

# CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

September 2007

Volume XII, Number 1

## Renew Your Membership in CHoW NOW!

The membership year runs from September 1 to August 31. Annual dues are \$20 for an individual, household, or organization and \$10 for a student. Individual and household members are eligible to vote, hold office, and serve on committees.

Benefits include the newsletter *CHoW Line*, all meeting notices and a membership list.

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

An annual subscription to the newsletter is \$10. No other membership benefits apply.

SEE PAGE 9 to join or renew your membership.

## Articles for CHoW Line

The newsletter editor will be pleased to receive contributions to the newsletter from members and subscribers, although we regret we cannot pay for articles.

## SEPTEMBER MEETING 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

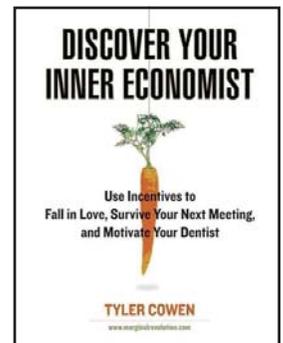
“Every Meal Counts: How and Why An Economist Became Obsessed with the Quest for the Perfect Meal”

By Tyler Cowen



Tyler Cowen is the General Director of both the Mercatus Center and the James M. Buchanan Center for Political Economy at George Mason University, where he is a Professor of Economics. He applies this knowledge to his exploration of ethnic restaurants here in Washington and in his travels.

His latest book, *Discover Your Inner Economist: Use Incentives to Fall in Love, Survive Your Next Meeting, and Motivate Your Dentist*, shows how the individual does use economic theory (knowingly or unknowingly) to make dining decisions.



His web guide, [www.tylercowensethnicediningguide.com](http://www.tylercowensethnicediningguide.com), is the best location for information on ethnic restaurants in our part of the world.

## Calendar of CHoW Meetings

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| September 9 | <b>Tyler Cowen</b> , Every Meal Counts: How and Why an Economist Became Obsessed with the Quest for the Perfect Meal                                   |
| October 14  | <b>Stefanie Walker</b> , Bartolomeo Scappi's <i>Art of Cooking (Dell'arte del cucinare)</i> of 1570 and Italian cookbooks from the 16th-17th centuries |
| November 11 | <b>Amy Riolo</b> , Incense and Spice: Entertaining in the Arabian Peninsula  |
| December 9  | TBA  |
| January 13  | TBA  |
| February 10 | TBA  |
| March 9     | TBA  |
| April 13    | Cooperative Supper   |
| May 18      | Note: Not the second Sunday.   |

### Keep Those Refreshments Coming!

Please contact Felice Caspar at [chowdcmembers@verizon.net](mailto:chowdcmembers@verizon.net) if you would like to bring some food or drink for our September 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](http://www.chowdc.org)

# Field Trip to Mount Vernon

## Speaker: Esther White

By Dianne Hennessy King  
Photos by CiCi Williamson

On a beautiful May 6, CHoW members and guests met at the Mount Vernon Inn for lunch. Afterwards, we had time to visit a number of exhibits before gathering again a couple miles away at George Washington's Gristmill and Distillery.



The gristmill uses the Oliver Evans system that automated all parts of the flour milling, according to our guide Steve Bashore. CHoW visitors could appreciate what a loud and dusty enterprise grain milling actually is to this day. George Washington was fortunate to have a ready supply of water as a power source on his property. Interior water wheels are found more often as one travels north in the country.



The pair of stones from France that ground the Virginia wheat is a harder and more premium stone than the less-fine set used for corn. With a set of two stones, it is only the top one that rotates, and the two stones should never

touch. You don't want bits of stone falling into the flour nor do you want to create sparks that could start a fire.

Evans, who received the third patent granted by the United States, designed elevators for vertical movement and conveyer systems for sideways movement in gristmills. The elevator dumps the stone ground flour onto the third floor and the rake or "hopper boy" dries and moves the flour. A "hopper boy" machine is named for the boys who previously manually raked the flour to aerate it.



## The Distillery

After the tour of the gristmill, we moved on to the distillery, which was probably the largest distillery in the U.S. in George Washington's time. In order to operate a distillery, you needed: (1.) grain; (2.) water that could be pumped; and (3.) fuel. Washington



had a woodland for fuel, a source of water, and a gristmill for the grain such as barley (which was roasted for flavor), corn, and rye.

James Anderson, a farm manager from Scotland, encouraged George Washington to build a distillery. They started with two stills and added three more. In 1799 the whiskey sold for \$1 a gallon and the distillery made \$7,500, not all of which was profit. When George Washington died, the distillery was selling more than 10,000 gallons a year. In 1997 the foundation of the original distillery was discovered at Mount Vernon.



Inside the distillery, another guide showed us the equipment and explained the distilling procedure. All of the work was done by six slaves and two overseers; the production schedule was 24/7. Cooking the grain, which took 10-12 hours, was the most important part of the process. One added yeast to convert the sugar to alcohol. The fermentation started from the top down and usually took 3 to 5 days.

After that time, the liquid went from the fermentation barrels to stills via a bucket brigade manned by slaves. The still was heated to 160 °F to evaporate the alcohol (water evaporates at 212 °F). The result of the first collection was 20-45 proof and undrinkable. The spent mash went out to the hogs. The mixture was then distilled a second time with a result of 80-100 proof.

Esther White, Director of Archaeology at Mount Vernon, also spoke to us about the history of the gristmill and distillery. During 1770-71 George Washington built a large merchant mill. The nearby creek was navigable and there was also a road that led to the Alexandria turnpike. Owning a merchant mill allowed one to buy more grain, five to seven years' worth on speculation, to be stored at the mill.

George Washington abandoned much of his 1000 acres that had been planted in tobacco as he gradually switched to flour production. The finer cake flour was exported to western Europe and the Caribbean. Whiskey only went as far



Esther White and the Distiller

as Alexandria. Up to two thirds of gristmills had distilleries attached to them in the 1800s. In the 1830s there was a backlash against alcohol: the temperance movement started in the 1820s.

The average distillery was 20 x 40 feet; George Washington's was 75 x 30 feet and had bedrooms on the second floor. Most distilleries had one or two stills operating for one or two months a year, usually September and October, producing 3,000 gallons. George Washington's distillery operated twelve months a year. It was one of the largest in the United States. The whiskey was sold not in bottles but rather in 30 gallon barrels. George Washington also moved his cider mill to this same locale. In 1814 the distillery caught fire and in the 1850's the gristmill closed. In 1932 a replica of the gristmill was built and the reconstructed distillery was just opened to the public in April 2007, about a month before CHoW's tour.



## Updated CHoW Board of Directors

President	<b>Laura Gilliam</b>
Vice President	<b>Randy Clarke</b>
Recording Secretary	<b>Clara Raju</b>
Membership Secretary	<b>Felice Caspar</b>
Treasurer:	<b>Katherine Livingston</b>
Director	<b>Claudia Kousoulas</b>
Director	<b>Zina Pisarko</b>

### Changes for CHoW Board 2007-2008

Cathy Gaber resigned her position as Recording Secretary due to health reasons. Clara Raju agreed to serve as Recording Secretary, which created a vacancy on the Board. Claudia Kousoulas, former CHoW President, will fill the position of Director.

## CHoW Board Meeting Summary

**April 15, 2007, 1:00 p.m.**

The following is a brief summary of Katherine Livingston's notes of the meeting:

Katherine Livingston gave a treasurer's report. Our current bank balance is \$4576.26. New members who joined in March and April will be counted as paid up through the coming year.

The main items on the agenda were next year's meeting schedule and the choice of speakers. At Shirley Cherkasky's suggestion and because of weather concerns, the cooperative dinner will be shifted from January to April. Claudia Kousoulas will continue to make arrangements for the Bethesda meeting room and to do publicity for the meetings. As to arrangements for visuals, several people have been identified as having Power Point projectors they would be willing to lend to a presenter. The Board then reviewed several lists of possible speakers derived from various sources.

Destinations for possible field trips discussed included Willis VanDevanter's cookbook collection in Poolesville, the American Indian Museum cafeteria, the African Art museum's collection relevant to culinary matters, and Gadsby's Tavern in Alexandria. Pros and cons of having such field trips on days other than Sunday were discussed.

The meeting adjourned about 4 pm. The board will next meet at 12:30 pm September 9 in Bethesda, just before next year's first general meeting.

### CHoW Bylaws

If you've ever wondered about such questions as how we fill board vacancies or if board meetings are open to all, consult the CHoW bylaws which are posted at [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org)

## News from Other Culinary Organizations

The **Culinary Historians** of Chicago this summer presented an interesting program we thought you would enjoy learning more about from their newsletter:

"Predecessor to M.F.K. Fisher: Michigan's Della Lutes"

Presented by Robin Mather Jenkins  
Author, and Food Writer, Chicago Tribune

Most of us have heard of the great literary food icon, M.F.K. Fisher. But long before Ms. Fisher, there was another literary food master, Della Lutes.

Born in 1872 in Jackson, Michigan, Ms. Lutes relied on her Michigan roots to become one of the most widely read cookbook authors of her time. She used her immensely popular columns that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* as a basis for her best selling *The Country Kitchen*, first published in 1936.

Readers delighted in her poignant and often humorous stories of life in late nineteenth-century rural Michigan, complete with descriptions of authentic country folks, reflections on family and community events, and especially, details of sharing meals together that recapture warm childhood memories. Scattered throughout her writing are colorful examples of regional cuisine.

*Chicago Tribune* food writer, and Michigan native, Robin Mather Jenkins, provides a portrait of her beloved Della Lutes and her legacy in culinary history. Before joining the Tribune three years ago, Ms. Jenkins served as food editor at the *Detroit News*, senior writer at *Cooking Light* magazine, and, for a short time, started and ran a goat cheese dairy in Batesville, Mississippi. In 1995, she also wrote the first book on genetically modified crops and livestock and sustainable agriculture aimed at the mass market reader: *A Garden of Unearthly Delights: Bioengineering and the Future of Food*. Ms. Jenkins is currently working on a book about Della Lutes.

### Calling All Lovers of Books

Is there a food-related book in your background that means a lot to you? Is it a novel? A cookbook? A travelogue? A memoir? Have you ever heard of Della Lutes? Had you heard of Marion Harland before Nancy Carter Crump spoke to our CHoW members a few years ago? Fame, indeed, is so fleeting. Your favored book may be by a once-famous author, a now-famous one, or one who penned in permanent obscurity. Tell us in one or a few paragraphs why you liked the book and why it means something to you. We're looking not so much for a book review, but more for an appreciation of a book that wandered into your life.

Send your story to CHoW Line editor,  
**Dianne Hennessy King.**

# Upcoming Events

Heart to Hearth Cookery  
and the Bucks County Conference and Visitor Bureau  
proudly present

## "High Status Dining in the 18th Century"

with internationally known food historian

Ivan Day

November 11, 2007 at 2 p.m.

Tea will be served at 3:45 p.m.

Bucks County Visitor Center

3207 Street Road, Bensalem, Pennsylvania

Cost per person: \$25. To register, send a check made payable to "Heart to Hearth Cookery," to Susan McLellan Plaisted, PO Box 1162, Morrisville, PA 19067.

[www.hearttohearthcookery.com](http://www.hearttohearthcookery.com)

Gathered from Mr. Day's website, [www.historicfood.com](http://www.historicfood.com), Ivan Day has an international reputation for his research on British and European culinary history. In addition to his courses and museum work, Ivan is an experienced broadcaster, and has written books, articles and papers on English food history. He is best known for his museum exhibitions of re-created historic table settings and is considered to be one of the foremost authorities in this field, lecturing throughout Britain and the U.S.A. Having started collecting antiquarian cookery books and culinary utensils when he was only thirteen, Ivan now has forty years experience of cooking period food. His work has been exhibited in many museums, including the Paul Getty Research Institute, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Museum of London, Fairfax House, the Bowes Museum and the Rothschild Collection.

Note: CHoW Line readers enjoyed Katherine Hayes' article and photographs in the November 2006 issue about her experience taking a Dairy and Ices course with Ivan Day in the village of Shap, east of the Lake District.

## International Pickle Day VII, September 16

From the New York Food Museum website:

[www.nyfoodmuseum.org](http://www.nyfoodmuseum.org)

How New York Ate 100 Years Ago

Pickles from all cultures! - music, memory, smells, tastes, science, medicine, magic and religion

On the block of Orchard Street between Broome and Grand

No entrance fee, of course

11:00 am to 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, September 16, 2007

For more information: Call Les Bid at (212) 226-9010

Website: [www.LowerEastSideNY.com](http://www.LowerEastSideNY.com)

NY Food Museum (212) 966-0191

Visit the permanent Pickle Wing under "On-line Exhibits"

## Fairfax County Parks Events

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/teas.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/teas.htm)

Held at **Green Springs Gardens, 4603 Green Springs Rd., Alexandria, VA 22312, 703/642-5173.**

### Saturday, September 15 - Backyard Beekeeping

1:00 to 3:00 p.m. Bees pollinate our crops, wild plants, and garden flowers and give us sweet, delicious honey. Local beekeepers, Bob and Grace Parker will show you our Green Spring beehive and talk about how to start an apiary of your own. \$25

### Sunday, September 23 - A Well-Dressed Table

1-3pm. The number of pieces on a properly set Victorian dining table was staggering. We'll talk about the growing appetite for refinement at the table as we separate the ice cream forks from the asparagus tongs. Bring along your own piece of dinnertime Victoriana, if you have one, and tell us its story. \$25

### Sunday, October 7 - Apron Strings: Ties to History

1-3pm. Every kitchen apron has a story. For some of us, these simple garments evoke memories of grandma's kitchen. We'll look at the long and the short, the embroidered and the plain and discover how aprons were expressive of the work and lives of the women who wore them. \$25

## A Taste of History: A Sampling from the Schlesinger Library's Culinary Collection Exhibit

Closes September 28, 2007

[www.radcliffe.edu/schles/exhibits/tasteHistory/index.php](http://www.radcliffe.edu/schles/exhibits/tasteHistory/index.php)

An exhibit of treasures from the extraordinary culinary history collections of the Schlesinger Library is on display until September 28, 2007, in conjunction with the Radcliffe Institute's fifth annual gender conference, "Women, Men, and Food: Putting Gender on the Table" (April 12-13, 2007).

The exhibition features materials from a collection that has been developed over the past half-century and continues to grow. The selection illuminates gender issues and the achievements of women in culinary work.

Among the items on display are Anna Wecker's *Neu, köstlich, und nutzliches Koch-buch* (1679), the first published cookbook by a woman; pages from Julia Child's papers showing the meticulous pre-filming planning she and her husband did for her television show; colorful illustrated commercial pamphlets, such as "What Mrs. Dewey Did with the New Jell-O" (1933); community cookbooks documenting women's charitable work; historical photographs; cookbooks from the 1940s and 1950s written for men; and one of the first cookbooks published by a former slave, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking* (1881).

## News of Our Members

Shirley Cherkasky sent the following information about two of our members:

➡ **Psyche Williams-Forson's** book, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power* was reviewed by Leni Sorensen of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Monticello, in the Spring 2007 issue of *Gastronomica* (pp 117-118).

➡ The June 2007 issue of *The Torch*, the publication for the Smithsonian Institution's staff, carried a half-page article titled "CHOW [sic] serves up a moveable feast of culinary history," with a picture of **Bryna Freyer** working at the CHoW booth at the 2005 Folklife Festival.

➡ **Francine Berkowitz, Shirley Cherkasky, Laura Gilliam and Katherine Livingston** attended the **Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History: "Regional and Ethnic Traditions"** at the Longone Center for American Culinary Research, at the William L. Clements Library (below) on the University of Michigan's campus in Ann Arbor, May 18-20. The dozen speakers such as Toni-Tipton-Martin, John T. Edge, and former CHoW member, Marcie Cohen Ferris, spoke on a wide variety of topics concerning the American history of regional and ethnic traditions.



➡ **CiCi Williamson's** research on "400 Years of Virginia Winemaking" is the front-page article in *Food History News* (Vol. XXIV, No. 1), the summer 2007 edition. Learn about the native Virginia grape first encountered by the Jamestown colonists in 1607 that, when made into wine, had the "bouquet of a wet dog." The article covers Virginians' four-century attempts to produce fine wines.

### **Welcome, New Member!**

Vera Glocklin

Primary interests: History, evolution, transmission



**T**he Smithsonian Folklife Festival 2007, which celebrated "The Roots of Virginia Culture" — 400 years of Virginia history after Jamestown was founded, featured several CHoW members. **Randy Clarke** volunteered behind the scenes for the food demonstrations as he has done for many years. **Vera Oye Yaa-Anna**, Liberian-born artist, celebrated her ancestral Virginia roots and culture through her story telling performances on the Willow and Dogwood stages. **CiCi Williamson** consulted with Betty Belanus and Dorey Butter of the Smithsonian on the food served in the Virginia Common Wealth Café, provided background history for decorating the Virginia Garden Kitchen, and introduced and moderated most of the Virginia food demonstrators in the Garden Kitchen July 4-8.

In addition, CiCi successfully proposed to the Smithsonian a panel on Virginia culinary history by CHoW members. She was the moderator and panelist for the July 7 Panel on "Virginia Culinary Traditions: Past, Present and Future." CiCi was joined by three other CHoW members. **B.L. Trahos** from Milford, Va., is a Colonial hearth cooking expert at Gunston Hall, the home of George Mason. CHoW President **Laura Gilliam**, who lives in Washington, D.C., is a cookbook collector with a particular interest in southern cookbooks. **Dianne Hennessy King** is a cultural anthropologist, lecturer, and editor who teaches about both preserving and adapting to diverse culinary traditions. Dianne, a Vienna, Va., resident, also teaches cookbook writing classes and is a former president of CHoW. **CiCi** is the author of *The Best of Virginia Farms Cookbook and Tourbook*; a PBS-TV series host, and a food and travel writer from McLean, Va.

**CiCi** led off with a brief Virginia culinary history from 1607 forward. **B.L.** spoke about hearth cooking and brought along a beautiful salamander — loaned by Gunston Hall — to show the audience how "crème brûlée" was made in Colonial times. **Laura** talked about Mary Randolph and *The Virginia Housewife*, as well as several other historic cookbooks. **Dianne** spoke about the diversity of modern Virginia culinary history in the making, as increasing numbers of people from other nations are joining the ranks of Virginians.

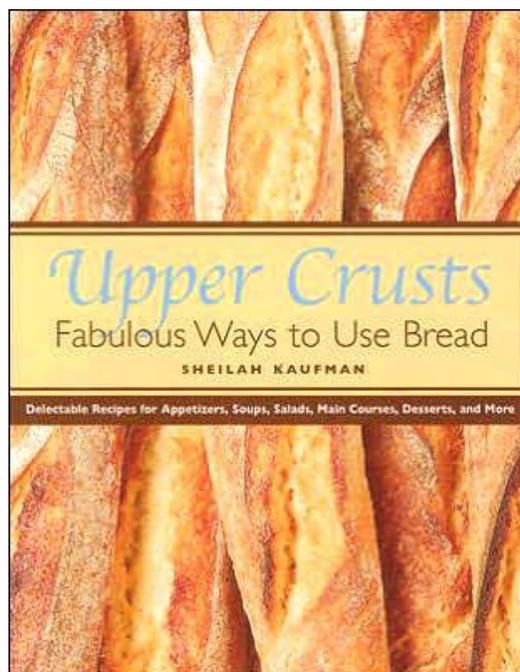
## Book Review

# Upper Crusts: Fabulous Ways to Use Bread by Sheilah Kaufman

Reviewed by CiCi Williamson



CHoW member **Sheilah Kaufman**, prolific author of numerous culinary books, has turned to the “upper crust” to inspire her latest one. Not a book of doughs and batters (no kneading needed), *Upper Crusts* is a 248-page soft cover manual of ways to use already-baked bread -- and, yes, even its crumbs -- in appetizers, soups, salads, main courses, desserts and other ways.



Michel Richard, Chef and Owner, Citronelle, Washington D.C., who was recently voted the 2007 Outstanding Chef in America by the James Beard Foundations, says, “This book reminds me of my mom. She’d never throw away a piece of bread. Thank you very much for the respect you have for the main ingredient -- a wonderful collection.”

Despite the Atkins diet, phase I of the South Beach, Sugarbusters, and other such carbohydrate-avoiding diets, the popularity of bread has rebounded. How did anyone ever live without the “staff of life”? And what great breads we have in the Washington, D.C. area today! We’re long past the decades of Wonder Bread and such other “marshmallowy,” squishy loaves.

Sheilah begins with a short history of bread, and then, like Hansel and Gretel, trails through chapters beginning with “Bread Crumbs” and on to “Bread Salads, Bread Soups, Bread as a Container, Bread Puddings (savory and sweet), Fabulous French Toast,” and “Others.”

Featured are 150 recipes of the author, several CHoW members and renowned chefs including Patrick O’Connell of the Inn at Little Washington, Michel Richard of Washington, DC’s Citronelle, Henry Haller of White House fame, Santi Zabaleta of Taverna del Alabadero, and Aulie Bunyarataphan of Bangkok Joe’s, to name a few.

Most of the recipes can be assembled in less than 30 minutes and can be frozen. Sheilah gives creative ways to use leftover and fresh bread, and she provides cooking tips and tidbits on the history of bread. The recipe titles whetted my interest and encouraged perusal of ingredients (none hard to locate) and methods (well described and easy). A sampler:

*Throw out the Turkey – Keep the Chestnut and Sausage Stuffing; Cherry and Goat Cheese Strudel; Chilled White Gazpacho with Almonds and Grapes; Turkish Chicken Salad with Walnuts; Yia Yia Mary’s Skordalia, and Lamb Fatta with Tomato Sauce.*

On the facing column is one of Sheilah’s recipes to make a quick, easy and elegant dessert.

## Chocolate Cherry Croissant Bread Pudding

- 1 teaspoon butter
- 3 stale croissants
- 1/3 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup dried cherries
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 cup cream
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon Cassis (or vanilla)

- Generously butter a 9x9-inch baking dish.
- Cut croissants into 1/2-inch pieces (as best you can) and scatter cubes, chips and cherries into prepared dish.
- In a large bowl, whisk together sugar, cream, eggs, and Cassis until sugar dissolves. Pour mixture through a sieve over croissant pieces in prepared baking dish. Gently push down cubes so they absorb the egg mixture. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes (\*Note).
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Bake for 40 minutes, or until center is puffy and golden. Serve hot. Makes 6 servings.

(\*Note: If in a rush, skip chilling. Instead, pour only half of egg mixture over croissant pieces and push down to absorb. Wait 5 minutes before pouring on more, leaving tops of cubes just above the liquid line.)

-- From *Upper Crusts*, copyright Sheilah Kaufman 2007.