

CHoW Line

Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

January 2007

Volume XI, Number 5

Happy New Year!



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.

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

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.

January 14 Meeting in Alexandria CHoW Annual Cooperative Supper

Foods of Virginia Through Time

Sunday, January 14, 2007

NOTE: TIME IS 4:00-6:00 pm

Alexandria House
400 Madison Street
Alexandria, Va 22314

CHoW members voted to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, Va. as the theme for our annual cooperative supper. Because the theme covers all the foods in Virginia from 1607-2007, there's an enormous variety from which to take your pick. For anyone who wants a few

suggestions of recipes or books to consult, see CiCi Williamson's references on page 7. This dinner is an informal potluck where you have a chance to talk to people, watch the skyline from high above Alexandria, and eat great-tasting food from Virginia's history.

Plates, cups, bowls, eating utensils, and napkins will be provided but please bring anything needed for serving your contribution, as well as any interesting information related to the recipe you have chosen. (*For directions, see below.*)



Colonial Williamsburg Tavern Cookbook

Directions to Alexandria House

Driving if you're coming from NORTH of Alexandria, VA: Alexandria House (tallest building - 23 stories - in Old Town), is at the intersection of N. Pitt and Madison Streets, just five minutes south of Washington National Airport. Pitt Street is parallel to and two blocks east of Washington Street (George Washington Parkway), toward the Potomac River.

Driving from SOUTH of Alexandria: Madison Street is 7 blocks north of King Street. From the north, enter Alexandria on the Parkway, turn left at Madison St. (5th traffic light) and go 2 blocks. Park on the street. The entrance to Alexandria House is off Pitt St. You will be met in the lobby, most likely by Shirley Cherkasky, who lives there and arranged for the room.

Inclement Weather Plans

If we have sufficient warning about stormy weather or heavy snow, we will attempt to send an e-mail to warn of a cancellation of a meeting. If CHoW members have any question about whether or not a meeting will be held, you are advised to check by phone or e-mail with any Board member listed in each newsletter.

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

Dues to: Katherine Livingston
1835 Phelps Pl. N.W., #42
Washington, D.C. 20008

What Happened at the December 10 Meeting?

Panelists' Topic: "A Festival of Frugality or Little Money, Lots of Pleasure"

The panel was comprised of five people including (from left to right) Amy Riolo, Kay Shaw Nelson, Jane Mengenhauser (Moderator), Hanne Caraher, and Sheilah Kaufman.



Jane Mengenhauser, an independent food and travel writer, began by defining "frugality," noting that the word comes from Latin, and means "economic, temperate, saving, sparing," but *not* "cheap, cheesy, chintzy, or scrimping." She said that today we might replace the word frugality with a concept such as "creative saving." She gave examples such as buying on sale, using coupons, and generally preferring financial independence to showiness as a path in life.

Amy Riolo, the first speaker, grew up in an Italian-American family in Northern New York, and married an Egyptian man. She drew her perspective from this dual experience. She notes that in her case frugality was a by-product of her bringing-up—her family had an orchard and garden, and grew much of what they used, just as their relatives had in Italy. Growing your own food, Amy said, is cost-efficient, and often more healthful because it is local, seasonal, and self-preserved. Sometimes, however, frugality grows out of adversity, whether self-imposed (special diets) or a result of external problems such as wars, famines, poverty, or storms. These trials challenge the good cook, who deals with adversity and enhances her skills by being creative, flexible and appreciative of what's available. Thus it's rather fun to cook frugally, but, Amy says, she never skimps on some ingredients, including olive oil and cheeses. She recommended we visit ethnic food stores where good quality produce is often available at lower prices.

Kay Shaw Nelson was born in New England of Scottish ancestors, and has traveled the world, studying and writing on foods because they are relatively non-controversial, so people willingly talk about them. Today she chose to emphasize oats, "one of nature's best foods," which forms the backbone of Scottish cooking. Kay noted that oats may have been introduced to Scotland by the Romans. At any rate, oats are offered in many forms from porridge to oat cakes to a dish called *goetta* which consists of meat and oatmeal formed into a loaf, baked, then sliced and fried, to be topped with syrup at the table. Despite a history associated with adversity, today oats are "almost trendy," since they've been associated with lowering cholesterol and

high blood pressure, and controlling appetite. Production in the US has increased. A unique feature of oats is that they are always "whole"—that is, even rolled oats contain the entire grain. Oat bran is a "nutritional powerhouse," and, in general, oats are a "feel good" ingredient in hundreds of dishes. Today oats are also used in cosmetics from shampoo to lotions, and are effective at treating skin rashes.

Hanne Caraher was born in Germany and came to the U.S. at age 24 where she worked as an interpreter and translator, and wrote a great deal on foods and German wines. Like Amy, Hanne distinguished "forced frugality" from "self-chosen" frugality. As a child she experienced the former, only later realizing how hard her mother had worked to put food on the table. For example, as a child in post-war Germany, Hanne went mushroom hunting, gathered berries, nettles, dandelion, mâche, and walnuts, all of which soon turned up on the table. Her mother canned and dried apples. They had meat on Sundays only. A special frugal treat was *schiebewurst*, or "pushed sausage" sandwich. You put your slice of sausage in bread, and then pushed it along without eating it until you got to the last little bit of bread—when at last you were rewarded with the sausage. Hanne nowadays practices self-chosen frugality, and explained it thus: take the emotion out of shopping so you don't allow advertising to cause you to buy what you don't need; eat economical foods (scrambled eggs for \$0.35 dinner, lentil soup, buying small amounts of herbs so you only use fresh); and conserve energy by using energy-efficient appliances and by cooking large quantities and freezing some for later use. Asked to say a few words about German wines, Hanne explained that they are *not* all sweet, but aim for a balance of fruit and acidity, and have lower alcohol content than California wines. She recommends we try *trochen* and *halbtrochen* wines, especially those imported by Terry Theise.

Sheilah Kaufman has been a culinary instructor and cookbook writer for many years, with a new book on bread due out in April 2007. She began baking at age 8. She recalls being made to sit over food even if she didn't want to eat it "because children are starving in Europe."

(continued on page 3)

Sheilah says her goal today is to help her students and those who use her cookbooks to achieve “fearless, fussless cooking” that is “easy and elegant.” For her new book, Sheilah has researched the history of bread, including the term “upper crust” (the best “top” bread was given to guests), and noted that a preference for white bread was well entrenched by classical Greek and Roman times. She is interested in uses for “tired bread,” or stale bread. It can be used in hundreds of recipes, as in bread pudding, summer pudding, as a thickener, as croutons, in bread salads or as French toast, and finally as crumbs in a multitude of dishes. Like Amy, Sheilah emphasized the importance of high quality ingredients—the bread may be stale, but the milk, eggs, butter, fruit and so on had better be good!

Jane ended the series of short talks by adding some of her own tips about frugality. She suggests, for example, visiting bake sales and garage sales, using a flat iron to weight grilled cheese sandwiches instead of buying a panini press, saving money while having fun at “spice exchange parties,” and in saving on restaurant visits by making the “same” foods at home. At her house they always have a Saturday Night Pizza Night, and everyone helps make the pizza.

At about 3:35 p.m., Jane opened the floor to questions and comments, of which there were a great many. Most members of the audience could offer examples of frugality from their natal homes, including a dish called “graveyard stew” (bread, salt and pepper, milk). Shirley Cherkasky mentioned that *goetta* is a version of scrapple, of which there are many versions. The discussion ranged over topics such as whether there are breads in Asia, to whether people today actually use leftovers (a frugal behavior), and in many other directions. The panel discussion closed, somewhat reluctantly, at 4:00 p.m. —Claire Cassidy

Business Meeting

The following foods were brought to be shared by those present:

- **Amy Riolo** brought Biscotti Semplice Senza Uova (Simple Eggless Biscuits), top photo.
- **CiCi Williamson** brought Anzac Biscuits, middle photo below.
- **Katherine Livingston** brought Hoe Cakes, bottom photo below.
- **Amy Snyder** brought Ginger Cat Cookies for People, Plain Cat Cookies for People, and Pumpkin Fluff
- Marion Cunningham’s Peanut Butter Bread : Unknown Donor
- **Shirley Cherkasky** brought Chocolate Snowflakes
- **Claudia Kousoulas** brought Brown Sugar Cookies
- Apple Ciders : one brought by **Felice Caspar**; a second bottle from an Unknown Donor



A **Whatsit** was presented by Zina Pisarko. It was a wooden spoon with a hole in the bowl, and we learned that it is called a “Dieter’s Spoon,” and appears, in silver, in the exhibition catalogue from “Feeding Desire: Design and Tools of the Table, 1500-2005,” an exhibit that was recently at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in NYC.

A vote was taken as to what the ‘theme’ of our January meeting should be. There were four topics in contention, including Food Around the World, c1607; Foods of Virginia Through Time; Frugal Foods; and Pairing of Wines and Foods. In order as listed, the vote was 7, 10, 7, 0, so the theme for January 2007 will be: **Foods of Virginia Through Time.**

The meeting adjourned at about 4:30 PM.— Claire Cassidy, Recording Secretary

Calendar of CHoW Meetings

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| September 10 | Psyche Williams-Forson, “African American Women, Food Service and the Railroad” |
| October 8 | Deborah Warner, “ How Sweet It Is: Sugar, Science and the State” |
| November 12 | Paul Lukacs, author, <i>American Vintage: The Rise of American Wine.</i> |
| December 10 | “A Festival of Frugality “ panel (reported on pages 2 to 3). |
| January 14 | Cooperative Supper in Alexandria |
| February 11 | Sandy Oliver , “Lessons My New Book Taught Me: Insights Gained from <i>Food in Colonial and Federal America.</i> ” |
| March 11 | Warren Belasco , “The Future of Food” |
| April 1 | Robert Wolke , “Food 101” column in <i>The Washington Post</i> Food section. “How Chemistry Facilitated Colonial Food Preservation” |
| May 6 | Field Trip to Mount Vernon, VA. George Washington’s reconstructed Distillery & Grist Mill with a talk by the archeologist of the distillery. |

Upcoming Events



GREEN SPRING GARDENS
4603 GREEN SPRING ROAD
ALEXANDRIA, VA 22312
703-642-5173

“A Well-Dressed Table”

Sunday, February 25, 1-3 pm

Historic Green Spring

703.941.7987

www.greenspring.org

The number of articles on a properly set Victorian dining table was staggering. Green Spring staff will separate the game knives from the ice cream forks and identify some other household objects of the day. Their uses may surprise you. Bring along your own piece of Victoriana, if you have one, and tell us its story.

Programs are by reservation only, with a traditional English tea that includes scones, clotted cream, jam, and assorted finger sandwiches and pastries. Programs require a \$24 prepayment to FCPA. Visa/MasterCard accepted.

“Women, Men and Food: Putting Gender on the Table”

Thursday, April 12 to Friday, April 13
Radcliffe Gymnasium, 10 Garden Street,
Radcliffe Yard, Boston, Mass.

617-495-8600

www.radcliffe.edu/events/calendar



RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

The Radcliffe Institute's fifth annual conference on women, gender, and society will include panel discussions on culinary memoir and food writing, rethinking sweetness and power, women and famine, obesity and anorexia, food studies and women studies, and race and gender in American food.

2:45-6:30 p.m. on Thursday and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. on Friday

Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History: Regional and Ethnic Traditions.

The Longone Center for American Culinary Research
William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
MAY 18-20, 2007

General Registration will open after January 15, 2007.

Registration will be limited to 200 participants.

www.clements.umich.edu/culinary

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

Alice Arndt, Culinary historian, author, lecturer, Founder/co-founder, Culinary Historians of Houston, Austin and Southern California (topic to be announced)

John T. Edge, Director, Southern Foodways Alliance
“Mouth of the South: The Southern Foodways Alliance at Ten”

Marcie Cohen Ferris, Associate Director, Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill., “Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South”

Larry B. Massie, Michigan culinary historian
“Rubbaboo, Kalamazoo, and Pasties Too: Aspects of Michigan's Culinary Heritage”

Michael and Jane Stern, culinary historians and food journalists, cookbook authors, lecturers, columnists for *Gourmet* magazine, NPR's “The Splendid Table”
“American's Least Fashionable Cuisine: A Road Trip through the Vastly Underappreciated Cuisine of America's Northeast: the Unknown, Disrespected, Hidebound, Inexplicable, Ghastly and Delicious Foods that Define the Region's Unique Taste”

Dan Strehl, independent culinary history scholar and author. “Yah-Tah-Hay to the Fiesta: The Immigrant Cuisine of the American West”

Toni Tipton-Martin, food journalist, cookbook author
“The Jemima Code: A Cook's View into the Heart, Soul, and Recipe Box of a Wise Servant”

William Woys Weaver, Contributing editor, *Gourmet* magazine; professor of food studies, Drexel University
“The Amish as a Symbol of Regional and Ethnic Cuisine”

Jacqueline B. Williams, Independent culinary historian, author, lecturer. “In the Midst of Plenty: Pacific Northwest Foodways: 1845-1900”

Pel'meni Quest

By L. Peat O'Neil

Pel'meni – Siberian Meat Dumplings – hail from the far frozen reaches of the taiga. The dumplings are of Mongolian origin and the word Pel'meni is always plural, I was told by Russians. Apparently you can neither make nor eat just one.



Natalia in her restaurant kitchen

Pel'meni warm tummies all over Russia and the countries that used to be part of the Soviet Union. It could be Russia's answer to fast food. Pel'meni are food for the masses, but not mass-produced. Workers chow down at

pelmennaya (pel'meni restaurants) but the dumplings are still made by hand. I haven't yet seen canned pel'meni by Chef Boyar. Students of Russian history will remember that the boyars were the landed gentry class during Moscow's formative years.

In permafrost regions, pel'meni were made in quantity, frozen and stored outdoors in sacks slung high away from dogs or other scavengers. Then the dumplings were cooked as needed. We can imitate those resourceful Siberian cooks by freezing the pel'meni on a tray and putting them in re-sealing freezer containers to be cooked later. Pel'meni can also be prepared and served immediately, but purists insist that pel'meni should be frozen before cooking.

In the old days — and possibly in remote areas of Siberia today — cooks just took a frozen haunch of whatever mammal wandered into a trap and shaved or scraped off the meat needed for a batch of pel'meni. The traditional horsemeat filling might be difficult to find, or stomach nowadays. Modern Russians use ground beef, lamb and pork or mushrooms for the pel'meni filling.

My first taste of Pel'meni occurred in St. Petersburg. Larissa Davidyuk, my Siberian-born hostess rolled, stuffed and folded a pel'meni mountain which three adults and a teenager leveled at dinner. Later, I read of a 19th century banquet at Lopashov's Tavern in Moscow where twelve people dined on 2,500 pel'meni. [*The Art of Russian Cuisine* by Anne Volokh, Collier Books, 1983].

Larissa urged me to try other versions of pel'meni during my stay in Siberia, and compare them with hers. Did I detect a hit of smugness in her smile? With Larissa's pel'meni as the benchmark, how could I find such steaming morsels of flavor again?

Like its kitchen-kin, ravioli, the bite-sized dumplings are made of ground seasoned meat wrapped in soft dough. They are cooked in boiling water or broth and served with butter, sour cream or vinegar. Sometimes pel'meni are served in the broth under a baked crust.

Pel'meni shapes vary according to the cook's preference and dexterity. Basically a small circle of dough is folded over a dab of meat filling, the dough edges are sealed and the ends brought together to make a loop.

Larissa Davidyuk's Pel'meni

Larissa was my hostess in Moscow. A scientist, she was unemployed when I visited her in the mid-1990's. She wrote her recipe in longhand and my Russian teacher at Montgomery College translated. 'Make an egg pasta dough': that was Larissa's instruction for making the dough.

Since she did not write a dough recipe for me, I adapted this from *Please to the Table* by Anya von Bremzen & John Welchman, Workman Publishing, N.Y. 1990.

3 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg
1 cup cold water

Using a mixer with bread hook or food processor, blend flour and salt; add egg; then add water gradually until dough forms a ball. Transfer to a floured surface and knead about 2 minutes until smooth. Cover and let stand for 1/2 hour.



Pel'meni making in Khabarovsk, Russia. Photos by Ben Hanson.

Larissa's meat filling: Mix of 1/3 pound each ground lamb, beef and pork. Mix with salt, pepper, 2 tbsp. finely chopped garlic and the 1/2 cup minced whites of scallions. Roll out the dough approximately 1/8" thick. Cut circles with a glass. Place small spoonful of filling on the dough. Fold over and pinch closed. Bring ends together. Boil water. Cook the pel'meni in boiling water until they rise in the water, then 5-7 minutes more. Serve with butter or sour cream. Serves 4.

Natalie's Pel'meni in Taiga Manner

When I reached Siberia, I was eager to pursue the quest for pel'meni. In Khabarovsk, a port on the Amur River bordering China, the hunt for ultimate pel'meni took me to Natalya Mamadzhanova, a spirited businesswoman who opened a homey little restaurant specializing in Russian traditional food called V/Gostiakh u Natali, "As Natalie's Guest."

(Continued on page 6)

Pel'meni (continued from page 5)

Make a soft dough. (see recipe above).
Make the filling: To 1 pound of ground pork, add 1 large finely chopped onion and 6 chopped cloves of garlic. Roll out dough to about 1/8". Make the pel'meni by putting filling on a small circle of dough. Fold dough over and seal. Twist ends of half-circle around to form a ring. Prepare the sauce: Make a clear soup from meat bones. Put chopped onion, carrot, pepper, tomato and boiled paparnick (collard greens) in a soup kettle. Cover vegetables with the hot bouillon. Add sour cream, black pepper and Korean sauce (soy sauce). Cook, covered, over warm heat, not boiling.

Meanwhile, cook the pel'meni in boiling salted water, about 8 minutes. Put in a small serving dish and cover with the vegetable sauce. Add garlic and warm dish on stove. Serves 4-6. Back home, I researched pel'meni recipes in Russian cookbooks and I wanted to try the various recipes I'd collected in Russia. The dough recipes were all more or less the same, no problem there. I did chill the dough before rolling and cutting the pel'meni jackets. For the filling, I mixed 3/4 pound each ground beef and pork, two minced onions, salt, pepper and a dash of ground clove.

Labor intensive pel'meni shaping followed. After a half-hour of nimble fingered filling, sealing and turning, I realized why all the cooks I'd seen making pel'meni were sitting down and working in teams. Next time I convene a pel'meni party, I'll invite the guests into the kitchen to cut dough and stuff.

Other resources:

Classic Russian Cooking, Elena Molokhovets' A Gift to Young Housewives, Translated, introduced and annotated by Joyce Toomre, Indiana University Press, 1993.

Please to the Table, The Russian Cookbook, Anya von Bremzen and John Welchman, Workman Publishing, 1990.

The Art of Russian Cuisine, Anne Volokh with Mavis Manus. Collier Books, 1983.

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News of Our Members

Shirley Cherkasky was interviewed for an article, "Culinary Historians group discusses history of the world, through food" by Stephanie Siegel in the November 29, 2006 (page A-10) *Gazette Community News*.

In the article Shirley gives an explanation of what culinary historians study, as well as a brief description of the founding of CHoW ten years ago, and some of the topics of current CHoW meetings. Members **Kari Barrett** and **Claudia Kousoulas** were also quoted

Welcome, New Members!

Janet Dinerman
Interests are "open"

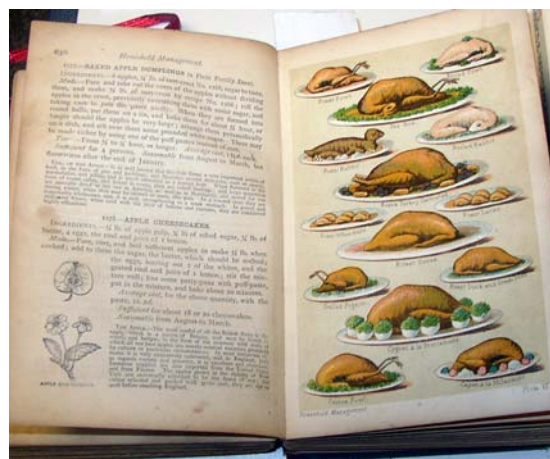
Janet Sass
Education; cultural aspects



Diane Threlkeld
Reading about, talking about, and sometimes even preparing food.

Cookbooks from December Meeting

Laura Gilliam brought some historic cookbooks to the meeting. See the photos below.



400 Years of Virginia Food

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Would you prefer:

1. Full color e-mail (PDF)?
2. Black and white copy sent by U.S. mail?
3. Both ways?

Please notify Membership Secretary **Felice Caspar** at (703) 560-7191 or chowdcmembers@verizon.net

Dear CHoW Members,

Here is a brief list of references to head you in the direction of Virginia food history for the January 14 Cooperative Dinner. If you want to take the easy way, send me an e-mail and I'll provide a recipe of your choice.

CHoW member **Nancy Eagles** has generously donated funds to use for refreshments, and the board has decided to use the money to purchase sliced Virginia country ham that I will serve between sweet potato biscuits. Also, *don't everyone make Brunswick Stew!* See you there. Huzzah!

-- CiCi Williamson

Virginia Cookbook Bibliography

Bibliography of Virginia-Related Cookbooks compiled by Cynthia D. Bertelsen, Spring 2006. A 60-page PDF file of 1,227 Virginia-related cookbooks.

http://spec.lib.vt.edu/culinary/va_cookbooks_bib.pdf

1600's

Life at Jamestown (by Jamestown Settlement)

www.historyisfun.org/pdfbooks/life_at_jamestown.pdf

Jamestown Rediscovery: What did the colonists Eat?

www.apva.org/exhibit/eats.html

Thomas Hariot's A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (see The Second Part). www.nps.gov/archive/fora/hariotpart2.htm

1700s

Colonial Virginia Cookery, Jane Carson, excellent introduction to (and explanation of) colonial recipes and cooking methods.

Dining at Monticello, editor Damon Lee Fowler (food styling by Lisa Cherkasky)

Foodways of Colonial Williamsburg

www.history.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradefood.cfm

Recipes of Colonial Williamsburg

www.history.org/Almanack/life/food/foodhdr.cfm

Claude Moore Colonial Farm of 1771

www.1771.org/cd_recipes.htm

Foods Grown at Monticello

www.monticello.org/gardens/index.html

Food and Cooking at Monticello

www.monticello.org/browse/food.html

Slave Lifeways at Mount Vernon

www.mountvernon.org/learn/collections/index.cfm/pid/243/

Hospitality at George Washington's Mount Vernon

www.mountvernon.org/pdf/Foodways-Hospitality11.pdf

1800s

The Virginia Housewife, Mary Randolph. The first cookbook published in America. Originally printed in 1824, it was reprinted with historical notes and commentaries by Karen Hess [University of South Carolina Press:Columbia] 1984. ISBN 0-87249-423-3.

Housekeeping in Old Virginia, Marion

Cabell Tyree, 1890. Containing contributions from two hundred and fifty ladies in Virginia and her sister states.

1900s through today (see Bibliography)

Recipes from several centuries: *The Best of Virginia Farms Cookbook and Tour Book* by CiCi Williamson. Some recipes from the book are on the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website or send an e-mail to CiCi with a request (ciciwmson@aol.com) www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown-july/cookbook.shtml

Virginia's Top Foods Produced in the "Old Dominion" Today

Fruits: Apples, Asian pears, blueberries, caneberrries, cantaloupes, grapes, nectarines, peaches and watermelons.

Vegetables: Asparagus, bean sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, elephant garlic, hydroponic lettuce, mushrooms, okra, potatoes, pumpkins, snap beans, squash, sweet peppers, sweet potatoes and tomatoes.

Legumes: Peanuts, peanuts, peanuts!

Seafood: www.virginiaseafood.org/consumers/recipes/index.htm

Meat: Beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb.

Virginia wines: www.virginiawines.org