

CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

October 2006

Volume XI, Number 2

Renew Your Membership in CHoW NOW!

The membership year runs from September 1 to August 31. Annual dues are \$20 for an individual, household, or organization and \$10 for a student. Individual and household members are eligible to vote, hold office, and serve on committees.

Benefits include the newsletter *CHoW Line*, all meeting notices and a membership list.

CHoW/DC publishes *CHoW Line* nine times each year. More information can be found at www.chowdc.org.

An annual subscription to the newsletter is \$10 for those outside the Washington area, or for institutions, organizations, or other interested groups. No other membership benefits apply.

Articles for CHoW Line

The newsletter editor will be pleased to receive contributions to the newsletter from members and subscribers, although we regret we cannot pay for articles.

October 12 Meeting: Deborah Warner To Speak

“How Sweet It Is: Sugar, Science and the State”

Deborah Jean Warner has spent her career as a curator of the physical sciences collections at the National Museum of American History. She has written widely on the history of science and technology, with a special emphasis on historic scientific instruments. With Robert Bud she edited *Instruments of Science: An Historical Encyclopedia* (London and New York, 1998).

“The consumption of sugar is a chief test of the nation’s prosperity” claimed *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in 1886. “The American people have become the greatest

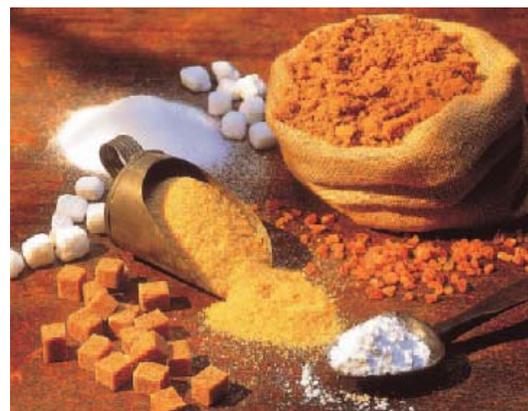


Photo credit: The Sugar Association

sugar consumers on earth and the refined article constitutes the bulk of what is used,” boasted M. J. Foster, a senator from Louisiana, in 1909. At the time, Americans were spending more than \$100 million a year on imported sugar and consuming a whopping 77.5 pounds apiece. While citizens were becoming hooked on sugar as a source of cheap and tasty calories, the federal government was becoming hooked (see “How Sweet It is,” continued on page 2)

Calendar of Events

September 10

October 8

November 12

December 10

January 14

February 11

March 11

April 1

May 6

Psyche Williams-Forson (see report on page 2.)

Deborah Warner, “How Sweet It Is: Sugar, Science and the State”

Paul Lukacs, author, *American Vintage: The Rise of American Wine*.

“A Festival of Frugality” panel with **Jane Mengershauser**, **Sheilah Kaufman**, **Kay Shaw Nelson** and **Amy Riolo**.

Cooperative Supper in Alexandria

Sandy Oliver, “Lessons My New Book Taught Me: Insights Gained from *Food in Colonial and Federal America*.”

Warren Belasco, “The Future of Food”

Robert Wolke, “Food 101” columnist in *The Washington Post* Food section. “How Chemistry Facilitated Colonial Food Preservation”

Field Trip to Mount Vernon, Virginia. George Washington’s reconstructed Distillery & Grist Mill with a talk by the archeologist of the distillery.

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C. (CHoW/DC)

founded in 1996, is an informal, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to the study of the history of foodstuffs, cuisines, and culinary customs, both historical and contemporary, from all parts of the world.

www.chowdc.org

What Happened at the September 10 Meeting?

Whatsit!

Katherine Livingston passed around a photo of a tin object, which several Members recognized as a multiple cherry pitter.

Treasurer's Report

Katherine Livingston gave the Treasurer's Report. The current balance is \$4,398.26. During Sept. 06-Aug. 06 we accrued \$587 more than expenses. Katherine requested all membership checks be submitted along with the membership form, available on the last page of the newsletter.

Speaker

Laura Gilliam introduced **Psyche Williams-Forson**, who spoke on "Lost in the Great Unknown: A Research Note on African American Women, Food Service and the Railroad."

Dr. Forson-Williams is interested in issues of class in the black community. Presently she is engaged in research to understand the lives of African American women who called themselves "waiter-carriers" and brought food to train travelers between approximately 1865 and 1940. Only a few names remain, and even then, very little detail—these women and their work seem to have slipped into "the Great Unknown." Dr. Forson-Williams has found tantalizing images and quotations from several locales, but is focusing her research on Gordonsville VA. This town developed so good a reputation for the chicken sold by women vendors that some people made the trip just to eat in Gordonsville, "the chicken leg center of the universe." Based on her findings so far, Dr. Forson-Williams proposed that in this town, women systematized their work in the informal economy, with neighbors working the trains, and daughters taking over from aging mothers, perhaps for several generations. Because their work was marginal and part of the informal economy, ordinary research resources are not much help, but Dr. Forson-Williams has identified a group from the 1910 census, most of whom owned their own homes. This occupation disappeared when trains were modernized, and when formal economy competition drove the women out of business. Many questions remain to be resolved, such as where did the women get the foods they sold? Where did

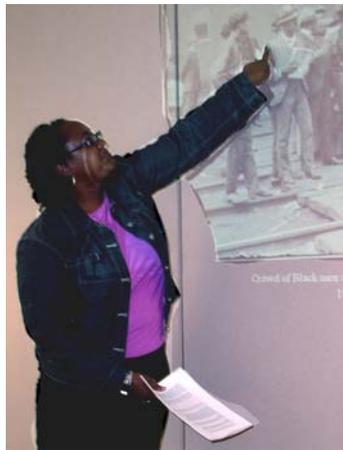
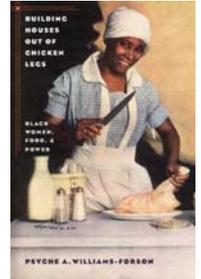


Photo by Kari Barrett

they prepare them? How did they transport the food to the trains? Did they sell to other African-Americans? Was it a cooperative effort and how did they disburse the money they earned? What occupations did they take after 1940?

During the question and answer session, Dr. Forson-Williams was deluged with questions and also suggestions for new places to check for data. She remained for some time to discuss suggestions, and to sign copies of her book, *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006).



Refreshments:

Clara Raju brought a Lemon Rice dish that is often eaten as a "traveling food" on train rides in India.

Dianne Hennessy King made an adaptation of Graves Mountain Lodge's Chocolate Applesauce Cake, using pumpkin because there was no applesauce in the cupboards.

Betty Robertson prepared a fruit salsa that prompted several requests for the recipe (see below).

CHoW relies on the continued generosity of members to volunteer food and drinks as they choose on an ad hoc basis: in other words, no official committee.

Watermelon Fire and Ice Salsa

- 3 cups de-seeded and chopped watermelon
- 1/2 cup diced green peppers
- 2 tablespoons of fresh lime juice (about 2 limes)
- 1 tablespoon diced cilantro
- 1 tablespoon of diced green onion
- 1-2 tablespoons de-seeded and diced jalapeño peppers

Combine ingredients; mix well and cover. Refrigerate 1 hour or more. Serving suggestion: May be served with chips or as a garnish for grilled chicken and fish. Makes 3 cups.

"How Sweet It Is," continued from Page 1:

on the revenues generated from taxes levied on imported sugar. Yielding some \$50 million a year, these taxes were the single largest source of federal funds. Collecting sums of this magnitude placed a heavy burden on customs agents, especially as new production technologies were making the traditional visual method of sugar analysis problematic. The solution would come from science and technology from the increasingly accurate polariscopes, many of them designed by physicists or chemists working in concert with instrument makers, and from the numerous workers who developed the protocols for their use and an understanding of the behavior of sugar solutions under various conditions.

Upcoming Events of Interest

“Repast as Ritual: The Objects of Entertaining at Homewood House Museum”



Wednesdays, October 4 - November 8, 2 p.m.
Johns Hopkins University, 3400 North Charles Street,
Baltimore, MD 21218.

\$146/person or \$75/students for series; \$35/person or
\$15/students for an individual lecture
For more information, 410-516-5589 or www.jhu.edu/hwdhouse/events/index.html#repast

Distinguished speakers will explore the social meanings and fashionable forms of entertaining objects used in Federal Baltimore at this six-part lecture series, with particular focus on the significant collections of glass, ceramics, and silver in the museum’s collections. Don’t miss this rare opportunity to learn more about the history behind the art of dining, and the dining objects on display at Homewood House.

Claudia Roden

November 14, 2006, 7:30 PM
Washington DC Jewish Community Center
1529 16th Street NW
Washington, DC
Tickets \$ 8.00 at www.nextbook.org
or 1 (888) 219-5222



“Claudia Roden is no more a simple cookbook writer than Marcel Proust was a biscuit maker,” declares historian Simon Schama.

In her seminal books on Middle Eastern and Mediterranean food, Roden weaves together memoir, history, anthropology, and recipes to tell the story of a culture through its cuisine.

In *The Book of Jewish Food*, we learn what the ancient Hebrews ate and that fish and chips was introduced to England by Portuguese Jews. Born in Cairo, Roden left at 15, after the Suez Canal crisis led to the confiscation of property and other attacks on the Egyptian Jewish community.

She is the author of numerous books, including *A Book of Middle Eastern Food*, *The Food of Italy: Region by Region*, and most recently, *Arabesque: A Taste of Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon*. From nextbook web site.



“The Cook’s Oracle: A Celebration of Barbara Ketcham Wheaton”

Saturday, October 28, 2006
Radcliffe Gymnasium
10 Garden Street
Radcliffe Yard
Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Free and open to the public
For more information, 617-495-8600 or
www.radcliffe.edu



Photo by Martha Stewart, 2006

The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library marks the 75th birthday of Barbara Ketcham Wheaton, honorary curator of the culinary collection, scholar, writer, and library volunteer. In a daylong symposium, a distinguished group of food historians, writers, chefs, and restaurateurs will discuss Wheaton’s contributions to culinary scholarship and research and will explore future directions in the field. From radcliffe.edu web site.

Shirley Cherkasky is planning to go, will drive, and is looking for other CHoW members interested in attending the symposium.

“From Jamestown to the Blue Ridge: Cooking Up 400 Years of Culinary History in Virginia”

April 20 - 21, 2007

Virginia Tech Campus, Owens Hall Banquet Facilities, 17 Owens Hall, Blacksburg, Virginia

Schedule of Events Friday, April 20

**Tours of Special Collections,
Newman Library, VT Campus**

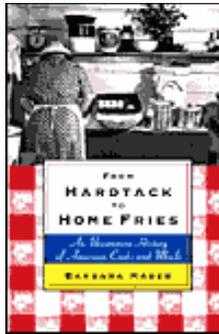
**Tours of The Historic Smithfield
Plantation**

Welcoming Reception

The Alice M. Johnson Memorial
Lecture: “**Food as a Force in
Virginia History**”

Presenter: **Barbara Haber**

Cookbooks that record what people eat have the power to tell us what is special about a region and its past. Major Virginia cookbooks will be explored for their historic and



cultural significance, in this keynote address presented by Barbara Haber, award-winning culinary historian and former Curator of Books at the Radcliffe Institute’s Schlesinger Library at Harvard University. Ms. Haber, a recipient of a Who’s Who of Food and Beverage in America Award from the James Beard Foundation, currently serves on the board of the International Association of Culinary Professionals. She helped edit and contributed to the Cambridge World History of Food and the Encyclopedia of the History of American Food and Beverages. Seen on Today, Martha Stewart Living and other TV programs and interviewed in *Newsweek*, *The New York Times* and *Bon Appetit*, Ms. Haber has delighted thousands around the world with her fascinating stories of the special ways food and cooking have defined people’s lives.

Saturday, April 21

“**Starvation, Nutrition and
Cannibalism in Early
Jamestown: Recipes for
Disaster**”

Presented by
**Dr. Crandall
A. Shifflett**,
Project
Director and
originator of
Virtual
Jamestown

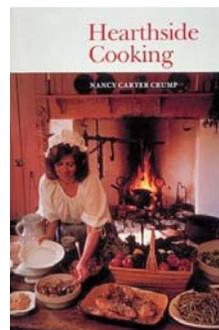


(www.virtualjamestown.org) which is part of the 400th anniversary commemorative of the founding of Jamestown. A Professor of History and Director of Graduate Studies at VPI and SU, Dr. Shifflett authored *Coal Towns* (winner of the Weatherford Award) and other books on Southern and U.S. history.

“**Out of the Ashes: The Taste &
Textures of Open-Hearth
Cooking in Early Virginia**”

Presented by **Nancy Carter Crump**, author of *Hearthside Cooking: An Introduction to Virginia Plantation Cuisine*, and many articles on colonial cookery. The combination of foodways from Virginia’s native

Americans, slaves from Africa and the Caribbean, and European settlers brought about a sumptuous fare that was noted and enjoyed, not only by its residents but by travelers to the colony. Using period directions and recipes from both published and manuscript sources, Nancy Carter Crump will



explore many of the open-hearth cooking methods used to create the meals that were presented at elegant dining tables in the early years of the Old Dominion. Various techniques will be discussed, as well as the interaction between plantation mistress and slave cook who worked together to produce the delicious cuisine for which early Virginia was famous. She has worked for various historical sites in Virginia, including Evelynton Plantation, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Chesterfield Historical Society, as well as teaching college-level history.

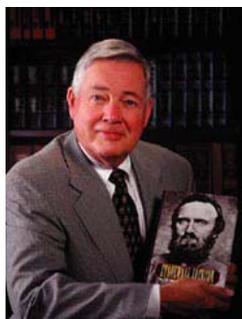
“**Straddling Two Worlds: The
Cooks and the Foodways in
Jefferson’s Kitchen at
Monticello**”



The joinery at Mulberry Row, Monticello.

Presented by **Dr. Leni Sorensen**, African American Research Historian at Monticello, Charlottesville, VA and contributing editor to *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. From 1810 until his death in 1826 Thomas Jefferson was noted for serving a combination of French-Virginian cuisine of elegance and variety at Monticello. For this he relied on the skills and experience of his two enslaved cooks Edith Hern Fossett and her sister-in-law Frances Gillette Hern, both of whom trained at the President’s House for eight years under Jefferson’s French chef. Her talk highlights Monticello’s restored kitchen with its eight-hole stew stove, the bake oven, the hearth, and the variety of copper pots and specialized utensils, and tells how these cooks produced meals for one of Virginia’s finest tables. (continued on page 5)

“Civil War Rations: A Test of Endurance”



Presented by
**Dr. James I.
Robertson, Jr.**

Napoleon Bonaparte once stated that an army travels on its stomach. However, in the 1861-1865

American Civil War, armies largely had to campaign in spite of what they ate. Dr. Robertson will attempt to show why the most prevalent disease in that war was diarrhea. Dr. Robertson is Alumni Distinguished Professor of History at Virginia Tech and executive director of the university's Virginia Center for Civil War Studies. He appears regularly on Civil War-related television programs, including Arts & Entertainment Network, the History Channel, PBS, and NPR. Dr. Robertson has written dozens of books, from popular to scholarly, including *Daily Life in Civil War America*, *Civil War Virginia*, and *Virginia at War*, and other books on the daily lives of common soldiers.

“Civilian Food Concerns in Virginia 1861 - 1865”

Presented by **Dr. Danielle Torisky**, Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics at James Madison University.

Dr. Torisky will focus on how Virginia families - as described in selected diaries, letters, and memoirs - took on challenges to food



preparation during a time of shortages, blockades, and military occupation of their cities and homes. Nineteenth century knowledge of nutrition and food science as reflected in period cookbooks and recipes will also be discussed. Dr. Torisky is a

noted presenter and educator, focusing on Civil War nutrition, health and medicine for both soldiers and civilians. Among her publications are “Quantity Feeding in the American Civil War” and “Comfort Foods and Food Remedies in the 19th Century” in *Portals to Shenandoah Valley Folkways*.

“From Spikey Rollers to Rotary Tillers. 400 Years of Virginia Agriculture: Three Sisters to Chardonnay”

Presented by **CiCi Williamson**, author of six cookbooks and more than 1,500 newspaper and magazine articles.



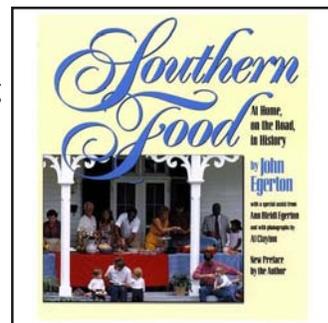
Take a fascinating trip across Virginia's four-century agricultural history beginning with the Jamestown colonists' attempts to survive and the Virginia Indians' methods of growing crops that saved the colony. Glide across the Old Dominion's prestigious 18th century Virginia plantations and learn about the planters' emerging understanding of sustainable agriculture. Visit small family farms in the Shenandoah as Colonists pushed westward in pursuit of fertile land. Hear about the Civil War's devastating influence on Virginia agriculture, and finally, the bittersweet current situation where housing developments have usurped half the state's farms as “The Mother of States” triumphs at producing wines. Ms. Williamson, former PBS-TV host, syndicated food-column writer and co-editor of *CHoWLine*, the newsletter of Culinary Historians of Washington, will take you on a fascinating trip across four centuries of agriculture in Virginia in this absorbing lecture that begins with Virginia Indian farming and ends with the state's long-sought success in producing great wines.

BANQUET

Menu based on historical recipes

“Pork and Corn ... and the Rest is History”

Presented by **John Egerton**, editor, author and outstanding presenter, with expertise on Southern foodways.



He will present an informal, anecdotal, selective, and subjective review of Virginia foodways, from the Colony to the Commonwealth, from the “starving times” to the “all-you-can-eat” buffet, from malnutrition to misnutrition, from Mr. Jefferson's garden to the processed and pre-packaged produce in your nearby supermarket, from shad to . . . shad. Mr. Egerton has edited eleven non-fiction books, including *Southern Food: At Home, on the Road, and in History*. His articles on food and other topics have appeared in many publications, including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Saturday Review* and *Southern Magazine*. A founding member of the Southern Foodways Alliance, he edited the first of a series of volumes on Southern food, entitled, *Cornbread Nation 1*.

Registration fee for whole program: \$225 (includes Friday night reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres, snacks and lunch on Saturday, all sessions, 5-course banquet with wine on Saturday night). Banquet only, \$89. Lodging not included.

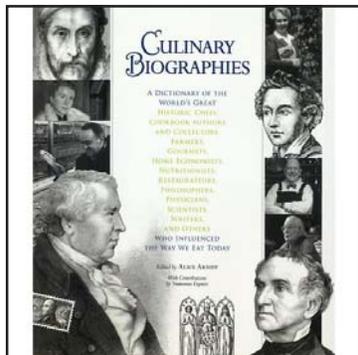
Lodging packages available
For more information, contact: Cynthia Bertelsen at cbertel@usit.net or (540) 552-8655 or go to www.culinarycollection.org

On the Bookshelf

Culinary Biographies:

A Dictionary of the World's Great Historic Chefs, Cookbook Authors and Collectors, Farmers, Gourmets, Home Economists, Nutritionists, Restaurateurs, Philosophers, Physicians, Scientists, Writers, and Others Who Influenced the Way We Eat Today

by Alice Arndt, ed.
Yes Press, 2006
\$48.00, cloth
432 pages



None of us is in the kitchen alone. Way back behind that slipping layer cake is Benjamin Thompson, who became Count Rumford - British loyalist, refiner of the kitchen range, and namesake of Rumford Baking Powder. No matter what it is you're cooking, a philosopher, a chef, or a scientist has been there before you. The profiles of these "culinarians," as Arndt calls them, tell the stories of historical figures, none living persons, who were often celebrities in their own time, but have been forgotten in the wake of Rachael Ray and Iron Chef.

The book works as a quick reference, for the name, year, or invention that you can't quite put your finger on, but also as one of those endlessly fun books that you'll flip through, drawn from one personality to the next. Start with Minekichi Akabori, "the initiator of cooking education for women in Japan," go on to Pythagorus, the mathematician and earliest vegetarian, and finish with Zhang Qien, China's Marco Polo who introduced grapes, pomegranates, coriander, and onions to the Chinese diet, which had been based on rice, beans, and millet.

Arndt's selections are deep and wide, from the Sicilian cookery book of 400 BC by Mithaecus to Julia Child, whose achievements are well known to us.

The book ranges across geographic boundaries as well, with plenty of French and other western countries represented, along with Asia and the Middle East. While the United States is well represented, there are few South American entries.

The entries include names that are familiar, like Escoffier and James Beard; foodie favorites like Richard Olney, Epicurious, and Ray Kroc through the lesser known but here heralded figures like Thomas Walker, an English gastronome and writer whose works combined the musing style of Brillat-Savarin with the practicality of Benjamin Franklin. (*continued, next column*)

News of Our Members

Audrey B. Davis,

a charter member of CHoW, died August 29 of leukemia at her home in Baltimore. She began her 26-year career at the Smithsonian Institution in 1967, becoming a curator of medical sciences at the National Museum of American History.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Anne Rothfeld

Special interests: Social/cultural uses of food; medicinal uses

Linda Alleman

CHoW at WCR Reception

CHoW charter member CiCi Williamson represented our organization on Sunday, September 10, at a 1:00 p.m. reception at Stratford University, in Tysons Corner, Va., organized by the Women Chefs & Restaurateurs to introduce members to D.C. culinary organizations and schools. CiCi gave a presentation about CHoW to the 50 students and professional members attending. Organizations represented included Stratford University's School of Culinary Arts, Northern Virginia Community College, L'Academie de Cuisine, Montgomery College, WCR, The American Institute of Wine and Food (AIWF), Slow Food, McLean Community Center. Watch for more info in next month's *CHoW Line*.

(continued from "On the Bookshelf")

And Arndt cuts the information from every angle - the personalities are arranged alphabetically, and the book includes a timeline of significant culinary texts and their authors, along with categorical and geographical listings

But as you read through the book's individual entries, the information flows over you in waves, emphasizing the universality of food. It is an expression of culture, power, fear, and individuality. In *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair famously aimed for the nation's heart and hit the stomach, and changed America's food and drug laws. When writers transcribe recipes for babka, kaiseki banquets, and flummery, they are recording culture and building one at the same time.

Eating is a human endeavor, an act vital to survival but one that we have transformed into an art, a science, a philosophy. The individual stories here add up to history.

Review by Claudia Kousoulas

The review copy has been donated to the CHoW Culinary Collection at the National Museum of American History.

Read Any Good Blogs Lately?

Heard Any Good Podcasts?

As we all try to keep up with the sometimes bewildering media changes that constantly occur (see Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin program below), we would like to hear from CHoW/DC members who know of any interesting food blogs (web logs) or podcasts. We would like to share the information via Notes and Queries in *CHoWLine*.

For example, Claudia Kousoulas has suggested a few local food blogs that sometimes have an interesting take on D.C. food. She learned about Cowgirl Creamery coming to D.C. well before it was listed in *The Washington Post* from a blog called Metrocurean. Others include Suburban Tasteland - the adventures of a guy who, according to Claudia, will drive almost anywhere to eat almost anything and never met a weird ethnic soda pop that he didn't try. A blog called DCFUD uses a series of writers to comment on seasonal food, food outlets, restaurants, and events.

Web Sites of Interest

Food History News: www.foodhistorynews.com

Historic Foodways Guild of Maryland:
www.marylandfoodways.org

Culinary Historians of Chicago:
www.culinaryhistorians.org

Julia Child's Kitchen:
www.americanhistory.si.edu/juliachild

Marty Martindale's web site of specially indexed links:
www.FoodSiteoftheDay.com

Foodways Group of Austin: www.austinfoodways.org/

Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (CHEW):
www.chew.wisconsincooks.org

Culinary Historians of Ontario:
www.culinaryhistorians.ca

Culinary Historians of New York:
www.culinaryhistoriansny.org

Longone Center for American Culinary Research:
www.clements.umich.edu

Culinary Historians of Boston :
www.culinaryhistoriansboston.com

Culinary Historians of Southern Calif.: www.lapl.org

Peacock-Harper Culinary Collection :
www.culinarycollection.org

News from Other Organizations

Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (CHEW) "Five-hundred Years of Food Media"

New technology has enhanced our relationship to food for centuries, from the printing press that put cookbooks into the hands of middle-class readers to an entire television channel devoted solely to culinary issues. And now podcasting is allowing gastronomes to experience their favorite food talk where and when they want to.

At the September meeting of the Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (CHEW), Anne Bramley will take us through 500 years of new media that have changed our relationship to food, uncovering many of the paradoxes that arise when a very basic need enters the high-tech world. She'll also offer a peek at some of the first English cookbooks and demonstrate how to find and listen to food podcasts.

In January of 2005, Anne Bramley turned her academic research on Renaissance English food into one of the first food podcasts, *Eat Feed* (www.eatfeed.com). As creator and host, she now works with a team of food enthusiasts to continue to use the new medium to connect listeners with topics that are often overlooked by mainstream media.
From: www.wisconsincooks.org/chew