

CH W *Line*

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

Dec. 2011-Jan. 2012

Volume XVI, Number 4

Special Double Issue!

Please note that this is a double issue for December 2011 and January 2012. See the January program information on page 2. *Happy holidays from CHoW!*

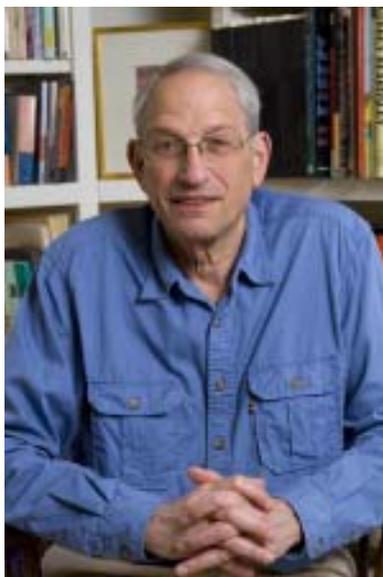
Last Chance to Renew Your Membership

To be included in the roster and mailings, December 31 is the final date to renew your dues. Annual dues are \$25 for individuals, households, or organizations. Dues include e-mail delivery of the newsletter *CHoWLine*.

Dues are \$35 for members who also wish to receive a mailed, paper copy of the newsletter.

More information can be found at www.chowdc.org.

Beating the Nazis with Truffles and Tripe: The Early Years of *Gourmet*



**Speaker: David Strauss
Sunday, December 11
2:30 to 4:30 p.m.**

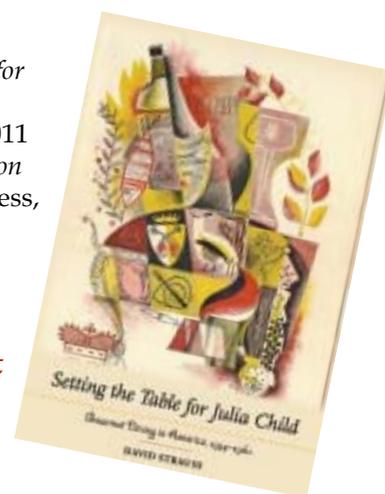
**Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center,
4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD**

According to conventional wisdom, a wartime environment discourages activities like gourmet dining, which requires the preparation of expensive dishes to satisfy the palates of a few individuals. Though the publisher of *Gourmet*, Earle MacAusland, was familiar with this belief, he brought out the first issue of the magazine in January of 1941 and proceeded to grow its circulation over the next four years. He did so by discovering in the wartime environment cultural

themes which would support his venture, including the rise of internationalism, the defense of traditional American dining ways, and the belief that the war was being fought to defend the American way of life. MacAusland and *Gourmet* even offered an approach to wartime dining which was more patriotic and tastier than the rationing system devised by Franklin Roosevelt's administration.

David Strauss is a professor emeritus of history at Kalamazoo College and author of *Setting the Table for Julia Child: Gourmet Dining in America, 1934-1961*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011 and *Percival Lowell: The Culture and Science of a Boston Brahmin*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

**NOTE: See page 2 for Information about
the January Speaker & Meeting**



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
Dues to: Bruce Reynolds

Sunday, January 8, 2012, CHoW Meeting

Inclement Weather Advisory

If there's a question about whether the weather will cause a cancellation of a CHoW meeting, first check your e-mail. A CHoW-DC Google group message will be e-mailed to members.



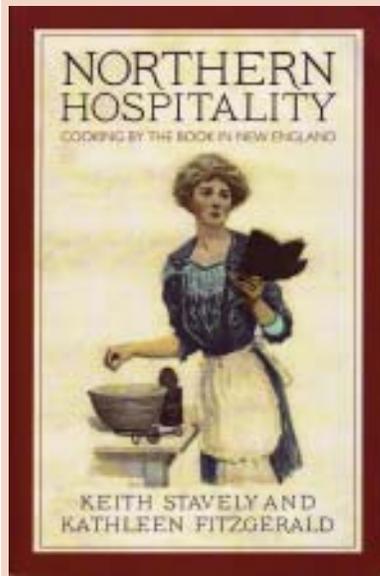
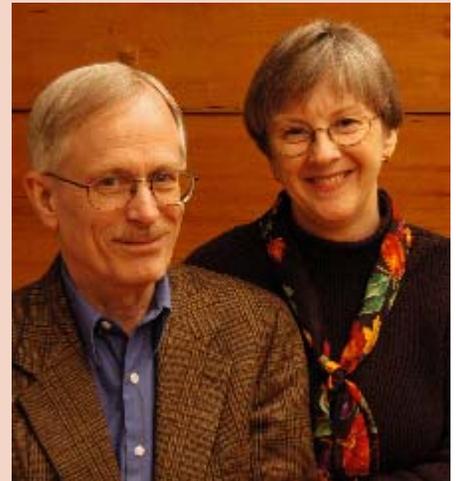
If you are not part of the CHoW Google group or do not have e-mail, call any Board member to learn of possible program cancellations due to weather (see page 8 for contact information).

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.

Cooking by the Book in New England: From Colonies to Colonial Revival

Speakers: Ken Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald from Rhode Island

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center,
4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, Maryland



Guest lecturers Stavely and Fitzgerald will give a survey of the place of cookbooks in New England society in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, followed by an illustrated presentation of representative historic recipes as cooked in a typical twenty-first century kitchen.

As Claudia Kousoulas said in her review of the book written by Stavely and Fitzgerald, "New England food brings to mind chowder, baked beans, brown bread, and perhaps a few more thrifty and austere dishes that evoke our nation's earliest days. In *Northern Hospitality*, the authors tease out the source of that simplicity by examining early American cookbooks and their recipes." See the September 2011, *CHoWLine*, page 5, for Claudia's extensive book review.

Anglo Saxon Cuisine

Amy Riolo presented at National Geographic Museum a thoroughly researched lecture on Anglo Saxon Cuisine on November 6. The large audience learned what foods Anglo-Saxons ate and how they prepared for daily meals or elaborate feasts. Participants enjoyed hearing Amy's overview of the history of Anglo-Saxon foods that were common in England more than 1,000 years ago. Her talk was in conjunction with the current exhibit, "Anglo Saxon Hoard: Gold from England's Dark Ages," which will be open until Sunday, March 4. The exhibit is the only U.S. appearance of the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold ever discovered. --National Geographic Museum



A sample of the exquisite artifacts on display in *Anglo-Saxon Hoard: Gold from England's Dark Ages*

What Happened at the November 13 Meeting?

President **CiCi Williamson** called the meeting to order at 2:42 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves. There were 12 visitors among the 54 in attendance.

Announcements

Joan Nathan is seeking volunteers to work with Martha's Table, which distributes food to the low income community. With a \$50,000 grant from Target, Martha's Table is distributing groceries once a month to low income families at two D.C. grammar schools, one in SW and the other near Martha's Table. Volunteers are needed to demonstrate simple recipes or explain how to use the groceries to the parents and children on either the third and fourth Tuesday of the month, from 5-6 p.m. Contact Joan Nathan at [redacted] for further information.

Judy Newton announced that the Olney Farmers Market, which has closed for the season, will open once more on the first Sunday of December for holiday shopping.

Regina Newport was recognized as founder of the new chapter Culinary Historians of the Philippines (CHOP).

Claudia Kousoulas and Beverly Firme brought home-grown bay leaves and rosemary to share with members.

Williamson mentioned that the next CHoW Line newsletter is a combined December/January issue. Please send notices for either month to our editor **Dianne Hennessy King**

Membership: Treasurer **Bruce Reynolds** reminded members that he continues to collect dues for 2011-2012 membership renewal and invited visitors to join CHoW. Visitors **Eric and Rebecca Gordon** became CHoW's newest members!

Membership Secretary **Quentin Looney** asked members to pick up the updated 2011 membership roster. Any not picked up today will be mailed to CHoW members. Please check your contact information on the roster and send any errors to Quentin

Whatzits: **Dianne Hennessy King** brought two items recently acquired from Brittany. No one guessed their uses. She explained later that they were 1) a cider cup holder hung around the neck of the cider jug and 2) a wooden grip in which the handles of plastic shopping bags are hooked to keep the plastic from cutting into your hands when carrying the bag.

Sheilah Kaufman brought a small metal spoon with a sieve encased bowl that no one was able to identify (see *Whatzits* at right).



President Williamson asked Joan Nathan to draw names for seven door prizes.

Program: President Williamson introduced Joan Nathan who shared her research efforts for *Quiches, Kugels and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France* (see page 2).

CHoW's December 11 program will be David Strauss on "Beating the Nazis with Truffles and Tripe: The Early Years of *Gourmet*." (See overview on page 4.)

Meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Refreshments: Thank you to our members for their delightful contributions. Three ChoW members made recipes from Joan Nathan's book *Quiches, Kugels, and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France*.(*)

Francine Berkowitz	Belgium almond butter thins
Felice Caspar	*Fennel Salad with Celery, Cucumber, Lemon and Pomegranate (arils - seeds)
Beverly Firme	Chocolate covered coffee beans
Laura Gilliam	*Babka a la Française (babka rolls with olive tapenade)
Claudia Kousoulas	Whole wheat sables
Phyllis Krochmal	Watermelon
Regina Newport	Cassava bibingka (sweet Philippine dessert cake)
Jane Olmsted	Parmigiano reggiano dip with crudités
Clara Raju	*Tunisian Carrots with Caraway and Harissa

Anne Whitaker for her generous monthly contribution of providing the beverages and organizing the refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,
Audrey Hong, Recording Secretary

A Brief Overview of Joan Nathan's Presentation

By Joan Nathan

Inspired by my own family history, (my Jewish relatives had gone to France after the war), I set off to learn more about the often-hidden history and foods of French Jews. But Jewishness has always been a little under cover in France. For a long time, when I asked French Jews where they came from originally, the answer was always "France," no matter how I prodded.

A few years ago I went back to visit my French relatives only to discover that people were suddenly talking about the war and their Jewishness.

In speaking with Jews across the country, I came to understand that French Jews hold the traditions of their region side by side with the traditions of Jewish cuisine. Within this rich agricultural country, Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Provençal Jewish food developed side-by-side and often melded with French regional cooking. While the Jews of Alsace cooked with goose fat and sauerkraut, those of the south cooked with oil and garlic. Since some Jewish families in Provence, for instance, have been there for over two thousand years, it is hard to differentiate Jewish from Provençal food customs. Fougasse, a bread with holes, traditionally mixed, kneaded and shaped at home, then brought to a



Joan signs copies of her book for a CHoW guest and Jamie Lapin.

communal oven for baking was, for example, the holiday bread for Jews. This diversity of origin goes beyond region and all blend together in the French people, including its Jews.

Through them, and people all over the country - from a Jewish farmer in Haute Savoie who makes his own cheese, to the grand rabbi of Bordeaux who oversees kosher runs of wine making, to a family who shared the story of a truffle hunter in the 13th century Carpentras, to one Baroness de Rothschild who welcomed me to her homes in Geneva and Paris, I have learned family stories and secrets about their Jewish life and food.



Joan Nathan speaks to 54 CHoW members and visitors on *Quiches, Kugels, and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France*. Photos by Regina Newport.

Exciting CHoW Program Speakers for 2011-2012

Except for the April Cooperative Supper, all meetings will be held from 2:30 to 4:30 at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, Maryland.

September 11. Patricia Jinich. "Mexican Culinary Traditions."

September 24. Field trip: Distillery Lane Ciderworks (see page 3)

October 9. Mimi Hernandez, Frostburg, Maryland. "Wild Weeds, Medicinal Mushrooms, and Healthy Spices" (see p. 1).

November 13. Joan Nathan, Washington, D.C. "Quiches, Kugels and Couscous: My Search for Jewish Cooking in France."

December 11. David Strauss, Kalamazoo, Michigan. "Beating the Nazis with Truffles and Tripe: The Early Years of *Gourmet*."

January 8, 2012. Keith Stavely and Kathleen Fitzgerald, Rhode Island. "Cooking by the Book in New England: From Colonies to Colonial Revival."

February 12, 2012. William Woys Weaver, Ph. D., Devon, PA. "Food and Drink in Medieval Cyprus."

March 11, 2012. Warren Belasco, Washington, D.C. "A Culinary History of Washington, D.C."

April 1, 2012. Community Supper, Alexandria, VA. Theme to be decided by membership vote.

May 6, 2012. Amy Riolo, Germantown, MD. "Karabakh Cuisine: Recipes, Memories, and Dining Traditions from Azerbaijan's Cradle of Culture."

Welcome, New Members!

Eric and Rebecca Gordon

Terry Eason, Ethnic cuisines, especially Asian

Paula Shoyer, Pastry, desserts, Jewish cooking, author of *The Kosher Baker*



Culinary Humor

By Tom Weiland

Lutefisk. The very name puts a grin on my face. In the bizarre world of Scandinavian food, lutefisk is the most notorious. You either love it or hate it; there is no ambivalence. Lutefisk is dried “fisk” (fish, usually cod) soaked in “lut” (lye – aka drain cleaner) until exceptionally gelatinous and odoriferous.

The history at least goes back to the middle ages in Catholic Southern Europe, with shortages of fresh fish during Lent. Enterprising Norwegians preserved their plentiful cod by air-drying in the colder North (“stock fish”) or salting/air-drying in the more pest-ridden South (“clip fish”). Traders brought it to countries like Spain (*bacalao*), Portugal (*bacalhau*), and Italy (*baccala*) to grace tables and it is still loved today, especially around Christmas and Easter.

Normal people just soak and boil the dried fish. Inexplicably, Norwegians spend weeks curing theirs into olfactory-assaulting, bone-laden Jell-O. The origin of this habit is a matter of debate and urban (or rural) myth. Google the term and you’ll find some hilarious encounters, as well as jokes like:

■ Ole had a family of pesky raccoons living under his house. A friend told him an old trick: put lutefisk under the house and they will leave. The good news is that it worked; the bad news is now there is a family of pesky Norwegians living under the house.

■ Ole: “Say, Lars, I heard you saved a man’s life last veek.”
Lars: “Yah, I sure did. I advised him not to order da lutefisk.”

In lutefisk’s defense, maybe its appeal is the broader experience. This traditional dish is often shared with friends and family during Christmas, accompanied by copious quantities of camaraderie, merriment, and alcohol. In honor of that, let’s all sing the first verse of “O Lutefisk” by Red Stangland, to the tune of “O Tannenbaum” (full lyrics at www.allcarols.com/o/o_lutefisk_o_lutefisk.html):



O lutefisk, O lutefisk, how fragrant your aroma
O lutefisk, O lutefisk, you put me in a coma.
You smell so strong, you look like glue
You taste just like an overshoe
But lutefisk, come Saturday
I tink I’ll eat you anyway.

Cheers! TW

Note: Please see sources for the lutefisk material on page 7.

Photo: Norwegian Constitution Day dinner with lutefisk (foreground), lefse and meatballs.



Upcoming Events

Crete: The Roots of the Mediterranean Diet

Bethesda Green (4825 Cordell Ave. Suite 200) followed by a brunch celebrating the cuisine of Crete at nearby Yamas Mediterranean Grill, 4806 Rugby Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814

Sunday, December 11, Lecture: 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., Brunch: 1:30 to 3:30

Fee: Lecture free, Brunch \$30; advance reservations required for each event.
www.bethesdagreen.org

Nikki Rose, a Greek American Professional Chef-Instructor and Writer living in Greece, has been hosting teachers, students and journalists in Crete for 14 years through her project, Crete’s Culinary Sanctuaries (CCS). Her focus celebrates and helps protect Crete’s cultural and culinary heritage. The concepts of the Mediterranean Diet originated in Crete. Chef Rose, with her CCS initiatives, demonstrates that Cretan cuisine is not just a diet, but is a way of life that has much to offer our ongoing pursuit of healthy and sustainable approaches to eating. In her concise book, Rose shares strategies for applying the celebrated concepts of Cretan cuisine wherever you live. The book includes recipes with gorgeous photos of culinary treasures amid the magnificent landscape of the isle of Crete.

Rose has received numerous awards from National Geographic, the United Nations and many other organizations for her success in creating sustainable travel/community-based tourism and culinary projects that bring focus to the expanding inquiry into sustainability. An autographed copy of her book will be available for sale. Proceeds benefit CCS initiatives.
Chapter preview: www.cookingincrete.com

Chinese New Year Dinner

January 28, 2012, 6:30 p.m.

Join Les Dames d’Escoffier to celebrate a lavish, authentic Chinese New Year dinner at Hollywood East Cafe, Silver Spring, MD.

Save the Date!

March 10, 2012, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for Les Dames’ biennial symposium
“Celebrating FOOD:
Cooking * Careers * Communications.”

More information on both events will be posted at www.lesdamesdc.org in early 2012.

CHoW Members Attend Thai Basil Luncheon

By Regina Newport



Les Dames d'Escoffier invited CHoW members to a luncheon and cooking demonstration by Chef Nongkran Daks at her Thai Basil Restaurant in Chantilly, VA, on October 22.

Of the 22 attendees, six were CHoW members: **CiCi Williamson, Jane Olmsted, Jane Mengershauser, Sheilah Kaufman, Regina Newport** and **Ian Newport**. The first four are also members of Les Dames, as is Chef Nongkran, who spoke to CHoW about regional Thai foods in December 2009. [Top photo: Larry Daks, Regina, Nongkran and Ian]



Chef Nongkran is known for her authentic Thai cooking, but she gained national fame when she beat TV Food Network Chef Bobby Flay in a Pad Thai Throwdown in March 2009. While the group was looking forward to sampling this winning dish, everyone was excited about the extensive menu, which included three appetizers, three entrees, two side dishes and a dessert (with a surprise bonus dish at the end).



Chef Nongkran's demonstration of two dishes -- Chicken in Pandan Leaves (photo 2) and Bananas in a Blanket (3) provided lively entertainment, punctuated by her self-deprecating sense of humor and husband Larry Daks' funny anecdotes. CiCi added a nice touch by presenting the Chef with a beautiful "Miss Siam" tiara and sash (4).



The appetizers -- all winners -- were Miang Kham (5), a mini-"taco" with shrimp and vegetables wrapped in a broccoli leaf and eaten in one bite with a special sauce; Golden Cups (6), homemade mini-pastry cups with chicken and vegetables pre-cooked in herbs and spices; and Chicken in Pandan Leaves (2), chicken wrapped in the aromatic pandan leaves and deep-fried. (In demonstrating how to wrap the chicken, Chef Nongkran said she found it difficult to write a proper description of the procedure, and offered a prize to anyone who could provide her with one.)

The Pad Thai with Shrimp (7), a noodle dish and the highlight of the entrees, did not disappoint, but equally delicious were the Crispy Watercress Salad with Shrimp (8) in a light batter with tangy/citrusy dressing; and Northern Thai Pork Curry (9) served with rice. Perfect accompaniments to these complex flavors were the Chinese Broccoli with Shiitake Mushrooms & Tofu (10) stir-fried in oyster sauce and Tri-Color Pickle (house-pickled vegetables).



Rounding off the feast was Bananas in a Blanket (3), sugar-and-cinnamon-dusted bananas in eggroll wrappers, fried and drizzled with honey or chocolate. When the group thought they couldn't eat another morsel, the Chef brought out a surprise bonus, Sticky Rice with Mango, eliciting "oohs" and "aahs" from everyone. Despite complaints about being too full, the plates were polished off in no time!

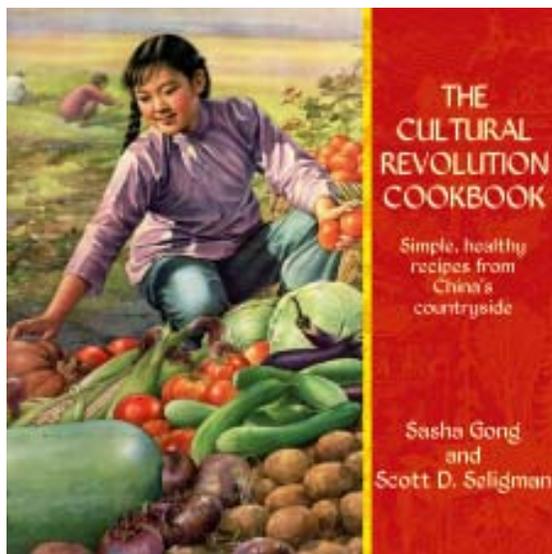
Thanks to CiCi (11), with Regina), Chef Nongkran Daks and Les Dames d'Escoffier for inviting CHoW members to join the feast. *All photos by Regina and Ian Newport*



Book Review

The Cultural Revolution Cookbook

By Sasha Gong and Scott D. Seligman
Earnshaw Books \$29.95 Launch date
December 12, 2011 at Tenleytown Library
(confirm before attending)



Reviewed By Claudia Kousoulas

It takes courage to write a cookbook from a time and place noted for famine. During China's Great Leap Forward in 1958 "tens of millions perished." Author Sasha Gong was one of the survivors and she has teamed with China expert Scott Seligman to write her memoirs and a cookbook of the time.

We spend a lot of time discussing the politics of food these days – genetically modified seeds, farm labor practices, and local foodsheds – but a political action like "sending down" 17 million young city dwellers to work on country farms for as long as a decade is inconceivable. In 1966, China's Cultural Revolution was an attempt to restructure society, and as an element of culture, food was part of the upheaval.

As schools and businesses shut down, food supplies quickly dried up and rationing was

extended beyond grain to include salt, sugar, eggs, cooking oil, bean curd, soy sauce, and more. Market reforms in the 1970s would eventually ease rationing, but it was not completely eliminated until the 1990s.

With striking equanimity, Gong recalls cooking her own dinner as a six-year old while her parents were at work. In 1965, when she and her siblings were sent by her parents to live with her grandparents, the household moved to their home village when her grandfather was accused of being a counter-revolutionary.

In 1968, the children were back with their parents in Guangzhou, but were shortly left to live on their own when their parents were sent to camps for "re-education for labor." Again, Gong was cooking, this time from rationed ingredients for her siblings.

Gong's description of her kitchen will boggle the mind of any gadget-loving western cook – a wok, a water pot, a spatula, a ladle, and a "slice of tree trunk for a cutting board..." all shared in 200 square feet with another family. Meanwhile, Chinese city dwellers were raising chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs and ducks, and growing chives, squash, eggplant, cucumbers, and cabbages on their apartment balconies.

Between 1969 and 1971, Gong was sent to Guangdong and assigned to work rice fields and plant vegetables. The work teams ate with the peasant families and the food was strictly local. A can of Spam was valued at two month's worth of meat rations.

By 1972, she was back in the city and assigned to a candy factory, where she was surrounded by the luxury of sugar. Among the factory workers, cooking was one "of the relatively safe topics for group discussion," and Gong picked up many cooking techniques.

As political winds blew in different directions, Gong was eventually able to attend university and by 1986 she was at Harvard, pursuing a Ph.D. She continued to cook for homesick students and adapted quickly to western ingredients and techniques – using balsamic vinegar in sweet and sour dishes and microwaves to steam.

These recipes, from a "cheerless decade" are actually well suited to today's harried cooks who are looking for quick, healthy food. The limited ingredients and simple techniques make for easy cooking, and all of them have been tried and tempered to get the most flavor out of the least ingredients.

It is a Chinese proverb that notes, the only way to keep a family in existence for generations is to think cabbage stalks nice. Gong and Seligman have made these cabbage stalks seem very nice.

Claudia Kousoulas is an urban planner who also writes cookbook reviews.

Lutefisk sources (see page 5). Following are the sources for the "Culinary Humor" column. Tom cross-referenced multiple sources because the legends of lutefisk are difficult to separate from truth. He says, "But it's more fun that way."

1. *The Last Word on Lutefisk: True Tales of Cod and Tradition*, Gary Legwold, borrowed from Shirley Cherkasky
2. *Lutefisk, Rakefisk, and Herring in Norwegian Tradition*, Astri Riddervold, borrowed from Shirley Cherkasky
3. *Norwegian Jokes, Uff Da Jokes, and Ole and Lena Jokes #8*, Red Stangland
4. *101 Things to do with Lutefisk*, Ed Fischer
5. Illumination from Odd Brenden and Shirley Cherkasky

In case you have a masochistic hankering to make lutefisk yourself, Tom will be ordering some stockfish when the new shipment arrives in the U.S., in about a week or two. Give him a heads-up and he will order extra for you.

CHoW 2010-2011 Board of Directors

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Editorial Positions

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CHoW Line Designer

CiCi Williamson

Past President & Website Coordinator

Katherine Livingston

DIRECTIONS TO THE MEETING

CHoW/DC usually meets on the second Sunday of each month, September through May, from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, Maryland.

DIRECTIONS: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center is located at 4805 Edgemoor Lane in downtown Bethesda, Maryland, in the two-story County office building on the plaza level of the Metropolitan complex, above a County parking garage. The building is across the street from the Bethesda Metro station.

From the **Metro Station**, take the escalator from the bus bay to the plaza level, turn left, walk past the clock tower and across to the Metropolitan plaza using the pedestrian bridge. The Center's street entrance at 4805 Edgemoor Lane (corner of Old Georgetown and Edgemoor) is marked with American and Montgomery County flags. Take the elevator to Level Two for meeting rooms.

If you are coming **south on Old Georgetown Road** (from the Beltway use exit 36) turn right on Woodmont Avenue - the entrance is the second driveway on the left.

If you are coming **south on Wisconsin Avenue/Rockville Pike**, turn right onto Woodmont Avenue, go south for approximately one mile, cross over Old Georgetown Road, and the parking garage entrance is the second driveway on your left.

Coming **north on Wisconsin or west on Rt. 410**, take Old Georgetown Road north, turn left at the second traffic light (Woodmont Ave.) and the garage entrance will be on your left. Take the elevators from the parking garage to the plaza level (P). The building is located at the center of the plaza. The American flag, Montgomery County flag, and the County seal mark the entrance to the building.

PARKING: Parking is free on weekends in the county parking garage. The entrance to the parking garage is marked with a large blue Bethesda Center parking sign.

