

CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

February 2009

Volume XIII, Number 5

Cooperative Supper April 5

CHoW will be holding its annual Cooperative Supper on Sunday afternoon, April 5. We will vote on a dining theme based on a topic in culinary history at the March 8 meeting. Then, on April 5, everyone brings a "covered dish" to share that is somehow related to our chosen theme.

Inclement Weather Advisory

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.

Keep Those Refreshments Coming!

"The ZIP Codes of Our Food: A Quick History of Global Cuisines"

Sunday, February 8, 2009
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.



The cuisines that we recognize today as French, German, Chinese, Italian, Mexican, etc. resulted from centuries of influence from other countries and hemispheres. In a beautiful photography show and lecture, syndicated columnist, author, and culinary historian, **CiCi Williamson**, will trace the origins of food and their contribution to the world's modern menu. Come discuss the answers to questions such as: Is pasta Italian? Is sauerkraut German? Is rice Chinese? Is chile con queso Mexican?"



Food and travel writer CiCi Williamson (above) is the author of six cookbooks and more than 1,500 articles in newspapers and magazines. She was the host of an award-winning Virginia PBS-TV series based on her latest book, *The Best of Virginia Farms*,
(continued on page 6)

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 Michael Twitty, "Afro-American Foodways of the Historic Chesapeake Region"
February 8 **CiCi Williamson**, "The ZIP Codes of Our Food: A Quick History of Global Cuisines"
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)

What Happened at the December 14 Meeting?

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Announcements:

 **David Bender** announced that there will be a new policy regarding entry into the building for CHoW meetings. As of January 3, 2009, the center will be changing access to the building. Doors will remain open until 2:30 p.m. (There is a future possibility of it being extended until 2:45 p.m.) At 2:30 p.m., the front doors will be locked and entry into the building will be through a buzzer in the meeting room. January's meeting will be in Room D where there is no buzzer. Please arrive by 2:30 p.m. A suggestion was made to have someone at the front door, Plaza Level, to let people in, which we will do.

 **Felice Caspar** stated that the membership roster will be mailed out in early January.

 **Katherine Livingston** reminded people who have not paid their dues that this is the time to renew membership.

 **Shirley Cherkasky** said that on Tuesday, December 16, 2008, at 9:00 p.m., there will be a program on WETA-TV on the history of coffee. The Third Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History, "Dining Out: Restaurants, Chefs, and Menus," which was to have been held in May 2009 at the Univ. of Michigan's Clements Library, has been postponed. Updates to come.

 **Randy Clarke** mentioned that next month's speaker is Michael Twitty who will speak on "Afro-American Foodways of the Historic Chesapeake Region."

Refreshments:

See below for the long list of wonderful foods brought by CHoW members and guests. You did have to be at the meeting, however, to be able to taste the "festive foods" and hear all the great stories that accompanied each dish.

Program: **Dianne Hennessy King** moderated a three-person panel on "Festive Food: Celebratory and Symbolic Foods From Around the World." **Claudia Kousoulas** spoke about Greek Easter and **Amy Riolo** spoke about "la Befana" as it is celebrated in Rome. In addition, Amy spoke about three Islamic holidays: Eid al Adhu, New Year and Ashoora. According to Amy, there are a lot of variations in spelling of Arabic words because the Arabic language doesn't have written vowels as letters— just consonants with accent marks. Certain vowel sounds can be interchanged when translating. The words are transliterated into English and may appear other ways in additional sources. The third panelist, **Elisabetta Castleman**, spoke of "Winter Holiday Foods and Customs in the Northern Italian trilingual region of Alto Adige and How Some of These Italian and Northern Customs Might Have Made it to America."

Due to newsletter space considerations, we are printing the papers by Claudia Kousoulas and Amy Riolo in this issue and plan to print Elisabetta Castleman's paper in the next issue.

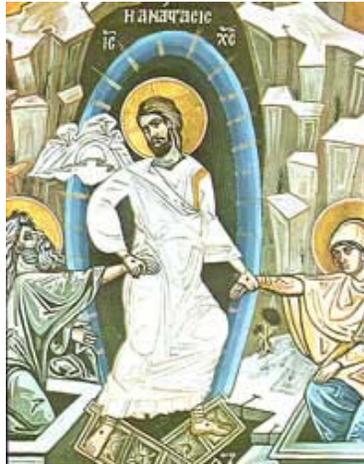
Refreshments:

- **David Bender** brought Dried Beef Log
- **Hanne Caraher** brought Christmas Stollen
- **Kathleen Carrington** brought "Great Balls of Fire," a cheese ball
- **Felice Caspar** brought Larry Bain's Bubie's Haroset with matzoh and horseradish
- **Claire Cassidy** brought Pain d'épices, French medieval spice bread
- **Elisabetta Castleman** brought Ginger Snaps
- **Shirley Cherkasky** brought Spiced Nuts made according to Cathy Gaber's recipe (see *CHoW Line* February 2008)
- **Sheila Crye** brought Crab Fritters
- **Bryna Freyer** brought Hannukah Gelt
- **Laura Gilliam** brought Haggis for a Burns' Night Supper (and played the bagpipe)
- **Audrey Hong** brought a Chestnut Dessert which "has variations in both the oriental and occidental cuisines: Peking Dust (Chinese): The ground chestnut represents the yellow dust of the Mongolian desert. Monte Bianco (Italian): named for one of the tallest peaks in the Alps that border France and Italy. Mont Blanc (French): fame of dessert crosses into France, named for the snow-covered peak it resembles. Chestnut Mound (American): a nod to 'chestnuts roasting on an open fire....'"
- **Wilhelm Jonach** brought Marmor Gugelhupf (Marbled Pound Cake), Mohn Strudel (Poppy Seed Strudel), and Linzer Schnitte
- **Dianne Hennessy King** brought Poached Irish Salmon with Cucumbers à la Scandinavia
- **Claudia Kousoulas** brought Spanakopita
- **Katherine Livingston** brought Janssons Frestelse (Jansson's Temptation), a Swedish holiday dish
- **Andrea Meyerhoff** brought Aunt Louise's Sour Cream Coffee Cake
- **Regee and Ian Newport** brought Pancit Bihon, a rice noodle dish from the Philippines
- **Judy Newton** brought Kugel
- **Clara Raju** brought Portuguese Sweet Bread served at Christmas, Easter and Feast of the Holy Ghost
- **Pat Reber** brought Pumpkin Chips, Pumpkin slices cooked in sugar and juice of oranges until candied, from a recipe by Harriott Pickney Horry, South Carolina, 1770
- **Amy Riolo** brought Lamb and Almond Sambousak
- **Amy Snyder** brought Chocolate Truffles
- **Jacob Thiesen** brought Black-Eye Peas, a New Year's dish

Greek Easter

By Claudia Kousoulas

I should first say that I come to Greek Easter celebration not from growing up with family tradition but by entering a family tradition as an outsider. This may be a good thing, though, as I am more likely to ask questions. My answers come from my reading, my father-in-law, and my own experience of cooking Easter dinner for about 10 years now with my son and husband. My book sources are *Honey from a Weed* by Patience Gray (Prospect Books, UK), *Evia, Tradition and Diet* by Julia Kouki (Kinitro E. Kalem Publications), *Sacred Food* by Elizabeth Luard (Chicago Review Press), and *A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America* by Marilyn Rouvelas (Nea Attiki Press).



Universal Cycles

I think we tend to forget, in our shopping-centric society that focuses the holiday highlight on Christmas gift-giving, that for the Christian church, Easter is the year's prime holiday, celebrating the miracle of the resurrection.

In the Greek Orthodox Church the cycle from Lent to Easter is followed very closely and hasn't been commercialized with chocolate eggs and Easter baskets.

Dates

And though the Eastern church has many doctrinal differences with the Roman church, they both celebrate Easter as a movable feast—they just can't settle on the same calendar. Greeks use the Julian calendar, Romans the Gregorian.

This element of the schism between east and west goes back to the second century, though the First Council of Nicea decided that all Christians would celebrate on the same day. But in true bureaucratic style, the Council left the specifics vague, and each church stuck to its own calendar. As recently as 1997, an attempt was made to align the dates between the two churches, but none of the participants adopted the standard to calculate based on astronomical observations and the division remains.

Greater minds than mine have figured this out and I simply consult the internet for the date each year.

Greek Easter differs from Roman Easter by always placing the celebration after the Jewish Holiday of Passover, recognizing that you couldn't celebrate resurrection until after the last supper.

But the cycles of ritualized feast represented by carnival, lent, and Easter are universal and are used to declare an identity and respond to seasonal availability of food.

• Pesach (crossing over) becomes Pasqua.

The word Easter is speculated to come from the celebration of the feast day of Anglo-Saxon pagan goddess Eostre, a Norse goddess of rebirth whose sacred animal was the hare—thus the Easter bunny.

• Ancient Greek myth of Persephone returning to the earth from the underworld is called forth as a metaphor for the change of seasons, but with her mother Demeter, goddess of agriculture and fertility, a much more basic facing of life and death and the lost paradise of year-round fertility that was imagined to have existed before Demeter and Persephone were separated.

I think what this really shows is that you can name it and tie it to rules, but it is fundamentally a celebration of the earth's return to life after a period of darkness, seeming death.

Lent

Faithful church members mark Easter by closely following the procession of Holy Week from the crucifixion to the resurrection, preceded by a seven week Lent.

In *Honey from a Weed*, Patience Gray is writing on Naxos in 1987. "From Ash Wednesday to Midnight on Easter Saturday, the diet is reduced to haricot beans, lentils, rice, spaghetti, and weeds. (Sounds like an end of feast cabinet to me) "The normal standbys—goat, lamb, pork, cheese, eggs, and olive oil are eliminated." She marvels that on an already restricted island diet they are able "to deprive themselves even further."

In shades of Demeter and Persephone, she continues: "during the summer there had been no difficulty about food..." and recounts a mouthwatering list of fruits, vegetables, fish and meats. I think the phrase "difficulty about food" is very telling. We can always get food these days—it may be expensive or not what we want, but it is always available.

She points out that islanders make the most of summer bounty, but that "fasting is therefore in the nature of things, and feasting punctuates it with joyous excess." She also points out that fasting periods, ritualized by the church "correspond with moments when on Naxos, there was hardly anything to eat."

Lent begins with Clean Monday, which I can't help think answers the urge for spring cleaning and mirrors the preparations in an Orthodox Jewish household for Passover, removing every crumb of leavened bread. In Greece, Clean Monday is a national holiday—in Athens it has become secularized, through programmed arts events throughout the city. Many families have picnics that feature

Lagana, a special bread for that day. It is the last shred of Carnival celebration and an opportunity to literally and figuratively “clean house.” Some people Spring clean, others use it to clean their bodies by beginning a leaner lenten diet, and others to re-orient themselves spiritually.

Fasting and services continue through the seven weeks, marking each step toward the resurrection. Families will follow specific lenten menus without meat—dishes like fasoltha (bean soup), lentil soup, eggplant, vegetables. Seafood is allowed, but products of red-blooded animals, meat as well as milk, cheese, and eggs, are not allowed after the third Sunday of Lent.

Many of the lenten foods are given symbolic meaning—lentils symbolize Mary’s tears, but also reflect a thrifty cleaning of the winter’s stores—dried beans.

As Luard points out, the proscriptions of what is allowed vary by country, region, church, and culture based on what is available. In Greece for example, fish is allowed, well timed to when fish are running in the Mediterranean.

Holy Week is treated as a time of mourning, recreating Jesus’ last steps, with a very strict fast (Gray points out that on Naxos, by this time, nothing much is cooked, beyond a plain bread and a pot of beans). There are parallel preparations for a faithful housewife. Traditionally the red eggs are dyed on Holy Thursday and the dishes for the Easter meal are prepared.

A prosforon, an offering bread, is baked and marked with the sign of the cross, meant to sustain parishoners through the long services. (Kimon, prayer while kneading)

First is the Anastasi (Anesti-risen) meal, served at midnight services on Saturday, to celebrate Christ’s emergence from the tomb. The traditional meal is Mayeritsa, a soup from the lamb’s innards, translated by Kouki as Tripes and Herbs Soup. Kouki describes it as “a very tedious and tiring food” for the housewife to prepare. This is something we’ve never attempted. Our lamb comes with some innards that we spice and grill in a corner of the spit’s coals. Thrift requires one to use every bit of the lamb.

Traditionally the red eggs are served at this meal, the first egg to be eaten after the Lenten ban. The hard-boiled eggs are dyed bright red to symbolize the spilt blood and the promise of eternal life, Luard points out that while eggs, as an animal product, are not allowed during Lent, the chickens keep laying and their output can’t be wasted. Eggs are hardboiled and stored. Many cultures use eggs as a symbol of life and birth.

More faithful families than mine will follow this progression with real feeling. For us, Easter is a celebration of the warm weather with friends and family. Through repetition it has become a tradition, and we have our own secular countdown to Easter that involves ordering the lamb, making a freezer full of spinach and cheese pies, making cookies, buying drinks, and checking to make sure the spit is in working order.

Could hardly be a meal freighted with more symbolism? In fact, when people ask if they can bring something, I always say no, because it is such a symbolic menu.

Lamb

Lamb of God, blood sacrifice mirroring Jesus’ own statements at the last supper, which Luard points out is a way to tame cannibalism. Lamb is also served at Passover, and in the southern Mediterranean, Eastertime is when the first spring lambs are ready for the spit. Gray: “Meat only figured on feast days,” and goes on to say that butchery as we know it, doesn’t figure. “The guilt one feels is an old legacy from which we are saved by the slaughterhouse and which was once expunged by sacrifice.”

In another sign of universality, we get our lamb from a Halal butcher in Rockville, who may not share our faith, but recognizes the value of tradition and always comments when my son and husband pick up the lamb, that this is a fine thing to do together, with a father passing on his expertise to his son.

Red eggs

Eggs hold life. We serve the eggs with our Easter dinner on Sunday, because the tradition of egg cracking is fun for a group of people. Each person takes an egg, and taps large end to large end, eliminating all but one uncracked egg; the one who holds it will have good luck all year.



Luard points out that most northern European countries have traditional breads with egg for this time of year, Germany particularly, where they are symbolic of fertility and perhaps the time to choose a mate.

Kouki describes that the eggs used to be colored with onion skins that the housewife would start to gather at the beginning of Lent. She calls this “romantic” and points out that in Greece the already colored eggs can be bought in shops.

The red eggs also show up in tsoureki, a lightly sweet yeast bread. Usually a family friend makes this for our dinner.

Greens pie

One wouldn’t have a Greek Salad of tomatoes and cukes, since they haven’t had all summer to grow. There is a similarity with greens on the Seder plate, used as a symbol of growth and renewal.

Fresh Cheese

But as the seasons change so do the dietary restrictions. Palm Sunday is also called Cheese Sunday, and is the first time cheese is allowed after Lent. Again, Luard points out that this is when peasants were expected to pay the landowners “cheese rent” when lambing begins and when fresh cheese is available.

In Greece, Bright Week follows Easter Sunday, meant to continue the joy of the resurrection—but in my house, it’s really about spring cleaning.

La Befana, Eid Al Adhu, New Year, and Ashoora

By Amy Riolo

Today I'd like to talk about four holidays about which many people in the United States know little but that are very important to me personally. While they may seem to be very different at first glance, the importance of traditions, good food, and community are at the heart of each one.

La Befana is celebrated yearly in Piazza Navona in Rome during December all the way up until Epiphany. It's like a winter version of a state fair in a piazza with roasting chestnuts, candies, mimes, children's games, inexpensive gifts, etc. While I lived in Rome this was a great time when everyone (who had stopped the evening stroll due to cold weather) got back out onto the streets. We would always run into friends - and it was a time when old and young could celebrate together.

Here's a song about La Befana:

*La Befana vien di notte
Con le scarpe tutte rotte
Col vestito alla romana
Viva, Viva La Befana!*

The English translation is:
*La Befana comes at night
With old and torn shoes
She comes dressed Roman style
Long live the Befana!*

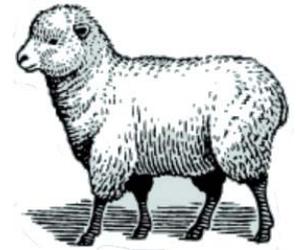


Eid Al Adhu (pronounced "eed aal udha")

This holiday is one I came to know later in life. The two important Eids or "feasts" of the Muslim calendar are the Eid al Fitr, which is a three-day holiday that comes at the end of Ramadan, and the Eid al Adhu, or the Feast of the Sacrifice, a four-day holiday that comes at the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Today I will talk about the latter because it just took place last week. Keep in mind that the Islamic calendar is a lunar one, so each of these holidays changes yearly. Muslims do not have seasonally themed menus, because holidays are not always held in the same season.

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of spending the Eid al Adhu in the guest palace in Mina, Saudi Arabia. Mina is an ancient city where the Prophet Abraham once lived. According to Islamic history (this is the same story as in the old testament except in Islam it is Ishmael instead of Isaac who is about to be sacrificed), one night Abraham dreamed that God ordered him to sacrifice his son Ishmael. Although the thought of sacrificing his own son caused Abraham great stress, he knew he had to obey God's wishes. Ishmael understood his father's sorrow and gave Abraham permission to sacrifice him. When Ishmael was about to be killed, the archangel Gabriel appeared to Abraham and told him that his dream was only a test of his faith and that God did not want him to kill his son. Gabriel ordered Abraham

to sacrifice a sheep instead. Every year Muslims celebrate the Eid al Adhu by sacrificing sheep or other animals to symbolize God's mercy. Unless the person is a farmer or Bedouin, they generally seek the assistance of a butcher. Butcher shops take orders in the weeks leading up to the holidays.



It is a very high tech, sophisticated business nowadays. This is true even in our area. When a sheep is sacrificed, the name of God is pronounced upon it. After it is butchered, its meat is divided into thirds. One third of the meat is given to the poor, another third is given to the extended family of the person who purchased it, and the last third is kept for the immediate family of the person who purchased it. Needless to say, lamb recipes abound at Eid al al Adhu tables. There is also a communal prayer service on the first day of the holiday. Children receive gifts of new clothes, toys, balloons, and candy.

Each Muslim community and culture has their own lamb-based recipes for the Eid al Adhu. In Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries like Kuwait, entire communities congregate to prepare a traditional dish called qouzi, which consists of whole lambs, which are stuffed with chickens that have, in turn, been stuffed with savory rice pilaf. Pit-roasted kid is also popular. Because it is a sin to waste meat, various cuts of the meat are turned into different dishes. Ground lamb meat is transformed into Sambousak which are the Arabic version of Indian Samosas- turnovers. Sometimes made out of bread dough or phyllo, sambousaks are stuffed with ground meat and fried. Lamb and vegetable stews are made out of tougher cuts, legs are roasted on spits, and kabobs are grilled out of steak meat.

In Egypt, the traditional dish of the holiday is called Fattah. In Egypt, Fattah is a layered dish of Egyptian rice, toasted bread and lamb meat with a spicy tomato sauce. The word "Fattah" comes from the Arabic word "Fattat" meaning "well grown girl." In culinary terms it means you are "growing" or as we say in English "stretching" a dish by adding less expensive ingredients like rice and bread. In Lebanon and Syria, Fattah is topped with yogurt instead of rice and tomato sauce. This dish is said to have been Napoleon's favorite while he was in Egypt from 1798-1801. Beef and goats can also be sacrificed. Depending upon the weight and cost of the animal, sometimes multiple families share a larger animal like a cow. Many Egyptians now prefer beef to lamb and this has become typical. It's also important to note that while the act of sacrificing animals seems so ancient and ritualistic, it is still very important part of charity in the Middle East upon which many poor families depend.

Web Sites, Blogs and Podcasts



www.sil.si.edu/SILPublications/Online-Exhibitions/search.htm

This **Smithsonian Institution Libraries** Web site features links to online exhibitions that have been created by libraries, archives, and historical societies, as well as to museum online exhibitions with a significant focus on library and archival materials. The scope is international and multi-lingual.

The online exhibitions included in this guide draw their inspiration and content primarily from library and archival materials, including, for example: printed books, book illustrations, manuscripts, photographs, printed ephemera, posters, archival sound and video recordings, artist's books, and the book arts (engraving, marbling, and bookbinding, etc.). Although many of these online exhibitions were originally created to accompany shows held in the exhibition galleries of their institutions, a growing number exist in digital format only.

The online exhibitions in this guide are keyword-searchable by title, subject, and the name of the sponsoring institution. A list of instructions and tips for searching will be provided. In order to keep *Library and Archival Exhibitions on the Web* reasonably focused and of manageable size for one person to maintain, its scope has necessarily been limited to a listing of online exhibitions of library and archival materials sponsored by non-commercial institutions.

Regretfully, it is not possible to include all manner of library and archival digital projects in this list. Online collections and electronic finding aids have typically been omitted, except for those that include significant exhibition-like elements, such as a selective theme and a contextualized narrative for the featured objects and artifacts. Also omitted are notices publicizing exhibitions that are not themselves online exhibitions, and commercial and personal web sites.

Disclaimer: This list of online exhibitions is provided as a public service of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries. The Smithsonian Institution Libraries is responsible only for the content of its own online exhibitions.

In years past, we have paid to have animals sacrificed for holidays. We distribute the meat among my husband's family and the poor in the community. Many of the people were so happy to receive the meat (which is well loved in Egyptian culture and extremely expensive) that they begin asking God to grant us Special blessings, etc. One lady even came to my mother-in-law's home to meet me and kissed my mother-in-law's hand because the meat meant so much to her family. In wealthy Gulf countries, the rich distribute the meat among poor immigrants and export a large amount to impoverished countries. Coincidentally, Islamic New Year or the 1st of Muharram will be celebrated on December 29 this year. This is a relatively low-key holiday compared to Jewish and Christian New Year celebrations. The main focus during this holiday is reflecting on the past and looking for the future. North African Muslims sometimes eat a chicken- pasta- tomato casserole which North African Jews eat for the Sabbath.

Muslims will also celebrate Ashoora on January 7, which coincides with Epiphany this year. The tenth day of Muharam, the first month of the Islamic calendar is known as Ashoora (sometimes spelled Ashura in English). Ashoora is a special day to Egyptian Jews, Christians, and Muslims (although it is remembered by each group on different dates). Muslims are encouraged to fast on Ashoora because the holiday commemorates God saving the Prophet Moses and the Jewish people from the tyranny of Pharaoh.

The Prophet Mohamed recommended that Muslims fast the day before or the day after Ashoora as well. After the fast, families congregate for a communal meal. A traditional wheat pudding, also known as ashoora, is eaten in most Muslim countries on this date.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me anytime. Happy Holidays!

(Speaker bio, continued from page 1)

a cookbook, tour book and history reference. Before concentrating on book writing, she wrote a syndicated weekly food column for 22 years in 160 newspapers across the country. CiCi has a B.S. in home economics from the University of Maryland, and has created over 2,000 original recipes for publication. She has served as an officer of many culinary associations including president of the prestigious 1,500-member Les Dames d'Escoffier International, a board member of the Association of Food Journalists, and president of Home Economists in Business, and is a charter member of the Culinary Historians of Washington. As a travel writer and photographer, she has visited all seven continents, more than 90 countries and all 50 U.S. states. She especially loves photographing farmers markets in foreign countries. But the McLean, Virginia, resident always returns home thinking her state with its Atlantic coast beaches, Chesapeake Bay peninsulas, Appalachian highlands and Blue Ridge Mountains is the most beautiful and diverse.