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# Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

## Historic Foodways of

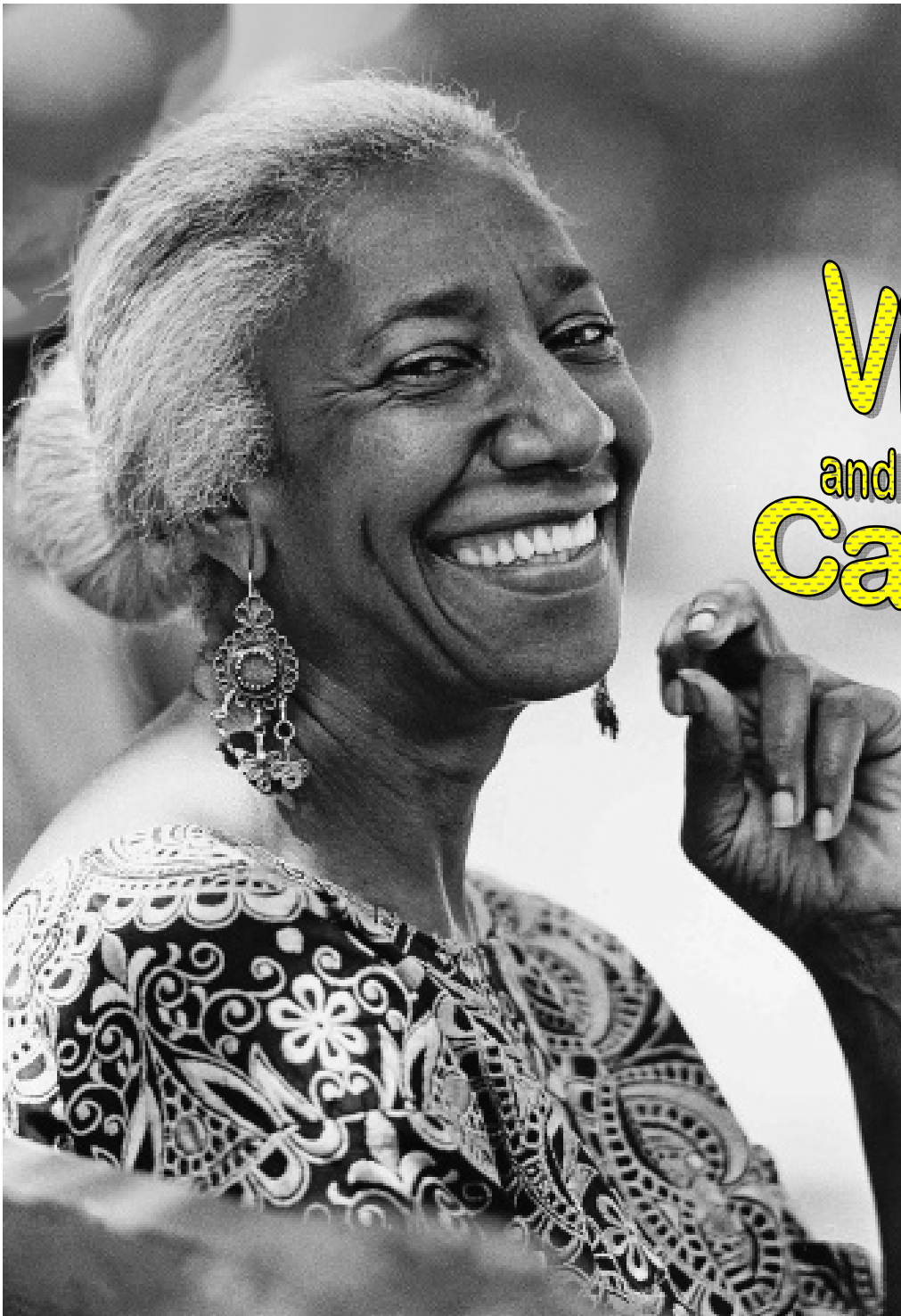
## Virginia and the Carolinas

Virginia-born  
chef

Edna Lewis  
(1916-2006)

See Damon Lee Fowler's  
remembrance on page 3.

Photo: John T. Hill, circa 1989



# CURDLED WITH GIZZARD SKIN



## A RECIPE FROM JAMES HEMINGS AT MONTICELLO

by Leni A. Sorensen

*CHAA member Leni Ashmore Sorensen of Crozet, VA is an African-American Research Historian at the Monticello estate near Charlottesville. In 1999, she was the historical technical consultant for the CBS miniseries "The Memoirs of Sally Hemings". In December 2005 she completed a Ph.D. at the College of William and Mary, with a dissertation on fugitive slaves in Richmond, 1834-44. Dr. Sorensen's recent writing and current research have focused on foodways and garden ways in African and African-American history. On October 15, she gave a lecture before the Peacock-Harper Culinary History Friends Group (Blacksburg, VA), "Straddling Two Worlds: In Jefferson's Kitchen at Monticello", and demonstrated the preparation of one of Jefferson's favorite dishes, lemon curd. Her previous article for Repast was "Taking Care of Themselves: Food Production by the Enslaved Community at Monticello" (Spring 2005).*

**H**ow does a European culinary technique become a staple in an élite American kitchen of the Early Federal period?

In the undated manuscript cookbook written by Virginia Jefferson Randolph Trist, she included five dessert recipes she attributed to James Hemings, slave and chef to Thomas Jefferson in Paris. One unusual recipe is for Chocolate Crème (with the variations of Tea Creams and Coffee Creams), calling as it does for the cook to "put 3 gizzards in the napkin [in a bowl] and pass the cream through it four times as quick as possible, one person rubbing the gizzards with a spoon while another pours." The final part of the recipe reads, "The gizzards used for this purpose are only the inside skins taken off as soon as the chicken is killed, washed, dried, and kept in paper bags in a dry place. The effect is the same with rennet. James."

Virginia had been born the same year James Hemings died, 1801, and even her elder sisters had been very little girls that year. By the 1810's, when the young white women began to take their turns opening the locked doors to dole out the stored foodstuffs, it was the enslaved sisters-in-law Edith Fossett and Frances Hern who cooked for the table at Monticello.

Within a week of reading the recipe for gizzard rennet I was scheduled to butcher 20 fryers, and of course I had to try preparing the gizzards in this way. The cleaning process was very straightforward, but my curiosity concerned how quickly the membrane that lines the gizzard would take to dry. Late Spring and Summer in Virginia are hot and often full of flies. Surely a drying process that took too long would be distasteful.

To my surprise, within 15 minutes of being stripped out of the muscular gizzard and rinsed of its gritty contents the mustard-yellow membrane was as dry as a potato chip! A paper bag would be a perfect storage place and at Monticello chickens were being butchered regularly for the dining table.

After a mad scramble to find references to this unusual (to me) source of rennet, my questions became "Where did James learn it?" and "How did this recipe get handed down?" Question number one will have to wait for more research, but question number two may have some answers. Before the death of Thomas Jefferson in 1826, his granddaughters Anne, Ellen, Cornelia, Virginia, Mary, and Septimia rotated duties keeping the keys in the kitchen at Monticello. The cooks during most of their lives would have been, first, Peter Hemings, and later Edith Hern Fossett and Frances Gillette Hern. All three cooks were related to and learned significant parts of their craft from James Hemings. Fossett and Hern were little girls during the years 1793 to early 1796, when James taught his brother Peter the "art of cookery", but both girls may well have been the sculleries under Peter after that and until they both were taken to the President's house.

At the President's house, Edith and Frances served and trained under the French chef Honoré Julian and all were supervised by the French *maitre d'hôtel* Etienne Lamaire. I currently surmise that the original recipe for gizzard rennet came into the Monticello kitchen via James Hemings and was used there beginning in 1793. It was there that Edith and Frances first learned it. Then while working in Washington the young women may well have had the technique reinforced. Later, as the Randolph girls began to write their various housekeeping/cookery books, they could have turned to Peter or Edith or Frances to learn the details of the often-used recipe and heard that the original had come from James Hemings so long ago. ■

# Repast

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# EDNA LEWIS, SOUTHERN CULINARY GIANT, LEAVES A LEGACY AS LOVELY AS SHE WAS

by Damon Lee Fowler

*Damon Lee Fowler of Savannah, GA is a food writer, a culinary historian, and a member of the Southern Foodways Alliance. He is the author of six cookbooks, including Classical Southern Cooking: A Celebration of the Cuisine of the Old South (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995), and the editor of Dining at Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., 2005).*

On February 13, 2006, food lovers mourned the passing of a giant in American, and especially Southern, gastronomy. Edna Lewis, a gentle soul with the mind and heart of a poet, died quietly at home, just two months shy of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

She was a lovely, graceful woman, possessed of a dazzling smile, dancing dark eyes, and skin like warm chocolate. With her thick, snow-white hair elegantly knotted at the nape of her neck, her signature dangling earrings, and African print dresses of her own design, she cut a striking figure.

But it is not her physical beauty that made Edna Lewis memorable. This brilliant, largely self-taught woman was, quite simply, one of the great culinary minds of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Born 1916 in Freetown, VA, a now defunct community founded in the 1840's by freed slaves, Miss Lewis grew up with the flavors of fresh, naturally raised food. They grew all their own vegetables, raised and slaughtered their own cattle, hogs, and poultry, and hunted and foraged for game and wild fruits and vegetables. The way that these prime ingredients were cooked was simple, and yet it was elegant in ways that more sophisticated cuisines could never match.

Throughout a career that spanned more than five decades, she championed the fresh, natural ingredients of her childhood long before it was fashionable to do so, and her cooking was marked by the same clean simple flavors.

She defied fashion and did not believe in being contrived or fussy with food. Her philosophy was as exquisitely simple as her cooking. She believed that if one took the time to find the best ingredients, and respected and handled them with care and restraint, the results would always be good.

She fed countless celebrities and world leaders from New York to Middleton Place in Charleston, SC, her culinary prowess has been celebrated by every major American food magazine, she has been awarded such prestigious honors as Grande Dame by Les Dames d'Escoffier International, and still her cooking remained forthrightly, unapologetically simple, never straying far from the rich heritage of her rural Southern roots.

In 1988, Miss Lewis met a young chef named Scott Peacock, who quickly became a protégé, professional partner,



and, when her health began failing, her caregiver. Together they published her last major work, *The Gift of Southern Cooking*, and today Peacock continues her legacy in the kitchen of Watershed, his restaurant in Decatur, GA.

Though Miss Lewis had long since retired by the time of her death, her lovely cooking remains more than a mere memory. Her legacy includes three earlier cookbooks, including *The Taste of Country Cooking*, a kind of memoir in recipes that preserved a rapidly vanishing way of life and cooking, which is to this day widely acknowledged a modern classic.

In fact, it has been more through her writing than her professional cooking that she brought Americans home to our roots and taught us to respect simple elegance in a world where restaurant cooking was becoming increasingly overwrought and pretentious, if not downright silly.

Though we were destined never to meet face to face, Miss Lewis had a special place in my own life and work. *The Taste of Country Cooking* had had a profound effect on me while I was working on my own first cookbook, and we struck up a correspondence.

She was quiet, retiring, a bit shy, but generous in spirit, warm, funny, charming, and wise. As our mutual passion for good cooking grew, our friendship grew as well, the old-fashioned way. We wrote real letters, not e-mails, and shared many long telephone calls. The quiet, musical sound of her voice is still bright in my memory.

Unhappily, our friendship bloomed just as her health and memory were beginning to fail, but the impression that short, precious time left on my writing and cooking—and on my soul—is deep, and I am grateful to have known her at all. ■

### The Edna Lewis Reader

- *The Edna Lewis Cook Book*, with Evangeline Peterson (Ecco Press, 1976)
- *The Taste of Country Cooking* (Knopf, 1978)
- *In Pursuit of Flavor* (Knopf, 1988)
- *The Gift of Southern Cooking*, with Chef Scott Peacock (Knopf, 2003)



# SOLVING A CULINARY HISTORY MYSTERY

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## TRACING ABBY FISHER'S ROOTS TO SOUTH CAROLINA

by Robert W. Brower

*Robert Brower is an attorney and independent culinary historian in El Sobrante, CA. His writings include several articles in The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America, and the Introduction to a reprint edition of Antonia Isola's Simple Italian Cookery (Applewood Books, 2005). Robert traveled to Ann Arbor to participate in the Biennial Symposia on American Culinary History in 2005 and 2007.*

Printed in San Francisco by the Women's Co-operative Printing Office in 1881 and self-published by Mrs. Abby Fisher<sup>1</sup>, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking* is believed to be one of only four 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Black-authored American culinary works.<sup>2</sup>

The book is scarce, since most copies were destroyed in the fire following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Two scanned originals of the cookbook can be found online.<sup>3</sup> Applewood Books published a facsimile edition in 1995, with valuable supplemental historical notes by Karen Hess.<sup>4</sup>

The Historical Notes by Karen Hess

Before the publication of the Hess notes in 1995, very little

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*Author's note:* An earlier version of this article was presented at a meeting of the Culinary Historians of Northern California. I wish to acknowledge their questions and comments, which have greatly improved this work. In addition, this article would not have been complete without the courteous and professional assistance of the staff at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia.

<sup>1</sup> The Women's Co-operative Printing Office was a commercial print shop located on Montgomery Street in San Francisco serving the legal and business community of the San Francisco Bay Area. The shop specialized in printing appellate briefs, corporate reports, and business forms. Although it printed some books, it was not a publisher. Roger Levenson, *Women in Printing: Northern California, 1857-1890* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Jan Longone, "Early Black-Authored American Cookbooks", *Gastronomica*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 96-99.

<sup>3</sup> One scanned original is part of the Feeding America project sponsored by the Michigan State University Library and MSU Museum ([http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book\\_35.cfm](http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book_35.cfm)). A scan of another original copy, this one from the cookbook collection at the Bioscience and Natural Resource Library at the University of California at Berkeley, can be found in the cookery collection accessible on the American Libraries page of the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org/details/whatmrsfisherkno00fishrich>). The latter scanned copy is fully searchable in a flipbook format.

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking, Soups, Pickles, Preserves, Etc.* Facsimile edition, with Historical Notes by Karen Hess (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1995).

was known about Mrs. Abby Fisher. The Hess notes, however, revealed some basic biographical information. First, Karen Hess reviewed important data from the 1880 Federal Census taken in San Francisco.<sup>5</sup> In this census, it was reported that Abby Fisher was 48 years old and born in South Carolina. She stated that her father was born in France and her mother was born in South Carolina. The census taker recorded Abby's "color" as "Mu" for mulatto. From these data, Karen Hess proposed that Abby Fisher was born a slave in South Carolina; her father, most likely, was a white plantation owner and her mother, a Black slave.

Second, Abby was married to Alexander C. Fisher and, at the time of the census, they had four children living with them in San Francisco. The three oldest children, ages 16, 12, and 10, were born in Alabama, but the youngest child, age 3, was born in Missouri. Based on these data and a comment in the Preface and Apology in the cookbook, Karen Hess correctly concluded that the Fishers were living in Mobile, Alabama in 1870. She surmised that their youngest child was born in Missouri while the Fishers were on "the terrible trek from Alabama to California."

Finally, based upon San Francisco city directories from 1880, 1881, and 1882, Karen Hess noted that Abby Fisher had independently established her own San Francisco company manufacturing pickles and preserves. This business enterprise, which was created by a woman who could not read or write, was complemented by the improbable publication of the cookbook of 160 of her remembered recipes. As Hess correctly observed, Mrs. Fisher was "a remarkably resourceful woman."

Because her reconstruction of Abby Fisher's life was based on very limited data, Hess's notes raised significant and interesting questions about Fisher's biography and the source of her culinary expertise.<sup>6</sup> This article is an attempt to answer one of those questions by expanding the Hess biographical notes to trace Abby Fisher's roots to South Carolina.<sup>7</sup>

### Additional Biographical Information

My investigation started with an expanded review of the relevant census reports. These include the 1830, 1840, 1850, and 1860 Federal Census of South Carolina, the 1860 and 1870 Federal Census of Alabama, the 1866 State Census of Mobile, Alabama, and the 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 Federal Census of San Francisco, California.<sup>8</sup>

Some of this information about Abby Fisher has been published elsewhere. For example, data from the 1870 Federal

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census, San Francisco, Page No. 9, Supervisor District No. 1, Enumeration Dist. No. 65, June 4, 1880.

<sup>6</sup> Rafia Zafar, "What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking", *Gastronomica*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Fall 2001), pp. 88-90.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the Hess notes, there is a very sympathetic and moving commentary on Abby Fisher's life, and the culinary significance of her cookbook and recipes, in Laura Schenone, *A Thousand Years Over a Hot Stove: A History of American Women Told Through Food, Recipes, and Remembrances* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003), pp. 82-85.

<sup>8</sup> It would have been helpful to see the 1890 Federal Census for San Francisco, but the bulk of the 1890 United States Census records were destroyed in a fire.

Census of Mobile and the 1900 Federal Census of San Francisco formed the basis of a thoughtful and expanded short biographical sketch written by Alice Arndt and published by her in 2006.<sup>9</sup> Using the 1900 Federal Census data from San Francisco and additional research assistance provided by the staffs of the Michigan State University Library, the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe, the Mechanics' Institute Library in San Francisco, and the African-American Museum and Library in Oakland, CA, a quasi-factual "story" of Abby Fisher's life was included in Tricia Martineau Wagner's 2007 book, *African American Women of the Old West*.<sup>10</sup>

These two recent publications do not, however, reveal anything about Abby Fisher's roots in South Carolina. They prove, by implication, that these roots cannot be traced with census data alone. Although experts in genealogical research generally agree that uncorroborated census information may be very unreliable<sup>11</sup>, as is the case with some of the census data for Abby Fisher and her family, the central problem with tracing Abby Fisher's roots prior to 1865 is the absence of a single piece of data to connect Abby Fisher to antebellum South Carolina.

This lack of information about Abby Fisher is not unusual. Since information about slaves as African-American persons was not considered important, the census takers only reported on the name of the slave owner and the gender and age of every slave he owned. There are very few names or identities of slaves in any census before 1865.

The absence of any connection of Abby Fisher to South Carolina in the state and federal census records inspired a complete search of all public records in San Francisco to look for a clue. This search yielded various property deeds, death certificates, probate files and cemetery records.<sup>12</sup> These records revealed one potentially important fact connecting Abby Fisher to antebellum South Carolina: Abby Fisher's father's name was James Andrews.<sup>13</sup>

#### James J. Andrews of Orangeburg, SC

Using the name, James Andrews, and a tiered fact filter for the 1830, 1840, 1850 and 1860 Federal Census of South Carolina, only one James Andrews qualified as Abby Fisher's father: James J. Andrews, a farmer with 2,000 acres of farmland located near Orangeburg, SC.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Alice Arndt, ed., *Culinary Biographies* (Houston: Yes Press, Inc., 2006), pp. 162-163.

<sup>10</sup> Tricia Martineau Wagner, *African American Women of the Old West* (Guilford, CT: Twodot - The Globe Pequot Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Richard H. Steckel, "The Quality of Census Data for Historical Inquiry: A Research Agenda", *Social Science History*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter 1991), pp. 579-599.

<sup>12</sup> Abby Fisher is buried in an unmarked grave at Cypress Lawn Cemetery in Colma, California.

<sup>13</sup> The San Francisco public records also reveal that Abby Fisher's mother was Abbie Clifton and that Abby's maiden name was also Abbie Clifton. The latter maiden name was independently confirmed by a September 28, 1869 deposit receipt from the Mobile, AL branch of the Freedman Savings and Trust.

<sup>14</sup> The tiered fact filter included: (1) name; (2) age; (3) occupation, i.e., farmer; (4) size of farm; (5) owner of a female slave under 10 years old for the 1840 federal census; (6) owner of an 18-year-old female slave for the 1850 federal census; and (7) no 28-year-old female slave reported in the 1860 federal census. The last three tiers of the filter were based upon

This James Andrews appears in the 1830, 1840, 1850, and 1860 Federal Census. Although the amount of data in each census varies slightly, on the whole, it is consistent.

In the 1830 census for Orange Parish<sup>15</sup>, James J. Andrews was recorded as the head of a family. The "family" included 2 free white males and 4 free white females. Andrews owned 15 male and 22 female slaves. In 1840, also for Orange Parish, James J. Andrews appears as "J.J. Andrews." There were 48 people at his property: 4 white males, 4 white females, and 40 slaves. The census stated that 23 of these people were involved in agriculture.

In the 1850 Federal Census, there is additional information. James J. Andrews is listed as a 48-year-old "planter" living in the area "between Santee and Edisto, north of Belville Road", Orangeburg, South Carolina.<sup>16</sup> The value of his real estate is stated as \$75,000. Andrews's wife, Ann, his two sons, James H. and Edward, two overseers, and a carpenter are noted. The accompanying Slave Schedule lists individuals by sex and age. There were 70 slaves, 34 male and 36 female.<sup>17</sup>

The 1860 Federal Census data are similar. James J. Andrews is listed as a 58-year-old "farmer" living in the "Orangeburg District". The value of his real estate is \$40,000 with an additional personal estate of \$90,000. Andrews's wife, Ann, his son, Edward, and one overseer are noted. The accompanying Slave Schedule lists 66 slaves, 35 male and 31 female.<sup>18</sup> This schedule also states there were 14 slave houses.

Ironically, this type of biographical research, which yields important factual background about Abby Fisher, has been called "historical trivia" when compared with "insights" gleaned from

*continued on next page*

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Abby's reported birth date, June 1831, and a presumed marriage date of 1859. I omitted from the filter the information, stated by Abby Fisher, that her father was born in France. According to the African-American research expert at the LDS Family History Center in Oakland, CA, where I carried out this search, such a claim would have been completely unreliable. This expert noted that many people in the middle country near the Santee River spoke French because that area had been settled by numerous French Huguenot immigrants, and Abby, like other slaves, might have assumed that her father was born in France merely because he spoke French.

<sup>15</sup> The names "Orange", "Orangeburgh", and "Orangeburg" are confusing. Over time, the names have been used for different places: the city, the parish, the district, and the county.

<sup>16</sup> This reported location is too general to specifically identify the location of Andrews's property. However, a plat map of an adjacent property reveals that Andrews's property was 7 miles northwest of the City of Orangeburg between Limestone Creek and the road from Orangeburg to Columbia.

<sup>17</sup> In 1854, Harriet Beecher Stowe published *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was her personal research documenting the depiction of inhumane treatment of slaves in her serial, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. One item that she cites is an Orangeburg newspaper ad placed in 1852 by J. J. Andrews offering a \$25 reward for one of his slaves, a runaway.

<sup>18</sup> Significantly, none of the female slaves were reported as 28 or 29 years old (although four were reported as 30 years old). This is consistent with what we know about Abby Fisher: based on other information, both Tricia Wagner and I had already surmised that Abby's marriage occurred in 1859, and that Abby had left the Andrews farm and gone to live with Alexander Fisher in Mobile, AL prior to the 1860 census of South Carolina. Given her reported birth date of June 1831, she would have been 28 or 29 years old at the time of that census.

**ABBY FISHER** *continued from page 5*

the recipes themselves.<sup>19</sup> (We will turn to those recipes further below.)

James J. Andrews was an important and influential citizen of Orangeburg County. In 1831, he was one of 40 “sundry inhabitants of the village and immediate neighbourhood of Orangeburgh” who signed a petition asking the South Carolina Senate and House of Representatives to incorporate the village of Orangeburgh as a city. James Andrews also served as a Commissioner for Roads and as a Commissioner of Public Buildings for Orange Parish.<sup>20</sup>

James J. Andrews died on September 9, 1863. His will was admitted to probate at the Court of Ordinary in Orangeburg. Nearly all of the records in the Ordinary’s Office were destroyed by fire in February 1865, when General Sherman and his troops marched through Orangeburg and burned the town to the ground.<sup>21</sup>

### The Culinary Landscape of South Carolina

Confirmation that Abby Fisher’s roots lie in Orangeburg, SC can be found in the ingredients used in Abby Fisher’s recipes, in the crops and animals raised on James Andrews’s farm in Orangeburg, and by a comparison of Abby Fisher’s recipes with those found in a contemporaneous cookbook from a nearby plantation. Although this determination will necessarily be based on circumstantial evidence, the essential background information is simple and straightforward.

Historically, South Carolina has been divided into seven well-defined regions. From the coast to the mountains, they are: the Coast Region, the Lower Pine Belt (or Savannah Region), the Upper Pine Belt, the Red Hills Region, the Sand Hills Region, the Piedmont Region, and the Alpine Region. These regions are primarily defined by elevation, soils, and climate.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sara Roahen, “What Abby Fisher Knows”, *Tin House* magazine, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2003), republished in Lolis Eric Elie, *Cornbread Nation 2: The United States of Barbecue* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. 220-222.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Marchant Culler, *Orangeburgh District, 1768-1868: History and Records* (Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> The Andrews will was folded. The fire charred and destroyed portions of the folds, although paper that was protected inside the folds survived. The readable parts of the will are, unfortunately, inconclusive concerning Abby Fisher’s relationship to James J. Andrews.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Mills, an engineer and architect, first enumerated these seven regions in his *Atlas of the State of South Carolina, Made Under the Authority of the Legislature; Prefaced with a Geographical, Statistical and Historical Map of the State* (Baltimore: F. Lucas, 1825). He classified the geographical “face” of the state as follows: the Sea Islands, the tide swamps, the inland rice swamps (a belt about 50 miles wide), the sand hill region, an unnamed red clay belt, the foot of the mountains (piedmont), and the mountains. This seven-part division of South Carolina was still recognized as valid after the turn of the century; see Ebbie Julian Watson, *Handbook of South Carolina; Resources, Institutions and Industries of the State; a Summary of the Statistics of Agriculture, Manufactures, Geography, Climate, Geology and Physiography, Minerals and Mining, Education, Transportation, Commerce, Government, Etc., Etc.*, Second Ed. (Columbia, SC: The State Company, 1908), pp. 66-68.

The first region, the Coast Region, is land at, or just above, sea level.<sup>23</sup> This region includes the Sea Islands, certain salt marshes, and the southern portion of the State’s shoreline. The commercial crop of the Coast region was long-staple cotton. Orange and lemon trees were common. The Lower Pine Belt, or Savannah, is the second region, paralleling the Coast Region; it is low and flat with a maximum elevation of 134 feet above sea level. Some of this land is subject to the influence of the tide, while other portions, depending on elevation, are completely above tidewater. Rice was the commercial crop of this region.

Orangeburg lies in the third region, the Upper Pine Belt, or Central Cotton Belt. This region, which irregularly parallels and interlaces with the Lower Pine Belt, has an elevation of 130-250 feet. In the Upper Pine Belt, there was sufficient water flow in rivers and most creeks to support mills. There were, however, some large inland swamps adjacent to these rivers, and smaller swamps near creeks and streams. Crops in this region included cotton, corn, rice, sweet potatoes, oats, rye, and wheat. Fish was abundant.

The Red Hills are fourth. Named for their red clay soils, these hills have an elevation of 300-600 feet and a much drier climate. The staple crops were cotton and a variety of grains. The fifth region is the chain of Sand Hills that abut the Red Hills at a higher elevation, 600-700 feet. Because of its soil, this region is sometimes called the Pine Barrens. Notwithstanding its dreary title, the region had a rich commercial agricultural production of cotton, corn, grains, vegetables, and fruits.

The Piedmont (“foot of the mountains”) is the sixth region. It starts the back country of South Carolina. With an elevation of 400-800 feet, it was suitable for cotton, grains, and grasses for livestock and dairy animals. The seventh and last region is the Alpine (mountain) region in the northwest corner of the state, with an elevation of 900-3,430 feet.

For ease of analysis of its culinary landscape<sup>24</sup>, South Carolina can be divided into three distinct zones: the low country, the middle country, and the up country. The low country includes the Coast Region and the Lower Pine Belt. The low country was generally a low, flat, and level coastal plain with malaria-infested cypress swamps and a large slave-driven rice plantation economy. The climate is sub-tropical. The zone is narrow; together, both regions are about 50 miles wide.<sup>25</sup> The middle country, which includes the Upper Pine Belt and the Red and Sand Hills, is at a

<sup>23</sup> The following details about the regions are based on M. B. Hillyard, *The New South: A Description of the Southern States, Noting Each State Separately, and Giving Their Distinctive Features and Most Salient Characteristics* (Baltimore: The Manufacturers’ Record Co., 1887), pp. 143-155.

<sup>24</sup> Landscape means “land shaped by human hands”. Mart A. Stewart, “What Nature Suffers to Groe”: Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 11-12.

<sup>25</sup> In his cookbook, *Hoppin’ John’s Lowcountry Cooking: Recipes and Ruminations from Charleston and the Carolina Coastal Plain* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), John Martin Taylor states that the low country extends from the coast “inland about eighty miles to the Fall Line” (p. 3). It is historically erroneous to expand the low country to the Fall Line. This division overly simplifies South Carolina’s culinary landscape into low country and up country. With such an approach, the special character of the middle country is slighted.

higher elevation, with flowing rivers and streams, and pine forests. With its more temperate climate, it supports a very diverse array of crops. The up country is the Piedmont and Alpine regions. At a still higher elevation with different soils, a sub-temperate climate and a longer growing season, its agricultural production is less diverse.

This three-part division of South Carolina was also extended to its population:

South Carolina, like a certain Roman province made famous by Julius Caesar, is divided geologically and topographically into three parts, significantly designated as low, middle, and up country. It may therefore be said to be a State of three altitudes, three climates, three soils; and since these largely determine the economic and industrial activities of the inhabitants, which in turn shape and color their history, their character and culture, we may add, three peoples. Not separate and distinct peoples, to be sure. To a stranger, indeed, the people would have appeared to be practically homogeneous, so slight were their differences. But these slight differences among men are oftentimes the very ones that cause the most trouble.<sup>26</sup>

With this background information in mind, does Abby Fisher's cookbook reflect a foundation grounded in the culinary landscape of South Carolina's Upper Pine Belt or, more broadly, its middle country? To answer this question, three factors must be considered. First, were the ingredients used in Abby Fisher's recipes those associated with Orangeburg and the middle country? Second, were the specific crops raised on James Andrews's farm in Orangeburg reflected in the recipes in the cookbook? Third, how does Abby Fisher's cookbook compare to any other nearby and contemporaneous cookbook?

#### Abby Fisher's Ingredients

The recipes in Abby Fisher's cookbook called for a wide variety of ingredients. Reading a list of numerous ingredients will be a tedious assignment, for which I apologize, but the goal is to decide if the ingredients *as a group* are typical of a certain location, i.e., the low, middle, or up country of South Carolina.

Abby Fisher's meat, poultry, and seafood dishes utilized veal, beef, lamb, pork, venison, chicken, turkey, quail, duck (wild and domestic), turtle, fish, crab, shrimp, oysters, and clams. There were more than 40 fruits and vegetables. Many were predictable; more than one was surprising. These fruits and vegetables were corn, rice, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, cauliflower, "mangoes" (bell peppers), chili peppers, "ochra" (okra), tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, ginger root, celery, eggplant, lemons, oranges, cling peaches, pears, plums, apples, crab apples, apricots, quinces, cherries, prunes, currants (fresh), watermelon, cranberries, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackberries, rhubarb, raisins, citron, pineapple, and "cocoanut".

Common dairy products—butter, cream, milk, and cheese—were mentioned in the recipes. For leavening, Abby Fisher called for soda, yeast, and yeast powder. There was no shortage of sweeteners and spices. These were sugar, dark molasses, sage,

mint, thyme, mustard seed, mustard (dry), celery seed, parsley, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, allspice, cayenne pepper, and turmeric. The almond was the only nut mentioned in the cookbook, and the only macaroni was vermicelli.<sup>27</sup> There is one named commercial ingredient, Cox's gelatine.

Some of these ingredients were used in large quantities. For example, 50 bell peppers were needed in her recipe for pepper mangoes (#81). For other recipes you might need a peck of cucumbers, a peck of plums, a peck of ripe tomatoes, or a peck of young carrots. For her spiced round (#114), which was spiced and marinated in vinegar for a week, Abby Fisher specified a 20-pound round of beef.

Finally, in terms of frequency, there are a significant number of peach recipes: Peach Pie (#39), Sweet Pickle Peach (#83), Brandy Peaches No. 1 (#89), Brandy Peaches No. 2 (#90), Marmalade Peach (#99), Preserved Peaches (#132), and Peach Cobbler (#143).

The ingredients list alone and the large number of peach recipes support a strong inference that Abby Fisher's cookbook is not a low country cookbook.<sup>28</sup>

#### Agricultural Production on the Andrews Farm

The Andrews family farm was located approximately 7 miles northwest of Orangeburg, near Limestone Creek. In 1850, the farm had 600 improved acres with 1400 unimproved.<sup>29</sup> That year, James Andrews reported that there were 10 horses, 10 asses and mules, 15 milk cows, two working oxen, 60 other cattle, 75 sheep, and 75 swine on the farm. The sheep produced 100 pounds of wool; from the milk cows, there were 156 pounds of butter. The farm's other agricultural production included 2,000 bushels of Indian corn, 400 bushels of oats, 3,200 pounds of rice, 1,000 pounds of sweet potatoes, and 300 pounds of peas and beans. The ginned cotton production was 18,400 pounds.<sup>30</sup>

By 1860, the amount of improved property at the farm had doubled to 1,200 acres. Rice production, however, had been abandoned, while the ginned cotton production increased to 28,400 pounds.<sup>31</sup> The number of livestock remained essentially the same except for sheep, which decreased to 30, and swine,

*continued on page 14*

<sup>27</sup> There is a recipe for homemade "vermecelli" in Mrs. Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife: or, Methodical Cook*. Stereotype Edition, with Amendments and Additions (Baltimore: John Plaskitt, 1836), p. 85.

<sup>28</sup> The immediate vicinity of Orangeburg was, and is, an excellent location for peach orchards. See E. J. Watson (cited in fn. 22 above), p. 348.

<sup>29</sup> Unimproved land does not mean unused land. Venison was an important food source in the Old South, and cattle were left to graze in the forest. "The [pine] forests certainly were not ideal grazing by any means, but as a cattle-producing medium they provided animals at low cost with little effort." Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp. 70-74, 133-137.

<sup>30</sup> These data are from the 1850 and 1860 Federal Census, which included a schedule requiring a limited disclosure of the agricultural and manufacturing output of every household.

<sup>31</sup> With the increase of usable acreage and the focus on cotton, the Andrews family farm was technically a "plantation". Merle Prunty, Jr., "The Renaissance of the Southern Plantation", *Geographical Review*, Vol. 45, No. 4. (Oct. 1955), pp. 459-491.

<sup>26</sup> Josiah Morse, "A Social Interpretation: South Carolina", *Social Forces*, Vol. 4, No. 4. (Jun. 1926), p. 690.



# STIRRING THINGS UP



## BRUNSWICK STEW

by John Drew Clary

*John D. Clary, 57, is a native of Lawrenceville, the seat of Brunswick County in far southern Virginia, and is President of the Brunswick Box Company there. He has been cooking Brunswick Stew for hungry and appreciative groups of people since 1973.*

**B**runswick stew, according to most history books and a proclamation of the Virginia General Assembly, was first cooked in Brunswick County, VA on the banks of the Nottoway River in 1828 for a hunting party of Dr. Creed Haskins by a gentleman known as Uncle Jimmy Matthews. He probably used squirrel (killed by the hunting party) as the main meat and then combined whatever vegetables and seasonings he had, possibly onions and stale bread.

The exact details of the 1828 event are not available. Some reports say that Matthews was the slave cook of Haskins. One characterizes the incident as a political rally rather than a hunting party (Haskins later served as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates in 1839-41). There are numerous books on Brunswick Stew at the Meherrin Regional Library in Lawrenceville. Readers interested in pursuing the historical details can contact Diane Wagner, public-service coordinator there (434-848-2418), who has some documents from county records and from the Virginia Genealogical Society relating to the 1828 event.

In 2007, most of the stews cooked in Brunswick County, VA use chicken as the base meat. Usually, bacon, fatback pork, hog jowls, or smoked midlin' meat is added as seasoning meat, and of course to add fat for the cooking process (see the recipe on the next page). Quite a few of the cooks, better known as stewmasters, add some type of beef as well. The basic vegetables are white potatoes, tomatoes, onions, butterbeans (limas) and corn. Some stewmasters add carrots, string beans, or other vegetables to their liking or, as probably in the "olden days", whatever they have left over from the week. Seasonings are generally salt, red and black pepper, and some use sugar.

### Stewing as a Way of Life

Cooking Brunswick stew and becoming a stewmaster has been a labor of love for me. It has afforded me the opportunity to meet some wonderful people and travel to some different places to share this delicious stew with others around the country.

My training began in 1973 when I joined the Lawrenceville Volunteer Fire Department and was lucky enough to be a friend of McGuire Thomas, the stewmaster for the department at that time. McGuire was off from work on Tuesdays, so that is when we cooked the stew. Back then we would cook only two-three times per year. McGuire provided me with detailed instructions on stew preparation and how to adapt to the changes that may need to be made based on ingredients you have for each stew.



**John Clary (left) and a colleague use paddles to stir up a batch of Brunswick Stew.**  
(Photo: Morgan Miller/ Smithsonian Institution)

When the lack of other helpers on Tuesdays forced us to cook on Saturdays, I assumed the role of stewmaster, probably in 1974-5. I was assisted by fellow stewmasters Harold Blick, Lonnie Moore, and Phil Batchelor. We worked together as a team.

The 50-gallon cast-iron stew pot that I first cooked in belonged to Robert F. Pecht ("Pa Pecht" to most of us) of Lawrenceville, VA. He had purchased the pot in the early 1930's to cook stews to raise money for the local farm team of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball club. In 1986 or 1987, Mr. Pecht purchased a 75-gallon stainless-steel pot and had it mounted on a trailer. The popularity of Brunswick Stew was really taking off at that time as it was being used in the wars with Georgia. The publicity the wars generated brought in a lot of new people to enjoy this wonderful stew and increased the sale of stews for raising money for various church, civic, and other groups. Now, instead of cooking 50 gallons at a time, we began cooking both pots for a total of 125 gallons. In 1988, Mr. Pecht had the original 50-gallon pot also mounted on a trailer, enabling more people to use his equipment to cook the stews all over Southside Virginia.

### The "Wars with Georgia"

Let me say right off that Brunswick, Georgia does not have a foot to stand on as far as claiming to be the original home of Brunswick stew. I have a newspaper article from 1987 with a



picture of the stew pot they had on display at the rest area on southbound I-95 stating that the first stew cooked there was in 1898. Lo and behold, in 2005 when I was traveling through their area, the plaque had been changed to stating that it was cooked in the early colonial days! I guess they figured they were proven wrong and needed to change history and most travelers would not know the truth. I proceeded to put one of the Brunswick County, VA “Original Home of Brunswick Stew” stickers on the pot and photographed it for my records.

The Georgia version of the stew is barbecue-based and very rich. All the “Brunswick Stew” I’ve eaten there has all-smoked meats (chicken, pork, beef, etc.) or else has liquid smoke added. It does have vegetables. It is mostly a soup and not what we describe as a thick stew. A genuine Brunswick Stew should be so thick that the cooking paddle stands up in the middle of the pot. The Georgia dish is mainly used as a side dish and not a meal unto itself as we use ours in Virginia.

In 1987, Brunswick County in Virginia and the coastal city of Brunswick in southern Georgia started the Stew Wars to use as an economic development tool. The Virginia General Assembly agreed with Brunswick County, VA that it was the original home of the stew, and so proclaimed it on February 22, 1988.

On that day history was made again. Mr. Pecht was asked to get a crew together to prepare Brunswick stew at the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond. Having been longtime friends with Harold Blick and a member of the Lawrenceville Volunteer Fire Department, he involved us in this history-making event. Since we decided to take both of the pots, we needed a large crew to handle all of the preparation and cooking for that day. As Harold, Lonnie, Phil, David “Chunk” Gibson and I had worked together on stews for the Fire Department, Mr. Pecht asked us to head up the cooking while he handled all of the other logistics. We named ourselves the Proclamation Stew Crew. Everything went as planned and the event was a huge success.

With both of Mr. Pecht’s pots being mounted on trailers, we were able to travel to various locations to cook stew. The first trip as a group outside of the state was to Brunswick, Georgia for a cook-off. This was in November 1988 and the Proclamation Stew Crew won The People’s Choice Award.

Brunswick stew or a facsimile is cooked all over the country using different ingredients and called different things. At the southern end of North Carolina there is a Brunswick County that has also made some claims about originating the stew, although I have never known them to be a true “player” in the fight. Brunswick County, NC is a seaside county and would probably have included seafood in its stews. I have a recipe from North Carolina that is similar to ours, but adds all types of vegetables including okra. In Greensville County, Virginia, they cook a chicken muddle, in Kentucky they cook Burgoo, in South Carolina they cook Carolina Hash, and I am sure other areas cook something similar and call it something else. In any case, the “Stew Wars” have been used as a valuable economic tool by all concerned and hopefully will continue.

Recorded for Posterity

In July 1998, to organize those of us local stewmasters who were involved in the making of a documentary leading up to our official visit to the State Fair in Richmond, I helped form the

## Brunswick Stew 10-Quart Recipe

*from John D. Clary*

5 1/2 lbs	deboned chicken		thighs are better
6 oz	white meat (fatback)		ground or chopped
4 lbs	white potatoes		cut up french-fry size is OK
2 1/2 lbs	yellow onions		chopped
1 1/2 qts	crushed tomatoes		
2 1/2 qts	small green butterbeans (limas)	drain	
1 1/2 qts	white shoe-peg corn	drain	
1 stick	margarine		
1/4 oz	black pepper	}	or you can season to your taste
1/4 oz	red pepper		
1 1/2 oz	salt		
1 1/2 oz	sugar		

Prepare your potatoes and onions ahead of starting the stew so that you can stir continuously. Continuous stirring is necessary for the thick consistency in order to call it a stew and not a soup.

Put the chicken and white meat in the pot; cover with water; bring to a boil and cook until chicken starts coming apart. Add potatoes, onions, and 1/4 of the seasonings; bring back to a boil and cook until potatoes are soft. Add tomatoes and 1/4 seasonings; bring back to boil and cook 5 minutes. Add drained butterbeans and 1/4 seasonings; bring back to a boil and cook until butterbeans are soft. Add drained corn, margarine, and balance of seasonings; cook about 10-15 minutes and then enjoy your stew.

Brunswick Stewmaster’s Association. The two-hour documentary, “Brunswick Stew: A Virginia Treasure”, was made by Stan Woodward of Greenville, SC. A one-hour version was telecast by Virginia PBS stations. Copies can be purchased at a discount through [www.brunswickstewmasters.com/Film.htm](http://www.brunswickstewmasters.com/Film.htm).

Two of the main organizers of the Proclamation Stew Crew have passed, but Lonnie, Phil and I still work together today. In 2004, we trained Chiles Cridlin from Richmond, VA through the Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program, a project of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities based in Charlottesville, VA. We began apprenticing Tim Bendall from Prince George County, VA in 2005, and Rodney Elmore from Bracey, VA in 2006.

Lonnie and I have purchased and mounted two additional pots; Lonnie’s is 55 gallons and mine is 90 gallons. With Mr. Pecht’s, Lonnie’s, and my pots, we have been fortunate to be asked to cook in various Virginia areas including the State Fair of Virginia and other locations in Richmond, Chester, Chase City, Virginia Beach, Blacksburg, and Charlottesville.

The Proclamation Stew Crew— now composed of Lonnie Moore, Phil Batchelor, Chiles Cridlin, Tim Bendall, Rodney Elmore, and myself— is more in demand than ever before. In the Summer of 2007, we cooked at the Fifth annual Big Apple Barbecue Block Party at Madison Square Park in New York City, and at the 41<sup>st</sup> annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. This past October 27 alone, we prepared a total of 1,050 quarts of Brunswick Stew for a high school band in Richmond, VA. ■

# SANDWICHES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



## A MEAL WITH MANY LAYERS

Does the lowly sandwich get its due? That was the question that about 35 members of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor set out to answer at our annual participatory Summer meal last July 29, with its theme “Sandwiches from Around the World”.

In America, when we think about the sandwich, our vision is often distracted by a few of the quickly-made, massively-consumed versions, which are fixtures of the lunchbox and the fast-food joint. But as the participants at this meal assembled their novel creations, and partook of the many cultural traditions and the many layers of flavors involved, we began to see the sandwich itself with fresher eyes. Some sandwiches are elegant works of art, and others are testaments to historic ingenuity in the face of deprivation. From the standpoint of both taste and nutrition, there is also a compelling logic to the sandwich. It represents a way of eating that is primeval, yet large enough to envelop many centuries and many countries.

In line with the “sandwich” theme, our meal itself was tucked inside the walls of the Earhart Village Clubhouse. Special thanks go to CHAA member Bonnie Ion for creating the table decorations: arrangements of homegrown flowers and sage, in glass fishbowls set on handsome tablecloths. Bonnie is a landscape architect and President of the Ann Arbor Garden Club.

### Bold Flavors of Northern Europe

The countries that border the Baltic and North Seas were especially well represented at our repast. Northern Europeans have carried on what are perhaps the most vigorous traditions of sandwich-eating in the world.

Art and Joanne Cole brought a famous Dutch sandwich, the *broodje haring*, a bread roll filled with herring filet. In describing what they had made, they wrote:

In any city in the Netherlands, one can find *broodjes*—which means “little breads”, or buns—for sale by street vendors. The typical *broodje* filling is herring, ham, cheese, or sausages. On the street, the vendor grabs a bun, stuffs it with the filling, and hands it to the customer in just a few seconds. Beer is often sold at the same time. The typical bread for *broodjes* is a commercially-baked crispy white roll, although soft crusts are also seen. The rolls are not cut until immediately before the sandwich is made, and the sandwich is consumed immediately. However, the Eu-



**Broodjes of pickled herring made by Joanne and Art Cole**  
(All photos: Randy Schwartz)

ropean rolls do not keep well, and they are too absorbent for advance assembly, so we used a somewhat richer dough to cut down on soginess. The recipe is from Bernard Clayton’s *The Breads of France*, and is attributed to M. Gaston Bichet, in the Loire region west of Paris, near Chambord.

The Coles made their *broodjes* with imported herring pickled with vinegar and onions, sold under the “Ma Cohen’s” label (Detroit, MI). Besides the vinegar-preserved version, which the Dutch call *zure haring* (“sour herring”), others that can be eaten in *broodjes* include “fresh” herring, which is simply preserved in salt; herring marinated in sour cream; *matjes haring*, literally “maiden herring”, a brined product made from females that have not spawned; and many more.

The widespread use of herring, and its endless variety, reflects the huge role that it played not only in the diet but in the economy and culture of northern Europe. In part this was because salted herring was the staple food for observing meatless Lent days in the region. The fish, salted away in barrels stamped with its place of origin, was the primary item sold at important trade fairs starting in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, especially at Scania on the Baltic Sea in southern Sweden (then ruled by Denmark). Even today the Dutch use an expression, *zo dicht gepakt als haringen in een ton*, “as tightly packed as herring in a barrel”. Medieval German merchants, who controlled the valuable salt-mines of Lüneburg, organized into guilds called *hanse* to bolster their salt-herring trade in Scandinavia. Their Hanseatic League came to exert a monopoly over Baltic commerce. But with the eventual rise of herring fishing in the North Sea, and the ebb in Lenten practices as a result of the Protestant Reformation, the League declined in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

Marjorie Cripps prepared examples of a celebrated variant from Denmark called *smørrebrød*. *Smørrebrød*, literally “buttered bread”, are small open-faced sandwiches. Marjorie used a dark brown bread, layering some of the sandwiches with herring and slices of cucumber and beet, others with such morsels as hardboiled egg, olive, red onion, and tomato. Danes like to spread each slice of bread smoothly and evenly with rich butter, right to the edge, to serve as a palette for the carefully arranged morsels of food, often leftover tidbits. The custom arose in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, when Danish farm families would pack





**A man sells *broodjes* of pickled herring from a sidewalk cart outside the town of Zaandam in the Netherlands**

(Photo: Randy Schwartz, June 1997)

*smørrebrød* fixings in baskets that could be carried to the fields for midday nourishment. The practice then spread to kitchens and urban areas, where it grew more elaborate and artistic. After a decline in modern times, the custom has enjoyed a resurgence since the early 1990's. As the late R. W. "Johnny" Apple, Jr. reported in the *New York Times* in 2002,

today many Danes eat *smørrebrød* for lunch several times a week, either at restaurants or at their workplaces, buying sandwiches at carryouts or bringing them from home in specially fitted lunchboxes. They are sold on trains and ferries. And at home, *smørrebrød* are often served when friends are invited by for the evening, especially in the summer. ("Where Danish Means Lunch", October 23, 2002)

In more formal Danish eating, the sequence in which various types of *smørrebrød* are eaten is fixed by tradition, with pickled herring leading the way. Similarly, pickled herring and smoked herring are placed at the leading edge of the traditional Swedish buffet called a *smörgåsbord* (literally a "board", or table, for buttered bread), where they are the first item eaten.

In Sweden and in Finland (which was a grand duchy of Sweden from the 1500's until 1809), herring or other fish is often served as a first course accompanied by rye crispbread, or else a leavened dark bread sweetened with malt or molasses. (Crispbreads, called *knäckebröd* in Swedish, are unleavened and highly baked, and have the pleasant slight bitterness of the rye flour.) Slices of cheese and other tidbits are also often served alongside. Nancy Sannar, who has some Finnish heritage in her background, prepared us *canapés* on rye crispbread, using instructions from *The Finnish Cookbook* (New York, 1964) by Beatrice Ojakangas of Duluth, MN. Nancy topped the rye crisps variously with smoked salmon, shrimp, *Lappi* cheese, lettuce, and slices of radish and hardboiled egg. *Lappi*, purchased at the New York Deli in the northwest suburbs of Detroit, is named for the Lapland region of Finland. It is a regional cheese made from part-skim cow's milk, and is similar to Swiss *Emmental* in color and consistency, although milder in flavor.

## A Pick-Me-Up for Preserved Meats

Bread is a boon companion to those who subsist on preserved meat and dairy foods. It augments the calories and protein furnished by the often scarcer products of animal husbandry. Bread also affords a convenient way to bring such foods to the mouth, and it lends a note of freshness, especially to a meal eaten in the dead of Winter. As was evident in our own meal, this practice has existed, in various forms, across many different cultural regions and historical eras.

Marion and Nick Holt contributed lamb *qawarma* (also called *shawarma*) stuffed into pita pockets. Marion used a recipe from Madelain Farah's *Lebanese Cuisine* (Portland, OR, 1972 and often reprinted), in which the lamb kebabs are grilled on skewers, and accompanied in the pita with chopped lettuce, tomato, onion, and a sauce made from sesame *tahineh*, lemon juice, and mashed garlic. *Qawarma* refers to lamb or other meat preserved in fat, *confit*-style. Traditionally, in mountainous parts of the Caucasus and Fertile Crescent regions, the lamb was minced, then pan-fried in melted fat from the tail of special fat-tailed sheep, and sealed in earthen jars. Such *confiture* was a way to preserve meat so that it would last through the cold Winter months. The Lebanese and Syrian practice is described more fully by Anisa Hellou in her entry "qawarma" in Alan Davidson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Food* (New York, 1999) and by Habeeb Salloum in *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead* (Regina, 2005). The Turkish word *qawurmah*, from a verb meaning "to fry", was borrowed by Arabic as *qawarma* or sometimes *shawarma*. With the spread of Islam, the word and the associated practice migrated and further evolved in Persia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India; for details, see *Repast* Summer 2005, p. 4, and Winter 2006, p. 13.

Chicken *rillettes* [Randy Schwartz] represents a similar practice in the context of southern France and into the Pyrenees. Tough cuts of pork, fowl, or rabbit would traditionally be cooked long and slow; the strands of meat were then teased apart, or else the cooked pieces were pounded in a mortar. This shredded meat with its fatty juices could then be sealed in a pot for a wide variety of later uses. Randy used a modernized recipe from *Sunset* magazine (Sept. 1, 1984) that also incorporates butter, white wine, shallots, garlic, and spices. The result was similar to a coarse *pâté*, and he served it between slices of Brownberry bread.

In Central Europe, sausages of preserved pork or other meats are a classic filling for sandwiches. Some are simply sliced and eaten cold ("cold cuts") with the bread, such as the German salami on pumpnickel [Rich Kato] that we sampled, made from ingredients purchased at Zingerman's Deli. In other cases (no pun intended), the sausages are warmed up and eaten whole inside the bread. The *frankfurter* (from Frankfurt, Germany) and the *wienerwurst* (from Vienna, Austria) were introduced to America by immigrants in the mid- and late-1800's, becoming especially popular at fairs and sporting events and evolving into the American hot dog or "red hot". A kindred tradition in Austria today is the *bosner* [Bonnie and Patrick Ion], in which briefly-grilled *bratwurst* is eaten in a slice of soft, yeasty white bread (or a roll) and topped with a sauce blended from mustard and/or ketchup, curry powder, and chopped raw

*continued on next page*



Above, the Tuscan *gemininni* with alternating slices of *mozzarella* and tomato, made by Lisa and Tony Putman

Left, a classic French *sandwich jambon* with ham and *gruyère cheese*, from Ann Larimore

onion. The sandwich apparently arose among immigrants from the Balkans. The word *bosner* suggests “from Bosnia”, which makes a parallel of sorts with *frankfurter* and *wiener*. The Ions ate their first *bosners* at a *fútbol* match on a recent trip to Austria; the sandwich is also ubiquitous at fast-food restaurants in that country. A similar sandwich popular in the Düsseldorf region of western Germany is the *kottenbotter*, consisting of *kottenwurst* (a smoked pork sausage), sliced raw onion, and mustard, placed between slices of buttered brown bread.

Also exemplifying a culture of preserved meats are Thai sandwiches [Phil Zaret] made with *moo yong* (cooked dried minced pork) and *nam prik pao* (chili paste). Phil’s version consisted of delightful, spicy-sweet appetizer-style sandwiches. He cut coins from thin, light Pepperidge Farm brown bread, spread them lightly with the chili paste, and sprinkled the dried pork inside before closing them together in pairs. *Nam prik*, a table condiment used in Thailand at almost every meal, is traditionally made with minced dried red chilies, lime juice, *nam pla* (a fish sauce), and sugar; the modifier *pao* indicates that some roasted ingredients are also added to the paste, such as onion, garlic, shrimp paste, or nuts.

Open Up and Say “Cheese”

In terms of nutrition, eating cheese with bread is an important custom, because the amino acids of milk and grains are complementary, greatly increasing the usable protein that would be available from either one separately. And in terms of culinary habit, few things are more tasty and familiar than a cheese sandwich.

Cave-aged *gruyère*, Black Forest ham, and a freshly-baked *baguette* were the makings of a deluxe version of the *sandwich jambon* [Ann Larimore], a classic of northern France. Ann recalled that she first ate this sandwich in the gardens of the palace at Versailles in 1952, part of a bag lunch packed for her by the owner of a pension in Paris where she was staying.

*Bolo de presunto e queijo* [Virginia and George Estabrook], literally “cake of ham and cheese”, is a substantial pastry served at holidays and special events in the Douro region of northern Portugal. The Estabrooks, who have worked extensively in that country, adapted a recipe from Maria de Lourdes Modesto’s *Cozinha Tradicional Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1982; also published in English translation, *Traditional Portuguese Cooking*, in 1989). They made a yeast-leavened dough, placed it in a pan greased with olive oil, and filled it with slices of dry-cured ham and *fontina* and *mozzarella* cheese. Then they baked the cake at high heat for 30 minutes, until the crust was browned.

Our meal also included two different closed-face Italian vegetarian sandwiches, rich with cheese, tomato, and *pesto*. The *gemininni* [Lisa and Tony Putman] hails from mountainous Pontremoli, north of Carrara in Tuscany. The Putmans sandwiched slices of whole-wheat *baguette* around layers of buffalo-milk *mozzarella*, Roma tomato, and an herbal green *pesto* made from basil, garlic, olive oil, and grated *pecorino Toscana* and *Parmagiana reggiano* cheeses. The word *gemininni* means “little twins”, perhaps referring to the paired slices of bread, or else to the handsome two-tone look of the white cheese and red tomato. The *Caprese* sandwich [Jan and Dan Longone] is named for Capri, a beautiful, rocky little island south of Naples. The Longones sliced open a loaf of *focaccia*



and layered it with *mozzarella*, heirloom tomato, Boston lettuce, mayonnaise, *pesto*, balsamic vinegar, and olive oil. The flatbread *focaccia* traces back to ancient Rome, where it was cooked in the ashes of the hearth and thus known as *panis focacius* (“hearth bread”).

Eggs and Other Dainties

A mayonnaise-based egg salad with shrimp and paprika was the filling for Spanish sandwiches brought by Rita and Jim Goss. Rita said that in her experience in Spain, this was most often served in a *bocadillo*, a thick submarine-type roll, but she also found it on thinly sliced bread. She herself used such a white bread made by Pepperidge Farm, and cut each sandwich into four dainty triangles.

Sandwiches of egg salad with olive [Nancy and Bob Harrington] exemplify the fare at a British afternoon tea. The latter, a light meal taken in the late afternoon, is attributed to Anna, Duchess of Bedford (1788-1861), who said that she got “a sinking feeling” having to wait until dinner was served at 8:00 p.m. Cakes or scones are also common accompaniments with the tea. Afternoon tea and high tea arose at roughly the same time in history and are eaten at the same time of day, but high tea is a heavier meal in which meat usually plays a prominent role.

Another dainty appearing at our meal was the cucumber sandwich [Julie and Bob Lewis]. Julie, who was born in England, described it well:

a classic English tea sandwich— dainty, refreshing— particularly on a hot summer day for tea in the garden, and always cut in small squares, fingers or triangles with the crusts cut off and the bread buttered before being sliced very thinly. A pinch of salt is the only seasoning.

“Zucchini blini” [Jane Wilkinson and Howard Ando] are flatcakes that reflect a sunny Mediterranean or Pontic sensibility and the use of a home garden. Jane made hers with shredded zucchini squash, chopped walnuts, *feta* cheese, wheat flour, scallions, dill and other herbs, and bound them with beaten egg. After lightly frying the cakes in oil, she topped them with *pesto* (homemade from her own sun-dried tomato and garlic), small dabs of sour cream, and fresh dill, and garnished the platter with colorful zucchini blossoms.

Leave It to the Americans!

Sandwiches of many kinds are probably the most commonly eaten type of food in the United States today. Leave it to the Americans to come up with astounding variations, even on such archetypes as the hamburger, hot dog, and peanut butter sandwiches. Consider three certified-American entries at our meal:

- In their version of the Leftover Thanksgiving Turkey Sandwich, Jane and Herbert Kaufer managed to stuff the ingredients from an entire holiday feast— including roast turkey, walnuts, dried red cherries, apple, sliced seedless grapes, Kalamata olives, celery, onion, mayo, and Dijon mustard— between the halves of each small but sturdy roll, to delicious effect.



From the CHAA “Sandwiches Around the World” meal, a plate with samples includes Phil Zaret’s coin-sized Thai Sandwich (front left) and the Kaufers’ Leftover Thanksgiving Turkey Sandwich (right)

- Joanne Nesbit prepared two sandwiches exemplifying how Americans coped with the deprivations of wartime: a chicken salad spread made with tapioca, and a baked-bean sandwich with sliced onion on dark rye bread. Both recipes are from Joanne Lamb Hayes’s *Grandma’s Wartime Kitchen: World War II and the Way We Cooked* (St. Martin’s Press, 2000).
- A grilled sandwich of egg salad with bacon and mayo, on white bread [Patty Turpen and Carl Paulina], was a favorite at the old Drake’s Sandwich Shop, which existed just off-campus in Ann Arbor from the late 1920’s to the early 1990’s.

Sandwiches Can Even Be Desserts

Layered cakes, pastries, pies, cookies, and other sweets are sometimes thought of as forms of the sandwich. They range from the informal campfire s’more, which is picked up with the hands, to the elegantly baked *Napolitain*, which is properly eaten with a fork. Representatives at our meal:

- Coffee bread [Nancy Sannar] from Ojakangas’s *The Finnish Cookbook*, topped with lingonberry jam. Closely related to the cranberry, the lingonberry is much used in Sweden and Finland for sauces and jams.
- Ice cream sandwiches [Jan and Octavian Prundeanu] formed from homemade cake-like chocolate cookies, a filling of coffee ice cream, and a topping of caramel sauce. Ice cream sandwiches first appeared in the late 1890’s, sold by New York street vendors.
- Cream wafers [Harriet Larson] made from a recipe in a *Sunset* cookbook, c. 1960. To make the wafers, butter, flour, and whipping cream are beaten together and chilled, then rolled thin and cut into rounds; these are dredged in granulated sugar before baking, then cooled and generously frosted with vanilla icing. ■

**ABBY FISHER***continued from page 7*

which increased to 175. Wool production decreased to 75 pounds; butter was doubled to 312 pounds. There were 40 pounds of honey produced. Regarding other production, the farm reported adding wheat and hay (11 tons), but eliminating oats. The Indian corn production decreased to 1,200 bushels, and peas and beans decreased to 150 pounds.<sup>32</sup>

The size, location, agricultural diversity, and value of James J. Andrews's farm holdings are consistent with the image of a South Carolina farm that we might envision from reading the recipes in Abby Fisher's cookbook alone. Because there are no substantial inconsistencies, the specific crops raised on James Andrews's farm in Orangeburg also support the inference that Abby Fisher's recipes are grounded in the culinary landscape of South Carolina's Upper Pine Belt.

#### The Emily Wharton Sinkler Manuscript Cookbook

Anne Sinkler Fishburne was the family custodian of a manuscript cookbook started in 1855 by her grandmother, Emily Wharton Sinkler. After Fishburne died in 1981, a substantial portion of the manuscript cookbook was stored in a box with her belongings. Her granddaughter, Anne Sinkler Whaley LeClercq, discovered the cookbook in 1990.

Using her grandmother's letters, the cookbook, and other reliable sources, LeClercq wrote an intriguing biography of her grandmother's life in South Carolina. The University of South Carolina Press published the biography with a transcription of the family's manuscript cookbook in 1996. In that book, LeClercq explained that, based on her study of the index, 30 recipes were lost or missing from the manuscript cookbook. In 1999, LeClercq miraculously found the missing pages "in another box at another location." The missing recipes were appended to the original book and it was republished, with the entire cookbook, in 2006.<sup>33</sup>

Emily Wharton Sinkler, the cookbook's primary author, initially lived at Eutaw Plantation from 1842-1847, and then in January 1848 moved to Belvidere Plantation, where she lived until she died in 1875. These plantations were at Eutaw Spring, Upper Saint John's Parish, in the Charleston District, at the same latitude and less than 30 miles due east of Orangeburg.<sup>34</sup>

Life at these two plantations mirrored life at James Andrews's farm. In a section of her book entitled "Living Off the Land", LeClercq describes some of the sustenance foods at the plantations:

The Sinklers at both The Eutaw and at Belvidere lived off the land. They produced most of the staples including rice,

<sup>32</sup> Although the farm's rice production was not reported, it is likely that some small fields were still sown with rice. In the Pine Belt, rice was raised for domestic use, i.e., for the landowner. Slaves, of course, were fed corn. Amelia Wallace Vernon, *African Americans at Mars Bluff, South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), pp. 124-128.

<sup>33</sup> Anne Sinkler Whaley LeClercq, *An Antebellum Plantation Household, Including the South Carolina Low Country Receipts and Remedies of Emily Wharton Sinkler, with Eighty-Two Newly Discovered Receipts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Specifically, the plantations were just south of Nelson's Ferry on the Santee River.

Indian meal, wheat, oats, and rye. They made their own sorghum molasses. They had plenty of honey from bee-keeping. They had milk, cream, and butter but did not make cheese. They raised sweet potatoes but few white potatoes. They kept flocks of sheep and swine. They had herds of milk and beef cows. They hunted and frequently dined on haunch of venison and wild ducks. They fished and enjoyed shad in season and bream and trout from the Santee year-round. Their principal cash crop was cotton, as shown by this example: the Orangeburg District, which bordered Upper Saint John's, produced 16,315 ginned bales of cotton, each weighing four hundred pounds, according to the 1860 Agricultural Census.<sup>35</sup>

When the Sinkler family manuscript cookbook is compared side-by-side with Abby Fisher's cookbook, there are many similarities. Chicken croquettes, fricassee chicken, roast turkey, pickled mangoes, Sally Lunn, Charlotte Russe, plum pudding, rice pudding, meringue-topped puddings<sup>36</sup>, quince preserves, and brandy peaches, to name just a few. Differences in the recipes themselves are understandable. Emily Wharton Sinkler copied her recipes from those she received from family, friends, and neighbors, or found in newspapers and printed cookbooks.<sup>37</sup> Abby Fisher dictated her recipes from memory.<sup>38</sup>

These similarities from a nearby and contemporaneous cookbook, although written by the wife of a landowner and not a plantation cook, further support the inference that Abby Fisher's cookbook reflects the cuisine of the middle country.

#### Conclusion

Standing alone, the ingredients mentioned in Abby Fisher's cookbook do not conclusively prove that she was a cook on a middle country farm or plantation. This can also be said for the agricultural production from the Andrews farm and the similarities we find in the Sinkler family manuscript cookbook. But, when taken as a whole, these three pieces of circumstantial evidence sufficiently support the conclusion that Abby Fisher's culinary roots are in South Carolina's middle country.

This conclusion is, of course, based upon a reasonable assumption. Abby Fisher dictated recipes from memory for dishes she knew, because she had cooked these dishes many times. These recipes and their ingredients should therefore mention foods that were local or available to her in South Carolina. ■

<sup>35</sup> LeClercq, p. 60.

<sup>36</sup> The Sinkler cookbook has a recipe for a meringue-topped sweet potato pudding. It would be difficult to reproduce the flavor of this dessert or Abby Fisher's sweet potato pie because, unlike today, their sweet potatoes were cured in smoke houses. Dori Sanders, an African-American peach farmer from York County in South Carolina's middle country, provided a detailed description of this process in her superb cookbook, *Dori Sanders' Country Cooking: Recipes and Stories from the Family Farm Stand* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1995), pp. 207-209.

<sup>37</sup> For many of the recipes, Sinkler recorded her source. Using these sources, and with some assistance from Karen Hess and her writings about South Carolina food, LeClercq provided excellent footnote material as annotations for the recipes, part of her major contribution to the family's legacy.

<sup>38</sup> Sources for some of the recipes, presumably unknown to Abby Fisher, can be found. For example, her recipe Pap for Infant Diet (#160) can be sourced to a cookbook written in Andover, MA.

# MORSELS & TIDBITS

We are delighted to announce that the Ann Arbor District Library's new "Ann Arbor Cooks" website includes a complete archive of *Repast* going back to the first issue in 1987 (with a one-year embargo on the most recent issues). Organized by Adult Services Librarian **Debbie Gallagher**, "Ann Arbor Cooks" (<http://www.aadl.org/cooks>) is an online collection of digitized cookbooks published by area churches and organizations, along with local heirloom recipes and related information. The project is a partnership between AADL, CHAA, the Washtenaw County Historical Society, and Ann Arbor Hadassah. An Oct. 25 launching event featured **Marilynn and Sheila Brass** of Cambridge, MA, authors of *Heirloom Baking with the Brass Sisters* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2006; 312 pp., \$29.95 cloth). Their volume, collecting dessert recipes from dozens of historic family cookbooks, was a James Beard Award nominee this year.

This theme issue of *Repast* marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, VA, the first successful British settlement in North America. A symposium scheduled last April in Blacksburg, VA, "From Jamestown to the Blue Ridge: Cooking Up 400 Years of Culinary History in Virginia", was canceled due to the calamity at Virginia Tech, but the **Smithsonian Folklife Festival's** focus on "Roots of Virginia Culture" was able to proceed in Washington last Summer. The Proclamation Stew Crew were among the invited demonstrators (see pp. 8-9 of this issue), and the Culinary Historians of Washington organized a panel presentation, "Virginia Culinary Traditions: Past, Present, and Future". Information on historic Virginia foodways, gardens, and recipes can be found at [www.folklife.si.edu/festival/2007/Virginia](http://www.folklife.si.edu/festival/2007/Virginia).

Several CHAA members have been in print or at the blackboard lately. **Larry Sebold** is the new instructor this Fall for the 3-credit course "Food and Culture" (Culinary Management 107) at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, MI. Larry succeeds CHAA member **Carlo Coppola**, who has moved to Los Angeles, and *Repast* writer **Rich Weinkauff** (see our Summer 2003 issue), who has been promoted to sciences dean at Schoolcraft but continues to teach the Wine and Spirits course there. **Pat Cornett** reprised her workshop on creating family cookbooks at the Troy Public Library (Oct. 24) and the Ann Arbor District Library (Nov. 7). Pat was also interviewed for two stories on the subject: "Family Cookbooks Connect Generations" ran in the *Detroit News* on Aug. 25, and another is set to appear in the *Columbus Post-Dispatch* in November. **Sherry Sundling** and her catering business were the subject of a profile, "Taste of Fudge and a Foodie is Born", in the *Ann Arbor News* (Jul. 25). Member **Ari Weinzweig** and his business partner **Paul Saginaw** received Lifetime Achievement Awards from *Bon Appétit* magazine as co-founders of the 25-year-old Zingerman's Deli in Ann Arbor. They have made the deli the hub of a circle of artisanal food businesses, food-rescue work, and associated training, research, and writing activities.

In June, **Fiona Lucas**, who co-founded the Culinary Historians of Ontario in 1994, received an Ontario Volunteer Award from the provincial Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration for her years of commitment and dedication to CHO. Three other members received similar awards for their work preserving the historic kitchen at Mackenzie House Museum: **Margaret**

**Lyons, Eva MacDonald, and Amy Scott**. In addition, two of the three finalists for Canadian Culinary Book Awards this year in the category "Canadian Food Culture, English Language" were written by CHO members: **Dorothy Duncan's** *Canadians at Table: Food, Fellowship, and Folklore: A Culinary History of Canada* (Dundurn Press, Toronto), and **Fiona Lucas's** *Hearth and Home: Women and the Art of Open-Hearth Cooking* (James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Toronto).

**Catherine Lambrecht** and other members of the Culinary Historians of Chicago (CHC) recently led in forming the Greater Midwest Foodways Alliance. A symposium, "Stuffed: A Journey of Midwest Sausage Traditions", GMFA's first public event, was held at Kendall College in Chicago on Sept. 15, co-sponsored by Oxford University Press. In other Windy City news, two books related to Chicago food history came out this Summer. Anthropological writer **Ellen F. Steinberg** wrote *Learning to Cook in 1898: A Chicago Culinary Memoir* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007; 256 pp., \$19.95 paper). Using notes and recipes, she documents a year in the life of the young bride Irma Rosenthal, a first-generation American of German Jewish descent who adapts her family's traditions of cookery and household management to a new world. Fourth-generation cooking entrepreneur **Carlyn Berghoff** teamed up with CHC member **Nancy Ross Ryan** to write *The Berghoff Family Cookbook: From Our Table to Yours, Celebrating a Century of Entertaining* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2007; 288 pp., \$29.95 cloth). The book celebrates Chicago's Berghoff Restaurant, one of America's oldest family-owned eateries before it closed in 2006 after 107 years. Recipes, including such favorites as Berghoff rye bread, *wiener schnitzel*, and creamed spinach, are accompanied by photos, informative sidebars, and an introductory narrative.

Writer, restaurateur, and CHAA friend **Rick Bayless** led a study trip for Worlds of Flavor, "Central Mexico, A Culinary Adventure" on Sep. 22-29. Worlds of Flavor is sponsored by the Culinary Institute of America and the Viking Range Corporation.

**Angela Schneider**, a food history instructor in Vancouver, BC, is leading a culinary history tour of Egypt on Jan. 14-31, 2008. The tour is organized by Capilano College and Great Expeditions tour company. For more information, visit <http://www.greatexpeditions.com/TourDetail.asp?TourID=EGY001> or call 1-800-663-3364.

The **European Institute for the History and Culture of Food** is organizing its next annual colloquium, to take place in Tours, France on Mar. 28-29, 2008 with the theme "Information and Food Practices". For more details see [www.iehca.eu/recherche](http://www.iehca.eu/recherche).

**On the Back-burner:** We invite ideas and submissions for these planned future theme-issues of *Repast*: Fairs, Festivals, and Cook-Offs (Winter 2008); The Revival of Native American Cooking (Spring 2008); Evolution of Foodways in the Middle East (Summer 2008); Episodes in the History of Breakfast Cereals (Fall 2008); Scandinavian-American Food Traditions (Winter 2009); History of American Restaurants, Chefs, and Menus (Spring 2009). Suggestions for future themes are also welcome. ■

# CHAA CALENDAR

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

Sunday, November 18, 2007

Christopher Carr, Director of Catering,  
University of Michigan Unions  
“UM Mixing Bowl: The Unions Food  
History from Beans to Bridezilla”

Sunday, December 9, 2007

4-7 p.m., Everyday Cook event space  
(410 N. Fifth Ave., Kerrytown, Ann Arbor)  
CHAA annual participatory theme dinner  
“A French Bistro Evening”

Sunday, January 20, 2008

Alina Makin, Lecturer in Russian,  
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures,  
University of Michigan  
“Dining à la Russe: Evolution & Revolution in Russian  
National Cuisine from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”

Sunday, February 17, 2008

Kathleen Timberlake, Culinary Historian  
“Traditional Swedish Foodways”

Sunday, March 16, 2008

Slow Food Huron Valley Chapter  
“Slow Food: Finding and Celebrating  
Our Local Food Community”

Sunday, April 20, 2008

Hanna Raskin, American Table Culinary  
Tours, Asheville, NC  
“Chinese Takeout: How Lo Mein and  
Eggrolls Became Jewish Food”

Sunday, May 18, 2008

Alex Young, Managing Partner, Zingerman’s  
Roadhouse and owner, Cornman Farms  
“Double Digging Deep: The Story of  
Chef Alex’s Organic Garden”

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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*First Class*