

CHOW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

March 2008

Volume XII, Number 6

Field Trip Notes

We encourage everyone to take Metro. The closest stop is **Smithsonian**, on the Orange/Blue Line.

Refreshments: Please do NOT bring food or beverages to this meeting at the Smithsonian.

As announced at the February meeting, some CHoW members plan to meet at Mitsitam Café, the restaurant in the Museum of the American Indian at noon for lunch, so if you plan to do the same, look for some familiar faces.

The museum has storage lockers, available for a 25 cent returnable fee in the ground level lobby.

NMAFA closes at 5:30 p.m.

Websites for the Museum and Library:

www.nmafa.si.edu/index2.html

www.sil.si.edu/Libraries/nmafa/

Two additional websites of interest:

www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/africa/cuvl/cooking.html

<http://library.stanford.edu/africa/africanrecipes.html>

March 9 Field Trip and Meeting 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

African Food through Books & Art: A Field Trip to the Warren Robbins Library of African Art at the National Museum of African Art

This is a chance to explore the holdings of an internationally known reference library. The discussion will be led by Janet Stanley, Smithsonian librarian since 1979. Ms. Stanley lived in Nigeria and traveled extensively in Ethiopia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Bryna Freyer, curator of collections and a CHoW member, will lead a tour of the collection. Touchable food-related objects from the education and curatorial departments will also be in the library.

Please arrive at the NMAFA main entrance between 2:00 to 2:20 p.m. to go through Smithsonian security (no food, beverages or sharp objects, please!). Then proceed directly to the Administrative Area located downstairs on the 2nd Floor. This is not a public space. Take the stairs or elevator down and follow signs – you will be admitted through the double doors which lead to the Library.

The CHoW meeting will begin promptly at 2:30 p.m., followed by the NMAFA program and 30-minute tour. Light refreshments will be served nearby. (See page 6 for photos.)



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 Frances Hern of Monticello" (see page 2)
- February 10 **Brenda Rhodes Miller**, "If You Don't Want Grits, Why'd You Order Breakfast? Church Ladies as Custodians of Culture and Tradition."
- 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. "Good Food for Bad Times"
- May 18 (Note: Not the second Sunday.) "What Made You Interested in Culinary History?"

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C. (CHoW/DC) founded in 1996, is an informal, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to the study of the history of foodstuffs, cuisines, and culinary customs, both historical and contemporary, from all parts of the world.

www.chowdc.org

What Happened at the February 10 Meeting?

The Meeting was brought to order by Randy Clarke, Vice-President, at 2:30 p.m.

1. Whatzits: Kay Nelson brought in a rubber white tube which was a garlic smasher.
2. Introductions by audience members
3. Announcements: Bryna Freyer announced that the March 9 meeting would be a field trip at the National Museum of African Art at 2:30 p.m. We will be looking at food related books and hands-on objects. Because it is in a secure area, please allow for extra time to get there. Food and beverages are not allowed. Laura Gilliam said that a group of CHoW members will be meeting at noon at the Native American Museum cafeteria for lunch. Meet across from the waterfall.
4. Refreshments: Claudia Kousoulas brought Corn Muffins from *Church Ladies Celestial Suppers and Sensible Advice*. Janet Danzinger brought Carrot Cake. Phyllis Krochmal brought Southern Corn Bread. Clara Raju brought Marshmallow Treats from the *Church Ladies Divine Desserts*.

A vote was taken on the theme for April's Cooperative Dinner. The people who nominated the theme gave an explanation why they chose the topic.

The results are:

Recipes from Famous Hotels, Inns and Bed & Breakfasts	10
Good Foods for Bad Times	12
Symbolic Foods	5
Victorian Era	0
Dishes made with Potatoes	3
Recipes from White House/Presidents	1
Foods of Africa	0
Marion Harland	0
James Beard	1
Foods with Funny Names	1

A vote was also taken on a time change for the community dinner. Three people voted for the 3 to 5 p.m. change. The rest voted for the 4-6pm. It will be held from 4 to 6 p.m.

The nominating committee was introduced: Kari Barrett (Chairperson), Francine Berkowitz and Clara Raju. Elections will be in May. If you are interested in a Board position, contact someone on the board to get more information.

CiCi Williamson announced that the Les Dames d'Escoffier chapter of Washington, D.C. will be holding an event with over 40 speakers in 16 sessions. Among the speakers are CHoW members **Shirley Cherkasky, Dianne Hennessy King, Lisa Cherkasky, Connie Hay, Sheilah Kaufman, Joan Nathan, Amy Riolo, Goody Solomon** and herself. Nathalie Dupree will be the keynote speaker. Brochures were handed out at the meeting.

Speaker: Brenda Rhodes Miller



Randy (at left) introduced the speaker Brenda Rhodes Miller. Ms. Miller is a non-profit executive director and has written food-focused newspaper and magazine articles as well as presented on such subjects as "Food and Family," "Preserving Family Traditions with Recipes," and "The Role of Hospitality in African American Culture." She has published two cookbooks and a novel. Currently she is working on a murder mystery. She earned her graduate degree in

Advertising from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. She is married to a Baptist minister. Her talk today is titled, "If You Don't Want Grits, Why'd You Order Breakfast? Church Ladies as Custodians of Culture and Tradition."

Photos by Dianne Hennessy King

Ms. Miller began her talk by asking for volunteers to put on items that proper Church Ladies would wear or own. The items that were displayed were: funeral hat, gloves, handkerchiefs, purse, wax paper, suitcase full of aprons and a canister of candy. The unique aprons were distributed to the male and female members of the audience to wear. Ms. Miller said that Church Ladies and certain things go together.



Church Ladies are models of decorum, of high virtues, kind *and* make good pound cake. When she first was thinking of writing a cookbook, her topic was initially on maiden ladies and the making of teacakes. But there was not enough variety in recipes to necessitate a cookbook. However, she wanted to write about women who were committed to their community *and* who could bake. Church Ladies filled these requirements. She met with many ladies who had great stories and recipes. Many of the recipes had to be re-created because they had never been written down. Recipes were passed on to other Church Ladies who were considered friends and who wouldn't "misuse" the recipe. When it came time to test the recipes given to Ms. Miller, many didn't work out. She then had to go to the donors' homes and measure the ingredients that went into the recipes. *(Continued on page 3)*

(Continued from page 2)

Ms. Miller learned that teaching is by example. She observed that in the Protestant churches, Church Ladies never let their backs touch the pew, they clasped their hands and their ankles were always crossed. Another lesson learned was that a dish was never returned empty. Church Ladies are also very tolerant and forgiving of short comings.



Photo by Dianne Hennessy King

Ms. Miller read an excerpt from her book on clothes that Church Ladies wear to church. They have standards on what should be worn. There is always some formality in what to wear. Those who deviate from the standards are frowned upon and at times corrected (i.e., scarf given to cover bare shoulders).

At the conclusion of the talk, Ms. Miller graciously answered numerous questions from the audience. Much information was given in her answers to the questions. Congregations are learning to prepare healthier food. The younger church ladies are adapting traditions and culture of the Protestant Church to modern times. There is a hierarchy in cooking for dinners. In many Baptist Churches there is a culinary ministry that runs the cooking events. Ms. Miller asserted, to the applause of everyone attending the meeting, that Church Ladies would indeed continue to exist and continue to help their congregations.

Respectfully submitted,
Clara Raju
Recording Secretary

Welcome, New Members!

Karen Anthony. Interest: Ethnic foods.
Margie Gibson. Interest: Food and culture.
Anne Whitaker. Interests: Southern cuisine history, manuscripts, singular or hotel chef, teacher.

NOTE: David Bender sent this note a few days after Professor Leni Sorensen's talk at the January 13 CHoW Meeting.

During the Question and Answer portion of "*Cooks and Slaves: Edith Fossett and Frances Hern of Monticello*," speaker Leni Sorensen was asked about "the roots and evolution of foodways at President Jefferson's home." Later I recalled passages from James E. McWilliams' *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America*. McWilliams writes that, "America's food habits are a story about adaptation." He explores the conflict and collaboration among Native Americans, settlers and slaves, describing how each affected the evolution of our regional foodways.

Slaves brought from West Africa to the West Indies and then to the southern colonies encountered culinary traditions which forced them to adapt to the soil of the New World, often following the lead of Native Americans who relied on cassava, beans, sweet potatoes, roots, berries, fish, and shellfish for their sustenance. Slaves become farmers, hunters, and fishermen as they lived in the New World. Anyone who has not read McWilliams' book and wants to explore Professor Sorensen's lecture in further detail, will find his book "must reading."

CHoW Board Meeting **February 10, 2008**

Below is a condensed version of Clara Raju's minutes of the Board meeting. Members are always welcome to attend any CHoW Board meeting.

- 1. Treasurer's Report:** \$135 was spent for room rental and \$210 was taken in from dues. We are \$165 ahead of where we were this time last year and have already taken in \$255 more dues than in 2006-07. As of 02/10/2008 the bank balance was \$5050.44.
- 2. Membership:** Felice has considered printing the newsletter on completely recycled paper. One concern is that the pictures would not be as clear and there is some possibility of bleeding occurring. We have been using partially recycled paper.
- 3. Meetings:** The Board members discussed the planning and logistics of the March, April and May meetings.
- 4. Summer Field Trip** – Laura will look into arranging a summer field trip.
- 5. Publicity:** CiCi Williamson asked the Board to have CHoW brochures available for the Les Dames d'Escoffier event in March. She will need about 300. Changes were suggested to improve the existing brochure.
- 6. Website:** We need more pictures of Whatzits before putting them on the website. Members can continue to bring past Whatzits to any future meetings so that the objects can be photographed for the website.
- 7. Nominating Committee** – The new nominating committee includes Kari Barrett (Chairperson), Francine Berkowitz and Clara Raju.

Upcoming Events

CHoW Cooperative Supper

April 13, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Old Town Alexandria
“Good Food for Bad Times”

The address and directions for our annual potluck will be in the next issue of *CHoWLine*. Shirley Cherkasky notes that there are several food warming options available: a 4-burner stove, an oven, a microwave and several electrical outlets.

CHoW Meeting

May 18, 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

“What Made You Interested in Culinary History?”

Come prepared to share for a few minutes your story of how you became interested in culinary history. One of the many pleasures of CHoW is that members come from so many backgrounds and have such diverse interests.

Peacock-Harper Culinary History Friends Group

Friday, March 28, 2008, Noon

“Civil War Rations: A Test of Endurance”

Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr. with Chef Billie Raper

Holiday Inn University

900 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA

Cost: \$30 (tax & gratuity included, plus donation to Peacock-Harper)

(For more information, see listing in February *CHoWLine* or go to www.culinarycollection.org.)

Friday, May 23, 2008, 9:30 a.m.

“The Romance of Virginia Ham: History and Production”

with Sam W. Edwards, III, Owner of Edwards’ Virginia Hams, producer of highly renowned Virginia hams

Edwards’ Virginia Hams

11455 Rolfe Highway, Surry, VA

Enjoy learning about Sam Edwards’s Virginia hams and the history of Virginia ham. Tour his Virginia ham processing facility in Surry, Virginia, and see the production techniques used in the creation of Virginia’s wonderful hams. On the evening prior to Mr. Edwards’s talk and tour, savor a dinner at the King’s Arms Tavern and a restful night at the Hospitality House in Colonial Williamsburg. Cross the James River on the ferry that started Mr. Edwards’ grandfather in the Virginia ham business. Sam’s grandmother prepared ham biscuits for the passengers, and so popular were these morsels that the Edwards’ Virginia ham business grew into the business that it is today. Lunch will be at the Surrey House in Surry after the talk and tour. Fees are separate for the various activities. See website below for costs. **Pre-registration required.**

Deadline: April 22, 2008. To register, go to www.culinarycollection.org or <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/Culinary>

Les Dames d’Escoffier Washington, D.C. Chapter presents

Celebrating FOOD! Cooking * Careers * Communications

Saturday, March 8, 2008, 9:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.

The Universities at Shady Grove, Rockville, Maryland.

More than 40 Speakers in 16 sessions, Hands-on Cooking Classes!

Fabulous Food Product EXPO! (For more information, see listing in

February *CHoWLine*; go to www.lesdamesdc.org; or call 703-533-0066.)

George Mason University

March 28, “All Manner of Useful Goods: Household Necessities and Craftsmanship in Early America, 1750-1850.”

This symposium will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia. Cost: \$65. Must register by March 21.

For information and registration forms, e-mail susan.clark@fairfaxcounty.gov or phone Museum Collections at 703-631-1429.

“Craftsmanship and hand-crafted objects necessary to the daily running of a household ... Presentations, costumed interpretations and tabletop exhibits examine types of trades, how they operated and economic factors impacting American craft; the processes of ceramic and metal production; and utilitarian household goods of redware and stoneware, iron, copper and base metals, cooperage, basketry and other items.”

The Spring Lecture Series at the Riversdale House Mansion

4811 Riverdale Rd., Riverdale Park, Md 20737
(301) 864-0420, TTY (301) 454-4472

Tuesday, March 11, 7:00 p.m.

“Fighting Old Nep: The Food Culture of Enslaved Afro-Marylanders”

Michael Twitty, Director of Interpretation for the Menare Foundations. Fee: Free, made possible by a grant from the Maryland Humanities Council

Tuesday, March 18, 1:00 p.m.

“Julia Child: America’s Favorite Chef”

The Riversdale Historical Society and Campus Club of the University of Maryland are co-hosting “Julia Child, America’s Favorite Chef.” This play is a part of the Maryland Humanities Council “America by Food: Community Conversations” program. In this costumed living history presentation, Mary Ann Jung portrays Julia Child. There is no admission fee, but reservations are required. RSVP Alice Tyler (301) 935-5279 or Barbara Glover (301) 927-4182 by March 11. www.pgparcs.com/places/eleganthistoric/riversdale_events.html#events

BOOK REVIEW

The Scavenger's Guide to Haute Cuisine

By Steve Rinella
Miramax, 2006
\$23.95, cloth
318 pages

Miramax, 2007
\$13.95, paperback
336 pages

Reviewed by
Jane Mengershauser

What most don't know about Escoffier (and perhaps don't need to know) can be found in the pages of *The Scavenger's Guide to Haute Cuisine* by Steven Rinella.

In a most authoritative but amusing tome, the author reveals that Escoffier, king of chefs and chef of kings, dreamed-up and cooked-up some outrageous and not always tantalizing dishes. Who amongst us would have their mouth water at mention of "giblets of pigeon in puff pastry"? Mere mention of Escoffier's Pêche Melba can get one's taste buds activated. But how about skewered elk liver with duxelles, or bladder of boar stuffed with wild duck? Never!

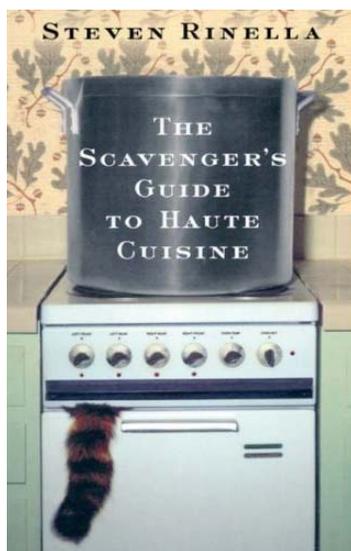
Rinella, somewhat of a *rara avis* himself, went on a year-long journey across America searching for bizarre and often esoteric ingredients mentioned in *Le Guide Culinaire*, Escoffier's 1903 masterpiece. Among them, are saddle of antelope and some fish semen for making a sauce.

In his hilarious and ribald travels, the author, sportsman-cum-cook, collected and preserved fish, fowl and animals necessary for the forty-five course feast described in *Le Guide* and then, albeit months later, prepared, cooked and served the culinary extravaganza to his "outdoorsy" friends.

It has been said that Rinella's book is a walk on the wild side of hunting and gathering. Jim Harrison states on the back cover that "It's sure to repel a few professional food sissies but attract many more with sheer in-your-face energy and storytelling."

The Scavenger's Guide to Haute Cuisine has been mentioned and reviewed widely since publication. Perhaps the San Diego Union said it best: "It's a stomach-turner as well as a page-turner."

When choosing a recipe from *Le Guide Culinaire*, I'll stick with Pêche Melba. How about you?



On the Bookshelf

In early January, Katherine Livingston sent *CHoWLine* the following notes on some books she saw displayed and/or advertised at the American Historical Association meeting.

Arranging the Meal: A History of Table Service in France. Jean Louis Flandrin. Foreword by Beatrice Fisk. University of California Press. \$34.95. California Studies in Food and Culture. *An account of how the order and manner in which dishes are presented have changed over recent centuries, as related to socioeconomic and cultural factors.*

Citrus: A History. Pierre Laszlo. University of Chicago Press. \$25. *Sometime CHoW speaker Laszlo ranges broadly over the career of these fruits, recounting how the three "true species" (citron, pummelo, and mandarin) developed into the many we know today as they spread from Asia through the Mediterranean to the New World.*

Danish Cookbooks: Domesticity and National Identity, 1616-1901. Carol Gold. University of Washington Press. Paper, \$24.95. *The author (according to the publisher) uses cookbooks to "trace the growth of a bourgeois consciousness, the development of domesticity and gendered spheres, and the evolution of nationalism and a specific Danish identity."*

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry (Luke 12:19): Food and Wine in Byzantium. Leslie Brubaker and Kalloroe Lenardou, Eds. Ashgate. \$99.95. *Includes 16 papers on food production, processing, and preservation, modes of dining, food in relation to ideology and religion, and exportation of food and wine.*

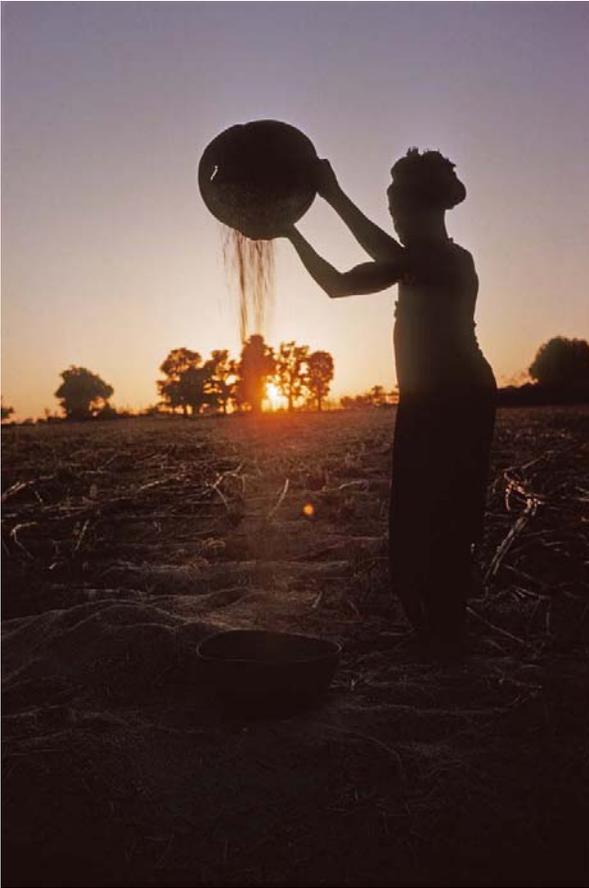
Food: The History of Taste. Paul Freedman, Ed. University of California Press. \$39.95. California Studies in Food and Culture. *Essays, with many color illustrations, by French, German, Belgian, British, and American historians exploring culinary matters in classical antiquity, China, Islamic civilizations, medieval and post-Renaissance Europe, and the New World to the present day.*

Foodways. John T. Edge, Ed. Vol. 7 of *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. University of North Carolina Press. \$39.95; paper, \$19.95. *Short essays on some 150 topics, including particular foods and beverages, well-known cooks and restaurants, and broader cultural topics relevant to cuisine in the southern states.*

A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America. James E. McWilliams. Columbia University Press. Paper, \$18.95. *Arts and Traditions of the Table: Perspectives on Culinary History. New in paperback, an account of food production, distribution, and cuisine in Colonial America.*

The Spice Route: A History. John Key. University of California Press. Paper, \$16.95. California Studies in Food and Culture. *Also new in paperback, the story of three millennia of trade in these valuable commodities.*

National Museum of African Art Smithsonian Institution



Habe woman is winnowing threshed millet. (above)

Barhin village, near Katsina, Nigeria.

Hausa peoples, Nigeria.
Photograph by Eliot Elisofon, 1959.

EEPA EECL 7841
Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives
National Museum of African Art

Ghanaian woman at market selling mangos, Ghana. (right)

Photograph by Eliot Elisofon, 1970.

EEPA EECL 8482
Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution



Ceremonial ladle (right)

Wee peoples, Liberia
Côte d'Ivoire
Late 19th to mid-20th century
Wood, metal, oil patina
H x W x D: 62.5 x 16.5 x 8.5 cm
(24 5/8 x 6 1/2 x 3 3/8 in.)
Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company
2005-6-58
Photograph by Franko Khoury
National Museum of African Art
Smithsonian Institution



Female figure pounding manioc (right)

Chokwe peoples, Angola
Early 20th century
Wood, brass tacks, glass beads, plant fiber, oil
H x W x D: 32.5 x 10.5 x 14.5 cm
(12 13/16 x 4 1/8 x 5 11/16 in.)
Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company
2005-6-116
Photograph by Franko Khoury
National Museum of African Art,
Smithsonian Institution

