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Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

The Home Front

Domestic Food Customs of the Civil War Era

An African American live-in cook servant in the kitchen of a house in Amherst County, Central Virginia, 1853.

Drawing by David Hunter Strother, a popular graphic artist and writer, originally from Virginia/West Virginia. Under the penname Porte Crayon he created “Virginia Illustrated, Adventures of Porte Crayon and His Cousins”, a narrative of a journey that he and a few companions took through central Virginia. It appeared serially in *Harpers*.

Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, vol. 12 (Jan. 1856), p. 177. (Copy in Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Image Reference HARP01)

LOWCOUNTRY RICE *continued from p. 11*

In Washington, DC, General Winfield Scott devised the Anaconda Plan, a strategy to blockade Confederate ports in order to strangle and starve Southerners into submission. By early May, Charlestonians began to notice the shortage of groceries that came from the Union. But there were still all manner of local fruits and vegetables for the residents to consume. By the Spring and Summer of 1862, food prices began to rise to $4.00 for a bushel of rice and $1.50 for a chicken.

Rice was still produced, and some plantation owners began cultivating other crops such as sugar cane to help ease the shortages caused by the blockade. In July 1862, Robert F. W. Allston, former governor of South Carolina and one of the largest rice planters in the country, sent a letter of inquiry to a friend seeking instructions on cultivating and processing sugar cane into molasses (Easterby, p. 188).

As the war continued, rice and corn became the dominant foods of Lowcountry residents. Charlestonian Emma Holmes wrote of attending a wedding in November 1862 and expecting to only partake of cornbread. The hosts, however, were able to procure turkeys, rice, ham, apples, and numerous other items that had by then become luxuries (Marszalek, p. 209). At a party a few weeks later, Holmes's host told her they would partake of the produce of his plantation, i.e., shrimp, crabs, and corn whiskey (Marszalek, p. 275).

Repast

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By 1863, the Richmond, VA, publisher West and Johnson had issued the *Confederate Receipt Book: A Compilation of Over One Hundred Receipts, Adapted to the Times*. Included in it are 10 receipts for rice bread or for the substitution of rice flour for wheat flour. This cookbook and newspaper articles throughout the Confederacy advocated using rice as a substitute for wheat flour. For residents of the Lowcountry, however, these ingredients were not unusual. Rice Griddle Cakes is one of several receipts submitted to the cookbook by a lady claiming to have found them in a Charleston newspaper some years before:

> Rice Griddle Cakes
>
> Boil one cup of whole rice quite soft in milk, and while hot stir in a little wheat flour or rice flour. When cold, add two eggs and a little salt, bake in small thin cakes on the griddle. (*Confederate*, p. 35)

Although rice cultivation on the plantations had decreased and diversified, there was still rice available for those in the countryside to subsist on. A problem with feeding those in the cities was the transportation of crops from the farms and plantations to the cities themselves. While the churches of Charleston were trying to feed the poor in the city, those living on the outskirts of Charleston, on the plantations and farms, were able to at least have enough to eat, if not a large variety of foodstuffs.

The Fall of the Rice Kingdom

By the war's end, many Lowcountry planters had fled to the mountains of North Carolina to protect themselves and their families from the fire of Sherman's army. As Federal troops moved through South Carolina, they burned many plantations, and the enslaved labor left for freedom.

What was once the kingdom of rice plantations was left burned and desolate. Many large rice fields became overgrown and flooded, never to be used for rice again. When the planters returned home after the cessation of hostilities, many found burned homes and barns, and little or no labor with which to rebuild their lives.

Some planters were able to maintain their rice fields and kept up production even after the war, using sharecropping as a system to regain some of the wealth lost. By the early 20th Century, however, the production of rice in South Carolina almost completely disappeared. The marshy landscape could not support the new and improved farm machinery that made rice cultivation so much more productive in Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and other Southern states. Hurricanes and a massive earthquake filled the rice fields with salt water that ruined the soil for cultivation. Thus ended the rice kingdom of the Lowcountry. ■

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POPULAR DISHES IN THE UNION STATES

by Susan Odom

A longtime friend of the CHAA, Susan Odom is currently proprietress of Hillside Homestead, an historic farmstay that she recently established in Sutton's Bay, MI. She was formerly the historic program manager at the Leelanau Historical Society Museum. Prior to that, for seven years she worked at the Firestone Farm at Greenfield Village in Dearborn, where she re-created historic farm life of 1885, became an expert in historic foods, and amassed a large personal collection of historic American cookbooks. She has also worked as a docent at the Univ. of Michigan's Clements Library. Susan spoke to CHAA in April 2006 about the history of The Buckeye Cookbook, *and will present a talk about historic Fishtown, MI this coming January 15. Her article on "mangoes" (Anglo-American pickles) appeared in* Food History News *77 (Winter 2009).*

I'm sitting at a local bar recently, having a drink and waiting for my dinner. I'm alone so I've brought a book to read, one of my all-time favorite cookbooks, *The Kentucky Housewife* by Mrs. Lettice Bryan, published in 1839. I'm perusing deeply there about cabbage salad when the man two stools over inquires as to what I'm reading. I tell him and then explain I'm a bit of a food historian and enjoy reading cookbooks. He comments, "Is cooking all that different now from back then, I mean haven't we got it all figured out?"

The question made me smile. I jumped right in with some examples that illustrate some of the differences between mid-19th-Century and early 21st-Century foodways. Beef and buffalo tongue were once so popular that we as a people almost made the buffalo extinct for want of tongues and hides; but today many folks are disgusted by the thought of eating tongue and have actually never even tried it. Then we discussed the oyster. I can't think of a food today that has the universal popularity that the oyster once enjoyed in this country. The man two stools over does recall hearing about oyster stew and oyster suppers. And he begins to see that food and cooking do seem to have changed a lot in the past 150 years.

An experienced chef was a recent guest at my inn. We had a good time looking at old cookbooks together. He was shocked to see how vague many of the recipes were. 'Butter the size of an egg' is an instruction he found several times, much to his amusement. I am quite used to recipes like that; but it does highlight another big change in cooking: recipes today are quite specific, whereas, during the Civil War era and earlier, they tended to be more open-ended.

Favorite Recipes to Try

I have been studying food history since 1997, mostly in a practical hands-on fashion while working at living-history museums and during my own time at home. Recently I opened a historic farmstay, Hillside Homestead, where I cook historic meals for guests on a regular basis and provide an overall historically authentic experience.

Although my focus at Hillside is closer to the year 1900, I have a few favorite recipes from the mid-19th Century and Civil War era that I would like to share here, together with my own notes about them. I hope you'll find the time to try some of these recipes— feel free to get your greasy fingers on this section. Rolling up your sleeves is one of the best ways to truly appreciate the old cookbooks and recipes. It is a bit like walking in the footsteps of these cooks of so long ago.

"The Simplest Way of Cooking Oysters"
Mrs. Mary H. Cornelius (Boston), *The Young Housekeeper's Friend; or, A Guide to Domestic Economy and Comfort.* (1859; first published in Boston, 1846)

Take them, unopened, rinse the shells clean, and lay them on hot coals, or top of a cooking-stove, with the deepest side of the shell down, so as not to lose the liquor. When they begin to open a little, they are done, and the upper shell will be easily removed with a knife, and the oyster is to be eaten from the lower shell. The table should be supplied with coarse napkins, and a large dish to receive the shells.

My Notes:
Oysters were hugely popular in the 19th Century. They were available canned at almost any general store, and by 1852 they were being shipped fresh and in the shell via ice-packed railcar to Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Chicago. Just shortly after that time, fresh oysters arrived in St. Louis via train, too. Fresh oysters were even available in Leland, Michigan in 1870— I have seen the newspaper advertisements.

Mrs. Cornelius's cookbook has a somewhat famous mention: Meg, one of the sisters in the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, receives this book upon her marriage. In the first few months she methodically cooks from it, as a dutiful new wife, meeting with much success and failure.

"Stewed Beef"
Catharine Esther Beecher (Cincinnati), *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt-Book* (1858; first published in New York, 1846)

Take a shank or hock of beef, with all the meat belonging to it, and put it into a pot full of water early in the morning and throw in a tablespoonful of salt. Let it simmer very slowly, till the beef is soft, and cleaves from the bone, and the water is reduced to about two quarts. Then peel some potatoes, and cut them in quarters, and throw in with two teaspoonfuls of black pepper, two of sweet marjoram, and two of thyme, or summer savory. Add some celery flavor or sauce, and more salt if it requires it. Stew until the potatoes are cooked enough, but not till they are mashed. Then take dry bread, and throw in, breaking it into small pieces, and when soaked, take up the whole and serve it, and everybody will say it is about the best dish they ever tasted. Those who love onions slice in three or four with the potatoes. Rice can be put in instead of bread.

continued on next page

DISHES IN THE UNION *continued from p. 3*

My Notes:

Miss Beecher lists this receipt in the last section of the book, entitled "Some Excellent Cheap Dishes". And indeed it is. A shank or hock of beef is not a good cut, but can be made delicious by a slow and steady cooking. This is not a handsome dish when finished, but it is very good and is usually eaten up by the dinner party.

Notice that there are no cut-up chunks of 'stew meat' in this beef stew. Ask the butcher for a piece of beef shank, including the bone. It should have a good bit of meat on it. The whole piece should weigh between 2-5 pounds. Since this is a piece of shank, it will have part of the leg bone. The bone is important; it will have a cut edge, which will expose the marrow. The marrow is very rich and tasty, and adds a lot of flavor to the stew. Place the beef shank in a large pot on the stove and add plenty of water; cook for several hours over low heat. The trick here is slow, slow cooking. If the beef boils in the water it will get tough and will not fall from the bone. It will become almost inedible. So keep the heat low!

Once the meat starts to fall from the bone, add the peeled and quartered potatoes. Don't cut the potatoes too small or they will start to disintegrate before the stew is finished. I would estimate two potatoes for every pound of beef, but use your judgment and recognize the limitations of the size of the pot. Add the spices as she lists above. For celery flavor add one teaspoon of celery seed. You may also add one or two chopped onions if you like, completely optional.

"HERE YOU ARE, NICE FRESH FISH."

A fish vendor in New York City.

Drawing by Thomas B. Worth, accompanying the article by E. E. Sterns, "The Street Vendors of New York", *Scribner's Monthly, An Illustrated Magazine for the People* 1:2 (Dec. 1870), pp. 113-129. Courtesy of Cornell Univ. Library.

Have ready an unsliced loaf of stale bread, torn into small pieces. I would use either homemade bread or something from the bakery that resembles that. Let it sit on the counter for a few days, unwrapped, so that it will become stale. In the 19th Century, women baked bread at least once a week and sometimes twice. Bread did not have any preservatives, and because it was not kept in plastic bags it tended to go stale instead of molding. So this receipt calls for a common ingredient, stale bread— one of the reasons this stew qualifies as a 'cheap dish'.

Once the potatoes are done cooking, add the bread pieces and allow the bread to soak up the stew. Do not stir hard at this point or you will make a gooey mess. The soaking up does not take long, so be ready to serve!

"A Very Economical Dinner"

Sarah Josepha Hale (Philadelphia), *The Good Housekeeper; or, The Way to Live Well and to Be Well While We Live* (1841; first published in Boston, 1839)

One pound of sausages cut in pieces, with four pounds of potatoes, and a few onions, if they are liked, with about a table-spoonful of flour mixed in a pint of water and added to the dish, will make a sufficient dinner for five or six persons. The potatoes must be cut in slices, and stewed with the sausages till tender. Or you may use a pound and half of meat (mutton is best) instead of the sausages. Season with pepper, salt and sage or thyme.

My notes:

This is the same Mrs. Hale who was the editor of the important magazine called *Godey's Lady's Book*, was the composer/writer of "Mary Had a Little Lamb", and, through her constant lobbying of President Lincoln and others, was responsible for establishing Thanksgiving as a national holiday.

This dish is found in the back of the book, in the 'cheap dishes' section. You will find it very easy to make. I slice the onions thick and put them in first. Then add the sausage and potatoes. The onions act as a 'rack' and keep the potatoes and sausage off the bottom of the pot, allowing these to cook more nicely. I usually use bratwurst-style sausage. The flour is an important ingredient as this dish makes its own gravy.

"Warm Slaugh"
Mrs. Lettice Bryan, *The Kentucky Housewife* (Cincinnati, 1839)

Cut them [cabbages] as for cold slaugh; having put in a skillet enough butter, salt, pepper, and vinegar to season the slaugh very well, put it into the seasonings; stir it fast, that it all may warm equally, and as soon as it gets hot, serve it in a deep china dish; make it smooth, and disseminate over it hard boiled yolks of eggs, that are minced fine.

My notes:

In a previous recipe, Mrs. Bryan gives very detailed instructions on how to cut the cabbage properly. Essentially, she wants you to cut off the top portion of the head, that which is above the core. Then cut that good section of the cabbage into quarters, and slice each quarter down the sides into very, very fine shreds. Take the time to carefully cut the cabbage as finely as possible— it makes all the difference. In a large frying pan I melt about five tablespoons of butter; add some salt and pepper; adjust quantities to your taste. Add about three tablespoons of cider vinegar and quickly stir until well combined and hot. Quickly add the cabbage and stir constantly till it is all well-combined and the cabbage is warm through.

"Summer and Winter Saccatash"
Miss Eliza Leslie, *New Receipts for Cooking* (Philadelphia, 1852)

SUMMER SACCATASH. — String a quarter of a peck of young green beans, and cut each bean into three pieces (not more) and do not split them. Have by you a pan of cold water, and throw the beans into it as you cut them. Have ready over the fire a pot or saucepan of boiling water, put in the beans, and boil them hard near twenty minutes. Afterwards take them up, and drain them well through a cullender. Take half a dozen ears of young but full-grown Indian corn (or eight or nine if they are not all large) and cut the grains down from the cob. Mix together the corn and the beans, adding a very small teaspoonful of salt, and boil them about twenty minutes. Then take up the saccatash, drain it well through a sieve, put it into a deep dish, and while hot mix in a large piece of butter, (at least the size of an egg,) add some pepper, and send it to the table. It is generally eaten with salted or smoked meat.

Fresh Lima beans are excellent cooked in this manner, with green corn. They must be boiled for half an hour or more before they are cooked with the corn.

Dried beans and dried corn will do very well for saccatash, but they must be soaked all night before boiling. The water poured on them for soaking should be hot.

WINTER SACCATASH. — This is made of dried shelled beans and hard corn. Take equal quantities of shelled beans and corn; put them over night into separate pans, and pour boiling water over them. Let them soak till morning. Then pour off that water, and scald them again. First boil the beans by themselves. When they are soft, add the corn, and let them boil together till the corn is quite soft, which will require at least an hour. Take them up, drain them in a sieve; then put them into a deep dish, and mix in a large piece of fresh butter, and a little pepper and salt.

This is an excellent accompaniment to pickled pork, bacon, or corned beef. The meat must be boiled by itself in a separate pot.

My notes:

Please note that Miss Leslie spells succotash very differently from most others! No matter how it is spelled, these receipts for succotash are great. A very American food, succotash is usually corn and beans. In the Summer it is made with fresh (sometimes called "green" in the 19th Century) corn and beans. In the Winter it is made with dried corn and dried beans. Dried corn is sometimes called Shaker corn. You can buy it today at some grocery stores or Amish bulk food stores; Cope's is a well-known brand.

This receipt appeared first in Miss Leslie's book about corn and corn meal, *The Indian Meal Book, Comprising the Best Receipts for the Preparation of That Article* (1846). During the 18th and 19th Centuries, corn meal was often called Indian meal, after the Native Americans who introduced maize to the Europeans. *The Indian Meal Book* was all about that very American food, corn, and how to cook it in its variety. The book was published in England, where it sold very well, and it was incorporated into several of the author's later books.

"Coffee"
Catharine Esther Beecher (Cincinnati), *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt-Book* (1858; first published in New York, 1846)

Mocha and Old Java are the best, and time improves all kinds. Dry it a long time before roasting. Roast it quick, stirring constantly, or it will taste raw and bitter. When roasted, put in a bit of butter the size of a chestnut. Keep it shut up close, or it loses its strength and flavor. Never grind it till you want to use it, as it loses flavor by standing. To prepare it, put two great spoonfuls to each pint of water, mix it with the white, yolk, and shell of an egg, pour on hot, but not boiling water, and boil it not over ten minutes. Take it off, pour in half a tea-cup of cold water, and in five minutes pour it off without shaking. When eggs are scarce, clear with fish skin, as below. Boiled milk improves both tea and coffee, but must be boiled separately. Much coffee is spoiled by being burned black instead of brown, and by being burned unequally, some too much and some too little. Constant care and stirring are indispensable.

Fish Skin for Coffee. Take the skin of a mild codfish which has not been soaked, rinse and then dry it in a warm oven, after bread is drawn. Cut it in inch squares. One of these serves for two quarts of coffee, and is put in the first thing.

My Notes:

From the section on "Temperance Drinks". The egg acts in a mechanical fashion to settle the grounds of coffee. I have made gallons of this coffee and it is always popular with my guests. It does not taste like egg. Most cookbooks of this era suggest the same method of making coffee. I have not tried the fish-skin method yet, but I'm sure it must work. I try my best to leave my modern tastes behind when I do historic cooking so that I am open-minded to new ideas. ■

COOKING FROM THE LEE FAMILY HOUSEKEEPING BOOK

by Anne Carter Zimmer

Anne Carter Zimmer is a great-granddaughter of Gen. Robert E. Lee, Confederate commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. She lives in Winchester, VA, with her husband, Fred Allen Zimmer, Jr., an artist and emeritus professor of design. Anne is the author of The Robert E. Lee Family Cooking and Housekeeping Book *(Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1997, 2002). Together with insights into the Lee family and social history, her book contains 70 recipes and remedies drawn from a notebook kept by the general's wife, Mary Custis, and interpreted for today's homes.*

A funny thing happened on the way through my great-grandmother's housekeeping hints— most of which were of little help— and receipts— most of which were actually worth the effort. I had expected to find a window on the way wealthy slave owners dined before the Civil War. Instead, the receipts had been written down afterward, when Southerners both black and white subsisted mostly on corn pone and cabbage, boiled with pork fatback when they were lucky. And Mrs. Lee put in only a few of the receipts.

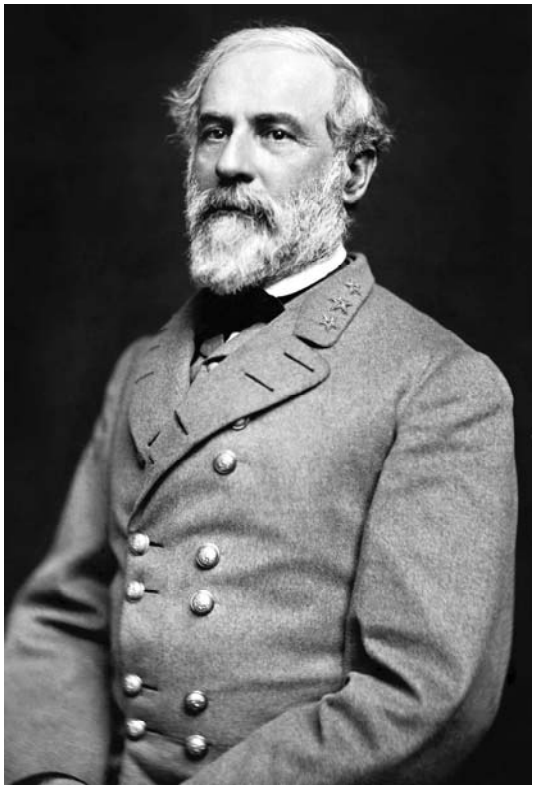
(Incidentally, what's now written as *recipe* I write as *receipt*, because I've always pronounced it that way. And as an older form, it seems appropriate.)

A certain list of foods that I found among the papers, beginning "40 hams, all of them cooked", led me astray at first. The huge amounts of ingredients, such as flour and lard and so forth, were extravagant enough to have been from the prosperous days before the Civil War.

But the names beside most of the ingredients were of people living in Lexington, Virginia, home of Washington College, the tiny college that was resuscitated by its new president, Robert E. Lee, my great-grandfather. General Lee had taken this position only after the end of the Civil War. (The school, on whose grounds he is buried, eventually became Washington and Lee University.)

It took me a long time to decide what that list might mean. It is in a little cardboard notebook not unlike the ones still sold today. The cover of the notebook has faded. The pages are stained from use. Receipts are written in dozens of different hands which, as it turned out, provided clues to the social circle of the Lees, especially of their four daughters. Some pages, mostly housekeeping hints clipped from newspapers, had been put in loose. The little book has no discernible order and is less than unpretentious.

It wouldn't have survived if it hadn't belonged to a prominent family. Even so, for over a century it lay forgotten in an archive at the Virginia Historical Society, until Agnes Mullins, then Curator at Arlington House[1], came across it. She knew I'd been a writer and loved cooking, so she sent me a copy.



Portrait photo of Gen. Robert E. Lee in 1863, taken by Julian Vannerson.

Image now in public domain. Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog, digital ID cwpb.04402.

Even then, its survival wasn't likely. I didn't see any gastronomic breakthroughs like the ice cream Thomas Jefferson supposedly brought back from France[2]. An on-and-off dieter, I was afraid of all that butter, eggs, cream and sugar in receipts compiled long before talk of calories and cholesterol and the rage to be thin. Besides, I didn't think anybody would care about the Lee papers in Ohio, where Fred was teaching at Ohio State. I used to joke that Lee was a Chinese name. I put the copy away.

A Grand Cooking Experiment

One day, for no particular reason, I asked my gourmet group if anybody wanted to help me try out the Lee family receipts, and I was surprised how many did. After some initial fallout and permission from the Virginia Historical Society, nine of us spent over a year making everything in the little notebook, except for obvious duplications.

We had to test some receipts several times, most often because of measurements. Some ingredients such as chocolate hadn't yet been standardized. We had to find out about "butter the size of a goose egg". Other amounts were vague, and sometimes no quantity at all was specified. I became very grateful to Fanny Farmer for standardizing measurements in her 1896 *The Boston Cooking-School Cookbook*[3].

"It looks like a brain" said a fellow tester when I unwrapped my first boiled pudding. Later I located the correct but now-extinct technique in an 1800 cookbook. Then by chance I saw a way to make boiled pudding in a microwave. It wasn't quite the same, but somebody daunted by the original might want to try it.

Most of the receipts, however, adapted easily to modern kitchens. One of the five ways to make cake gingerbread is so good and easy that I recommended it to people for demonstrations. A few others, duly noted in my book, are best left to enthusiasts of Lee or of historical cooking. Among the many that are more deserving of a comeback, wine jelly is a light, easy, any-time-of-year dessert, and it is nothing like the jelly one puts on toast.

The Impact of the War

Robert E. Lee had a salary of $1,500 a year at Washington College, plus the use of a house and vegetable garden and income from some railroad bonds. Thus, in comparison with the rest of the postwar South, the family was comfortably well off. He would arrive home from his last vestry meeting at two o'clock, in time for dinner. This suggests that the family continued the planters' pre-war meal pattern, which consisted of breakfast, often utilizing leftovers; dinner, the main meal, at two or three in the afternoon; and a light collation, often called tea, in the late afternoon.

The meal pattern might not have changed after the war, but what the Lees actually ate no doubt did change. Comparing two receipts for soup— the important and all but inevitable first course at dinner— one from before the war and the other from after it, gives an idea of how great that difference could be.

The first is from Mary Randolph, a renowned cook, and close cousin and probable godmother to Mrs. Lee. After her husband fell out of political favor, Mary kept a boarding house and wrote a celebrated (and much plagiarized) cookbook[4]. I might never feel rich and thin enough to make oyster soup the way she did: first boil plenty of oysters and ham (Virginia home-smoked of course) and some herbs. Then throw away everything but the broth. Put in more oysters, egg "yelks" (a pronunciation my mother still used), and heavy cream. Bring this to a simmer and serve.

From the notebook, the Lee ladies' tomato soup seems to have been made at the end of one season and canned to tide them over until the next season. Mrs. Lee in her wheelchair probably didn't do the work herself, but she knew the process intimately. The receipt calls for a bushel of tomatoes, which are scalded and peeled, then cooked, presumably in water, with a turkey carcass (not a whole turkey), carrots, onions, celery, and "herbs if you have any." This is thickened not with egg yolks and cream but with a paste of milk and flour. The preparation can be varied, no doubt, with whatever meat or perhaps seafood is available.

The tomato soup doesn't sound thrilling, but when a tester made one-eighth the quantity (for obvious reasons) and without any additions, guests who'd come from Paris raved.

Made from Scratch or Pulled from the Shelf

Trying to figure out why some of the receipts didn't work, I began to notice details of the changeover from making ingredients at home to buying them.

One bread receipt, for example, is mostly about making yeast, with the bread itself an afterthought. Baking powder was just coming into use, developed in several stages from the ashes (potash) used by the Indians to raise cornbread.

Intrigued, I traced a few other changes through additional relevant cookbooks, mainly those of Karen Hess, Mary Randolph, and Marion Cabell Tyree[5].

In some cases, the changes have been subtle. The Sally Lunn that my mother served to company could have come right from the Lee notebook recipe, one of the few provided by Mrs. Lee. The name of this cake has been attributed variously to the name of a cook of George Washington's (unlikely, says Karen Hess) or a corruption of the French *sol et lune*. A British friend knows Sally Lunn as any of several little sweet cakes. In Bath, England, the young owner of the Sally Lunn teashop declares it to be the original shop and named for the original owner. She told us the raised, plain, sweet cakes she served us had been made using the original receipt, and she wrote us a copy.

But in other cases, the manufacturing process had a profound effect on the product itself. For centuries, gelatin, the ancestor of good old familiar Jell-o, was reserved for complicated, luxuriously shaped desserts (think of a hen and chickens, or a chocolate castle) because making it was such a production. I've heard of calf's-foot jelly but have never seen or tasted it. Earlier gelling agents came from deer antlers (hartshorn), sturgeon bladders (isinglass), and even powdered ivory. Well into the 19th Century, gelatin making began by turning a table upside down, tying a sheet to its four legs, then pouring the liquid boiled with the gelling agent through the sheet repeatedly until it ran clear.

Vegetables in the notebook are almost like the dog in Sherlock Holmes who didn't bark. The few vegetables appearing in the notebook are prepared raw, such as in "cold slaw". Cooked vegetables didn't need receipts because people simply boiled them— in my childhood, to gray death. We know now that boiling water for 20 minutes kills many germs; they knew then, and no doubt people for centuries knew, that vegetables not cooked enough were dangerous. (Daring Mrs. Randolph cooked asparagus briefly anyway.) And long cooking persisted after water became relatively reliable.

A Celebratory Meal at Church

By the time the testers and I worked our way through the notebook, Fred had retired, and the two of us moved to my roots in Virginia. To cope with problems that remained in some of the receipts, Adelaide Simpson, gourmet and powerhouse in Lexington, offered to orchestrate one final trial. Twenty-five volunteers took on 35 receipts.

Then, in the basement of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Church in Lexington, we had a gala tasting. Television came. Throngs of people from town tried the final samples and wrote their comments. After tasting a strong punch, the rector opined that the Lees were Episcopalians (true, but they drank very little alcohol), not Presbyterians or Methodists.

Everybody had a good time, but the best part for me had already happened. When I was growing up we didn't talk much about ancestors. But when I started telling about my project, my

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ASH CAKES AND ROAST POSSUM

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THE FOODWAYS OF ENSLAVED AFRICAN AMERICANS

by Dwight A. Eisnach and Herbert C. Covey

Dwight Eisnach and Herbert Covey are the authors of What the Slaves Ate: Recollections of African American Foods and Foodways from the Slave Narratives *(Greenwood Press, 2009). Both of them live in the Denver/ Boulder area. Herbert C. Covey, PhD., is also the author of* African American Slave Medicine: Herbal and Non-Herbal Treatments *(2007) as well as of numerous books and articles on juvenile gangs and on drug addiction. He has been Vice Chair of the Colorado State Juvenile Parole Board since 1994 and Field Administrator for the Colorado Department of Human Services since 1999. Dwight Eisnach is an independent scholar and editor. He began his career as an investigative reporter and later served the Colorado Department of Human Services for some 25 years, successively as Legislative Liaison, Public Information Officer, and Administrator of the Colorado Juvenile Parole Board.*

Much has been written over the years about the complex social, economic, and political outcomes of the institution of slavery and its demise in the United States. Authors have explored a myriad of topics around the upheaval caused by this unfortunate chapter in our country's history. Although there is considerable literature on what slaves ate and how they survived, most of what has been written has been based on second- or third-hand accounts, archaeological evidence, and research of extant documents of the times such as slave-ship logs, plantation rationing logs, and manuals on the treatment of slaves. Surprisingly, precious little has been written using the first-person accounts of the slaves themselves to tell the story of how they subsisted during slavery. In fact, not only did they subsist, they created flavorful and nutritious dishes by supplementing rations of poor-quality food and leftover scraps with their own enterprise and the rich African and Caribbean traditions of peppers and spices.

In writing *What the Slaves Ate: Recollections of African American Foods and Foodways from the Slave Narratives*, we began with what we thought would be the simple strategy of utilizing the Federal Writers' Project, carried out by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930's, as the foundation for studying African American slave foodways of the antebellum period. Despite their flaws and biases, which are detailed in the Introduction of our book, the WPA slave narratives are a rich source of first-person accounts of life under slavery, including details about food, foodways, cooking, and recipes, by the people who lived through this turbulent period in our history.

The Writers' Project hired unemployed writers during the Great Depression and fanned them out across 17 states, mostly in the South, assigning them to interview 2,200 former slaves. The project's goal was to capture a written history of their lives before this history was lost. The resulting interviews created a rich tapestry, and many scholars have since used parts of the narratives to tell stories about slave life. However, to our knowledge, no one had focused on the narratives in a comprehensive and systematic way for the sole purpose of probing into the foodways of slaves, including diet, nutrition, foods eaten, rations available, and the control issues between owners and slaves.

As our project unfolded, we realized that using the narratives alone was not sufficient to reach valid conclusions about what slaves ate and how they prepared, stored, and cooked their food. As with all good scholarship, it is necessary to seek other sources to corroborate one's observations. As a result, more than 300 other sources of literature, periodicals, and other media were added to our research.

Social and Historical Context

Although our project began with more circumscribed tasks in mind, as we progressed it began to broaden and take on a life of its own.

First, it pointed us toward pre-colonial West Africa to find the roots of some of the most historic and important foods, cooking techniques, and agricultural methods that had crossed the Atlantic along with the slaves. Many foods common to North America were indigenous to Africa, such as the yam, the black-eyed bean and certain other legumes, sorghum, okra, watermelon, and certain other melons and cucumbers, all of which could be found on the African continent as early as 4000 BCE. Onion and garlic are also believed to have been in use centuries ago in Africa, as were sesame seeds (*benne*) and collards and other leafy greens, among many others. Anyone interested in the development of antebellum Southern cooking—and the subsequent development of other cuisines such as "soul food", Creole, Cajun, barbecue, Caribbean, and Bahian (in what is now northeastern Brazil)— must begin with the traditions, cooking styles, and crops that were important to West Africans, because all of these cuisines evolved incorporating African influences.

Second, our study prompted us to review some of the complex relationships between owners and slaves over the control and rationing of food and its role in maintaining the dominance of one race over another. Some of our preconceived notions of the impact of slavery on African American foodways were validated by the research, but many others fell by the wayside. Among the latter, for example, was the idea that all slaves were treated the same and ate the same diet. As our research showed, treatment of slaves varied by region and even by individual plantation, and there was tremendous variation in which foods were available to slaves.

The opening chapters of our book set the stage for examining African American slave foodways by first looking at the issue of food as control; the nutrition required to keep field hands reasonably healthy; the benefits and limitations of the narratives and other similar documents; and the ancestral history of native African foods and spices.

Given the importance of food and its social aspects, the study of African American slave diets is an important avenue to understanding the complex social relationships of those living under slavery. For example, even the simple act of breast feeding of enslaved children could evoke power struggles between owners and enslaved mothers. Some owners wanted to permit only three such feedings a day, whereas a mother, claiming her infant was sick, might want five feedings a day. These struggles over food started as soon as the first Africans were boarded onto slave ships, and continued throughout the course of slavery in the United States.

Our book provides some insight into such management/labor relationships between slaves and owners. This issue was also affected by celebrations and special occasions, which were often a time for relaxing the otherwise strictly observed social boundaries between whites and African Americans. The Civil War years, the intrusion of soldiers from both North and South into plantation life, and their impact on slave foodways, are also featured in *What the Slaves Ate*.

Former slaves on James Hopkinson's Plantation, Edisto Island, SC, cultivating sweet potatoes c. 1862-3 after the island fell to Union forces.

Photo by Henry P. Moore. Civil War Treasures from the New-York Historical Society, image aa02037, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/nhihtml/cwnyhshome.html

Sources of Food

The appendices in our book show, as the narratives reflect, that slaves had access to more than 300 different foodstuffs or dishes from various sources. These sources included their own enterprise gardens, wild game, domestic livestock, and rations.

In most cases, the foundation of the slave diet was the basic weekly— or in some cases daily— ration provided by owners. However, since there was little variety and sometimes little quantity provided by the ration, it was supplemented with produce from enterprise gardens, hunting, fishing, trapping, or even stealing.

In Alabama, for example, a typical weekly ration was three to five pounds of pork and a peck of cornmeal. Some plantations would also provide rations of buttermilk, sweet potatoes, and molasses. Sometimes the amount of the ration would vary depending on the role of the individual slave. For example, ditchers and drivers were sometimes allowed extra in their rations due to the intensive labor required for such jobs. For most slaves, however, the ration fell far short of the calories needed to maintain hard field work, which was often carried out in high heat and humidity.

Many ex-slaves, when interviewed for the narratives, mentioned that they had access to wild game. These included ducks, geese, partridge, quail, catfish, perch, alligator, rattlesnake, bear, buffalo, deer, wild hogs, squirrel, raccoon, and opossum. The last of these is detailed further below. Vegetables from enterprise gardens included, but were not limited to, beans, cabbage, collards and other greens, corn, onions, peas, potatoes, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes. Without question, slaves ate other foods not identified in the narratives.

It would be wrong to conclude that slaves had a rich diet incorporating all of these foods. They relied heavily on two basic ingredients, pork and corn, although the narratives also indicate that they were very resourceful in taking advantage of other foods available to them. It would be more accurate to conclude that slaves, when they could, turned to the forests, streams, gardens, and their own means to survive and make the most of these resources.

Sources of Recipes

In his general history of cooking in the U.S., *The American History Cookbook* (2003), Mark H. Zanger noted that slave cooks on plantations would have been familiar with many of the printed recipes found on Southern plantations because they cooked in the kitchens of their owners. White mistresses and others would read the recipes for them to follow. Likewise, some of the slaves' own recipes were eventually included in the plantation cookbooks, although authors rarely acknowledged the slave origin of their recipes.

After emancipation, in the decades following the Civil War, some ex-slaves eventually published their own cookbooks. Among them was Mrs. Abby Fisher, a likely slave from South Carolina, who dictated her book, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, etc.* (San Francisco, 1881). [See Robert W. Brower, "Solving a Culinary History Mystery: Tracing Abby Fisher's Roots to South Carolina", *Repast*, Fall 2007, pp. 4-7, 14.] This and other books, although rare, do include combinations of old slave and white recipes.

However, the published recipes represent only one type of slave recipe. Because few slaves were taught to read or write, some authentic slave recipes were passed down mainly through oral tradition. Although instances are uncommon, the WPA narratives include some recipes and descriptions of how to pre-

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AFRICAN AMERICANS *continued from p. 9*

pare foods, such as ash cakes (detailed further below) or roasted sweet potatoes. In addition there are secondhand descriptions of foods available to slaves, which, although not always recipes per se, can shed some light on how particular foods were prepared.

The advantage of the narratives is that they reveal recipes and food references that were not typically included in traditional Southern plantation or ex-slave cookbooks. For example, slave recipes for possum or squirrel, although a sometimes important food source to slaves, would have been included by neither white nor slave authors in their cookbooks. Our own book includes selected slave recipes drawn from the narratives, a few of which are included below.

Consistent with much of the history of African American slave experiences, many recipes and foodways present during and after the period of enslavement were passed in oral form from one generation to the next. With each passage between generations, there was a chance that recipes and foodways might change.

Ash Cakes

A staple in the diet of many slaves was a type of cornbread often referred to as “ash cake”, “hoe cake”, or “spoon bread”. The term “ash cake” likely derived from either the ashes involved in their baking or from the fact that they were typically coated with a thin dusting of ash on their crusts. The term “hoe cake” was derived from the fact that these griddlecakes were originally baked in a fire on the blade of a hoe or a shovel.

Some of the preparation methods for ash cakes were reminiscent of traditional West African cooking methods for foods such as *fufu*, which is common in Africa and the New World. *Fufu* is prepared from yams, cocoyams, plantains, and/or cassava roots (also known as manioc or yuca, the source of tapioca), which are cut into pieces and boiled, then pounded into a starchy paste or dough. [On *fufu*, see also Apollos N. Bulo, “Out of Africa: Historic Soups and Stews from Nigeria”, *Repast*, Fall 1999, pp. 1-2.]

Ash or hoe cakes were, in their most basic form, baked from a gruel of cornmeal, water, and salt. Some recipes called for adding baking soda to the batter, for purposes of nixtamalization (softening and nutritional enhancement of the corn) and leavening, but as soda was unavailable to many slaves, they substituted ashes obtained by burning certain plant substances such as corn cobs, as was done by Native Americans. Sometimes the ashes from burned watermelon rinds would suffice.

Anstin Pen Parnell of Arkansas, in his narrative collected during the WPA project, recalled his mother baking ash cake:

> She’d take a poker before she put the bread in and rake the ashes off the hearth down to the solid stone or earth bottom, and the ashes would be banked in two hills to one side and the other. Then she would put the batter down on it; the batter would be about an inch thick and about nine inches across. She’d put down three cakes at a time and let ‘em stay there till the cakes were firm— about five minutes on the bare hot hearth. They would almost bake before she covered them up. The cakes had to be dry before they were covered up because if the ashes ever stuck to them while they were wet there would be ashes in them when you would take them out to eat. Two-thirds of the water used in the ash cake was hot water, and that made the batter stick together like it was biscuit dough. She could put it together and take it in her hand and pat it out flat and lay it on the hearth. It would be just as round! That was the art of it!

Abby Fisher, in her book previously mentioned, included a recipe for hoe cake that some believe might be the most authentic slave recipe for this dish:

> Plantation Corn Bread or Hoe Cake
> Half tablespoonful of lard to a pint of meal, one tea-cup of boiling water; stir well and bake on a hot griddle. Sift in meal one teaspoonful of soda.

Possum

Another very common and enjoyed dish among slaves was opossum, commonly known as possum. The opossum was an abundant animal in the South, and its capture and consumption was popular among slaves and even some whites.

The opossum was an ideal quarry for slaves because, being nocturnal, it was active when the slaves were home from the fields. It was easy to tree an opossum and, because it feigned death, easy to capture. Early Southern white settlers preferred opossum to other meats because it had a lot of fat and flavor.

Solomon Northup, a free-born African American from New York, was kidnapped into slavery in 1841 and became a leading abolitionist after being set free. When he wrote about his ordeal in his narrative, *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853), he observed that opossum could be a treat:

> The flesh of the ’coon is palatable, but verily there is nothing in all butcherdom so delicious as a roasted ’possum. They are a round, rather long-bodied little animal, of a whitish color, with a nose like a pig, and caudal extremity like a rat.

Most of the narratives and several other sources in the literature confirm that the preferred way of cooking opossum was to parboil after skinning, and then roast with lard or fatback. It was often prepared with sweet potatoes and brown gravy. Rachel Adams, an ex-slave from Georgia, recalled how her mother would prepare opossum:

> They catched plenty of ’possums and after they was kilt Ma would scald them and rub them in hot ashes and that clean’t them just as pretty and white. Oh! I was fond of possums, sprinkled wid butter and pepper, and baked down ’til de gravy was good and brown. You was lucky if you got to eat ’possum and gnaw de bones after my Ma done cooked it.

Despite their cultural, political, economic and racial struggles, African Americans have retained a strong sense of their traditional culture through a variety of means, and among these, the continuity of food traditions has played a critical role. One of the uplifting personal revelations we had in reading story after story in the narratives was that despite the intolerable and degrading circumstances under which slaves toiled, there was an indomitability of the human spirit which, among other things, allowed them to rejoice in the simple pleasures of food shared with family. ■

RICE IN THE BIG HOUSE, RICE IN THE STREET

&

RICE AND THE LOWCOUNTRY HOMEFRONT

by Heather Welch

Heather Welch is a volunteer at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston, SC, which was founded in 1676 by the Drayton family and was one of the Lowcountry's most successful antebellum plantations. Heather is originally from West Virginia and attended West Virginia University. She has worked in the living history field at sites in West Virginia and in North and South Carolina, and was part of the foodways program at Old Salem in Winston-Salem, NC. She has researched Civil War foodways for over 20 years. Her interest in foodways began when she was a child watching her mother and grandmother in the kitchen.

Detail from a drawing of a gang of men and women at work threshing rice on a plantation.

From *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Oct. 20, 1866, p. 72.

Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-61966. University of Virginia Library, Image Reference NW0088.

Before the first shots of the War for Southern Independence were fired in Charleston harbor, rice was the golden crop of the Lowcountry. The Lowcountry is the area of land from Wilmington, NC to Jacksonville, FL and 50 miles inland. This area became a wealthy "rice kingdom", and the rice center of the United States. For many years it produced up to one-third of the world's consumed rice.

With this abundance, here more than anywhere else in the United States, rice became a constant on the tables of rich and poor, free and slave. This small grain brought wealth to Charleston and sustained its residents, keeping them alive during the difficult years of 1861-65.

Rice in the Antebellum Period

By the mid-18th Century, rice had come to grace the mahogany tables of the wealthy planter class in the Carolina tidewater. *The Carolina Housewife* of 1847 contains no less than 29 receipts for breadstuffs containing rice. These receipts and others in the cookbook reflect the favored dishes of the Lowcountry aristocracy in the antebellum period. [Editor's Note: Descriptions and recipes for rice bread, biscuits, and challah can be found at the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation site, http://www.carolinagoldricefoundation.org/recipes/recipes.html.]

Rice was used not only in breadstuffs, but also as crust for pies such as Rice Pie:

> Rice Pie
>
> Boil a pint of rice. Mix into it well a good spoonful of butter. Line a deep dish with this. Have ready a nicely seasoned stew, made of beef, or any cold meat. Add hard-boiled eggs, if approved. Put them in the dish, and cover over the whole with the buttered rice. Brown it in the oven. Some persons mix a raw egg with the rice and butter, which is an improvement. (Rutledge, p. 85)

This and other rice dishes became so loved by the planter class that even when some of them married and moved away from the Lowcountry, they wrote home asking for receipts of their favorite rice dishes.

The Carolina Housewife also contains receipts for dishes— such as Hoppin' John and Carolina Pilau— that have roots in the foodways of Africa. In fact, the usual foods of the rice planters more resembled the food of their enslaved Africans than it did that of the aristocratic Europeans they otherwise tried to emulate.

When the South Carolina colony was founded in 1670, it was the only colony to have enslaved Africans at the beginning of settlement. Most of the early English settlers were wealthy planters from Barbados, where they had developed a culture based on sugar production using African slaves. They established rice plantations in South Carolina along much the same lines. The slaves were able to maintain some of their cultural heritage, including foodways. In Africa, their usual foods had been stews that included meats, fish, starches, vegetables, and spices.

On the rice plantations, the enslaved were allotted rice as part of their rations. In most cases, especially at planting and harvest time, one or two women were set as cooks to prepare simple rice and bean or pork dishes for the workers in the fields. The dish Hoppin' John is a mixture of pork, rice, and black-eyed peas or other beans, all cooked together in one pot. With their allotted rations and what they could grow and harvest from their own small plots, the enslaved were able to survive. These skills at stretching foods and harvesting from the land would prove useful in the days ahead.

War Blockades and Shortages

After the first shots were fired in Charleston harbor in April 1861, most people were convinced that a short and relatively bloodless conflict would ensue.

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A MATZOH CRISIS IN THE SOUTH

The following passage is from Marcie Cohen Ferris's Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South *(2005), It relates incidents from a diary kept between June 1861 and July 1862 by one Clara Solomon— a 16-year-old Jewish woman in New Orleans— and another incident in which faith led to charity across enemy lines.*

Clara's family owned slaves and, like most of the 25,000 Southern Jews, they were fiercely loyal to the Confederacy.

During Passover in the spring of 1862 Clara Solomon described the "motsoe" (matzoh) shortage in New Orleans. After services at Dispersed of Judah Synagogue congregants complained to each other and to Mr. Da Silva, the synagogue's sexton, who procured matzohs for the congregation. After the Solomons' neighbor, Mrs. Nathan, found a supply of inferior-quality matzohs for both families, Solomon viewed the whole effort as a farce, "surrounded as they are by bread and biscuits." Matzohs were not kept apart from the bakery's yeast bread and baking soda biscuits during the war. "But for form's sake, we must have them" wrote Solomon, stressing the importance of appearances in Jewish New Orleans.

Clara Solomon's anxiety about obtaining matzoh "for form's sake" speaks of her family's dual identity in New Orleans. Bread and biscuits were southern fare that families like the Nathans and Solomons ate every day, while matzohs were ritual foods that they reserved for Passover. During war distinguishing between "regular" food and "ritual" food was practically impossible. The Solomons were white, middle-class southerners, but they were also Jews, and foods like matzoh, treyf [non-kosher] foods like shrimp, and southern foods like okra soup symbolized ethnic boundaries within these worlds. Doing without these foods unraveled the most basic elements of southern and Jewish identity. Later in the week of Passover Solomon wrote, "Our motzoes are so miserably sour that I don't think I have eaten a whole one." She reluctantly turned to cornbread as a substitute. "I expect before long we shall all starve."

Remaining observant during the Civil War was difficult for all Jews, both at home and on the battle front. In February 1865, the Jews of Savannah wrote to the *Jewish Messenger* in New York describing a serious matzoh crisis. The crisis was due to the desperate financial situation of Savannah Jews who had "entirely lost the means of baking for the ensuing Passover." The editor of the *Jewish Messenger* appealed to its readers to overlook their regional allegiances during these difficult times, and the appeal worked. Savannah received three thousand pounds of matzoh from New York and two thousand pounds from Philadelphia.

LEE FAMILY *continued from page 7*

aunt, who was in her 90's and asked not to be named, began telling me about people she'd known, whether appearing in the notebook or otherwise relevant. She recognized my great-aunt Mary's handwriting. She had many unpublished photographs of many of the people, including a pair of sisters who I don't think were kin, although one had contributed a receipt. The pictures jogged my memory about my own photos filed away at Arlington House and forgotten, like the notebook itself. I did additional research of my own, of course, but it was because of this aunt that I found my family.

I can't prove that the list of food with all those hams marks a huge celebration on the day the renewed Grace Episcopal Church became the Robert E. Lee Memorial Church. But I like to think so, and it could be. The general had died in 1870, and the collection seems to continue through about 1873. Raising money took several years, during which time Mrs. Lee hand-colored cards depicting George and Martha Washington[6]. She also sewed "housewives" (mending kits) to sell to Washington College students and the cadets at nearby Virginia Military Institute. She even parted with treasured letters written by President Washington.

I can't help wondering about all the other neglected housekeeping books stuck away, unread sources of domestic history and the daily lives of ancestors. The Lees may be easier to learn about, since other people have studied them. But anyone, if he or she is lucky, can find a family, too. ■

Endnotes

1. Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, is the large house surrounded by the Arlington National Cemetery, across the Potomac River from Washington, DC. It was formerly named the Custis-Lee Mansion. Restored to the period when the Lees lived there, it is open free to the public. The general loved the house but never owned it; it descended to his wife.
2. According to the late food historian Karen Hess, Jefferson would have known about ice cream before he went to France. See Karen Hess, ed., *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 13.
3. Fanny Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cookbook* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1896). Editions 1896-1965; first facsimile edition, New York: Crown, 1973. Also available at http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book_48.cfm
4. Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife: or, Methodical Cook* (Baltimore: Plaskitt, Fite, 1838). Also available at http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book_10.cfm
5. Marion Fontaine Cabell Tyree, *Housekeeping in Old Virginia, Containing Contributions from Two Hundred and Fifty Ladies in Virginia and her Sister States, Distinguished for Their Skill in the Culinary Art, and Other Branches of Domestic Economy* (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph & English, 1878; Louisville, KY: John P. Morton & Co., 1879). Reprint, Louisville, KY: Favorite Recipes Press, 1965. Also available at http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book_34.cfm
6. Martha was the paternal grandmother of Mrs. Lee's father, George Washington Parke Custis, and it was she and the future President who actually raised him at Mt. Vernon.

ROUTE 66 THEME MEAL

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IT WENT DOWN REAL GOOD

Some 26 members of the Culinary Historians took a virtual 2,448-mile road trip together last August 14, creating a meal that re-enacted the varied dining options available to motorists along historic Route 66.

This was the latest of CHAA's creative semiannual participatory theme meals. The series itself has had a glorious 20-year history. We're indebted to members Art and Joanne Cole for again organizing this round, including the invitations, registrations, resource suggestions, and table decorations. The meal was held in the Earhart Village Clubhouse in Ann Arbor.

Art and Joanne Cole decking the hall with roadway paraphernalia.

Photo: Mariam Breed.

A Slice of America

A long and storied highway that left its mark in American literature and song, Route 66 was, more fundamentally, an integral part of economic and social development in the United States during the 20th Century. Sometimes referred to as "The Main Street of America", it connected the great cities of Chicago, St. Louis, Oklahoma City, Amarillo, Santa Fe, Flagstaff, and Los Angeles. Between these, it ran through smaller towns and gas-station hamlets, bridged across great rivers, and wended its way alongside canyons and caverns and railroad tracks, wheat silos and sheep pastures, mesas and deserts.

The thoroughfare was established in 1926, in part by improving and connecting sections of older roads, such as the Lone Star Route, the Ozark Trails system, and the Postal Highway. Much of this early Route 66 was gravel or graded dirt. Paving continued until 1939, at which point Route 66 became the nation's first completely-paved highway.

Because of its largely flat, smooth ride, the immense distance it covered, and its interconnection of major cities and beautiful sites and locales, "The Great Diagonal Way" was a route of choice for all kinds of motorists, from truckers and travelers to vacationers and joy-riders. In fact, the *truck stop* as we know it today— a haven complete with service station, restaurant, showers, bunkhouses, lounges, and repair shop— arose in large measure on US-66, at places like the Dixie Truckers Home (est. 1928) outside Bloomington, Illinois.

The route also came to symbolize America's love affair with private auto travel, which seemed imbued with the freedom and romance of the open road. In 1946, Nat King Cole immortalized the highway in the earliest recording of "Route 66", which would be followed by many other artists since then:

> Won't you get hip to this timely tip
> When you make that California trip,
> A-get your kicks on Route sixty-six.

Eating On-the-Go

The local commerce of Route 66 tells a story of people in Middle America and their enterprising spirit, as well as an important chapter in the modernization of foodways.

Local residents saw new roads and highways coming through, and droves of motorists from other regions of the country soon followed, traipsing across their town squares and former back yards. But as their landscapes were being transformed, the local people made the best of it and sometimes made a bonanza. They carried out a transformation of their own, turning the likes of gas stations and discarded railroad cars and Quonset huts into roadside dining places and watering holes.

To attract and feed the hungry travelers, they built outlandish, eye-catching structures, created colorful signs and slogans, and invented every imaginable variety of layered, stuffed, grilled, or fried food. Not to mention beverages, from piping hot to frozen cold— even the "milk shake", a form of ice cream that could be slurped through a straw! Everything was designed so that motorists could consume it on the go— sometimes even inside their vehicles.

Thus, from an older time in which travelers had packed their own tablecloths and sandwiches and other picnic-style fare in their cars, the nation moved into the current era, where it is routine to purchase fully prepared meals at eateries situated directly along the driving route.

A Mixing Bowl

Traffic flow also creates a mixture of different cultures and foodways. Thus, everyone in the areas served by the route came into closer contact and familiarity with the traditions of other regions.

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ROUTE 66 MEAL *continued from page 13*

John Steinbeck portrayed a memorable early example of this in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), when he described the Joad family and other "Okies" traveling from the Depression-era Dust Bowl to seek a better life as farm workers in California. Their jalopies crawled westward along Route 66, piled high with their pots, pans, and other paltry and ragged possessions. In that novel, Steinbeck called the route "The Mother Road".

The highway facilitated the travel, tourism, and permanent relocation of people. They took their customs, including their taste preferences and favorite dishes, with them, and they also came into new contact with the sights and savors and smells of the regions to which they traveled. All of this gave higher visibility and broader popularity to many regional American foods and foodways.

But eventually this began to turn into its opposite. The mass mobility fostered by automotive transport contributed to the large-scale commercialization of food and other aspects of American life, gradually erasing regional distinctions altogether. By 1962, Steinbeck was already lamenting this death of localism, this growing national homogeneity, in his *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, a semi-fictional travelogue of his drive around the U.S. by camper truck, some of it along US-66 in the Southwest.

Multilane, high-speed turnpikes, and especially the Interstate Highway System begun in 1956, gradually supplanted Route 66 and literally bypassed it in most areas. Increasingly obsolete, the route was officially decommissioned in 1985.

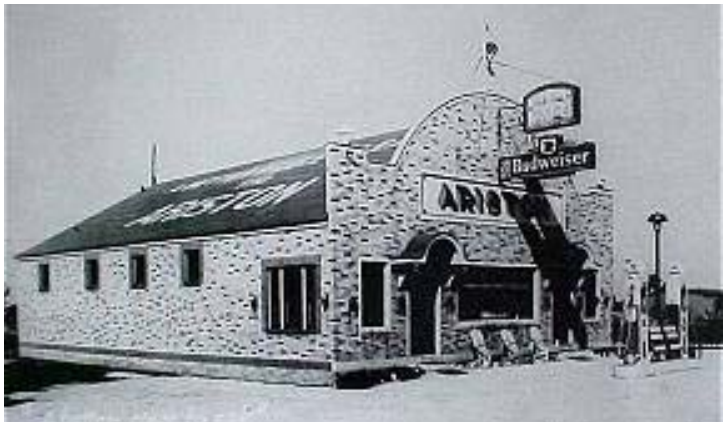
Today, much of the regional character of American food in the pre-highway era, and even the process by which that regionalism was lost, is no longer visible to the casual observer. Instead, this knowledge must be recovered through the research of historians, anthropologists, and other professionals. The published volumes of oral histories that were gathered by the WPA during the Depression, described earlier in *Repast* (Summer 2009, pp. 2-3), constitute an important baseline. Robert Dirks, an anthropologist at Illinois State University, has just completed a new study for central Illinois (see sidebar, "Toolin' the Gags", p. 17), while T. Lindsay Baker, a history professor at Tarleton State University in Texas, is currently researching the roadside foodways of all of Route 66 between Chicago and Los Angeles.

Route 66 at Mid-Century

When CHAA member John Thomson was a boy, his family would drive along Route 66 every year to visit his father's parents in California. In the hour before our meal began, John sat down with *Repast* to share his recollections.

Unlike the multilane interstates that supplanted it, US-66 was mostly a two-lane highway that passed through a lot of towns, John recalled. You could get stuck— for what seemed like hours— behind a slow-moving truck or farmer's rig. At the time, the only entertainment was the car radio, road games, and the occasional clever Burma Shave or other road sign. Any placard saying "Good Eats" was tantalizing.

In the era before the dominance of fast-food joints, John told us, there were basically two types of eateries along the route: the restaurant and the diner. The latter were known as "greasy spoons".



The Ariston Café, Litchfield, IL, in 1935.
Photo courtesy of Nick Adam and the National Park Service

The greasy spoon in a small town was often the only eatery there. The aroma of brewing coffee always filled the place. Besides tables, there would also be a luncheonette-style counter where the locals usually sat. A band of chrome or other metal often ran around the rim of each table as well as the counter, and the counter's swivel-stools. There were no tablecloths, and the napkins were of paper. The floor might be of linoleum, or else small square ceramic tiles in a checkerboard pattern.

Most of the servers were women. The counter man was often the cashier as well. From the counter, a diner could watch some of the cooking operation going on in the kitchen. Orders were constantly being written on slips and shouted back to the cook(s). There was always a bustle of waitresses zipping back and forth between the tables, counter, and kitchen.

The food at a greasy spoon was *road food* par excellence. There would generally be a "blue plate special", such as chicken or turkey with mashed potatoes and gravy. The premiere dishes were the pork tenderloin sandwich and the chicken-fried steak. Pork back in those days tended to be less lean and more flavorful than nowadays. The pork would be pounded thin, breaded as with fried chicken (dusted with flour, dipped in an egg-buttermilk wash, and coated with seasoned bread crumbs), then deep-fried or pan-fried, and served on a bun. The chicken-fried steak was a beef cube-steak of relatively high quality (often tenderized), breaded with an egg-buttermilk wash and seasoned flour, and served under a chicken gravy or a peppery white sausage-gravy.

John told us that the standard greasy-spoon meal was often chintzy: the portions were small, and corners would be cut in the choice of ingredients or cooking methods. Even a chicken-fried steak might be breaded twice ("double-dipped") to make it look bigger, diluting the beef flavor. Desserts, however, were an exception: they were "home made", i.e., prepared either in a local home or on the premises, and had excellent flavor. They were kept fresh in a glass case or multi-tiered "safe", and were served in large portions. In this way, a diner could really feature its cakes, pies, and other desserts.

A motorist learned— the hard way, if necessary— not to trust milk at a greasy spoon. Instead, the kids might drink a bottle of orange crush (made with real oranges), grape crush, lemonade, Coca Cola or other commercial carbonated drinks, often purchased from a coin-op machine on the premises. The adults would slurp down hot coffee or iced tea. Diners didn't serve alcohol.

The Mill, Lincoln, IL. Photo: David Taylor

In contrast with the greasy spoons were the more fully realized restaurants and road houses, which could be relatively fancy, with fabric tablecloths, a trained wait-staff, and a selection of alcoholic beverages. John recalls that in railroad towns, you could stop at a Harvey's restaurant, which was usually attached to, or near, a railroad hotel. (For more on the Harvey's chain, see below in the section "The Southwest".)

Shoving Off, and Washing It Down

As guests arrived for our meal, they observed that the dining tables had been decorated to resemble Route 66 itself. The tablecloths of black plastic had the sheen of a newly paved stretch of asphalt, and were striped with a double ribbon of yellow crêpe paper like a highway centerline. Each table had a pylon-like centerpiece holding a hand-made signpost marker for one of the key cities along the route, such as Chicago, Oklahoma City, or Flagstaff. Roadmaps of various U.S. states had been spread out on the tables, with the Mother Road traced across them in highlighter.

The participants placed the main dishes they'd prepared on a central row of tables, and desserts on a sideboard in the corner of the great hall. Each dish was labeled by its preparer with its name, source, and often its history and ingredients.

We washed down our whole meal with appropriate beverages including lemonade and iced tea, provided by the Coles.

The Great Lakes Region

The eastern terminus of Route 66 was Chicago on Lake Michigan. The road marched across the length and breadth of the great state of Illinois, from the metropolitan northeast to the flat corn-crop expanses of the southwest. Thus, it caused peoples and their foodways to rub shoulders, joining the urban with the rural, and the lake coast with the loam-rich inland.

Typical Great Lakes road dishes brought to our gathering included—

- a tossed salad [contributed by member Rich Kato], made with iceberg lettuce, carrot, green pepper, yellow squash, and locally grown tomatoes.
- Italian Meatloaf [Kay and Steve Oldstrom], made Illinois-style with ground veal, pork, beef, garlic, and three Italian cheeses.

American Midwestern culture has been shaped by Italian and other European immigrants for centuries. This was reflected in the hearty roadside food at our meal.

The Schnitzel Sandwich [Randy Schwartz and Mariam Breed] is a famous pork dish from The Mill, a Route 66 eatery in Lincoln, IL. An American adaptation of Central European *wiener schnitzel*, it is a pork loin chop, pounded thin, marinated with buttermilk and dried mustard, breaded, and fried. The Mill's founder Paul Coddington used veal cutlets originally, but switched to pork in the 1930's. The fried cutlet is served with the same type of toppings and bun as is a hamburger. (Such a pork schnitzel sandwich is also popular in Indiana, and a broader phenomenon of "pork tenderloin sandwiches" exists throughout the Midwest.)

Originally calling it The Blue Mill, Coddington had opened the place in 1929 as a sandwich stand in the form of a Dutch windmill, white with blue trim, complete with turning arms. A waitress or two, in a color-themed uniform of blue with a white apron, was on hand around the clock to dish up the Schnitzel Sandwich and other fried or grilled eats. In 1945, the stand was purchased by Albert and Blossom Huffman, who upgraded The Mill to a bar/restaurant. For the barroom and dance hall, they appended to the rear of the mill tower an Army barracks from Camp Ellis (Ipava, IL). Some of the colorful denizens in that era included the rock'n'roller Coonhound Johnny and a biker gang called The Grim Reapers. The place closed in 1996, but local fans have preserved the building by turning it into a museum/shrine.

To register the continuing influence of immigrants arriving in the Midwest in fresh new waves, Bonnie and Patrick Ion made an Indian dish of pork shoulder and chickpeas, from a cookbook by Madhur Jaffrey.

As the poet Carl Sandburg reminded us, Chicago was the "Hog Butcher for the World", so it's not surprising that the Illinois byways have been a pork-lover's paradise. For decades, the Tropics Restaurant, another eatery in Lincoln, was famous for its palm-tree décor and for its Horseshoe Sandwich, a warm open-face sandwich of sliced ham on two side-by-side pieces of thick toast, topped with French fries and then a Welsh rarebit-like cheese sauce. (You could also get a smaller version called the Pony Shoe Sandwich.) The Horseshoe was named for its resemblance to a smithy's routine: the toast was the horse's hoof, the arc of ham was the shoe to be fastened to it, the fries were the nails, and the serving plate was the anvil. The meal was invented in 1928 at the Leland Hotel in Springfield, IL, the town officially recognized as the place where Route 66 had been born two years earlier.

At The Pig Hip in Broadwell, IL, another Route 66 eatery, you could order a Pig Hip, a sandwich of fresh (not cured) ham, baked for 4½ hours, sliced paper-thin, piled high on a bun, and served with a secret sauce (believed to be an emulsion of eggs, oil, catsup, and Worcestershire). Owner Ernie Edwards, who invented the dish in 1938, used to joke that part of the reason the sandwich was so good was that he used only meat from the hog's left hind leg, not the right. "When a hog scratches," he explained, "it has a tendency to raise its right leg and scratch. That makes the skin tough. So we only use the left side."

Our array of Midwestern desserts included Art's Coconut Cream Pie [John and Carroll Thomson], a recipe from the Ariston Café in Litchfield, IL, not far from St. Louis. The recipe was taken from Marian Clark's *The Route 66 Cookbook: Comfort Food from the Mother Road* (Tulsa, OK: Council Oak Books, 1993). The fil-

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ROUTE 66 MEAL *continued from page 15*

ling is thickened with egg yolks and cornstarch, and the egg whites are beaten for use in the sweet meringue topping.

The little Ariston, with its arched façade of beige-colored brick, is one of the oldest remaining eateries on Route 66. It is still run by the Adam family, who opened it in 1924 and followed a re-routing of US-66 to its present site in 1935. There were two gas pumps in front, and the 1938 menu listed porterhouse steak at 85¢, bacon and eggs or a BLT for 25¢, and a glass of Budweiser for 15¢. The current menu looks like it benefited from decades of Route 66 cross-pollination, embracing dishes of Chicago's Greek immigrant community to the northeast as well as Hispanic favorites from the American Southwest.

Sherry Sundling contributed a different version of coconut cream pie, with an Italian-type meringue, as well as a peach-blueberry pie. The latter recipe— with the peach skins left on for color and flavor, and boasting a latticed upper crust— won a Blue Ribbon at the Ohio State Fair. Both of Sherry's pies had crusts to die for— or at least to drive many, many miles for.

Especially by offering homemade pies and good coffee, the greasy spoons along Route 66 went out of their way to attract long-haul truckers and other nighttime motorists. Home baker Edna Sherrington of Chenoa, Illinois, became famous for her pies, which she made for Steve's Café, a popular gasoline-alley restaurant located on US- 66 in that little town.

In his amusing memoir, "The Quest for Pie" (*Antæus*, Spring 1992; anthologized in his essay collection *Paper Trail*, 1994), the late writer and anthropologist Michael Dorris recalled that as a boy, his family allowed him to plan their cross-country Summer road trips. He would always plot them out so they would pass through Paoli, Indiana, where there was a café that, according to his mom, had the best latticed pie crusts anywhere:

> Woven in intricate patterns across a sea of blueberry or peach, each segment was crisp and melting, studded with just the right amount of sugar, laced with a sudden jolt of almond extract, and browned to perfection. If I brought us through Paoli too soon after a major meal, we might order our twenty-five-cents-apiece slices for the crust alone, reluctantly leaving the fruit on the green plastic plates.

Lisa Putman made us an early unfilled version of the Twinkie pastry. Hostess Twinkies evolved from such unfilled sponge cakes, which were served with strawberries. The cream-filled Hostess Twinkie was introduced in 1930 by Chicago-based Continental Baking Co. (also makers of Wonder Bread) as a way to extend production of the cakes into the months when strawberries were unavailable.

Missouri and Kansas

From the banks of the Mississippi, the Great Diagonal Way passed through St. Louis, the Gateway to the West. Driving southwest from there, a motorist would pass through the northeastern foothills of the Ozark Plateau, and later slice off a tiny corner of far-southeastern Kansas.

Kansas Cucumber Salad [Phil and Barbara Zaret] was made from a recipe on the Taste of Home website (http://www.tasteofhome.com). It is a salad of sliced cucumber and

La Fonda Pudding by Nancy Harrington (left); latticed peach-blueberry pie by Sherry Sundling (right). Photo: Mariam Breed.

chopped green onion, in a dressing mixed from Miracle Whip, sugar, apple cider vinegar, and dried dill.

New member Robin Watson made two dishes that gave us an idea of the kind of fare available at finer restaurants along the Route: cheddar-chive biscuits from Bevo Mill, and Austrian cabbage from the House of Maret. Both restaurants are St. Louis landmarks featuring fine food from the Central European immigrant tradition. The recipes were from Norma Maret Bolin's *The Route 66 St. Louis Cookbook: The Mother Lode of Recipes from the Mother Road* (St. Louis Transitions, 2009).

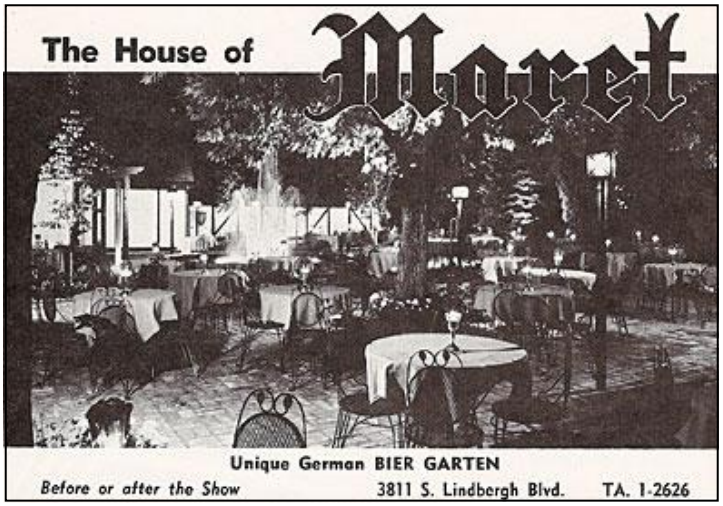
Bevo Mill is a lavish, many-roomed restaurant inside an authentic Dutch-style windmill of stone and stucco, constructed by beer tycoon Augustus A. Busch, Sr., in 1916. That was the year that alcohol was prohibited in the U.S. armed forces, and with Congress drafting a Prohibition Amendment, the Anheuser-Busch company began brewing a nonalcoholic malt beverage or "near beer" called Bevo (influenced by the Czech word *pevo*, "beer"). Mr. Busch used the Mill Room inside as his private dining room, and the other rooms were open as an elegant public restaurant. Since 2009 it has been operated by Louie Lausevich and Milan Manjencich (L & M Catering), mostly for weddings and other private functions.

In 1930, three years before the repeal of Prohibition, Bill Maret, Sr., and his wife Bertha, started the House of Maret as a gas station on Lindbergh Boulevard that also sold sandwiches and beer pulled from an undisclosed tub of ice. Over the decades, the family upgraded it into a fancy German/ French restaurant and *biergarten*. The Austrian cabbage dish from there is made in a skillet with chopped green cabbage, onion, bell pepper, celery, and tomato, diced bacon, sugar, vinegar, caraway seeds, and spices. The restaurant is now called Growler's Pub.

Oklahoma and Texas

In some ways, when the motorist reached the flat, wide expanses of the open prairie, he had reached the heart of the Mother Road. In fact, the National Route 66 Museum is located in Elk City, OK.

Oklahoma Beans [Julie and Bob Lewis] were made with a recipe from the Legends of America website (www.legendsofamerica.com), where one finds several pages of Route 66 favorites. The dried pinto beans are cooked with bacon,



Old postcard for House of Maret, St. Louis, MO.

tomato, green chilies, chili powder, and cumin seeds, and are dished up sprinkled with grated cheddar.

Dan and Jan Longone's schedules didn't permit any home cooking this time, but they regaled us with a Hummingbird Cake from Zingerman's Bakehouse in town. This cake is popular in states such as Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, southern Illinois, and the Carolinas. Made with alternating layers of cake and a cream-cheese-based frosting, it is studded with fruits and nuts such as banana, pineapple, coconut, and pecans. The website www.foodtimeline.org includes the earliest known printed recipe, from Mrs. L. H. Wiggins of Greensboro, NC, published in *Southern Living* magazine (February 1978). It is believed to be an American adaptation of a cake originally from Jamaica, where it is often called Dr. Bird Cake (the Doctor Bird is a type of hummingbird that lives only in Jamaica).

The Southwest

"Kiss my grits, Mel!" was the catchphrase of a sassy waitress on "Alice", a 1970's-80's TV comedy series set in Mel's Diner, a greasy spoon on the outskirts of Phoenix. Motorists hitting such diners in the Southwest (which were often called "cafés") were

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Toolin' the Gags

Quiz question: What is the leading restaurant chain that was born along Route 66?

Correct answer: Steak 'n Shake, whose first restaurant was established beside the highway in Normal, IL in 1932, and which is now the second-oldest hamburger chain in the U.S. (after White Castle).

The rise and impact of Steak 'n Shake is one of many fascinating stories recounted in a new book by Robert Dirks, *Come & Get It!: McDonaldization and the Disappearance of Local Food from a Central Illinois Community* (Bloomington, IL: McLean County Historical Society, 2011; 352 pp., $19.95 pbk.). The book is the fruit of a recent exhibit at the McLean County Museum of History that was curated by Dr. Dirks. Dirks, an emeritus professor of anthropology at Illinois State University, was the author of the article "What Early Dietary Studies of African Americans Tell Us about Soul Foods", *Repast*, Spring 2010.

In his book, Dirks recounts that Steak 'n Shake originated when Gus and Edith Belt established an eatery called The Shell Inn in an old house next to their Shell gas station on US-66. It prospered and expanded, and was soon renamed White House Steak 'n Shake in partial imitation of White Castle, which had been founded in Wichita, KS in 1921.

But whereas the White Castle chain was geared to carry-out meals, Steak 'n Shake was geared to a newer concept, the drive-in, where food is mostly delivered by car-hop. It catered especially to students from nearby Illinois State. "Toolin' the Gags", a slang phrase for nighttime cruising on a loop back and forth between the two Steak 'n Shakes nearest campus, became a ritual of Illinois State students that lasted for decades. To attract evening customers, bright neon signs were lit, and an array of 4,000 light bulbs blinked on and off in sequence, lending a carnival-like atmosphere.

Originally, fried chicken or fish with French fries and all-you-can-eat coleslaw sold for 45¢; a glass of beer cost another 9¢. There was a Steak Hamburger of ground sirloin, grilled in butter and served on a large toasted bun, along with home-baked beans and potatoes. The Steak Bar-B-Cue was a variant of this, topped with a Southern barbecue sauce.

Part of Steak 'n Shake's broader appeal was its cleanliness and quality, highly unusual for a sandwich shop at the time. The meat came from the highly reputable Pfaelzer Bros. in Chicago. Ingredients and cooking methods were printed on the menu. A new type of aluminum-alloy grill with a built-in thermostat was developed for the chain. Cooking operations were timed for speed, and deliberately made visible to customers.

Come & Get It is much more than a collection of interesting facts and stories such as those surrounding Steak 'n Shake. By tracing the history of cooking and dining in Bloomington, Normal, the rest of McLean County, and the vicinity, the book reveals the process by which it became increasingly difficult to find locally-produced food in this area.

Dirks's study begins in the 19th Century, including the culinary contributions of immigrants from Ireland and the European Continent. There is, for instance, a discussion of the food and drink of Amish, Mennonite, and other Anabaptist settlers, such as whiskey, *zwieback*, and *schnitz un knepp*. During this era, many families living outside the urban areas produced and processed nearly everything they ate, visiting a grocery store only occasionally.

However, by the turn of the century, as industry and urbanization developed, lunch rooms, working men's clubs, and cafeterias arose as ways to serve simple, inexpensive meals to workers and other busy people. This suggests that the rise of public eateries and of faster, more convenient ways to prepare, serve, and consume food were impelled by underlying economic necessities, more than by the taste preferences of individuals. The urban and rural diets of various strata, including African-Americans, during the Great Depression and the World Wars are also brought under examination by Dirks.

ROUTE 66 MEAL *continued from page 17*

La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, NM, was built in 1922 and then turned into a 156-room Harvey House in 1926.

brought face to face with modern American ways of eating corn, beans, tomatoes, chilies, and other foods from the heritage of Native and Hispanic people.

New Mexico Cornbread [Joanne and Art Cole] is an excellent version, incorporating creamed corn, mild green chilies, and sharp cheddar cheese. The recipe was from Jean Hewitt's *The New York Times Heritage Cookbook* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972). In New Mexico, the "Land of Enchantment", the chili pepper and the pinto bean are enshrined as the official state vegetables. Chilies are used there in hundreds of other dishes, such as *enchiladas*, *chiles relleños*, chile beef stews, and green-chile cheeseburgers. Meanwhile, in Arizona, a restaurant family in Phoenix claims to have invented the *chimichanga*, or deep-fried burrito, in 1946.

Hillbilly Burgers [Jan Arps and Tavi Prundeanu] are still served at the Summit Inn (est. 1925), a Route 66 diner in Cajon Pass, CA, as well as other diners in the area. Jan used a recipe from the website www.cooks.com. She browned some ground beef in a skillet with chopped onion and celery, drained the fat and added bottled barbecue sauce and grated sharp cheddar, placed this mixture inside hamburger buns spread with butter and mustard, wrapped these in aluminum foil, and heated them in the oven for 20 minutes. The result has some of the same messy, greasy, working-class appeal as do the Sloppy Joe, the White Castle slider, and the *poutine* of Québec. The Summit Inn version is more of a conventional hamburger, but served on a toasted garlic roll with French fries.

Chili Lime Rice [Joanne and Art Cole] is a side-dish made in a skillet and served warm. The dish is from the El Tovar Lodge, a luxury hotel opened in 1905 and turned into a Harvey hotel for railroad travelers in 1954. Situated on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, it is now in Grand Canyon National Park. The recipe was drawn from Kathleen Bryant's *Western National Park Lodges Cookbook* (Cooper Square Publishing, 2007). Successively, onion, garlic, and a small quantity of tomato paste are added to an oiled skillet and sautéed, then the result is de-glazed with fresh lime juice. Cooked rice is then added to the skillet, followed by ground red chile, chopped cilantro, salt, and pepper.

Gone to California: Doris Miller

As our meal came to a close, CHAA co-founder Jan Longone gave a spoken tribute and farewell to longtime member Doris Miller, who was attending her last CHAA event before moving out of state.

Doris was one of the first people to join our group, back in the 1980's. She is relocating to Walnut Creek, in the San Francisco Bay area, to be near her daughters.

Before her departure, Doris sent us a farewell greeting:

> To all my friends with wide-ranging appetites and adventurous palates. I have relished the extraordinarily flavorable, sweet and spicy times I've shared with all of you. I'm certain that there will be food adventures to be had in California. So long and stay hungry.

The Harvey Houses were very classy establishments, begun in 1876 and growing to a chain that included nearly 40 restaurants, mostly in the Southwest. They were situated alongside passenger depots on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway. An article about the Harvey restaurants, "Hey, Waitress!" by Alison Owings, appeared in *Gastronomica*, Winter 2003. Stephen Fried's *Appetite for America*, a biography of Fred Harvey and the latest of several books about the chain, was described in our "Morsels and Tidbits" column, Spring 2010.

La Fonda pudding [Nancy and Bob Harrington] was made from a recipe by Konrad Allgaier, Chef at La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, another one of the grand former Harvey Hotels. Until a re-routing in 1938, US-66 ran parallel to the Santa Fe railroad. It skirted the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, and passed right through the midtown Plaza, where motorists could purchase Indian jewelry and blankets.

La Fonda pudding is more like a dark cake or brownie, made with finely crushed graham cracker crumbs instead of flour. The other ingredients are eggs, sugar, chopped walnuts, baking powder, salt, and vanilla. It is baked in a buttered pan, cooled and cut into squares, and served with whipped cream. Nancy found the recipe in George H. Foster and Peter C. Weiglin, *The Harvey House Cookbook: Memories of Dining Along the Santa Fe Railroad* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1992; Lanham, MD: Baker and Taylor, 2006).

Sweetly— because they honeymooned there in 1962— the Harringtons have studied the foods of Route 66 and explored its length and breadth in recent years. Bob is a retired road-surface engineer and consultant. The couple plans a second Route 66 honeymoon to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary next year.

Classic Banana pudding [Tony Putman] was made in the style of Ed's Kitchen, which was Tony's father's café in Temecula, CA, from about 1966 to 1972. Like many diners, they always used the recipe that appeared (and still appears) on the side of each box of Nilla Wafers, a Nabisco product first made in 1967. (Vanilla wafers themselves date back to at least the 1880's, when a recipe appeared in *The Woman Suffrage Cook Book*, edited by Mrs. Hattie A. Burr, c. 1886.) The old country-western song "L.A. Freeway", written by Guy Clark, includes the line, "Throw away all your papers and that moldy box of Vanilla Wafers". ■

MORSELS & TIDBITS

The Greater Midwest Foodways Alliance invites participation in its annual conference, to be held at Kendall College in Chicago on Apr. 27-29, 2012. The theme this year is, "Road Food: Exploring the Midwest One Bite at a Time". For more info, see http://www.greatermidwestfoodways.com/.

As noted in this column in the past few issues, the status of rural and urban farming and its relation to food have drawn increased public attention, notably in Michigan. New developments include:

- Oran B. Hesterman, a former agronomy professor at Michigan State University who now runs the Ann Arbor-based nonprofit Fair Food Network, has just published a book, *Fair Food: Growing a Healthy, Sustainable Food System For All* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011; 320 pages, $24.99 hbk.). The book is an inspiring and practical guide to changing our food habits and food systems. Hesterman explains how unsustainability resulted from the one-sided pursuit of efficiency, profit, and convenience. He sets forth principles and actions needed to bring about restructuring, and he describes people and organizations across the country who are already creatively working toward that.
- Several CHAA members got together for a Detroit Food and Farm tour on Sep. 17, arranged by our Program Chair, Laura Gillis (who volunteers at a two-acre urban farm near the corner of McNichols and John R.). Olivia Dobbs, an urban studies student at Wayne State University, led the tour as part of her undergraduate research. Stops included Peaches and Greens, a farm that markets by truck to give inner-city residents better access to fresh produce; Earthworks Urban Farm, a program of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen; and Gleaners Community Food Bank.
- "Michigan's Harvest: Food, Farming and Community" was a series of exhibits and talks hosted by Macomb Community College's Albert L. Lorenzo Cultural Center between Sep. 24 and Nov. 20. The exhibits focused on Michigan Regional Culture Through Food; Michigan's Harvest; Michigan's Heritage Barns; America's Agricultural Fairs; and Tableware from the Detroit Institute of Arts. There were also about 20 talks, on such topics as community-supported agriculture, Detroit's Eastern Market, beekeeping, Great Lakes fish, sustainable food systems, and food rescue. Our own Jan Longone spoke about the Longone Culinary Archive; Priscilla Massie on Michigan's culinary past; Lucy Long on culinary tourism at home; and Mark Bittman on the future of food.
- "Down on the Farm: Specialty Agriculture in Berrien County" is an exhibit running until January 2012 in Berrien Springs, MI. The exhibit is on view at The History Center, which is located inside the 1839 Greek Revival-style courthouse at Courthouse Square. Visitors will learn about the specialty farms that operated in the area over the years, such as the Israelite House of David farms, the Emmanuel Missionary College dairy farm, the Berrien County Poor Farm, the Edward Brohman peach orchard and other "U-Picks", and local wineries.

Two theatrical plays focusing on historical culinary experts hit the stage this Fall:

- The Indianapolis Repertory Theater presented "'I Love to Eat': Cooking with James Beard", a one-man play written by James Still and starring Robert Neal.
- At the Connelly Theater in Manhattan, the 3 Sticks troupe presented "Le Gourmand, or Gluttony!", a fanciful operetta about Grimod de la Reynière, served in 10 antic "courses".

This year, Penguin Books has issued a collection of "Great Food" reprints. Each of the 20 books is a handsome $12 paperback consisting of extensive excerpts from one cooking classic. Examples include:

- Dr. A. W. Chase, *Buffalo Cake and Indian Pudding* (96 pp.), which was originally published as *Dr. Chase's Third, Last and Complete Receipt Book* (1887). Chase, based in Ann Arbor, was a self-made travelling physician, salesman, and author who built a publishing empire out of his wildly popular compilations of recipes, remedies, and other household hints.
- Alexis Soyer, *The Chef at War* (144 pp.), the flamboyant Frenchman's colorful account of his time improving the food served to British troops on the Crimean War front.

Andrew P. Haley has written *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011; 384 pp., $39.95 hbk.). The author, an associate professor of American cultural history at the Univ. of Southern Mississippi, examines changes in restaurant culture during the period, and argues that public dining was one of the first spheres in which urban middle-class consumers rose to become leading arbiters of culture. Topics include battles over cosmopolitan cuisine, French-language menus and the "Americanization" of ethnic food, the early movements for "scientific" and "healthy" eating, and women's entry into the public dining room. Dr. Haley is delivering a related talk on January 7 for the Chicago Foodways Roundtable; for more details, check the website http://culinaryhistorians.org/.

On the Back Burner: We invite ideas and submissions for *Repast*, including for these planned future theme-issues: Foods of India (Winter 2012); Civil War Sesquicentennial, Parts 3-4 (Spring and Summer 2012); and 20th-Century American Cookbooks and Their Authors (Fall 2012). Suggestions for future themes are also welcome. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, December 11, 2011
4-7 p.m., Earhart Village Clubhouse
(835 Greenhills Drive, Ann Arbor)
Participatory theme meal, "New England Dinner"
(CHAA members and guests only)

Sunday, January 15, 2012
Susan Odom, Proprietress of Hillside Homestead,
an historic farmstay in Sutton's Bay,
"The Heritage and Preservation of Fishtown, Michigan"

Sunday, February 19, 2012
3-5 p.m., Ann Arbor District Library
(343 South Fifth Ave.)
Chef Brian Polcyn, charcuterie expert,
Culinary Arts Program, Schoolcraft College,
"Culinary Métier: Italian *Salumi*"

Sunday, March 18, 2012
3-5 p.m., Ann Arbor District Library,
Malletts Creek Branch
(3090 E. Eisenhower Parkway)
Brian Leigh Dunnigan, Assoc. Dir.,
William L. Clements Library, Univ. of Michigan,
"Urban Agriculture in Detroit, Part I:
The History of Agricultural Land Use in Detroit"

Sunday, April 15, 2012
3-5 p.m., Ann Arbor District Library,
Malletts Creek Branch
(3090 E. Eisenhower Parkway)
Kathryn Lynch Underwood,
City Planner, Detroit City Planning Commission,
"Urban Agriculture in Detroit, Part II:
Imagining the Future of Urban Agriculture in Detroit"

Sunday, April 22, 2012
3-5 p.m., Ann Arbor District Library
(343 South Fifth Ave.)
Culinary author, teacher, and historian
Anne Willan,
"The History of Early Cookbooks"

Sunday, May 20, 2012
Jan and Dan Longone, founders of
the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive
and of CHAA, "Reminiscences of Julia"
(marking the centennial year of Julia Child's birth)

REPAST
1044 GREENHILLS DRIVE
ANN ARBOR, MI 48105-2722

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First Class