COOPERATIVE SUPPER

Indigenous Pre-contact New World Foods

Sunday, April 11, 2010
4:00 to 6:00 p.m. (Note time change)

Alexandria House
400 Madison Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

CHoW will be holding its annual Cooperative Supper on Sunday afternoon, April 11. This dinner is an informal potluck where you have a chance to talk to people, view the skyline from high above Alexandria, and eat great-tasting historic recipes.

The winning culinary history dining theme chosen at the March 14 meeting was “Indigenous Pre-contact New World Foods. Please see pages 6 and 8 for research ideas.

On April 11, everyone brings a prepared recipe to share that is somehow related to our chosen theme.

For new members or those who were unable to attend previous suppers, in the ChoW Line newsletters below there are ideas, photos and descriptions of food brought to some of our recent potlucks based on various culinary history themes:


Directions to Alexandria House are on page 8. To see an extensive list of indigenous foods and references, see page 5.
What Happened at the March 14 Meeting?

**GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

President Katherine Livingston called the meeting to order at about 2:40 p.m. Approximately 45 people were present.

A vote was taken for the theme for the April Cooperative supper. “Indigenous Pre-contact New World Food” won with 18 votes. The dinner will be held on April 11 in Alexandria, Virginia. See page 1 for details.

We have an active CHoW Board nominating committee: Bryna Freyer, Katy Hayes and Francine Berkowitz. The committee will present its slate at the April meeting and will also ask for nominations from the floor. Felice Caspar has reached the term limit for Membership Secretary. Send your suggestions for Board nominations to Francine at fcb@si.edu. The election will take place in May.

Katherine Livingston and Shirley Cherkasky announced a new addition sent to the CHoW Culinary History Collection, housed at the Smithsonian American History Museum. Gina Jenkins procured the last 25 of a 56 volume Mexican regional culinary booklet series, Cocina Indigena y Popular, published by La Direcccion General de Culturas Populares del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes. A few years ago, Gina brought back from Mexico City about half of the series of booklets based on the culinary research on various communities throughout Mexico, such as Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Chiaapas.

**Program:** Vice President CiCi Williamson introduced today’s speaker, Dr. Frederick Czarra. His talk was based on his book *Spices: A Global History.*

**Refreshments:**
- Francine Berkowitz brought Dates from Iran that she had bought in India the previous week.
- Felice Caspar brought Spiced Garbanzo Beans.
- Elisabetta Castleton brought Corn Muffins with Jalapeno peppers and onions.
- Kari Barrett brought Spiced Pecans.
- Claire Cassidy brought Spicy Green Pea Salad (blanched frozen peas, celery, cumin, fennel, cayenne, salt, sesame seeds, toasted sesame oil, cider vinegar).
- Zina Pisarko brought Bird’s Milk (Polish Marshmallow Candy), Hummus and Pita chips, and a “Dark & Stormy” highly seasoned Bundt cake from Dupont Farmer’s Market.
- Clara Raju brought Batata Nu Shaak (Spiced Potatoes).

Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. by President Livingston.

Respectfully submitted by Clara Raju for absent David Bender, Recording Secretary.

**Keep Those Refreshments Coming!**

Fred Czarra autographs his books for Catherine Pressler, and Quentin Looney. *Photo by CiCi*

Fred Czarra, an international education consultant, is an Adjunct Professor of World Geography and World History at St. Mary’s College of Maryland. He is the author or co-author of seven books. He based his talk on his most recent book, *Spices: A Global History.* Professor Czarra grew up in Washington, D.C. where his family owned a food market. By the 1970s in Manhattan, he was already interested in spices and how they had changed the world. He decided that food and its culture were a good way to teach children about history, geography, and the world.

His talk, accompanied by beautiful images, covered five eras of the history of spices: in the ancient world, the medieval world, the age of exploration, the age of industrialization, and the twentieth century and beyond. Czarra recounted all sorts of stories such as ones about Roman routes, the East Indian trade, the Crusades, the economic dominance of the Portuguese and the Dutch, and stories about adventurers such as the Moroccan Ibn Battuta (1304-1368/1377) and Admiral Zheng He with his Chinese armada in the early 1400s.

In addition to telling about the several thousand-years-old history of the spice trade, Czarra also devoted part of his presentation to what he refers to as “The Premier Spices,” which are the five following ones: cinnamon, clove, chili pepper, nutmeg and mace, and pepper. Each spice, as did others, had a part in bringing cultures together, in ways sometimes peaceful and sometimes not; each stimulated globalization of trade; and each changed the way people ate as the spices moved from one part of the world to another.

—Dianne Hennessy King
CHoW Members View Rare Cookbooks at Library of Congress

By CiCi Williamson  
CHoW Vice President

Thanks to Shirley Cherkasky’s arrangements with Mark Dimunation, Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division since 1998, about two dozen CHoW members were privileged to view more than 30 of the Library of Congress’ rare cookbooks, including the first one ever printed.

On Thursday, March 4, we were escorted to the handsome Rosenwald Room located upstairs in the Thomas Jefferson Building, which was modeled after the Beaux Arts Paris Opera House in France. Our co-host was Dan De Simone, Curator of the Rosenwald Room. Formerly the Woodrow Wilson Library, the Lessing J. Rosenwald Room is named for this bibliophile, businessman, philanthropist, and former chairman of the board of Sears from 1910 to 1925. The Rosenwald estate gave 28,000 items to the Library of Congress in the early 1980s.

The books on display were mainly from two collections in the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. The 4,346-volume gastronomic Bitting Collection was amassed by Katherine Golden Bitting (1868-1937), a food chemist for the Department of Agriculture and the American Canners Association and author of nearly fifty pamphlets and articles on food preservation and related topics.

The Bitting Collection contains numerous English and American publications on food preparation from the 18th and 19th centuries and a sampling of notable French, German, and Italian works. American regional cooking is well-documented. We viewed the treasure of the collection: a mid-15th century Italian manuscript entitled Libro de arte coquinaria of Maestro Martino, a source for the earliest printed cookbook, Bartolomeo Platina’s De Honesta Voluptate (ca. 1475).

Also from the Bitting Collection, we saw an original 1747 copy of Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy by Hannah Glasse; The Forme of Cury, 1390, by Samuel Pegge, printed by J. Nicols in 1780; an early Tudor cookbook, Sir Thomas Elyot’s Castel of Health; a Japanese text on carving, Ryori Shitsuke-sho (Manner of Cookery), 1642(?); Whole Duty of a Woman or a Guide to the Female Sex, from the age of sixteen to sixty. London (1735); and Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin’s Physiologie du gout (1852).

The Elizabeth Robbins Pennell Collection provided four books in the display. Writing extensively on gastronomy, Elizabeth Pennell (1855-1936) amassed a large collection of European cookbooks. My Cookery Books (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903) is a personal account of her cooking activities and describes many of the 433 volumes on cookery from the Pennell bequest.

Left to right: Mark Dimunation, Chief, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, LoC, with Dan DeSimone, Rosenwald Room Curator, and CHoW Treasurer Bruce Reynolds.
The Pennell collection is strongest in French and Italian cookbooks from the 16th through 18th centuries and includes a fully illustrated edition of Bartolomeo Scappi’s *Opera* (Venice: 1574). The culinary treatise, which makes the earliest mention of mozzarella, contains more than 1,000 recipes, numerous menus, and – exceptional at this period – woodcuts illustrating the kitchen, cooks at work, utensils and meal service.

Other books we viewed from this collection were *The queen-like closet, or, Rich cabinet* by Hannah Woolley (1672); *The accomplisht cook* by Robert May (1588), which includes a pastry ship with marzipan guns, pastry cattle, and pies filled with frogs and birds; and *Cours gastronomique, ou, Les diners de Manant-ville* by Charles-Louis Cadet de Gassicourt (1809). The latter contains a magnificent, foldout, gastronomic map of France, the first in book form.

Both the Katherine Golden Bitting Collection on Gastronomy and Elizabeth Robins Pennell Collection are primarily concerned with gastronomy and the history of the kitchen and, between them, have amassed several thousand European and American imprints.

More “firsts” on display from the Rare Book and Special Collections Division included the first original Mexican cookbook, *Novisimo arte de cocina o escelente coleccion de las mejores receta* by Manuel N. de la Vega (1845); and the first cookbook of American authorship to be printed in the U.S., *American Cookery* by Amelia Simmons (1796).

Related to our CHoW Cooperative Supper, the author adapts numerous traditional recipes by substituting native American ingredients, such as corn, squash, and pumpkin, printed here for the first time. Simmon’s “Pumpkin Pudding,” baked in a crust, is the basis for the classic American pumpkin pie.

The entire bibliography of rare cookbooks viewed during this visit will be reprinted in *CHoW Line*.

**LOCATION**
The Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress
10 First Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C.
Shirley Cherkasky provided this list from the Smithsonian’s American History 1991 conference, “Good As Gold: Foods the Americas Gave the World.”

**Fruits:**
- atemoya
- avocado
- berries: blueberries, highbush and lowbush
- Cape gooseberry
- cranberry
- huckleberry
- Juneberry (serviceberry)
- raspberries, American red and American black
- strawberry
- cassabanana
- ceriman
- cherimoya
- cherries
- chokecherry
- pin cherry
- rum cherry
- custard apple
- feijoa (pineapple guava)
- granadillas, giant and sweet
- grapes (American varieties: Concord, scuppernong and others)
- guanabana (soursop)
- guava
- maney
- mamey sapote
- naranjilla
- papaya
- passion fruit
- pepino (melon pear)
- pawpaw
- persimmon, American
- pineapple
- plums (American, beach)
- sapodilla
- sugar apple (sweetsop)
- tamarillo (tree tomato)
- white sapote

**Grains and Grasses**
- amaranth
- corn, popcorn
- quinoa
- wild rice

**Legumes**
- beans: All beans, except fava, soy, mung, garbanzo and broad beans, are American in origin.
- peanuts

**Roots and Tubers**
- arrowroot
- groundnuts
- Jerusalem artichokes
- jicama
- malanga (yautia)
- oca
- potatoes
- sweet potatoes (North American, boniato)
- yuca (tapioca, cassava, manioc)

**Vegetables**
- capsicums (bell and other sweet peppers, chili peppers and pimento)
- chayote
- gherkins (Jamaica cucumbers)
- pokeweed
- pumpkins
- ramps
- squashes
  - **winter**: Hubbard, buttercup, winter crookneck, butternut, acorn, kabocha, golden nugget, calabaza
  - **summer**: spaghetti, yellow crookneck, zucchini and patty pan
- tomatillo
- tomato

**Cacti**
- cactus pear (prickly pear)
- nopales (cactus pads)

**Nuts**
- black walnut
- Brazil nut
- butternut, cashew
- hickory nut
- pecan

**Seeds**
- pumpkin
- sunflower

**Spices, Flavorings, and Extracts**
- allspice
- capsicums (chili peppers)
- cayenne, paprika
- cassareep
- chocolate, cocoa
- maple syrup and sugar
- sarsaparilla extract
- sassafras leaves
- spicebush
- vanilla

**Poultry**
- turkey

Claire Cassidy, who is a nutritional anthropologist, sent these references:

- Mitsitam restaurant at the Amerocan Indian Museum is a source of inspiration, and they may have published a cookbook—I don’t know, but if they haven’t, they should!

**Books from my shelf:**
- The recipe books are old, but similar books must be available today, and these might be available used…. You can see by the dates when I stopped collecting and stopped teaching:

**Traditional Plant Foods of Canadian Indigenous Peoples, Nutrition, Botany and Use.** Harriet Kuhnlein, and Nancy Turner. Gordon and Breach, 1991. This is a technical book, dense, and fascinating. No recipes, but with food names and uses you can figure one out.


A few of Claire’s indigenous options:

**Mammals:** buffalo, deer, elk, raccoon, beaver, squirrel, porcupine, rabbit, woodchuck

**Sea creatures:** turtle, drumfish, buffalo fish, other fishes, snails, mussels, clams, abalone, halibut, red snapper, seaweed

**Poultry** goose, duck, swan, crane, heron, passenger pigeon

Your own research might uncover other indigenous foods you would like to prepare for our Cooperative Supper.
Culinary Humor

By Tom Weiland

It is St. Patrick’s day as I write this, so let’s look at an Irish writer: Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).

A forerunner in his time, Swift had satirical thoughts on many subjects, not the least of which were food and drink, oft mixed with politics and human vice. Here is a sampling:

’Tis an old maxim in the schools,
That flattery’s the food of fools;
Yet now and then your men of wit
Will condescend to take a bit.--”Cadenus and Vanessa” (1713)

Poor Nations are hungry, and rich Nations are proud, and Pride and Hunger will ever be at Variance.
--Gulliver’s Travels (1726)

And he gave it for his opinion, that whosoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together.
--Gulliver’s Travels (1726)

Finally, one-liners from “Polite Conversation” (ca. 1738)

She watches him, as a cat would watch a mouse.
He was a bold man that first ate an oyster.
The best doctors in the world are Doctor Diet, Doctor Quiet, and Doctor Merryman.
Better belly burst than good liquor be lost.
Promises and pie-crust are made to be broken.
Fingers were made before forks, and hands before knives.

Cheers! - TW

Zina Pisarko sends this: Bennett Cerf, in “Out on a Limerick,” attributes the following to Edmund Lear’s Book of Nonsense, London 1846.

There was a young lady of Greenwich,
Whose garments were border’d with spinach.
But a large spotty calf
Bit her shawl quite in half,
Which alarmed that young lady of Greenwich.

Spinach had quite an important place on Victorian tables, being widely used not only in dishes “a la Florentine,” but also in dessert puddings and ices. Spinach juice was a favored coloring agent, which leads me to wonder about the recent decision of Necco Wafers to drop artificial colors from its candies, announcing that while beet juice would be used for pink, green would be dropped because no natural color could be found for it. Perhaps our present-day idea of green as a food color is not the same as that of the 19th century?

Upcoming Events

Forty Second Annual Used Book Sale
14 miles of books for readers and collectors
Stone Bridge School, 9101 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 29814
April 16-19, Friday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., Sunday (Half-Price Day) 12 p.m. – 6 p.m., Monday ($10 Bag-of-Books Day) 5 – 8 p.m.
www.stoneridgebooksale.org  301-657-4322, ext. 372

Workshop: Strawberry Jar Herb Garden
United States National Arboretum
3501 New York Avenue, NE, Washington, D. C. 20002-1958

May 8, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Meet in arboretum lobby
www.usna.usda.gov  202-245-4521

Grow fresh herbs for all your favorite recipes right outside the door. Chrissy Moore, curator of the National Herb Garden, will guide you through the process of planting an herb garden in a strawberry jar. Select ten herbs from a mix of annuals and perennials, and create your own perpetual herb garden. Great for a small space, and makes an excellent Mother’s Day gift. Fee covers all plants and materials. Fee: $69 (FONA $55). Registration required.

Nominating Committee for 2010-2011 Board Members

Francine Berkowitz, Bryna Freyer, and Katy Hayes have agreed to serve as a nominating committee for next year’s officers.

Per the by-laws, the committee will present its slate at the April meeting and will also ask for nominations from the floor. The election is in May.

All the existing board officers are eligible to serve again in their current capacity except for Felice Caspar who has pioneered the position of Membership Secretary and has reached the term limit for that office. Please volunteer or send a nomination to Francine

Although the number of Board officers is few, the tasks of the Board are many. We would welcome volunteers who, even if they are not interested in a Board position, would like to occasionally volunteer their time according to their own schedules.

CHoW events can always use a helping hand with organizing field trips, monthly hospitality, publicity, mailings, information gathering for the newsletter and a variety of other assistance.
By Claudia Kousoulas

The allure of spices used to draw explorers and merchants, now it draws authors and cooks.

The two volume set of Spices by Fabienne Gambrelle (Flammarion, 2008), available in the CHoW collection at the Smithsonian Museum of American History Library, traces the history of the spice trade from a Silk Road luxury to New World plunder.

In the Middle Ages, Europeans believed that spices were a product of paradise and thus had miraculous properties. Spices had an aura of tropical romance, enhanced by the mystery of their sources. But like all luxury products, when the fog of mystery burns off, so does the allure. When pepper was discovered to have come from Africa, its fire dimmed. As travelers, merchants, and explorers mapped the world, they discovered the sources of spices. Peppercorns, curls of fragrant bark, and perfumed seeds changed from miracles to merchandise.

Plants and propagation were observed and recorded from Africa, across India, and into China. Beyond African pepper, came cardamom from India, cinnamon from Ceylon, and nutmeg from Malacca. Even the Americas offered cacao, canella, and pink pepper.

It’s hard to imagine, looking at neatly labeled and stacked jars on supermarket shelves, but the spice business was cutthroat. Spices became “the stuff of barter and voyage,” and as a commercial product they were the cause of slavery and wars. The Portuguese dominated the spice trade, but nearly every European country—Spain, France, the Netherlands, and England set up colonies in competition.

Stealing plants, altering nautical maps, subduing and enslaving native populations, all for an elusive perfume.

A plant’s leaves are the herb, while spices come from every other part of the plant. So leafy cilantro is an herb, while its dried seeds are a spice. Hemphill educates with chapters on history, essential oils, growing, drying, buying, and storing spices. He follows up with cooking techniques, including dried vs. fresh, and grinding and roasting to develop flavor.

Most useful to the cook is Hemphill’s discussion of herbs and spices in major cuisines, with the combinations that give each cuisine its distinct and authentic flavor.

Most of the book is spice notes, an alphabetical listing beginning with Ajowan (relative to parsley, but with peppery notes, native to India, and for many years used in toothpastes and mouthwashes, now used in curries) and ends with Zedoary (of the ginger family, with musky overtones that thrives in tropical regions, but unfortunately takes two years to harvest after propagation).

After its profile, each herb or spice gets a recipe and they are incredibly creative choices. Mace is featured in Green Ricotta Ravioli with Burnt Sage Butter, horseradish appears in Green Tea Noodles with Wasabi Dressing, and the various hot peppers come to fore in Roasted Almonds with Chili Butter, and Sea Salt, Chili Chocolate Black Beans, and Thai Chili Dressing. Nuanced and alluring, these recipes showcase the herbs and spices, but are never the obvious choices.

Even with the passage of time, trade and science, herbs and spices retain their romance. After all, what other ingredient can pack such power into a teaspoon?

Claudia Kousoulas is a freelance food and features writer. Her stories and cookbook reviews appear in Washington Woman, Cookbook Digest, and online at AppetiteforBooks.com and at booksforcooks.com. She is a past President and current Director of CHoW.