



Quarterly Newsletter of the

REFERENCE

HOLIDAY PARTICIPATORY DINNER

AN AMERICAN CENTURY OF FOOD

by Randy K. Schwartz

W e Americans are known for “living large” when it comes to dining, but how often do we get to dine on ten decades worth of food? That was the opportunity facing three dozen members and friends of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor who gathered at the Walden Hills Community Room one evening in the last month of the 1990s. To commemorate “American Food in the Twentieth Century: Decade by Decade,” the participants had prepared dishes recreating the changing American culinary landscape of the past one hundred years.

Unlike your typical potluck supper, this grand concert of the national cuisine was based on a great deal of preparation and research. Participants had received copies of a bibliography prepared by our founding member and honorary president, Jan Longone. A special issue of *Bon Appétit* magazine for September 1999, “The American Century in Food,” also proved helpful not only in selecting recipes but in cramming for the after-dinner quiz. The quiz prize, created by our outgoing president Julie Lewis, was a Millennium Basket that included a commercial food product introduced in each of the ten decades of the past century.

It was Julie who kicked off the dinner by comparing Hershey’s 1907 introduction of the Kiss[®], a tapered tidbit of milk chocolate wrapped in silver foil, and its 1999 introduction of the Bite[®], a sphere of milk chocolate encasing an almond. Perhaps a century that begins with a kiss and ends with a bite, Julie suggested, is a reflection of the evolution of food and the pace of life in America more generally, from a tender and leisurely innocence to a frenzy of quick bites and sound bites. Indeed, many of the dishes contributed from the first decade of the 1900s were based on such innocent, old-fashioned, “honest” ingredients as corn, beans, cabbage, apples, molasses and lard. These dishes “set the table” by giving us a taste of the received traditions that ushered in the century.

Dawn of an American Century

In *A Tramp Abroad*, his 1880 commentary from Europe, Mark Twain included Boston Baked Beans among the American foods for which he most yearned overseas. The batch that Sherry Sundling contributed to our meal was based on a recipe she saved from her wedding shower in 1961. The beans are soaked overnight and then baked for 5-7 hours, with characteristic accents of salt pork, molasses, brown sugar and mustard. Molasses also figured prominently in the Anadama bread that Carroll Thomson contributed—a dark cornmeal yeast bread from colonial New England, as venerable as it is American. No one is certain of the source of the name “Anadama,” which first appeared in print in 1915. James Beard, who included a recipe in *Beard on Bread* (1973), commented that “There are many recipes for this famous American loaf. No two people agree on what the original was, but it is practically certain that it contained cornmeal and molasses. I have had interesting Anadama breads made with graham flour, white flour, and cornmeal. It can also be made with brown sugar or raw sugar instead of molasses.” A recipe also appeared in the 1964 edition of *Joy of Cooking*. Carroll used a recipe she found in a bread-machine cookbook from Nitty Gritty Productions.

Along with old New England, the Old Midwest was also well represented at our meal. Ann and Don Fowler contributed two side dishes from this period: a corn relish incorporating chopped cabbage, green pepper, onions, white sugar and lots of spices; and a dish of red cabbage cooked with apples, cranberries, bacon, red wine and brown sugar. Both dishes were drawn from Herman Smith’s cookbook *Stina* (1942), named for the Scandinavian woman who was the source of the recipes and who served as cook in Smith’s household beginning c. 1880. The apple dumplings contributed by Leslie Stambaugh also boasted a Midwest pedigree: they were fashioned from

continued on next page

AMERICAN CENTURY (continued from previous page)

the Third Edition (1903) of *Dr. Chase's Receipt Book*. As we learned from Prof. Russell Bidlack at our March 21, 1999 meeting, Ann Arbor physician A. W. Chase founded a local publishing empire on his very popular cookbook, the earliest editions of which preceded the Civil War. The 1903 recipe was a bit sketchy on the proper amounts of lard and other ingredients, so Leslie consulted *Joy of Cooking* (1947) to make some educated guesses about proportions.

In "The Leading Lady," a story from her early collection *Buttered Side Down* (1912), writer Edna Ferber of Kalamazoo, Michigan described a hotel stenographer Pearlle who "could cook like an angel... She could turn out a surprisingly good cake with surprisingly few eggs, all covered with white icing, and bearing cunning little jelly figures on its snowy bosom." Ladies of the time aspired to prepare such desserts that were "heavenly," "divine." Angel food cake is perhaps emblematic: every step in its preparation—selecting a very soft cake flour, whipping the egg whites in a copper bowl, introducing cream of tartar to stabilize the foam, carefully folding in the flour and sugar, baking in a tube pan—is directed at producing the lightest possible result, airy and white as clouds. Angel food, with possible Pennsylvania Dutch roots, was known in the 1870s but did not appear in print until the 1880s. The version contributed to our meal was crowned with a meringue that used lemon juice and Carnation[®] condensed milk, introduced in 1899.

There was a special link, in the American popular imagination at the turn of the century, between sweet innocence and femininity. The link was highlighted by a Protestant evangelical movement, with its idealiza-

tion of women and domesticity. Although Hershey's chocolate helped introduce a dark and "sinful" element into the milky mix, the shape and the advertising of the Kiss[®]—mass produced in the newly built company town of Hershey, Pennsylvania beginning in 1907—further confirms the essentially feminine character of sweets in pre-WWI America. Jane Dusselier describes this period as the "era of the delicate, dainty, breast-shaped bonbon" in her paper "Bonbons, Lemon Drops, and Oh Henry! Bars: Candy Consumer Culture and the Construction of Gender, 1905-1920."

However, against the background of these traditions—innocent, honest, angelic, feminine—a contrasting national ambition was trumpeted at the dawn of the century that was aggressive, muscular, and masculine. Sanford B. Dole had led the armed overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, and over the next decade the U.S. would also exert control in the former Spanish possessions of the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Panama. Projecting the nation as a world-class power in war, in politics, as well as in culture was a goal that would shape the American Century. In tune with this, a number of U.S. chefs—generally French-trained male professionals—created dishes that could slug it out with the finest in Europe while remaining distinctively American. Examples of such creations are Oysters Rockefeller (1899) and Pompano en Papillote (1901) at Antoine's in New Orleans, Crab Salad Louis (c. 1900) at the Olympic Club in Seattle, Chicken à la Maryland (c. 1905) at Martin's in New York and, across town, Crème Vichyssoise Glacée (c. 1917) at the Ritz-Carlton.

Also exemplary is the Waldorf Salad, introduced at New York's Waldorf Hotel in 1896 by Oscar Tschirky, the Swiss-born maître d'hôtel. Walnuts, grapes, raisins, chopped dates, marshmallows—all of these were later innovations. The original Waldorf was just a salad of diced red-skinned apples, celery and—what took it to new heights, as with Crab Louis—mayonnaise. That dressing's popularity now sharply increased in America, and with Hellman's introduction of bottled prepared mayo in 1912 such salads became easier to assemble at home. Midge Lusardi contributed a Waldorf Salad to our meal in honor of her parents' marriage at the Waldorf-Astoria. She used a recipe from a 1930s cookbook calling for apples, celery, walnuts and mayonnaise, and recalled that when she first made the salad in Home Economics class in high school, it was her first encounter with mayonnaise! Mila Simmons, who is Filipina, contributed two versions of the salad, one based on a traditional recipe, the other a modernized version from *Gourmet* magazine (1999) using such ingredients as Fuji apples and dried cranberries.

continued on page 6

Repast

Published quarterly by the
Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor (CHAA)

Editor.....Randy K. Schwartz
CHAA President.....Margot Michael
CHAA Founder and Honorary President....Jan Longone



*Material contained in this newsletter is copyrighted.
Passages may be copied or quoted provided that the source is credited.*

For information about memberships, subscriptions,
or anything in this publication, contact:

Randy K. Schwartz
2222 Fuller Court #1101A
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2316
rks1@gateway.net

WHY HAWAIIANS EAT SPAM

03

THE AMERICANIZATION OF ISLAND FOOD

by Shirley T. Parola

Ann Arbor resident Shirley Tong Parola was born in Hawai'i to a Polynesian mother and a Chinese father. Shirley and her daughter, CHAA member Lisa Gaynier, owned and operated Diamond Head Café in the Kerytown shops for seven years. Their recent book Remembering Diamond Head, Remembering Hawai'i (Ann Arbor: Diamond Hawai'i Press, 1999; \$15.95 paper) contains 250 recipes, many drawn from the café's menu.

The fusion of cuisines is not unusual, and in the U.S. we have been blessed with the melding of food traditions from the world over. Just as this nation has drawn people from the farthest reaches of the globe, so have foods from every country also come together here. Nowhere has this been more the case than in Hawai'i.

Remembering Diamond Head, Remembering Hawai'i, the cookbook memoir that I co-authored with my daughter, focuses on that fusion and the evolution of Island foods. We consider the foods of Hawai'i to be a metaphor for Hawai'i itself. Just as Hawai'i may boast the greatest mingling of diverse ethnicities in a single state, so too the 50th state assimilated the greatest number of cuisines of any place in the world. In fact, we believe that the latest trend in the upscale

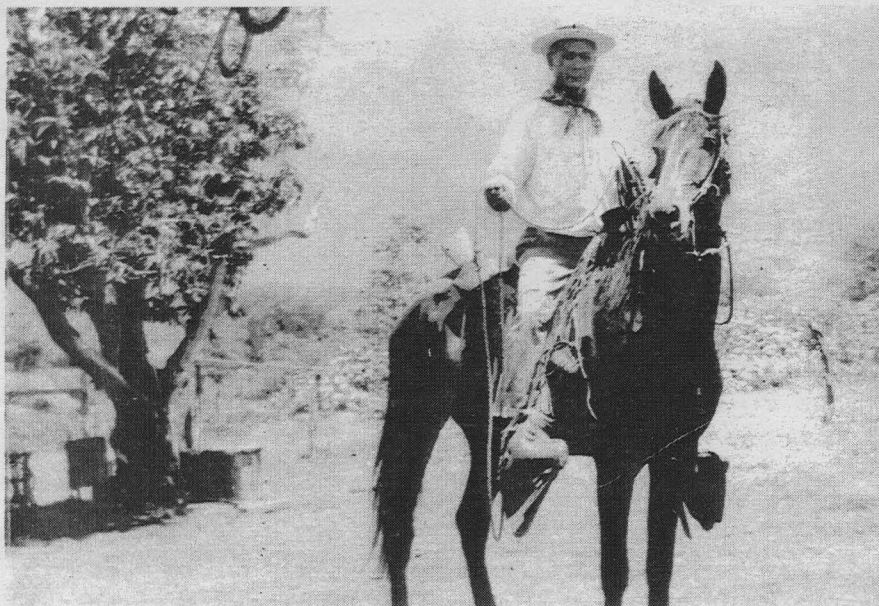
restaurant scene, variously called "Fusion," "New American," "East Meets West" or "Pacific Rim" cuisine, originated in the most geographically isolated place in the world: the Hawaiian Islands. Among the cuisines that have fused over centuries with the native Pacific diet of Hawai'i are those of China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Portugal/Azores, England, and the U.S.

This essay focuses on one aspect of that fusion: the story of how American culture influenced a large Asian population that for hundreds of years was considered incapable of being "westernized." The Asian immigrants were brought to the Islands only as a stop-gap measure before a more "acceptable," i.e. European, workforce could be recruited for the emerging Island sugar industry. Once arrived, the Asians faced suspicion and distrust, gaining acceptance only after many years and repeated tests of their patriotism. Today, almost half of the population of Hawai'i are descendants of these Asian immigrants.

It is hard to imagine, but this Pacific outpost was once visited by Russian, Spanish, Portuguese and even Scandinavian émigrés who, however, found it difficult to tolerate the harsh working conditions and the remoteness from their homelands. In the face of this shortage of European labor, sugar planters were forced to rely on the labor of Asians, and waves of immigrants from China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines were brought to the Islands.

Saddled with workers considered alien to Western values, the American government early on implemented a policy of acculturation in which food played a major role. Formal efforts came with the U.S.

continued on next page



Shirley Parola's father, Sai-chung "Tim" Tong, made his living herding cattle on a ranch on the Hawaiian island of Molokai.

ISLAND FOOD

(continued from previous page)

annexation of Hawai'i in 1898, but Western influence had already begun as early as the 1770s when Captain James Cook and the first British ships wandered into Hawaiian waters, and later when Yankee missionaries settled in to spread the word.

First Dessert

One of my earliest food memories is of a large, round, hard cracker, crumbled into a bowl to which was added evaporated milk if some was on hand, hot water if not, with a sprinkling of brown sugar added. This was the dessert occasionally offered to us children by our father. It was not one of my own favorites, and as often as not it was passed up for a green mango. These hard crackers came in square blue and white airtight tins, which my mother also found perfect for storing her preserved Chinese foodstuffs. I remember the label on the outside carried the brand name "Saloon Pilots."

This hard cracker was the sea biscuit, or hardtack, the staple of sailors who, away at sea for months, required a "bread" (that is essentially what it was... unleavened bread) that would withstand the moist sea air and not spoil. As described by Rachel Laudan in her book *The Food of Paradise? Exploring Hawaii's Culinary Heritage* (University of Hawaii Press, 1996), sea biscuits, baked twice without salt, sustained the fleets of European powers as they set out for new lands as early as the 15th Century. Laudan writes that the biscuits were among "the first mass-produced foods, turned out in quantities by commercial bakers for navies and crews of merchant ships."

Yankee Christian missionaries and their families, too, endured the rigors of months at sea, and perhaps the crackers also served to alleviate sea sickness. Settling into a life of hardship and want, missionary wives struggled to bring a measure of civilized living into their new home. In this way "Kanaka Pudding" was born, the simple combination of hardtack, evaporated milk and sugar, a modest concoction named for the natives they had come to work among. Later, housewives added butter and cinnamon, transforming the dish into a kind of bread pudding.

Cowboy Fare

My father was exposed to Kanaka Pudding the same way he was introduced to the pumpkin pies that he made for our Thanksgiving dinners, and to the beef stews that we ate with rice. He worked on a ranch in Molokai where, as a young *paniolo* (Hawaiian cowboy) living with a *haole* (Caucasian) family, he herded cattle. Possibly he learned these dishes from the

Chinese cooks brought in from California, who were taught to make western food for the cowboys. Beef stew made from the meat of older steers was a favorite, and even Asians who were not used to eating beef took to it. But no Chinese cook would dream of serving a meal without rice. Even today, Islanders of every ethnic group must have rice with their stew. Even McDonald's in Hawai'i offers rice for breakfast, in addition to hash browns.

Beef was first introduced to the Islands in 1793 by a British sea captain, George Vancouver, who in his youth had served under Captain Cook. Over the course of several visits to the Islands, he overcame the skepticism of King Kamehameha and presented the Hawaiians with three young bulls and two cows. Their offspring in time overran the countryside, destroying valuable flora and grassland. But the king was astute enough to realize that these "big hogs," as he called them, might constitute a valuable industry for the reprovision of visiting ships as well as the growing numbers of Yankee missionaries and their families. Hawaiians called this new meat *pipi*, and learned from the *haole* how to salt and preserve it. Hence Hawaiian jerky, known as *pipikaula*, was born and is still sold today at Island drugstore and supermarket counters as a snack.

It was the customary practice of the Hawaiian royalty to appoint *haole* to important positions in their administrations, and many prominent Island families today are the descendants of these white men who had been welcomed early into the inner circles of the ruling elite. John Palmer Parker, for example, was a Yankee from Massachusetts who was appointed to manage the monarch's cattle ranch. Today, the Parker Ranch on the island of Hawai'i is second in size only to the King Ranch in Texas.

Canned Goods and SPAM

The late 19th and early 20th Centuries saw an explosion of world commerce and trade, and Hawai'i, remote though it was, was not exempt from that explosion, exporting sugar and pineapple, and importing immigrant workers and some of the food to sustain them. At the same time, in Europe, innovations to support this "global economy" were introduced. The canning of food was seen as a great boon to travel and industrialization, and a welcome substitute for salted meats. Among the canned goods was a processed meat called SPAM[®] (Spices And Meat), introduced in 1937 by the Hormel Company.

In the Islands, as in agricultural areas on the mainland, company stores were the only sources of provisions for plantation workers, and these stores did

not always carry the rice and other staples that Asians were used to. Asian workers made do with *haole* food, and that food was often canned sardines, canned corned beef, or SPAM.

For Americans today, even the poorest of whose homes are equipped with refrigerators and who have easy access to supermarkets, it is hard to imagine a time when canned meat was considered a luxury. But for impoverished immigrants laboring under harsh conditions and living in ill-equipped company houses, SPAM was a godsend! A plantation worker's wife, who herself might work in the fields or wash the supervisors' clothes when she was not tending to her growing family, could produce a dinner with SPAM without too much trouble. This was the genesis of Hawai'i's love affair with a much-maligned processed meat.

The love affair with SPAM was consummated during World War II. Shipping of non-essentials came to a halt, and the American territory of Hawai'i, with its isolation and proximity to battle, suffered greater privation than did the mainland. Everyone had to eat SPAM and other canned foods, and SPAM became the great equalizer, appearing on the tables of the well-to-do as well as the poor. Even today, Hawai'i is notable for the amount of SPAM it consumes, over four million cans a year. More remarkable is that the custom spans class and ethnicity in a culture that celebrates the latter if not the former: almost everybody eats SPAM.

Eating For Citizenship

But Hawaiian eating habits also changed for other reasons. Young Islanders joined the services, and military mess halls and homes of friendly mainlanders exposed them to American food. One of my sisters baby-sat for a military couple and learned in their household how to make Jello[®] and chocolate pudding. These were somewhat accidental and unexpected influences. Of much greater impact, as Hawai'i moved from annexation to territorial status and finally to statehood, were broader as well as more conscious forces of acculturation. In easing Hawai'i's acceptance into the union, food customs played a major role.

Valuing Hawai'i's strategic importance as an addition to the United States, yet fearing the dominance of a growing "alien" population tied to the Orient, the governing local elite worked with the federal government on a policy to instill habits of good citizenship. Home Economics was the main vehicle through which Americanization was transmitted. Nutritionists, full of patriotic zeal, were brought to the Islands to spread the word.

The major part of this program took place in the schools. I recall that we ate rice and *tofu* at home, but meat loaf and mashed potatoes in school. I remember working in the cafeteria as part of an elementary school service requirement. Donning a hairnet and a white apron, I was given the job of mixing, by hand, a packet of food coloring into a strange, pale, greasy blob, which was then slathered onto slices of white bread. This was my introduction to margarine. In the classroom lessons on health, we listened obediently to the praise of milk, but some of us had digestive systems that couldn't handle this strange drink nor the cheese sandwiches that accompanied it. Others took the nutrition lessons home to compliant parents, and milk soon began appearing in local ice-boxes.

In junior high school, we girls took classes in Home Economics. There we learned to make baking-powder biscuits, prune cake and our favorite, refrigerator cookies. Some of us didn't have ovens at home, and our teachers taught us how to improvise with those Saloon Pilot cans, which served adequately as stove-top ovens. We were taught to eat more vegetables and fruit, and cereal for breakfast rather than the rice from last night's dinner. One lesson, however, that we refused to accept was to substitute brown rice for the white rice we were used to!

Despite our loyalty to white rice and starchy noodle soups, our assimilation into the American way of eating was not difficult. After all, we were beginning to have money to go to the movies where we saw Andy Hardy enjoying a midnight snack of leftover fried chicken, and teenagers at drive-ins eating hamburgers. Before long, we too were going to drive-ins and soda fountains. Not long after that, somebody opened the first pizza parlor in Honolulu. The cheese topping seemed a little easier to digest than what we had eaten at school!

Today, we still eat SPAM even though many of us can afford bacon or ham. It comes in handy when you want something with your eggs in the morning but don't have anything else. The leftover meat, already cooked, can serve to garnish a bowl of *saimin* (*ramen*) for lunch or, chopped and mixed with mayonnaise and pickles, it makes a pretty good sandwich. But I'll pass up the baked SPAM topped with pineapple slices, which they used to serve us at school. I'd much rather have SPAM *musubi*, a ball of white rice and salty morsels that is wrapped in sea vegetable! ■

Shirley adds that those interested in learning more about Hawaiian history may refer to :

A. Grove Day, *Hawaii and Its People*. Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 1955.

Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961.

Fighting the Great War of the 1910s

With America's entry into the First World War, the government moved to control the production, consumption and export of sugar and other foodstuffs. Rations supplied to U.S. soldiers included generous quantities of chocolate bars, lemon drops and Life Saver[®] candies, a change that would leave a lasting impact on the home front. As Dusselier observes, "The popular press and advertisements directed at men began characterizing candy as a valuable fuel rather than a feminine indulgence... As candy eating became legitimized for men, candy would acquire a new shape. Manly candy bars began to be marketed alongside round, voluptuous bonbons."

In the meantime, during the war the U. S. Food Administration headed by Herbert Hoover froze wheat prices paid to farmers, and rationed sugar and other commodities under the slogan "Don't Waste Food While Others Starve!" Hoover called on patriotic housewives to voluntarily observe wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays, meatless Tuesdays, and porkless Thursdays and Saturdays. "Avoid fancy cooking," urged Alice B. Kirk in her cookbook *Practical Food Economy* (1917). Typical of wartime conservation was "Liberty Bread." The example contributed by Carroll Thomson was a white loaf, with half of the wheat flour replaced with mashed potato. It was also common to substitute rice, cornmeal, or darker ingredients such as buckwheat flour, barley, cottonseed meal, or peanut meal. Efforts to promote soy flour for bread, as well as for "soybean meat loaf" and "soybean mush croquettes," were less successful because of the fledgling state of U.S. soy production and distribution at the time.

Ironically, tamale pie also acquired red, white and blue overtones during the war. While tamales themselves date back to Aztec times in Mesoamerica, the Tex-Mex innovation occurred in 1911, coinciding with the introduction of canned tamales by William Gebhardt in San Antonio. The innovation was to use the moist cornmeal as top and bottom layer of a baked "pie" filled with chopped meat and chili sauce. In her *Everyday Foods in Wartime* (1917), Mary Swartz Rose, assistant professor in the Dept. of Nutrition at Teacher's College, Columbia Univ. in New York, recommended a tamale pie made with ground beef. *Conservation Recipes* (1918), a booklet compiled by the Mobilized Women's Organization of Berkeley, California listed no less than five tamale pie recipes, in each of which the meat is replaced with less precious ingredients like black olives. By this time, the influence of Mexicans and their foodways was reaching far north of the border; in Detroit, for example, a sizeable community of 10,000 Mexican

immigrants had coalesced by the 1920s, drawn by jobs in sugarbeet fields and auto factories.

The tamale pie contributed by Gwen Nystuen was a later variation called "tamale loaf," in which the cornmeal is thoroughly mixed with the other ingredients before baking. A recipe from *Good Housekeeping's Book of Menus, Recipes, and Household Discoveries* (1922) might be the ur-text for this loaf. By the early 1930s, the tamale loaf had assumed the older name "tamale pie," as in a popular recipe that Gwen located from California's *Sunset* magazine. Gwen preferred to use the recipe saved from her college days in a household (c. 1950) where everyone cooked one night a week. It calls for ground pork (she substituted beef), onions, chili powder, and cans of creamed corn, tomatoes, and black olives; the cornmeal is combined with beaten eggs and milk before being mixed in. As a teenager in 1946, visiting a logging camp where her uncle worked in redwood country outside Eureka, Gwen recalls her aunt Ethel cooking such a pie as the evening meal. "Tamale pie was a relatively common dish at that time," she notes.

Bootlegging Through the 1920s

With wartime rationing ended, Americans faced a deprivation of a different sort in 1920: the advent of nationwide Prohibition. Consider the dish of the period called Tomato Woodchuck, also Pink Rabbit or Blushing Bunny: a nod toward Welsh Rabbit (Rarebit), but with the beer replaced with canned tomato soup!

Also notable is the number of candy and ice cream companies launched during Prohibition. For law-abiding citizens, sweets made a stimulating alternative to alcohol, while for those partaking of "bathtub gin" or "bootleg" (illegally sold) spirits, sweets helped mask the occasional off-tastes.

The term "moonshine" probably does not capture well the finely honed craft of distillation that persisted in rural areas. We can imagine that a locally made apple brandy might have continued to be available in the 1920s for use in the mincemeat pie contributed by Mary Lou Unterberger. She used her mother's recipe from rural Colorado of that period, which calls for a flaky crust shortened with lard, and for a filling of beef, raisins, currants, apples and applejack.

As for "Bootlegger Beans," contributed by Sherry Sundling as foil to her Boston Baked Beans, they included nothing more intoxicating than apple cider vinegar, brown sugar and tomato catsup. The recipe that Sherry clipped from an Ann Landers column many years ago (a similar one has appeared in "Hints from Heloise") calls for these ingredients, along with sautéed onion and bacon, to be dumped into some

beans warmed up from a can. Thanks to the canned beans, cooking time was cut short from a whole day to 40 mins. Perhaps the epithet "bootlegger" refers to this shortcut, conjuring up an image of rum-runners staying a step ahead of the law by their skill in throwing a meal together in record time. So much for "honest" cooking!

Making Ends Meet in the 1930s

Marjorie Reade gave us a sense of Great Plains hardship by contributing a Holiday Salad, as made by her mother every Thanksgiving and Christmas. As Marjorie has recalled in this newsletter (Fall 1990), "My home state of North Dakota was laid low by the triple afflictions of the Great Depression, the dust bowl drought, and hordes of grasshoppers devouring all vegetable matter (including broom straws!)... One year, I think it was 1934, we ate nothing all winter but potatoes, bread, and the chicken and beef we had canned in the fall. When my father borrowed money the following spring to buy seed, his first purchase was a bunch of celery, and nothing was ever so delicious to the five of us." To make Holiday Salad, her mother would combine cans of pineapple and fruit cocktail with available fresh fruit—grapes, bananas or oranges, with luck—and diced marshmallows. She would then boil up a dressing using the juice from the canned pineapple, lemon juice, sugar, flour, and eggs; once cooled, this was mixed with whipped cream.

A virtue of hard times is that they draw people closer together. Marjorie's mom would prepare Jell-O® molds for summer meetings of the Homemakers' Club, and across the country people also attended potluck suppers, church socials and ladies' club luncheons. Women of a certain means, who had had to let their cooks go, increasingly turned to books and magazines to learn various recipes. The creamed spinach that was contributed to our meal appeared in the first edition of Irma S. Rombauer's *Joy of Cooking* (1931), which followed by one year the also influential *Better Homes and Gardens Cookbook*. Rombauer, from a German immigrant family in St. Louis, had to print her first edition at her own expense, but her style—light, personal, direct, even breezy—encouraged sales, which would skyrocket in 1943.

Preparing a dish like creamed spinach became much easier with the introduction of the \$29.95 Waring Blendor in 1936. It was jazz bandleader Fred Waring who financed the device and promoted it at the National Restaurant Show in Chicago to mix daiquiris and other drinks, but it soon became a home appliance. Julia Child notes, for example, that "handmade mayonnaise was one gastronomic delight that many home cooks were afraid to tackle until the appearance of the electric blender before World War 2, and until

Anne Seranne came up with the first fool-proof machine-made mayonnaise."

Gwen Nystuen contributed a dish of creamed new potatoes with hard-boiled eggs and peas, still a favorite of her husband John. John's mother made this as a young woman growing up during the Depression in Northfield, Minnesota, and it might reflect her Irish background.

An important recipe for Macaroni and Cheese appeared in *Good Housekeeping's Meals Tested, Tasted and Approved: Favorite Recipes and Menus from Our Kitchens to Yours* (1930). The version contributed by Pat Cornett, recent author of her own cookbook *Macaroni and Cheese: Mom's Home Cooking*, is based on her mother's recipe, substituting sharp cheddar. In 1937, when Kraft introduced its Macaroni & Cheese Dinner, eight million boxes were sold that first year. With grated American cheese premixed with the other ingredients, it was billed as "A meal for four in 9 minutes for an everyday price of 19 cents." Other convenience foods from this period are the biscuit mixes Jiffy® (Chelsea Milling Co., 1930) and Bisquick® (General Mills, 1931), with the shortening already included; and the canned minced pork SPAM® (Hormel, 1937), which would have such a big impact on the Allied war effort and on Hawaiian food habits (see "The Americanization of Island Food," page 3).

Food Technology of the 1940s

When the Japanese seized the Philippines in May 1942, Americans began hoarding sugar: food companies topped off their inventories, and homemakers bought up hundred-pound sacks. The government responded with sugar rationing at 8 oz. per person per week, soon followed by rationing of coffee, flour, meat and dairy foods, and canned goods. Much of the hoarded and rationed sugar went into home-baked goods like the monkey bread contributed by Carroll Thomson. Carroll describes monkey bread (also called bubble bread; the names refer to the whimsical final appearance) as a World War 2 era confection in which balls of kneaded white bread dough are rolled in melted butter and sugar, then piled into a tube pan for baking. Carroll made her version with a frozen, sweetened bread dough, and she added cinnamon to the sugar coating.

The cranberry nut bread contributed by Pat Cornett made use of quick-frozen berries sold in plastic bags from Ocean Spray. The company introduced them in 1944, one of many instances of new food technologies spawned by the war effort itself. Earl Tupper invented his famous polyethylene refrigerator dishes at his mili-

continued on next page

tary plastics factory in Massachusetts in 1942. Down the road, another discovery that year at Raytheon's military microwave facility in Waltham would lead to its introduction of the Radarange[®] five years later. A freeze-drying process discovered in 1940 would lead to Maxim[®] instant coffee, while the frozen-meal "Strato-Plates" offered on U.S. warplanes in 1945 were precursors of TV dinners. Canned poultry and frozen poultry from Swanson, dehydrated potatoes from Simplot and McCormick, powdered instant coffee from Maxwell House, powdered instant orange juice, and frozen orange juice concentrate were all invented to feed U.S. troops. Complex and multilayered candies that could withstand harsh conditions in theaters of war made good rations for soldiers and sailors: M&M's[®], Reese's Peanut Butter Cups[®], Almond Rocha[®], chocolate bars made with cocoa butter.

Prof. Rudi Volti, in his article "How We Got Frozen Food" (*Invention & Technology* Spring 1994), concluded that "the armed forces were powerful exponents of standardization, including in food, and a hitch in the Army or Navy did much to prepare a new generation of Americans for a postwar consumer society built on a foundation of standardized products. Frozen foods were the very embodiment of standardization."

Casserole Affluence in the 1950s

The victorious war effort seemed to confirm that U.S. power would dominate the 20th Century. And as suburbanites and other Americans got down to the business of enjoying prosperity and raising families, it was handy to have the advice of authors like James Beard in *The Casserole Cookbook* (1955) and Elsie Masterton in *The Blueberry Hill Cookbook* (1959).

Instead of simply compiling her favorite recipes, Masterton, chef at a popular Vermont country inn, also included a typical day at the inn and a month of menus, all in a user-friendly style not typical of cookbooks in earlier decades. Her 1963 edition catered even further to the baby boom, with a family menu for each month, and a section in each chapter on what to do with leftovers. As the author later wrote, "It was my feeling that there was a need for a truly conversational, yet functional, cookbook; that women, and men—for many of my readers have turned out to be men—like to know what to expect of food." From *Blueberry Hill*, Marnie Ruch contributed Wild Rice with Currants, while her mother Barbara Ruch contributed Sweet Potato Supreme (with the meringue topping). Interestingly, both recipes make liberal use of sherry, reminding us that a desire for refinement can be seen in some of the 1950s home cooking.

Marion Holt contributed Tuna-Noodle Casserole, a dish she fed her brood of children many times in the 1950s. Opening a can of cream of mushroom soup averted the need to make a Béchamel sauce, and what could be easier than a topping of crumbled potato chips? To say that the homemaker "cooked" these dishes is in some ways an overstatement. "We didn't even know what feta cheese was, or angel hair, or arugula," Marion recalls in looking back at the era. The magazine *Household* featured an article "With a Can of Soup" in Nov. 1950. By 1958, the average American family was consuming 850 cans of foods annually.

Margot Michael contributed two versions of Green Bean Casserole, one based on the traditional recipe using canned mushroom soup and a classic topping of canned fried onions, another an updated 1990s version using a homemade mushroom-Madeira sauce and sprinkled with fried leeks. Judy Goldwasser contributed a casserole of macaroni with three cheeses, and another participant contributed a Cottage Bake of noodles, sour cream and tomato sauce.

The vegetable casserole that Sindi Keesan and Jim Deigert contributed from *The Settlement Cookbook* is a bit more old-fashioned. There is a bottom layer of chopped red cabbage, followed by a layer of green pepper and green cabbage, with diced apple and lemon juice sprinkled on top. The lemon juice serves to chemically redden the green cabbage, while butter and brown sugar are needed to bring the ingredients together during baking. Chestnuts may also be added. The cookbook, still popular today, had a clearer immigrant character in its earliest editions. Sindi and Jim used a 1945 printing from the Girls' Trade and Technical High School of Milwaukee. The original 1901 version, a pamphlet by Mrs. Simon Kander (Lizzie Black) and Mrs. Henry Schoenfeld, was designed to teach cooking to young women in the city's "settlement houses," missions for German Jewish immigrants.

I certainly expected German Chocolate Cake, also contributed to our meal, to be a product of Americans returning from the occupation of Europe after WW2. My timeframe was correct, but the rest of my hunch was way off. The two-layer cake, which arose in postwar Texas and Oklahoma, took its name from Baker's German's Sweet Chocolate, a popular brand invented in 1852 by Samuel German for a Massachusetts company run by Walter Baker. After spreading from kitchen to kitchen, in 1957 the cake recipe was sent to a Dallas newspaper that published it under the name "German's Sweet Chocolate Cake." By then, General Foods owned trademark to the chocolate, and its people in White Plains, NY polished up the Dallas recipe (for instance, adding the now-classic Angel Flake Coconut) and began printing it on every

label of their product. "Texas Sheet Cake," as contributed by Barb and Marnie Ruch to our Southern Country Picnic last summer, is a one-layer version.

The cake example reminds us that in postwar consumer America, food companies could disseminate recipes far and wide on product labels alone, quite apart from newspapers, magazines and cookbooks. This was also the case with Chex[®] Party Mix, the savory oven-toasted snack contributed by Fran Lyman. The original recipe combines butter, Worcestershire sauce, pretzels, nuts and spices with three dry breakfast cereals introduced by Ralston Purina: Rice Chex (1950), Wheat Chex (1950) and Corn Chex (1958).

The French Revolution of the 1960s

When Elizabeth David published *French Provincial Cooking* in London in 1960, it was an early salvo in what would prove to be an explosion of Francophile food writing in England and America. It was followed by the American blockbuster *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, by Simone Beck, Louisette Bertholle and Julia Child, published in two volumes in 1961 and 1970. By 1974, Volume 1 alone had sold 1.25 million copies. Columns and books by Craig Claiborne and Pierre Franey were also influential. The late Richard Olney, who in 1951 had moved to France from his native Iowa after falling in love with its food, published *The French Menu Cookbook* in 1970, first of his many volumes on the subject.

A symbol of the excitement about French cooking is *bœuf à la bourguignonne*, beef Burgundy style, as generously contributed by Joann Chalat to our meal. It was Julia Child herself, in a national television broadcast of February 11, 1963, who showed America how to prepare this hearty ragoût. That was the very first episode of her popular series "The French Chef," produced by Boston public station WGBH. Child, trained at the Cordon Bleu in Paris, instructed her viewers how to stew the cubes of beef for several hours with red wine, onions and mushrooms. Joann's version of this French provincial classic utilized both Child's book and Jane and Michael Stern's retrospective *American Gourmet: Classic Recipes, Deluxe Delights, Flamboyant Favorites, and Swank "Company" Food from the '50s and '60s* (1991).

The impact of the French cooking enthusiasts on American taste went far beyond simply popularizing dishes like *bœuf à la bourguignonne*. What came through in their cooking was a greater respect for the food itself, for the characteristics of the various regions where it is produced, and for the complex interplay of geography, history and culture that make up a style of cooking. Recalling his first meal in Paris at the age of 24, Richard Olney later commented: "I had never

dreamed of mashing potatoes without milk, and, in Iowa, everyone believed that the more you beat them, the better they were." Chefs such as Child and Olney helped shake American cooks out of their slumber, bringing a whole new level of seriousness to the kitchen.

Cooking for a Small Planet in the 1970s

"The flavor of stroganov doesn't really require beef," Ellen Buchman Ewald breezily announced in her *Recipes for a Small Planet* (1973). "Try this recipe," she beckoned, "and you'll agree." Having tried her recipe for Soybean Stroganov and contributed it to our meal, I can report that the dish is yes, tasty, but wholly distinct from classic Stroganov. The strips of beef fillet are replaced with soybeans, the white wine with sherry, the sour cream with yogurt. That, and coat the onions and mushrooms with whole wheat flour. Oh—and serve on bulgur wheat, not egg noodles!

In the 1970s I was an impressionable young college student learning to cook, and Ewald's book—along with its theoretical underpinning, Francis Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet*—had no small influence on me and my friends. When we looked at the rest of the planet, the foods that we'd eaten our whole lives suddenly seemed obscene in their richness. Our ethic was to try to replace these rich ingredients with more humble ones available to the impoverished masses of the Third World. *Meals for the Masses* was the actual title of a recipe collection compiled by my housemate Beth Miller for use by those of us who shared the work cooking meals in the student housing co-ops of Ann Arbor. Also popular were recipes from Anna Thomas' *The Vegetarian Epicure* (1972), such as Spinach Lasagna and Pizza Rustica. Such books were always printed as paperbacks.

Most of all we shunned meat, a scarce flavoring agent across most of the planet, in favor of seemingly exotic Asian vegetable sources of protein: soybeans and their derivatives (tofu, miso, tempeh, etc.), mung bean sprouts, tahini and the like. The ingredients were often purchased at alternative food co-ops, of which between 5,000 and 10,000 were established in the U.S. between 1969 and 1979. We were also told by Ewald to pay close attention to the complementarity of amino acids, which is why in her Soybean Stroganov recipe she went so far as to stipulate the correct ratios of yogurt to soybeans and of soybeans to bulgur so as to optimize the intake of "usable protein."

California Chic in the 1980s

We were lucky that our wine expert, Dan Longone, could get his hands on some bottles of Beaujolais nou-

continued on next page

AMERICAN CENTURY (continued from previous page)

veau as a contribution to our meal. Beaujolais, the unoaked red wine made from Gamay grapes hand-picked in September, has been described as "gulpable if served cool," "approachable," "friendly," even "flirty." This is indeed a young and fruity wine, and every November the youngest, fruitiest batch—only six weeks old—is earmarked as Beaujolais nouveau and airlifted from the Burgundy region of France to enthusiastic throngs awaiting its arrival in other countries. In the U.S., this fanfare began in the 1970s, and before long the Americans were gulping down most of the annual French harvest. As if to honor this, chef Margaret Fox founded a Café Beaujolais in Mendocino, California in 1977. The restaurant, serving dishes like a Sweet Pepper and Garlic Omelet made from locally grown ingredients, helped establish what became known as the California cuisine of the 1980s.

Like Beaujolais itself, California cuisine was an import from France that the Americans took to new heights. The *nouvelle cuisine* being championed by Paul Bocuse and other young French chefs rebelled against the heavy and rich classical dishes of France. It insisted on the use of the freshest ingredients, meaning local and seasonal ones. It favored simple preparations that tasted naturally of the food ingredients used. And it relished the ability to *épater le bourgeois* by combining foods that had never been paired before. At Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, chef-owner Alice Waters (a follower of Richard Olney) used these principles to create dishes like Wild Nettle Frittata, Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Polenta with Duck Sauce, and King Salmon in Fig Leaves. Also influential in this regard were Los Angeles chefs Michel Blanchet at L'Ermitage, Michael McCarty at Michael's, and Wolfgang Puck at Spago.

The extent to which California cuisine became trendy, a leading edge in American culture, can be gauged by leafing through *A Taste of Hollywood: The True Story of Ma Maison* (1999) by Patrick A. Terrail, who founded that L.A. restaurant in the mid-1980s. Ma Maison, which gave Wolfgang Puck his start, served some of the most daring dishes around, yet attracted Tinseltown glitterati and other diners of the "rich and famous" variety. Robin Leach himself wrote the foreword to Terrail's culinary memoir, where recipes and reflections on the restaurant business rub shoulders with photos and reminiscences of celebrity sightings.

Producing Locally, Cooking Globally in the 1990s

By the final decade of the American Century, the increasing prevalence of mass-produced consumer goods had nearly obliterated popular awareness of the role of craftsmanship in the production of food. One counter-trend was the surviving axiom among gastronomes that the finest wines are produced on a

small scale, by artisans whose exquisite attention to quality and to every facet of production has been passed down from generation to generation. Under the influence of *nouvelle cuisine*, it was only a matter of time before this sensitivity spread to other types of food and drink. Chef Alice Waters, for example, began incorporating into her dishes a line of artisanal goat cheeses produced by Laura Chenel on a farm not far from Berkeley. Today, an ambitious cook in a town like Ann Arbor can procure not only cheese of artisan quality, but also butter, olive oil, vinegar, smoked fish, bread, pasta, cornmeal, oatmeal, honey, even salt.

In the world of beer, this smaller-is-better dictum led to the proliferation of the microbrewery (by definition, one that produces less than 15,000 barrels yearly), of which there are now over 1,000 in the U.S. The bottles of Pete's Winter Brew contributed by Dan Longone were produced by Pete's Brewing Company, founded by Pete Slosberg of St. Paul, Minnesota in 1986. Pete's has been called a "quasi-microbrewery" because it brews at plants in Eden, North Carolina and Tumwater, Washington that are owned by the huge Miller Brewery, albeit with Pete's own brewmaster. The Winter Brew is a deep-amber ale produced from pale and caramel malts, with the addition of Cascade, Tettnang and Saaz hops, as well as hints of raspberry and nutmeg. The Cascade hops, grown locally in Washington State, lend a flavor that is more citric and piney than bitter.

Some of the finest American cooking of the 1990s showed a greater willingness to experiment, combining even locally produced ingredients in creative ways that were borrowed from far-flung international cuisines. Consider the rice salad contributed to our meal: its ingredients (basmati rice along with some wild rice, peas, smoked pork, olive oil, and balsamic vinegar) bring to mind India, Minnesota, Spain, Italy. The Swiss/cheddar buttermilk scones contributed by Jan Longone were based on a recipe from a volume entered in a recent Tabasco community cookbook contest.

Detroit-bred food writer Raymond Sokolov presciently described this dual trend toward local production and international borrowing in "Revolution Now," the penultimate chapter of his book *Why We Eat What We Eat* (1991). "The main interest of postmodern American cuisine, at this early stage," he wrote, "is its free but informed attitude toward the rich world of possibilities open to American cooks. Perhaps a vocabulary of new 'American' dishes will ultimately shake out from all the fervid experimentation. But for now it is the process that counts. The manipulation of local ingredients with culinary ideas inherited from many national pasts is a sensible extension of the notion of the melting pot—and an intrinsically American way to go."

MORSELS & TIDBITS

Nationally known author **Jessica Harris** is keynote speaker at the June 23-25 Chicago conference on "Grits, Greens and Everything in Between: The Foods of the African Diaspora and American Transformations." The conference will trace the history of foods and food traditions from their African origins to African American, Afro-Caribbean and African immigrant cultures, and their impact on the social, political, and economic life of Chicago and other cities. Organized by the Culinary Historians of Chicago in cooperation with the Chicago Historical Society, this is the first in a planned series of conferences on ethnic food history and culture.

Our founding member **Jan Longone** contributed the entries on American cookbook history, as well as several biographies, to the long-awaited *Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1999; 892 pp., \$60.00 cloth). Two decades in the making, the work compiles 2,650 entries from over 50 food scholars and is edited by Alan Davidson, a former British diplomat, world authority on seafood and co-founder of the annual Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery. While strongest in British and European food, the book also delves into other world cuisines: the history and geography of Asian noodles, for example, spans more than three pages. The companion to the *Oxford Companion to Food* is the new second edition of the *Oxford Companion to Wine* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1999; 819 pp., \$65.00 cloth), edited by Jancis Robinson.

The Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor continue to garner local news coverage. A large feature article by **Anne Rueter** in the Connection section of the *Ann Arbor News* (February 20, 2000) profiled Jan Longone, focusing on her acclaimed mail-order business the Wine and Food Library, her recent appointment as Curator of American Culinary History at the University of Michigan Clements Library, and her continuing work with CHAA. "Ann Arbor's Jan Longone may have thumbed through more cookbooks than anyone alive," Rueter wrote, adding that "her enthusiasm for her life's work pulls you in like the smell of baking bread." Food writer **Elissa Karg's** profile of CHAA, "Historical Tastes," appeared in the Best of Detroit 2000 issue of the *Metro Times* (March 15-21, 2000) and was based on interviews with Jan Longone and *Repast* editor Randy Schwartz.

The increased scholarly attention to food and its history can be seen in a number of longstanding academic journals. The Spring 2000 issue of *PROTEUS: A Journal of Ideas*, published by Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania, is a theme issue on food that drew contributions from many disciplines. Among the historical essays are "Pearl S. Buck and the Politics of Food" by **Robert Shaffer**, "Hot Biscuits: Food as Sexual Metaphor in the Blues" by **Nathan Hill**, "The Social Hierarchy of Meat in Eighteenth Century Paris" by **Sydney Watts**, and "Crossing Gibraltar: Medieval Morocco as Culinary Bridge" by *Repast* editor **Randy Schwartz**. The journal *Social Research*, published by the New School for Social Research in New York, also had a

theme issue on food (Winter 1998). Among the historical articles were "Translating Maize Into Corn" by **Betty Fussell**, "How the Potato Changed the World's History" by **William H. McNeill**, "Sweet Polychrest" by **Sidney Mintz**, and "Scarcity in Abundance: Food and Non-Food" by **Ann Murcott**, who studied milk in Britain from the 17th Century on.

Veteran CHAA participants will recall a presentation at our May 1993 meeting by then-member **Rafia Zafar** on Black women's cookbooks. That research became the basis for her recent publication "The Signifying Dish: Autobiography and History in Two Black Women's Cookbooks" (*Feminist Studies*, Summer 1999). The essay considers Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor's *Vibration Cooking, or, The Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* (1970) and Carole and Norma Jean Darden's *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine: Recipes and Reminiscences of a Family* (1978) as examples of the way in which a recipe collection can help articulate a personal and communal identity. It forms one chapter of Zafar's forthcoming second book, *And Called It Macaroni: Food in the Formation of Our National Identity* (Oxford Univ. Press). Previous publications include the book *We Wear the Mask: African Americans Write American Literature, 1760-1870* (1997), and an essay "The Proof of the Pudding: Of Haggis, Hasty Pudding, and Transatlantic Influence" in *Early American Literature* 31:2 (1996). Dr. Zafar, who was denied tenure in 1996 by the English Department at the University of Michigan—reportedly, she was advised to pursue more "literary" research not focused on cookbooks—told *The Chronicle of Higher Education* last July that "I've had many an eyebrow raised when the topic of my second book has come up, and that hasn't stopped." She is now Associate Professor of English and Director of African and Afro-American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis.

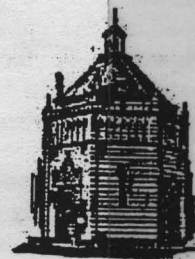
Only our most veteran members might recall the talk "Authentic Mexican: Regional Cooking from the Heart of Mexico," presented to us by then-University of Michigan doctoral student and CHAA member **Rick Bayless** in 1987 shortly before he and his wife **Deann Groen Bayless** published a book under that title. Rick and Deann moved on to become founder/owner/chefs of two acclaimed Mexican restaurants in Chicago, the Frontera Grill and Topolobampo. The Baylesses have now produced a 26-part series "Mexico, One Plate at a Time" for broadcast this summer on PBS-TV. Dishes to be discussed in the series include churros, enchiladas, chiles rellenos, and new interpretations such as Crispy Potato Sopes with Goat Cheese and Fresh Herbs, and Broiled Flank Steak with Tomato-Poblano Salsa. Recent books from the Baylesses include *Mexican Kitchen: Capturing the Vibrant Flavors of a World-Class Cuisine* (1996) and *Salsas That Cook: Using Classic Salsas to Enliven Our Favourite Dishes* (1998). Rick has appeared a number of times recently on the Food TV Network's "Cooking Live" show hosted by **Sara Stockwell Moulton**, Chef of the Executive Dining Room at *Gourmet* magazine and herself a 1974 University of Michigan graduate. ■

CHAA CALENDAR



July 23

A Tuscan Picnic



REPAST

2222 FULLER COURT #1101A
ANN ARBOR, MI 48105-2316



Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume XVI Number 2, Spring 2000



Ann Arbor District Library Attn. Steve
Jensen
343 S. 5th Ave.
Ann Arbor MI 48104

First Class

