

# CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

September 2008

Volume XIII, 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 7 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 at [t](mailto:info@chowdc.org)

We regret we cannot pay for articles.

## “Food and History in the Carolina Lowcountry”

By John Martin Taylor (“Hoppin John”)

September 14, 2008  
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

CHoW is extremely pleased that our first speaker for the 2008-2009 lecture series is **John Martin Taylor** (“Hoppin John”), a founding member of the Southern Foodways Alliance. He is a leading authority on the culinary history of the South and the expert on the foods of the lowcountry - the coastal plain that surrounds Charleston and Savannah. In the lowcountry, Spanish, French, English, West African and Native American influences created a complex network of agriculture and food traditions.

Taylor is the author of *Hoppin’ John’s Lowcountry Cooking* (Bantam, 1992; paperback, Houghton Mifflin, 2000), *The New Southern Cook* (Bantam, 1995; paperback, 1997), *Hoppin’ John’s Charleston, Beaufort & Savannah* (Clarkson Potter, 1997), and *The Fearless Frying Cookbook* (Workman, 1997). In addition to his books and photography exhibits, he has written for numerous journals and reviews in Europe and the United States. He has lived in the Caribbean, France, and Italy, and is (*continued on page 2*)



Photo by Mikel Herrington

Visit Taylor’s Web site at [www.HoppinJohns.com](http://www.HoppinJohns.com) and his blog at [www.HoppinJohns.net](http://www.HoppinJohns.net).

## 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** Field Trip to Alexandria  
**January 11** CiCi Williamson, “The ZIP Codes of Our Food: A Quick History of Global Cuisines”  
**February 8** Michael Twitty, “Afro-Maryland Food Culture”  
**March 8** Patrick Evan-Hylton, “Wine in Virginia”  
**April 5** Cooperative Supper (Note: first Sunday and time change)  
**May 3** TBA (Note: first Sunday)

**Keep Those Refreshments Coming!**  
Please contact

if you would like to bring some food or drink for our September meeting.

## What Happened at the May 18 Meeting?

### CHoW BOARD MEETING

The Board met for two hours before the general membership meeting. Katherine Livingston reported that the bank balance was \$4601.02.

The Board discussed various subjects and presenters for the September 2008-May 2009 season. In addition to seven lectures, we will have a field trip to Alexandria in December and the Cooperative Dinner in April.

A discussion was held on the pros and cons of having a second cooperative dinner during the year. Instead of another dinner, the vote was in favor of one of the lectures being more food oriented and, in addition, members will be encouraged to bring foods more closely related to each month's topic.

### MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Our last meeting of the year was planned as an informal sharing of stories on how each person became interested in culinary history. Some tales were hilarious, some poignant, all fascinating.

It is the membership that is the strength and breadth of CHoW. We hope that in the year to come that there will be even more opportunities to share our diverse knowledge and backgrounds via the lectures, field trips, whatzits, newsletter, Web site and informal networks.

**Whatzits— Please bring your whatzits to the September meeting to be photographed (see page 3).**

### **Welcome, New Members!**

**Kay and Ray Gross**

Interests: Regional cooking and cookbooks

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**John Martin Taylor** (continued from page 1)

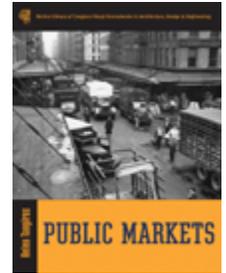
practiced in the cuisines and customs of Liguria, France, and the African diaspora.

Go to [www.HoppinJohns.com](http://www.HoppinJohns.com) for information about his books and stone ground corn products. [www.HoppinJohns.net](http://www.HoppinJohns.net) will lead you to John's Blog where Taylor writes eloquently on subjects ranging from family and friendship to cheese straws, musings often accompanied by his own wonderful photos.

## News of Our Members



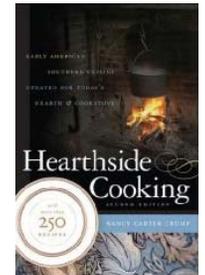
**Helen Tangires** has authored a new book entitled *Public Markets: A Norton/Library of Congress Visual Sourcebook*. Focused on the historic exchange of food and other commodities in cities and towns, the book spotlights the variety of formats of public markets throughout the world. More than 800 illustrations are provided from collections including the Historic American Buildings Survey and Historic American Engineering Records. (From the May issue of DC Preservation League)



Members may remember that Helen spoke to CHoW a few years ago when her first book, *Public Markets and Civic Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, came out in 2003. Helen is the administrator of the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art.



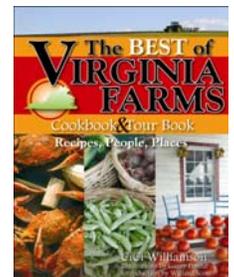
**Nancy Carter Crump** announced that the second edition of her book, *Hearthside Cooking: Early American Southern Cuisine Updated for Today's Hearth and Cookstove*, will be published by the University of North Carolina Press in November. The book includes over 250 recipes and a foreword by Sandy Oliver.



**Kay Shaw Nelson**, journalist and author of twenty cookbooks, has donated the first installment of the Kay Shaw Nelson Cookbook and Menu Collection of international cookbooks, menus and manufacturers' recipes, as well as Kay's personal articles, books, and background data, to the Special Collections Research Center of the Syracuse University Library. The presentation was made on July 17 at Kay's home in Bethesda, Maryland. Another CHoW member, **Willis Van Devanter**, conducted the appraisal of the collection.



**CiCi Williamson** reports that a newly revised edition of her book *The Best of Virginia Farms Cookbook & Tourbook* (now in its fourth printing) was published in soft cover in April. CiCi updated all of Virginia's agricultural statistics, resources' contact information, and locations of more than 100 state-sanctioned farmers markets. The book is the same size as the original hard-cover book, but it has a new cover. (Menasha Ridge Press, \$19.95).



## Calling All Whatzits

Can you once again bring old Whatzits that you brought to CHoW meetings in years past?

We will have a digital camera at each meeting in order to photograph all Whatzits, current or previous.

The [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org) Web site will feature a Whatzits Gallery of photographs of objects brought to CHoW meetings.

For those of you new to CHoW, Whatzits are the culinary objects that members can bring to the meetings to be passed around and puzzled over. Sometimes the experts are stumped, but it is always fascinating to try to discover the purpose and history of these curious and mysterious articles. See the accompanying photos for some past examples.



## CHoW Shop: Now Open for Business 24/7 at [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org)

We are all proud CHoW members and now we can display that pride. Our wonderful CHoW dome logo can be found on mugs, aprons, fridge magnets, and notebooks at CHoW's new online shop.

CafePress allows anyone to make customized products on demand. Many groups and individuals use it to promote causes or just to make personal gifts. For example, the Southern Foodways Alliance sells its T-shirts and bumper stickers through a CafePress shop. We hope you'll use these CHoW products to enjoy our group even more and spread the word about what a great resource it is.

The CHoW CafePress basic shop won't cost us a penny, and we've put a minimal mark-up on the products, just about one dollar over the base price, so it will also be a gentle fundraiser, helping us keep our dues low. You can find the shop directly from the link on our website. Go to [www.chowdc.org](http://www.chowdc.org) and click on CHoW Shop.

And you should know, these are quality products. The next time you go to a conference, bring your CHoW notebook. It has a heavy cover, sturdy wire binding, and thick paper. The mug has a bright, glaze and clear colors. I've run mine through the dishwasher plenty of times and it still looks great. Use the tote bag in place of paper or plastic grocery bags. We took one to the apple orchard and found it can hold 17 pounds of apples.

If you're looking for unique gifts for foodie friends or for a conversation starter on the Metro, shop CHoW!

by Claudia Kousoulas



[Home](#)

### CHoW Shop

**In the mood for CHoWare?**

For more information, or to place an order  
Visit CHoW's online shop [here](#).

 <b>Mug</b> 3.75" tall, 3" diameter Dishwasher and Microwave safe	 <b>Barbeque Apron</b> 35% cotton/65% polyester Machine washable Ties at neck and waist Two bottom compartment
 <b>Journal</b> Wire-O bound 160 page 5x8" journal with your choice of paper	 <b>Magnet</b> 2.125" x 3.125" Flat magnetic back
 <b>Postcards</b> Printed on glossy, 12 pt paper Package of 8	 <b>Tote Bag</b> 10 oz heavyweight natural canvas 22" reinforced self-fabric handles Machine washable

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# Current and Upcoming Events

## Power Plants -- Farming Fuel

The United States National Arboretum

Through mid-October, daily 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Free Admission and Parking.

The exhibit is adjacent to the National Herb Garden near the R St. entrance.

### Entrance One:

3501 New York Avenue, N.E.,

### Entrance Two:

24th & R Sts, N.E.,  
off Bladensburg  
Rd.

[www.usna.usda.gov](http://www.usna.usda.gov)  
(202) 245-4521



Worried about gasoline prices and where our fuels will come from in the future? Come see how agronomic crops might become a major part of the renewable energy that will help fuel our future.

A new one-acre outdoor exhibit, "Power Plants--Farming Fuel" features 21 different plants currently being used commercially or having the potential to be commercial sources of ethanol or biodiesel.

Visitors can learn about each of the fuel crops that range from algae to switchgrass, sugarcane, corn, poplar trees and even some lesser known plants such as jatropha, cuphea, mustard, and the African oil palm.

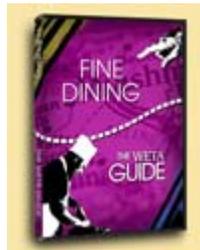
Each plant is accompanied by informational signs, and a brochure is available for self-guided tours.

Visit the National Arboretum Web site, [www.usna.usda.gov](http://www.usna.usda.gov), to view several virtual tours as well as find links to the Arboretum's support groups such as the Herb Society of America:

[www.herbsociety.org](http://www.herbsociety.org) Several years ago a horticulturist at the Arboretum conducted a special tour of the Herb Garden for CHoW members.

## The WETA Guide to Fine Dining

This hour-long program premiered on May 15 on WETA-TV Channel 26, and featured more than 20 of Greater Washington's



restaurants. If you missed it, you can watch selected segments at [www.weta.org/tv/guide.php](http://www.weta.org/tv/guide.php).

"The WETA Guide to Fine Dining" explores the elaborate menus, creative chefs, distinctive atmospheres and interesting histories that create the fine dining experience at each locale.

Cuisines include African, American, French, Indian, Italian, Japanese and Nuevo Latino. Among the restaurants in Washington, D.C., are:

- The Blue Duck Tavern
- The Willard Room
- The Palm
- The Prime Rib
- Rasika
- minibar
- 1789 Restaurant,
- Citronelle
- Café Milano
- Restaurant Nora
- Charlie Palmer Steak

In Virginia, the program visits

- Ray's the Steaks in Arlington;
- Farrah Olivia and Restaurant Eve in Alexandria;
- L'Auberge Chez Francois in Great Falls; and
- The Inn at Little Washington in Washington, Virginia.

## "The History and Growing of Virginia Wine"

By Susanne Haskil, Peacock Harper Culinary History Friends Inn At Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va. September 26, 2008. Go to [www.culinarycollection.org](http://www.culinarycollection.org) for details unavailable at press time.

## The Old Girl Network: Charity Cookbooks and the Empowerment of Women

Exhibit at the Great Hall of the William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Curated by Jan Longone

**June 2 to October 3**

Monday-Friday, 1:00-4:45 p.m.,  
or by appointment.

Go to [www.clements.umich.edu](http://www.clements.umich.edu) and click on "Current Exhibit: The Old Girl Network: Charity Cookbooks and the Empowerment of Women, June 2—October 3, 2008"

Lecture by Curator Jan Longone:  
Sunday, September 21, 2:30 to 5:00.

Before mass media, communication, and transit, the first wave of the women's movement was already active via the most ordinary of objects: the lowly cookbook. The upcoming exhibit illustrates the politics just under every woman's nose (and, often, behind many men's backs).

This exhibit features cookbooks on many themes with an emphasis on female empowerment.

On display will be the first American "charity," A *Poetical Cookbook*, written for the 1864 Sanitary Fair, to support those

wounded, widowed, or orphaned by the Civil War. Also shown is a rare copy of *The National Cookery Book*, written for the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia to celebrate the nation's 100th Birthday.



# Notes & Queries

## Zephyrettes

Katherine Livingston wrote in the May issue of *CHoWLine* that her earliest edition of *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* by Fannie Merritt Farmer “called for an ingredient called ‘zephyrettes,’ evidently a sort of roll or



Fannie Farmer  
(photo credit Corbis)

other breadstuff. Fanny Farmer uses them for several sandwiches, for which she otherwise suggests just bread slices. A Google search has come up empty. Does anyone know what they are/were?”

Katherine reports that “My CHoW Line query regarding ‘zephyrettes’ yielded two useful responses.”

“Laura Gilliam came up with suggestive evidence in the form of recipes for ‘zephyrinias’ in John F. Mariani’s *Dictionary of American Food and Drink* and in a facsimile of Sara Rutledge’s *Carolina Housewife* of 1847.

Though Mariani identifies the item as a cookie, neither recipe includes sweetening; the ingredients are flour, water, salt, and a small amount of butter, to be mixed, kneaded, rolled thin, and pricked with a fork before baking.

Confirming the suspicion that zephyrettes were a form of cracker, Jan Ruskell, a librarian subscriber (and as it happens a cousin of mine) turned up a grocery ad from a 1900 *New York Times* which offered

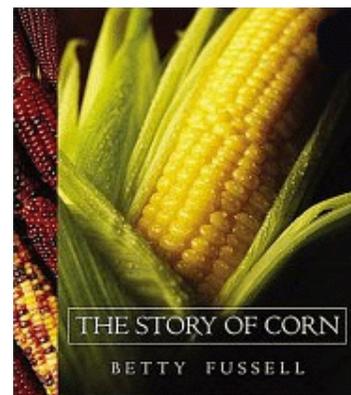
*‘Holmes and Coutts’s Saltines or Zephyrettes,  
1 lb pkg,’ selling for 13 cents.*

Holmes and Coutts, I have learned through Internet research, was a New York baker eventually subsumed by Nabisco. Online I also found an 1886 article from *The New York Times* reporting on a tour of the Holmes and Coutts factory, not mentioning zephyrettes in particular but giving a detailed account of biscuit manufacture more generally. Among other discoveries I learned that Holmes and Coutts was one of the first U.S. producers of animal crackers. Anyone interested in pursuing the subject can easily find the Holmes and Coutts materials via Google.”

[Ed. Note: Later, CiCi Williamson added information from [recipelink.com](http://recipelink.com) that Zephyrettes were thin, wafer-like biscuits sold by the New York Biscuit Co. prior to merging with the American Biscuit Co. to form the National Biscuit Company, today known as Nabisco (now owned by RJR). Zephyrettes were discontinued in the 1920s or 1930s.]

## Dialogue on “Corny” Culinary History

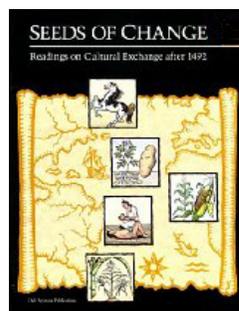
Katherine Livingston received a letter inquiring about corn history. She circulated an e-mail to CHoW members with the researcher’s request. We are printing the request and informal responses to give our readers another sample of how CHoW and its members have become a resource for researchers.



“I received an inquiry from someone in Oregon who is researching the history of ‘corn and its affect or effect on Europe, Asia, and Africa’ and would like the names and addresses of food, cuisine, and/or agricultural historians who might assist him.”

CiCi Williamson answered, “One culinary historian who has done a lot of research on corn is Betty Fussell of the New York Chapter of Les Dames. She lectures on corn and wrote a book titled *Crazy for Corn*. Her e-mail is: [bettyfussell@earthlink.net](mailto:bettyfussell@earthlink.net).

David Bender responded to the inquiry with: “A few more references to CORN which might be of use— Evan Jones, *American Food: The Gastronomic Story*; John F. Mariani, *Dictionary of American Food and Drink*; and Tannahill’s *Food in History*. Harold McGee’s *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, pp. 477-481 plus other pages, offers good information. Andrew F. Smith’s *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink*, pp 168-69... offers three reference sources (Fussell being one of them).”



Felice Caspar added, “The Smithsonian’s *Seeds of Change* book is still available on Amazon.com.” [Ed. Note: The edition available on Amazon.com is *Seeds of Change: Readings on Cultural Exchange After 1492* by National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution (1992).]

CHoW President Laura Gilliam responded to the inquiry: “Betty Fussell also wrote *The Story of Corn* in the early 90s and it is a fairly substantial history. Also, *The Cambridge History of Food* has a number of articles that might be useful. Perhaps, the inquirer is not aware that the word ‘corn’ in Britain, at least until fairly recently, refers to any cereal grain—wheat, rye, barley, oats, etc. They use the word *maize* for American corn and earlier used ‘Indian corn.’”