

Culinary Historians of Chicago NEWSLETTER

Summer Edition — 2006

Editors: Wanda Bain and Kantha Selke

www.culinaryhistorians.org



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear CHCers and Roundtablers (that's a mouthful),

What a pleasure to see another edition of our newsletter finally ready. Thanks from us all to Wanda Bain, Catherine Lambrecht and Barb Olson, who have taken so much time to construct it. I am especially pleased to welcome Matthew Peterson's first book review. Matthew is a student in Kendall College's new Bachelor of Arts in Culinary Arts degree program and an exemplar of the program, a marriage of culinary and liberal arts. Kendall's is the first in Chicago and joins such well-known institutions as the Culinary Institute of America and Johnson and Wales University.

Food studies are growing rapidly in the United States—French and Chinese scholars have been at it for some time, as one might have guessed. The field mirrors popular interest in cooking, food history, disgusting foods, gorging...everything one would want from food.

Two recent conferences showed the several sides of food studies. One the, annual Joint Meetings Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society (AFHVS) and Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) held at Boston University (go to <http://food-culture.org/>) to see what the organizations are all about and some excellent research links. Many of the papers were by graduate students and faculty concerning their ongoing research—it was a pleasure to see so many young scholars actively engaged in the subject. One panel, for instance discussed lead contamination in grasshoppers and rural choices in Oaxaca, another on Sub-Saharan cuisine and western perceptions of it, while others were about farmers' markets, sustainable farming, agricultural stewardship, and horse-eating in nineteenth century France. Yours truly was on a fun panel that chewed over the future of foods (read H.G. Wells to see what it might be). The conference, a mixture of research into food history, folklore, literature, sociology, and hard sciences, represents the kind of high-level research being done in many colleges and universities these days. Incidentally, global climate change was a strong undercurrent in many talks, it being reinforced by days and days of rain in Boston and the rest of the northeast.

A second conference was the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Education or CAF in held at the magnificent Culinary Institute of Charleston, South Carolina—where an old CHC friend, Michael Carmel has just become chair of the culinary school. Here were collected educators from culinary schools around the country, along with others engaged in culinary training—one was a training chef for the U.S. Navy. Panels included sessions on professional development and assessment, budgeting, interactive education, and a panel about new curricula for culinary arts on which I and Chris Koetke, Dean at Kendall College appeared. This conference differed from the ASFS/AFHVS in that it was about more practical (I won't say vocational) education for people who were not necessarily going into academic research. Yet, all were interested in the kinds of areas addressed by the researchers—sustainable agriculture, social implications of our food production systems, environment, and the cultural aspects of food. For instance, while the first conference might have had a paper on the deeper cultural meaning one dish on an area of the Philippines, the latter group wondered what to serve the many Filipinos working in the military facilities in southern California. And all at the CAF conference

wanted ways to teach good writing and other skills to their culinary students: in short, to help them succeed in the world both inside and outside the culinary world.

All of this is to say that the world of food is expanding and, at the same time, each area of it fertilizes the others. That is why CHC supports students and researchers in both the academic and practical culinary realms through our grants program.

Last, what held both groups together was good food. In Boston it was a great seafood dinner from one of the city's famous shacks, in Charleston meals in what has to be one of America's premier dining cities (I fed at a marvelous Gullah, low-country) restaurant. And in Charleston, another old friend of the CHC, Chef Joe Randall put on a cooking demonstration, for which he created a Brown Butter Peach Pecan Cinnamon Tart that was to die for. (see his website: www.chefjoerandall.com).

I hope you have a good summer and wherever you go come back with more good food memories and recipes.

Bruce Kraig, President CHC



MARK YOUR CALENDAR - CHC and Roundtable Events

July 22, Saturday — What is American Food?

Time: 10 a.m. Speaker: Penelope Bingham, Roosevelt University, Room 628

August — Date to be announced. Maxwell Street Tour

October 14, Saturday - "Feeding our kids and affecting our future"

Time: 10 a.m. Speaker: Chef Ann Cooper Place: TBA

Check website www.culinaryhistorians.org for latest meeting information.



***The Arab Table, Recipes and Culinary Traditions* Author May Bsisu**

Publisher: William Morrow, 2005 Reviewed by Culinary Student Matthew Peterson

After beginning to read this cookbook, I soon realized that *The Arab Table* is not just a cookbook. But I should have known this after hearing Ms. Bsisu speak at the September meeting of the Chicago Culinary Historians. This book is not your average American home economists' cookbook consisting of chickpea and lamb recipes. Ms. Bsisu has not only put together a book of traditional recipes of the Arab world, but also gives us a glimpse into rich culture and history unknown to many Americans.

A native of Amman, Jordan who now lives across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ms. Bsisu has been cooking and studying Arab cuisine since the mid-seventies when she was married. At first this was because of necessity and then for simply the love of cooking.

My passion for nearly three decades has been to learn all that I could about Arab food: in my Grandmother's kitchen in Beirut, in desert villages in Jordan, in hotel kitchens in Kuwait, in friends' homes and fine restaurants, from street vendors in Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus; and even in London, England.

Her love of Arab cuisine is shown in the vignettes before each recipe giving the story behind the recipe, be it cultural or familial. As I read a recipe, I felt like I was in Ms. Bsisu's kitchen with her helping her to prepare a family meal while she spoke about the origins of a dish or a childhood memory.

Interspersed throughout the recipes Ms. Bsisu also includes longer articles about Arab history and ingredients, religion, and her family. My favorite story was the one that followed her recipe for Shredded Pastry with Cheese (Kunfa Bi Jibin.) Her father still in his business suit would prepare Kunafa, strands of phyllo-like dough, over an open heater in the living room as she and her siblings looked on. This dish was also my favorite to

eat. It is similar to Greek Baklava, yet not as overly sweet. The akawi cheese and the orange blossom and rose water give Kunafa Bi Jibin a much rounder flavor. I think I ate about three portions.

Although she was born in Jordan, lives in Kentucky, and is a Muslim, Ms. Bsisu does not fail to mention the other nations, cultures, and religions of the Arab world, which stretch from Morocco to beyond the Persian Gulf. In the introduction of the book she gives an overview of Arab history, discusses the similarities and differences between the nations and cultures of the Arab world, and then tackles each individually. The food and traditions that surround Ramadan and Easter are addressed extensively later in the book.

The second section of the book, the Arab Pantry, is an exhaustive list of Arab ingredients with detailed descriptions of each. Some may be unfamiliar to most Americans and even culinary students, like me. Luckily for us she lets us know where we can find them. (There is even a list of specialty purveyors at the end of the book if we are unable find a certain ingredient at our local ethnic or health food store.)

So what about the recipes? Ms. Bsisu's could be followed easily by a home cook like my mother (who is going to get a copy of this book) and are not dumbed down to bore a culinary nerd, like me. They are organized into eleven distinct chapters: Basics (spice mixtures and sauces), Mezza (similar to Spanish Tapas), Bread (not pita tasting of freezer burn), Breakfast, Soups and Stews, Salads, Rice, Main Courses, Side Dishes, Beverages, and Desserts.

The Arab Table is a wonderful book that could easily be used by a home economist, as a textbook at a culinary school or for late night reading in bed (as I did.) It is a positive insight into a world with a rich culinary tradition that has been unfairly stereotyped by Western media and governments.

Meeting Information:

To attend a lecture hosted by the Culinary Historians of Chicago we do charge a fee for nonmembers. Adults are \$10.00 and students are \$5.00, unless otherwise stated. Fees are collected at the door. CHC usually meets the third Saturday of the month at The Chicago Historical Museum. However, the museum is under renovation. It is best to check the CHC website at www.culinaryhistorians.org for meeting location. Members will be notified by email or mail of program and location each month. If you would like to attend a meeting, please call Barb Olson 708-788-0338. Please leave your name, telephone number and the number of people in your party. Space is limited.

Membership:

To become a member of the Culinary Historians of Chicago, fill out the application that is available on CHC's website, www.culinaryhistorians.org along with your check and mail it to CHC, Attn.: Barb Olson, 6219 W. 26th St., 1st Floor, Berwyn, IL, 60402 (708-788-0338). Annual membership is \$36.00 for individuals, \$60.00 for couples, and \$24.00 for students. Prices are in US dollars. Membership includes: Membership card, Newsletter, Notification of up-coming events, and Special member discounts for certain events. If you would like a membership card mailed to you, please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your membership fee.



ChicaGourmets Events:

Tuesday, July 25, 7 PM, Cuisine Bourgeoise, Caf Matou, 1846 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, Members \$62; non-members \$75

Thursday, July 27, 6:30 PM, Pairing American Wine & Italian Cuisine, 312 CHICAGO.

Monday, August 14, 6:30 PM, Reception, Celebrate Summer's Bounty, Le Fran ais

Tuesday, August 22, 5:30 PM, Reception at Hellenic Museum, 6:30 PM Reception and Dinner, Seafood on the Mediterranean, Greek Islands.

Monday, August 28, 7 PM, Modern Comfort Food in a Rustic Setting, L. Woods Tap & Pine Lodge, 7110 N. Lincoln Ave., Lincolnwood, Members \$59; Non-members \$69.

Sunday, September 3, 5 PM, Sweets & Savories, 4 pm Reception, 5-course dinner with Chef-Owner David Richards with Guest of Honor Tammy Weller, President of Singles Travel International. An Overview of the ChicaGourmets! Spring 2006 Caribbean Cruise.

Sunday, September 24, 5 PM, Thoughts on Wine & Food Pairings, Bonefish.

For more information: www.chicagourgourmets.org or for reservations, call 708-383-7543 or email donaldnewcomb@comcast.net.

Food Events and Special Programs

Pierogi Fest — Whiting, Indiana July 28-30 Friday night Parade with leader Mr. Pierogi and Pierogiettes. Homemade pierogis — Try plum, strawberry, cheese, potato, sauerkraut or mushroom.

Chicago Green City Market - Wednesdays and Saturdays until October 2 - From 7 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Located south of Chicago's Lincoln Park and north of Chicago Historical Society parking lot.

Tales from the Kitchen Cooking utensils, gadgets and methods throughout history are featured at Arlington Heights Historical Museum, 110 W. Fremont, Arlington Heights. 847-255-1225.

Eli's Cheesecake Factory Tours, 6701 W. Forest Preserve Drive, call 773-308-7000 for reservations \$3 per person includes slice of cheesecake.

Eli's Wright College Farmer's Market - Thursdays from June 22 to October 26 in the Eli's Cheesecake World Parking Lot, 6701 W. Forest Preserve Drive. Culinary Demo at noon — a different demo every week. Learn how to decorate a cheesecake or prepare fresh salsa and jams. Fresh produce plus special programs like salsa dance lessons and flowerpot painting.

Chinese-American Museum of Chicago - Current exhibit Tofu, The Wonder Food. ° April 2-Oct 1. °
Featuring soybean curd history, products, and Midwestern connections. °

The current quest of the Chinese-American Museum: To find a Chinese American Restaurant dating from the 1930's that has its original decor and is run by the same family that owned it in the 30's. They suspect this may exist somewhere in a small town in the Midwest. Prizes offered: A Chop Suey dinner, membership to the Chinese-American Museum and a year's supply of Fortune Cookies! Location: 238 West 23rd Street, Chicago, 312 949-1000, www.ccamuseum.org

Open Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Field's Culinary Studio in the Marshall Field's State Street store, 7th floor, offers several classes in August. For class details, visit www.field.com. August 2 Homemade Pasta, August 3 Healthy 30-minute Meals, August 10 New Wines from Around the World, August 12 Kids Cooking Class, August 13 Field's Favorite Lunch, August 16 & 31 Girls Night Out: Massage and Margaritas, August 18 Mediterranean Flatbreads, August 23 Chocolate, Chocolate, Chocolate, August 25 Basic Tamale Builders, and August 29 Vegetarians are Hungry People Too.

Potpourri

Gadgets make great gifts! From the Chef's Catalog:

Pit a Pound of cherries in just 75 seconds Kitchen tool features large feeder funnel with spring-loaded steel plunger encased in a plastic handle. °It also works on olives. \$39.99.

Peel, core and slice pineapple in one twist. **Pineapple Slicer** keeps fruit intact to create a delightful mug. ° \$9.99.

Gravy Strainer. Eliminate clumps and grease for healthier gravies. ° Pour gravy through the wide strainer top to trap solids then allow fat to rise before pouring grease-free gravy through the low spout. ° Made of polycarbonate, it's microwave and dishwasher safe. ° \$9.99.

Stuffing Cage. Make no-fuss, no mess stuffing! Put stuffing in cage, insert into turkey, and when it's done, remove easily. Large handle is easy to grasp and pull out of a 14lb or larger bird. Dishwasher safe. \$12.99. °

Syrup Warmer. Treat yourself to hot syrup! Keeps pancakes or waffles warm longer. ° See-through container features double wall insulation and a pointed spout for easy cleaning and easy pouring. Microwavable \$6.99.

All items are from the Chef's Catalog, 5070 Centennial Blvd., Colorado Springs, Co 80919-2402, Sales and Services 1 800 884-2433, Fax 1-800-967-2433, www.Chef's.

- Barb Olson

Eva Eliscu, who presented History of the Table in January, provided this recommended reading list:

1. Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver: Stories of Dinner as a Work of Art
Caroline C. Young
2. The Art of the Table: A Complete Guide to Table Setting, Table Manners and Tableware
Suzanne Von Drachenfels
3. Beautiful Napkin Folding Horst Hanisch
4. Cooking for Kings : The Life of Antonin Careme, the First Celebrity Chef Ian Kelly
5. Eight Centuries of European Knives, Forks and Spoons Klaus Marguardt
6. The Food Chronology: A Food Lover's Compendium of Events and Anecdotes, from Prehistory to the Present
James Trager
7. Food in History Reay Tannahill
8. Food in Painting : From the Renaissance to the Present Kenneth Bendiner
9. Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life
Donna R. Barnes, Peter G. Rose, Albany Institute of History and Art
10. Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners
Margaret Visser
11. Salt : A World History Mark Kurlansky

12. Savoring the Past : The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789

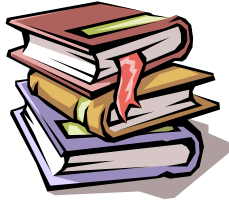
Barbara Ketcham Wheaton

Cookbook Donations - If you want an appreciative home for your no longer desired cookbooks, then donate them to: Washburne Culinary School of the Kennedy-King College, South Shore Cultural Center, 7059 S South Shore Drive Chicago IL 60649

Washburne Culinary School is building their culinary library with these donations. The contact for your donation is: **Provost William N. Reynolds e-mail: wreynolds@ccc.edu** or 773-602-5487.

If you intend to write your donation off on your taxes, then you should list the books. For establishing value, you may want to consult these sources: A Guide to Collecting Cookbook by Col. Bob Allen, Price Guide to booklets and recipe leaflets by Linda Dickinson, or www.addall.com which has a used book section with prices from at least 16 different web sites, including Amazon, exlibris, etc.

When donating to Washburne, give them two copies of your list.° One they will keep for their records and the second for°them to initial they received it for your records.



▶▶▶ Send culinary stories to wandar33@aol.com.