

# CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C. -- December 2007/January 2008 -- Volume XII, Number 4

## Last Call for Membership Dues!

If you want to be included in the CHoW membership roster, send your dues and membership form to Katherine Livingston by November 30.

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.

CHoW/DC publishes CHoW Line nine times each year. More information can be found at [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org).

### Inclement Weather

Call any Board member for possible program cancellations due to weather. Any decision to cancel would be made the night before, if possible, or no later than 10 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

## DECEMBER 9 MEETING

2:30 - 4:30 p.m.



### "From Raw Beef to Freedom Fries: Haute Cuisine, the White House, and Presidential Politics"

By Professor Mark McWilliams

Long before the wave of anti-French (fry) sentiment that preceded the war in Iraq, food-particularly the elitist and foreign sounding haute cuisine-has been linked to Presidential politics. Did Martin van Buren lose touch with the American people when he served a six course French meal in the White House? Was his opponent William Henry Harrison more a man of the people when he claimed to subsist on "raw beef without salt"? And what of the debate over the food prepared in Bill Clinton's White House kitchen? McWilliams traces the history of our native distrust of French cuisine's excesses and implications in state-side politics. (see Mark McWilliams bio on page 2, column 1.)

#### Maryland Humanities Council

This program is made possible by the Maryland Humanities Council. The meeting is free and open to the public and the location is handicap accessible. Sign language interpretation is available with a two-week advance notice. Call (410) 685-0095 or e-mail [jdobbs@mdhc.org](mailto:jdobbs@mdhc.org).

## Calendar of CHoW Meetings

- September 9 **Tyler Cowen**, "Every Meal Counts: How and Why an Economist Became Obsessed with the Quest for the Perfect Meal"
- October 14 **Stefanie Walker**, "Bartolomeo Scappi's *Art of Cooking* (*Dell'arte del cucinare*) of 1570 and Italian cookbooks from the 16th-17th centuries"
- November 11 **Amy Riolo**, "Incense and Spice: Entertaining in the Arabian Peninsula"
- December 9 **Mark McWilliams**, "From Raw Beef to Freedom Fries: Haute Cuisine, the White House, and Presidential Politics"
- January 13 **Professor Leni Sorensen**, "Cooks and Slaves: Edith Fossett and Francis Hern of Monticello" (see page 2)
- February 10 TBA
- March 9 "African Foodways in Books and Art," A Field Trip to the Robbins Library at the National Museum of African Art
- April 13 Cooperative Supper
- May 18 TBA (Note: Not the second 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)

## BIO OF MARK McWILLIAMS

Mark McWilliams, our December speaker, writes about food and culture. An Associate Professor in the English Department of the United States Naval Academy, he specializes in the shifting portrayals of food in literature, particularly in the nineteenth-century United States, but he has also explored topics as diverse as fusion cuisine and the morality of bread. His work has appeared in numerous scholarly journals and in the proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Virginia.

**REFRESHMENTS:** *Everyone is welcome to bring food or beverage to serve at CHoW meetings.*

## Who Has a Whatzit?

Calling all past Whatzits: If you have brought in a Whatzits anytime over the last several years, please bring it to be photographed at the December 9 meeting. Doors open at 2:00, and we would like to start taking pictures shortly thereafter. We are creating an online "whatzit" library on [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org)

## Upcoming Event

CHoW Meeting just announced for Sunday, March 9, 2008:

**"African Foodways in Books and Art," A Field Trip to the Robbins Library at the National Museum of African Art**

Conducted by Janet Stanley, Librarian and Bryna Freyer, Curator and CHoW member. See:

<http://africa.si.edu/index2.html>

## JANUARY 13 MEETING

2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

### "Cooks and Slaves: Edith Fossett and Francis Hern of Monticello"

by Professor Leni Sorensen

Leni Sorensen, African American Research Historian, Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Monticello, will be our guest speaker at the CHoW meeting on January 13. More details of her presentation will be sent mid-December along with the mailing of the CHoW membership roster.

Professor Sorensen has also worked as a consultant and interpreter at Monticello, Ash Lawn Highland, and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. She is formerly the Research Coordinator, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Detroit. Professor Sorensen received her M.A. and Ph.D. in American Studies from the College of William and Mary.



## News from Other Organizations



Mark Catesby (English, 1683-1749)  
The Cacao Tree from The Natural History of the Carolinas, Florida and the Bahama Islands - Vol. 2  
Appendix -1st edition, 1731  
Private Collection

The Bruce Museum  
1 Museum Drive, Greenwich, CT 06830  
(203) 869-0376  
[www.brucemuseum.org](http://www.brucemuseum.org)

### A Taste for Chocolate

July 21, 2007 - February 24, 2008

Consumed worldwide as a confection and beverage, chocolate has been traded as currency, is given yearly as a token of enduring love, and inspires passion bordering on obsession and addiction —

the current Merriam-Webster Dictionary now includes the word "chocoholic" as an entry. Yet its origin and history are often overlooked.

A Taste for Chocolate explores the varied uses of cacao over the centuries and the cultural influence of chocolate on society. The exhibition traces chocolate's historical and cultural evolution with approximately fifty examples of decorative arts and historical artifacts dating from the Aztec and Maya civilizations through the 20th century. These items are drawn from the Bruce Museum collection, private collectors, and institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum, American Museum of Natural History, New York Botanical Garden, Gardiner Museum in Toronto, and Wilbur Chocolate's Americana Museum in Lititz, Pennsylvania.

# What Happened at the November 11 Meeting?

The meeting was called to order by Randy Clarke, Vice-President, at 2:45 p.m.

**Announcements:** Randy stated that the newsletter for December and January will be combined into one edition.

**Whatzit:** Claudia Kousoulas brought in an ice crusher and Shirley Cherkasky brought in a campfire toaster which was made in Canada.

On December 9, please bring in any Whatzits that you have brought to past meetings so they can be photographed for our CHoW website.

## Program: “Incense and Spice: Entertaining in the Arabian Peninsula.”

**Amy Riolo**, a CHoW member, was introduced by Randy Clarke. Amy is a nationally recognized culinary expert, food writer, and cooking instructor based in the Washington, D.C. area. Amy’s talk was titled “**Incense and Spice: Entertaining in the Arabian Peninsula.**” She talked about the history of the cuisine of the Arabian Peninsula and how the incense and spice trades impacted the area over the centuries. Amy presented her talk dressed in a beautiful blue silk outfit that she had bought at the *souk* at the seaside port in Jeddah. She explained that one would dress like this when attending important events or for entertaining.



The cuisine of the Arabian Peninsula is a combination of healthful ingredients and time honored techniques combined with exotic herbs, flowers, spices, and sometimes incense. For Amy’s discussion, she referred to Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates as the Arabian Peninsula. She learned about the cuisine of this region when she traveled to Saudi Arabia to participate in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. She was part of an American delegation as part of the Royal Protocol and was entertained with much lavishness. After experiencing the Arabian hospitality, she then began to reevaluate her own process of entertaining.

The history of Arabian cuisine can be divided into three categories: antiquity, the 7th century and advent of Islam, and Modernity. Nomadic desert tribes relied upon staples

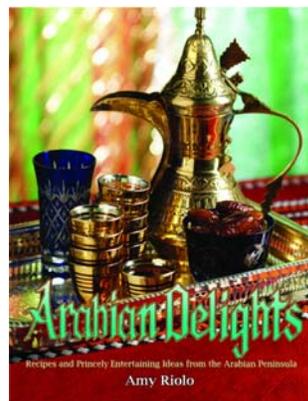
such as rice, dates, mutton and lamb which they took with them when traveling. People living on coastal areas also enjoyed seafood such as lobster, crab and tuna.

Islam came to Arabia in the 7th century with the Prophet Mohamed. The Prophet’s wife and companions were the first people to adopt the new religion. The five pillars of Islam had a direct impact on how cuisine changed in the area:

1. **Shahada** - declaration of faith. As Muslims converted to Islam, new dietary obligations were stated.
2. **Salat** - prayers. Five daily prayers gave people a centralized time for not only praying, but eventually eating and getting together. Eating became “communal.”
3. **Sawm** - fasting. During the holy month of Ramadan, elaborate meals and recipes were developed for the break-fast meals.
4. **Zakat** - charity. Food is used as charity in helping the poor
5. **Hajj** - Pilgrimage to Makkah. Many pilgrims remained in Saudi Arabia and their food traditions stayed with them.

Trade boomed as the Islamic empire grew. The years of trade spread cultural ideas, knowledge and recipes throughout the region. Trade elevated Arabian cuisine and living standards from its humble Bedouin origins to a new elegant status with the addition of spices and knowledge from faraway lands. Intricate spice mixes became indispensable. Each spice vendor and cook has their own special blend - blends varied by location.

The incense trail intersected the Silk Route. Incense in the Arabian Peninsula is not considered a luxury. It is an important aspect of daily life -- like drinking wine in other cultures. The sense of smell is heightened in the Peninsula.



Coffee was roasted for the first time in 13th century Yemen. Coffee spread through the area with the help of Imams who used it as an aid to stay awake during the long hours of devotion.

Modern Arabian Cuisine is considered by natives to be a melting-pot of many different cuisines, just like modern American cuisine is. Increased wealth and opportunity in the region has brought people from all around the world to the Peninsula for work. Their immigrant’s signature dishes have become part of today’s Arabian cuisine.

Amy concluded her talk by explaining the secrets to Arabian hospitality: *(continued on page 4)*

## SECRETS TO ARABIAN HOSPITALITY

1. The guest is more important than the food.
2. Everyone eats the same things -- together.
3. No matter how short your visit, people will offer you food and drink.
4. Offer the greatest amount of variety possible.
5. Treat your most cherished guests like family.
6. Seating your guests on the floor (on a carpet) is treating them as family.
7. Make sure your guests' every need is met.
8. Impromptu friends and guests are always welcome.
9. Guests will be offered more coffee and dates before departing and an incense censor and perfume oils will be passed for guests to use.
10. Parting gifts are usually given to guests.

An incense censor and perfumes were passed around the room for all to experience a touch of Arabian hospitality. Amy then spent the next 35 minutes answering many questions from the audience. She also made mention that her book *Arabian Delights: Recipes and Princely Entertaining Ideas from the Arabian Peninsula* should be out by Thanksgiving.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Clara Raju, Recording Secretary

### Refreshments:

Hommus and Stiratini con olive (breadsticks with olive oil) from **Janet Dinerman**

Pickled turnips and Koftit Ferakh (chicken balls), a 13th century recipe via **Claudia Roden** from **Katherine Livingston**

Pomegranate yogurt dip with cucumber slices and sesame crackers from **Felice Caspar**

Pistachio K'nafeh, Almond Baklava and Date Dome Cookies from **Amy Riolo**

## NEW BLOG

### Korean Embassy Launches a Major Contender for the Palates of Korean Cuisine Enthusiasts

With dozens of English language blogs dedicated to teaching the cuisine of Korea springing up in recent years, including those by American expats in Korea, there is a thriving online community of amateur Korean chefs that cater largely to an American audience.

Now, some expats within the United States, namely the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Washington D.C., have launched their own online entry into the field: a comprehensive forum and classroom for English-speaking lovers of Korean food worldwide.

Korean Embassy Cuisine boasts a few unique features: regular updates of step-by-step video lessons, a communal guide to Korean restaurants across the United States, a forum for visitors to share their own home recipes, a database of hundreds of Korean recipes, and English translations of particular dishes, all available at [www.Korea-Cuisine.com](http://www.Korea-Cuisine.com).

(See photo of Radish Kim Chee with Oysters, below.)



Embassy officials in the United States decided to devote resources to a useful and comprehensive website that would serve as a free and open focal point for all such kimchi enthusiasts, in light of the blossoming popularity of Korean food.

Ms. Chang Jae-ok, lifetime chef, author of the bilingual book *Vignette of Korean Cooking*, and host of a radio-broadcast Korean cooking show, will provide the featured recipes and host the video tutorials. The website's lessons will be accompanied by detailed texts that guide viewers through the entire process, from selecting ingredients to adding the final touches.

Korean Embassy Cuisine was created by the KORUS House, a branch of the Korean embassy in Washington, DC and the office of the Korean Overseas Information Service. Its name being derived from a combination of Korea and U.S., the KORUS House mission is to foster better ties and awareness in the United States on all levels. [www.korea-cuisine.com](http://www.korea-cuisine.com)

## News of Our Members

Sally and John Waltz were profiled in a lengthy article in the Washington Post Food section November 7, see "Stirring Up History Over a Crackling Fire" by Bonny Wolf.

[www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/30/AR2007103000726.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/30/AR2007103000726.html)

The newspaper story recounts some of Sally's meals prepared in the cooking house that has survived over 200 years on the Maryland farm that has been in John's family since 1774.

CHoW members have for years been beneficiaries of Sally and John's vast knowledge of farming. Not only have they brought innumerable "Whatzits" to CHoW meetings, but they also hosted CHoW members on a field trip to their farm in May 2004.

## Welcome, New Members!

**Hillary Lee**

**Anna Rabin**

Interest: Gender and food, identity and food

**Tom Weiland**

Interest: All sorts of things

**Elizabeth Bennett**

**Janet Boileau**

University of Adelaide

Interest: Portuguese colonial cuisine

**Ann Chandonnet**

Indigenous Alaskan food, gold rush food and beverages; wild edible foods; global warming's effect on traditional Arctic menus; Pacific seafood; Civil War infantry chow.



## BOOK REVIEW

### *Kitchen Memories: A Legacy of Family Recipes from Around the World*

By Anne Snape Parsons and  
Alexandra Greeley  
Capital Books, Inc. [www.capital-books.com](http://www.capital-books.com)  
\$24 392 pages softcover  
[www.familyfoodmemories.com](http://www.familyfoodmemories.com)

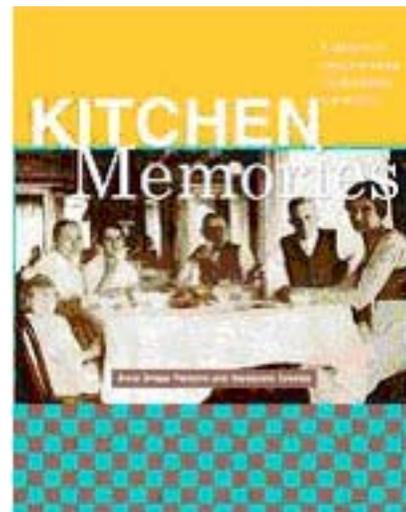
Reviewed by  
**Dianne Hennessy King**

The Scottish born, North Carolina resident Anne Snape Parsons, a travel and food writer, and the Virginian journalist Alexandra Greeley, author of several Asian food cookbooks, are a natural duo to combine their interests in the Slow Food movement, worldwide cuisine and diverse family histories.

Together they have compiled 120 recipes that represent the traditions of 25 countries. Each recipe is accompanied by a family story of the contributor and each chapter is prefaced with a few paragraphs of background information about the country. The U.S.A. section has sixteen recipes that are divided into four parts: All-American, Southern American, African American and Jewish.

As with all survey based books, the reader has to balance the limits of brevity (France is represented by four recipes; all of Scandinavia plus Iceland, joined as one unit, is given four recipes and a sidebar), with the pleasures of breadth (fine recipes from Morocco, India, Thailand and Mexico, for example). At the end of the book a three-page Glossary of terms of implements (cazuela), methods (knead), and ingredients (palm sugar), is followed by Where to Shop Online, a one-page list of websites. There is also a helpful Bibliography of books and websites for most of the countries that are mentioned in the cookbook.

The authors are to be commended for providing a forum for the voices of those who are struggling to preserve family culinary heritages. It is with a sense of joy and pride that each recipe contributor remembers the past and delights in sharing his or her traditions with those of us in the present. The responsibility for passing on our own traditions to the future generation now rests with all of us.



## CHoW Website Enhancements

This fall CHoW, with gratitude to **Gina Jenkins**, who pioneered the website, and Pat Reber, who stepped in in a pinch, signed up a new webmaster and established a committee to review and revise the site. (Members are **Katherine Livingston**, chairman, and **Felice Caspar**, **Laura Gilliam**, **Dianne King**, **Claudia Kousoulas**, and **Pat Reber**.) Since then the site has been reorganized somewhat and updated. In addition to some pruning and restoration of lost material, there have been some additions, most notably links to some 30 library collections (under Related Sites) and the beginnings of a calendar of local food festivals (Coming Events). Material is also being gathered for new features, to include Works by Members, listing our websites and publications (contact **Dianne King**), and Whatzits, photographs of items brought to meetings for identification. **Laura Gilliam**, web coordinator pro tem, will receive and transmit all changes to the webmaster. Check out the improved/improving site at [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org).

—**Katherine Livingston**, Committee Chair