

CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

September 2009

Volume XIV, Number 1

Renew Your Membership in CHoW NOW!

The membership year runs from September 1 to August 31. Annual dues are now \$25 for an individual, household, or organization for those who choose to receive printed copies of *CHoW Line* in the mail. Dues are \$20 for members who choose e-mail delivery of *CHoW Line*.

Dues for students are \$15 to receive printed copies of *CHoW Line* in the mail (\$10 for e-mailed delivery of *CHoW Line*). 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 roster.

CHoW/DC publishes *CHoW Line* eight times each year. More information can be found at www.chowdc.org.

An annual subscription to the newsletter only is \$10 for e-mailed delivery (\$15 for printed copies via U.S. mail). No other membership benefits apply.

SEE PAGE 7 to join or renew your membership.

A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine 1500-1800



Marie Antoinette

By Susan Pinkard

Sunday, September 13
2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.



Susan Pinkard

Quite suddenly, French cooks broke with the ancient cooking traditions that had existed from Rome through the Renaissance. The aim of what was called “the delicate style” was to cook and serve

ingredients in a manner that preserved the qualities with which they were endowed by nature: instead of being miraculously transformed by the cook, food was supposed to taste like what it was. In pursuit of this new aesthetic of naturalness and simplicity, cooks developed many techniques and recipes that continue to define French cuisine to this day.

Why and how had this major shift in sensibility come about? What does the culinary revolution reveal about other aspects of modern life that were also coming into focus in 17th and 18th-century France? Our speaker will elaborate.

Susan Pinkard holds a master’s degree and a Ph.D. in modern European history from the University of Chicago. Since 2005 she has been a full-time visiting member of the Department of History at Georgetown University. She spent most of her previous career as a university administrator, serving as Associate Dean and Director of (continued on page 4)

Calendar of CHoW Meetings

- September 13** Susan Pinkard, “A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine 1500-1800”
- October 11** Patrick Evans-Hylton, “Wine in Virginia”
- October 17** Field Trip to Alexandria Archaeology Center. Saturday, 2:00 p.m.
- November 8** Joan Bacharach, “Curating Culinary Exhibits for Museums: Behind the Scenes”
- December 13** Nongkran Daks, “Beyond Curry & Pad Thai: Regional Thai Cuisine”
- January 10** Tom Weiland, “The Search for the Elusive Schnitzel”
- February 14** (To be Announced)
- March 4** Special Tour: Library of Congress’s rare book holdings on gastronomy by Mark Dimunation, Chief. Thursday, 4:00 p.m.
- March 14** Fred Czarra, “Spices of Life: The Savory Story of the First Global Marketplace”
- April 11** Cooperative Supper (Note: time change 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.)
- May 2** Barbara G. Carson, “Ambitious Appetites” — political aspects on dining in D.C. during the Federal period. (Note: first Sunday)

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 May 3 Meeting?

GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Laura Gilliam, President, at 2:40

Treasurer's Report: Since January, \$460.00 of dues revenue was received and total expenses amounted to \$890.58. The balance as of May 3, 2009 was \$4631.08.

Announcements: Laura Gilliam announced that **dues will increase by \$5** for those members who wish to receive a **hard (printed) copy of CHoWLine** in the mail. Those receiving the newsletter only by e-mail will remain at the current \$20. We will continue meeting the second Sunday of the month except for May. In May the second Sunday falls on Mother's Day, so we will meet on the first Sunday.

The nominating committee (Shirley Cherkasky, Amy Snyder and Felice Caspar) presented the slate of officers. Motion was made to accept the slate; the motion was seconded and passed.

2009-2010 Board of Directors:

President	Katherine Livingston
Vice President	CiCi Williamson
Recording Secretary	David Bender
Membership Secretary	Felice Caspar
Treasurer	Bruce Reynolds
Director	Katy Hayes
Director	Claudia Kousoulas

Program:

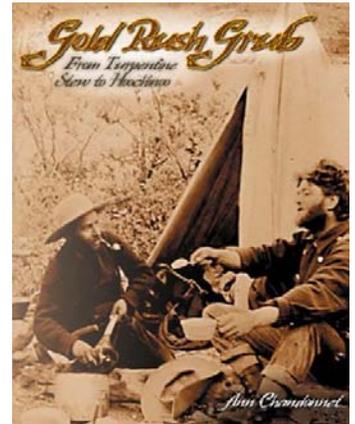
Randy introduced today's speaker, Ann Chandonnet, who spoke on "How Argonauts Ate: Details from Gold Rush Diaries." Ann and her husband have recently retired to North Carolina after living in Alaska for 34 years. She is a non-fiction writer, teacher, food historian, poet, book reviewer and journalist. Ann was born and raised in Lowell, Massachusetts and earned her Master's degree in English literature from the University of Wisconsin (Madison) in 1965, followed by Post-graduate work at Boston University and the University of Alaska.



After writing her seafood cookbook, *Alaska Heritage Seafood Cookbook*, she reviewed her notes on the Gold Rush and

realized that no one had written about that topic in relation to food. By researching letters and diaries written during that time, she was able to find out what miners ate during the Gold Rush. According to Chandonnet, food history is a niche history, a small but important aspect of history. She says that if you ask immigrants about their culture, they will mention church and kitchen.

The first Gold Rush in the U.S. was actually in 1803 in North Carolina, after word had finally spread about the gold discovered by a 12-year old boy in North Carolina in 1799. Thomas Jefferson hoped that this discovery would free the states from foreign dependence on gold. Miners began to rush to North Carolina to seek their fortune.



Decades later, the Gold Rush in California took place from 1848 to 1864. Most miners arrived in the first three years. This was considered the greatest mass migration in our history. The discovery of gold in California changed the nature of that area. Many people stopped working in agriculture to pursue mining for gold; that change in occupations increased the dependence on imported food from other parts of the U.S. and other countries.

Word of the discovery of gold in California took a year before it reached the East Coast. The majority of the prospectors arrived in 1849 - hence the term 49ers. About 75% of the argonauts came from New England. An argonaut is a person who is engaged in a dangerous but rewarding quest: an adventurer. About 95% were men, and most could not cook.

On their ship voyage to California they subsisted on jerky, hardtack and coffee, and those were the items that they took to the hills with them. Diets were low in vitamins. The newcomers didn't know how to use many of the resources around them in California.

A common food item was flour and water, mixed and cooked. The miners did, however, learn from Native Americans how to use acorns to make gruel and hoecakes. But, most miners refused to cook, preferring to spend their time mining. They either made fast food or food that cooked on its own, i.e., Boston Baked Beans. Some miners were from other countries and so foreign food (especially Mexican and Chinese) was introduced. The different cultures contributed to what we call "fusion cuisine" today.

The miners often stripped the land of some of its natural resources such as elk. Eventually, game wasn't available in parts of California because miners would shoot everything in sight. Many times miners left fires untended and burned the surrounding land, which further devastated the territory.

The demand for food from the influx of miners stimulated the growth of agriculture in this area. Crops of wheat and barley were grown, but this farming often displaced the elk and buffalo that Native Americans depended on. In retaliation, the Native Americans raided the settlements because their land had been destroyed.

Gold Rush food tended toward feast or famine. The unsuccessful miners had to make do with what they could find, and quite a few went hungry because of lack of money. The luckier miners were able to afford food in restaurants and hotels. Modest hotels and boarding houses, whose prices were reasonable, popped up everywhere. If you had the money, there were good restaurants and better boarding houses.

Mary Ballou, who moved to Sacramento in 1851 from New England, opened a boarding house to serve the men who had limited access to home-cooked food. In her letters to her sons she reveals what food was like at that time. Most food came in barrels, kegs or wooden containers. Dried food was very common. Hand grinders were used to make cornmeal and people made their own yeast. A typical meal for a miner would be pork, beans and tea with no sugar. In the boarding houses some of the popular items were apple pie, pudding, and dried apple pie.

Ann Chandonnet ended her discussion by answering questions from members. She then signed copies of her book *Gold Rush Grub: From Turpentine Stew to Hoochinoo*.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00.

Respectfully submitted by **Clara Raju**, Recording Secretary.

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, October 17

CHoW Field Trip to Alexandria Archaeology Center,
Torpedo Factory, 2:00 p.m. (fee to attend)
Talk and demonstration

Alexandria Archaeology has excavated a sugar refinery, one of two refineries that operated in Alexandria during the early 1800s. The Archaeology Center also has a lot of other food- and beverage-related objects. See the October **CHoW Line** for details. Attendance limited. Members given first preference.

Upcoming Events

The National Book Festival

September 26, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
The National Mall in Washington, D.C.,
(between 7th and 14th Streets)
Free. Sponsored by the Library of Congress

Two of the many authors who may be of interest to CHoW members are Mark Kurlansky -- see Katherine Livingston's review of his latest book *The Food of a Younger Land* (2009) on page 4 -- and Paula Deen. www.loc.gov/bookfest2009.



Mark Kurlansky
Photo credit: Sylvia Plachy

2009 Festival Poster >
2009 Festival Artist:
Charles Santore



Paula Deen (above)

Food Network star Paula Deen started her career in food in 1989 as The Bag Lady, delivering, with her two sons, bag lunches to customers in Savannah, Ga. The caterer and restaurateur is the author of Southern cookbooks. "Paula's Home Cooking" and "Paula's Party" are seen regularly on the Food Network.

Mark Kurlansky's jobs as a playwright, commercial fisherman, dock worker, cook, pastry chef and paralegal have influenced his writing. From 1976 to 1991 he worked as a foreign correspondent for *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Miami Herald* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. His books *Cod*, *Salt* and *1968* were all *New York Times* best-sellers.

Maryland Seafood Festivals

Three festivals are coming up soon.

40th Annual Maryland Seafood Festival

September 12-13 (the weekend after Labor Day)
Sandy Point State Park, Annapolis

31st Annual Patuxent River Appreciation Days

October 10-11
Solomons

St. Mary's County Oyster Festival and National Oyster Cook Off

October 17-18
St. Mary's County Fairgrounds, Leonardtown.

www.marylandseafood.org/festivals/



IACP Food History Symposium

All Things Culinary Around the World in 1849 and Their Convergence Upon California

October 8 - 10, 2009, Wine and Roses Inn, Lodi, California

The Fourth IACP Food History Symposium, "All Things Culinary Around the World in 1849," will recount the culinary history of the mid 19th century around the globe and how these traditions converged on California during the Gold Rush era and influenced the following decades by focusing on different regions of the world in each session. Registration is limited to 50 people. Fee: \$450.

Conference host Ken Albala, Professor of History at the University of the Pacific, writes, "We have some spectacular speakers like Darra Goldstein, Andy Smith, Jeff Pilcher, Carol Helstosky and others."

www.iacp.com



Colonial Williamsburg

THAT THE FUTURE MAY LEARN FROM THE PAST



Foodways in the 18th Century: Bringing Virginia's Bounty to the Royal Governor's Table

November 8 - 10, Williamsburg, Virginia, \$295.

www.history.org/history/institute/institute_about.cfm

Register ASAP. Workshops are nearly full.

The three-day conference begins on Sunday evening with a keynote address by Ivan Day on the state of the art of fine dining in eighteenth-century England. The Monday morning session delves into selecting recipes, procuring

ingredients, and preparing the dishes of a royal governor's dinner. Tuesday morning focuses on presentation, table settings, service, and dining etiquette. Both afternoons offer workshop sessions on colonial chocolate making, brewing beer, and ice cream as well as private tours of food-related collections and sites with Colonial Williamsburg experts. And, of course, no food conference would be complete without a chance to eat! There will be an eighteenth-century-inspired luncheon at one of Colonial Williamsburg's historic taverns and a concluding banquet at the Williamsburg Lodge that reflects how historical foods can be adapted to and inspire modern fine dining as well.

CHoW members **Pat Reber** and **CiCi Williamson** have registered to attend. CiCi is looking for someone to share a hotel room (ciciwmson@aol.com).

News of Our Members

In Memory of Karen Cathey

September 11, 1961-July 6, 2009, a friend



to so many who loved food, wine and good fellowship. She was president of Bon Vivant, LLC, one of the founders of the Southern Foodways Alliance and a founding chairman of The American Institute

of Wine & Food National Capital Area Chapter. Donations in her memory may be made to the Karen Cathey Education Fund at The AIWF, c/o of Bob Sitnick, 6271 Park Road, McLean, Virginia 22101.

Kay Shaw Nelson's

memoir, *The Cloak and Dagger Cook: A CIA Memoir*, will be published this Fall by Pelican Publishing Co. Inc. for \$24.95.



Book Review

The Food of a Younger Land

Mark Kurlansky, Ed.

Reviewed By Katherine Livingston

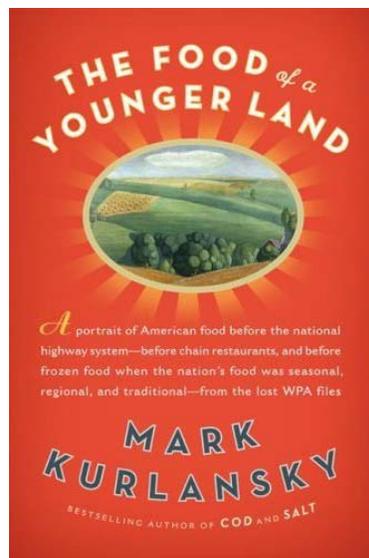
In *America Eats! On the Road with the WPA* (reviewed in *CHoW Line* April 2009) Pat Willard offers an intriguing sampling of a Depression-era effort to document American foodways. Now Mark Kurlansky has taken up the story with his own set of gleanings from the material left behind (not actually “lost” but deposited in various archives— or even forgotten; see for example Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of America*, pp. 139-44, available via Google).

Whereas Willard’s selection was focused on communal events, grouped according to type, Kurlansky’s is more eclectic and is organized, as was the project, by region: Northeast, South, Middle West, Far West, and Southwest. And, whereas Willard put much of her effort into reporting on comparable present-day events and reconstructing recipes, Kurlansky stays in period and leaves the cooking instructions to his authors.

A number of documents Willard selected also appear in Kurlansky’s collection, but his broad range includes such other items as several sets of instructions on the proper preparation of mint juleps and eggnog, accounts of a grass-roots effort to provide hot school lunches and seaweed consumption in Montana, and a deploration of “whipped” or “fluffed” (vs. properly mashed) potatoes.

Kurlansky offers much to remind us that the project was of another era. Barbecuing may go on forever, but possum, beaver tail, and poke sallit are probably less eaten today, and the shortage of manure attendant on the age of mechanization has no doubt been gotten round by Pennsylvania mushroom growers. The reports on trendy innovations also remind us that time has passed—gone now are not only the Automat but Suzi-Q potatoes, and who today would need the explanation provided of “a Los Angeles sandwich called a taco”?

It has to be said that as a work of history Kurlansky’s is the more satisfactory. Rather than attempting an update, he provides a series of introductory sections that amplify the culinary and cultural background of the foods discussed as well as tell something about such of the original authors as can be identified. He appends an “informal bibliography” of works the authors reported consulting, and his index is the more thorough of the two. It is a further convenience that his commentary is printed in italics and thus easier to distinguish from the original texts than are Willard’s



The Food of a Younger Land. A Portrait of American Food—before the national highway system, before chain restaurants, and before frozen food, when the nation’s food was seasonal, regional, and traditional—From the Lost WPA Files. Mark Kurlansky, Ed. Riverhead Books, New York, 2009. 398 pp. \$27.95.

comments. In the matter of illustrations, Willard’s book is far richer in photographs; Kurlansky provides a few, but his book’s main adornments are his own woodcuts.

These two collections might prompt regret that the comprehensive publication originally envisioned was never achieved. But in the best of circumstances (absent domestic politics and World War II) it would have been a daunting editorial task. The contributors’ insistence, contrary to instructions, on providing recipes could have been dealt with, but how might the editors have adjudicated the claims that a combination of ham, eggs, and potatoes was a Washington state invention, that pilaf was original to Florida Minorcans, or that Nebraska baked beans are superior to those of Boston? It is probably best that well enough was left alone, given that these nuggets are now easily available for mining.

Susan Pinkard speaker bio (continued from page 1)

Undergraduate Studies in the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University and as Senior Lecturer in History and Assistant Dean in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University.

Susan Pinkard is also an avid cook. *Cuisine bourgeoise* forms the backbone of her culinary repertoire, but she also takes a passionate interest in the Creole cooking of New Orleans, the Cajun food of southwest Louisiana, and Texas barbecue.