

# CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

October 2008

Volume XIII, 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* eight times each year. More information can be found at [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org).

An annual subscription to the newsletter is \$10. No other membership benefits apply.

SEE PAGE 8 to join or renew your membership.

## Keep Those Refreshments Coming!

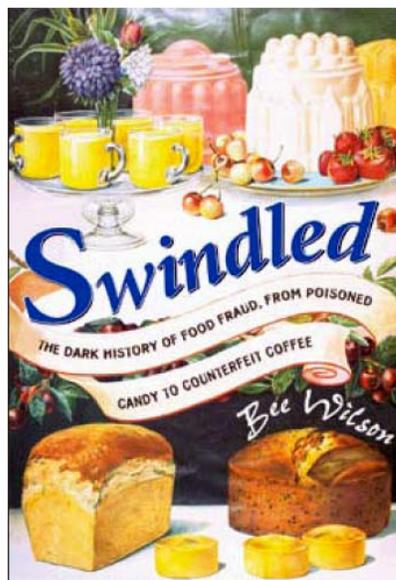
Please contact Felice Caspar at

if you have questions about bringing food or drink for any of our meetings.

## “Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud from Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee”

By Bee Wilson

Sunday, October 12, 2008  
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.



**Bee Wilson** is the author of *The Hive: The Story of the Honeybee and Us* (2006), and *Swindled* (Princeton University Press, Sept. 2008). She writes a weekly food column for London's *Sunday Telegraph* and is a former food critic for the *New Statesman*. Bee was named Food Journalist of the Year by the Guild of Food Writers and Food Writer of the Year by BBC Radio 4.

Marion Nestle, author of *Food Politics* and *What to Eat*, says, “Bee Wilson is a terrific writer who tells great stories, and her book could not be more timely given what’s going on in the Chinese food industry today.”

Bad food has a history. *Swindled* tells it. Through a fascinating mixture of cultural and scientific history, food politics, and culinary detective work, Bee Wilson (see *Swindled*, continued on page 4)

## Calendar of CHoW Meetings

- September 14** John Martin Taylor, “Food and History in the Carolina Lowcountry”  
**October 12** **Bee Wilson**, “Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud from Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee”  
**November 16** Andrew Smith, “Hamburger: A Global History” (Note: third Sunday)  
**December 14** “Festive Food” Panel composed of CHoW members who will speak about celebratory and symbolic foods from around the world.  
**January 11** CiCi Williamson, “The ZIP Codes of Our Food: A Quick History of Global Cuisines”  
**February 8** Michael Twitty, “Afro-Maryland Food Culture”  
**March 8** Patrick Evan-Hylton, “Wine in Virginia”  
**April 5** Cooperative Supper (Note: first Sunday and time change)  
**May 3** Ann Chandonnet, “How Argonauts Ate: Details from Gold Rush Diaries” (Note: first Sunday)

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](http://www.chowdc.org)  
Dues to: Katherine Livingston

# What Happened at the September 14 Meeting?

## GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

President **Laura Gilliam** called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m. People introduced themselves and, if this was their first visit, told how they heard about CHoW/DC.

**Whatzits:** There were quite a few whatzits this month: Charleston rice steamer, leg of lamb holder, gnocchi maker, design stamper for bread, asparagus peeler, baked potato opener, cork puller, Roquefort cheese strainer and a glass bean cooker. (See page 3 for some of the whatzits.)

**Announcements:** Laura Gilliam informed us that we now have CHoWShop which has items with our logo on it. She displayed a mug and notepad as examples. There are other items of interest such as an apron, canvas bag etc. This online venture isn't a fundraiser; it is used mainly for publicity. Our Web Site, [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org), will lead you to the CHoWShop site.

**Program:** The meeting was turned over to **David Bender** who introduced today's speaker, John Martin Taylor. He is a founding member of the Southern Foodways Alliance. His expertise is on culinary history of the South, particularly the lowcountry -- the coastal plain that surrounds Charleston and Savannah. He is the author of *Hoppin' John's Lowcountry Cooking*, *The New Southern Cook*, *Hoppin' John's Charleston, Beaufort & Savannah*, and *The Fearless Frying Cookbook*. Mr. Taylor has lived in the Caribbean, France, and Italy.

Mr. Taylor started his talk "Food and History in the Carolina Lowcountry" by stating that he has been writing about food for over 25 years. During this time he has tried to understand how history has impacted food in the Charleston area, especially between the diets of the poor and the wealthy.

Charleston, named after King Charles, was founded in 1670 by English settlers. The intent was to "recreate a miniature aristocratic London." Plantation owners from Barbados also settled in this area. The area became a religious refuge for the French Huguenots who were fleeing Europe. By mid 18<sup>th</sup> century 45% of the white settlers were Huguenots. There was also a large Jewish population in this area. All this led to Charleston becoming a diverse and refined city.

The colonists from Barbados brought with them their knowledge of plantation life. In America they focused on the cultivation of rice, which required a lot of cheap labor. Consequently, slaves were brought into the area in great numbers. With the slaves came a knowledge of the foods and plants that the slaves had left behind in their homelands. The cooking in the lowcountry area was a combination of foods from both slaves and masters. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the aristocrats had cut themselves off from the



David Bender, left, and speaker John Martin Taylor.  
Photo by CiCi Williamson

rest of the county. Many of their ways, especially in the food area, resembled the ways of the slaves. They ate butter beans, okra, tomatoes, rice and greens. When Sarah Rutledge wrote *The Carolina Housewife* in 1847, she not only included recipes for German egg dishes, Italian pasta and fancy French food, but she also included dishes that the black cooks would make i.e., Hopping John and bennie soup.

Lowcountry food is Creole cooking, but it is more influenced by Africans than it is in Louisiana. After the Civil War, both whites and blacks ate very poorly. Lowcountry food culture began to disappear at this time. People ate overcooked vegetables, over-salted food and fatty stews. This is a type of cooking that many associate with Southern cooking. But we have to remember that this change in culinary tradition was due to poverty.

Mr. Taylor remarked that true lowcountry cooking is quickly disappearing. Many of the old recipes have been lost and very few people can cook true lowcountry. There are still some residents in the area who can make turtle suppers, catfish stew and oyster roasts, but those people are hard to come by. Mr. Taylor's intent is to revive the great foods of the lowcountry area.

The presentation was concluded with Mr. Taylor showing us numerous jars of canned foods such as pickled beans, preserved figs and spiced peaches, to name a few. He then took several questions from CHoW members and signed copies of his books. . The meeting adjourned at 4:15.

Respectfully submitted by **Clara Raju**, Recording Secretary.

**NOTE:** See *September 14 Board Meeting minutes* on page 3.

## Calling All Whatzits



*Italian bean cooker*

Can you once again bring old Whatzits that you brought to CHoW meetings in years past?

We will have a digital camera at each meeting in order to photograph all Whatzits, current or previous.

The [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org) Web site will feature a Whatzits Gallery of photographs of objects brought to CHoW meetings.

For those of you new to CHoW, Whatzits are the culinary objects that members can bring to the meetings to be passed around and puzzled over. Sometimes the experts are stumped, but it is always fascinating to try to discover the purpose and history of these curious and mysterious articles.

-- Photos by CiCi Williamson



*Gnocchi maker*



*Baked potato fluffer*



*Extracts broken corks from wine bottles*

### SEPTEMBER 14 BOARD MEETING

**Treasurer's Report:** Bank balance for the year 2007-2008 is \$4540.67 with some items still pending.

**Programs and Field Trips:** Board members decided to cancel the December field trip due to concerns about weather and logistics. The December meeting will be a panel of CHoW members speaking on the subject of "Festive Food."

 **December 14, 2008** "Festive Food" Panel composed of CHoW members who will speak about celebratory and symbolic foods from around the world. Audience members are invited to bring food to share that reflects their own religious, cultural and seasonal festivities. This program replaces the Alexandria field trip.

 **May 3, 2009** Ann Chandonnet, "How Argonauts Ate: Details from Gold Rush Diaries." She is the author of

many books on Alaskan history and food, such as *Alaska Heritage Seafood Cookbook* and *Gold Rush Grub: From Turpentine Stew to Hoochinoo*, reviewed this Spring by Jane Mengenhauser.

**Board Positions:** Board members will write job descriptions so CHoW members can begin thinking about joining the Board next year. In addition, the Board discussed the possibility of enlarging the number of Board positions or the possibility of having two people share a position. The Board also discussed that perhaps the Board could offer assignments to CHoW members who would like to help out with tasks related to various positions, such as contacting a speaker, arranging publicity, or arranging refreshments for one meeting. Any and all help by CHoW members is appreciated.

**Web Site:** June 2006-May 2007 issues of ChoWLine have been added to the Web site. Dianne will bring in the first volumes so they can be scanned and be added to the Web site and then given to the Secretary for CHoW archives.

## REFRESHMENTS

To start our new year of lectures and activities, we had a wonderful assortment of foods brought by CHoW members to accompany our speaker's theme. Many of the selections were made from recipes found in John Martin Taylor's book, *Hoppin' John's Lowcountry Cooking*:

- Sugar Cookies brought by **Kari Barrett**,
- Bourbon Balls brought by **Felice Caspar**,
- Rum Balls from **Clara Raju**
- Awendaw, a lowcountry Spoonbread that is a dish named for an Indian settlement north of Charleston. **CiCi Williamson** made the spoonbread with stone-ground cornmeal from George Washington's Grist Mill (one of the sites of our field trip to Mt. Vernon on May 6, 2007).

Other foods that also would be served in the lowcountry region were:

- Pickled Okra brought by **Katherine Livingston**,
- Plum Cake with Cornmeal, a recipe via Dorie Greenspan and made by **Claudia Kousoulas**.
- **Kathleen and Royle Carrington** made Paula Deen's Low Country Cookies that were rich, square bars.
- **Amy Snyder** brought a bowl of Glazed Pecans
- **Karen Wilcher** prepared a dish of warm Field Peas.

In addition, **Francine Berkowitz** brought in a colorful postcard from the NY Food Museum reminding us all that September 14 was the Eighth Annual New York City International Pickle Day. **Bryna Freyer** brought an equally colorful card describing one of her recent finds, Mercer's Wine Ice Cream that is made by a small company in the Adirondacks.

As is mentioned on page 1 of this newsletter, you can contact **Felice Caspar** if you have questions about bringing food and drink to any of the meetings. **If possible, foods should be related to the speaker's topic**, but otherwise, feel free to bring whatever dish you would like to share with other members.

**(Swindled, continued from page 1)** uncovers the many ways swindlers have cheapened, falsified, and even poisoned our food throughout history. In the hands of people and corporations who have prized profits above the health of consumers, food and drink have been tampered with in often horrifying ways—padded, diluted, contaminated, substituted, mislabeled, misnamed, or otherwise faked. *Swindled* gives a panoramic view of this history, from the leaded wine of the ancient Romans to today's food frauds—such as fake organics and the scandal of Chinese babies being fed bogus milk powder.

Wilson pays special attention to nineteenth- and twentieth century America and England and their roles in developing both industrial-scale food adulteration and the scientific

## New to CHoW? This is Who We Are.

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 food-stuffs, cuisines, and culinary customs, both historical and contemporary, from all parts of the world.

### Membership

Membership is open to scholars, cooks, food writers, nutritionists, collectors, students, and anyone interested in learning about foodways, culinary history, and gastronomy. Everyone's contribution is welcome and we benefit from a wide variety of viewpoints on culinary history.

### Programs

Programs at meetings include lectures by invited speakers, participatory sessions in which members share research on a particular subject, specialized demonstrations, field trips, and a periodic banquet designed to enrich understanding and appreciation of a particular study topic. Recent meetings have included presentations on subjects as diverse as the histories of popcorn, tomatoes, and spices; the marketing of candy in the Gilded Age; an anthropological perspective on the culinary traditions of the Chesapeake Bay; and European wrought iron cooking and fireplace utensils from the Middle Ages to the 19th century.

### CHoW Line

*CHoW Line* is published nine times each year to report on the organization's activities, and to keep members informed of meetings, related upcoming events, publications, films, and other pertinent information.

The newsletter editor will be pleased to receive contributions to the newsletter from members and subscribers at \_\_\_\_\_ We regret we cannot pay for articles.

means to combat it. As *Swindled* reveals, modern science has both helped and hindered food fraudsters—increasing the sophistication of scams but also the ability to detect them. The big breakthrough came in Victorian England when a scientist first put food under the microscope and found that much of what was sold as “genuine coffee” was anything but—and that you couldn't buy pure mustard in all of London.

### **Welcome, New Members!**

**Jane Olmsted**

Interests: Italian regional, slow food, and Southern cooking

**Benjamin and Maxine Leon**

# Current and Upcoming Events

## 2008 MAW Mushroom Fair

Sunday, October 5  
11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Visitors Center of Brookside Gardens,  
1800 Glenallan Avenue  
Wheaton, MD.

The Mycological Association of Washington will host its seventh annual Mushroom Fair. Some of the activities planned are forays, lectures, wild mushroom identification, raffles, cooking demonstration, book sales, arts & crafts and more.



The Fair is open to the public. Come and spend an enjoyable time learning about mushrooms! <http://mawdc.org/calendar.html>

## Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW) 48th ANNUAL BOOKFAIR



Saturday and Sunday October 18-19: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday October 25-26: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Department of State, 22nd & C Streets N.W., Washington, D.C.

In the Exhibit Hall and two tents in the South Courtyard of the State Department. Enter through the Diplomatic (C Street) Entrance.

Thousands of used books, art objects, collectibles, stamps and coins are available. They always have a table of interesting food books from around the world. Admission is free; bring a photo ID. Books are half price on the last day. Proceeds from Bookfair benefit scholarship programs and other Foreign Service projects. Visa and Mastercard are accepted. [www.aafsw.org](http://www.aafsw.org)

## Eat Local Challenge during October 2008

As part of the current Eat Local or Locavore movement, there is a marked increase in home gardening and buying food at nearby Farmers' Markets. We look back for lessons from the Victory Garden era.

We all know the *Rosie the Riveter* posters about working on the assembly lines, but there were also many variations of *Victory Garden* posters. What do you do with all your crop abundance?

At right is a 1944 poster published by the U.S. War Administration to encourage canning food by those Americans on the home front. Our Cooperative Dinner in April 2008 for CHoW members was based on the theme of "Good Food for Hard Times." The more things change, the more they stay the same.

[www.eatlocalchallenge.com/sign-up-page-october-2008.html](http://www.eatlocalchallenge.com/sign-up-page-october-2008.html)

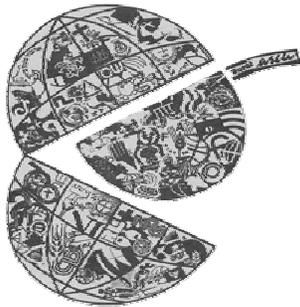


# News from Other Culinary Organizations

## Twenty-Eighth Annual World Food Day

October 16, 2008

**World Food Day (WFD)** is a worldwide event designed to increase awareness, understanding and informed, year-around action to alleviate hunger. It is observed each October 16th in recognition of the founding of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1945. The first World Food Day was in 1981. In the United States the endeavor is sponsored by 450 national, private, voluntary organizations. [www.worldfooddayusa.org/](http://www.worldfooddayusa.org/)



## Peacock-Harper Collection's Ten Most Wanted

**Peacock Harper Collection** at the Virginia Tech's Newman Library in Blacksburg, VA, has a list of their "ten most wanted" historic cookbooks.

- *Ma Gastronomie*, by Fernand Point
- *The Dinner Year-book*, by Marion Harland
- *National Cook Book*, by Marion Harland
- *The New England Cook Book*, by Marion Harland (co-authored with Mary J. Lincoln and Maria Parloa)
- *Being an interesting collection of directions to guide in the preparation [sic] of Virginia cooking containing receipts of more than one hundred years ago*. Printed by Whittet & Shepperson, Richmond VA. 1939, by A. Brown and G. Drinker
- *Cooking of the Old Dominion prior to 18—; being an interesting collection of directions to guide in the preparation [sic] of Virginia cooking; containing receipts of more than one hundred years ago; to which is added, the observations of publishers whose name follows herewith*, Richmond Hotels, Inc., Richmond VA.. 1939, by A. Brown, G. Drinker and Richmond Hotels Inc.
- First editions of M.F.K. Fisher's works.
- First editions of Elizabeth David's works.

Special Collections  
Newman Library  
P.O. Box 9001  
Blacksburg, VA 24062-9001.

## Blogs, Radio & Web Sites

**The Chicago Culinary Association** offers their speakers' presentations on public radio station WBEZ or as podcasts. Some of the most recent presentations are:

**The History of Greektown's Parthenon**, with Yanna Liakouras and Camille Stagg, recorded August 9, 2008:  
[www.chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=28026](http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=28026)

**Exploring the Wild Mushroom ... Myths, Flavors and Facts**, with Joe McFarland, recorded August 2, 2008:  
[www.chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=27310](http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=27310)

**In The K/Now: What's The Beef?** with Bill Kurtis, recorded July 19, 2008:  
[www.chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=26909](http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/Content.aspx?audioID=26909)



**Claudia Kousoulas** wrote this information about The Splendid Table:

### "Guess Who's in Town"

Cookbook author and food adventurer, Lynne Rossetto Kasper is in town every Saturday on WAMU (88.1 fm) at 2pm. Her hour-long radio show, "The Splendid Table," was recently picked-up by our local NPR station.

The show is named for her James Beard award-winning book that traces the recipes and food culture of Emilia-Romagna. After a quick, weekly check-in from the road with Jane and Michael Stern, show topics range from kitchen knives, heirloom tomatoes, and Japanese Whisky to classic Genoese Pesto, and the merry widows of French Champagne.

At the online companion site, [www.splendidtable.org](http://www.splendidtable.org), you can listen to past broadcasts, print out recipes and references, and subscribe to newsletters and podcasts.

**Slow Food Blog** is an interesting offshoot of Slow Food USA: [www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/slow\\_food/blog/](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/slow_food/blog/)

### World Bank Report on Agriculture:

World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development

<http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/EXTWDR2008/0,,contentMDK:21010122~menuPK:2795166~pagePK:64167689~piPK:64167673~theSitePK:2795143,00.html>