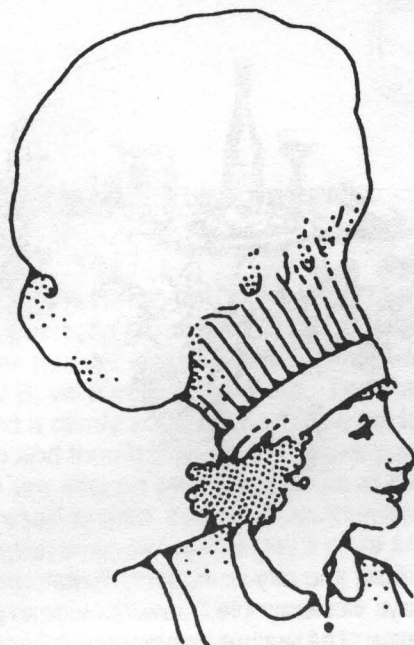
**Terry McClymond (TM):** Restaurant critics perform a public check to help restaurants perform at their best, to keep them from getting into bad habits. The critic can make the public aware of what they should expect at even the grimmest diner, i.e., educate the public about what to expect from a good dining out experience.

**Q:** How often do you go to a restaurant?

**AH:** It depends on the restaurant. If I didn't like the restaurant, I tended to go back more often. Especially reviewing restaurants in a town like Ann Arbor where restaurant owners put so much of their lives into the business, I came to appreciate what enormous power I had to make or break a restaurant. You have to learn to say the truth about a bad restaurant without being blunt or cruel. On the other hand, some places were so marvelous







that two or three visits were enough. But it's all so unfair. In any case, I never go fewer than three or four times.

**CC:** I always go back four or five times. As far as a reviewer's influence, there are times I wish I was so powerful that I could close a restaurant. But in general, the life of a restaurant review is two or three weeks. As far as I know, no restaurant has ever been closed by a review.

**AH:** Not closed, but almost ruined by success. They had no way to cope with their sudden success.

**Q:** Does a restaurant know when a review is going to appear in the paper? Often a restaurant that's been favorably reviewed will be swamped by business and if they can't handle it, it creates bad feelings.

**AH:** I always told a restaurant afterwards that they would be reviewed--it could be two months before the review would appear--so they wouldn't chew their nails waiting for it to come out. I always review anonymously, of course. I way only caught once, and that was at Escoffier, because they recognized me when I had been at the Lord Fox and they had been there. Oddly enough, *The Ann Arbor News* was reviewing the Lord Fox just about the time I was checking the place out, and they took a picture of the people in the restaurant and I was one of the people in the picture.

**PP:** The two of you may be exceptional in that respect because I know we were reviewed on the first Friday we were open, and the the reviewer could only have been there once before the review was written.

**Raquel Agranoff (RA):** To change the subject slightly, I often wonder how a critic keeps his/her palate unjaded and then is able to write about it fairly in a way that is meaningful to the average person who goes out to eat occasionally?

**AH:** I don't know that it is possible. For example, I've had a terrible time straightening out all of this interest in Tex-

Mex cooking. We were flooded with places serving it, and it all tasted the same to me and it all looked perfectly hideous on the plate. Some were better than others, and the problem was how to make those distinctions.

**CC:** There's nothing wrong with saying that everybody is serving the same thing.

**AH:** I did say that, but I always wonder if I was telling the truth. The first place I visited always stuck in my mind as the best. But was it the best because it was the first one I tasted?

**Q:** Connie said that she feels a restaurant review has a very short life, no more that 2-3 weeks. How do the others of you feel?

**RA:** I think it's much longer than that. We've had people come to the restaurant who have read reviews six months earlier. Or they will be visiting from out of town and someone will have sent them a review. The reviews are still valid to them. For us we definitely see an immediate reaction, but for the public I would guess that it's much longer term.

**Q:** All criticism must have standards it adheres to. For the restaurant critics, I'd like to ask what your standards are for the very finest, first-rate restaurant, whether you find it or not?

**CC:** I look for fresh food, well-prepared in the house, not sauce bases. One of my favorite audiovisuals in my office in the newsroom is a poster of 80 different sauce bases and flavors from one company. I would not expect anything like that in a fine restaurant. Two, a good relationship between price and value. A pleasant atmosphere. That doesn't mean that it has to have white tablecloths, but the service has to be good. That probably accounts for about 80% of a restaurant's value. Also, the food has to be appropriate. There's a lot of experimenting going on right now. For example, I saw blue cheese wontons on a menu recently. Of course, you can't have change without experimentation, but I don't want to pay \$8.95 for somebody's experiment that they're not sure is right yet.

**AH:** All reviewers sound too pontifical, me included. Under the best of circumstances, you hope that people who follow your column will become acquainted with your prejudices and know how to read what you are saying. My regular readers know that I hate sugar and that I'm so fussy about bread that nobody can please me except *The Moveable Feast*. I have other prejudices, about texture, oversalting food. Are these prejudices my standards? I don't know. They are a part of my standards. Freshly prepared food is one standard that goes without saying.

**Q:** When you dine at a restaurant, how do you select the items you will eat. Do you choose from the standard menu or do you choose from the specials offered that evening?

**CC:** I try to eat at a restaurant as many times as I can to get a cross-section of the menu. I try never to eat out except for work.

**AH:** I once had an editor whose idea was that the average reader just wanted to walk into a restaurant and be able to order a hamburger if he was hungry. So I had to try

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hamburgers at every restaurant I reviewed, whether the restaurant was noted for hamburgers or not.

**Q:** Does it make a difference if the Chicken Kiev comes from your own hand or comes frozen from Omaha, or wherever? If it doesn't make a difference, are you in favor of truth in labeling laws. A few critics I know have sometimes hinted at a suspicion that the food was not local and fresh and implied that that was part of the reason the restaurant was disappointing. Is it part of your job as a restaurant critic to find out if the food is fresh? Shouldn't your readers know that?

**TM:** Virtually everything we serve is prepared on the premises, except the bread. If people ask, we will relate the provenance of certain dishes. But, in general, it goes without saying that we use only fresh ingredients prepared on the premises. We try to be honest with the customer about the freshness of what we offer. If we have fish that was brought in yesterday and we froze it to serve today, we will tell the customer that. I think the customer has a right to know that. I always make a point of describing as accurately as possible where a food comes from and what we did with it.

**Q:** Are the specials really special?

**AH:** I think so. Sometimes they're more experimental than the regular menu items.

**TM:** Often, for example, the fishman will come with a special kind of fish that he has only for one day, and then we will feature that as a special. It may be available in a more limited quantity because we were able to get only so much of the featured ingredient. There may only be enough to serve for an hour or so, not for the whole evening. But it's enough to give the chef a chance to be creative and try something a little different.

**RA:** When our chef has time, she loves to do specials. We always talk about it every week and try to do some as often as we can. But it's difficult to do specials as frequently as we'd like because we have a rather extensive regular menu.



The panelists also regaled the audience with entertaining stories of their personal experiences in the line of duty. One restaurant critic told of sleuthing in the garbage behind a local Mexican restaurant because she was convinced that the owner's guacamole was canned, not made fresh, as he claimed. It took her weeks of snooping after dark, but her diligence finally paid off when she found many empty cans of guacamole mix in his garbage. Of course, she could never print anything in her article about her discovery.

As the other critic pointed out, in a slightly different context, if you suspect that the restaurant's food is not fresh, it is dangerous to say so outright because you leave yourself and your publication open to a possible lawsuit. Here, writing skills become as important as critical judg-



ment because *how* you say something matters as much as *what* you say. For example, Annette Hodesh pointed out you might say, "The waitress said the chicken was fresh, but you sure could have fooled me."



Jan Longone closed the evening's discussion with two provocative questions for all the panelists: Is what you do fun? Would you swap jobs with each other?

**RA:** It's very hard work, but it is fun. I would like to swap jobs with a restaurant critic for about a week. But I don't think I could take it for longer than that.

**AH:** I am glad to be a restaurateur no longer. I was one for much too long. Our son owns a restaurant now, and I spend about a month each year helping him with his business. It's awfully hard.

**CC:** I love what I do. I would never want to run a restaurant because it's much too hard.

Pat Pooley's final comment said it all for everyone there, panelists and audience alike. "I love the association with good food and wine. As someone once said, 'Great food is like great sex—the more you have, the more you want.'"

*Pat Cornett*

**Editor's Note:** In her introductory remarks, Jan Longone commented that to her knowledge almost nothing has been written about the subject of the evening's program. However, one CHAA member said that Marti Sousanis, a former CHAA member and food writer who now lives in San Francisco, has written an article on the subject for *The Bay Area*, a magazine published by one of the San Francisco newspapers. She interviewed more than a dozen restaurateurs and food writers on their views of each other. Maybe Marti would share some of her thoughts on the subject with our readers? Does anyone else know of other articles on the subject?



## Membership News

### Julie Lewis Reports on London Cookbook Shop

A visit to Books for Cooks is a must for any culinary historian in London with time to spare. The shelves are packed with cookbooks from around the world with the U.S. very well represented. The staff is most helpful and a comfy sofa in the window beckons you to sink down and thumb through the books you've selected.

A tiny kitchen and a few tables at the back of the shop are used to cook and serve recipes from books they sell. You can even call up the day before and request a particular recipe. My long search for a perfect sticky ginger cake ended here. They gave me a taste of such a cake from their freezer and showed me where I could find the recipe. What a way to sell a book! Next time I must plan to spend two days there rather than two hours, or maybe I'd better not. In two hours I bought ten cookbooks!

*J.L.*



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### November Meeting: the AGA Cooker Makes a Comeback

Chef Judith Asphar has invited CHAA members to a demonstration of the AGA cooker. She plans to discuss the development of this unique stove during the Victorian era, as well as its unusual cooking method. The demonstration, including a light supper cooked on the AGA, will be at Ms. Asphar's Kitchen Studio in Sylvan Lake, Michigan. Reservations must be made before November 14. For more information please call Julie Lewis at 313-662-9211.



### Mark Your Calendars for the December Participation Meeting

As in past years, our December meeting will honor all our winter holidays with oral contributions from members and guests. This year's theme is "Humor in Food". If you have a funny anecdote, an odd recipe, or humorous piece of food literature, bring it along to share during the first part of the meeting. You may also wish to bring a favorite holiday dish. During the second half of the meeting we will have a chance to chat and indulge in the goodies.

This has always been one of our most enjoyable meetings, a chance to get to know new members and renew friendships, so please don't miss it!

### Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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Membership: Individual - \$15.00/year, Family - \$20.00/year (both include newsletter subscription). Newsletter only - \$7.50/year (3 issues).



## CHAA Fall and Winter Programs

Meetings are held the third Sunday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Washtenaw County Extension Service building, 4133 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor.

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| <b>1988</b> | <p><b>November 20</b> AGA stove demonstration at Judith Asphar's Kitchen Studio, Sylvan Lake. Reservations required.</p> <p><b>December 18</b> 'Humor in Food' -- Holiday Participatory Meeting. Please bring a humorous anecdote and a holiday dish to share.</p>  |
| <b>1989</b> | <p><b>January 15</b> Great Lakes Fish and Fishing, Bill Carlson, Carlson Fisheries, Leland, Michigan</p> <p><b>February 19</b> Vegetarian Cookery, Lynn Marie Hinojosa and Dawn Clark of Cuisine Couriers, Royal Oak, Michigan.</p> <p><b>March 19</b> Cooking of Aztec Mexico, Liz Brumfiel, Albion College, Albion, MI</p> <p><b>April 16</b> Moon Ja Yoon, R.D., Beaumont Hospital, Detroit, author of <i>Korean Cooking for You</i></p> |

CHAA Newsletter  
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