Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume 3 Summer, 1989

CHAA's 1989 Summer Gathering: Pique-nique Française

Save the afternoon of Sunday, August 20, 1989, for this gala event to be held at the idyllic Seven Lakes Vineyard in Fenton, Michigan.

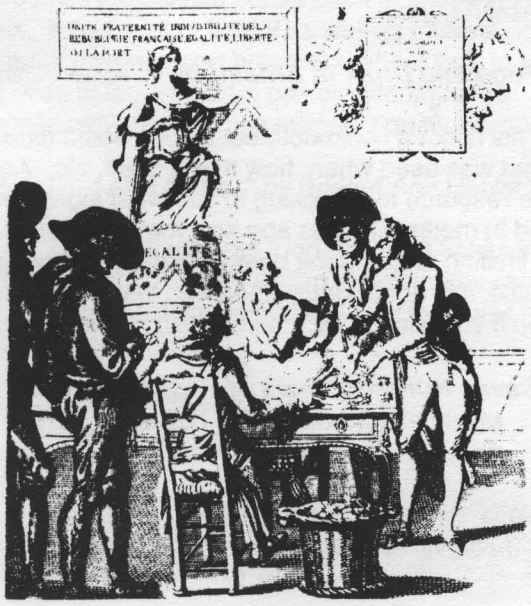
This year we have decided to have a theme for the picnic. **The French Revolution** was a natural choice because of its bicentennial celebration this year. In this spirit, we ask you to bring a French dish to share. If you wish, your contribution could be an example of French food at the time of the revolution. If you are interested in consulting period recipes, a bibliography compiled by Jan Longone appears on page 7 of the Newsletter. Some of these books are available from the Ann Arbor Public Library or the University of Michigan Library, and you are welcome to use any of the sources from Jan's extensive collection. This is not a requirement! We hope all CHAA members will attend, bringing along their favorite French picnic dish, Revolutionary or otherwise. The July, 1989, issue of *Gourmet* magazine has many wonderful French recipes that would be delightful at a picnic.

In addition to enjoying the bucolic setting and feasting on delightful food and estate-bottled wine, we will be entertained and enlightened with historical anecdotes from the era of the Revolution. You can help us out by bringing unusual and interesting items from various areas of interest: food, wine, science, literature, or politics.

July 14th, 1789. View of the Bastille from the gallery facing the boulevards

We will mail further details, including directions to the picnic site, to you before the picnic.

Bring friends and prospective members. Don't miss it!



Contents

Acquiring a Period Cookbook Library

Once you decide you want to cook, it can be disheartening to face all those books and not know where to begin. Here are guidelines to making those choices.

Jaelle of Armida

Among the more dedicated culinary historians are members of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA). Their interest is in all aspects of medieval life. The following article was written by SCA member Judy Gerjouy (under the nom de plume Jaelle of Armida) of Washington, D.C., and was first published in Tournaments Illuminated, the SCA's quarterly magazine. Ms. Gerjouy has kindly allowed us to reprint it. I note, with great interest, that besides the books specifically mentioned, the author comments that she has, not counting medieval manuscripts and cookbooks, more than 100 titles of interest to medieval food historians.

Jan Longone

This article is intended to help a would-be medieval cook start a basic library of books about food and cooking during the medieval period. While I feel that people trying to recreate medieval feasts should use original sources as much as possible, I also realize that this is not always practical. If you cannot work from original sources, good secondary sources are a must. In speaking of these secondary books I use the term "redacted," which means that the recipe or cookbook has been edited for modern publication.

Below you will find a suggested basic library of redacted cookbooks and books about food and drink of the period. It starts as a one-book library, goes onto three, then five, then ten. Obviously, not all of these books will be available to everyone, but this listing will serve as a guide. Those books not in print should be available through inter-library loan.

NOTE: Items marked with an asterisk (*) are available by mail from Poison Pen Press, 627 East 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218.

1. ***Pleyn Delit*** * by Hieatt and Butler

If you can get only one book to work from, this is the one I recommend. It contains the original as well as the redacted recipes and has a great many recipes in every category: soups, desserts, meats, fish, vegetables, etc. Most important, it is in print and in paperback. My only real quibble with it is that the original recipes are set in a non-standard typeface (to look medieval), which I find difficult to read.

2. ***Dining with William Shakespeare*** by Madge Lorwin

Another excellent cookbook, containing both the original and the redacted recipes. The main reason it is listed second instead of first is that it is out of print. It too has a great many recipes. The only fault I find with it is that the recipes are listed in menus (a set menu for various occasions) rather than by type (i.e., meats, vegetables, soups, desserts, etc.).

3. ***Food and Drink in Britain*** by C. Anne Wilson

This is not a cookbook, but a book about food and drink: what was used when, how it was used, etc. An invaluable resource for checking to see what ingredients were used in medieval times and how they were used. The only limiting factor in the book is that, as is obvious from the title, it is about British food and therefore is not much help if you wish to do a non-British medieval feast.

4. ***Seven Hundred Years of English Cooking*** * by Maxime McKendry (also published as *The Seven Centuries Cookbook)*

While this book has more than half of its recipes from non-medieval or Renaissance times, it has a great

deal that does come from medieval times as well as some interesting contemporary commentary. However, use this book with a bit of caution! The author does not always include the original recipe, and she does sometimes use out-of-period ingredients.

5. ***Sallets, Humbles, and Shrewsbery Cakes*** * by Ruth Anne Beebe

This book of mostly Elizabethan recipes is my personal favorite of all the redacted cookbooks. It has some lovely commentary about food of the time. Each redacted recipe has the original as well.

Now you have a basic five-book library. With the next five, we are going to get a little more specialized.

6. ***English Bread and Yeast Cookery*** by Elizabeth David

As the title goes, this book is about bread and yeast cookery. It is not a period cookbook, *per se*, but a number of the recipes are from medieval times. Since bread was used throughout the medieval period, in every European country, it is important to have your bread as authentic as possible for medieval feasts. Ms. David's book comes the closest I have seen in showing you how to do this. It has a lot of useful as well as interesting information about making good bread and about how to simulate a brick oven using a modern gas or electric range. The American edition has a fine introduction by Karen Hess.

7. ***Fast and Feast*** * by Bridget Ann Henisch

This book is about food and food habits in the fifteenth century. While it doesn't contain any recipes, it is full of important information about how food was prepared, served, decorated, etc.

8. ***Savoring the Past*** * by Barbara Ketcham Wheaton

This book is about the French kitchen and table from 1300 until 1789. While it does contain 40 redacted recipes from the medieval period, with originals included in French, I am recommending it mainly for the information it contains about food and cooking.

9. ***To the King's Taste***, ***To the Queen's Taste***, and ***Christmas Feasts Throughout History*** by Lorna Sass

King's Taste is a collection of about 40 recipes redacted from *The Forme of Cury* (Richard II). *Queen's Taste* is a collection of about 40 Elizabethan recipes. *Christmas Feasts* has five complete menus with recipes for Christmas feasts, three of which are from this period. Some of the recipes are in the other two cookbooks, but most are not, and the information on how Christmas was celebrated through history is useful and interesting. All the recipes give the original as well as the redacted version.

10. ***Food in History*** * by Reay Tannahill

This book deals with food throughout history, what was eaten when, etc. Like all survey books it contains some inaccuracies and some are things left out. Still, it is a worthwhile tool, especially if you are doing a non-northern European feast. Available in paperback.

You will notice that a sizable number of the books recommended are not cookbooks, but books about food and drink. To serve a feast in proper medieval manner, you need to know more than just cooking. The serving and the presentation of the food, as well as how it looked, play a very important role.

You will also notice that, with the exception of the Elizabeth David book, all the cookbooks contain the original as well as the redacted recipes. While there are some good redacted cookbooks that do not contain the original recipes, there are many more that are not good. I dislike recommending cookbooks that do not have the original recipes to anyone without a solid grounding in medieval cooking. Too many use, at best, questionable ingredients. This is not to say that the cookbooks that include original recipes don't use out-of-period ingredients; they often do. This does not mean that you shouldn't use cookbooks that don't include the original recipes; just use

see **Period Library**, *page 7*

Middle English Culinary Terms

I. Sotilté

Robert E. Lewis

Editor's Note: We are very pleased to have Middle English Culinary Terms , a new series of articles, in the Newsletter. The author, Bob Lewis, a member of the CHAA, is Editor-in-Chief of the Middle English Dictionary, a comprehensive record of the vocabulary of English between 1100 and 1500, in pogress at the University of Michigan. From time to time, he will comment on culinary terms from the Dictionary's files.

The Middle English word *sotilté* was derived from Old French and first appeared toward the end of the fourteenth century. It has the range and variety of meaning of its Modern English counterpart, *subtlety* — shrewdness, an act of cleverness, complexity, a subtle argument, craftiness, etc. — but in addition it is often used in a culinary sense, now obsolete in Modern English. The *Middle English Dictionary* defines this sense of *sotilté* as 'a culinary decoration for the table; a course of a meal; or a particular dish, frequently in the form of a historical or religious tableau.'

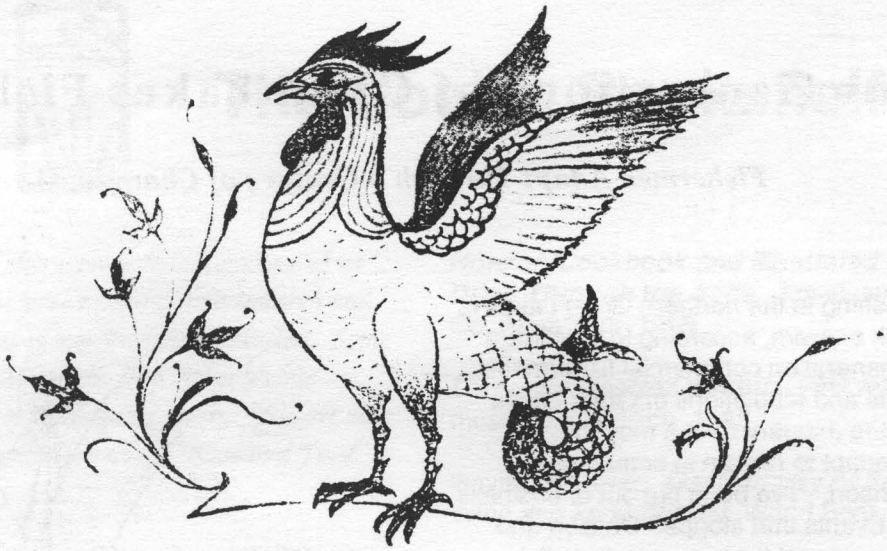
Medieval courtly feasts were intended to appeal to the eye as well as to the palate, and for this purpose cooks were expected to prepare *sotilités*, which, in medieval usage, meant either elaborate dishes that would often look like something else or sculpture-like decorations that would accompany a course. The best known example of the first variety is the so-called *cockentrice* (more accurately *cok-a-gris*, as in Middle English), which was created by sewing together the forward half of a chicken and the back half of a suckling pig, stuffing, baking, and roasting the beast, and then decorating it with a mixture of egg yolks and saffron, pastry leaves, and the like. Another example is *haslet* (Middle English *hastelet*), usually the internal organs of a game animal, but counterfeited of a mixture of dried fruits, nuts, and marzipan.

Elaborate sculpture-like decorations — the second variety of *sotlité* — were usually made of sugar, marzipan, or pastry (and therefore sometimes edible). They came in various shapes (persons, animals, castles, ships) and were paraded through the hall for guests to view, either between courses or accompanying a course. They are described in detail in the data accumulated for the *sotilté* entry in the *Middle English Dictionary*, and I reproduce a few of the most interesting quotations in what follows. I have not translated them into Modern English, but I have slightly modernized the spelling so they would be comprehensible to readers of the Newsletter. I hope they will give an idea of the ingenuity of the medieval cook and the extravagance and ceremony of the medieval feast.

The first, taken from the *Great Chronicle of London* of about 1450, is part of a description of the Feast of St. George held at Windsor Castle in 1416, with King Henry V and the German Emperor in attendance: "The first sotilte of the servyse was howe oure lady armyd saynt George and an Aungell doyng on his spurres. The secunde sotilte was seynt George rydyng and fightyng with the dragon with his spere in his hande. The thrydde sotilte was a Castell and saynt George and the kynges doughter ledyng the lambe yn atte the Castell yates. And all the sotiltees were servyd before the Emperour and the kyng and no firther. And othir lordys were servyd with sotiltees after here astates and here degree."

A second example is taken from a description of another elaborate feast, this one celebrating the coronation of King Henry VI in 1429. The quotation itself is from the chronicle attributed to William Gregory written shortly after 1470 and describes the *sotilté* accompanying the third course: "Oure Lady syttynge, and hyr Chylde in hyr lappe, holdyng in every honde a crowne, Syn Gorge knelyng on that one syde and Synt Denys in that othyr syde, and they ii presentyng the kynge to oure Lady."

For the feast at the installation of John Stafford as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1443, the following *sotilté* accompanies the third course (this abbreviated version is taken from a cookbook of about 1450): "A godhead in a sun of gold glorified above; in the sun the holy goste voluptable; Seint Thomas kneling a-for him, with the poynt of a swerd in his head and a Mitre there-uppon."



Cokentrice

Not all the examples in the *Dictionary* files are from actual feasts. In the *Book of Nurture*, a household manual in verse written around the middle of the fifteenth century by John Russell, usher and marshall to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, can be found sample menus for various kinds of dinners with *sotiltés*. Here is a menu for the first course of a dinner on a meat day: "Furst set forthe mustard and brawne of boore, the wild swyne, Suche potage as the cooke hath made of yerbis, spice, and wyne, Beeff, moton, Stewed feysaund, Swan with the Chawdwyn [a sauce], Capoun, pigge, vensoun bake, leche lombard [a spiced, boiled pork pudding], fruture viaunt fyne [a fine meat fritter]; and than a Sotelte: Maydon mary that holy virgyne, and Gabrielle gretynge hur with an Ave." This is followed by the menu for a four-course dinner on a fish day (or fasting day), with the *sotilté* for each course being a figure of a man representing each of the four seasons, beginning with spring and ending with winter, as follows: "Wyntur with his lokkys grey, febille and old, Syttynge uppon the stone bothe hard and cold, Nigard in hert and hevy of chere." The cycle of the seasons, so important to the Middle Ages, can make its influence felt even in the subtleties of a courtly feast.

Membership News

New CHAA Officers for 1988-89

Julie Lewis	Chair
Jan Longone	Honorary Chair and Corresponding Secretary
Dan Longone	Treasurer

To simplify our correspondence, Jan Longone has agreed to take the position of secretary and receive all general questions about CHAA, subscription information, requests for back issues, and changes of address. You may contact her at:

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Ann Arbor, MI 48103
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Membership Fees will remain the same as last year:

Individual - $15.00/year Family - $20.00/year
(Both include newsletter subscription.)
Newsletter subscription only - $7.50/year (3 issues)

Newsletter Staff

Susan Fussell, Editor
316 Westwood Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Judy Goldwasser and Pat Cornett, Associate Editors

Please address editorial questions and contributions to the editor.

Four Generations of Great Lakes Fishing

Fishermen Adapt Through a Century of Changes

Commercial fishing in the northern Great Lakes is literally a matter of sink or swim, according to L. William Carlson, Jr., a fourth generation commercial fisherman, who explained the trials and tribulations of Great Lakes commercial fishing at the January CHAA meeting.

"You have to adapt to remain in commercial fishing," explained Carlson. "I've been put out of business seven times myself." Events that stopped Carlson and fellow Great Lakes commercial fishermen include fish contamination, a botulism poisoning incident, changes in the fish population, and Indian fishing rights issues.

Today, Carlson Fisheries in Leland, Michigan, bones over 10,000 fresh-caught fish daily in the summer. Carlson also owns Leland's River Trading Company, specializing in preserves, toppings, and condiments.

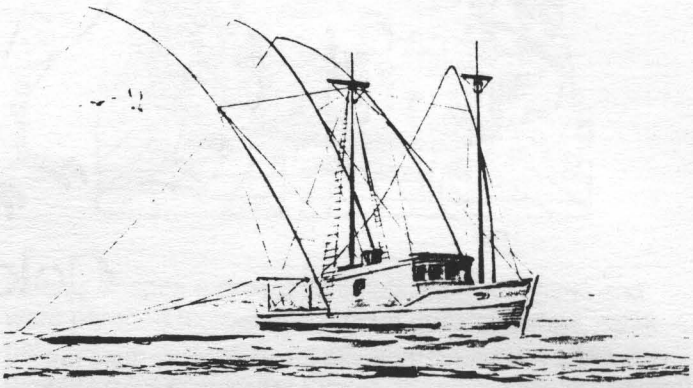
Carlson's ancestors emigrated from the Netherlands to North Manitou Island off northwest Michigan's Leelanau Peninsula in the mid-1800's. At that time, according to Carlson, fishing was still a seasonal occupation. All fisherman had two — and often three — professions. Some were farmers, fishing between spring planting and fall harvest. Many were also loggers during the cold northern Michigan winter.

At the turn of the century, Carlson's family moved to the mainland. "It was at this point that fishing became a more profitable, full-time occupation. Fishermen moved from cotton and linen gear to nylon. The gas engine came into being, so we didn't have to spend as much time sailing out to nets," explained Carlson. Today he uses 40-foot-long steel, diesel-powered boats and finds the fish with sonars and video screens.

The first major disruption in Great Lakes fishing came in the late 1930's and early 1940's when sea lampreys invaded the Great Lakes. The lampreys eventually killed many of the lakes' most popular commercial fish including salmon, lake trout, and whitefish.

The only fish that remained in great enough quantities was the chubb, a deep-water whitefish. Because the chubbs swam far from shore, many commercial fishermen found the effort to be more than it was worth and gave up. But smoked chubb became very popular, and the commercial fishermen who were able to adapt to the new catch did well through the 1950's and into the 1960's.

In November, 1965, commercial fishing suffered another setback. Three members of a Tennessee family died of botulism poisoning after eating smoked chubbs packed by a grocery store chain. The government immediately set up complicated new regulations fo prevent



another such tragedy. Most harmful to Michigan's commercial fishermen was a law making it illegal to ship smoked fish from Michigan. Chubb fishing stopped, and many fishermen left for more secure occupations.

"In the early 1960's, there were 8,000 to 9,000 commercial fishing licenses in Michigan," Carlson explained. "After the botulism scare, there were 1,800."

At the same time, about 1967, alewife overpopulation became a problem. They made up 98 percent of all the fish in the lake. Foul-smelling dead alewives washed ashore by the millions and polluted the lakeside air for miles. To combat the alewife invasion and simultaneously create a sport fishing industry, the state stocked the Great Lakes with salmon, a natural alewife predator.

The move was so successful that the state decided to encourage sport fishing further and in 1968 introduced "limited entry legistlation." Limited entry meant that the state would issue no new commerical fishing licenses, and that the only way new people could enter commercial fishing was by buying an existing license.

Commercial fishing, according to Carlson, hit another hurdle in 1971 when the state upheld Indian fishing rights demands. Commercial fishermen may not use specified prime fishing areas reserved for Native American fishermen.

Over the years, fears of contamination of fish by chemicals such as DDT, PCB, and mercury have temporarily hurt Michigan's commercial fishermen.

"The levels of chemical contamination have been dropping rapidly since 1965," observed Carlson. "We test our fish twice a year. They tested far higher 10 to 12 years ago on every count. There are drastic changes going on even now in the Great Lakes. You have to adapt to survive."

Judy Goldwasser

The Cook's Bookshelf

Jan Longone has prepared this bibliography for those of us attending the CHAA picnic who would like to research and prepare a dish from the time of the French Revolution. Some of the books may be available at the Ann Arbor Public Library or the University of Michigan Library. You are also welcome to consult Jan's collection at the Wine and Food Library.

Esther Aresty. ***The Delectable Past***. Simon & Schuster, New York, 1964.

Esther Aresty. ***The Exquisite Table.*** Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1980.

Pierre Andrieu. ***Fine Bouche: A History of Restaurants in France***. Cassell & Co., London, 1956.

Jean-Paul Aron. ***The Art of Eating in France***. Harper & Row, New York, 1975. 19th century manners and menus.

Craig Claiborne. ***Classic French Cuisine***. TIME/LIFE, New York, 1970.

Louis Colman. ***Alexandre Dumas' Dictionary of Cuisine*** (translation). Simon & Schuster, New York, 1958.

A. Davidson. ***Dumas on Food***. Michael Joseph, London, 1978. Also a translation of Dumas' Dictionary.

Christian Guy. ***Illustrated History of French Cuisine***. Orion Press, New York, 1962.

Horizon Cookbook and Illustrated History of Food and Drink Through the Ages. American Heritage Publishing Co., New York, 1968.

Larousse Gastronomique. First American edition, 1961; most recent edition, 1988.

Raymond Oliver. ***Gastronomy of France***. International Wine and Food Society, World Books, Cleveland, 1967.

Jean-Francois Revel. ***Culture and Cuisine***. Doubleday, New York, 1982.

Waverly Root. ***The Food of France.*** Knopf, New York, 1958. There is also a paperbook edition.

Reay Tannahill. ***Food in History***. Stein & Day, New York, 1973. Revised edition, 1989.

Barbara Wheaton. ***Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789.*** University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1983.

Anne Willan. ***French Regional Cooking.*** William Morrow & Co., New York, 1981.

Anne Willan. ***Great Cooks and Their Recipes: From Taillevant to Escoffier***. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1977.

Jan Longone

Period Library, *from page 3*

them with caution, and do some research on the recipes and the ingredients before you use them. Before using *any* redacted recipe, read the redaction and the original. Try to understand what the redactor had in mind, and see if she did it correctly. Experiment. Medieval recipes are not like modern ones, with all the steps neatly spelled out. Change proportions. Work the recipes around. It is quite likely you can find a better tasting, easier way to fix a recipe that is just as authentic, if not more so, than the one in the book.

The historical cookbook field is, at the moment, a growing one. I have given you just a small sample of what is available; there is much, much more. My own personal library, not counting copies of medieval manuscripts and cookbooks, contains over 100 titles. This list is only a start. From the bibliographies in the backs of these books you can get more books to increase your knowledge and your library.

Judy Gerjouy

If you are interested in learning more about the Society for Creative Anachronism, contact:

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P.O. Box 360743
Milpitas, CA 95035-0743

CHAA Fall and Winter Programs

Meetings are held September through May, the third Sunday of the month from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Washtenaw County Extension Service Building, 4133 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor.

1989	*September 17*	**Gods, Men, and Wine** Dan Longone, professor emeritus of chemistry at University of Michigan and founder of the Ann Arbor Wine and Food Society
	October 15	To be announced
	November 19	Vietnamese meal at West East restaurant, Pontiac, Michigan
	December 17	**Food and Mystery** Annual Holiday Participation Meeting. Please bring a mysterious food anecdote and a holiday dish to share.
1990	*January 21*	**A Traveling Gourmet in China** Raquel Agranoff, co-owner of The Moveable Feast, Ann Arbor

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