



VOLUME XXXI, NUMBER 3 SUMMER 2015

Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor



Vendors of mustard (left) and *callas* (Creole rice fritters) in the streets of old New Orleans are portrayed in these two illustrations by Harper Pennington from *Cooking in Old Creole Days* (1904), a cookbook by Célestine Eustis. Inside, Gerald F. Patout, Jr., writes about his collection of Louisiana cookbooks (see page 5).

MORSELS & TIDBITS

CHAA founder **Jan Longone** announces an exhibit, “Dining Out: Menus, Chefs, Restaurants, Hotels and Guide Books”, which will be on display Aug. 20 through Dec. 17, 2015, at the Univ. of Michigan’s Clark Map Library, on the 2nd floor of the Hatcher Graduate Library in Ann Arbor. Jan will give a related lecture there in Room 100 (The Gallery) on Nov. 12, at 4-6 pm (details to follow). Jan is Adjunct Curator at the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive, Special Collections, Univ. of Michigan Libraries.

CHAA member **Margaret Carney**, director of the Ann Arbor-based Dinnerware Museum, sends details on four of her museum exhibits:

- “A Place at the Table” continues through Dec. 15, 2015, at the Gifts of Art Gallery (Elevator Alcove, Level 2) in the Univ. of Michigan’s Comprehensive Cancer Center, 1500 E. Medical Center Dr., Ann Arbor.
- “Delicious Dishes” runs Aug. 6-29, 2015 (opening reception on Aug. 7 at 5-7 pm), at the Riverside Arts Center, 76 N. Huron St., Ypsilanti, MI.

- “Thirst Quenchers” will run in Jan.-Feb. 2016, at the Ann Arbor District Library, 343 S. Fifth Ave., Ann Arbor. It features beverage-related items, from cups and saucers, mugs and pitchers, to cordial glasses, breakfast juice sets, and related novelties.
- “Cake” will run Apr. 9 - Sep. 4, 2016, at The Museum on Main Street (500 N. Main St., Ann Arbor), featuring functional pedestal cake stands as well as sculptural works of cake that could be displayed on such stands. In conjunction with this exhibit and theme, the museum’s second annual juried competition has been launched, with entries to be judged by Heather Anne Leavitt, proprietor of Sweet Heather Anne bakery in Ann Arbor. Heather was a co-presenter at CHAA’s Jan. 2007 meeting. For more information, see <http://www.dinnerwaremuseum.org/>.

Congratulations to CHAA friends **Paul Saginaw** and **Ari Weinzwieg**, who were the commencement speakers at the Univ. of Michigan’s May 2 graduation ceremonies and received honorary Doctor of Laws degrees. Now co-owners of Zingerman’s Community of Businesses, they graduated at UM (in business and Russian history, respectively) before founding Zingerman’s Deli in 1982. They have also played a leading role in Food Gatherers and other benevolent causes, and were inducted into the Specialty Food Hall of Fame earlier this year.

CHAA member **Julie Lewis** alerted us to the Manuscript Cookbooks Survey, a newly-launched online catalog, or database, of pre-1865 English-language manuscript cookbooks from many different collections, along with a related blog and a set of adapted recipes. The effort is funded by the Pine Tree Foundation of New York. A couple of years ago, project director **Szilvia Szmuk-Tanenbaum** and principal researcher and writer **Stephen Schmidt** visited the Univ. of Michigan libraries, where Julie introduced them to the culinary manuscript collection there. To access the site, see <http://www.manuscriptcookbookssurvey.com/>.

The Edna Lewis Memorial Scholarship, offered annually by Les Dames d’Escoffier New York, has been renamed the Jonell Nash Memorial Scholarship in honor of its original creator and benefactor. **Jonell Nash**, who passed away this past Feb. 27, was Food Editor at *Essence* magazine between 1984 and 2008 and was the author of several cookbooks, some of which popularized lower-fat, more healthful versions of “soul food” dishes. Born in Delhi, LA, in 1942, Ms. Nash grew up in Detroit, graduated from Wayne State Univ., and taught high-school home economics before moving to New York to work at *Woman’s Day* and then *Essence*.

Upcoming conferences include the Third Amsterdam Symposium on the History of Food, to be held Jan. 15-16, 2016 on the theme “Fire, Knives and Fridges: The Material Culture of Cooking Tools and Techniques”. The symposium aims to explore how cooking techniques, skills, and tools as a form of material culture have shaped food cultures and eating habits—and vice versa. For more information, contact Dr. **J. J. Mammen** at j.j.mammen@uva.nl. ■

Repast


ISSN 1552-8863

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

<http://culinaryhistoriansannarbor.org/>

An archive is available at <http://cooks.aadl.org/cooks/repast>

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A LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Our Winter 2015 activities, organized by CHAA Program Chair Laura Green Gillis, included programs on Hungarian cuisine, unusual dinnerware, and Michigan production of milk, honey, and chestnuts.

Magyar Foodways

CHAA member Amy Emberling and her colleagues at Zingerman's Bakehouse have been studying, preparing, and selling Hungarian foods since 2010. In her Jan. 18 talk, "Magyar Foodways: More than 1000 Years of Inspired Cooking", she explained that Hungarian cuisine developed over a very lengthy period with influences from many cultures:

- Roman settlement west of the Danube left a legacy of grain production and viticulture, although it is the northeast (centered at Tokaj) that has been the leading wine region since medieval times.
- Roman rule gave way to an influx of Slavic farming peoples as well as nomads, especially Huns from the Central Asian steppes and Turkic-speaking Magyars from the Ural Mountains. The food legacy of the herdsmen included outdoor cooking and the use of dried noodles, both seen in *gulyás* ("goulash"), a meat-based stew served with noodles, still the national dish. Shortly after their arrival in 895, the Magyars established a unified Principality of Hungary, which was Christianized within a century. In medieval times, food professionals were organized in guilds. Even this early, chefs from France and Italy were invited to work in the kingdom, which influenced the development of Hungarian haute cuisine.
- Ottoman rule (1541-1699) in central and southern Hungary introduced aspects of Muslim culture and Turkish foodways, including *phyllo*-type dough and pastries, coffee drinking, the use of cherries and other fruits, and the stuffing and baking of New World bell peppers. Likewise, Jewish foodways became so well-integrated that many of them today are not thought of as distinctively Jewish. In fact, in Hungary, *csolent* (*cholent*), which arose as a Sabbath stew, often includes pork along with the beans and barley. Matzah balls, which may incorporate fresh ginger, are served in a goose broth and are often accompanied with goose leg. Other Jewish favorites include potato *latkes*, *gefilte* fish, and *halászlé leves* (a carp soup, red with paprika).
- Under Habsburg rule, which lasted until the formation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1868, the region became the "farm basket of Central Europe". For optimal lard production, the Mangalitsa pig was developed by the Habsburgs in the 1830s by crossing Serbian and Romanian breeds. (Transylvania, now part of Romania, was a key part of Hungary during this period and until World War I.) Lard remains the primary cooking fat today, while goose fat is also popular, and sunflower oil is a more modern in-



Hungarian *rétsek* (from Zingerman's Bakehouse website)

production ideal for Lent and other fast days.

- The use of paprika, a spice derived from New World peppers, only became widespread in the late 1800s. Szeged, in the south, is the center of production. A "sweet" variety was developed in the 1920s, and today there are many varieties. Hungarian food tends not to be very spicy.
- In the capital Budapest, on the Danube River, a central market was established in the 1870s, and fine pastry shops also arose in that city. Famous Hungarian baked goods, many of them now made at Zingerman's, include *pogácsa* (same root as Italian *focaccia*), a layered, yeasted bun, savory or sweet, that can be filled with cheese, sour cream, pork cracklings, or goose cracklings; *rétsek*, similar to German *strudel*, a flaky layered pastry, savory or sweet, with fillings of potato, cabbage, or other vegetables, poppy or other seeds, or apple or other fruits; *kiflis*, crescent-shaped almond cookies; *krémes*, a layered meringue pastry, akin to the French *mille-feuille* or *Napoléon*; *Esterházy torte*, a toasted-walnut cake layered with buttercream; and *Dobos torte*, a vanilla sponge cake layered with chocolate buttercream and topped with caramel.
- During and after World War 2, most Jews in Hungary died or fled the country. Many of the country's food traditions all but disappeared during the Communist era. Today, Hungary is mainly Catholic, although Budapest boasts the largest thriving Jewish community in Eastern Europe. About 2% of the nation's people are Roma ("gypsies").

Helping the Honeybee

In the 12-month period ending in April 2015, more than 40% of U.S. honeybee colonies died. The crisis has boosted public interest in honeybees and in their health. From a Feb. 15 panel discussion, "Helping the Honeybee", we learned that key suspects in this complex 10-year-old crisis include mites, agrochemicals, Winter food shortages, hive moisture levels, and other forms of hive stress. The panel included Germaine Smith, founder/owner at New Bee Apiaries and Pollinator Sanctuary in Ypsilanti, MI, who also works with the Ypsilanti Food Coop's Local Honey Project (LHP); Dick Dyer of Dyer Organic Family Farm just north of

continued on next page

CHAA PROGRAMS *continued from page 3*

Dixboro; and beekeeper Jamie Berlin of the Ypsi Melissa pollinator support project.

Honeybees feed on the nectar and pollen of flowering plants as their primary carbohydrate and protein sources, respectively. Enzymes from the bees’ digestive tracts help “cure” the nectar to convert it to the colony’s non-perishable food source: honey, a complex carb that also has vitamins and minerals. Once the honey dries to 17-18% moisture, the bees “cap” the cells with wax, a fatty byproduct of their gorging on nectar and honey. In the Fall, no more pollen is available, so the workers (females) are expelled from the hive to fend for themselves during the Winter, while the Queen and the drones (males) live off of the stored nectar/honey. Since they must huddle together for warmth, if their numbers fall below a critical level then they cannot access all of their stored food, and the colony collapses.

Commercial migratory beekeeping, with its long-distance transshipment of colonies to farms, orchards, and other pollination customers, places great stress on the bees. The LHP supports urban beekeeping, which is based on smaller, stationary holdings, more diverse plants, and fewer pesticides. Confronted with a Lennonist demand— “All We are Saying is Give Bees a Chance”— the city of Ypsilanti relented in about 2009, modifying its ordinances so as to make urban beekeeping easier. At the Dyer farm, certain groundcover crops (such as buckwheat) and vegetable crops require bee pollination, and the farm maintains its own bee colonies rather than relying on migratory providers. They sell the bees’ raw, unheated, unfiltered honey to consumers. The farm has experimented with several non-chemical methods for fighting mite infestations. In an urban context, Ypsi Melissa promotes such natural beekeeping practices and the retailing of local honey. It also mentors urban beekeepers and supports them by working to establish urban “bee gardens” of flowering plants.

Dishes of Distinction

CHAA member Margaret Carney, director of the Dinnerware Museum, became interested in history and in ceramics in the 1970s at her first job. Working as assistant to the Curator of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Museum in Iowa, she was enthralled by the Hoovers’ porcelain china, mostly “blue and whites” from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), which they had collected while living in China at the turn of the century. Margaret later learned

Chinese, earned a Ph.D. in Asian art history, and became one of the leading experts on Chinese ceramics. Porcelain was produced in China for millennia before it was first made in Europe (Meissen, Germany, 1710).

In her Mar. 15 presentation, “Anomalies and Curiosities of Dinnerware”, Dr. Carney spoke about many of her favorite unusual dishes, some of them owned by the Dinnerware Museum. A few examples:

- a “Snowball Service” soup tureen and a sauce boat in the shape of a swan, both from the Meissen manufactory, 1700s
- a Wedgwood ceramic game dish from the years around 1800, when there was a flour shortage in England as a result of the Napoleonic Wars; the dish mimicked a traditional game pie (see photo on this page)
- a Minton’s, Ltd., majolica teapot with vulture and snake, 1870
- “Le Déjeuner en Fourrure” (1936), a fur-lined cup, saucer, and spoon by Swiss surrealist artist Méret Oppenheim
- Fiesta ware in a reddish-orange radioactive glaze, from the Homer Laughlin China Co. (Newell, WV), 1936-42
- pop artist Roy Lichtenstein’s black-and-white china table service (New York City, 1966), designed to be used for breakfast after an Andy Warhol-inspired “happening”
- “The Dinner Party” (1974-79) by feminist artist Judy Chicago, now at the Brooklyn Museum
- “Captain Picard’s Tea Set” (1990), a seven-piece set of black-glazed slipcast porcelain, from Saenger (Newark, DE); a later version was featured on the TV show “Star Trek, The Next Generation”.



This Wedgwood Cane Ware ceramic game dish is from about 1800, when the Napoleonic Wars caused a flour shortage in England. The dish mimicked a traditional game pie, so that a well-off family could present at the table a modest meal of rice and stewed meats as if it were a lavish raised pie.

Under a Spreading Chestnut-Tree

The chestnut tree is rebounding in America and so is the public appetite for their sweet, chewy nuts, or strictly speaking, fruits. In his Apr. 19 talk, “The Amazing Chestnut: The Grain that Grows on Trees”, Dennis W. Fulbright, professor emeritus of plant pathology at Michigan State Univ., noted that chestnuts are traditionally roasted and eaten as-is or added to a variety of dishes, or else dried or ground into flour for dough. Boiling chest-

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AT THE CORNER OF CREOLE AND CAJUN

❧

MUSINGS OF A LOUISIANA COOKBOOK COLLECTOR

by Gerald F. Patout, Jr.

Gerald Patout is Director of the Arnold LeDoux Library at Louisiana State University Eunice. Readers of Repast might recall meeting him at the Second Symposium on American Culinary History held in Ann Arbor in May 2007, at which time Mr. Patout was Head Librarian at the Williams Research Center of The Historic New Orleans Collection. He was born in New Iberia, LA, into a family heritage that includes M. A. Patout & Son, a cane-sugar producer on Bayou Teche that has been in operation now for more than 180 years.

Louisiana's rich history and traditions provide a compiler of culinary history with fertile, yet winding, turf. As someone who is a casual student of Louisiana history and a professional librarian by trade—as well as a son of the state's sugar and hospitality enterprises that have made lasting contributions to the commodities and cooking landscape there—it has been an avocation and a labor of love for me to collect Louisiana cookbooks and to compile a bibliography of the ones that record significant landmarks, influences, and trends marking the pathways toward today's Louisiana cuisine.

My own private assemblage, the Patout Cookbook Collection, is the product of sheer curiosity, opportunity, and a family food background that began in 1829 Louisiana. I have developed this collection by employing my library skills, accessing market tools, and consulting numerous reference works.

The Seminal Early Works

As a “pathway” starting point for collection development and historical context, Louisiana cookbook publishing history begins with the 1840s work by Mlle. Jeanette, *La Petite Cuisinière Habile*, purported to be published in New Orleans and cited on the *Jumonville Bibliography of New Orleans Imprints, 1764-1864*.

Although not published in Louisiana, an 1866 title, *Verstille's Southern Cookery* (New York: Owens and Agar) by Mrs. E. J. Verstille of Georgia, is considered a collection stepping stone that captures the cooking methods, flavors, and ingredients



of Louisiana. For example, recipes for the iconic dish known as “gumbo” are noted in this important work. A new edition (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2014) is a facsimile of the copy found in the library cookbook collection of the American Antiquarian Society. The book is also now available in a digital format.

Two cookbooks published in New Orleans in 1885 are considered seminal to its culinary history: *La Cuisine Creole* by Lafcadio Hearn and *The Creole Cookery*, compiled by 18 ladies from the Christian Women's Exchange of the historic Hermann-Grima House in the French Quarter. These original works have been reprinted and are routinely cited, and Hearn's book can be read online at the “Feeding America” site based at Michigan State University (<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/>).

Two other titles, *The Unrivalled Cook-Book and Housekeeper's Guide*, published by Harper & Brothers in New York in 1886 under the pseudonym “Mrs. Washington”, and the 1901 *Picayune's Creole Cook Book*, published by the *Picayune* newspaper and considered the classic collection of Louisiana creole food and New Orleans cookery, round out a roster of cookbook titles that should be on any collector's list. These early titles are the building blocks in documenting the Louisiana cookbook story.

There are many additional interesting, collectible titles from which to fill in publishing gaps, from early cookbooks to the present-day information overload. This plethora of information serves as a metaphor for the complex, muddled chronicle of Louisiana cooking that so often confuses devotees of Creole and Cajun cuisine. Helpfully, Carl Brasseaux and Marcelle Bienvenu, in *Stir the Pot: The History of Cajun Cuisine* (2005), provide a reference tool that assists in understanding the integration and blending of specific Louisiana French foodways, lifestyles, and economic and commercial influences, all of which shaped the pathway toward this regional cooking.

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LOUISIANA COOKBOOKS *continued from p. 5*

As an accumulator of content and an avid collector, keeping an eye on the cookbook markets, book values, various editions and reprints, or even digital surrogates, remains both interesting and challenging to me. With the above as background, I would now like to provide some personal details and thoughts about specific selected holdings in my collection that are unusual, contribute to building the historical record, and are some of my own favorites.

Cooking in Old Creole Days

La Cuisine Créole à l'Usage des Petits Ménages (New York: R. H. Russell, 1904) by Célestine Eustis remains a much-celebrated, vernacular Creole title that reflects heritage and tradition. The French title translates to “Creole Cooking for Use in Small Households”, although the English title of this bilingual book was rendered as, “Cooking in Old Creole Days”. The quaint illustrations and old-time song lyrics helped set into motion a curiosity and fascination with New Orleans that still exists today. Eustis’s delicious recipes, while ultimately rooted in her French heritage (she was actually born in Paris), were perfected by the oft-overlooked Black cooks who were in charge of and responsible for this cuisine. A copy of the book can be read online at the MSU site mentioned earlier.

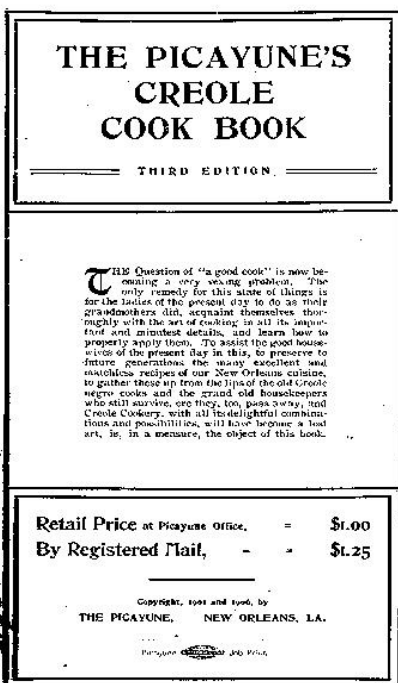
Besides being a rare book and an excellent depiction of cultural life in Louisiana at this time, the copy that I own is especially appealing because it bears a handwritten inscription by a member of the Perrins family of London, England, makers of Lea & Perrins brand of Worcestershire sauce. As a collector and a native of New Iberia, Louisiana, which is considered the “hottest, saltiest and sweetest little town” in America, I well know that condiments and their manufacture were a large part of a South Louisiana upbringing and of cooking traditions there, and these would have interested manufacturers overseas. The Perrins

inscription speaks to the external food pathways that brought Creole and Louisiana cooking ideas to other world destinations, where they perhaps influenced cooking styles and choices.

The Picayune’s Creole Cook Book of 1906

Originals of the 1901 *Picayune’s Creole Cook Book*, mentioned earlier, are very rare in library collections as well as in the marketplace. The Patout Collection contains a Third Edition from 1906 that is considered a favorite. Again, it is brimming

with turn-of-the-century Creole recipes and New Orleans cooking traditions passed down from “the lips of old Creole cooks.”



Picayune’s Creole Cook Book is a newspaper cookbook publication that has changed with the times and has endured as one of the written legends in Louisiana culinary history. Reportedly, it was actually not until 1915 that this important cooking treatise received recognition and became wildly popular. To gain a more meaningful understanding of the influence of this important cookbook and its 15 various editions published during the 20th Century, readers can refer to the online New Orleans Cookbook

Bibliography (<http://www.tulane.edu/~wclib/New%20Orleans%20Cookbook%20Bibliography%202011.pdf>), compiled by the New Orleans Culinary History Group, of which I was a member. On pages 103-111, colleague, collector, and *Times-Picayune* cookbook authority Phyliss Marquart provides noteworthy annotation, with considerable detail and depth.

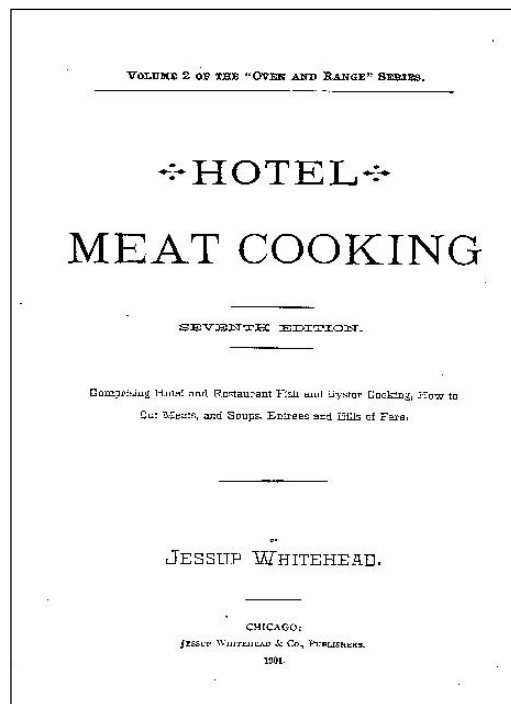
Hotel Meat Cooking

Somewhat off the beaten path for Louisiana, this favorite title helps to uncover some of the secrets of Creole cooking and of its spread. Jessup Whitehead’s *Hotel Meat Cooking*, 7th edition (Chicago: J. Whitehead & Company, 1901), dedicates a substantial

segment to “Creole Cookery” (pp. 377-386). In a textbook largely focused on American cooking in hotels and restaurants, the recognition and validation of Creole cooking is an important marker along its developmental timeline and signals its elevation as a full-fledged American regional cooking style.

This historic work contains some fascinating observations of the Creole cooking landscape, speaking to aspects that are still misunderstood and jumbled in contemporary, often spicy Louisiana food preparation and cooking jargon.

The work also provides important, relatively early *written* documentation—for much of the early French cooking of Louisiana, particularly in the Cajun or rural areas, had been largely oral. Written narrative was an important stepping-stone that facilitated the transmission of previously oral-only techniques and recipes, becoming a means by which the cuisine was spread, duplicated, and eventually integrated into other cooking styles. In terms of process, this was possibly a juncture where Louisiana French Creole and Cajun cooking began to intersect and cross-pollinate in various areas of Louisiana.



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Book Review

SPICING THE PLANET

Gary Paul Nabhan,
Cumin, Camels, and Caravans: A Spice Odyssey
Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2014
292 pp.; \$29.95 hbk.

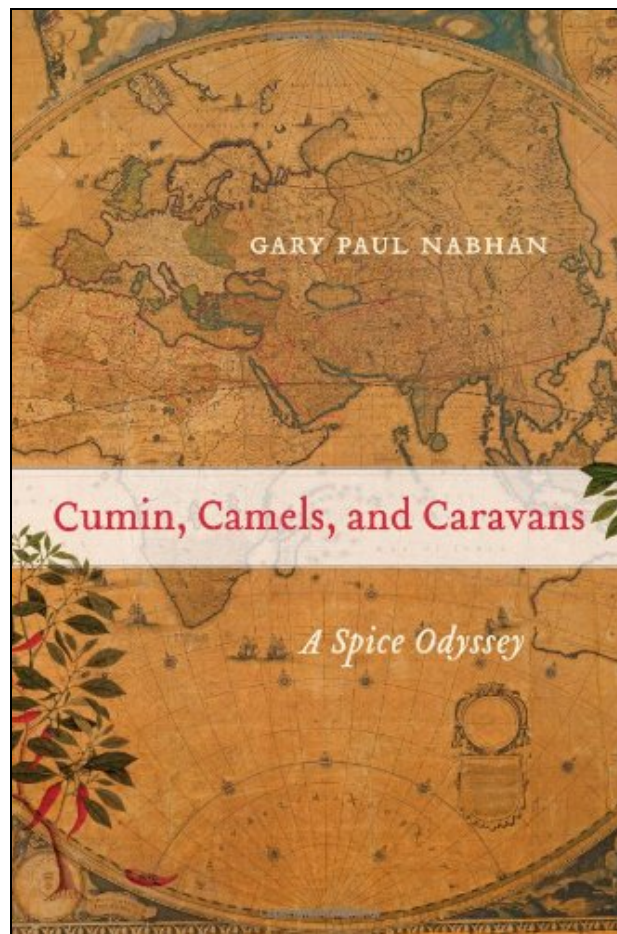
by Wendell McKay

CHAA member Wendell McKay of Ann Arbor is a cook at Zingerman's Delicatessen, where he has been employed for several years. Originally from Baton Rouge, he holds an M.A. in history from the University of Akron and has taught classes on Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian history and culture. Wendell has reviewed several other books for Repast, most recently Rachel Laudan's *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* in our Spring 2014 issue.

The common read on Columbus's voyages, at least when I was in school, was that he "discovered" America while searching for "the Spice Islands". Among the avalanche of information and misinformation encoded in that statement lies the existence and knowledge of an extensive, even intercontinental, spice trade that had hitherto connected Western Europe with the spice-producing lands of India and Southeast Asia, however tenuously. The interruption of this trade by the Ottoman conquests of the 15th Century forced the growing nation-states of the Atlantic coast to search for alternate routes to restore their access to flavor.

That account shows a simple causality, but it conceals a great deal. Not only was the spice trade one of the main economic and cultural threads binding together the Eurasian landmass, but it was also a harbinger of what would later be known as globalization. This deeper understanding of the trade's role in history offers inspiring lessons for the farmers, merchants, and consumers of today. Such, anyway, is the convincing thesis of Gary Paul Nabhan's new look at the spice trade and its haunts, both then and now.

There are few whom I would think fitter for the task than Nabhan. A scholar and farmer at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Nabhan's long been a refreshing voice in the "local food" community, emphasizing the historical pedigree and permanence of globalization, an inevitable force that must be harnessed and channeled rather than resisted or ignored. His own existence, as he himself implies in his work, is a natural result, almost a celebration, of globalization's positive effects, both in social and



in culinary terms. Nabhan was born in Indiana to a family of Lebanese descent whose ancestors included a family of merchant princes in modern-day Oman, the Banu Nebhani. He presently lives and farms in an area long famed among scholars for its transethnic and transnational trading networks, one incorporating foodstuffs and foodways from all corners of the globe. Looking at the spice trade is just taking his own life one step further (or back). In many ways, it harkens back to his earlier works, such as *Some Like It Hot*, a study of human attraction to the spicy, and *Where Our Food Comes From* (which I reviewed in *Repast*, Fall 2009), a combined history and travelogue looking at the career of influential and tragic Soviet biologist Nikolai Vavilov. In *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans*, Nabhan follows the spice trade from its earliest origins in prehistoric Arabia, looking at how it transformed and enriched societies, brought people together and tore them apart, and eventually crossed the ocean to begin the process anew in the Americas.

From the very start, the earliest "globalizer" had to contend with environmental constraints and threats, and arguably arose as a result of both. The mountains and valleys of southern Arabia, particularly in present-day Yemen and Oman, had little room for the kind of agriculture that developed to the north along the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates. Early attempts at agricultural engineering, such as the Ma'arib Dam constructed by the Sabaeen civilization (historically famed as the Biblical Sheba), proved untenable in the long run, and the region's people turned for their salvation to the humble frankincense tree (*Boswellia sacra*), well-suited to aridity, requiring far less water than wheat or barley. The intoxicating scent from the tree's sap proved a cultural hit throughout the re-

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A SPICE ODYSSEY *continued from page 7*

gion, for both religious and culinary reasons, and enabled the Sabaeans' neighbors, the Minaeans, to expand their reach, trading with their more climatically gifted neighbors and then farther afield, even as far as India. In doing so they laid the foundation for the "world economic system" that dominated the ancient and medieval "Old World". Spices, with their light weight and cheaper carrying costs, soon provided the means by which other luxuries— silks, precious stones and metals, etc.— would make their way across the mountains and oceans, usually from east to west.

The simple development of the spice trade from one far-flung region to another wasn't the only sign that spices were changing the world. Beginning with the Minaeans, the trade would transform many peoples, politically or economically underprivileged in one way or another, into "middleman" cultures, specializing in the transfer of goods or services, whether in terms of international trade or smaller-scale ventures. The Minaeans' immediate successors were the Nabateans, probably most renowned for their fabulous rock-face architecture at Petra in Jordan, but who played this role at a time of long-standing conflict between the two superpowers of Rome and Persia, and in similar environmental circumstances. The most famous example of middleman cultures is probably that of the Jews, who were able to take advantage of their wide-ranging settlement and family connections to establish strong transregional networks of both trade and culture (most spectacularly illustrated in Cairo's Geniza archive), but there were gradations both within and without. The Radhanite Jews, a mysterious group who emerged after the dissolution of the Roman Empire, controlled the Mediterranean spice trade for a good 500 years, and the even more shadowy Karimi— which eventually became a Muslim group but which

started as an obscure interfaith mercantile consortium— took it over until the rise and challenge of the Italian maritime republics. In this manner, the spice trade turned into a cultural conduit as much as an economic one.

Spices became an essential element of high culture throughout Europe and Asia, particularly in areas that saw a high level of multicultural coexistence. The spread of Islam facilitated the growth of overland Eurasian networks for the trade, not least as Muhammad himself had begun his career as a spice trader, a career that perfectly illustrated how the trade conducted beliefs and cultures as well as culinary ingredients. Farflung entrepôts such as Córdoba (in Spain) and Zayton (modern Quanzhou in China) developed thriving cultures that profitably batted on the new ideas, both cultural and economic, that the trade had to offer. Córdoba in particular shone in relation to its surroundings, as figures such as the enigmatic Ziryab transformed Andalusian manners and mores, culinary culture being only one such. The resulting *convivencia* between Muslims, Jews, and Christians put Andalusia in Europe's cultural vanguard. The power of Islam was further strengthened through the connections forged by families of spice merchants— Muslim, Jewish, and some of other faiths— connections stretching across the entire Eurasian landmass.

The decline of Islam's political power only boosted the power of spices, as their increasing rarity, especially after the expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the fall of Constantinople, made them more of a luxury good and sharpened the appetites of rising Western powers. Spain and Portugal financed expeditions into the unknown with the full or partial purpose of harnessing elusive trade routes. The resulting discoveries coincided with violent crackdowns on the *convivencia* that had helped to enable



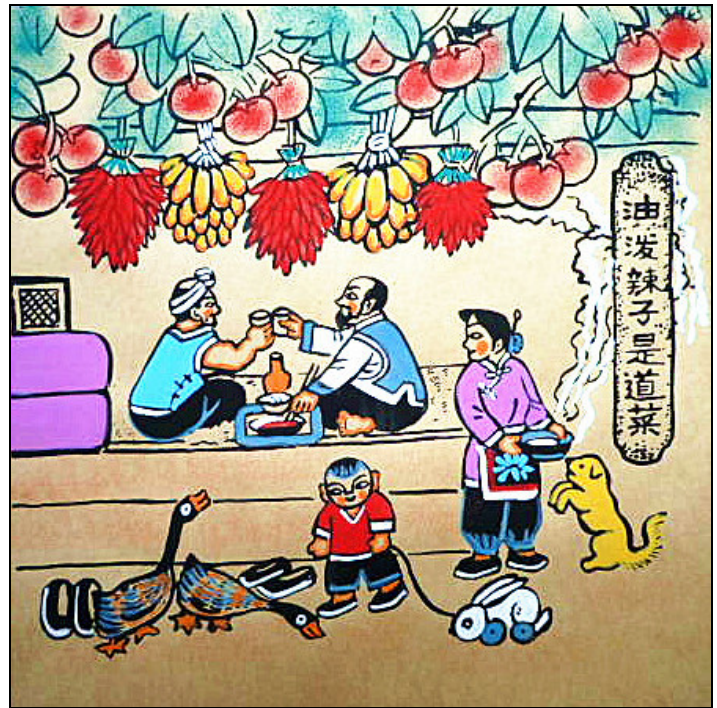
An idealized painting of a nutmeg plantation on the Banda Islands, part of the Moluccas, or Spice Islands, in the colonial Dutch East Indies (modern Indonesia). The female workers are cracking open the dried nutmeg fruits and sorting their seeds by quality. The male workers stand nearby, each holding a *gai gai*, the long bamboo pole used to pick the fruits from the trees. For nearly 200 years, the Dutch East India Company held a monopoly on the global nutmeg trade, since the trees grew only on the Bandas.

these creative bursts in the first place, ironically driving fleeing *conversos* and *marranos* (converted Jews and Muslims) across the ocean to the “new worlds” that now beckoned. These latter had their own trading networks already, networks which the refugees became adept in exploiting. Nabhan’s own stomping grounds of Arizona and New Mexico were a particularly inviting imperial backwater, providing safe obscurity for many Spanish families of Jewish and Muslim origin, some of whose culinary traditions survive there in radically altered form.

Nabhan interweaves this history with his modern-day travels, as he ranges the globe examining the trade’s physical echoes, starting in his ancestral homeland of Yemen and visiting Central Asia, China, and Spain in a quest for the trade’s historical remains and present traces. The strongest takeaway from these journeys is the continuing existence of political and cultural divisions that the spice trade previously transcended. Nabhan barely manages to surmount a series of Israeli checkpoints on his way to visit Petra. His visit to a possible colony of his ancestral family in Tajikistan is thwarted by the presence of organized arms smugglers in the area. He bemoans the deliberate marginalization of Muslim history and influence by the Spanish and Chinese governments at, respectively, the Andalusian ruins of Madinat al-Zahra and the Quanzhou Maritime Museum. The exotic spice plants and flowers that the Umayyad sultans would have favored have been replaced by generic European flora, while the Muslim origins of the great eunuch admiral Zheng He, whose 15th-Century voyages came close to establishing Ming China as a maritime empire, are downplayed by a Chinese government anxious to maintain Han unity. These last examples come across as the most insidious, striking at the culinary and cultural traditions that Nabhan seeks to celebrate in both scholarly and practical terms.

If *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans* were simply a look at the spice trade and its living ruins, it would be a fantastic addition to the corpus of food history. However, unsatisfied with simply that, Nabhan has thrown both recipes and potted biographies of spices into the mix, making it a cookbook and culinary reference on top of everything else. Both additions serve to underline the book’s basic ideas, emphasizing their long journey through time and space, and the many transformations, both biological and cultural, that they’ve undergone to get to their ever-changing destination. These journeys in many ways provide the proof of Nabhan’s assertions, each spice or recipe beginning in a specific region but gaining many more selves during its travels. Coriander, for example, and its leafy product cilantro are great illustrations for Nabhan. The first was an honored and well-established spice crop in Middle Eastern cuisines for millennia, and the second—“parsley with flavor”, as I like to call it— became a valuable and ubiquitous staple for cooks in the new frontiers of Southeast Asia and Latin America. Similarly, a recipe for *pollo en mole verde* honors a dish born in the Mesoamerican uplands, but whose parents were both indigenous American and Moroccan. The case of *zalabiya*’s transatlantic transformation into *buñuelos* speaks to a kindred journey. There are 13 recipes scattered through the book and twice as many spice biographies, giving the reader not only great ideas for the next dinner party, but also a running commentary on the continuing vitality of the movements, ingredients, and flavors that Nabhan so engrossingly documents.

The style and method of Nabhan’s approach might disorient some readers. The history and travel sit a little awkwardly togeth-



Bundles of dried red chili peppers hang overhead in this contemporary painting from Shanxi province, China. The chili first reached China about 100 years after Columbus and his crew took some of the plants back to Spain from the Caribbean.

er at times (though this is a common pitfall with many works that combine the two, even with masters of the art like Jan Morris or Tony Horwitz). Also awkward is a certain essentialism that feels at times more like a sexagenarian grouching about change (especially in terms of youth culture) than it does the principled dedication to a certain worldview. He’s also not the first writer I’ve read recently who overstated the importance of the Occupy movement, even if in passing.

Nevertheless, the book’s good points massively outweigh its very minor flaws. This is especially true given the conjuncture within which the book was produced: *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans* was released not only as part of the series California Studies in Food and Culture, but also with the support of the S. Mark Taper Foundation in Jewish Studies. Nabhan had the idea for the book roughly around the time of 9/11, and the book’s championing of the need for cross-cultural cooperation, and the (literal) fruits it has provided humanity since the beginnings of civilization, particularly in the case of Jews and Arabs, is as pressingly relevant today as it was 15 years or even 15 centuries ago. The cooperation and interaction between the two peoples is a constant background chorus to the movement and transfer of goods and ideas, a perpetual reminder of the beneficial power of flavor over human existence.

Using his own life and circumstances as an inspiration, Nabhan paints a convincing and fascinating picture of the culinary and cultural wealth that results from the simple act of people working together, whatever their ideas or beliefs. If it were that alone, *Cumin, Camels, and Caravans* would be worth reading, but like a good cook, Nabhan uses his recipes and spices to make the experience delicious as well as enlightening. ■

AS ADVERTISED ON TV!



MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE VIDALIA CHOP WIZARD

by Philip M. Zaret

Phil and his wife Barbara are longtime CHAA members. He was raised in the New York City area, majored in Classics at the University of Michigan, and made a living as the owner-manager of a local photocopy shop. Phil also worked for over 10 years as a volunteer at UM, where he bound and repaired library books and developed an index of culinary references found in manuscripts at the William L. Clements Library. Phil's most recent article for Repast was "Achieving the Perfect Homemade Bagel" (Winter 2014).

When I went into semi-retirement about 15 years ago, I began to do more of the cooking chores at our house. That very year, our younger son graduated from high school and moved on to college, so I had only my wife and myself to cook for. I've always liked cooking and baking, so it was no great hardship or massive learning experience to prepare meals. My only reservation was having to cook something different every day. I wouldn't do it. Putting in time in the kitchen every day was too much like work—especially my work, running a Xerox copy business, where I was on my feet all day. I like to prepare in quantity (making a week's worth of food in one session, if possible) and I love using kitchen gadgets and appliances because they streamline the process—and also, honestly, because they're fun.

One thing that I found out early was that no matter how versatile an appliance is, it has strict limitations. This goes for small ones like apple corers, melon ballers, and nut choppers, as well as big ones like blenders, mixers, and food processors. Food processors come close to being an all-in-one machine, but they are limited in one vital area—chopping. And chopping is *the* basic cooking function. Real chefs pooh-pooh chopping-gadgets. They reluctantly adopted the food processor some years ago, but for chopping they still rely on the lowly knife, and they pride themselves on their chopping skills. But they also pride themselves on not chopping their own fingers. This is where the Vidalia Chop Wizard comes in.

I have this nightmare: I'm doing the dishes in the sink and I reach into the soapy water to pull out a pan, and the water starts turning red and my fingers are bleeding... Yow! I've cut myself on a knife that I didn't see. That's another reason I've fallen for TV and magazine promotions for chopping gadgets. Unfortunately, none of them so far—with one exception—has



lived up to the hype. Some gadgets are downright dumb, such as the special egg cooker that, among other insufficiencies, causes the eggs to explode or turns them into concrete. The Veg-o-matics and nut choppers that I've bought are not much better. Besides breaking quickly, they cut unevenly and leave a lot of sloppy, unusable residue.

Trial by Borsht

It was Christmas about 13 years ago and, as is our custom, we headed over to our friend Mary's house to exchange gifts. Mary buys a lot of stuff: she always has more gifts for me and my wife (and our kids, when they lived at home), than we have for her and her husband and kids. I appreciate her generosity, but often I find the things that she gives me have limited function and soon find their way into a closet or the crawl space. Thus, I was prepared to consign the Vidalia Chop Wizard that she gave me to the back of a kitchen cabinet after a brief trial. Yes, I had seen it "as advertised on TV", but I'd been burned before and I was leery. Mary asserted that her husband, Ralph (who did the cooking in that family), used the gadget and found it valuable and reliable. This was a forceful recommendation, as I knew that Ralph was an exceptional cook.

One of the first dishes that I made using the Vidalia Chop Wizard was beef borsht. I remember thinking something like, "This device is really for only one step in the normal multi-step process of preparing food. Is it really going to speed things up? Will the results be worth the effort?" Besides chunks of beef, which were purchased already chopped, the soup had carrots, potatoes, celery, onions, parsnips, sweet peppers, cabbage, and beets. After washing and paring the vegetables, each one had to be sliced to fit the Wizard's 3-3/8 by 3-5/16-inch crisscross blades used for dicing and mincing. The question was: how thick or thin did I need to slice the vegetables to allow the dicing and mincing blades to penetrate the slices? I decided to first cut the vegetables (where applicable) in half-inch-thick slices using the Wizard's wide chopping blades. I had no problem with the potatoes, carrots, parsnips, sweet peppers, and celery. I cut up the cabbage by hand in large pieces, and I reserved the onions to use the narrower quarter-inch mincing blades.

When I was preparing the beets, I noticed how hard they were. It seemed unlikely that the chopper blades could cut through them, so I hedged my bets and microwaved the beet slices. The slices bled red when I diced them, and the dice fell apart a bit, but the blades had no problem getting through them. Next I did the onions. Mostly there was no problem, but when I encountered a slice of onion with thick skin, the chopper failed to chop. I lifted the lid and saw that the half-sliced onion was caught tightly in the blades. Using a chopstick, I poked and prodded till the onion slice came loose. Lessons learned: 1) peel onions better and 2) the big dicer works better than the little mincer.

Despite these small problems, I was absolutely blown away at how “neat” the dice looked. It somehow pleased my esthetic sense to see so many uniform morsels. Not only was it quicker than hand chopping, but no chef with just a knife could cut such even pieces.

How the Thing Works

The crisscross blade idea is very old, but incorporating it into a handy, simple countertop device with only one moving part was what made this contraption innovative and new.

Let’s take a look at how the Wizard works. It has five parts, but you only use three at a time. The dicer or mincer blade fits easily into the container. The chopping lid fits easily over two pins at the square end. The underside of the lid has “pushers” that fit perfectly into the blade grid to force the food completely through. You put your food onto the blades and push down firmly on the lid. It takes only a bit of strength to achieve a quick, clean cut. Just leaning in with your body weight can exert enough force to chop almost anything.

The fifth and final part is the cleaning tool, a little white rake that can poke through the blades to loosen anything stuck there. It can also be used to clear out the spaces between the “pushers”, except for really tightly-lodged pieces. Granted, the cleanup can be a bit tedious: I hold the lid under warm running water in the sink, and rake up, down and sideways till all the bits are out. But it’s a routine that I expect now, so it seems like a small inconvenience when compared to the “joy” of using the Wizard.

The container has measuring lines, in both English and metric units, so you can see how many cups you’ve chopped. Just stand the Wizard on end, shake it a little to let gravity consolidate its contents, and observe.

If you’re concerned about how long the blades remain sharp, I can’t give you an answer to that, because I’ve never known the blades to get dull. Because the blades don’t make contact with anything but food (unless you’ve chosen to chop plywood), there’s nothing to dull them. The combined length of the blades is about 40 inches, and the workload is distributed pretty evenly over the whole length, so isolated wear and tear is slight. I’ve never tested the sharpness, and although my fingers have come in contact with the top of the blades, I’ve never been cut. So I guess that the blades are sharp to begin with, but not too sharp (not like razor blades). This keeps them from being brittle, I assume.

My Pal, the Wizard

Some guys get their jollies from hitting a golf ball or driving a fast car—I get pumped from my Wizard. I look forward to my big day of cooking, so that I can play with it. I might use it for only one small part of one dish, but sliding it out of its box, slapping it together and “crunch!” chopping with it, provide ineffable satisfaction. I’ve used it almost every week since I got it, and I can’t say that about any other kitchen tool, except for knives.

I began to find uses for the Wizard immediately. Chopping and mincing vegetables for casseroles, soups, stews, chili, etc., is my main use of the device. It’s also great for making “chopped” salads, the kind that Russians are fond of. For this, I’ll fill a big glass jar with chopped vegetables— cucumbers, zucchini, turnips, sweet peppers, tomatoes, jicama, bok choy, and so forth. Then I’ll fill the jar with diluted vinegar, and we’ll have salad at the ready for a week or two. Sometimes I’ll chop “big”, sometimes “small”, and sometimes a combination of the two for variety. You can stockpile an enormous amount of vegetable matter if you chop small, although the individual flavors disappear. The gadget also chops nuts well, but does leave more “powder” than when you chop by hand.

In a way, the Wizard changed our diet. For example, I sought out dishes that I could use it for, such as egg salad or potato salad. We also got away from preparing the big pieces of meat that I had favored toward a more “refined” diet. We set aside one day a week, usually Friday, for a big piece of fish, and occasionally a steak. The rest of the week we dine on whatever the Wizard can conjure up.

As I said, no one gadget can do everything. The Wizard, especially its small mincer blade, does not chop soft stuff well (such as tofu or cooked vegetables), nor really hard stuff (say celery root), nor really sticky stuff (most cheeses). I say these things from hard-won experience. But I feel that the two or three Wizards that I’ve had to discard taught me some important lessons, so I don’t decry the expense. Common sense would have prevented the destruction, but I was testing the limits and I kept making the same mistake— basically, trying to “power” through a large piece of something hard. The blades never bent or broke; what broke were the two plastic knobs at the square end of the base where the lid pivots. You *can* chop hard vegetables, like raw beets, but you have to slice them thin first; for this, I use another handy device, the mandoline.

There are other limitations, such as the depth of the container. It’s only two inches, which limits the length of your pieces. So if you’re a fan of French fried potatoes, you can only get the stubby little ones, not the long pieces. (At one point, I saw advertised a version of the Wizard with a deeper container to allow longer pieces, but they stopped advertising it before I made up my mind to buy one.) It would also be nice to have blades that make larger pieces (say ¾-1 inch), which are sometimes better for stews, salads, kimchi, etc. In addition, because the lid comes down at an angle, rather than directly from above, all of the pieces are slightly curved.

Spreading the Joy

After using the Wizard for a while, I began to sing its praises back to Mary, the original gift giver. Mary doesn’t like to cook, but she gave it a try, using her husband Ralph’s Wizard. “Too hard to

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INSTRUMENTS OF MASS CONSUMPTION



FORK AND CHOPSTICK

by Randy K. Schwartz

Our eating utensils, East and West, have interesting histories of their own. They are highlighted by two recent books: *Consider the Fork* by British food writer Bee Wilson and *Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History* by historian Q. Edward Wang.¹

Forks and other forms of tableware are good examples of customs that gradually filtered down to the masses from the uppermost strata. One of the earliest surviving traces of fork usage in Europe is a painting by Botticelli showing the 1483 wedding feast in Florence of Giannozzi Pucci, a relative of the wealthy Medici family. The male and female guests are seated at separate rows of cloth-covered tables, the women dining with forks and the men with their fingers (a cynic would say that some things never change). It's known that in 1492, Lorenzo de' Medici owned a set of 18 forks. During the 1500s the use of forks diffused across Italy, including to men and women of other classes.²

From Italy the dining fork spread to France and England. French king Henry III first encountered the fork while traveling through Italy in 1574, and he introduced the utensil to the court in Paris, although it would only be in the mid-1600s that its use became fairly entrenched there and among the French aristocracy. English traveler Thomas Coryat marveled at forks in Italy in the 1590s, writing later that he did not "thinke that any other nation of Christendome doth use it". He observed that each diner would handle his own knife and fork to cut pieces of meat from a common platter, and there was a strict etiquette about it:

whatsoever he be that sitting in the company of any others at meate, should unadvisedly touch the dish of meate with his fingers from which all the table doe cut, he will give occasion of offence unto the company, as having transgressed the lawes of good manners, in so much that for his error he shall at the least be brow-beaten, if not reprehended in wordes.³

Such use of forks and knives together to cut food on a plate, Wilson writes, actually accounts for the rise of the dental overbite in modern Western countries, according to Univ. of Michigan professor emeritus of anthropology C. Loring Brace. Previously, since prehistoric times, what Brace calls "stuff-and-



cut" had prevailed: an eater would grab a hunk of meat or other food in one hand, stuff a corner of it into the mouth, sink the front teeth into it, and leave a chewable morsel there by tugging off or cutting off (with a stone blade or a knife) the rest of it. This practice, which relied on tight gripping by the incisors, encouraged the front teeth to remain aligned. In other words, if only we all ate like cavemen, we wouldn't need dental braces! By comparison, Prof. Brace adds, the Chinese developed an overbite 800-1000 years earlier than Europeans because they abandoned stuff-and-cut that much earlier, replaced by cut-and-serve.⁴

Dining forks were generally made with two uncurved tines early on, then with three curved tines beginning in the latter half of the 1700s, and with four tines beginning in the early 1800s. The curvature of the tines made it easier to hold food on the fork; and the curvature and multiplicity of the tines made it harder to prick the tongue with them. Tines were kept sharp, and sometimes doubled as toothpicks. In England there was also a special-purpose utensil with a two-tine fork at one end and a spoon at the other. It had arisen by the 1400s and came to be called the "sucket fork". Since a sucket—a sweetmeat of fruits preserved in sugar syrup—combines liquid and solids, this combination spoon and fork is nearly ideal for such a dish (the ideal, of course, being a "spork"!)⁵

Compared to chopsticks, forks are a Johnny-come-lately. The book by Wang, a professor of Asian history at both Rowan Univ. (Glassboro, NJ) and Beijing Univ., traces how chopsticks arose in China, with roots in Neolithic times, and used mainly as cooking utensils at first, but gradually replacing spoons for the eating of rice or other grains, dumplings, and noodles from a bowl. In the Ming dynasty, they were given their modern name *guaizi*, literally “quick little boys”.⁶ The traditional material was polished bamboo or wood, and eventually these would be coated with lacquer, another Chinese invention. The wealthy sometimes had elegant ones made of ivory, jade, bronze or other copper alloys, silver, or gold.

From the Fifth through the Seventh Century, the use of chopsticks— along with many other aspects of food and culture— spread outward from China in all directions, to Korea, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, and Japan. The oldest known examples of Japanese-made chopsticks are pairs from 646, found in the ruins of the Itabuki Palace in the former imperial capital of Nara. Made of cypress wood, they averaged about 12 inches in length and were tapered to a point at the ends, unlike the Chinese style with their blunt ends.⁷

In Japan and certain other regions, the adoption of chopsticks was associated with the adoption of Buddhism from China. Thus, from early on, the sticks were used in holy rituals. One example was the Japanese funeral ceremony of *hashiwatashi* (“bridgescrossing”): after the cremation, the family members, each holding a pair of chopsticks, pass from one pair to the next a bone taken from the ashes, symbolically linking the participants with the deceased. A Japanese proverb summarizes, “One’s life begins with chopsticks, it also ends with chopsticks.”⁸

Because of associations with the *hashiwatashi* ritual, to pass actual food between chopsticks is a *faux pas* in Japan. Similarly one never plants a pair of chopsticks to stand vertically in the bowl, since this is the way one offers rice to a dying or dead person; in addition, it resembles incense-burning, another Buddhist ritual.⁹ A few of the many other points of etiquette that are widespread among Asians include:

- It is *gauche* to suck on chopsticks, bite them, or point with them.
- It’s also considered rude to use a single chopstick to transfer food between plates or bowls at the table, as this resembles “digging for food”.
- A diner at table should never use chopsticks to break the food into smaller pieces, or even to stab or pierce a piece of food. The very word “chopstick” is misleading, since Asian ingredients are customarily pre-chopped to appropriate size by the time the food is served—which is why the fork-and-knife combo is not well suited to this cuisine.

In modern times, certain chopstick customs appear to be in flux, partly due to public health awareness. For example, prompted by an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Chinese health officials began a campaign to encourage the practice of placing a pair of dedicated “serving-chopsticks” in each common platter of food, instead of the traditional method where individual diners use their own pairs of chopsticks both to serve and to eat their food. A blogger in Hong Kong objected,

writing that, unless one is clumsy, one’s chopsticks touch only the food removed from the platter, not other people’s food. He concluded, “Serving-chopsticks are for chopstick losers.”¹⁰

Before closing, we might note one other use that has been made of chopsticks. Since chopsticks are a traditional symbol of good fortune in much of Asia, it’s interesting to know that for decades, the immigrant workers producing fortune cookies on the West Coast of the U.S. used a combination of chopsticks and fingers to fold the hot wafers into their characteristic shape. Skilled workers— often women and children— could fold about 1000 cookies per hour.

Fortune cookies were folded “by hand” in this way until 1967, when Edward Louie, a Chinese immigrant whose family had established the Lotus Fortune Cookie Company in San Francisco some 20 years earlier, invented a machine that could both fold the wafers and insert the slips of paper in the process. Automation dramatically lowered the cost of production, and the fortune cookie soon became a standard item at Asian restaurants coast to coast.¹¹

For a long time, the notion has prevailed that fortune cookies were invented by Asian immigrants in California sometime between 1890 and 1920. But Jennifer 8 Lee of the *New York Times* has reported evidence that the *tsujiura senbei* (“fortune crackers”) and *omikuji senbei* (“written fortune crackers”) of Japan, still made there, are older. One type is stuffed with a slip of paper and has the same shape and texture as the modern American fortune cookie, although its flavor is more sophisticated— less sugar and less vanilla. Additional evidence, gathered by Yasuko Nakamachi of Kanagawa Univ. and reported by Lee, includes an etching from an 1878 Japanese story collection showing the wafers being grilled in black irons over hot coals. ■

Endnotes

1. Q. Edward Wang, *Chopsticks: A Cultural and Culinary History* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015); Bee Wilson, *Consider the Fork: A History of How We Cook and Eat* (Basic Books, 2012). Earlier, Wilson was the author of *The Hive: The Story of the Honeybee and Us* (2006), *Sandwich: A Global History* (2010), and *Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, from Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee* (2008).
2. Roy Strong, *Feast: A History of Grand Eating* (Jonathan Cape, 2002), pp. 169-170.
3. Quoted in Strong, p. 167.
4. Wilson, pp. 64-68.
5. Wilson, pp. 206-208.
6. Wang, p. 119.
7. Wang, p. 76.
8. Wang, p. 127.
9. Wang, p. 127.
10. Geoffrey A. Fowler and Blythe Yee, “Hong Kong Promotes Healthier Chopstick Etiquette”, *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 11, 2005, front page.
11. Jennifer 8 Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food* (Twelve Books, 2008), pp. 86-87.

LOUISIANA COOKBOOKS *continued from p. 6*

Lafayette Cook Book

Let's shift lanes a bit to glimpse another rare but seminal item, *Lafayette Cook Book* (1922) by the Methodist Episcopal Church South of Lafayette, a recently nationally-acclaimed and -awarded "Food Town" in the heart of Cajun country. This exceptionally scarce church cookbook places Lafayette, Louisiana, on the food and cooking map. Most notable about this work is that while it emanates geographically from the heart and soul of Cajun country, there is not a single mention of the term "Cajun" in it. Although it uses the term "Creole" in describing pralines, this important work, the earliest Lafayette cookbook, is evidence that the word "Cajun" as applied to cooking was absent from the early cookbook publications of this area. Only in the late 1950s did "Cajun" cooking begin to percolate in the media, and before long popular chain restaurant menus were touting all things "hot, spicy and Cajun", a new fixture in the national culinary landscape. Cookbook history can truly demonstrate some interesting facts!

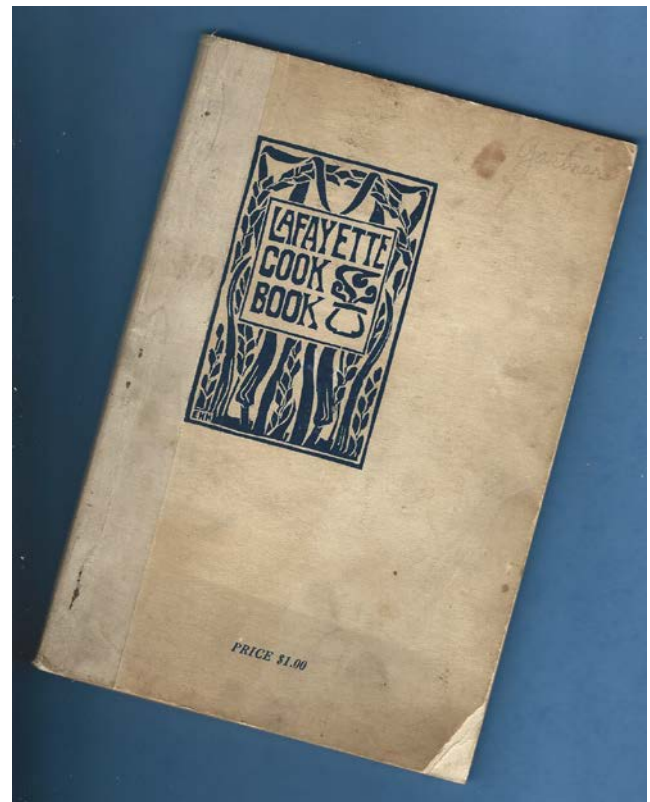
Lafayette Cook Book is also a real treasure because it established a genre and model of church community cookbooks produced by early Methodist congregations around the state. These cookbooks document recipes from small communities and their specific cooking techniques, set against a Louisiana backdrop.

Two Classics from the 1930s

A final pair of collection favorites, *Dixie Meals* (1934) and *Food for Gourmets* (1940), are truly the products of Southern ladies, reflecting their gracious hospitality and darn good food that was well prepared and well served! In building this collection, I felt that both of these exceptional cookbooks have relevance to my paternal grandmother Yvonne Patout, who was a doyenne of good cooking and socializing.

Dixie Meals by Florence Roberts is unusual as an updated 1930s version of the very early housekeeper's guides that gave rise and impetus to many later cookbooks. *Food for Gourmets* by philanthropist and oil heiress Matilda Geddings Gray of Lake Charles, Louisiana, in western Cajun country, is a savory example of unique food tastes and great recipes. For example, Kumquat Preserves (p. 112) is an intermittently popular recipe hard to find in contemporary Louisiana cookbooks. This citrus confiture, once a seasonal and holiday favorite, has now become somewhat buried in cookbook history, as contemporary publications seem to only favor ease of preparation and commercial, store-bought ingredients.

In conclusion, this particular personal cookbook collection carefully mirrors the publication record from Louisiana's earliest days to contemporary works now being issued. Perhaps with this article, my collection journey can be enriched through a dialogue with other collectors, identifying and acquiring additional titles that might better explain where the Creole and Cajun cooking of Louisiana really do meet in time and space. ■



CHOP WIZARD *continued from page 11*

chop" was her report. I don't think her heart was in it, so I let it drop. However, this did not stop me from dropping the Wizard into conversations with other friends. I'm sure that they gave me peculiar looks, as if my fiery eyes and zealot-like tones were signs of an unbalanced mind. No matter. Occasionally I'd hear back from a cooking enthusiast about how the Wizard had jazzed up his or her cooking experience.

Perhaps my most satisfying bit of proselytizing came through my wife, Barbara, who works at a senior facility connected with the Univ. of Michigan Hospital. One of the patrons was talking to Barbara and mentioned how much she liked to cook, but chopping with a knife had become almost impossible because of arthritis. She simply couldn't grip the knife tightly enough to make firm cuts. My wife told her about my adventures with the Vidalia Chop Wizard. Like many seniors, this woman was living on a very limited budget, and paying out the \$19.95 cost of the Wizard was too much for her. I promptly went to my study closet and extracted one of the four wizards I had stockpiled and gave it to Barbara to give to the woman. Not only was she grateful for the gift, but she reported back about how wonderfully easy and effective it was. There! The joy was spread.

Yes, I stockpiled the Vidalia Chop Wizard. As mentioned, I have broken a few and have had to replace them— but my real motivation was the fear that they would stop making them and I would eventually be without one. Luckily, the Wizard is still going strong, simply, I believe, because it is a superior product.

About four Christmases ago, Mary gave me a Crockpot, and another great love was born. Now the Vidalia Chop Wizard and the Crockpot are joined in bubbling harmony almost every week. Oh, the stories I could tell you about my lovely Crockpot! ■

CHAA PROGRAMS

continued from page 4

nuts produces a “liquor” rich in anti-oxidants. Ann Arbor-based Jolly Pumpkin uses dried chestnut chips to brew its gluten-free Special Holiday Ale. Chestnut production in Michigan, now the leading state, is surging but cannot keep up with demand. The best way to shell chestnuts is not with a pair of crosswise cuts but with a single cut around the belly; once roasted, the shell can be opened like a clam. Hermetically-sealed packs of peeled and frozen nuts can also now be purchased. Many contemporary recipes are available at the Michigan site <http://chestnutgrowersinc.com/>, and many historical recipes are collected in a book by Jane Ettawageshik Huntwork, *The Majestic American Chestnut: A History and Cookbook* (Cadillac, MI: Princeton Hall, 1995).

There are eight species in the genus *Castanea*, all native to either eastern North America, Europe, China, or Japan. Chestnut blight, a fungal canker, was first noticed in 1904 at the New York Zoological Garden; within 40 years most trees on the continent had perished. In 1981, Prof. Fulbright and his MSU colleagues began investigating why some trees in northern Lower Michigan had survived. The state’s commercial groves today are mostly of a cultivar called Colossal, made by crossing a European strain with Japanese and Chinese strains that are relatively resistant to the blight. Still, Michigan growers must ward off the blight with a natural virus, using a process learned from European growers. In chestnut-loving Italy, 90% of the nuts are simply pan-roasted and eaten, but they’re also used to make such traditional products as breads, cakes, pastas, and syrups. Turkey is another chestnut center, with a heritage of fine candies such as nougats and chocolates. In Istanbul, there are thousands of street vendors of chestnuts. In China, which accounts for over half of global production, hundreds of different cultivars are grown in high-intensity orchards of fairly small, grafted trees. Roasted chestnuts are added to many Chinese dishes and are also sold on the streets of Sichuanese and other cities.

Down on the Dairy Farm

On May 17, about two dozen CHAA members were given a tour of Calder Dairy Farm in Carleton, MI. Founded in 1946 by William Graham Stewart Calder, this is one of the few remaining family-owned dairies in the state. Twice every day there, about 180 cows are milked by machine. Every two days the raw milk is hauled to the firm’s plant in Lincoln Park where it is processed into various grades of pasteurized milk and cream, butter and cheese, ice cream and egg nog. The company still offers home delivery of glass-bottled milk by truck routes covering parts of four counties.

Most of the cows are Holsteins because they produce the largest milk volumes. There are also many Brown Swiss cows (which are heavier and produce milk with higher fat content, important for products such as butter and cheese) and some Jerseys (which weigh less than the first two but produce the highest fat content). A large cow can hold 15-20 gals. of milk in her udder, but the average milking produces about 3 gals. and takes about 10 mins. The cows are impregnated soon after giving birth to keep the milk flowing. Besides cows, the farm also keeps some Hereford and other beef cattle, as well as sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, pigs, chickens, peafowl, and guineafowl. These are just for showing visitors now, but recently the farm was certified to sell meat, and it plans to produce pork first. ■

IN MEMORIAM

We were saddened to hear of the passing of two former longtime CHAA members.

Muriel Seligman (11/7/22 - 6/16/15), along with her daughter Lucy Seligman, who survives her, were CHAA members and *Repast* subscribers from the early 1990s through 2001. On Dec 12, 1993, they hosted a CHAA participatory theme meal, “An English Christmas”, at the Community



Building at Geddes Lake Townhouses, the Ann Arbor condos where they both lived at the time. Born Muriel Bienstock in New York City, she grew up in Hartford, CT. Muriel was widowed in her 40s, and raised five children on her own. A son, Adam, now deceased, had Tourette Syndrome, and Muriel became very active in the early days of the National Tourette Association (Bayside, NY). For the past 15 years she lived in the Bay Area, and she died in El Cerrito, CA. Lucy, who lives in Richmond, CA, with her daughter, Remy, tells us that a memorial service will be held on Sun., Sep. 6, 2-4 pm, at the home of Muriel’s son Brad, 815 The Alameda, Berkeley, CA.

We learned only recently of the passing of **Susan Nell Lincoln** (5/4/48 - 9/14/09). Sue had a lengthy and successful career as a dietitian, mostly at hospitals in Toledo, OH, including 29 years at the St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center where she passed away. She also taught some classes at Owens



Community College, and was active in Junior League and in local and state dietetic associations. Despite living in Toledo she frequently attended the monthly meetings of CHAA, of which she was a member from the early 1990s through 2007. She and a fellow Toledoan, Annette Donar, who remains a CHAA member, were instrumental in writing a detailed report for *Repast* (Fall 2005) on Dan Longone’s talk, “Early American Wine-Making: The 19th-Century Experience”. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

Sunday, September 20, 2015

Chef Frank Turner,
Director of Dining Services at Henry Ford Village,
a senior living community in Dearborn, MI,
“Culinary Wellness: A Recipe for Success”
3:00 pm, Ann Arbor District Library
Downtown Branch (343 South Fifth Ave.)

On the Back Burner: We welcome ideas and submissions from all readers of *Repast*, including for the following planned future theme-issues. Suggestions for future themes are also welcome.

- Fall 2015 and Winter 2016: American Restaurant History
- Spring 2016: Reminiscences of Food Professionals.

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume XXXI Number 3, Summer 2015

First Class