



VOLUME XXXVI, NUMBER 2 SPRING 2020

Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Immigrant Foods of Steel Country, Part 3

Setting a Mediterranean Table on the Allegheny Plateau



A sliced
Croatian
walnut roll,
or *kolach*,
from Butter
Maid Bakery,
Youngstown,
Ohio. See the
Grgich family
recipe on
page 7.

Repast

ISSN 1552-8863

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

<http://culinaryhistoriansannarbor.org/>

An archive is available at <https://cooks.aadl.org/cooks/repast>

Editor.....Randy K. Schwartz
CHAA President.....Mariam Van Deventer Breed
CHAA Treasurer.....Judy Steeh
CHAA Membership SecretaryMarionette Cano
CHAA Website Editor.....Judy Steeh
CHAA Founder and Honorary President...Jan Longone



*The material contained in this publication is copyrighted.
Passages may be copied or quoted provided that the source is credited.*

For submissions or inquiries about *Repast*, contact:

Randy K. Schwartz
1044 Greenhills Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2722
tel. 734-662-5040
rschw45251@aol.com

Subscriptions are \$20/year. To subscribe to *Repast* or to become a CHAA member (which includes a subscription), contact either President Mariam Breed (tel. 734-320-3708) or Membership Secretary Marionette Cano (e-mail a2culinaryhistorians@gmail.com), or download a membership form from the web address given near the top of this box.

More Resources for This Issue

Fine preserves of fruits and berries form an important part of Croatian cuisine, as reflected in the Grgich cookbook (see pages 3-9). Especially famous are the Marasca ("Maraschino") sour cherries of the Dalmatian coast. A firm called Dalmatia (<https://dalmatiaspreads.com>), based in Miami, FL, imports fruit from the region to produce preserves of sour cherry, fig, quince, apricot, and many more, as well as some savory varieties such as pepper and eggplant. The products are also available by online retail.

Butter Maid Bakery (<https://buttermaidaibakery.com>) offers about a dozen and a half different varieties of *kolachi*, the Croatian sweet roll pastry (see front page), including by online order. The company's roots in Youngstown, OH, go back to 1903, and back further in Europe.

Saveur magazine offers a recipe for "Pittsburgh-style nut roll" (*kolachi*) alongside a brief video showing its preparation (<https://www.saveur.com/nut-roll-recipe>).

The wedding cookie table tradition among Italian and Central European immigrant families in Steel Country, discussed by Profs. DeBlasio and Pallante in "Italian American Foodways and Traditions in Ohio's Mahoning Valley" (pages 10-15), has become an outright craze in recent years, including Facebook groups with huge followings:

- The Youngstown Cookie Table page, created in 2009 by Youngstown resident Linda Schramke, currently has more than 15,000 members in the U.S.: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/11106835573292>. (Linda Schramke, now Linda Sproul, who still administers that Facebook page, has moved to Michigan where she is Director of Donor and Alumni Relations for her *alma mater*, Concordia Univ. of Ann Arbor.)
- The Wedding Cookie Table Community page, begun in 2015 by the Italian-American documentary filmmaker and historian Laura Magone of Pittsburgh, currently has nearly 40,000 members from coast to coast: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1689021244718379>.

A decade ago, veteran writer Cassandra Vivian extensively documented Christmas food traditions among Italian-American families in the Pittsburgh area in a pair of articles (one for Christmas Eve and one for Christmas Day foods) that include high-quality recipes and photographs. She examined the constituents of each meal course, and documented how immigration had preserved Italian regional differences. "An Italian-American Christmas in Southwestern Pennsylvania" was published in *Western Pennsylvania History*, Part I in Winter 1999 (82:4), pp. 154-168, available at <https://journals.psu.edu/wph/article/view/4674/4477>, and Part II in Winter 2000 (83:4), pp. 174-191, available at <https://journals.psu.edu/wph/article/view/4721/4524>. A version of Part I that has additional information and recipes is available at <https://www.academia.edu/18197475>. ■



Photo: Ross Mantle/ *The New York Times*, Dec. 16, 2009.

Guests fill their plates with some of the 2,000 cookies baked by the family of bride Laura Gerrero at her Pittsburgh wedding in Dec. 2009. Many of the cookies were made using old family recipes. On the tier in the foreground are two flavors (chocolate and anise) of the *pizzelle*, a waffle-like Italian cookie made with an electric-powered *pizzelle* iron.

A CROATIAN-AMERICAN FAMILY IN PITTSBURGH

by Anna Mae Grgich Anderson

Anna Anderson, 89, a longtime resident of Vienna, VA, grew up in a Croatian immigrant family in coal-mining country near Pittsburgh. Below, with her permission, we are reprinting extensive excerpts from her annotated compilation of recipes from her mother, Anna Kusanic Grgich (1903-1998). Anna moved to Northern Virginia more than 40 years ago with her husband, Norwegian immigrant Carl Louis Anderson (1931-2006). For decades there, she has volunteered with women's groups and, following a Croatian tradition, has made preserves and relishes using fruit from her yard as gifts for family and friends.

Anna Anderson self-published the Anna Grgich Cookbook: Croatian and American Favorite Recipes (hereinafter "the Grgich cookbook") in 1987, and again with updates in 1997. It has about 80 pages, 5½ × 8½ inches, with a comb-type plastic binding. Most of the recipes in the book, including all of those that we have selected to reprint, are flagged as "From Croatia in 1930", the year in which Anna Grgich married and settled in the U.S.; those not so marked are closer to mainstream American recipes.

Anna Kusanic (Grgich) was born on October 24, 1903, in Millvale near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her father Joe Kusanic and mother, Anna Obranovich Kusanic, lived in the Pittsburgh area.

When Anna was six months old, her mother took her to Croatia and left her with her grandparents in Brezane¹. Since her mother was only 18 years old with very little money, it was difficult to cope with a small baby.

A Childhood in Northern Croatia

Anna was brought up part of the time with the grandparents Kusanic in Brezane, and part of the time with the Obranoviches in Utinje² depending on the ability of the relatives to take care of her.

At age seven, Anna was sent to a one-room school in Brezane. School did not interest her, and she was not encouraged to study. In fact, at first the teacher usually kept her busy sweeping the floor or adding wood to the stove in the classroom. Since she was a hard worker, the teacher, himself a farmer, soon taught her to butcher his chickens, ducks and geese.

Her father, Joe, while working in the steel mills in Pittsburgh, became ill with tuberculosis and returned to Brezane. This is when young Anna at the age of 10 nursed him until the year 1913 when he died. When she was 12 years old, her mother returned to live in the village. By that time, Anna did not recognize her.



Passport photo of Anna Kusanic (1930) from the Grgich cookbook.

When she was 19, Anna was sent to work as a housekeeper and cook for the Plemich family in Mekose near Karlovac. There was a tradition in the cities of Croatia of early morning open-air food markets. Local farmers would bring their fresh produce daily. Anna had to carry large containers of milk on her head to the market in Karlovac every day to sell. The market was more than a place to do business, it was also a place to greet neighbors and to exchange the latest news and gossip. Anna also went to the Catholic church every morning, as was customary for everyone in the village.

In 1928, when Anna was in her mid-20s, her widowed mother (my own grandmother) Anna Obranovich met and married Mike Mance in the nearby village of Skakavac. Both bride and groom had returned to Croatia from Pennsylvania after being widowed. Once married, they returned to America to live on Mike's large farm in Murrysville³, with many cows, pigs, horses, chickens, sheep, ducks, geese, guinea hens, pigeons, cats, dogs, etc. Anna Mance set to work as cook, housekeeper and stepmother in a large, 10-room, old farm house with no central heating and no bathrooms. It was also common for farmers to make wine and liquor. The Mances also made *šljivovica* (plum brandy). They were heavy drinkers, but they were also very hard-working people.

Settling in Coal Country

It was common then in western Pennsylvania, especially during the Great Depression days, for farmers to have boarders

continued on next page

Corn Meal Mush (*Palenta*)

*Palenta was a staple during hard times in Croatia. Before corn was introduced, it was made from a dried dough product of flour and eggs. The dough, called tarana, was crumbled into pieces, then dried in the sun, and resembled grains of rice.*⁴

1 cup yellow corn meal
2 cups water
salt to taste

Bring salted water to boil in deep pot. Sprinkle corn meal slowly into boiling water, stirring continuously with a wooden spoon. Make sure there are no lumps. When all corn meal has been added, continue cooking over moderate heat. Stir constantly while it thickens. It will take a few minutes to get hard. When it becomes difficult to stir, and pulls away from the sides of the pot, it is ready.

Palenta was served in several ways:

- Sauté onions in butter, then pour them over your palenta.
- Make a sauce, or gravy, with sour cream, then pour this over your palenta. Fresh onions served with it are delicious.
- Serve your goulash, or stew, over your palenta!

Yellow Corn Bread (*Pogaca or Baglamaca*)⁵

4 cups yellow corn meal	2 cups white flour
½ cup sugar	3 tsp. baking powder,
½ cup margarine, softened	or 2 packages dry yeast
2 cups sour cream	3 cups milk
3 eggs	salt

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Let sit for a few mins. until it starts to rise. Pour into two well-greased 9 × 13 inch pans. Bake at 350° F. for 25-35 mins. until golden brown.

Beans and Sauerkraut (*Igrah zelje*)

Igrah zelje was a regular meal on the farm when Anna Grgich was growing up.

1 cup pinto or Roman [cranberry] beans, or your favorite
1 lb. smoked ham, or pork, or chicken
1 qt. sauerkraut (Grandma's homemade)

Cook the meat and beans together until tender, then add sauerkraut. Make your favorite brown gravy, or brown sauce, and pour into pot. Simmer for 15 mins.

CROATIAN FAMILY *continued from page 3*

to help with the expenses. One of the Mance boarders was a local coal miner from Kablar⁶, Anton Grgich (the original spelling of the name is Grgić, which makes the “c” sound like “ch”). Anna Mance liked him and encouraged him to write to her daughter Anna in Croatia to become acquainted. Before long, Anton had saved enough passage money to send for Anna, and Anna, still in her late 20s, readily agreed to come back to America to marry him, sight unseen! She finally arrived at Ellis Island in May 1930.

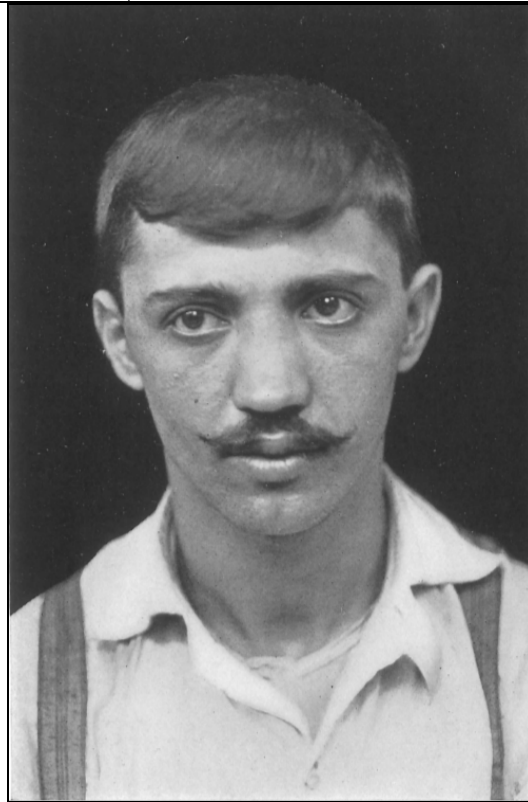
Anna and Anton took a train to Pennsylvania and, at the courthouse in Greensburg on May 20, they were married by the judge. They settled in Yukon⁷ and lived in a coal company four-room frame house. They paid \$7.00 a month rent, and he could walk to the mine. The village was occupied mostly by Slavic immigrants—Croatian, Serbian, Polish, Russian, and others from Eastern Europe, all uneducated laborers. They attended the Roman Catholic church where the priest spoke their languages. Anna and Anton never did have a chance to go to school to learn to read and write in English. But every week they received a Croatian newspaper, the *Zajednicar*, from the Croatian Fraternal Union (CFU) from Pittsburgh.

They also had fun at picnics and parties with their Croatian and Serbian friends. They would gather together to reminisce and enjoy their old country cooking. There was always plenty of roast pork and roast lamb. Anton had a musical talent and at an early age had learned to play the tamburitza, the Croatian national instrument. He formed his own small band and sang all the old traditional Croatian country songs. At dances people

would make requests for favorite songs, sing and dance to the tamburitza music, and stuff the tamburitza with money. Anton was quite handsome and a ladies man, and he would use the money for drinking and having a good time!

The coal miners lived in the company houses and had to buy food and clothing in the company stores because that was the only place they could get credit. When the miners went on strike for better working conditions, they did not, of course, receive any pay. That happened almost every year. Therefore, the miners were always in debt. But with the aid of a midwife, three Grgich children were born in that house in Yukon: myself, Anna Mae (May 5, 1931), my brother Walter (Feb. 5, 1933), and my sister Mary (Oct. 21, 1935). Later, we would have another brother, Anton Joseph Grgich (Mar. 13, 1938).

In 1936, when our father Anton lost his job at the mine, he got another one in the Euclid mine in Fitz Henry, a small village that had been built by the Pittsburgh Coal Company at the turn of the century. We moved into a company five-family row house, number 94, and paid \$8.00 a month in rent for a four-room frame house, with no central heating, no running water, no basement and no bathroom. There was a common pump outside which was used by everyone, and each unit had its own outhouse. It was a poor, rundown village with no paved streets and no street lights. The Grgiches were surrounded by blacks and other English-speaking neighbors who resented the foreigners who did not speak English. However, they still had their good times and always had enough to eat. Anna always saw to that.



Far left, a 1925 photo of Anton Grgich from the Grgich cookbook.

Near left, another Croatian immigrant laborer in Pittsburgh.

Photo (ca. 1907) by Lewis W. Hine, from Paul Underwood Kellogg, *Wage-Earning Pittsburgh*, Vol. 6 from The Pittsburgh Survey (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1914).

Cooking and Other Chores

Anna Grgich did all the work of caring for the family, baking all the bread, making noodles by hand, washing clothes on her wringer machine, ironing and mending. She hung her clothes on a line strung across the yard to dry. The clothes would always be covered with soot from the smoke from the mines, and from the trains in the valley. Every workday Anton walked to the mine, leaving home at three in the morning and returning at three in the afternoon. There were no bath houses in those days and everyone coming home from the mines looked black! Since there was no bathroom, he would wash down to his waist stooped over a galvanized tub in the kitchen. Every Saturday night everyone in the family would take turns taking their bath in the kitchen.

The house was heated by a coal stove in the kitchen that was also used for cooking and baking. It was also the only heat in the house. Anna would get up very early in the morning to put more coal in the stove to heat the kitchen before anyone else got up. She would make fresh coffee and bread and have breakfast ready for everyone every morning. There was always smoke escaping from the coal stove, so the inside walls and windows would also be covered with soot. She washed the windows every week, and wall papered or painted the walls every year. She made a lot of the clothes for the family although she had no idea of proper fashion. This bothered her.

Anna managed never to be sick. When the whole family came down with the flu and were all in bed, she was still cooking and serving everyone!

Anna Grgich also did most of the gardening and canning. When she had a good garden crop, and there were a lot of fresh vegetables left in the Fall, she would make piccalilli by cutting

them up, soaking them overnight sprinkled with salt, and boiling them for 10 minutes in vinegar and water with hot peppers, mustard seeds, and other pickling spices. The resulting pickles would be packed and sealed in heat-sterilized jars. She learned not to waste anything and made good use of it all.

She fed and cared for all the animals, which included three cows, two pigs, ducks, chickens, rabbits, dog and cat. Several years they raised 100 or more ducks so she could use the down for making pillows and feather ticks (*blazine*).

The cows would use the lower field across the road as pasture. Anna would milk them very early in the morning and again at night. We always had fresh milk. She made fresh butter and cottage cheese. She also had an old custom of drying cottage cheese in the sun for many days until it was completely dry and very hard and so delicious!

My mother's wonderful cooking made my childhood memorable. To this day, I have never experienced more pleasurable eating.

Chicken was the favorite Sunday dinner, with a lot of vegetables and fresh lettuce from the garden. The meat could also be used to make chicken salad or chicken noodle soup. Anna made her own noodles (*rezanci*) from fresh brown eggs and flour. She had learned to make them by hand as a young girl, but much later had a noodle making machine when her arthritis bothered her. She would also combine her homemade noodles with fried green cabbage and season them to make a popular Croatian side dish.

Pork was also eaten regularly. Every Fall after the first frost, a large hog weighing over 300 pounds was butchered. Everyone

continued on next page

Grandma's Roasted Chicken

3-lb. chicken; reserve gizzard and liver
6 potatoes, peeled and quartered
3 onions, peeled and quartered
6 carrots, peeled

For the Stuffing:

2 cups favorite bread stuffing, with spices
chicken gizzard, cooked and chopped
chicken liver, cooked and chopped
2 stalks celery, cooked and chopped
8 boiled chestnuts, chopped
½ cup pecans, chopped
1 onion, chopped
1 apple, chopped
1 stick margarine, melted
1 egg

Season the chicken inside and out. Combine all stuffing ingredients, and stuff the mixture into chicken cavity and breast. Bake in a pan at 350° F. until done, about 1½ hours. About halfway through, add the potatoes, onions, and carrots to the pan, arranging them around the chicken.

Pork Congealed (*Hladetina*)⁸

2 lbs. pigs feet 1 onion, sliced
4 garlic cloves 1 tsp. peppercorns
1 tsp. salt 2 qts. cold water
4 Tbsp. cider vinegar (optional)

Cut the meat into small pieces. Place in deep pot with water and vinegar. Cook over low heat for an hour. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for 2 hours until meat is tender. Bone the meat if desired. Pour liquid over meat in greased molds, or bowls. Refrigerate overnight to set. The next day, scrape off the fat, then season with pepper. Enjoy!

Cabbage Rolls (*Sarma*)⁹

½ cup rice	1 cup water
2 Tbsp. oil or shortening	1 medium onion, minced
1 garlic clove, minced	1½ lbs. ground beef
1 egg, beaten	salt, pepper, parsley to taste
1 large head green cabbage	1 qt. or 2 lbs. sauerkraut, drained and rinsed

Put rice and 1 cup water in saucepan. Bring to boil, lower heat and cook, covered, 10 mins. or until tender. Drain. Sauté onion and garlic in oil or shortening in skillet until tender. Mix in bowl with rice, beef, egg, salt, pepper, and parsley.

Wash cabbage and remove any wilted outer leaves. Put in a large kettle with salted boiling water to cover. Cook over fairly high heat for 10 mins. Remove, and take off all leaves that are soft. Return to water; keep boiling, and again take off all leaves that are soft. Trim off any tough rib ends from leaves. Place a small ball of the meat stuffing on each leaf and roll up. Tuck in ends to completely enclose stuffing. Fasten with toothpicks if necessary. Put ⅓ of sauerkraut as bottom layer in kettle, followed by ⅓ of cabbage rolls. Repeat in two more alternating pairs of layers.

Bake in 350° F. oven for one hour or until done. Serve with sour cream and/or brown gravy, as desired.

For the brown gravy:

2 Tbsp. margarine
½ cup flour
½ cup water

Melt margarine in a saucepan, then stir in flour and cook over low heat until brown. Do not burn. If too thin, add more flour. When mixture is dark enough, stir in the water gradually to thin it. If still too thick, add more water.

CROATIAN FAMILY *continued from page 5*

in the family would have to help with the slaughter in the back yard. Since there were no freezers, Anna would spend days canning the pork. Hams and bacon would be cured for smoking. A lot of the pork would be ground up, then made by hand into sausages. We all took turns cranking an old sausage stuffer in the cellar. We had a small smoke house in the back yard near the barn. Father would cut enough fruit wood to burn in the smoke house since the fire had to burn continuously.

Leg of lamb (*pečenka*) was a favorite Croatian meal but was not available very often in Pennsylvania. It was stuffed with garlic cloves, rubbed with salt and pepper, then baked very slowly. For special occasions or for picnics, a small lamb would be roasted over an open fire at the home of relatives or friends.

Baking was very important in the Grgich home. Anna had learned to bake as a young girl in Croatia and retained this knowledge when she came to America. If she knew that relatives were coming to visit, she would always have old-fashioned,

fresh-baked white bread on the table, and the house smelled delicious! She baked wonderful cakes, cookies, and pies, and a favorite was jelly roll that she filled with her homemade raspberry and grape jellies. She made the most delicious apple strudel all her life. She also made all varieties of traditional Croatian rolled pastries filled with cinnamon or with nuts. Later, she would even ship the sweet rolls to relatives across the country living in Alaska, California, Arizona, Virginia, and even Norway!

Postlude

In 1941, during World War II, the Pittsburgh Coal Company sold its company houses to the residents and later closed the mine! By that time, Anna and Anton were living in unit number 95 in the row house. They decided to buy the entire row house—along with the acreage across the road, which they had been using for pasture for the cows and pigs, a total of about 12 acres. It took six years to pay off the \$1188.50 for both lots. The row

Sweet Rolls¹⁰

1 cup warm milk	6 packages dry yeast, or
½ lb. butter or margarine, softened	2 2-oz. cakes fresh yeast
1 cup sugar	7 eggs
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract	grated rind from 1 lemon
1 tsp. salt (optional)	10 cups flour, more or less

Make sweet bread the same way you do regular bread: Proof the yeast first in warm milk with one teaspoon of sugar. When it starts to foam, add softened butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla, lemon rind, and salt in a large bowl. Sift in the flour gradually and mix well with fingers. Knead the dough until it is soft and elastic and does not stick to your hands; this will take at least 15 mins. The dough should not be too hard, and free from air bubbles.

Place dough in draft-free warm place, and cover with thick cloth to rise. This dough is heavy, so the rise will take at least 2 hours. When it has doubled, knead the dough and let it rise again the second time. When doubled again, it is ready to use.

Cut dough into 4 separate pieces. Roll each piece out on a floured surface to form a rectangle. Spread with your favorite filling, such as cinnamon, nut, poppy seed, jelly, etc. Roll up the shorter side of the rectangle, so that the roll is as long as the longer side. Place the 4 rolls on greased baking sheets: you can leave each one as a long roll, or slice each roll into several sections, or slice each roll into small pieces turned onto their sides. Let rise again until doubled, about 1 hour. Bake at 350° F. for 35-45 mins. until golden brown.

For a cinnamon filling:

To 1 cup sugar, add enough cinnamon so that it is as dark as you like, about 2-4 Tbsp.

For a nut filling:

Grind about 2 cups walnuts or pecans, then scald this with a little hot milk to make a paste so it is spreadable. When cool, add 1 egg and ¼ cup sugar.

Crepes (*Palacinke*)¹¹

Grandma Grgich would prepare “palacinke” for her family for breakfast, especially on the day they were leaving. She would serve her own preserved plums, or peaches, or jams or jellies along with syrup! A delicious treat!

1 cup flour	1 cup milk
½ cup sugar	4 eggs
salt to taste	shortening

Blend all ingredients until sugar is dissolved. Add enough shortening to cover a large skillet. When very hot, pour ¼ cup batter into skillet. When sides start to curl, the center bubbles and you can see holes, flip over the pancake, then fry it for a few seconds until light brown.

Almond Horns (*Mandule Kifle*)

Grandma Anna Grgich brought this recipe with her when she arrived in America from Croatia in 1930. She made every Christmas special with her delicious almond cookies and nut roll!

10 oz. blanched, ground almonds (see below)
20 oz. butter or oleo
7 oz. powdered sugar
28 oz. flour

To make the ground almond, shell the almonds, then soak in hot water until the brown skins pop off. Dry them by baking them on low heat until completely dry. Grind fine.

Combine the ground almond with soft butter, powdered sugar, and flour. Roll into small crescent-shaped horns, and place on cookie sheet. Be careful when baking because they burn quickly. Bake at 350° F. for 10 mins. or less depending on oven.

house was in terrible condition, but over several years they completely restored it and then began renting out the units. But the only tenants they could get were either unemployed or on welfare; they were always delinquent with the rents, and there were many evictions. It was a losing proposition. Still, the family had many enjoyable moments and always plenty of good food due to Anna's efforts.

There was a small orchard in the back yard where they raised damson plums. When there was a good crop they would make the plum brandy (*šljivovica*). An old custom in Croatia was to begin the day with it!¹² Anton had started drinking at home back in Croatia with the family at a very early age, and was a heavy drinker all his life. But he was a good-natured man who loved his family and preferred to work and not to hurt anyone.

Anton was ill with a bad heart and black lung disease for the last 10 years of his life, and he died at age 69 on July 28, 1963 in the Greensburg hospital. Anna Grgich was a widow at age 59. She had no income until she was eligible for Social Security. She sold eggs and hand-loomed rag rugs, which she had learned to make as a young girl. She enjoyed working in her garden, raising chickens, and crocheting many beautiful doilies and afghans, which she gave as gifts to her children and grandchildren. After 60 years, in 1989, we took her back to visit the village where she had lived in Croatia. ■

Repast Editor's Notes

1. A village in northern Croatia, in what is now Sisak-Moslavina County. The Western Allegheny Plateau

continued on next page

CROATIAN FAMILY *continued from page 7*

in the U.S. was an early center of Croatian immigration because of its coal and steel industry. The Croatian Fraternal Union of America was established in Pittsburgh in 1894, and the first Croatian parish in the U.S., the Saint Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church, was founded that same year in neighboring Allegheny, PA.

2. Another village in northern Croatia, now part of the small city of Karlovac.
3. About 20 miles east of Pittsburgh.
4. This *tarana* (*tarhana* in Turkish) also generally incorporates yoghurt or some other fermented milk product as an ingredient; versions of it are still widely used to make thick soups in southeastern Europe, Turkey, and the Caucasus region. *Palenta* (*polenta* in Italian) is generally prepared even thicker than *tarana*, so thick that it is easily left to dry indoors to make a loaf that can be sliced like bread; the slices can be baked, fried, or grilled. Polenta evolved from the ancient Roman *puls* or *pulmentum*, a porridge of barley, wheat, or other grain that was the staple food of legionnaires and inhabitants throughout much of the Roman territory. After maize from Mexico was introduced to the Venice region around 1530, corn rapidly became the grain of favor for use in making polenta. As is the case with pasta noodles, cornmeal dishes such as *palenta* and *bazlamaca* are examples of Northern Italian cultural influence in Croatia, much of which was ruled by Venice at various times from the 13th to the 18th Centuries.
5. This sweet cornbread, or cake, whose name is usually transliterated as *bazlamaca*, is most popular in northern Croatia, particularly Istria on the northwest coast. It is typically eaten there for breakfast, often topped with fresh fruit, fruit preserves, or honey.
6. Another village near Karlovac.
7. About 25 miles southeast of Pittsburgh.
8. *Hladetina*, the Croatian version of jellied pigs' feet, is usually eaten cold or at room temperature. On pre-industrial farms in Croatia it was traditionally made at the late-autumn *svinjokolje* (swine-slaughter) and could be saved for the Winter months, especially in its soured (vinegar-pickled) form.
9. This rice-stuffed cabbage dish, together with its name *sarma*, are remnants of Ottoman Turkish rule in Croatia in the 1500s. In the Balkan and the Caucasus regions, grape leaves are often used as an alternative to cabbage. Other dishes in the Grgich cookbook that reflect Ottoman influence are the many pickles and relishes of garden vegetables (cucumber, zucchini, bell pepper, green tomato, cauliflower, etc.), generically known as *turšu* or *torshi* in Turkish, and *turšija* in Croatian. Farming families in Croatia also routinely made pickled cabbage (*kiseli kupus*), known in the West as sauerkraut. Croatian immigrants recalled their forebears preparing the shredded cabbage for fermentation by salt-packing it into a big oak barrel, then stomping it down with their bare feet to help remove the moisture.



Coal miners in the Pittsburgh area in the 1940s, returning from work blackened with soot and coal dust, holding their pickaxes and lunch pails. Photo from the Grgich cookbook.

10. This rolled, yeasted sweet pastry is probably most widespread in Croatia, where it is usually called *kolach* (pronounced kaw-l-atsh), plural *kolachi* (pronounced kaw-l-a-chi). In parts of Croatia and in neighboring Slovenia it is known as *potica* or *povitica* (pronounced paw-vee-TEET-sah). *Kolach* should not be confused with two other famous Eastern European baked goods that have similar names:
 - The Czech and Slovak *koláč* is a somewhat flat, oval, "open face" pastry that holds a portion of fruit preserves or other filling at the center, surrounded by puffy dough. A Steel Country recipe for these "Bohemian Kolachy" was included in *Repast* (Summer 2019), and Sharon Maggard of Prague, Oklahoma, wrote about their local Czech Kolache Festival in *Repast* (Winter 2008).
 - A brioche-like, braided sweet bread that is used at Easter and other ritual meals is called *kolač* in Serbo-Croatian, and has very similar names throughout Eastern Europe and Russia.
11. This Croatian *palačinka* is a version of the Austrian thin pancakes called *palatschinken*. The pancakes can

be eaten as sweet (as in this recipe) or savory; for instance, a recipe for *Prokulica Palačinka* (savory Croatian Broccoli Crêpes) is included in Clifford A. Wright's *A Mediterranean Feast* (William Morrow and Co., 1999), p. 343. Croatia was under Austro-Hungarian rule for much of the period from the 12th to the 19th Centuries. Other dishes in the Grgich cookbook that reflect this influence include *paprikas* (peppery stew), *savijaca* (apple or cottage-cheese strudel), *mandule kifle* (almond horn cookies), nut-roll pastries, and the frequent use of sour cream: as a dolloped garnish for baked stuffed cabbage, as a tart component for savory gravies used atop *palenta* or with fried meats, and as an ingredient in sweet baked cakes.

12. *Šljivovica* (the pronunciation is similar to SHLEE-vaw-veet-sah, but the EE is closer to YEE), the most prized alcoholic beverage in Serbian and Croatian culture, is one of a group of fruit brandies known collectively as *rakija*. It is often consumed in small shot-type glasses as an *apéritif*, accompanied by *turšija* (vegetable pickles). *Šljivovica* is also used at all important rites of passage as well as in many folk remedies. The Grgich cookbook includes a full-page recipe for distilling the brandy, describing the steps of harvesting the plums in one's back yard, fermenting them along with rye seeds for two or more weeks in a barrel of sugar water, then boiling the resulting mash continuously over three days and nights in a copper-kettle still.



Anna Kusanic Grgich at age 78, at the wedding of her youngest child, Anton Joseph Grgich, in Dec. 1981. Photo from the Grgich cookbook.



Some middle-class Croatian-Americans in 1950 in Aliquippa, PA, a steel-mill town just west of Pittsburgh. Far left, Rose (née Shuster) Sostar, who had immigrated in the early 1900s; center, Rose's daughters Jenny and Marge; far right behind a neighbor, Rose's niece Ana Besan (née Sostar), who came from Croatia after World War 2 with her husband and their daughter, Maria. Maria ended up settling in Ann Arbor, MI, with her husband, Univ. of Michigan Chemistry Prof. Robert Sharp; Maria and Robert both died in 2019. Photo from Maria Zdenka Besan Sharp, *A Letter to My Grandchildren: Memoir of a Croatian Immigrant* (Gloucestershire, UK: Mereo Books, 2017).

ITALIAN AMERICAN FOODWAYS AND TRADITIONS IN OHIO'S MAHONING VALLEY

by Donna M. DeBlasio and Martha I. Pallante

Historians Donna M. DeBlasio and Martha I. Pallante are natives of Youngstown and Niles, Ohio, respectively, and are co-authors of Italian Americans of the Greater Mahoning Valley (Arcadia Books, 2015). Dr. DeBlasio is Retired Professor of History and Applied History at Youngstown State Univ. and is Editor of the journal Ohio History. Dr. Pallante is currently Chair of the Dept. of History, and Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, at YSU.

Northeast Ohio's Mahoning Valley was once one of the centers of the American iron and steel industry. The many mills that dotted the Valley along the Mahoning River provided work and a decent living for its residents. The lure of jobs proved to be powerful, bringing thousands of immigrants to the area—many of whom hailed from Italy. As Amedeo Chiovitti put it, "I figured that if I came to this country [the United States] I would have a better life."¹ So many Italians settled here that even today, they are the second-largest ethnic group in the Mahoning Valley.

When the newcomers arrived, they normally settled in the neighborhoods with other Italian immigrants. As a result, several became known as "Little Italy". In the Valley's largest city, Youngstown, two areas fit that nickname: Smoky Hollow on the near east side and Briar Hill on the north side. The city of Niles, northwest of Youngstown, also housed a large Italian population; by 1920, over 25% of the city's population was Italian or Italian American. In these enclaves, Italians established vibrant communities, where the neighbors helped each other, celebrated the good times, and provided solace in the hard times. These men and women worked hard in the shadow of the mills to raise their families and provide a better life for their children.

Rushing to Become Americans

Early studies of the region suggest that immigrants to the Steel Valley—particularly Italians—faced conditions that do not align with those of immigrants to larger metropolitan areas such as New York, Chicago, or even such places as St. Louis or Buffalo. What made their experience unique was a combination of factors that impacted their adaptations to American life in general and to food culture in particular.

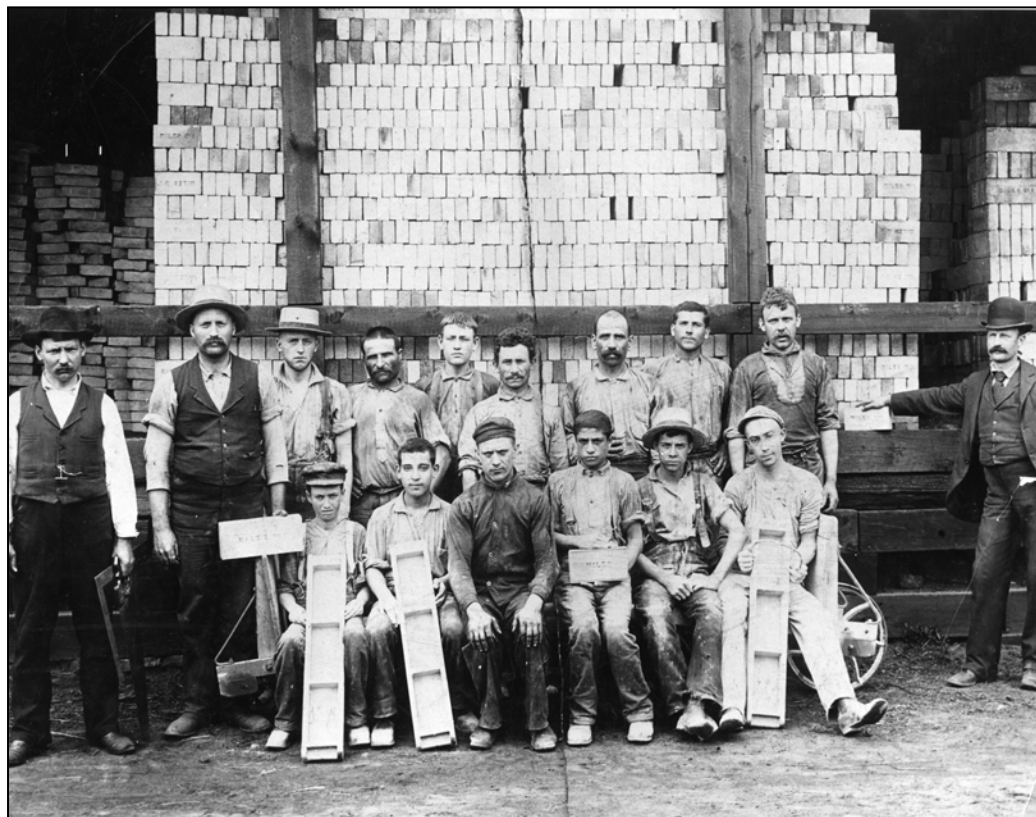
At the center of this is the industry that fueled the Valley's economic engine, the production of iron and steel and its

ancillary manufacturing. The Mahoning Valley, an industrial corridor that lines the banks of the Mahoning River from Warren in the northwest to Lowellville in the southeast, was a one-industry region, and it produced an unusual work environment. It required heavy labor much of which needed specialized training or skills, was extraordinarily dangerous, and as a consequence paid relatively well.

The resulting impact on the immigrant communities that provided the bulk of the labor was peculiar. Unlike most immigrant communities where everyone in the family worked outside the home as soon as they were capable or took in piece work for light industries such as clothing manufacturing, in the Valley it was predominantly adult males (16 years or older) who labored. Children recall working "side jobs" as paper or delivery boys but this rarely constituted full-time work. Similarly, women rarely found occupation outside the home, and because of local prejudice were rarely employed as domestics. Consequently, Italian women engaged in a variety of "domestic industries" of their own. They rented rooms and prepared meals for single adult males employed with their husbands and adult sons. They did laundry and sewed for the same population. Perhaps most significantly, they contributed to the family income by turning the front rooms of their homes into a variety of storefronts from which they sold bread and canned and dried goods. Those with access to transportation sold produce or meats secured from local farmers markets (usually the Pyatt Street market in Youngstown). Some began to serve meals to the more general public or, during the Prohibition era, helped their husbands run speakeasies.

As with many newcomers, there was much about their new home that was unfamiliar to these Italian immigrants. Food customs were among the factors that connected them to their old lives. At the same time, the unique conditions of the "Steel Valley" provided Italian immigrants and their Italian American offspring the opportunity to develop a food culture that was unique to the region. The Italians who settled in the Mahoning Valley, like so many others, adapted their cuisine to what was readily available there. Besides seasonal foods from their own gardens—which were ubiquitous—small grocery stores catering to the neighborhood sprung up to meet their needs. Indeed, while an adequate income was provided by work in the steel mills and support industries such as the Niles Fire Brick plant—which made the refractory brick that lined the mills' many furnaces—additional sources of revenue were always welcome. Domenic Ciarniello, who lived in Smoky Hollow, described the plethora of stores just within a few blocks: "From Audubon Street down to Andrews Avenue to Valley Street, we had five little store front homes. The first was Desimone and the second was Dominic Ferrari and his family. And across the street just a little ways up from that was Mr. Gatti, and further down, Mike DiBartolo's family had a little store."²

In Niles, a very similar situation existed. One pair of informants, brother and sister Joseph and Rita Jennings (DeGennero), separately recounted the importance of small family-owned groceries to the residents of Niles's Little Italy on the east side. Walking from the family home to their father's establishment (a speakeasy during the 1920s and, following the repeal of Prohibition, a private nightclub) down Mason Street,



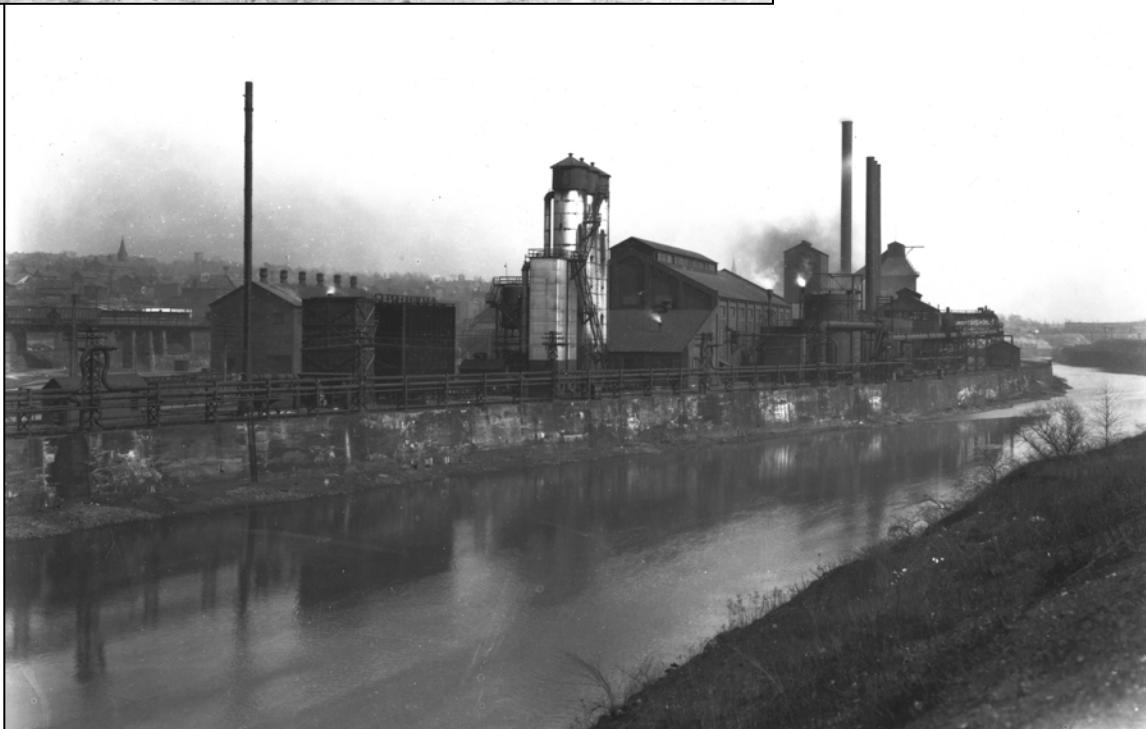
At left, employees of the Niles Firebrick Company, ca. 1895. Seen here on the far right is T. E. Thomas, son of the owner. Standing on the far left are, left to right, J. Rosensteel and P. J. Sheehan. Of the remaining 13 workers, four are Italian: Carmel Laborial, Michael Infante, Lorenzo Pallante and his son, Joseph. Photo from authors' collection.

Below, the Brier Hill Works of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company. Photo courtesy of the Ohio History Connection—Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor.

they reminisced about the multitude of small shops. Joseph recalled Big Ed Liberati, who had a meat market; Jim and Marty Brutz and their sisters, who provided “some of the best chocolate candy that was made in this area”; as well as Bernard’s store across the street. Rita fondly remembered that her grandfather had maintained a small corner store where he “had a little butcher shop and he sold groceries”, and that Johnny Scarnecchia ran a similar operation just down the street.

She also recalled that as a teenager, her father, Marco (b.1888), travelled to Youngstown’s Pyatt Street Market by horse and buggy for fresh produce.³

Over time, several of these storefront endeavors developed into larger operations. Besides those located in the ethnic neighborhoods, downtown stores also carried foodstuffs vital to Italian cuisine. Vito Donofrio noted, “Well, Toots Market downtown, they used to have quite a variety of things. Or East Federal Street [which was within walking distance of Smoky Hollow] had all kinds of stores there where you could



get chestnuts, walnuts, wine barrels and wine and grape boxes with grapes in them to make wine. But most of the groceries we bought were from right down in the Hollow.”⁴ When Lucy Marinelli married Nicholas Nazarin in 1940, she also married into the family’s grocery business. She, like many women, helped support the family by working in the store. Nazarin noted that she was known as the “sausage maker mixer”, and she added, “I was the cashier and I would keep our baby in the bassinet behind me. I used a banana box with cut up paper in it also [to hold the baby]. The banana box came in handy when I

continued on page 13



Lariccia's grocery store in Youngstown, OH, ca. 1933, with dry goods displayed on the sidewalk and baskets of fruit in one of the front windows.

Photo courtesy of Ben Lariccia.

Sweet Ricotta Easter Pie from Youngstown

This recipe traces back to Potenza, which is located in the Basilicata region of southern Italy. It was transplanted to Youngstown, OH, by Rosenell "Rosie" Garramone (1894-1989) and her husband, Salvatore "Sam" Villano (1894-1985), natives of Potenza who owned and ran an Italian specialty store, the Youngstown Wholesale Grocery. Rosie passed the recipe along to her goddaughter, Connie Lariccia, whose extended family owns the J. Lariccia & Bro. Grocery in Youngstown. (Both groceries, Lariccia and Youngstown Wholesale, have survived and greatly expanded over the years.) In 2011, Ben Lariccia filmed his aunt Connie preparing the recipe in an 8-minute video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=kexXL1mnUxg). Details gleaned from that video have been incorporated into the version of the recipe given below.

Makes one nine-inch pie.

For the crust:

1 stick margarine, softened 1 cup flour
3 Tbsp. cold water

Combine crust ingredients with hands or pastry cutter. Roll out about half of the dough with a rolling pin on a lightly floured surface to make the bottom crust, and use it to line a pie pan or dish. Remove and reserve the dough that overlaps the edge of the pan.

For the filling:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup durum wheat berries 2 eggs, beaten
15-oz. container of 1 tsp. vanilla extract
ricotta cheese $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

Soak wheat berries overnight. Cook for 90 mins. or until they split open, then remove from heat and drain them.

Combine beaten eggs with the ricotta. Add vanilla extract, sugar, and wheat berries. Pour or ladle the mixture to fill the uncooked pie crust, but it should not come close to the edge of the pan. Roll out remaining dough, and use a pastry cutter to cut 8 long, parallel strips each about 1 inch wide. Lay the strips over the top of the pie in a star pattern so they all meet at the center. Pinch the two ends of each strip, joining them to the bottom crust.

Bake at 400° F. for 15 mins. Then lower temperature to 350° F. and bake for another 45 mins. until nicely brown. Remove pie from oven and dust the top with powdered sugar. When cool, cut the pie into small blocks (rectangular pieces), not sectors.

ITALIAN AMERICANS *continued from page 11*

didn't have the bassinet with me."⁵ These storefronts allowed the women of the community to combine their domestic lives with their commercial responsibilities. Over time, the storefronts began to specialize and evolved into much more specific enterprises.

Regional Foods

Italian immigrants did the best that they could with whatever was available to recreate the foods they loved. Indeed, most of the Italian words that came into the English language are food-related: pasta, lasagna, pizza, and others. The authors of *The Story of English* argue that this was due to the fact that because Italians were generally less well-educated than many other immigrant groups, they "made a more complete adoption of American English."⁶

Italy, however, is not a monolithic nation state. It is made of numerous distinctive regional cultures, many of which have their own Italian dialect, customs, traditions, and foods. The majority of Italian immigrants to the Mahoning Valley hailed from Southern Italy, including the mountainous regions of Campania, Abruzzo, Molise, and others. Their cultures influenced the food culture of the Valley that persists to the present.

Many of Smoky Hollow's Italians were from Abruzzo (Molise was part of Abruzzo until about 1960). While they prepared foods that are familiar to most people, such as spaghetti, they also had variations that are localized even down to the home town. For example, an unusual *primo piatto* (first course) called *scattone* is a custom in Bagnoli del Trigno, which is now in Molise. As Dominic Ciarniello explained, "it started from the old country. These people would come home from the fields tired from the long day's work and the long walk home, and being that would be the first prepared food in the house, they would cook their pasta for their meal, then they would take a small bowl and put some pasta in it and pour their wine in it. And it served as a real picker-upper, a cocktail to start their meal."⁷ Marguerita Fossesca and Alice Rossi noted, in their cookbook *A Legacy of Italian Holiday Traditions and Recipes*: "After eating the pasta, [you] drink the water & wine mixture which is guaranteed to cure what ails you."⁸ This tradition followed the migrants to their new home, where *scattone* often became the first course of Sunday and holiday dinners.

In Niles, most of the original Italian community hailed from Campania, a region that is a bit further south than Abruzzo. The three original Italian expatriates in Niles came from a single mountain hamlet, Bagnoli Irpino, located in the Avellino district east of Naples. These three pioneers, Michael Infante, Carmel Laborial, and Lorenzo Pallante, arrived in Niles in 1889 or 1890 as skilled workers for the Niles Fire Brick plant. As with most second-wave immigrants, they came alone and then quickly had others join them, lured by the prospect of good jobs and opportunity.⁹ They also brought foods and foodways distinctive to their past. One such item is the "cheese puff", still known back in Bagnoli Irpino as a *bomba*. The puff is a sweet, enriched yeast dough filled with cheese and deep fried. In 21st-Century Bagnoli the puff or *bomba* has mutated into a hand pie filled with any sort of savory (*salume*, tomato sauce, a variety of cheeses, even French fries), and typically enjoyed as street food.

The Niles version is produced annually for the festival honoring a patron saint, "Our Lady of Mount Carmel". This feast is celebrated on or around July 16 in three Italian American parishes in the Youngstown diocese— Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Niles, Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Youngstown itself, and Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Lowellville. It is in Niles, however, where the cheese puff from Campania has been retained in a much purer form than elsewhere. The only significant change is the cheese: the original called for sliced mozzarella or provolone, while the "modern" version calls for a slice of Velveeta (see recipe in the box below).

Italian Fare Goes Mainstream

The presence of so many Italian Americans in the Mahoning Valley also explains why local restaurants include Southern Italian dishes. Fried greens, for example, a staple in many Italian American homes in the Valley, is also a dish that is available in restaurants throughout the area today. Usually this consists of escarole sautéed in olive oil with garlic. Variations can include the addition of sprinkled parmesan cheese, other spices, or hot peppers. Some recipes even add cannelloni beans. While now normally served as an appetizer, in Italian American homes the fried greens, especially if cooked with beans, often became an entrée and a Lenten staple.

Wedding Soup is one of the most ubiquitous Italian-American foods in local homes and restaurants, and has become well known beyond the Mahoning Valley itself. Among the terms used in referring to this dish are *Minestra con Scarollette* (soup with escarole) and *Minestra Maritata* (marriage soup, referring to the marriage or wedding of vegetables and meats).¹⁰ The soup is based on chicken stock and usually features small meatballs, cube-shaped bread croutons (spongy, not crispy as for salads), and greens (usually escarole). There are many variations, but all have their origins in Southern Italian cuisine. Some people omit the greens, some substitute *pastina* (tiny pasta

continued on next page

Cheese Puffs

This is a redaction of a recipe, handwritten and dated 1976, from the personal collection of Margaret Pallante.

Makes 26-28 puffs.

3 eggs	1 stick oleomargarine
½ cup sugar	pinch of salt
1 large cake <u>or</u>	1½ cups milk
3 packages dry yeast	
7 cups flour	1 slice cheese

Beat eggs with melted oleo, sugar and salt. Dissolve yeast in warm milk (sprinkle with sugar) and add flour. Combine all together and knead the dough. A medium dough is needed— if dough is too stiff, add a little more warm milk. Let dough set for half an hour. Roll in rectangular shape large enough for the slice of cheese, and fold over top. Deep fry until dough is golden.

ITALIAN AMERICANS *continued from page 13*

noodles) for the croutons, and some add chicken meat; such preferences tend to be rooted in family tradition. Due to the popularity of the Wedding Soup served at local Italian American restaurants, by the mid-1980s the custom had moved into the mainstream, with many non-Italian restaurants also including a version on their menus. Recipes appeared in local newspapers, and Campbell's Soups even placed several versions on store shelves¹¹ (see recipe in the box to the right).

Food for Holidays and Weddings

Italians and Italian Americans "pull out all the stops" for special occasions and holidays. One of the constant themes found in the oral histories of Italian Americans from the Mahoning Valley is the very communal nature of the Italian enclaves. Many of the accounts extoll the willingness to help others. Special events such as birthdays, holidays, and even funerals usually meant a communal sharing of food.

This giving spirit is especially characteristic of Christmas Eve and weddings. In Italian Catholic homes, Christmas Eve is generally a fast day during which no meat is eaten. The feast of Seven Fishes is an adaptation that enables Italian-Americans to uphold the letter of the law but to celebrate at the same time. Locally, relatives, friends, and neighbors made the feast an opportunity to join together and reflect on the year's fortunes. As the name implies, seven different fish dishes are the focus of the meal. These might include calamari (fried, grilled, stuffed, and/or in sauce over pasta), baccala (dried and salted cod fish), smelts, eel, linguini in clam sauce, and others. Mary Bernard recalled that in her family, Christmas Eve was a time when those more fortunate could provide for those around them.¹²

The occasion of a marriage was another opportunity to enjoy not only each other's company but also to share in traditional foods. For the most part, it wasn't until the late 1950s and early 1960s that most local Italian American weddings utilized outside caterers. Prior to that, the family and friends of the couple prepared the foods served to celebrate this life event. For many in Smoky Hollow, the meeting hall of choice for weddings was Il Duca Degli Abruzzi, located on Summit Avenue across the street from one of Youngstown's two Italian ethnic parishes, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Weddings were all-day affairs, beginning with breakfast; a big meal followed the marriage ceremony around noon, and there was a lighter meal with dancing in the evening. Lucy Nazarini reminisced that even before the festivities began, everyone in the neighborhood anxiously awaited seeing the bride-to-be leave her parents' home in her wedding finery.¹³ Dominic Ciarniello recalled that "all the friends would gather and pitch in to help to dress the chickens for the roast and the soup and to make the... fine egg noodles for the soup and scattone, and to help bake the cookies that were needed for the wedding."¹⁴ Niles's equivalent of Il Duca was the Bagnoli Club, located on the lower end of Mason Street. It provided a venue for gatherings large and small. Members played cards, made wine, and celebrated life's major events.¹⁵

Mary Bernard shared some insight into the elaborate cookie table, a wedding tradition ubiquitous among Italian Americans in the Mahoning Valley. In the diet of the Southern Italian *contadi-*

Italian Wedding Soup

This recipe was published in the Youngstown Vindicator newspaper in the early 1980s, having been contributed by one Gloria Zerbesia. The clipping was found in the recipe collection of Margaret Pallante.

For the chicken soup:

½ stewing chicken	2 large onions
small stalk celery with leaves	parsley
basil	salt and pepper to taste
4 lbs. escarole or endive	

Place chicken in large kettle of water. Bring to boil, skimming surface until clear. Add onions, celery, parsley, basil and salt and pepper. Cook until chicken is tender (about 2 hours). Meanwhile, cook escarole or endive in boiling water until tender. Cool. Cut into small pieces and add to soup.

For the meatballs:

1 lb. ground chuck and pork	2 eggs
salt and pepper to taste	2 cloves crushed garlic
parsley	2 cups grated cheese
2 cups bread crumbs (unseasoned)	

Mix all the ingredients together. Roll into the size of a dime. Place on cookie sheet and add 2 Tbsp. water on cookie sheet so meatballs do not burn. Bake at 350° F. for 10 mins. Do not overcook or meatballs will dry out. When soup is done, remove vegetables and chicken, cut into small pieces, and return to soup broth [along with meatballs].

For the croutons:

12 eggs	1-2 Tbsp. flour
¼ tsp. baking powder	parsley
2 cups grated cheese	

Mix ingredients together and place in a greased 9 × 13-inch dish and bake at 375° F. for 20 mins. until dry and brown. When done, cool and cut into small cubes. Place into soup and add small handful of grated cheese on top of soup.

ni (peasants), confections and sweets were a relatively rare luxury; they were usually reserved instead for the upper orders. But in the Mahoning Valley, former peasants found themselves with some disposable income for the first time in their lives. The same standard of living that allowed them to rapidly progress toward home ownership, and their children to complete high school at unusually high rates¹⁶, also allowed them to mimic their betters in small ways, including the consumption of cookies and other confections at special events.

Mary Bernard further suggested that the wedding cookie table reflects a tradition of communal sharing and a complex web of female obligation. Women, she said, were collecting implicit "cookie debts", a practice rooted in Southern Italian

foodways and customs. She recalled that at her own wedding in 1925, the number and variety of cookies supplied by members of the local community reflected the high status occupied within that community by her mother and by her future mother-in-law. Everyone wanted to be able to contribute because the acceptance of their donation formalized a relationship. If you accepted cookies from someone, you in turn owed them cookies at a later date. As a matriarch you had to calculate how many times you put yourself into such debt because, although you had some discretionary income, it was not unlimited. In donating or receiving wedding sweets, most women were limited to blood relatives and fictive kin, while others with larger coffers could reach beyond familial networks.

The impact of Italian American foodways on the grocery and food scene of the Mahoning Valley remains strong. Consumers recognize grocery stores such as Rulli's and Lariccia's in Mahoning County, and Macali's in Trumbull County as premium shopping destinations. Their origins in the Italian and Italian-American community of the first half of the 20th Century are evident in the organization of their shelves and the products that they carry. For example, in most grocery stores in the U.S.,

continued on page 18



Three Italian American weddings in the Mahoning Valley:

Top, the parents of the second author stand at the cookie table during their 1952 wedding.

Middle, the women and men who prepared the feast at the 1952 wedding of the parents of the first author.

At left, the cookie table at the first author's own wedding in 1992.



ITALIAN-AMERICAN RECIPES FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Braciola (Round steak roll)

This recipe is from the chapter “Italians” in the book edited by Daniel A. Karaczun, Out of This Kitchen: A History of the Ethnic Groups and Their Foods in the Steel Valley, 2nd ed. (Pittsburgh, PA: Publassist, 2010). It was contributed by Alice Manfredi of West Mifflin, PA. Alice was one of 11 children raised in a family of French and German heritage in Homestead, PA, but after marrying steelworker Ed Manfredi she incorporated Italian dishes into her repertoire.

Ed Manfredi, whose parents were from Italy, worked at the Jones and Laughlin Steel mill in Hays, PA, from 1950 to 1987. Ed described how he used leftovers from home for his lunches at work: “I carried them in plastic containers and heated them in pots and pans they kept in the mill right on the furnace. Often, other steelworkers would bring food in and there would be group cooking. The cafeteria was one quarter of a mile away from where I worked so, because of the 30 minute time allotted, I didn’t use the cafeteria.”

2 Tbsp. chopped parsley	1 tsp. black pepper
2 Tbsp. fresh chopped garlic	2 Tbsp. bread crumbs
2 Tbsp. Italian grated cheese	1 large, thin round steak (no fat)
3-4 hardboiled eggs	

Combine the parsley, pepper, garlic, crumbs, and cheese. Cut the steak in 3-4 nice slices, long enough (about 3-4 inches) so you can roll an egg in each. On each slice of steak, spread the mixture and put a hardboiled egg in the middle of the slice. Then roll the meat up like nut roll or cabbage roll, and tie it with string.

Brown a pan with olive oil. Cook the steaks with tomato sauce or spaghetti sauce until tender, about 1 hour. After the meat is cooked and cooled, remove the string. Slice down like a pinwheel. Serve with sauce and grated cheese on top.

Kauachuns

These deep-fried pasta cookies, whose stuffing is made with chick peas, chopped nuts, and chocolate, are a Christmas specialty of the Abruzzo region. The recipe is one of several that were relayed to us by CHAA member Pam Dishman of La Porte, IN, for this series on “Immigrant Foods of Steel Country”. It was contributed by one Nancy Console of Norristown, PA, to “Kitchen Shelf”, a recipe exchange column, in a late 1960s or early 1970s issue of the magazine Steel Labor (United Steel Workers of America, Pittsburgh, PA). Ms. Console’s term “kauachuns” is idiosyncratic, perhaps a corruption of caggionetti, one of the local Italian names for these treats. In America, they are most often called “ravioli cookies”.

For the filling:

1 jar (medium) honey	1 can chick peas (also known
2 small bars of milk	as “cicci beans”), drained
chocolate, melted	and mashed
1 cup chopped almonds	1 cup chopped walnuts

For the dough:

3¾ cups all-purpose flour	½ cup white wine
½ cup warm water	½ cup cooking oil

Combine all filling ingredients and mix well, then combine all dough ingredients and mix well. If the dough appears to be a little sticky, add ¼ cup of additional flour. Roll the dough out and cut into 3-inch squares.

Take filling by teaspoon and place onto square. Take another square and press on top. Press edges well (this will look like ravioli). Fry in hot oil or shortening until brown (a deep fryer does this well, although a deep pot will do). After the oil has become very hot, turn down the heat to just about a simmer and continue to cook the cookies about 3 or 4 at a time depending on size of pot. After they are brown, place on absorbent paper and when cool, sprinkle with confectioner’s sugar. Store in airtight can.

We cannot tell you the exact amount this recipe makes, for as soon as they begin to cook the aroma brings many hungry hands into the kitchen. Best guess: about 6 dozen.

C.H.A.A. REPORT



THE ROARING TWENTIES WAS JUST OUR CUP OF TEA!

Even though the pandemic scuttled most of the Winter talks of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor, we managed to “get our licks in” with January and February presentations on cups, saucers, and sticky-sweet desserts now a century old. We will try to reschedule the talks that had to be cancelled.

Vessels for Thinking as Well as for Drinking

In her talk on Jan. 19, “Defining Cups and Saucers”, CHAA member Margaret Carney showed that the cup and saucer represent a form with a long history, but worth thinking about in new ways. The saucer (from Old French *saussiere*, “sauce boat”) arose in the Middle Ages as a vessel for serving sauces and condiments. Paintings from the 18th Century document that it had evolved into a shallower plate for holding a cup of tea or coffee or chocolate, and perhaps a stirring spoon, while also protecting the drinker and the table or tablecloth from the hot beverage. The French word *demitasse* (literally, “half-cup”) came to refer to a coffee cup of small capacity, of the sort often used nowadays for drinking Turkish coffee or Italian espresso. The earliest materials used for cups were natural ones such as dried gourds, carved wood, and earthenware pottery. Over time, craftsmen, industrialists, and artists turned to materials such as glass, china, porcelain, stainless steel, brass, enamel, plastic, paper, and fiber. Ultimately, cups and saucers cannot be defined or limited by materials, size, style, era, or even function.

Many of Dr. Carney’s slides depicted objects from an exhibit of the same title, which she had curated for her International Museum of Dinnerware Design as a pop-up at Albion College on Jan. 13 – Feb. 8. A dozen examples:

- Kutani ware porcelain cup and saucer (Japan, 1875), hand-painted with a Winter scene in earth-red and other dark, vivid colors
- bone china cup and saucer (Coalport Porcelain Works, Shropshire, England, 1900s), glazed with fine vegetal patterns of blue decal and scalloped, gilded rims
- set of six Art Deco demitasse cups and saucers (Okura Art China, Japan, 1940s) of glazed white ceramic, with pastel-colored pedestals and gilded rims and handles
- Mid-Century Modern cup and saucer (predecessor of Branchell Co., St. Louis, MO, ca. 1950), designed by Kaye La Moyne, the cup of red melamine plastic painted with black Oriental characters and lashed to a bamboo handle, and the saucer of black Ebonyte (vulcanized rubber)

Call for New CHAA Officers

This is a call for volunteers to step forward to fill two important vacancies with the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor: Program Chair and Treasurer. If you might be interested or want to learn more about either of these opportunities, please contact CHAA President Mariam Breed at mariamvandeventer@icloud.com.

After member Valerie Sobczak switched her full-time job from the Ann Arbor District Library (our program scheduling partner) to The Henry Ford in Dearborn, her work as **Program Chair** proved to be too challenging, so we are calling for a successor in this important and gratifying CHAA role. The Program Chair, in consultation with other members, arranges a variety of interesting culinary history talks and programs, and works with the AADL and our website to schedule and publicize the talks. We already have several upcoming talks scheduled or waiting to be nailed down as to date, so there will be plenty of time for the new Chair to become acquainted with the work.

Judy Steeh and her husband, Bob DiGiovanni, both CHAA members, have decided to relocate to warmer climes outside of Michigan in time for next Winter, so we are also calling for a volunteer to step forward to replace Judy in the important and fulfilling role of CHAA **Treasurer**. The job does call for a patient and meticulous person because it entails collecting dues, maintaining the membership spreadsheet, overseeing payments for different kinds of expenses, and handling our bank account and other financial matters. Judy said that she is available through this Fall and, if necessary, remotely into the new year, so there will be plenty of time for the new Treasurer to become acquainted with the work.



Pop Art cup and saucer of black decals on white ceramic (Jackson China Co., Durable Dish Co., Falls Creek, PA, 1966), designed by the famous artist Roy Lichtenstein, who learned about ceramics from a Chinese-American, Hui Ka-kwong.

- Mid-Century Modern white melamine plastic cup and saucer, Northern Flair style (Northern Industrial Chemical Co., Boston, MA, 1959-1962), designed by Russel Wright with unique leaf shapes of actual Chinese jade imbedded in each piece
- Mid-Century Modern semi-vitreous white china cup and saucer (Salem China Co., Salem, OH, 1955), designed

continued on next page

C.H.A.A. REPORT *continued from page 17*

by Viktor Schreckengost in free-form shape with tripod feet and decorated with “primitive” hunting scenes

- restaurant china cup and saucer (Technical Porcelain and China Ware Co. [TEPCO], El Cerrito, CA, 1930-1968), glazed with decals of green banana-leaf patterns
- restaurant china cup and saucer (Sterling China, East Liverpool, OH, 1969) for the Union Pacific Railroad, glazed with decals of the Winged Streamliner
- stoneware cup and saucer, part of a six-piece place setting created by artist John Glick, commissioned by the Mondales for the Vice Presidential Mansion in 1979, decorated with brush work and reduction fired
- 3D-printed plastic *Kit Café* (kit for coffee) (Federal-Mogul Corp., 2013) by Portuguese designer Joana Carvalho
- one-piece cup and saucer by Mohawk basketmaker Robin Lazore (Akwesasne Reservation, NY, 2016), woven from strands of black ash and sweetgrass, some dyed purple with Welch’s grape juice.

We All Screamed for Ice Cream

On Feb. 16, CHAA member and local history enthusiast Patti Smith dressed up as a “flapper” for her illustrated talk, “Desserts by the Decades: The Roarin’ ’20s”. In the 1920s, she recounted, the U.S. saw a surge in popularity of desserts and other sweets, due in part to the deprivation that many people felt during the period of nationwide alcoholic beverage Prohibition (1920-33). Teacakes and pineapple upside-down cakes were some of the most popular confections of the decade. In 1921, to promote its products for making cakes, brownies, and other baked goods, the Washburn-Crosby Co. in Minnesota (renamed General Mills later in the decade) created the Betty Crocker character and accessories. Chinese-American restaurants in California began to provide simple sugar “fortune cookies” as constant companions to their meals, and a simple sugar cookie was also the first type sold as a Girl Scout fundraiser in 1922. Bubble gum was invented at a chewing-gum firm in Philadelphia in 1928. Mass-produced candies and other products that arose in this decade exemplified the rising commodification and commercialization of food and of food names and trademarks. Examples include Curtiss’s Baby Ruth and Butterfinger bars, Peter Paul’s Mounds bar, Hershey’s Mr. Goodbar, Mars’s Milky Way, Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup, and Chuckles jelly candy.

The icebox, a relic that had changed little in more than a century, began to become obsolete when General Electric introduced the first household refrigerators powered by gas (1911) or electricity (1927). The growing availability of large refrigerators boosted the home consumption of fruit puddings, “icebox cakes” (no-bake cakes made with such ingredients as wafers, fruit, pudding, and cream), Jell-O gelatin (often used in fruit molds), and Kool-Aid (invented in Nebraska in 1927). Homemakers served such treats proudly, since owning a refrigerator (even an icebox) was a status symbol. Postum, which owned the Jell-O Company, purchased Clarence Birdseye’s frozen foods firm in 1927; the combined operation was named the General Foods Corp. Frozen treats introduced in the 1920s included the Popsicle, the I-Scream-Bar (later renamed Eskimo Pie), the Good Humor ice cream bar, and the Klondike Bar. ■

ITALIAN AMERICANS *continued from page 15*

if you want pasta, you proceed to the international food aisle. In this region, “Italian” has its own aisle with 50-100 different varieties of boxed or bagged pasta for sale along with a multitude of tomato-based products. Arborio rice and polenta are also common items on the shelves there. Nearby, the bakeries specialize in Italian bread, and the butcher knows what you want if you ask for meat sliced for *braciola* [round steak roll]. Perhaps most telling of the impact of Italian foodways on the residents of the Mahoning Valley are the experiences of people from this part of Ohio when they vacation in Italy. Almost without exception, and regardless of their own ethnic heritage, they can read menus in Italian with ease. They know, for example, that not all pasta is spaghetti! ■

Endnotes

Abbreviation:

YSU = Youngstown State Univ. Oral History Program,
http://www.maag.ysu.edu/oralhistory/search_oralhist.html

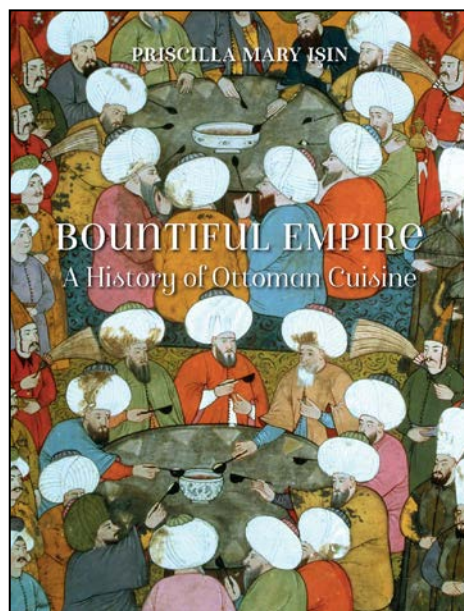
1. Amedeo Chiovitti Interviewed by Frank Mancini, Oct. 25, 1988. YSU (transcript, p. 5).
2. Dominic Ciarniello Interviewed by Annette D. Mills, Apr. 25, 1976. YSU (transcript, p. 5).
3. Joseph Jennings Interviewed by Steven Papalas, Aug. 20, 1982. YSU (O.H. 308); Rita Jennings Gregory Interviewed by Steven Papalas, Aug. 18, 1982. YSU (O.H. 275).
4. Vito Donofrio Interviewed by Joseph Mancini, Dec. 4, 1990. YSU (transcript, p. 14).
5. Lucy Nazarini Interviewed by Annette D. Mills, Apr. 12, 1976. YSU (transcript, p. 2).
6. Robert McCrum, et al., *The Story of English* (New York: Elizabeth Sifton Books, Viking, 1986), p. 265.
7. Ciarniello Interview, pp. 9-10.
8. Marguerita Fossesca and Alice Rossi, *A Legacy of Italian Holiday Traditions and Recipes* (privately printed probably in Youngstown, OH, 1991), p. 10.
9. Martha I. Pallante, “To Work and Live: Brickyard Laborers, Immigration and Assimilation in an Ohio Town, 1890-1925”, *Northeast Ohio Journal of History*, 2:1 (Fall 2003), available online at <https://blogs.uakron.edu/nojh>.
10. Elisabetta Piazzesi and Salvatore Giardinetto, *Neapolitan Cooking*, English Edition (Florence, Italy: Casa Editrice Bonechi, 2005), pp. 76-78.
11. Clippings from *Youngstown Catholic Exponent* and *Youngstown Vindicator*, ca. 1980-1985, Margaret Pallante Recipe Collection.
12. Interview of Mary Pallante Bernard by Martha Pallante, mid-1980s.
13. Lucy Nazzarini Interviewed by Annette Mills, Apr. 12, 1979. YSU (transcript, p. 7).
14. Ciarniello Interview, p. 9.
15. Michael Patrone Interviewed by James Allgren, Nov. 5, 1994. YSU (O.H. 1605).
16. Donna M. DeBlasio and Martha I. Pallante, “Memories of Work and the Definition of Community: The Making of Italian Americans in the Mahoning Valley”, *Ohio History*, 121 (Spring 2014), pp. 89-111; reprinted in *Italian Americana*, 34:1 (Winter 2016), pp. 9-36.

MORSELS & TIDBITS

Longtime CHAA member **Robin Watson** published a timely article in *The Detroit News* on April 1, “Learning from Hard Times: What Previous Generations Can Teach Us in the Kitchen”, archived at their website at: <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/life/food/2020/04/01/learning-hard-times-what-previous-generations-can-teach-us-kitchen/5095729002>. She summarizes culinary strategies used in times of scarcity in the last century, some of them learned from CHAA friends Helen Zoe Veit (Michigan State Univ.) and Andrew Coe (Culinary Historians of New York): home gardens, outdoor foraging, preserving, increased reliance on dried beans and other pantry items, and the creative use of kitchen substitutions and mock foods. She also shares a few historical recipes, such as one for Woolton Pie topped with Velvet Cheese Sauce, a double-crust vegetable pie that was commonly eaten during rationing times in World War 2 Britain.

In Manhattan, “Tea, Trade & Empire” is a segment of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s newly-renovated British Galleries, for which **Wolf Burchard** was the lead curator. It features two semicircular display cases of 100 teapots made in Staffordshire and other sites in Britain. The accompanying panels allow visitors to trace the role of luxury and beauty, as well as violence and oppression, in the rise of Britain as a global empire.

Bountiful Empire: A History of Ottoman Cuisine (London: Reaktion Books, 2018; 280 pp.) is one of several works in Middle Eastern culinary history and reflection published in the last two years. The author, **Priscilla Mary İşın**, has lived in or around Istanbul since 1973 and has written several previous works on Turkish and Ottoman culture and cuisine, some in English and others in Turkish. This well-documented and profusely illustrated book, more comprehensive than her earlier ones, treats 600 years of Ottoman rule in Turkey and in a far-flung empire that at its height ranged from Mesopotamia to



Central Europe, and from the Horn of Africa to Algiers. She identifies the elements of the Ottoman table that are traceable to earlier cuisines, such as those of the Central Asian Turks, the Byzantines, the ‘Abbasid caliphate based in Baghdad, and the Seljuk Turks. Using hundreds of primary and secondary sources ranging from

archival documents to endowment deeds and poetry, İşın explores different facets of the rich culinary culture, including

cooks, restaurants, cafés and taverns, food laws and the food trade, the symbolic functions of meals and courses and celebrations, the dining and manners of different strata and religious groups, and the fare of the elite Janissary corps (based in the palace at Istanbul) and other soldiers.

Saman Hassibi and **Amir Sayadabdi**, two doctoral students in New Zealand, translated and annotated *A Persian Cookbook: The Manual* (London: Prospect Books, 2018; 356 pp.), the oldest surviving cookbook of classical Persian cuisine. It was written under the Safavids by the anonymous Bavarchi (“Cook”) in 1521, during the ninth century of Islamic rule in Iran. The 121 recipes, kitchen-tested and with well-photographed results, are grouped into chapters on topics such as soups, noodles, breads, pastries (including the *samosa*, perhaps most famous today in India), meat dishes, and offal; four of the chapters are devoted to magnificent *pilafs* and other rice dishes, perhaps the crowning glory of classical Persian cookery.

Two Vermont historians, **Febe Armanios** and **Boğaç Ergene**, wrote *Halal Food: A History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2018; 400 pp.), treating the Qur’anic origins and subsequent global evolution of Islamic notions of what is permissible and wholesome for believers to consume. The topics include the cultural and prophetic traditions shaping halal, often via conflicting interpretation and debate; the status of pork and other foods symbolically thought of as impure; proper methods of animal slaughter; alcohol and other intoxicants; and the application of halal rules in industrial food production and in modern eateries, from restaurants to food trucks.

Ariel Rosenthal, **Orly Peli-Bronshtein**, and **Dan Alexander** have compiled *Hummus: On the Hummus Route, A Journey Between Cities, People and Dreams* (Magica, 2019; no city or pagination given), a lavishly printed collection of essays, recipes and reminiscences contributed by dozens of notables, from Sami Tamimi to Claudia Roden. This “coffee-table book” treats not only the famous mashed-bean paste but all things garbanzo (*hummus* being the Arabic word for chickpea), in particular the deep-fried *falafel* fritters. Rather than take sides in the nationalistic controversy over the origins of these foods, the book takes a celebratory multicultural approach.

Hummus with spiced lamb is an example of the dishes to be found in *Zaitoun: Recipes from the Palestinian Kitchen* (W. W. Norton & Co., 2019; 256 pp.), written by cookbook author and human rights activist **Yasmin Khan**. She includes stories reflecting the history and culture of Palestine, such as discussion of the significance of the olive (*zaitoun* in Arabic, *záyit* in Hebrew) in Palestinian and Jewish culture.

Two conferences scheduled in Europe this Fall:

- Nov. 3-4, 2020 : Symposium on Junk Food and Poor Food Habits from Antiquity to the Present, at Le Centre d’Histoire “Espaces & Cultures” (CHEC), Clermont-Ferrand, France.
- Nov. 13-14, 2020: Seventh annual Amsterdam Symposium on the History of Food, “Food and the Environment: The Dynamic Relationship Between Food Practices and Nature”, at The Aula of the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Except where noted, programs are scheduled for 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. at
the Ann Arbor District Library – Malletts Creek Branch, 3090 E. Eisenhower Parkway.)

Sunday, September 20, 2020

Frances Kai-Hwa Wang,
journalist, speaker, and educator,
“Chinese Food: Customs and Culture”

Sunday, October 18, 2020

Barbara J. Barton, endangered-species biologist,
“*Manoomin*: The Story of Wild Rice in Michigan”

On the Back Burner: We welcome ideas and submissions
from all readers of *Repast*, including for the following
planned future issues. Suggestions for future themes are
also welcome.

- Summer 2020: unthemed
- Fall 2020: Culinary History in England, Part 1
- Winter 2021: unthemed
- Spring and Summer 2021: Culinary History in
England, Parts 2-3
- Fall 2021: unthemed.

REPAST
1044 GREENHILLS DRIVE
ANN ARBOR, MI 48105-2722

Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume XXXVI, Number 2, Spring 2020

First Class