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Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

To Cook for No Master

New Levels of Autonomy in the African-American Kitchen



An advanced cooking class at Saint Augustine's School (now University) in Raleigh, NC, in 1923. The historically Black college was founded in 1867 by prominent Episcopal clergy for the education of freed slaves.

Photo: New York Public Library,
Schomburg Center for Research in Black
Culture, digital image ID 1239235.

ROBERT ROBERTS

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The author devotes a full 10 pages to teaching readers how to set an elegant table, with instructions ensuring that the table cloth does not extend beyond an eighth of an inch longer on one end of the table, and that the bottom of the flower basket faces toward the person at the bottom of the table while the design faces the top. This section also lectures on making sure dishes are arranged in a straight line and the appropriate distance each one must be from another. He also specifies how to measure the proper distance between types of glassware and knives and forks.

Tucked alongside lessons such as these are elaborate regulations for keeping knives sharp, a condition Roberts calls “primo bono”. Instructions for building coal fires, tips for shopping at the market, and directions for carving all sorts of meats and fowl, are side-by-side with Roberts’s attitudes about proper behavior, dress code, and such life-skills and values as the benefits of rising early.

A special section is devoted just to kitchen workers. Roberts humbly discloses:

I have appended a few observations addressed to servants generally, but more especially to the cook,

and assistant cook; and that I might not be thought guilty of presumption, in teaching what it may be thought I may not perfectly understand myself, or, as the old saying is, ‘swim beyond my depth,’ I shall quote this important part of the work from a most approved author of whose knowledge on these points there can be no doubt.

“A Few Observations to Cooks” is an impressive glossary of characteristics and values designed to produce remarkable manners and improve kitchen deportment while commenting on common-sense notions like developing the palate. Practical counsel regarding order, cleanliness, and *mise en place* are all attributed to *The Cook’s Oracle: Containing Receipts for Plain Cookery on the Most Economical Plan for Private Families...*, a volume of sage wisdom published in 1817 by Dr. William Kitchiner. “Some Miscellaneous Observations” teach the best way to store vegetables and bread, the appropriate means for keeping apples fresh and dry, when to use fresh herbs, and a simple way to preserve citrus zest for recipes.

As for the recipes, they are meticulous too. Roberts presents his formulas in a narrative style designed to make mundane daily tasks easier. He includes a few receipts for very simple preserves, vinegars, and refreshing beverages, but mostly there are prescriptions for household cleaning and polishing products with a few consumable recipes sprinkled in. Recipe 22, for example, is an interesting formula that tells how to use mutton or suet to remove rust. Recipe 29 offers a useful way to use egg whites and soft curd cheese to mend broken glass. Recipes 31 and 32 are concoctions that use food for pest management: “An Excellent Way to Prevent Flies from Settling on Pictures, or Making Dirt on Furniture” is an aromatic potion made by soaking leeks; black pepper, brown sugar and cream are combined “To Remove Flies From Rooms”.

Unlike the elite class of highly-esteemed caterers known throughout the Northeast for their fine dishes, Roberts was no chef. His book is not a cookbook in the truest sense. Still, he left a legacy of superior home management and supervision skills to respect and remember. His provocative cautions to heads of families about proper treatment of servants put on display the rapport Roberts must have enjoyed in his community. The *Directory* unveils a principled role model who passed along valuable life-skills and aspects of character in a personal letter to friends, while weaving sentiments of pride, dignity, and self-respect among its instructions for properly brushing and folding a gentleman’s clothing and for making the best ginger beer.

I like to think that Roberts and the three other black cooks who published recipe books during the 19th Century blazed a trail for future food industry prodigies. This missive is important for its teachings in the characteristics of impeccable staff and the art of making memorable meals— a kind of culinary declaration of independence epitomizing the inspirational words of Elizabeth David: “Even more than long hours in the kitchen, fine meals require ingenious organization and experience which is a pleasure to acquire.”■

Repast

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AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND PEANUTS AT POPLAR GROVE PLANTATION

by Ann A. Hertzler

Repast subscriber Ann Hertzler of Wilmington, NC, is a nutritionist, dietician, and emeritus professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, VA). For the last several years she has been researching and writing about historic African-American foodways associated with the Bellamy Mansion and the Poplar Grove Plantation. Her last article for Repast, co-authored with Madeline C. Flagler, was "Jonkonnu in the Kitchen: Recipes from the Cape Fear Region" (Summer 2010).

Peanuts have been an important crop in the history of the Wilmington area of coastal North Carolina since the 1700s, and the African diaspora has been a key factor.

Brought from Africa, this was a plant whose major uses were at first dictated by non-Africans, just as were the African people themselves. Peanuts first entered the colonies as provisions on slave ships from Africa and the Caribbean in the 1600s and 1700s, and slowly gained acceptance in antebellum times (Johnson). The names for the peanut in Central Africa included *nguba* (in the Kongo language) and *mpinda* (in the Loango language); in the Colonial South it became known as the goober (from *nguba*), the pindar (from *mpinda*), the pea nut, and the ground nut, this last being the term still prevalent in England.

By July 1833, the area around Poplar Grove Plantation, near Wilmington, had become the first important peanut market in the U.S. This plantation had been established on 3000 acres of sandy soil purchased by James Foy, Jr., between 1795 and 1798. By 1860, peanuts were the principal crop in the Poplar Grove area, more profitable than cotton (Johnson). Slaves at Poplar Grove worked the fields or served as blacksmith, miller, sawyer, cooper, brick maker, or household or kitchen help. Second-generation owner Joseph Mumford Foy granted freedom to the 64 African-Americans working on the plantation, a status that could not be recognized because of their having to leave the area, until the Civil War led to the abolition of slavery.

African-Americans at Poplar Grove lived in 12 family row houses and a men's house. From the early days, the Foyes distributed wheat flour, corn meal, and slab bacon to the slaves. Each man was given his own small patch of land to cultivate at the end of the workday, raising peanuts, vegetables, chickens, and pigs with which to help feed his family. They also grew peanuts as their own cash crop.

After the Civil War broke out, soldiers on both sides of the conflict would learn to appreciate Poplar Grove peanuts. Hungry

Union soldiers raided the place for peanuts, but as a kind of compensation they distributed chits to purchase peanuts after the war, a debt they honored (Johnson). When Yankee troops raided Floral College in Maxton, NC, the wartime inland retreat of the John D. Bellamy family of Wilmington, Miss Ellen Bellamy hoped the raw peanuts would make them desperately sick (Bellamy).

Peanuts and vegetables from truck farming at Poplar Grove were shipped north from the Wilmington port, and by 1843 were being transported by railroad. While African Americans were hawking peanuts as snack food on Market Street in Wilmington, vendors, especially European immigrants, were selling peanuts on major streets of big cities (Bellamy; Cape Fear Museum; Johnson).

By 1886 peanuts were in the list of nuts of most commercial value for eating and for use by confectioners, both in Europe and in the U.S. (Ward). On October 30, 1932, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) had a full-page ad in the Recipe Section of the *Wilmington Sunday Star News* announcing that sales of a dozen North Carolina foods throughout the country had totaled more than \$21,000,000 that year. One of these foods was peanuts.

Roasting, Boiling, or Cooking with Peanuts

At Poplar Grove, slaves would roast (parch) peanuts in outdoor cooking fires, spreading wonderful aromas across the plantation. Such fires were also used to roast potatoes, to bake hoecakes, and to cook food wrapped in greens (Cape Fear Museum).

African-Americans at Poplar Grove would also roast peanuts in an indoor hearth kitchen, either directly in the fire ashes or in an iron pot or pan such as a spider (a frying pan with legs to set over the hearth fire; see photo below). In the 1930s they described peanuts in the shell roasting in corners of the fireplace, "banked up" with ashes over them. Children of these families loved peanuts for after-school snacks, to sell at school in small brown paper bags for 5¢, or to carry in their school lunch.

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PEANUTS

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To prevent fires, manor house cooking at Poplar Grove was done in the hearth of the outdoor kitchen. By the mid-1800s well-to-do families were obtaining the modern cooking device known as an iron stove. The first iron stove introduced into the outdoor kitchen of the Poplar Grove manor house appeared in 1850 (see photo at right). African-American cooks adapted their hearth skills to this “modern” convenience in cooking for the master’s family.

In 1918 an iron stove was moved into the new indoor kitchen of the manor house. At this time, the outdoor kitchen was restored as a garden shed, and the herb cellar underneath was used to store fruits and vegetables for the Winter. The surface of the iron stove was used by the Foys to roast peanuts for 15 or 20 minutes, just as the legislatures did in the Virginia capital at Richmond (Johnson). As iron stoves were used more and more by African-American families in the Poplar Grove area, peanuts were roasted in the oven of the iron stove.

Electricity arrived at Poplar Grove in 1937. On special occasions one can taste peanuts roasting in the old electric roaster exhibited in the Poplar Grove gift shop. Microwaves are now used for roasting peanuts by many African-Americans in the Wilmington area.

Boiled peanuts, which tend to be either much loved or much disliked, according to the individual, are still home-prepared for the family or sold locally at roadside stands and at festivals in the Summer.

Peanuts were also eaten in soups and stews, but unfortunately no recipes or descriptions have been handed down by families. Elizabeth D. Abbey (1892-1937), a member of the third generation of Foys, had no peanut recipes at all in her *1909-1910 Domestic Science School Book*, a high school copy book from Columbia, SC, a nearby peanut-growing area. By 1940, peanut recipes had become more widely available, but they were mostly for desserts and candies. For example, Lola Eden, who lived across the street from the Poplar Grove Plantation in the 1940s, clipped and pasted peanut recipes in her *My Favorite Recipes* collection. The recipes included Peanut Squares, Peanut Crumb Cakes, Tiny Peanut Rolls, Peanut Cookies, Peanut Brownies, Blueberry Nut Crunch, Graham Cracker Peanut-Banana Cake Supreme, Peanut Bread, Chicken with Peanuts, and Peanut Fruit Drops.

Peanut Butter and Oil

Before the Civil War, peanut butter was made by African-Americans at Poplar Grove using a mortar and pestle to mash roasted peanuts. By the 1900s a meat grinder, also known as a peanut butter machine & spice mill, was being used (Franklin). The Foys still ground their own peanut butter during World War 2. Their nanny had a very special-tasting canned peanut butter that had to be stirred and stirred to incorporate the oil.

Slaves were also involved in the production of oil by grinding peanuts. Mr. Foy developed a process for expres-



Iron stove (above) and electric roaster (below).



A History That Sticks to the Roof of Your Mouth

If you’ve ever wondered where peanut butter came from and where it is going, you can now turn to a book by Los Angeles-based writer Jon Krampner, *Creamy and Crunchy: An Informal History of Peanut Butter, the All-American Food* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012; 320 pp., \$27.95 hbk.). Before he gets down to the business of recounting the epic battles among the Big Three U.S. corporations (Peter Pan, Skippy, and Jif), Krampner traces the birth and social roots of peanut butter and the role of such inventors as George Washington Carver in Tuskegee, John Harvey Kellogg in Battle Creek, and George Bayle in St. Louis. He also explains the continuing popularity of peanut butter in the U.S. and in countries like Haiti— where it is a street food called *mamba*— and he takes up more recent issues, from the plight of African-American peanut farmers to the recent salmonella scares, and the potential role of peanut butter in fighting world hunger.

sing the oil in large quantities, which he sold locally and overseas during the Civil War era. According to a record from 1857, a Poplar Grove slave named Israel Johnson took barrels of peanut oil and truck crops such as turnips and collards to the farmers' market in Wilmington. This was a three-hour trip each way along an old dirt road in a primitively-constructed homemade mule-cart; today, the trip by auto is only 30 minutes each way (Johnson). Shoppers brought their own bottles to fill with their peanut oil purchases.

Peanut oil, with its high smoking temperature, faster cooking time, and less absorption, soon became a substitute for lard and shortening in the local population (Johnson; Ward). Peanut oil is also tasteless and odorless. In 1883, *The North Carolina Advertiser* recognized peanut oil as an excellent condiment to dress salads or to make dressings such as mayonnaise (Johnson).

Peanut oil continued in demand during wartime when other oils were limited for household use. It is still often the local oil of choice. Today, peanut oil is used by many African-Americans in the Poplar Grove area, especially to deep-fry the holiday turkey or to fry peanuts.

Brown Dog Candies

Peanuts have been used in pulled candies and peanut brittle since the 1800s. One candy recipe not found in Lola

Eden's collection, mentioned earlier, is the local specialty known as Brown Dogs. They are made, purchased, and consumed by African-Americans.

One mystery is, How did "Brown Dogs" get their name, and where did they originate? Brown Dog recipes are not reported in George Washington Carver's famous 1925 recipe collection (Carver), in the collection *Peanut Classics* (Virginia-Carolina Peanut Growers), in the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library's archives of peanut recipes, or in Andrew Smith's comprehensive book (Smith).

Brown Dog recipes in the Wilmington area have been handed down within African-American families. One 90-year-old African-American living in the Poplar Grove area told me that his grandmother made Brown Dog candy in the 1800s. Other African-Americans tell about selling home-made Brown Dog candy in the early 1900s from a big basket on the Wilmington streets or in a small store across from Poplar Grove Plantation. African-American families remember filling soldier's requests for Brown Dogs in World War 2. In Southport, NC, just across the Cape Fear River from Wilmington, some tell about making Brown Dogs in first grade or eating Brown Dogs as a child in the early 1900s. The earliest known written report of Brown Dogs can be traced to a confectionary in Southport in the late 1800s (Hinnant; Wilson and Mullally, p. 197 s.v. Anna Lee McKenzie).

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Individually-wrapped Brown Dog candies.

PEANUTS

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Prices of Brown Dogs have escalated from a nickel a piece in the 1930s to about \$1.50 in 2010 for a large one, muffin-tin sized and $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick. The main ingredients of the candies are peanuts and either brown sugar, white sugar, or molasses. Notice the darker Brown Dogs made with molasses. They resemble pralines in shape and appearance, but differ from pralines which are made with cream and pecans.

Recipes for Brown Dogs vary considerably. Some recipes use vinegar, baking soda, cream of tartar, butter, or vanilla flavoring. In some recipes, peanuts are cooked with the brown sugar before pouring in a muffin tin to shape. Others cook/roast the peanuts first, a procedure which can result in the peanuts ending up overcooked.

African-Americans in the 21st Century still make Brown Dog candy for family enjoyment or for sale in community outlets. See the two local recipes below.

Poplar Grove remains a plantation to visit to learn about the history of peanuts. Talking to local African-Americans adds much to the history of cooking peanuts in the hearth or modern kitchen. ■

Recipes

Anna McKenzie's Brown Dogs (1930s - 1940s) (recipe relayed to Ann Hertzler by Brooks Priek)

2 lb. bag light brown sugar
3 lbs. raw peanuts (roast until light brown)
Baking soda/butter/vanilla flavoring

In heavy pot, mix sugar with enough water to dissolve; let cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, scraping sides of pot. When sugar starts leaving white streaks on sides of pot (250°), add $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda, stir in well, mixture will foam up. Add 1 tablespoon vanilla flavoring and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter, add peanuts, mix well, turn heat low.

Spoon into well-greased muffin pans. If mixture starts to harden in pot add a little water, stir well, cook down and fill muffin tins as quickly as possible. Makes about 3 dozen.

LaVerne Whitted's Brown Dog Candy

3 cups peanuts
4 cups sugar
2 cups water
1 tsp margarine

Grease some muffin tins with margarine. Set aside. Put sugar into an iron skillet. Pour water over the sugar and cook over medium heat. When it begins to boil, pour peanuts throughout. DO NOT STIR. Allow the sugar to caramelize by turning brown and thickening. Boil until the peanuts are done (sometimes they will pop), approximately 10 minutes. Pour the peanut mixture into the muffin tins. Allow to harden and cool. Remove from the tins. Makes 18.

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- local author Brooks Priek at Two Sisters Bookery, Wilmington, NC;
- Ceri McCarron, an Archives Technician at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA;
- Betsey Owens of Virginia-Carolina Peanut Promotions, Nashville, NC;
- and local African-American seniors who shared their experiences.

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A 19TH-CENTURY AUTHOR BREAKS A STEREOTYPE

OR

ROBERT ROBERTS'S *HOUSE SERVANT'S DIRECTORY*

by Toni Tipton-Martin

Below is an excerpt, reprinted with permission, from Toni Tipton-Martin's forthcoming bibliography of African American cookbooks, The Jemima Code: A Gallery of Great Cooks Share Their Secrets (Univ. of Texas Press, February 2014). In conjunction with writing the book, Ms. Tipton-Martin has spoken at venues around the U.S. and curated an exhibit featuring larger-than-life photos of black women at work in kitchens throughout the South. Toni, who now resides in Austin, TX, was one of the first black food editors in the U.S. at the Cleveland Plain Dealer. She began as a staff writer at the Los Angeles Times, and has subsequently worked as a freelance writer for the Austin Chronicle, Texas Co-op Magazine, Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture, and Cooking Light Magazine. She was a contributing editor to Heart and Soul Magazine (focusing on health and fitness for African American women) and has received several community service and nutrition writing awards. A former Director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, she wrote the chapter on the South for Culinary: The Food of the United States and her own cookbook, A Taste of Heritage: The New African-American Cuisine (Macmillan, 1998). At the Second Symposium on American Culinary History, held in May 2007 at the Univ. of Michigan, Ms. Tipton-Martin spoke on "The Jemima Code: A Cook's View into the Heart, Soul, and Recipe Box of a Wise Servant".

Robert Roberts,
The House Servant's Directory
Boston, published by Monroe and Francis, New York, 1827
1977 Facsimile Edition published by
the Gore Place Society, Waltham, MA
180 pp.

For years, the detailed musings of the "outstanding butler" of Gore Place existed primarily in the margins of historic cookery books— mostly because the treatise is, in form and function, more of a specialized guide or trade textbook than a traditional cookbook. Now, thanks to this new edition, it is considered "an American milestone", in the words of the curators

THE
HOUSE SERVANT'S DIRECTORY,
OR
A MONITOR FOR PRIVATE FAMILIES :
COMPRISING
HINTS ON THE ARRANGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF
SERVANTS' WORK,
WITH GENERAL RULES FOR
SETTING OUT TABLES AND SIDEBOARDS
IN FIRST ORDER ;
THE ART OF WAITING
IN ALL ITS BRANCHES ; AND LIKEWISE HOW TO CONDUCT
LARGE AND SMALL PARTIES
WITH ORDER ;
WITH GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR PLACING ON TABLE
ALL KINDS OF JOINTS, FISH, FOWL, &c.
WITH
FULL INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLEANING
PLATE, BRASS, STEEL, GLASS, MAHOGANY ;
AND LIKEWISE
ALL KINDS OF PATENT AND COMMON LAMPS :
OBSERVATIONS
ON SERVANTS' BEHAVIOUR TO THEIR EMPLOYERS ;
AND UPWARDS OF
100 VARIOUS AND USEFUL RECEIPTS,
CHIEFLY COMPILED
FOR THE USE OF HOUSE SERVANTS ;
AND IDENTICALLY MADE
TO SUIT THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF FAMILIES
IN THE UNITED STATES.

By ROBERT ROBERTS.

WITH
FRIENDLY ADVICE TO COOKS
AND HEADS OF FAMILIES,
AND COMPLETE DIRECTIONS HOW TO BURN
LEHIGH COAL.

BOSTON,
MUNROE AND FRANCIS, 128 WASHINGTON-STREET.
NEW YORK,
CHARLES S. FRANCIS, 189 BROADWAY.
1827.

Title-page image from the website of Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project at Michigan State University (<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/>)

of Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project at Michigan State University. Jan Longone, Curator of the Culinary Archive/American Culinary History at the University of Michigan's Clements Library, trumpeted *Directory*, the first book of any kind by a Black American printed by a commercial publisher in America, as "one of major gastronomic importance and influence."

Roberts left no category uncovered in his extremely valuable canon—a book so popular that two subsequent editions were printed in 1828 and 1843. The book contains curated professional advice the author attributes to several sources. He instructs readers about the proper care and maintenance required in a fine New England home. Everything the lengthy title says gets covered, and then some— from such well-known practices as "how to conduct large and small parties with order" and "general directions for placing on table all kinds of joints, fish, fowl, &c.", to 100-plus recipes for household remedies, various cleaning products, and some food. He attended to the virtues that

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ROBERT ROBERTS *continued from page 7*

define good cooks, tutored young workers on proper kitchen behavior, and offered “friendly advice to cooks and heads of families” that would secure their “advancement”. The “benefit of clean feet” was an unexpected pointer.

Roberts composed the comprehensive tome while serving the Honorable Christopher Gore, his wife Rebecca, their guests, and members of the social elite in Waltham, Massachusetts, including dignitaries Daniel Webster and James Monroe. The Gores were a prominent couple: He was the first U.S. attorney for Massachusetts, and was appointed to a diplomatic position in 1796 and, after a one-year term as Governor, to the U.S. Senate in 1813. She had a passion for architecture that was influenced by English and French buildings and gardens. Running their ornate home to the “highest standards” fell to Roberts, who ensured that guests were comfortable, satiated, and impressed whether the gathering was an elaborate reception, a ladies’ tea, an intimate political conversation, or a musical performance, according to histories written by the Gore Place Society, the nonprofit preservation organization established in 1935.

Excerpts from a letter of recommendation written by Gore encouraged the public to purchase the book for its instruction

and training on the practices of maintaining a fine, upper-class home:

I have read the work attentively, and think it may be of much use. The directions are plain and perspicuous; and many of the recipes I have experienced to be valuable. Could servants be induced to conform to these directions, their own lives would be more useful and the comfort and convenience of families much promoted.

Unlike the diaries and journals of slaveholding families, which recorded daily tasks as perceived by the master and mistress, Roberts’s philosophical and spiritual messages reveal exactly what it was like to be a knowledgeable household manager. We are reminded for the umpteenth time which chores laborers did: washing and cleaning decanters, polishing silver, and keeping pantries neat and orderly. But, at a time when few workers left written records of their capabilities, this notebook details the exact skills one servant taught to another. The meticulous regulations left behind by Roberts reconstruct the lost arts as well. His messages were thought so valuable that the *Directory* was among the texts in the library at the Hermitage, President Andrew Jackson’s Tennessee home.

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In this John Singer Sargent oil painting of men dining at Gore Place, the Governor’s Mansion in Waltham, MA, a black butler, presumed to be Robert Roberts, is at Gov. Gore’s side.

“COLD TEA AND COLORED COOKS”

✂

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CONGRESSIONAL FOODWAYS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

by Adrian Miller

*Adrian Miller, who lives in the greater Denver area, is the author of the forthcoming book *Soul Food: The Surprising Story of an American Cuisine, One Plate at a Time* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, August 2013). Educated at Stanford and Georgetown universities, he describes himself as “a recovering lawyer and politico turned culinary historian, food writer and professional speaker.” He has served as a Board member for the Southern Foodways Alliance, and in January 2010 he spoke about the history of African American street vendors as a special guest at the fifth annual African American Dinner at Zingerman’s Roadhouse in Ann Arbor. His earlier career included stints as advisor and policy analyst at the local, state, and national levels, including as Deputy Director of President Clinton’s Initiative for One America.*

“Why don’t we get together for dinner and talk things over?” Such invitations are rare among political adversaries in today’s Washington, DC. Some longtime political

observers believe that the lack of social interaction is a root cause of the current inaction, incivility, and intransigence in Congress.

Our current Congressional leaders could learn a lot from their 19th-Century counterparts. They also faced a lot of weighty issues— slavery, temperance, universal suffrage, severe economic swings, etc. But rather than shunning the other side, they saw entertaining at the dinner table as an opportunity to cajole, ingratiate, and persuade.

Those who had reputations for setting the best tables often had their meals prepared by enslaved and free African Americans. Just look at any 19th-Century illustration depicting scenes of the elite while wining and dining, and inevitably there are black bartenders, cooks, and waiters in the background. Thus, these indispensable culinary artists and professionals operated at an interesting intersection of food, power, and race. Here, we shall glimpse this dynamic through the experiences of Dick Francis, George T. Downing, and Monica McCarty.

Mixing Drinks on Capitol Hill

There were only a few places where Congressmen could talk business outside the prying ears and eyes of the public— namely, the restaurants inside the Capitol (also known as “refectory”) for the House and the Senate.

That’s not to say these private dining spaces were without public scrutiny, but 19th-Century Americans were more interested in what their Congressmen were drinking, not eating, while doing the public’s business. By 1848, the temperance advocates had successfully pressured Speaker of the House Robert Charles Winthrop, a Whig from Massachusetts, to ban the sale of alcoholic beverages at the Capitol. Newspapers such

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Some Senators and their friends are at lunch in the Refectory of the U.S. Senate in this engraving by famed Civil War artist James E. Taylor.

From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (May 16, 1868, p. 137).

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as the *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal* praised the move. This last, a weekly from the Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston, wrote in 1848: "This is right. If any place in the nation needs purifying, it is the national Capitol; yet what signifies any other reform, while the unmitigated infamy of the slave shambles remains there?"¹ For some, slavery and temperance were inextricably linked because the international rum trade had long fed the slave trade.

Speaker Winthrop's move ushered in an unintended consequence—the lobbyist-sponsored lunch. As *The Atlantic Monthly* noted following the ban on alcohol: "Thenceforth the quality of the food served degenerated, and the refectory was not much patronized by the representatives, whose gastronomic and bibulous wants were gratuitously purveyed for by avowed lobbyists, who advanced their interests by judicious distributions of 'ham-and-cham [champagne]'.² Rumors persisted, however, that legislators continued to secretly procure liquor in the House restaurant, often using the code word "cold tea" when they placed their order.

Despite their measure of success in the House, temperance advocates struggled to sever the Senate's relations with liquor. Liquor bans were periodically imposed and lifted, and through it all senators still managed to get their drinks in a variety of ways.

Enter Dick Francis. In 1885, *The Evening Bulletin* reported, "There has been a change in the proprietorship in the senate restaurant in the north side of the capitol. When Senator Edmunds was elected president pro tem of the senate he appointed the famous Dick Francis a well known colored bar tender who for the last forty years has had the reputation of being the best fancy drink mixer in Washington."³ As the Senate dining room illustration shows, there was a feeling that Senators were spending too much time drinking instead of thinking about how to solve some pressing issues.

This brazen repudiation of the temperance movement within the Capitol didn't last too long, for by December of that same year, *The New York Times* reported that Francis "proved, however, less successful as a keeper of the restaurant than as a mixer of punches and smashes, and last Summer it was decided that a change should be made."⁴ Thankfully, it really was about the food after all.

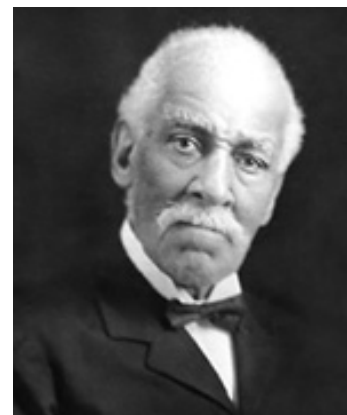
"The Colored Caterer and Politician of the Capital"

The House restaurant had a better food reputation in the latter part of the 1860s and early 1870s thanks to one man—George T. Downing. Downing was born in New York City, and was the son of Thomas Downing who ran a very successful oyster restaurant in that city. During his adult life, Downing was a very active abolitionist and civil rights advocate who eventually made his way to Washington, DC. By February 1869, newspapers were announcing that "Downing, the famous colored caterer of New York, has leased the restaurant of the House of Representatives at Washington."⁵

Downing wasted no time living up to his reputation. In 1869, we have this description and assessment of the House restaurant:

DOWNING'S RESTAURANT. This establishment occupies two rooms, and is entered from the passage we have been traversing, and from the central corridor. It is handsomely fitted up, and is carried on for the accommodation of the members, officials, and visitors. The proprietor, Mr. George T. Downing, is a gentleman of color, of middle age, and has decidedly the most elegant manners to be seen in the Capitol. He is from New York, where he is well known to all lovers of good living, and has opened in the Capitol one of the best restaurants in the Union. His bill of fare contains every delicacy of the season, and his dishes are served in a style which would not shame Delmonico himself.⁶

Downing was a notable presence in the Capitol. He was known to hold political discussions with his customers, and facilitated introductions between African American legislators newly-arrived to the Capitol and their somewhat anxious white colleagues.⁷ Thus, Downing was able to learn of the latest developments in Congress, and he maintained his stature in the African American community by sharing what he learned. *The Sun* reported in 1874 that "Mr. Downing, the well-known colored caterer and politician of the capital, writes to a Richmond (Va.) paper that the colored voters have reason for encouragement rather than fear.... In Mr. Downing's judgment, all things are working together for good."⁸ As we now know, Downing's assessment was far too rosy, for by 1877 the Reconstruction Era was over and the promise that African Americans would have a panoply of civil rights faded dramatically.



George T. Downing

Brown Univ. Library, Item #63,
<http://library.brown.edu/omeka/items/show/63>

Unfortunately, Downing's early days in the House restaurant were somewhat rocky, not because of his food but due to accusations that he would not serve African Americans. In letters to the editors of major newspapers, Downing strongly refuted what he felt were "malicious" charges with specific examples of instances where he desegregated the House's dining room. These accusations hounded Downing for the rest of his life and even in death (1903). Racist white managers of the House restaurant pointed to Downing's supposed discrimination to give them cover when they attempted to bar African Americans from dining there from the 1890s through the 1930s. Even as late as 1907, Downing's son Philip felt it necessary to write letters to newspaper editors to defend his father's name.⁹

Female Cook for Sen. Daniel Webster

Some legislators established their own culinary bona fides within the privacy of their own homes. Few surpassed Daniel Webster as a host during his 40-year career in politics (1813-1852) serving as a U.S. Representative, a U.S. Senator, and Secretary of State (twice). Webster is often on the historian's short list of the 19th Century's greatest legislators.

Senator Webster, known for his oratorical flourish, persuasive powers, and sharp wit, burnished his reputation as an entertainer based on the talents of his black private cook, Monica McCarty. Benjamin Perley Poore, a keen observer of 19th-Century life in the nation's capital, wrote of McCarty:

Mr. Webster's Washington home was a two-story brick house on Louisiana Avenue, next to the Unitarian Church. His dining-room was in the basement story, and it was seldom that he had not friends at his hospitable table. Monica, the old colored woman, continued to be his favorite cook, and her soft-shell crabs, terrapin, fried oysters, and roasted canvas-back ducks have never been surpassed at Washington, while she could make a regal Cape Cod chowder, or roast a Rhode Island turkey, or prepare the old-fashioned New Hampshire "boiled dinner", which the "expounder of the Constitution" loved so well.¹⁰

In addition to food, McCarty's artistry with drinks helped restore Webster after many late-night sessions in Congress. Poore adds, "Whenever he had to work at night, she used to make him a cup of tea in an old britannia metal teapot, which had been his mother's, and he used to call this beverage his 'Ethiopian nectar'."

Webster enthusiastically shared McCarty's cooking with any celebrities who came into his social orbit. In March 1842, Webster eagerly wrote to author Washington Irving, "I have, sir, just purchased in the market, a famous opossum... and I have sent it home to Monica, my cook, who will stuff it with chestnuts and bake it with sweet potatoes in true Virginia style. It will be, sir, a dish fit for the gods. Come, with your friend, and partake." The "friend" in this instance was none other than Charles Dickens who was touring the nation. Dickens and Irving did accept Webster's invitation, but reportedly "Dickens did not relish the 'possum as much as he relished Webster's company."¹¹

Even after Webster's death, McCarty was in high demand from Washington's elite. Peter Harvey, one of Webster's friends, described his futile attempt to recruit McCarty to the White House kitchen on behalf of President-elect Franklin Pierce. She rebuffed him, saying:

I cook for General Pierce? No, to be sure, I won't. After I have been Mr. Webster's cook, I will never be General Pierce's. I'll come and cook for you, Mr. Harvey, but I wouldn't cook for General Pierce.¹²

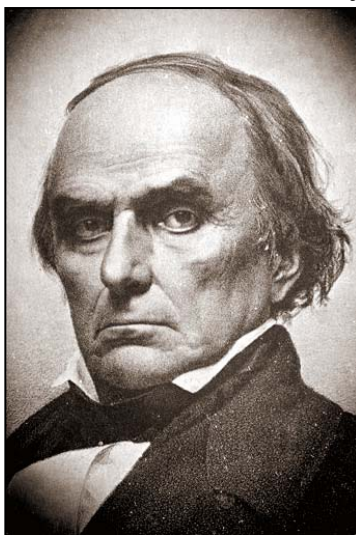
That McCarty, as an African American woman, could even decline Pierce is a consequence of her unusual relationship with Webster: he used her full name; paid her a fair wage during her indenture, which ultimately left her with \$2,000 in savings; hung her portrait in his Marshfield, Massachusetts, country estate (which burned down in 1878); and most importantly, he freed her in his will. Thus, she was free to make her own choices.¹³

Not much is known about McCarty's life after Webster, but her culinary legacy lived on. Perhaps there is no better eulogy than the testament of Webster biographer Rev. Joseph Banvard:

She was certainly an admirable cook, as every one who enjoyed Mr. Webster's hospitality could testify.

True, she knew but little about French dishes, *entremets* and *relevés*, but no one could send to the table roast meat, or fish, or game, cooked better than that from the kitchen over which aunt Monica presided. Her bread was remarkably excellent, and she was well versed in the making of griddle-cakes, waffles, biscuits and other Maryland delicacies.¹⁴

Through their adventures and misadventures, Downing, Francis, McCarty, and their African American contemporaries knew what it meant to "cook truth to power" in the 19th Century. ■



Monica McCarty's employer,
Daniel Webster

Daguerreotype photograph by John
Adams Whipple, c. 1847.
Boston Public Library Rare Books Dept.,

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5. *Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture*, 27:20 (Feb. 15, 1868), p. 2, accessed via ProQuest APS [American Periodical Series] Online.
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8. "Political Notes", *The Sun*, Dec. 5, 1874, p. 4.
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10. Benjamin Perley Poore, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia, Chicago, Kansas City: Hubbard Brothers, 1886), pp. 383-384.
11. "When Dickens Ate Possum", *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 4, 1921, VIII:17.
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SOUTHERN SOUVENIR COOKBOOKS: AUTHENTICITY AND STEREOTYPE

by Ann A. Hertzler (see the author information on p. 3)

Blanche Elbert Moncure,
*Emma Jane's Souvenir Cook Book:
Some Old Virginia Recipes Collected
by Blanche Elbert Moncure*
Williamsburg, VA, 1937, 87 pp.

Lillie S. Lustig, S. Claire Sondheim,
and Sarah Rensel,
*Southern Cook Book: 322 Old Dixie
Recipes*
[Title variations include *The Southern
Cook Book of Fine Old Recipes* or
Fine Old Dixie Recipes]
Reading, PA, 1939, 48 pp.

Are you looking for a cookbook that uses Southern bounty prepared with the cooking talents of plantation blacks? At a recent book sale, I found two cookbooks published in the late 1930s whose titles and content seemed to offer such a Southern cooking experience.

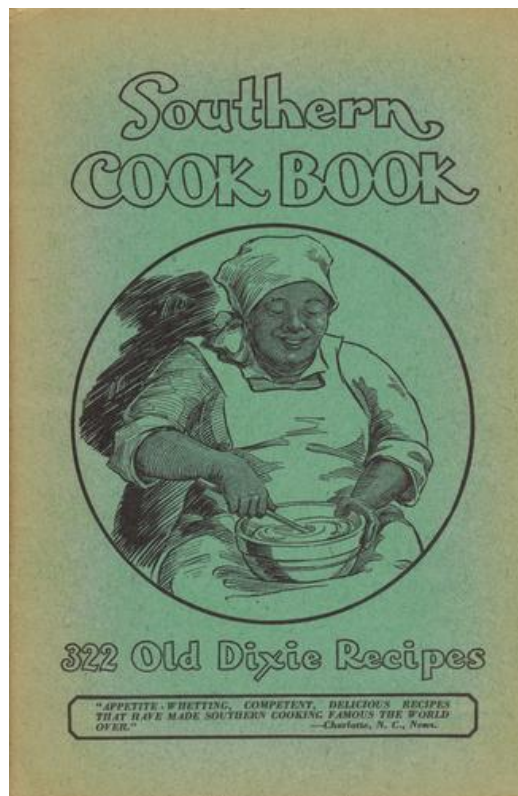
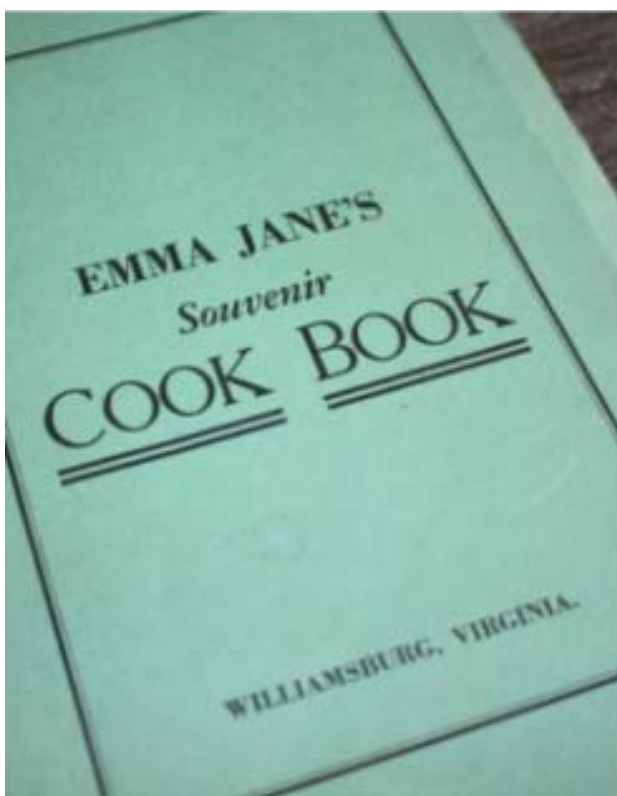
Emma Jane's Souvenir Cook Book was authored by Blanche Elbert Moncure. It compiles recipes derived from Emma Jane, an African American born during the Civil War, when Yankee soldiers named her Emma Jane Jackson Beauregard Jefferson Davis Lincoln Christian. She would cook for the author's family near Williamsburg, Virginia, for more than 50 years.

The *Southern Cook Book* was compiled by three cookbook writers in the North. In their Introduction, the authors wrote that they thought "of the Southland as the hearthstone of superb cooking" (p. 5). The book has "Decorations", i.e., line drawings, by H. Charles Kellum, including an "old mammy" on the cover.

During the post-World War I era, a mammy icon on a cookbook cover or in accompanying figures connoted good home-cooked food, prepared and served with love (Bentley, p. 186). Such themes are present in both of these cookbooks. In one is a single full-page black-and-white photo of a smiling Emma Jane, reproduced here on page 14. The other has a cover picture stereotyping "the old mammy, head tied with a red bandanna, a jovial, stoutish, wholesome personage" (p. 5), and inside the book are line drawings of her depicted as happy during leisure time and cooking.

Left: image courtesy of Toni Tipton-Martin from her book, *The Jemima Code: A Gallery of Great Cooks Share Their Secrets* (Univ. of Texas Press, forthcoming February 2014).

Right: image from the Open Library (<http://openlibrary.org>).



Many cookbooks after the Civil War attempted to preserve nostalgic memories of the plantation with a black servant such as mammy and “happy darkies”. Of course, most Southerners did not have slaves before the Civil War nor black servants afterwards to cook for the family or teach family recipes to a young Miss (Bentley; Witt; Weaver; Mack and Hoffius, eds.). But these two cookbooks do seem to be based, at least in part, on the cooking of such black servants.

Both books acknowledge that their recipes may originate “from the colored cooks who rarely bothered to write down their recipes” (*Southern Cook Book*, p. 5). Emma Jane explains recipes to a “young Miss” contemplating marriage (p. 12), credits a Christmas eggnog recipe to “Ole Miss” (p. 10), a Southern Corn Bread to “Miss Lee” (p. 31), and says “Ole Miss, larned me onion pudding a long time ago, when I was ‘bout knee high to a duck, one dat mos’ people don’t seem custerment to at all” (p. 28). The *Southern Cook Book* entitles a recipe as “Miss Cecelia’s” Chicken Pot Pie (p. 12) and credits a few recipes to African Americans: Aunt Linda’s Creole Beef Stew (p. 13), Aunt Sarah’s Fudge (p. 46), and Nannie’s Pineapple Custard Pie (p. 38).

In her study of African American foodways in the South, Anne Yentsch concluded: “Slave cooking, with some exceptions, exists only in imagination unless it was observed and recorded by someone able to read and write and who had time to do so—whites” (Yentsch, p. 68). The 1937 publication date is a time when slaves such as Emma Jane were indeed still alive to tell about African American heritage recipes in such a way, thereby preserving them.

Heritage Recipes

The chapter subjects and individual recipes in both cookbooks include many that were common in the 1930s, with headings or “rubrics” such as Bread/Biscuits, Vegetables, Meats, Cakes, Pies, Candies, Preserves/Pickles, Drinks, and Miscellaneous (Bentley; Witt, p. 158). Almost half of the recipes are desserts typical of early European recipes, such as Blanc Mange. Recipes of the *Southern Cook Book* are named for Southern city folks (Jean Lafitte Salad, Captain Henry’s Pickled Cherries, Miss Cecelia’s Chicken Pot Pie, Tomato Bouillon—General Lee’s Favorite Soup, Liver à la Madame Begue, and Barbara Fritchie Pudding) or for locales famous for “their palate-tickling culinary efforts” (Eggs New Orleans, Biltmore Golden Rod Eggs, Kentucky Burgoo, and other names referring to Monticello, Calvert Manor, Old Dominion, Norfolk, Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina).

The two books include some antebellum heritage recipes that are rarely attributed to African Americans:

1. **One-pot meals** combining rice, vegetables/beans, and fatty meat, varying according to whatever foods are on hand, can be seen in the *Southern Cook Book* but without African American credit. Such recipes include Mulatto Rice (red rice, bacon, tomatoes), Jambalaya (red rice, vegetables, meat or chicken), Southern Jugged Soup (rice, vegetables), and Southern Gumbo (okra, vegetables). Tomatoes and onions were the few fresh garden vegetables listed in these two books; corn, peas, and pineapple were canned. No recipe is given for cooked rice, even though it was part of most meals. The lack of a written recipe is not unusual for

the experienced African American, but usually ends in poorly-cooked rice for others.

2. **Meals eaten out of hand** such as ash cake or cornmeal pone appear in the cookbooks. These were often prepared by African Americans to eat alone or, as seen in Emma Jane, with Buttermilk or Pot Likker. In the *Southern Cook Book*, a Pot Likker subtitle claims that it was “Made famous by the late Senator Huey P. Long” of Louisiana, but the authors go on to note that Pot Likker is a familiar dish in homes of the poor white and negro.
3. **Less desirable cuts of meat and game** such as innards of pork (chitterlings) and easily available game such as opossum and rabbit (“Belgian Hare à la Maryland”) appear in these cookbooks. By the 1950s, African Americans were reporting many notable dishes for each of the less desirable cuts of meat (Yentsch). Although fatty meat such as bacon or bacon grease was typically used for flavoring, in these cookbooks African American recipes such as Brunswick Stew used lean beef. Instead of lard or “cooking grease” from pork, butter seems to have been the cooking fat preferred by these authors in making Corn Meal Dodgers, Chicken Gumbo, Mock Terrapin Stew, Fried Chicken Maryland, Ham and Pineapple, and fritters.
4. **Headier seasonings** are used. According to Emma Jane, “gumption” is the “seasoning you is got to put in ev’y dish you cook.... Dose ‘ceats [receipts] ... may tell you what to put in, wha’ to leave out, but effen you don’t use you ‘gumption’ you gwine to be leff in de lerch... (p. 6). Some of Emma Jane’s seasoning hints include:
 - “Drap into de pot [of ham] a hand full ... of spices—mace, allspice an’ cloves, an’ a pint of good strong vinegar laike de White House Vinegar” (p. 20).
 - “Fact of de bizness is, dat I makes all of my dresin’s jes zactly de same, fur enny kind of fowl, do; of cose some takes a little more of dis an’ some, a little mo’ of dat. You jest got too use yo’ gumpshion ag’in” (p. 9).
 - “A good inch of cinnamon an’ allspice an’ nutmeg” for a fruit cake (p. 11).
 Mustard, turmeric, and ginger are among the other strong spices found. But pepper, one of the headier seasonings for which African Americans are known, is limited in these books to red pepper in Barbecued Chicken and Opossum Stuffing, Tabasco Sauce in Crab Soup Baltimore, cayenne in Deviled Crabs, paprika in Potato Croquettes, and hot red pepper in Chopped Pickle, Tomato Catsup, and Black Bean soup.
5. Certain recipes seem to be **adapted or enhanced from early English authors** such as Hannah Glasse. These include Mint Sauce for Lamb, Popovers, Hard Sauce, and especially pound cakes and other cakes, pies, tarts, and puddings. Plantation Plum Pudding suggests an English celebratory recipe prepared with the cook’s own touch, but rarely acknowledged (Yentsch). As reflected in these books, by the 1930s many African American cooks experienced with Big House recipes could afford exotic ingredients (guava, papaya, artichokes, coconut, brandy, almonds, sugar, lemon) and fancy kitchen equipment (ramekins, muffin rings, electric appliances).

continued on next page

SOUVENIR COOKBOOKS *cont'd from p. 13*

Reading, Writing, and 'Rithmetic

The *Southern Cook Book* characterizes Mammy as a "good cook who most often could neither read nor write" (p. 5). Likewise, Emma Jane says to Miss Sally, a bride-to-be, "I 'aint no cooking teacher I is jes a plain uneducated cook-o'-man, what can't even read her own name, much less a 'ceat book!" (p. 5).

The two cookbooks are rife with attributed black dialect such as this, using phrases such as sho', informity', mo'brighter, 'preciate, 'taint, axed, whar, yuh, cawnah, mouf, and mah. Moncure (p. 73) includes "Resipee for Cukin' Kon-feel Pees (Black-Eyed)" by Mozis Addams from *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* (1879) in a way that seems to highlight the idiosyncratic pronunciation and grammar and to suggest black servants' inferiority and illiteracy. John Martin Taylor (2011) has described this verbiage as condescending "eye dialect" used by writers to disparage blacks. The authors of both cookbooks under consideration presented their own writing, by contrast, with complete sentences, correct words, grammar, spelling, and action verbs (e.g., gather, peel, cut).

The turbaned African American on the cover of the *Southern Cookbook* stirring a bowl is shown throughout the book engaged in everyday cooking that does not require "book learning". Moncure's Mammy is portrayed as unable to measure quantities: "I aint no measurin' cook, I's a 'pinchin-cook'" (p. 6). Mammy can't "'splain" how she did cooking miracles but knows alternative ways to measure by looks and feel; she can't remember "how menny cups of nothin' went into de diffrut 'ceats" but knows how much of "dis and dat". Mammy is praised as having superb cooking skills "without exact measures, a wizard in the art of creating savory, appetizing dishes from plain every day ingredients" (p. 5), and using more or less depending on what was on hand for the servings needed—a math whiz.

Emma Jane gives tips for interpreting exact amounts, times, and temperatures: "You got to learn how they look and how long to keep them cooking" (p. 7). For example, "bile [the ham] 15 minutes per pound ... but ... depend on the knowledge of the long fork" to tell when the ham is done (p. 9). She advises, "Have dat oven hot! And I means hot! befo' you puts



A photo of Emma Jane from *Emma Jane's Souvenir Cook Book*.

Image courtesy of Toni Tipton-Martin from her book, *The Jemima Code: A Gallery of Great Cooks Share Their Secrets* (Univ. of Texas Press, forthcoming February 2014).

dose biskits in dar! Fur a cole oven is 'sponsible for mo' brick bats dan mos' people think" (p. 6).

Moncure emphasizes Mammy's lack of understanding scientific principles needed for the new 1930s electric kitchen. She has Emma Jane say to Miss Sally, "You have to go to college an' 'tend dose Messy Sciences Classes dese days, to be what you call a fuss class cook! ... I jus couldn't see myse'f a cooking' on no quick-running trick laike dose 'lectrics is" (p. 5). "Less you have one of dese here new fangled 'lectri aig beaters, yo' got some powful arm beatin' to do, fur dat cake sho' needs some excise behind de makin' of it" (p. 11), or especially for making biscuits and bread. Emma Jane claims she doesn't have fancy college training but knows she can cook with "dis here pendable range" [an iron stove]. "When a pusson has cooked fur de same fambly fur over fifty years, dey has done a purty good job I thinks" (p. 5).

The *Southern Cook Book* envisions Ole Mammy as a "Wizard in the art of creating savory, appetizing dishes from plain everyday ingredients"; "jus' put em in front of a stove with the fixin's and they created something" grand (p. 5).

While these statements argue mammy's lack of expertise, they also support her understanding of the science and art of creating feasts from everyday ingredients. The scientific know-how of African Americans working with food in the 1800s is supported by the award-winning recipes in Abby Fisher's cookbook (1881), and by domestic science teachers who taught that energies needed for beaten biscuits and bread making were a test of a good cook, with hundreds of ways "of accurate observation" (Witt, p. 107). Fannie Farmer's exact measures were far less accurate than those of African Americans who, like Verta Mae, cooked by "vibration" (approximation) and feel (Witt, p. 161).

Derogatory Language

Many everyday expressions, poems, or songs in the two books refer to African Americans with words considered funny in the early 1900s, but degrading then and by present-day standards.

Emma Jane describes a Hay Wagon Christmas Party in the Dance Hall with "a one-man orchestra—an old fashion, music loving Negro" (p. 86), a term of varying acceptance throughout history. Moncure introduces Emma Jane as "the little nigger baby" (p. 2) and says, "you can't fool dis nigger!" (p. 8), "if you ever wants any mo' re-ceets outten dis ol' nigger's haid—jes come an' ask her" (p. 3). The 1-2-3-4 Cake is called a "Fool-Nigger-Proof" Cake" (p. 35).

Poems in the *Southern Cook Book* include such lines as, "Make a nigger's mouth go flippity flop" (p. 37), "Crow in the corn field, Nigger in the Patch" (p. 22), and "Niggers don't grow but eleben feet" (p. 12). Other derogatory words are seen in "coon" (p. 39), "darkies" (pp. 21, 34, 40), and recipe titles such as "Batter Bread, Mulatto Style" (p. 33), "Mulatto Rice" (p. 34), and "Pickaninny Doughnuts" (p. 43).

What Has Changed in the 75 Years Since These Books Were Published?

Looking through these two late-1930s cookbooks conjures up memories of mammy's mouthwatering recipes from the plantation. What appears to be a cookbook with nostalgic memories of Southern cooking often descends into racist stereotyping, with inept and negative images. The books portray African American servant cooks as uneducated, unable to read, and without scientific knowledge. A whole range of historical ephemera and food products have traded on these same stereotypes to make "fun" of African Americans (Weaver).

White authors have sometimes used African American images to invite readers to buy Southern cookbooks, while also using subtle techniques to disqualify their cooking credentials, to ignore their heritage cooking traditions, to make fun of their lack of education, and to defame their culture far more than any other in the United States (Weaver). In reviewing a cookbook of any culture, we should ask, Who wrote the book? Are foodways or recipes shown as negative or positive images? With the benefit of hindsight, racist and other stereotypical themes found in cookbooks of yesteryear might seem obvious to us today, but they are sometimes slow to be realized at the time (Weaver, p. 81).

Fortunately, the phenomenon of black people being placed in the cookbooks of outsiders, and speaking with voices other than their own, proved to be ephemeral itself. By the 1950s, African Americans started publishing their own cuisine incorporating their own ways of doing things (Witt). ■

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MORSELS & TIDBITS

CHAA founding member **Jan Longone** will be the featured speaker at the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Culinary Historians of Chicago, scheduled for Saturday, April 20. Jan will give a talk, "The Old Girl Network: Charity Cookbooks and the Empowerment of Women", 10am – 12 noon at Kendall College's School of Culinary Arts. CHC members and guests will then partake of a special lunch at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, and hear the announcement of winners of the annual American Midwest Foodways Scholar's Grant. The Museum and its special exhibit, "Unfinished Business: 20th Century Home Economics", will be open for visitors. Further information can be found at <http://culinaryhistorians.org/> for the morning lecture and <http://culinaryhistorians20thlunch.eventbrite.com/> for the afternoon activities.

The **Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive** was hailed in *Saveur* magazine by writer **Steve Friess**, who said that on a single visit, "My understanding of American culinary history was turned on its head". He gave some examples of his surprising discoveries among the collection of over 20,000 items and concluded, "Valuable as it is, Longone, who still curates the archive, remains its greatest asset" (*Saveur*, 154, Mar. 2013, p. 18).

Now, major changes are on the way for the JBLCA. This year, the collection is moving from the University of Michigan's Clements Library to the Special Collections Division of the UM Library. The transfer is intended to fully realize the potential of the JBLCA for teaching, learning, and research at UM and beyond. The Special Collections Library is enthusiastic about acquiring, expanding, caring for, and promoting use of the archive. CHAA member **JJ Jacobson**, as curator of the collection, will join the staff of Special Collections, and our founding member **Jan Longone**, in her role as "ambassador" for the JBLCA, will be appointed as adjunct curator. For more info, visit <http://theclementslibrary.blogspot.com/2013/02/>.

CHAA member **Margaret Carney**, director of the Dinnerware Museum in Ann Arbor, announces that the inaugural exhibition, "Unforgettable Dinnerware", will run April 27 to May 17 at the Ladies' Literary Club of Ypsilanti (218 N. Washington Street). There will be a public reception from 4-7 pm on opening day. For more info, visit <http://www.dinnerwaremuseum.org>. Margaret will speak to the CHAA about her experiences in establishing the museum on April 21 (see Calendar on page 20).

CHAA member **Bonnie Ion** was recently given her Peace Corps assignment. She will be leaving June 3 for staging and travel to Burkina Faso, a small land-locked country in Western Africa. After two months of language training, she will teach math, science, and computers to high-school girls in French and a local language. She is very excited about this adventure, and we wish her every success! Bonnie and her husband Patrick Ion joined the CHAA in 2007. ■

"THIS BOOK IS FOR US AND BY US"



FREDA DE KNIGHT AND POSTWAR BLACK COOKING

by Donna Pierce

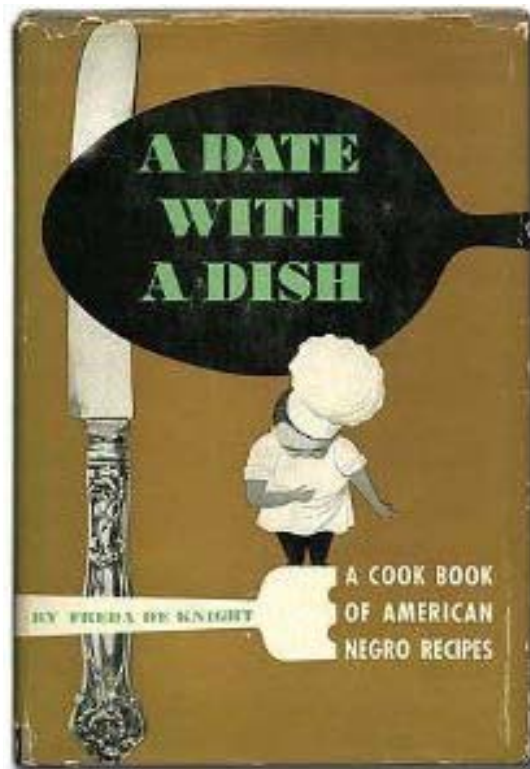
Donna Pierce is a national award-winning food and travel journalist, the former Assistant Food Editor and Test Kitchen Director for the Chicago Tribune, and Contributing Editor for Upscale Magazine. Pierce lived in San Francisco and Los Angeles before a return to Missouri where she was a Features and Food Editor for the Columbia Tribune and Adjunct Assistant Professor for the Univ. of Missouri Journalism School. Currently residing in Chicago, she has traveled to Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean, exploring the roots of African American culinary traditions. She is a member of the Southern Foodways Alliance (former board member), Les Dames d'Escoffier (former board member of the Chicago chapter), the Association of Food Journalists, the International Association of Culinary Professionals, the James Beard Foundation, and the National Association of Black Journalists. Pierce is the founder of BlackAmericaCooks.com and SkilletDiary.com. She is currently working on a novel and a biography of Freda De Knight.

"GOODBYE MAMMY, HELLO MOM". This headline appeared in bold caps above *Ebony Magazine's* March 1947 editorial declaring a kitchen revolution. Based on war jobs and postwar factory employment for U.S. men and women, Negro families were enjoying weekday suppers and meals together. Children were coming home to after-school snacks. Instead of being relegated to white folk's kitchens while their own children survived with latchkeys, the unidentified writer opined, "The cooking over which white folks used to go into ecstasies is now reserved for her own families."

One year later, Freda De Knight's groundbreaking cookbook *A Date with a Dish* was published for these moms (and dads) who were returning to their own kitchens to cook for their own children. It didn't stop there. It was also written for members of the educated "Talented Tenth", as described by W. E. B. Dubois in his 1903 essay, and the Black "upper class" as Lawrence Otis Graham described in his 1999 book *Our Kind of People*, where he highlighted historically wealthy, professional African American families.

A Cocktail Hour with Freda

De Knight's "first of its kind" nationally-published cook-



book wasn't written for a white audience.

"This book is for us and by us", De Knight once said to William Lawrie, who had been invited for cocktails at her Chicago apartment on 51st Street and South Michigan Avenue by their mutual friend, Bill Smallwood, whose name appears in the book's Acknowledgements.

Lawrie, a friend of Langston Hughes, had studied acting while working as a personal chef in Chicago's Gold Coast and in Manhattan in the 1930s and 1940s. He was 88 years old when I interviewed him in 1998, and he described his first meeting with Freda De Knight as "not at all what I expected."

"Smallwood, who was a friend of hers, knew how much I enjoyed her column and her style, and he had received permission to include me in the invitation for cocktails", Lawrie said. "I was very nervous, but she put me at ease right away. She seemed thrilled when she learned that I was originally from Independence, Missouri, and that my father had been a physician. It turns out we knew several people in common", he said, adding, "She said she thought that growing up in the Midwest and traveling all over the world helped us both appreciate the similarities and diversity within the Black community."

"Since her husband, Rene, was out of the country with the Delta Rhythm Boys, Freda (as she insisted I refer to her) commented about how the appetizers we were eating would be her entire dinner meal. The fact that she didn't plan on eating much didn't surprise me. She had a beautiful figure, and I imagine that's how she kept it. What did surprise me was the appetizer preparation. She didn't spend much time cooking. She opened cans and packages. Later, when I looked through the book she had autographed for me, I recognized what she had prepared as the Anchovy and Onion Balls from the Appe-

tizer Chapter.” According to Lawrie, “They were delicious.”

Sum her up with three words? “Elegant, gracious and humble”, he said, adding, “Spending that short cocktail hour with her is one of my favorite memories.”

Recipe Teacher for a Newlywed

During the 1950s, my mother kept Freda De Knight’s *A Date with a Dish* handy on the same kitchen shelf as the *Better Homes and Garden Cookbook*, *The Joy of Cooking*, and half a dozen community cookbooks. *A Date with a Dish* was her first point of reference, and she credited the 1948 recipe collection for helping establish her excellent reputation in the kitchen among family and new friends.

Mom’s college roommate, Jeanne Dubose— whose uncle, Whitney Young, Sr., was the longtime principal of Lincoln Institute, an all-Black boarding school near Louisville, Kentucky, and whose cousin, Whitney Young, Jr., was the former director of the National Urban League— describes a different reason for appreciating *Ebony Magazine* and De Knight’s cookbook. “Your mother always liked the modern approach and trying new things, but I made the waffles and cakes and pies from memory.”

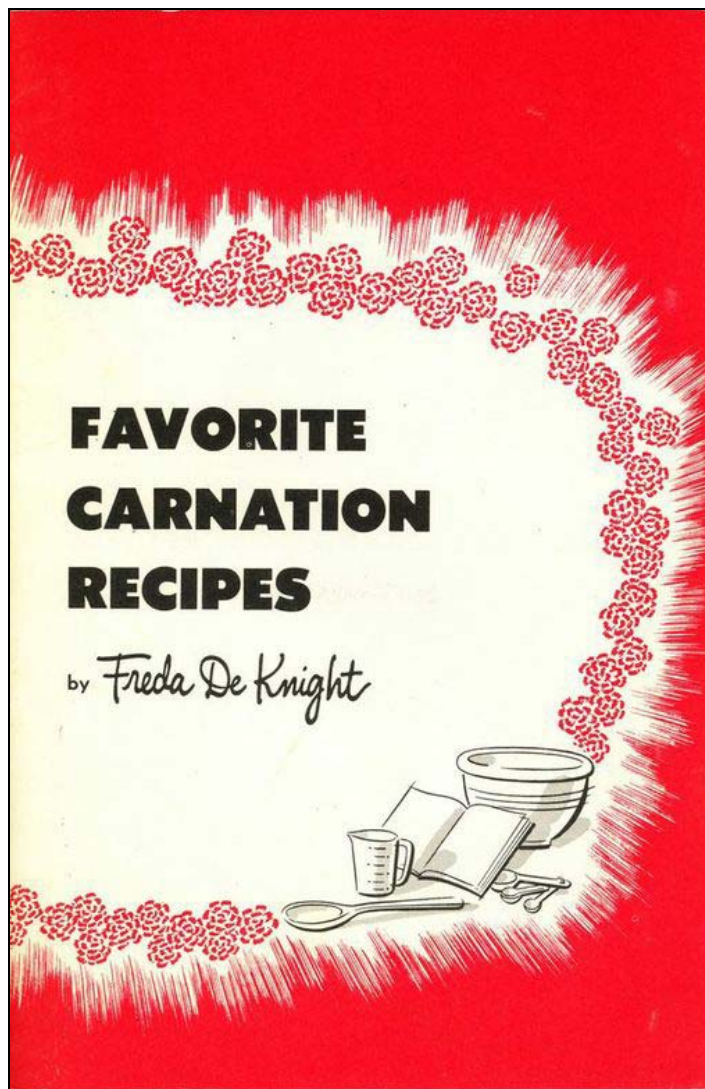
“I loved the book and everything that came out of *Ebony* because, instead of stereotypes, these publications represented people I knew. I didn’t see that in print many other places”, Dubose said.

Dubose, 82, and my mother, who passed away 10 years ago at age 72, had graduated from Florida A&M in May of 1950. Dubose returned to Chicago, where she would eventually marry and raise a family near relatives who could offer recipe reminders.

By contrast, after Mom married my dad one month after graduation, the newlyweds moved away from five generations of family ties on the Gulf Coast to begin careers in education in rural Missouri. More than 800 miles away from family and friends in Mobile, Alabama, during a time when long-distance telephone calls were reserved for emergencies or very special occasions, Mom said De Knight became her trusted recipe teacher. Hers was a cookbook that always came through with ingredients and directions to help the young wife and mother reproduce the recipes from home that she had cherished but not memorized.

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Below: Cover and preface page from Freda De Knight, *Favorite Carnation Recipes* (Los Angeles, CA: Carnation Company, 1950s). Images on these two pages are courtesy of Donna Pierce.



FREDA DE KNIGHT *continued from page 17*

Mom said she especially appreciated the fact that De Knight was beautiful, sophisticated, and well-traveled. But most of all, Mom always spoke about how much she loved her down-to-earth Midwestern perspective about even glamorous people, places, and recipes.

“He didn’t have to bow to anyone”

De Knight was born near Topeka, Kansas, and her father died when she was a toddler. Her mother, a traveling nurse, arranged for her two daughters to board with Paul and Mamie Scott, well-known caterers in Mitchell, South Dakota.

De Knight described the culinary inspiration gained from the Scotts in the “Collectors’ Corner” of the 1948 book. There, one finds a broad spectrum of recipes, such as Mama Scott’s Bechamel Sauce, Effie Jenkins’ Mexican Shrimp, Fred Knight’s Lobster Newburg, Jennie Goodgame Jeter’s Grated Sweet Potato Pudding, and Pauline and Charlie Saunders’ Hot Water Cornbread.

This “Collectors Corner” chapter, filled with recipes collected from “Negroes all over the country”, did not appear in the subsequent 1962 edition of the cookbook when *Ebony* was added to the title, and Johnson Publishing Company to the copyright. By then, De Knight had been named *Ebony*’s Home Service Director after organizing the first *Ebony* Fashion Fair in 1957.

Following a holiday trip to Chicago to celebrate Thanksgiving at my elegant Aunt Ella’s house, my mother returned home and replaced the well-worn first edition of *A Date with a Dish* with the brand new *The Ebony Cookbook: A Date with a Dish*.

Most of the recipes from the 1962 and subsequent 1978 editions were repeats from the classic 1948 book with small editing corrections. But my parents were elated over the book because we were related to Herbert Temple, the artist responsible for the new illustrations. My dad and Herbert Temple’s wife, Athelstan, were first cousins who had grown up together in Mobile.

Temple had joined *Ebony* in 1953 after graduating from the Art Institute of Chicago. He was promoted to the magazine’s Art Director in 1967 and spent the next 40 years working for Johnson Publications.

“How would you describe Freda De Knight?” I asked Cousin Herbert when I was visiting him and his daughter, Janel, a few months before his death in 2011.

“Delightful, charming, with the perfect balance of sophistication and the girl next door.... Stein and I liked her very much” he said, pausing before adding solemnly, “I miss them both.” Freda De Knight had died of cancer in 1963. Herbert’s wife, Athelstan (Stein), died in 1995.

“How would you describe the famous Little Brown Chef?” I continued, referring to the illustrated themes he had added to the cookbook. “Self-assured... very confident”,

Cousin Herbert said, studying the pen and ink he had pulled from a folder. “He’s proud of his work and his talent. His talent meant he didn’t have to bow to anyone”, he answered.

“Just like you”, I said, and Cousin Herbert paused before smiling in agreement. A few minutes later he put a few sheets of more recent chef drawings in a folder for me to take back home “to use with your blog”, he said.

A Personal Appreciation

For many of us African American Baby Boomers who grew up during the Civil Rights era, *Ebony Magazine* and De Knight’s *A Date with a Dish* became cultural lighthouses during a time when integrating white schools and the absence of Black faces in media sometimes left us feeling left out and confused about our cultural identity.

Alongside the influence of my grandfather, who was a newspaper publisher in Mobile, of my parents who were both educators, and of my two grandmothers who were both incredible family cooks, I’m certain that the childhood memories of *Ebony Magazine* on our family coffee table and Freda De Knight’s cookbook on the kitchen shelf had something to do with me choosing a career writing about the importance of saving family recipes in general and my appreciation of Black American cooking in particular.

I’m learning a lot by reading De Knight’s comments and advice in the book. On one page, she brilliantly negotiated the debate about authentic recipes by comparing Creole gumbos: “No two people have the same recipe for the same dish... their way is as authentic to them as your way is to you.”

In a paragraph devoted to people who wanted to “keep their weight down”, her recommendations 65 years ago included eating “sparingly of starches, sugars and fat... that plate of vegetables should be green.”

Now that it’s my turn to pass down the stories and recipes, I’m grateful for the instructions from cooks no longer with us, who took the time to demonstrate the importance of Negro, Black, and African American family recipes.

Recently, when I transferred the 1948 *A Date with a Dish* from my research recipe library to the small shelf of books I’ve come to think of as trusted kitchen advisers, I added photos of these cooks who inspired me. A few days later, I remembered the vintage mammy cast-iron bank that Mr. Lawrie had given me “as a reminder you have a message to share”, and placed it next to the photos.

I do have a message to share.

I’m standing on the shoulders of giants who taught me that we are more alike than we are different; that authentic is often in the memory of the taster; and that old family recipes are often much more than something to eat... Goodbye Mammy. Hello Mom. ■

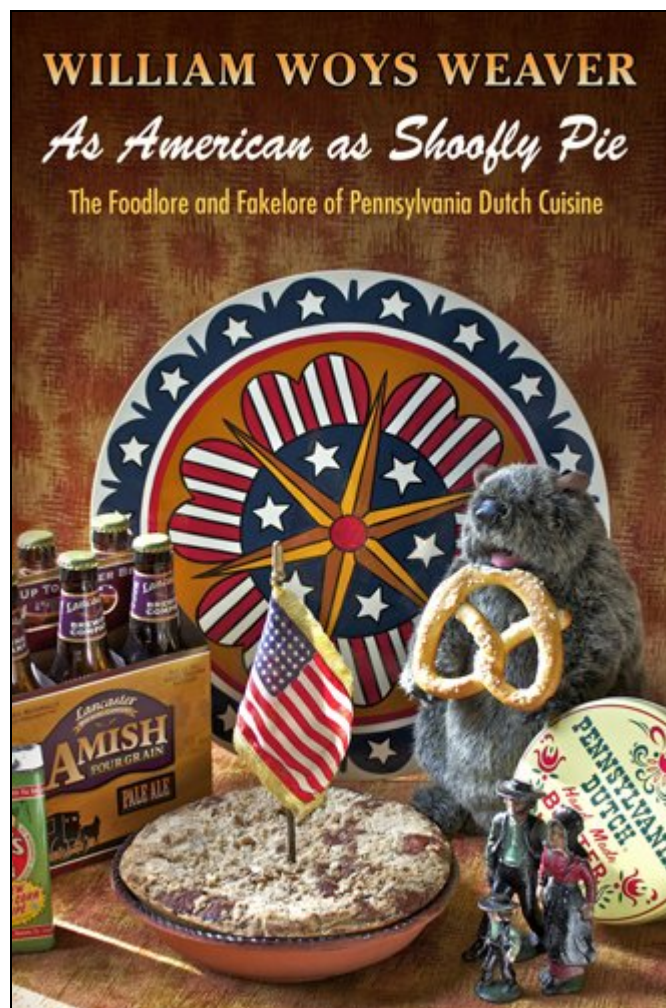
ETHNIC CUISINES: BATTLEFIELDS OF AUTHENTICITY AND GLOBALIZATION

Three studies have recently been published that explore the mass commodification of a particular ethnic food.

Dr. William Woys Weaver has written *As American as Shoofly Pie: The Foodlore and Fakelore of Pennsylvania Dutch Cuisine* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2013; 336 pp., \$34.95 hbk.). This essay collection is the first book to provide a full explication of the food culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch (i.e., German), including a discussion of the first German settlements in America, the dishes that became classics, the *Neie Deitsche Kiche* Movement (the new cookery movement that began in the 1930s), the use and misuse of Amish as a cultural symbol, and the role of tourism in creating many dishes now associated with the culture, such as Amish Friendship Bread and the “Seven Sweets and Seven Sours”.

Weaver, a longtime resident of southeastern Pennsylvania, is a member of the Culinary Historians of New York and of the Historic Foodways Society of the Delaware Valley. He is the author of 15 books, including *Sauerkraut Yankees* and *Culinary Ephemera*. His recent doctoral studies at University College, Dublin, focused on issues surrounding “authenticity” in food tourism. In *Repast* (Winter 2008), Weaver wrote about “The Kutztown Folk Festival and Its Stereotyping of Pennsylvania Dutch Cookery”, and at the Second Symposium on American Culinary History (Univ. of Michigan, May 2007) he spoke about “The Amish as a Symbol of Regional and Ethnic Cuisine”.

In *Planet Taco: A Global History of Mexican Food* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012; 320 pp., \$27.95 hbk.), Dr. Jeffrey M. Pilcher traces the evolution of this quintessential hand-held meal. Although noncommercial tacos seem to have existed earlier, with possible antecedents as far back as ancient Aztec times, the first widespread appearance of taco shops occurred in the late 1800s in the *barrios* of Mexico City. There, working-class men prized versions that were laced with meats such as *carnitas* (fried pork), *barbacoa* (pit-roasted beef or lamb, the source of our word “barbecue”), *tripitas* (tripe or other offal), or else they contented themselves with more humble versions such as the *taco de minero* (“miner’s taco”, filled simply with steamed potatoes and salsa). Pilcher’s narrative moves on to cover the taco’s subsequent migration out into the Mexican provinces, where it acquired such new flavors as *cochinito pibil* (Yucatecan pit-roasted pork) and *carne asada* (Sonoran grilled beef); the rise of the Americanized taco, the fried taco “shell”, and the “burrito” (encased in a wheat-flour tortilla) at chain eateries such as Taco Bell; and the taco as a modern multiethnic phenomenon on a global scale, embracing Lebanese *shawarma*, Korean barbecued short ribs, Norwegian *Fredagstacoen* (“Friday tacos”), and more.



Pilcher, a history professor at the Univ. of Minnesota, has written several previous books, including *Que vivan los tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* and a survey, *Food in World History*. He was also the editor of a recent collection of essays by many scholars, *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012; 536 pp., \$150 hbk.).

Studded with interesting facts and anecdotes, *How Italian Food Conquered the World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; 288 pp., \$25 hbk.) is the work of John F. Mariani. It chronicles the rise of Italian cuisine from the early days—when it was viewed by many outside Italy as mere peasant fare and street food—to the era of global fame and prestige, when authors such as Marcella Hazan and Lidia Bastianich (the latter wrote the Foreword here) helped interpret it for a foreign audience, lending it added cachet while defending its authentic core. Besides Europe, the book focuses mostly on the U.S., where pizzerias and Italian butcher shops began to flourish shortly after World War I. It was there that such popular American foods as “pepperoni” and “chicken Parmesan” were invented.

Mariani, a veteran food and wine correspondent for *Esquire* magazine, was previously the author of *The Dictionary of American Food and Drink* and *The Encyclopedia of American Food & Drink*. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4:30-6:30 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, April 21, 2013

Margaret Carney, expert on ceramics
and ceramic world history, and
founder of the Dinnerware Museum,
“Unforgettable Dinnerware: Creating
a Dream Museum in the 21st Century,
One Place Setting at a Time”

Sunday, May 19, 2013

Emily Jenkins,
Owner and baker at Tanglewood
Bakery (Plymouth, MI),
“Heirloom Strawberry Varieties”

On the Back Burner: We invite ideas and
submissions for *Repast*, including for the following
planned future theme-issues. Suggestions for future
themes are also welcome.

- Summer 2013: American Cookery from One
Century Ago
- Fall 2013: Formative Food Experiences
- Winter 2014: Jewish Baking
- Spring 2014: Quadricentennial of Dutch-
American Cooking.

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