

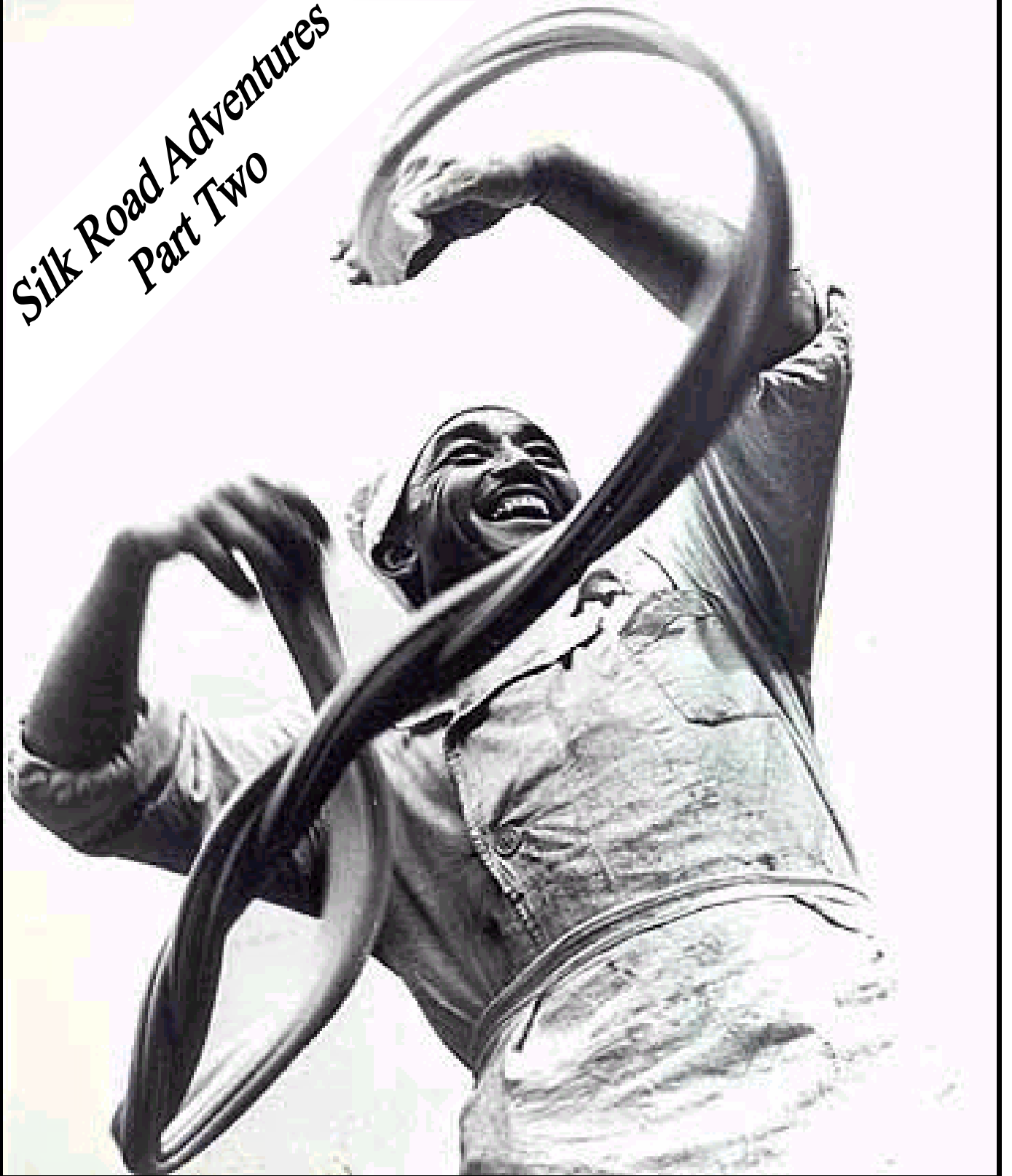


VOLUME XXI, NUMBER 3 SUMMER 2005

Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

*Silk Road Adventures
Part Two*



THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?



CREATING A CENTRAL ASIAN CUISINE FOR UZBEKISTAN

text and photos by Glenn Mack

Glenn Randall Mack of Austin, TX is a food researcher and writer with a history of professional cookery and a special interest in the Silk Road. Glenn and his Russian-born wife Asele Surina are the authors of Food Culture in Russia and Central Asia (Greenwood Press, June 2005). Glenn spent seven years as a photojournalist with Time magazine in New York, Moscow, and Central Asia, and trained in the culinary arts in Uzbekistan, Russia, Italy, and the U.S. He is an active member of the International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) and a past Chair of its Food History Committee. In 1997 he founded a professional cooking school, the Culinary Academy of Austin, where he is now Director of Education, and in 1999 he founded the Foodways Group of Austin, a cultural anthropology organization. Glenn is employed as the IT Project Manager for the Institute of Classical Archaeology at the University of Texas–Austin.

Modern Uzbekistan lies in Central Asia, among the most isolated areas of the planet, halfway between Europe and China. The swath of territory along the Silk Road, the network of exchange routes linking Asia and Europe, forms the heart of Central Asia. Since medieval times, travelers along these routes appreciated the grandeur of the civilizations and the opulence of the royal courts. Their exotic tales became myths and legends in the manner of the *Arabian Nights*. But few Europeans fully understood the people or lands of this region. When imperial Russia gained control of Central Asia by the 18th Century, the region became even further removed from Western eyes.

Who Are the “Uzbeks”?

Simply defining a term can be a very powerful act. Sometimes, saying “it is so” makes it true indeed. The “Uzbeks” as such did not exist until 1924, and Uzbek cuisine was not officially born until 1958. To be sure, Turkic peoples— speaking a mutually understandable language, sharing a common culture, and worshipping Allah— have lived on the territory of modern Uzbekistan since at least the 16th Century. But as we shall see, the “Uzbek” culinary culture is clearly a modern phenomenon.

Uzbeks have had a settled civilization for centuries, but there are still some Uzbek semi-nomads. Before

Russian contact in the 18th Century, non-nomadic Central Asians usually identified themselves first as Muslim, then as either Turk or Tajik (Persian), and finally associated themselves with a specific locality or tribe. The society was ethnically heterogeneous yet culturally homogeneous, with the main distinction being one of lifestyle— either nomadic or settled. Russians referred to all Central Asians as *musul'manye* (Muslims). City dwellers were called *Sarts*, a Sanskrit designation for merchants or town-dwellers. Nomads were dubbed variously as Kyrgyz, Turk, or Tatar.

It may be more accurate to describe Uzbeks as a cultural group rather than an ethnic group. They claim ties to the Mongol people of the Chaghatay Khanate, who mixed with the sedentary Turkic tribes during the 14th and 15th Centuries, although they have less of a Mongolic appearance than do Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Uzbeks share with Iranians a common religion (Islam) and culture (Persian), and their dialects, while Turkic, are heavily influenced by Persian. Traditionally, the Persians, or Tajiks, lived mainly in southeast Uzbekistan in the fabled cities of Bukhara and Samarqand.

A Cauldron of Influences

Defining Central Asian cuisine is as elusive as identifying the boundaries of the area itself. From Xi'an (the starting point for the Silk Road in China) to Istanbul on the threshold of Europe, the variety of dishes gradually diverges from one region to the next. Yet the similarities are more striking than the differences.

continued on page 7

Repast

ISSN 1552-8863

Published quarterly by the
Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor (CHAA)

- Editor.....Randy K. Schwartz
- CHAA President.....Carroll Thomson
- CHAA Program Chair.....Julie Lewis
- CHAA Treasurer..... Dan Longone
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On the cover: Georgii Zelma's classic 1930's photo of a Uighur-nationality noodle master in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

REMEMBERING KICHRI QUROOT, A DISH OF AFGHANISTAN

by Mermone van Deventer, as told to Randy Schwartz

Ann Arbor resident Mermone van Deventer (née Mohammadi), 75, was born and raised in Kabul, Afghanistan, where her native language was Persian. As a young woman she taught chemistry and physics at a Kabul academy for girls, then left the country in 1953 to work on a doctorate in Paris. There she met and married Eric van Deventer, a Dutch-Danish engineering student with whom she would raise four children. The family lived in Casablanca, Morocco in 1964-79, and in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia during the 1980s before moving to Ann Arbor. In the 1990s, Mermone was a Lecturer in French at the University of Michigan. She visited Kabul in October 2002 for the first time in nearly 50 years.

When I was growing up in Afghanistan, our cook servants were always from the ethnic group descended from the Buddhists. Their physique is different—they have Mongol faces. When Genghis Khan came to Afghanistan, some of his people stayed there, especially in the province of Hazara Djat, near the center of Afghanistan. Bamiyan, which was famous for the Buddhist statues that were destroyed by the Taliban, is in this region. Buddhism was the main religion in Afghanistan until the coming of Islam. For the most part their descendants remained impoverished, and did the worst work in Afghanistan: cooking, removing snow, and so forth. But today, they're a little bit better off.

My grandmother on my mother's side was named Zeba, and her father was Mohammad Yunis. Mohammad was a nomad south of Kabul, and his ancestors were, too. But he was very well-educated in religious matters, and he knew the emir very well [Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, chief ruler of Afghanistan from 1880 to 1901]. The emir was at war with the descendants of Genghis, but there was also some intermarriage and education going on. The emir wanted Mohammad to be a *qadi*, a judge, and he goaded him by saying, "If you don't agree to be a *qadi*, I'll have to bring a Buddhist in to be the judge!" So my great-grandfather agreed, and settled in the village of Lohgar to be a judge, with his own land. That was how my ancestors stopped being nomads.

When I was growing up, we lived in Kabul. But I also met my mother's uncles, and during the late 1930s and early 1940s, every summer for vacation we went to their village of Lohgar because the weather was nice there—it was a paradise. It was there that my "nomadism school" occurred: I'd play by running after the goats, and I'd get



**Mermone in her national costume.
(Photo courtesy of van Deventer family)**

milk from them directly, squirting it from the teats into my mouth. My uncles lived in a *qal'a*, a mansion made of mud, like a casbah, but very clean and nice. But their cooking was still that of nomads.

Making Traditional Milk Products

Nomads in Afghanistan make yogurt from the milk of their animals— mostly goat's and sheep's milk, maybe some cow's milk. You warm the milk and put in some yogurt from the previous day to start the souring. The next day it becomes sour milk, or yogurt. To churn the yogurt, you put it in a big clay jar that has two handles. You rock the jar slowly, back and forth every couple of seconds, to churn it and make butter. You can put some water in first to make this easier, because the fat floats on top of the water. You put a stick in to check that butter is forming, and then you take your hand and remove the butter. You can keep churning, and remove butter maybe two or three more times until there's no more left to skim off.

Butter was very important in Afghanistan. There was no oil, so butter was the only fat we had to cook with, except for sheep's-tail fat, which was not as high quality as milk fat. We would boil the butter and remove the charred solids with a piece of bread— it was delicious. The remaining butter is called *rughan*. It is a yellow, creamy

continued on next page

AFGHANISTAN *continued from page 3*

solid when it cools. It has no smell and is very clean, unlike *samneh* [a clarified butter prevalent in the Arab world].

After the butter is all removed, the rest of the yogurt can be put in a cloth, like a sieve, and left to hang to drain: this makes *chakah*. Then you can add salt, because it preserves it, and roll it into a ball of any size and let it dry. This is called *quroot*. After it was dry, they'd put the *quroot* in a can or something to keep it dry, and it keeps for a long, long time. In the winter, when you don't have a lot of milk and such, you have this *quroot*. It's to preserve milk for the wintertime.

To use the *quroot*, we had a special kind of *tagharah*, a shallow pottery dish. This special type, the *tagharah qurooti*, had angular stones jutting up from the bottom surface on the inside. You'd put in *quroot* and a little water, and rub it over the stony surface until you got something with the consistency of yogurt.

Preparing and Serving the Dish

I'm going to show you how to make *kichri quroot*. This was a dish that was eaten in both Kabul and Lohgar, but in Kabul not among rich people. Rich people in Kabul had *palau* instead. [Editor's note: this is the Persian word for what is called *pilaf* in Turkish, a dish of long-grain rice and flavorings, with the rice cooked very carefully to leave the grains whole and distinct.] At home in Kabul, we'd eat *kichri quroot* for Eid al-Kabir, the annual Festival of the Sacrifice, and that was true for lots of families there. It was also eaten as a special dish on other occasions.

To tell you the truth, I'm not a good cook—I don't like to cook! We never cooked at home. I never saw my mother cooking. Instead, we had a series of cooks. The cook would be a woman servant who cooked for us full-time, but lived with her own family. She would sometimes make *kichri quroot* at our home, but not in her own.

I will make the dish as we ate it in Kabul. In the village, it was different: normally, villagers and nomads wouldn't put the meat sauce on it, because they don't have it. They don't have vegetables and onions and tomatoes as nomads, they would have just the rice and beans and *quroot* and *rughan* for this dish, which is the traditional way of making it.

I take 3 cups of rice and wash it in a sieve. I use medium-grain white rice, but you can use any type that you want. I put it in a pot with 10 cups of water, and boil it on low for one hour or until all the water is gone. [Editor's note: at this point, the rice will be soft and mushy, but with the grains still more or less discernible.] Don't tell anyone, but I throw three bouillon cubes into the boiling water, which is not done in Afghanistan!

I also take 1 cup of dried mung beans, called *mash* in Persian, and 2 cups of water, boil it for $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour or until all the water is gone. Then combine the beans into the

rice pot and mix them, adding salt to your taste. This mixture of rice and beans is called *kichri*.

Qurmah [from the Turkish *qawurmah*] is any sauce used with meat. I use it in a lot of dishes. The kind we use for this dish is tomato-based. I chop 3 lbs. of onions and sauté it in 2 cups of vegetable oil until it's light brown. Then I add 1½ lbs. of lean ground beef; in Kabul, we would use ground lamb instead. Turn this until the moisture is gone. In Afghanistan you'd use fresh tomatoes, but here I use about 2 lbs. of any brand of canned tomato sauce. I add 1 tablespoon of a mixture of ground cumin and cardamom, and if the tomato sauce has no garlic or basil in it, you can toss those in, too. Cook this sauce on low heat for 1 hour.

In Kabul, we'd buy *quroot* and *rughan* instead of making it ourselves. In this country, it's hard to find *quroot*, so as a substitute I combine 1 cup of sour cream and 1 cup of plain yogurt with 1 tablespoon of salt. (In Morocco, when our children were growing up, I would use store-bought or homemade *labneh*, which is the Arab equivalent of *chakah*.) Then I add 2 tablespoons of dried mint that I've crushed into a powder, and 3 cloves of garlic that I've peeled and crushed in a garlic press.

When the *kichri* is ready, and the sauce is ready and the *quroot* is smooth, spoon the *kichri* piping-hot onto a large platter. Flatten it down with a broad spoon. Make a large well in the center, and spoon the *quroot* in and around the well. Then I drizzle 2-3 tablespoons of vegetable oil over the whole thing; in Afghanistan we'd use *rughan* instead, putting it on top of the *quroot* in the well and letting it melt and boil there, and then we'd put some chopped garlic in it. To finish the dish, spoon the *qurmah* all the way around the edge.

In Afghanistan, we'd eat this with everyone sitting around the dish, sitting on the floor with carpets and a tablecloth. People wash their hands first, and we start with a *bismallah* ("In the name of God, the merciful and compassionate"). At our home, everyone had their own plate, but in the village it was all from a common dish, eaten with the hands—the right hand only, as in the Arab world. The boys would often be mischievous and break the well in the center of the dish so all the *quroot* flowed out—then they'd blame it on each other!

Related Dishes

In Afghanistan, there are some other dishes that we ate made with *quroot*:

- *ash* is a soup made with flat pasta-noodles, kidney beans, chickpeas, *quroot*, and tomatoes;
- *ashak* is similar but made with *gandana*, a kind of long green onion that you can't get in Ann Arbor but you can in California [or in Dearborn, MI—see p. 6];
- *badinjan burani* is a dish of fried eggplant slices with *quroot*; other *buranis* are made with squash or pumpkin;

continued on page 10

Book Review

A JOURNEY SPANNING THE CONTINENT

Najmieh Batmanglij,
Silk Road Cooking: A Vegetarian Journey
 Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 2002
 336pp., \$50.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper

by Carlo Coppola

Carlo Coppola of Royal Oak, MI is a longtime member and friend of the CHAA. His most recent writing for Repast was "An Unlikely Pastry Apprentice: The Escoffier Connection" (Summer 2003). Carlo is a graduate of the Culinary Arts Program at Schoolcraft College (Livonia, MI), and holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago. He is retiring this summer after 20 years of teaching about food and culture at Schoolcraft and 37 years of teaching about Indian and Middle Eastern languages and literatures at Oakland University (Rochester, MI). Carlo, who has just completed a master's degree program in Family-Couples Counseling at OU, plans to move to the Los Angeles area and begin a "third career" as a therapist.

Historians and archeologists have written extensively about the Silk Road, that 4,000-mile overland trade route that stretched from the Yellow Sea in East Asia to the Mediterranean Sea in Europe. They have described and analyzed it as a link between Asia and Europe, important for over fifteen centuries not only because of commerce and politics, but also because of its function as a conduit for the exchange of technology and culture, especially religions, philosophies, and various arts and crafts. Fabled cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent were important stops along this route. More recently, additional scholars and specialists have brought other varied interests to the study of the Silk Road. For example, within the past decade musicians such as cellist Yo-Yo Ma have been exploring the musical dimensions of the Silk Road. (In fact, he and his Silk Road Ensemble will be performing at Orchestra Hall in Detroit on Monday evening, February 27, 2006.)

Food writers and food historians, too, have been investigating the culinary dimensions of the Silk Road. Among these culinary treatments Najmieh Batmanglij's *Silk Road Cooking: A Vegetarian Journey* is notable for several reasons. It is a culinary history of the Silk Road, whose scope stretches from eastern China, through Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, to Italy. Various essays, both long and short, synthesize and reflect up-to-date culinary scholarship. This volume is also a collection of 150 tasty, often unique, vegetarian (not vegan) recipes taken from the various places along the route. It is also a large-format picture book— dare I call it a "coffee table book"?— replete with hundreds of vi-



Najmieh Batmanglij gave a cooking demonstration this past June 23 at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. Here, she is making a dish from *Silk Road Cooking*, a cool soup of yogurt, cucumber, rose petals, and other herbs. (Photo: Randy K. Schwartz)

brantly-colored photographs of food, peoples, and places, most of them taken by the author herself. The book is also illustrated with maps and photos of art works in various media from various periods of history. And, finally, this is also an elegantly written collection of Batmanglij's reminiscences and food memories— for example, making holiday noodles with a gaggle of older women in her mother's kitchen in Tehran, or the author and her three sisters lapping up chewy saffron ice cream sandwiched between round crispy wafers. The food recollections are flecked here and there with quotes and anecdotes from the great Persian mystical poet Jalal-ud-din Rumi (1207-1273), the *1001 Nights*, and other literary and historical sources. Many of the features of this 2002 publication will be familiar to those who know Batmanglij's earlier volumes, *New Food of Life: Ancient Persian and Modern Iranian Cooking and Ceremonies* (1993, 2003), *A Taste of Persia: An Introduction to Persian Cooking* (1999), and *Persian Cooking for a Healthy Kitchen* (1994, 2004).

Batmanglij's basic premise in this book is that just as ideas and technology flowed both ways between the East and West, so too did "vegetables, fruits, grains and cooking techniques pass from one civilization to another, to be absorbed and transformed into local specialties" (p. 9), thus offering "mutual enrichment" to the entire stretch of the Silk Road. Because meat in most of these societies was eaten sparingly, usually on festive occasions, she has confined this book to vegetarian cuisine. Designed for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike, the book features recipes that "include the proper balance of proteins and carbohydrates" and that adhere to the "ancient philosophy— prevalent in all Silk Road regions to some degree— of balancing hot and cold foods" (p. 54). A native of Iran now living in the Washington, D. C. area, the author has spent a quarter-century studying the cuisines of the various countries through which the Silk Road passes. She underscores the point that Iran is centrally located along this route, absorbing, adapting, and utilizing foods that passed through the country from either direction. But she also makes the point that Persia (now Iran) sent food of its own out in both directions to both ends of the trading route. One such Persian food is— this will be astounding to many, I am sure— pasta! This assertion is likely to rile every culinarily ethnocen-

continued on next page

BOOK REVIEW *continued from page 5*

tric Chinese and Italian. Her take on the China-vs.-Italy debate over who invented pasta is the following:

Recent archeological and linguistic scholarship shows, however, that the transfer [of pasta to China and Italy] was much earlier [than the time of Marco Polo], and in both directions, east and west. Today, food scholars agree that pasta probably originated in Persia. The first pasta dish is recorded in a tenth-century Arab cookery book, *Kitab al tabikh va islah al-aghdhîya al makulat**, which calls it by the Persian word *lakhsha* (which means “slippery”), presumably because of the slipperiness of noodles. [...] It was probably the Arabs who introduced noodles, and the hard durum wheat necessary for making it, to Italy in the ninth century via Sicily and Genoa. (pp. 14-16)

A fascinating idea, certainly, one which I will have to investigate more thoroughly.

The book features nine chapters devoted to different foods: (1) salads, (2) soups, (3) eggs, (4) rice, (5) fruit & vegetable braises, (6) pasta, pizza, & bread, (7) pastries, desserts, & candies, (8) teas, coffee, & sherbets, and (9) preserves, pickles, & spices. Chapters 4 and 5 form the heart of the volume.

Many of the Italian dishes presented in this book— pizza, minestrone, and pasta with marinara sauce— will be quite familiar to most readers, as will be two American extensions of Silk Road food, California Brown Rice Pilaf (p. 144) and Minnesota Wild Rice (p. 145). But other Italian recipes, juxtaposed with similar ones from other parts of the Silk Road, seem new and different. For example, the tasty Sicilian Eggplant with Saffron Soufflé (p. 126) seems to have a genetic relationship with the delicate Persian Omelet with Saffron and Rose Water (p. 121). Ditto the Genoese Minestrone with Pesto Sauce (pasta is optional; p. 103) to the Susa Noodles Soup with Fresh Herbs on the opposite page. We learn additionally that eating noodles in this Persian New Year’s Day soup garnished with garlic, onion, mint, and sun-dried yogurt is a metaphor for unraveling the strands of our lives during the coming year. This kind of food lore peppers the entire volume. The Susa Noodles Soup— my favorite recipe from the score or more I tried in preparing this review— is given a full-page photo (p. 11), but is not identified by name.

My family is non-vegetarian; hence, my preparation of various recipes in this volume was predicated on serving these items as side dishes. Here, the Susa Polow with Lentils, Currants, & Dates (p. 156) was a family favorite, not only because of its taste, but also because it is quick and easy to make (20 minutes). The cinnamon and cardamom in the *polow* (aka *pulau*, *polau*, *pulao*, *polao*, *pulaw*, *polaw*, etc.) added a

complementary dimension to the grilled lamb chops I prepared as the entrée.

Probably because of my own ethnic food biases, I was particularly struck by two *crostatas* (more correctly in Italian, *crostate*) the author presents: the savory Sicilian Fava Bean, Garlic, & Dill Crostata (p. 206) and the sweet Sicilian Sour Cherry & Pistachio Crostata (p. 244). The dough for the former called for either butter or olive oil. I used olive oil, which imparted a richer, distinctive taste to the crust as compared to one made with butter. I made the sweet crostata with canned sour cherries, according to the recipe in the book. However, I hope to try it again with fresh Michigan sour cherries in the summer when they become available at my farmer’s market. Both crostatas won kudos from our dining club.

The book also contains recipes for nine different stuffed and wrapped breads such as Russian Pirozhki (p. 211), Istanbul Borek (p. 210), Uzbek Samsa (p. 213), and Indian Samosa (pp. 214-215). My favorite is the Afghan Garlic-Chive Boulani (p. 216), a small triangular bread stuffed with *gandana*, a vegetable similar to garlic-chives, which I readily found in markets in the sizable Middle-Eastern enclave in Dearborn, Michigan, the largest in the world outside the Middle East. If *gandana* is unavailable, scallions may be substituted. For the culinary exhibitionist, try the following: make all nine of these items, with accompanying sauces, for a cocktail party. The time spent rounding up all the ingredients and chopping them, not to mention putting them together, one by one, may seem like an eternity. However, the howls of appreciation from your guests is well worth it... I think. Once was enough for me. From now on I’ll stick to preparing just one or two at a time.

The glossary (pp. 306-324) offers a discussion of selected ingredients, running alphabetically from *agar-agar* to yogurt. It also presents techniques that complement the recipes. For example, we are given sure-fire directions on how to extract milk and pulp from the obstreperous coconut, how to peel a pomegranate, and how to juice a pomegranate in its own skin. Other helpful descriptions and hints treat ingredients that might be new to the western cook, such as *mahlab*, an almond-tasting ingredient made from the soft kernels found inside the pits of a wild black cherry. Another is mastic, an aromatic resin from a tree in the pistachio family, most of which comes from the Aegean island of Chios. I used this ingredient for the first time in making the 1001 Nights Chewy Saffron Ice Cream (p. 270), which has replaced my own Mango Pistachio Gelato as my favorite cold dessert. Yet another is sumac, made from the red-berried sumac bush— and not the poisonous white-berried species— which adds a lemony tang to Persian, Central Asian, and Levantine dishes. While this glossary is helpful and informative, more information could have been provided about a number of other ingredients, for example, *gandana* (mentioned above), *adivieh* (a Persian spice mix), and a number of others that are asterisked in various recipes. These, the author suggests, may have to be mail-ordered from one of three dozen groceries listed (street addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are also provided; pp. 326-327). We would, of course, expect Dean &

* This refers to *Kitâb al-tabîkh wa-islâh al-aghdhîya al-makûlat wa-tayyib al-at’ima al-masnû’ât*, or “Book on Cookery and the Improvement of Alimentary Nourishment and the Wholesomeness of Food Products”— Ed.



The scene at a *chaikhana* (teahouse) in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

UZBEKISTAN *continued from page 2*

Between the deserts and mountains, in the oases and fertile valleys, the Uzbek people cultivated grain and domesticated livestock. The resulting abundance of produce allowed them to express their strong tradition of hospitality, which in turn enriched their cuisine.

Hospitality—symbolized in the *dastarkhan* (a Turkic word for tablecloth, or great spread)—is foremost among the culinary cultural traits common to this vast region. More like a bountiful holiday table setting, *dastarkhan* refers to the prolific assortment of prepared dishes laid out for an honored guest. Uzbeks say *mehmon otanda ulug* (“the guest is greater than the father”), and they take it quite literally. The guest is given the best and the most, sometimes even to the detriment of the host’s financial well-being.

Numerous groups and cultures borrowed from and contributed to the *dastarkhan*. For Uzbek society the vibrant culture of Iran, to the south, was the primary creative inspiration, with later Arabic and Chinese contributions. Iran had a refined court cuisine beginning 2500 years ago. The cultural golden age of Iran, from the 8th to 10th Centuries AD, resulted in extraordinary scientific, technological, and commercial achievements, as well as sophisticated dishes made with food products from the Mediterranean to China. The region as a cultural crossroads contributed to the richness and variety of the cuisine. The result is a diverse combination of dishes, customs, and presentation styles where one can scarcely disentangle the contributions of the rulers and the ruled. The ancient eastern hospitality, the ritual

of the *dastarkhan*, flatbread, lamb, and cumin unite this area and its immense collection of traditions and produce. These items also set Central Asian cuisine apart from Chinese, Indian, and European fare.

From the east, the Turkic contributions to food in this period, such as *manti* (dumplings), *shashlyk* (shish kebab), *sumalak* (wheat porridge), and the milk products of *yogurt*, *airan*, and *kumiss* are mentioned in Mahmud al-Kashgari’s *Divanü Lügat-it Türk*, an 11th-Century Turkish-Arabic dictionary. He refers to pit cooking, grilling, and baking with earthenware pots. The Central Asian Turks had numerous grain-based foods, a reflection of their sedentary lifestyle, including the flatbreads *yufka*, *chorek*, and *ekmek*; a pastry (*katmer*); *tutmac* (noodle soup); and *halva*, the sesame-paste confection. The Ottoman Empire continued and refined many Iranian and Turkic dishes in its court cuisine from the 13th to the 20th Century, hinting at the grandeur of Inner Asian cookery.

Tea is perhaps the greatest culinary gift to Central Asia from the East. Though mass consumption of the drink appeared only in the modern era, tea was first introduced to Central Asia, Tibet, and Mongolia from China during the Tang Dynasty in the 7th Century. The dynasty exerted its influence from Afghanistan to Korea, and tea and teahouses gradually spread throughout the region. Bricks of tea were transported through Central Asia along the Silk Road to India and Turkey, and eventually into Russia at least by the 17th Century. Of the three basic categories of tea, green tea (*Cam-*

continued on next page

UZBEKISTAN

continued from page 7

A public *qazan* (wok) at a *chaikhana* (teahouse) on the road to Chirchiq, Uzbekistan.

UZBEKISTAN

continued from page 7

ellia sinensis) by far and away is the preference in Central Asia. Russians in the urban areas enjoy black tea. Oolong tea is conspicuously absent. The green tea is generally non-fermented, caffeinated, and yellow in color. Chinese sources point out that early Arab, Tocharian, Uighur, and Bactrian traders made a beeline for the teahouses in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), the capital of the Tang Dynasty and terminus of the Silk Road.

Ancient Roots of Hospitality

For more than a millennium, the rich Central Asian tradition of hospitality has been expressed through food and drink in the tea houses and *caravansarais* along the Silk Road.

The *caravansarai* was a way station that provided shelter for trade caravans, a hostel, and a place for nourishment for road-weary travelers and their camels. The Silk Road attracted merchants moving east and west laden with goods for exchange and sale from the 2nd Century BC until the 15th Century AD. In Central Asia all the roads converged, bringing the area into contact with Chinese, Indian, Persian, Slavic, and Middle Eastern traders and cultural influences.

The *chaikhana*, or teahouse, was based on similar establishments in China, and is the foundation of Central Asian culinary culture, especially in Uzbekistan. It remains to this day a social institution where a community or neighborhood congregates over green tea and traditional dishes of *pilaf*, *shashlyk* (shish kebab), and *laghman* (noodle soup). Always shaded, preferably situated near a cool stream, the *chaikhana* is a gathering place for social interaction and fraternity. Robed men congregate around low tables, centered on bed-like platforms bedecked with ancient carpets, to enjoy pilaf, kebabs, and endless cups of green tea.

In addition to providing nourishment, shade, fellowship and relaxation during the sweltering summer months, the *chaikhana* helped preserve many aspects of Central Asian heritage and cultural identity obscured by 150 years of Russification. Most every neighborhood (*mahalla*) has a mosque and a community teahouse, both influential social institutions. The *chaikhana*, literally tearoom, functions as a quiet retreat, a social center, a sacred place, a restaurant, and a men's club. The village or community elders gather here to share news, discuss business, make decisions, and comment on family and cultural matters. At times, the entertainment may include betting on animal fights, which can in-

A Cultural Transmission Belt

Drawing a triangle on the map— with the endpoints of Stockholm, Beijing, and Istanbul— neatly conveys the major cultural influences, not to mention the populated territory, of Eurasia. From the 2nd Century BC, the Silk Road connected China to the Mediterranean and on to Rome, with the bulk of its routes passing through Central Asia and northwards into Russia. Even before the Vikings in the 9th Century AD, the “Amber Road” functioned as a network of waterways for ancient trade between the Baltic and Black Seas. Although Marco Polo, Byzantium, and the Vikings are easy conventions for attributing cultural diffusion, the truth is that the process of contact and conflict was gradual and continual across ages, affecting in no small way the culinary cultures of Central Asia.

Islam became the main faith in Central Asia by the 8th Century. *Mâ-warâ-'n-nahr*— the principal trading zone along the Silk Road— became a center of culture and art, education, and spirituality. Bukhara and Samarqand reached their heights of brilliance in the 8th and 9th Centuries under the Abbasid Caliphate, based in Baghdad. Cultural inspiration came not only from the West with Islam, but from China as well. The cities grew into powerful states and crucial trading centers, attracting the finest artisans and architects. Rulers erected magnificent palaces, azure-domed mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, and public gardens. The Islamic applied arts of the 10th Century introduced new forms of elaborate glazed tableware to the region. Large, ornate dishes, bowls, and cups (*piala*) were festively painted inside and out. Glass mugs, goblets, jugs, and bowls became widespread. Also, vessels and dishes were cast or embossed in gold, silver, and copper.

The Central Asian region produced some of the greatest historians, scientists, and geographers in the history of world culture, especially in the intellectually flourishing period between the 8th and 14th Centuries. Such luminaries as al-Biruni, al-Farabi, al-Kashgari, al-Khuwarizmi, and ibn Sina (Avicenna) enormously augmented mankind's body of knowledge. However, in the West their contributions have been largely overlooked, forgotten, or underappreciated. The Mongol invasions in the 13th Century and the ensuing destruction were a profound cultural setback for the region, but the Mongol dynasty of the Timurids (14th-16th Centuries) rejuvenated the refinement of architecture, science, and arts in Central Asia.

— GRM

clude rams, cocks, and quails. The teahouse has maintained the Central Asian social order of patriarchy for centuries and helped to preserve certain aspects of Central Asian identity obscured by colonial powers.

The institution of the teahouse gained currency in China during the Song Dynasty (10th-13th Centuries) as a place of relaxation, fellowship, and refreshment. The teahouse architecture is fairly standard throughout Central Asia with a noticeable Chinese influence. Often a two-story covered terrace runs around the perimeter of the central building. Intricate wood-worked ceilings and columns, carved decorative window frames, and brightly-colored painted ceilings are traditional *chaikhana* touches. Other cultural elements include Uzbek silk for tablecloths or pillow coverings, assorted cushions for reclining, and a wooden interior. Many *chaikhana* cooks accept special orders in advance. For an additional price some places provide a wok, firewood, cooking utensils, and dishes for those who bring their own food. Customers have the option of preparing it themselves or entrusting it to the cook.

Soviet Crucible for Culinary Nationalism

Among the innumerable unintended consequences of the October Revolution in Russia was the creation of Central Asian states and their “national” cultures, including distinct cuisines. Early on, the Soviets encouraged official identities and literary languages for these nationalities, and in 1924 the Uzbeks claimed their name based on the 14th-Century ruler, Ozbeg Khan. Thus was the Uzbek nation born. As Soviet rule continued, migrations of Tatars, Koreans, Uighurs (Turkic peoples in China), Dungans (Muslims who are ethnic Chinese), Slavs, and Germans to the region added further cultural impact.

One specific example from Uzbekistan illustrates how the USSR’s nationalities policy affected culture and the publishing industry. In 1956, some 1200 delegates to the “Congress of Intelligentsia of Uzbekistan” affirmed that Central Asia is one of the most ancient centers of development of human culture. This occurred during a brief period of cultural revival following the death of Stalin in 1953. The First Secretary urged the delegates to take the lead in *developing* the nation’s culture. Cultural nationalists brought language issues to the fore, advocating the use of the Uzbek language in the administrative and social-cultural spheres. History books were rewritten, literature flourished, and the first Uzbek cookbook appeared.

Two years later, in 1958, Karim Makhmudov, a philosophy professor, cultural nationalist, and avid cook, wrote the first book on Uzbek “national” cuisine. His one-page preface mentions neither the USSR nor the Communist Party— a mandatory fixture in all Soviet publications. Instead he pays tribute to Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the great 11th-Century Persian philosopher and physician of Bukhara, whom the Uzbeks claim as their own. Makhmudov does his part to reclaim and revive traditional dishes and methods of cooking lost with industrialization, urbanization, and Sovietization. In his role as cultural nationalist, Makhmudov searches for origins and essences of identity and culture in the remote past to construct a long and continuous history of the Uzbek people and nation. Toward the end of the Soviet era, his works on tea, noodles, bread, and food traditions were published in the Uzbek language— they had originally appeared only in Russian.

By the 1970s, foreign travel to Central Asia was allowed to increase, under the auspices of Intourist, the Soviet travel

continued on next page



A Kazakh-nationality woman makes *qurt* (air-dried cheese) in Xinjiang Autonomous Region, far Northwest China.

AFGHANISTAN

continued from page 4



The finished dish of *kichri quroot* with meat sauce.
(Photo courtesy of van Deventer family)

- *qurooti* is *quroot* made into a soup; you add *rughan* and garlic. To serve it, you put a piece of bread in a bowl and pour the soup on top of it. This is eaten almost exclusively by nomads—only rarely in Kabul, and then only by old-timers.

Mung beans (*mash*) are used in many other Afghan dishes, too:

- *mash palau* is a pilaf made with rice and mung beans;
- *dal-e-mash* is a soup of lentils and mung beans, often served with bread or rice;
- *shu'lah-e-gushti* is a dish of sticky rice with lamb and mung beans. ■

Editor's notes:

1. Mermone is all too modest when she claims that she's not a good cook. Not only her *kichri quroot* but every other dish of hers that I've tasted has been absolutely delicious!
2. Helen Saberi, who includes a recipe for *kichri quroot* on pp. 173-4 of her book *Afghan Food and Cookery: Noshe Djan* (Hippocrene, 2000), notes that the rice-and-beans mixture *kichri*, also transliterated as *ketcheree*, is the ancestor of the Anglo-Indian breakfast dish *kedgerie*, in which fish often replaces the mung beans.
3. Françoise Aubaile-Sallenave, in her essay "*Al-kishk: the past and present of a complex culinary practice*", notes that *quroot* (a Turkish term, from a root meaning "to dry") is very similar to a more widely known product of the Fertile Crescent, *kashk* (a Persian term, loaned into Arabic as *kishk*), which latter, however, is often mixed with *burghul* or other grains before the drying process is begun. Her essay appears in Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper, eds., *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (Tauris, 2000), pp. 105-139.

BOOK REVIEW

continued from page 6

Deluca and Zabar's in New York on this list, but, closer to home, the list also includes Zingerman's in Ann Arbor (<http://www.zingermans.com>) and Rafal Spice Company in Detroit (<http://www.rafalspicecompany.com>).

The only flaw I find with the book is the index. It is not as complete as it might be and is only minimally helpful when trying to cross-reference ingredients in different dishes, for example. However, it is serviceable as it stands and will meet the needs of most readers.

Bottom line: This is a first-rate book that has much to recommend it and deserves a place on the shelf of every serious food historian and serious cook. It offers new and tasty fare from cuisines with which we are familiar, such as Italian, Greek, Indian, and Chinese, yet it also features delicious, healthy foods from Central Asian cities, areas, and countries whose names we might have heard only in childhood stories. ■

UZBEKISTAN

continued from page 9

agency. Hotel restaurants gilded with Asian art and motifs catered to visitors easily bedazzled by an isolated and mysterious land. They served Russian cuisine and a sampling of the regional Central Asian cuisine. Although these were still Soviet republics, this very public display of national culinary culture reinforced the locals' sense of identity and uniqueness in the international arena. Cultural nationalists worked to preserve or create national heritage through the revival of their language, religion, and arts, and in this instance, prepared the basis for political nationalism in Central Asia. The local élites certainly recognized the power of food in shaping identity. The other Central Asian republics, following Uzbekistan's lead, introduced their own national cookbooks in the 1970s. Two more spurts of cookbook publishing occurred: under Gorbachev in the late 1980s, and following independence in the 1990s. The newly independent states of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, created following the collapse of the Soviet Union, cover a territory about twice the size of Western Europe. By the time the USSR fell, the Uzbeks had already succeeded in creating a culinary cultural legacy, defining themselves through their national dishes, and leaving a written record for future generations. Cookbooks, hence, played a role in further refining the ideology of their respective national cuisines.

In addition to cookbooks, Uzbeks have embraced another modern device for transforming food from the ephemeral to the permanent: restaurants. In fact, dozens of Uzbek restaurants have appeared in Brooklyn, Los Angeles, and other areas with major Uzbek diaspora populations. (Curiously, many of these restaurants are Bukharan Jewish, but that is another story altogether.) While an outsider might struggle to understand the fine distinctions that separate the cuisines of the five new nations of Central Asia, the Uzbeks have positioned themselves ahead of the pack by quickly grasping what it takes to play on a world culinary stage. As long as their hospitality is not thoroughly commodified into a "service industry", the chances remain strong that Uzbek cookery will continue to evolve into an ever-distinctive regional cuisine. ■

SYMPOSIUM LAUNCHES LONGONE CENTER

by CHAA members Marion Holt, Lillian Paulina, Patty Turpen, and Randy Schwartz

“Mark my words: 10 or 20 years from now, there will be as many scholars from around the world coming here to study American culinary research as now come here to study the American Revolution.” These words, which helped launch the new Janice Bluestein Longone Center at the William L. Clements Library (University of Michigan), carried special meaning coming from John C. Dann, Director of the Clements, already world-famous for its Revolutionary-era materials and himself a renowned expert on the War for Independence. His remarks helped kick off the Center’s inaugural event, the First Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History, held in Ann Arbor on May 13-15, 2005.

The Longone Center for American Culinary Research will be a premier resource for the study of culinary Americana. The core of its collection will consist of the treatises, cookbooks, menus, food-industry ephemera, and other materials— well over 20,000 items in all— personally assembled over a 40-year period by CHAA founders Janice B. and Daniel T. Longone. The actual transfer of these items to the library, begun in 2000, is ongoing until about 2009. That collection is augmented by the rich holdings of books, historic manuscripts, maps, and other materials assembled at the Clements over decades.

In his remarks, John Dann emphasized that culinary history is still a very young field, but one with huge potential as a tool for the study of history. “Jan signed on in its infancy and was one of the true pioneers”, he said, in nurturing a scholarship that now, four decades later, “has entered its ‘teen years’.” Jan herself has been the first curator at the Center, and an endowment is being established to fund the curatorship beyond her term of service, as well as further acquisitions, research, publications, and other activities.

With the creation of this Center a kind of turning point in the development of our discipline, it was fitting that some 300 participants converged from across North America for its inaugural event. Culinary historians and other scholars were joined by food and wine enthusiasts, cookbook collectors, food writers, and others. Remarks from UM President Mary Sue Coleman, followed by John Dann and Jan Longone, opened the symposium. One of the presentations, Dan Longone’s talk on “Early American Wine-Making: The 19th Century Experience”, will be reported in depth by CHAA members Annette Donar and Sue Lincoln in our Fall issue, a theme issue on alcoholic beverages. Below, we summarize other parts of the event.

This symposium was many-faceted, and a huge success all around. It included illustrated lectures at UM’s Ross School of Business, a culinary musicale at the Michigan League Ballroom, a Clements exhibit of books and other materials related to the presentations, a field trip to Greenfield Village



Jan Longone makes some opening remarks. (Photo: Fritz Schafer)

and Henry Ford museum in Dearborn, and grand American repasts of various sorts. Synopses, participant biographies, menus, photos of exhibit items, and other information were compiled in a lavish 50⁺-page symposium booklet. This gathering was also the occasion for the founding meeting of the North American Culinary Historians Organization (NACHO), a network that will link together many different groups such as our own. More information can be found at <http://www.foodhistorynews.com/nacho.html>.

One participant from another library commented afterward, “The event was absolutely splendid both in content and presentation, and I plan to attend every Biennial Symposium to come. The 2007 symposium on regional cooking and the 2009 on restaurants and menus are alluring themes and my only regret is that I have to wait two years.” He went on to assess the significance of this research center: “The Longone Center is and will remain the foremost national repository for the study of American culinary history. For other institutions, like my own, that have American cook book or culinary collections, the Longone Center is a model for focused, systematic and cohesive collection development and, though we may aspire to replicate your efforts, we will never really be able to duplicate them.”

Collection Treasures

Much like many other casual observers, Curator of Manuscripts Barbara DeWolfe did not always view the Clements Library’s manuscript collection as a valuable resource for culinary research. But after she received an invitation from Jan Longone to give a presentation to the CHAA on culinary manuscript holdings at the Clements, DeWolfe claims that culinary references began to “look, for me, like ants coming to a picnic”.

The collection includes about 70 cookery and recipe manuscripts per se, dating back to 1698. But DeWolfe also thanked her assistants for helping to identify and catalog, so far, some 5,000 food and cooking references scattered

continued on next page

SYMPOSIUM*continued from page 11*

throughout other manuscripts in the library. In a presentation entitled “Recipes for Research”, she observed, “Everyone chats and writes about food, sort of like chatting about the weather.” Thus, food references crop up in both likely and surprising sources, such as in account books, household books, letters, diaries, commercial receipts, estate inventories, and military orderly books.

DeWolfe treated symposium attendants to an assortment of such references to give a sense of the richness of the Clements collection. One example was a comical letter from a boarding-school alumnus reminiscing about the menu and funny conversation at one of the meals. In another example, a man wrote to his mother in 1898 with a sketch of his wife peeling potatoes. “We have had that dinner and it was good. Jennie’s always are”, the man wrote. It sounded good, too: chicken, mashed potatoes, string beans, and “plenty of fixins for dessert”.

“Mapping Culinary History” was the subject of a talk by Brian L. Dunnigan, Clements Curator of Maps. He noted that food researchers can use maps of various kinds to identify climate and agricultural zones, trade and transportation routes, and the locations of farming plots, gardens, and food production centers such as creameries. Cartouches and other decorative elements of maps often depict aspects of food production or preparation.

The Longone collection includes, of course, many thousands of cookbooks. In his talk “Cookbooks and More”, Clements Curator of Books Donald L. Wilcox discussed the relevance of many other kinds of books at the library, such as works on agriculture and food technology, biographies of chefs and cooking teachers, and accounts of travel and exploration. For instance, John Lawson’s *A New Voyage to Carolina* (London, 1709) supplies much information about the foods eaten by colonists and Indians in the Carolinas at the time. Various Indian captivity narratives, belletristic works, trade catalogs, city directories, emigrant guides, and compilations of acts and laws are also valuable to food scholars.

Speaking on “Culinary Graphics”, Clements Curator of Graphic Materials Clayton Lewis treated the audience to a visual feast. His selection included farming photos, hunting drawings of George Catlin and others, lithographic drawings of agricultural and trade fairs, picnic and other family photos, photos of food vendors and preparers (including domestic kitchens, cooking schools, and restaurants and their cooking staffs), menus, advertisements, fruit- and produce-crate labels, wartime posters, cartoons, and satirical drawings.

The First American Cookbook

One of the treasures at the Longone Center is a first edition of the earliest printed American cookbook, Amelia Simmons’s *American Cookery* (Hartford, CT, 1796). Something like 17 subsequent editions of this work were published over the course of the next three decades. Anne Willan, founder of La Varenne cooking school in Paris and an internationally-known food writer and teacher, and her husband Mark Cherniavsky, a retired economist who, along

with his wife, is an avid collector of historical cookbooks, assessed the character and impact of Simmons’s cookbook in a joint presentation, “Amelia’s Inheritance: Formative Influences on *American Cookery*”.

Willan and Cherniavsky argued that Amelia Simmons was motivated both by a respect for British heritage and by stirrings of American culinary nationalism. On the one hand, the material culture of 18th-Century America, even in its frontier regions, was still largely that which had been transplanted from the British Isles, and Simmons drew freely from cookbooks by earlier British authors such as Hannah Glasse and Susannah Carter. On the other hand, an exciting aspect of her book was its use of New World ingredients such as corn, cranberry, pumpkin, winter squash, and turkey.

Like Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (London, 1784), which had been the most popular cookbook on both sides of the Atlantic during the 18th Century, Simmons’s book was directed to working-class women and had the character of a household manual. But compared to Glasse’s work, *American Cookery* was even more basic; it included only about 150 recipes, typically quite brief and simple. By contrast, Glasse included many complex and French-influenced recipes for soups and other dishes. Perhaps this reflects a difference in cultural level; as few as one out of every one thousand American households owned any kind of books at that time. It might also reflect material differences. While it is difficult to know intimately the overall cooking and household conditions, it is clear that American kitchen equipment during this period was significantly simpler than British, the presenters said.

The Taste and Texture of Authentic Food

Gesticulating with his hands, shrugging his shoulders and with a twinkle in his eyes, Ari Weinzweig, a founding partner of Zingerman’s Delicatessen in Ann Arbor, captivated the audience. He was dressed casually in his “uniform”, a black Zingerman’s t-shirt, for a presentation entitled “Almost Lost But Happily Refound: Traditional American Foods at the Start of the 21st Century”.

Ari was familiar to these surroundings because he has spoken to students at the UM Business School many times. He said that the students probably don’t like hearing that his successful business was built by someone with a degree in Russian history— and no business courses! Nor did his childhood in Chicago give any hint of his future interest in food, as family meals contained the typical fare of the day, such as Wonder Bread and canned peas. But some epiphany caused Ari to appreciate the finer points of cuisine.

Now one of his goals is to acquaint the public with tasty, old-fashioned foods and flavors that seem lost in our culture of fast, packaged, and formulated food. The focus is not on creating new foods but on re-discovering old ones. Ari pointed out that modern foods and their merchandising have shaped how people perceive food. When we taste real cream cheese without binders and preservatives, we might not recognize at first that this is the authentic flavor and texture of cream cheese. Recovering this appreciation and the technical skills that go into making such products has required that Ari not

only taste lots of foods and talk to lots of people at farmers' markets and the like, but also "do his homework" in the Longone archives and elsewhere.

In contrast to many others in the industry, Ari claims that staying in one locality is critical, and he is committed to the Ann Arbor area. The aim to "eat locally" is now a commonplace among slow-food aficionados, but Ari has deepened the understanding behind this slogan. He said that the essence of "eating locally" is to maintain a direct link between food producers and consumers. This is the ethos that guides him in creating face-to-face relationships with his suppliers, not only in southeastern Michigan but on his countless study visits to small-scale artisanal food producers across the country and around the world. The resulting ties have helped revive a market for a number of nearly-lost skills and products, exemplified by rye 'n' Injun bread (made from a blend of cornmeal, rye, wheat, and molasses), artisanal cream cheese, organic stone-ground corn grits from Anson Mills, SC, genuine Minnesota wild rice, Carolina Gold rice, long pepper, and flannel cakes.

The expansion of Zingerman's circle of businesses—which now includes a deli, creamery, bakery, coffee roastery, caterer, and the American Roadhouse restaurant— indicates that the partners have read the public correctly. Ari has also published a number of books, and the company offers classes for the public and for food industry workers.

The Roadhouse has a mission of its own: to bring back the original foods that people enjoyed in America one hundred years ago. About 70 symposium participants attended a specially prepared brunch there that included South Carolina corn grits, Hangtown Fry (a California Gold Rush dish of pan-fried oysters, scrambled eggs, and smoked bacon), hash, Kentucky ham, Indian pudding (a baked pudding of cornmeal, eggs, cream, cinnamon, ground ginger, and molasses), Pennsylvania Dutch-style deep-fried doughnuts, as well as breads and bagels from Zingerman's Bakery and cheeses from its Creamery. It was a delightful repast.

The Terrapin Fork and the Grape Snip

In 1800, less than 1% of U.S. households owned even a single silver spoon. By late that century, precious tableware was a fixture of the "Gilded Age". Exploring this transformation was the aim of Darra Goldstein in her charming presentation on "American Dining Etiquette: How to Set a Table in the Gilded Age".

Goldstein, a professor of Russian at Williams College, is also the author of numerous food articles and cookbooks, Editor of the journal *Gastronomica*, and General Editor of the book series California Studies in Food and Culture (University of California Press). She has just organized "Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table", an exhibit of European and American cutlery coming to the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York next year.

Interestingly, Goldstein noted, many aspects of place settings and table manners in America showed a French influence. The French "zigzag" style of cutlery usage, which entails transferring one's fork from hand to hand between

knife cuttings, was rejected by the British but was adopted across the Atlantic. Classic *service à la française* was gradually replaced by *à la russe*, which had been introduced to France from Russia probably about 1810. The latter style, in which courses are brought out successively rather than all at once, freed up table space and thereby encouraged the late-century fad of architectural-style centerpieces and other table decorations. It also helped lead to a proliferation of silver and other tableware.

Acquiring a full range of table silver was an important mark of social distinction in 19th-Century America. The silver fork had come into widespread use by mid-century, in part thanks to the discovery of large silver deposits in the continent. In the 1860s, designers developed a more rounded version of the silver soup spoon. Soup was eaten from the side of this large and deep spoon as a way to prevent slurping. Similar Victorian sensibilities, especially the desire not to touch one's food, underlay the development of many specialized, often patented silver implements, such as those for serving or eating terrapin, fried oysters, potato chips, sandwiches, or macaroni and cheese. Goldstein also reviewed the evolution of sideboards, candle-lamps, and napkin folding.

Tellingly, Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover felt compelled in 1928 to limit the number of silver pieces in a given pattern to 55, a standard that was adopted by the National Bureau of Standards and by manufacturers' associations. Goldstein identified a number of points of irony underlying the "wonderful excess" of the Gilded Age. Did the cavalcade of implements make eating easier or instead more encumbered? Did it make dining more refined or rather more distant from the food itself?

What Makes American Food Different?

Andrew F. Smith's thinking on the question "What is American About 'American' Food?" has deepened over the course of a series of talks he has delivered around the U.S. on that topic during the past year. Smith, based at New School University in Manhattan, is a renowned author and lecturer in food history, Editor-in-Chief of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America* (2004) and General Editor of the University of Illinois Press's Food Series.

Many before Smith have tried to address this question. Some have pointed to the well-known foods of our national holidays, others to the mosaic of immigrant and ethnic foods, and still others to modern commercial products such as Coca-Cola, McDonald's hamburgers, and Campbell's canned soups. In Smith's view, what is distinctive is not so much any one type of food as the characteristic content, processes, and values embodied in American eating.

In terms of content, the issue boils down to determining which ingredients, dishes, and meals are typically American. To answer this question, Smith said, it is less useful to look at Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery*— whose recipes he feels retain a largely British character, despite the admittedly nationalistic Preface— than at later works such as *The National Cookery Book* (Philadelphia, 1876), which he considers the first genuinely American cookbook. (This was

continued on next page

SYMPOSIUM *continued from page 13*

recently republished with an Introduction by Smith; see *Repast* Winter 2005, p. 15.) The Women’s Centennial Executive Committee, chaired by Benjamin Franklin’s great-granddaughter, compiled this book in response to a question often posed by foreign visitors in the period leading up to the American Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia that year: “Have you no national dishes?” They sent out invitations to women throughout the United States to contribute recipes, and they cast their historical gaze backward by including unusual Iroquois, Jewish, Spanish, Western, and other dishes. Besides this book, Smith noted, it is important to consult other cookbooks that reflect the influence of Southern (notably African-American) cookery, later waves of immigrants, and industrialization.

With respect to processes, Smith looks for the distinctive American ways of producing, distributing, preparing and consuming food. Focusing on one example, he said that our choice of grains was influenced by a series of developments that included colonists’ preference for wheat over corn, the degermination of grains to prolong shelf life, the use of the Erie Canal and, later, railroads to transport wheat to the East, the development of the McCormick reaper, the protests against refined flour by Sylvester Graham and others, and the introduction of hard wheat in the West.

Smith also identified a deeply ingrained, specifically American system of values associated with food. Among these are the commodification of time, the emphasis on efficiency (maximum quantity relative to cost), the commercialization of food, and a set of mores against the consumption of certain ingredients such as dogs, cats, and insects.

Closing Meals

Among other meals held in conjunction with the symposium were a Saturday night American Banquet, and a Sunday lunch at the Eagle Tavern in Greenfield Village.

The banquet, organized by Michigan League chefs Aaron Brock and David S. Young, featured Michigan and California wines, and such dishes as chicken breast accompanied by woodland mushrooms, dried cherries and a light cream sauce, grilled lemon-marinated asparagus and morels, and medallions of polenta. Diners were serenaded with a musicale of historic American culinary songs, some performed by the 40-girl Michigan State University Children’s Choir (Mary Alice Stollak, Director) and others by the renowned UM duo of Morris and Bolcom. Joan Morris is a mezzo-soprano, a scholar of American popular song, and Clements Library’s Curator of Music, while her husband William Morris is a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, pianist, and music professor.

The Eagle Tavern, known for preparing early American recipes in historically accurate ways, offered a lunch featuring such fare as pork shank with walnut ketchup; salmagundi, a cold side dish of dried sausage, cheddar cheese, and chopped egg, popular in colonial America; and veal collops, a dish of smoked ham and mashed potatoes encased in sliced veal and hickory bacon, oven-roasted with a rich veal gravy and pork forcemeat meatballs. ■

SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL

by Randy K. Schwartz

I was able to experience Opening Day at this summer’s Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall in Washington, D. C. The festival drew approximately one million visitors during its run on June 23-27 and June 30-July 4.

Food writer Joan Nathan was guest curator for one section of the festival, “Food Culture USA!”. This was the first time in the fair’s 39-year history that food was taken up as a central topic. Focusing on the themes of ethnic diversity, grassroots sustainability, and food education, Nathan scheduled displays, cooking demonstrations, and panel discussions involving dozens of food producers such as Keswick Creamery of Newburg, PA, Bruce Aidell’s Sausage Co. of San Francisco, Vanns Spices of Baltimore, and Ojibwa wild rice harvester Leslie Harper of Cass Lake, MN; celebrity cooks like Lidia Bastianich, Anthony and John Ugesich, and Paul Prudhomme; and activist groups like Seeds of Change and Slow Food USA.

There was also a Food Safety and Quality tent; a Professional Kitchen where instructors from the Culinary Institute of America demonstrated chefs’ equipment and skills; and a miniature version of the Edible Schoolyard, an educational garden that chef Alice Waters created for Berkeley, CA middle-school students. The Culinary Historians of Washington had a display of kitchen gadgets and utensils.

Food demonstrations were also a part of other sections of the festival. A section celebrating the centennial of the U.S. Forest Service included participant Beth King, a Forest Service cartographer in Layton, UT who has written the cookbook *Camp Cooking: 100 Years, 1905-2005* (National Museum of Forest Service History). In the Forest Foodways tent, I watched Saul Irvin, a state ranger/firefighter in Seville, FL, demonstrate how to cook catfish and hushpuppies in a cast-iron pot.

Another section on “Oman: Desert, Oasis, and Sea” included an Oasis Kitchen where French-born Executive Chef Jean-Luc Amman and several of his assistants at Al-Bustan Palace, a Muscat, Oman hotel, prepared national dishes like chicken *kabuli* and dried-fish salad. ■



Chefs Saïd al-Harthy and Samira al-Badri, both with Al-Bustan Palace in Oman, in a cooking demonstration. (Photo: Randy K. Schwartz)

MORSELS & TIDBITS

Pat Cornett has stepped forward to serve as CHAA delegate to the newly formed North American Culinary Historians Organization (see page 11). In conjunction with that, she is working to develop a CHAA website to be up and running before the end of the year. Those with ideas or information for the site should contact Pat at patsee@comcast.net. In particular, she invites ideas or designs for a site logo.

Pat will be teaching a class, "Cooking Up a Family Cookbook", for the Live Work Learn program at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor this Fall. The course covers the basics of how to produce a keepsake family cookbook. Participants will research and bring old family stories, recipes, and photos and learn how to assemble them into a heritage cookbook, perfect for keeping or giving as gifts to family members for holidays and reunions. The class will run on Monday evenings, 7-8:55pm from Oct. 3-24. Cost is \$65. For more information, e-mail Pat (see above) or check the website <http://www.wccnet.edu/lwl>.

The Community Life section of the *Ann Arbor News* ran a July 2 profile of CHAA member **Ann Fowler** and her years of devoted service as a culinary docent for the Longone Center. "I am learning so much", Ann said in the article. "I have never been an avid cook, but the history of cooking is fascinating." CHAA is very proud of Ann and all of the other hard-working docents.

"Bountiful Coast: Foodways of the South Carolina Lowcountry" is an exhibit running at The Charleston Museum through Dec. 31, 2005. The show was curated by Museum Archaeologist **Martha Zierden** through her long collaboration with **Elizabeth Reitz** of the University of Georgia. The exhibit explores the procurement, preparation, and serving of food among all social classes in this region in the 18th and 19th Centuries. For more information, visit <http://www.charlestonmuseum.org>.

The March of the Thousands

Was it the turning of the millennium a few years ago that set writers thinking about the Long Sweep of History? Whether for that or other reasons, there has been an abundance of interesting books with "1000" in their titles in recent years.

Colin Spencer, a British author and the former food editor for *The Guardian*, has written *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand Years of History* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2003; 386 pp., \$35 cloth). Spencer's focus is on England and his treatment is roughly chronological, with separate chapters taking up such topics as Anglo-Saxon gastronomy, Norman cuisine, haute cuisine, Tudor cooking, Victorian food, and the diet of the working classes. Spencer's treatment of food history as a branch of social history makes for very intriguing reading. For example, his discussion of Hannah Glasse's ambivalence toward French influence concludes that she "may enthuse over plain and economical cooking... expressing

disgust and horror for the French style, but the sub-text speaks powerfully to us. The Englishness of the former represented values of freedom, an elected Parliament, an English Church free of foreign domination, food without taint, fresh from the English soil, while food in the French manner was something quite insidious, almost, she makes us feel, a contamination, a creeping infection, to be much feared and halted if at all possible. She admits, with a cross sigh, that such recipes are to be expected, but makes her readers feel guilty for wanting them." One of Spencer's previous books, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism*, was reviewed by Don Fowler in *Repast* (Winter 2000).

Laura Schenone's *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003; 412 pp., \$18.95 paper) is also chronologically arranged. In such chapters as "She Cooked in a New Land", "Slavery at Her Table", and "A Woman's West", Schenone's theme is the key place of women in each phase of American history, most centrally in providing daily sustenance. She has pored through journals, cookbooks, and other records for evidence not just of the drudgery of kitchen chores but of the active, creative role played by women both inside and outside the home.

Felipe Fernández-Armesto, a history professor at Oxford and the Univ. of London, has written *Near a Thousand Tables: A History of Food* (New York: The Free Press, 2002; 258 pp., \$14 paper). Each of his eight chapters examines, in a fresh and provocative way, a "revolution" in the global history of food. For example, the "herding revolution" is seen in general terms as a leap in humanity's ability to feed itself by corralling populations, not just of livestock but of things like snails, or the bacteria that turn milk into curds. Other revolutions include the inventions of agriculture and of cooking itself, and the advent of global food exchange and of cross-cultural eating. Fernández-Armesto does not subscribe to the March of Progress school of history, and he warns especially of ecological damage and of the alienation bred by solitary eating of prefabricated foods.

The importance of slow pace and of social interaction in cooking and eating are also major themes in *The Pudding That Took a Thousand Cooks: The Story of Cooking in Civilisation and Daily Life*, written by Adelaide restaurateur-turned-author **Michael Symons** and published in Australia in 1998. This has now been reprinted as *A History of Cooks and Cooking* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2004; 400 pages, \$25 paper). Symons divides his thoughtful book into two parts. The first, "What Do Cooks Do?", examines the work of household and professional cooks throughout history and delivers a defense of Brillat-Savarin's gastronomic perspective on food and society, with its emphasis on enjoyment. Part 2, "Sharing and Civilisation", further probes the relation between cookery and life, deploring the social impact of commodity production and applauding an aim enunciated a century ago by Nikolai Berdyaev, "to overthrow the rule of money and to establish in its place the rule of bread". ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Except where noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, Sept. 18, 2005
Univ. of Michigan Clements Library, 3-5 p.m.
Jan Longone, lecture on the Longone Center
for American Culinary Research
(Co-sponsored with Clements Library)

Sunday, October 16, 2005
(rescheduled from January 16)
“Culinary Biographies”
Alice Arndt, editor, food historian, and
author of the forthcoming
Culinary Biographies (Yes Press, Inc.)

Tuesday, November 8, 2005
Joan Nathan, food writer and
author of the forthcoming
The New American Cooking (Alfred A. Knopf)
Details TBA

Sunday, December 11, 2005
CHAA Participatory Holiday Dinner,
“A Silk Road Journey”
Earhart Village Clubhouse
835 Greenhills Drive, Ann Arbor, MI
Details TBA



Map of Silk Road by Justin Odum, Silk Road Seattle Project, Univ. of Washington

REPAST
1044 GREENHILLS DRIVE
ANN ARBOR, MI 48105-2722



Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume XXI Number 3, Summer 2005

First Class