



VOLUME XXXIII, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2017

# Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor



## Ann Arborites Share Some Food Memories

Ann Arborites Tom and Joan Overmire at a Thanksgiving meal at the house of American friends in Kuwait in 1978. Tom's article "Memorable Eating: The Evolution of a Hoosier Palate" begins on page 4 inside.

# TAFFY AND THE YEAR 1906

“Saykly’s of Escanaba: Sweet Treats ‘UP’ North” is an interesting article that CHAA member Sherry Sundling showed us from the magazine *Michigan History* (Jan.-Feb. 2017, pp. 36-39). Saykly’s was founded by Lebanese Christian immigrant Joseph Saykly in 1906 as a grocery and confectionery in Escanaba, a town on the shore of Lake Michigan in the Upper Peninsula (UP). The article has old photos of its taffy and chocolates; the product line never included traditional Middle Eastern sweets, notes writer Elyssa Bisoski, a curator at the American Arab National Museum in Dearborn. The company is still family-owned and ships chocolates and candies all over the world.

In the same year, 1906, the first truly effective mechanical taffy puller was patented in the U.S. Has anyone witnessed the working of such a machine and not been mesmerized by its reciprocating rods as they move round and round? The repeated pulling and folding of the taffy aerates it with tiny air bubbles, making it lighter and chewier. The inventor of the 1906 device,



In this old photo, a Saykly’s worker pulls a giant band of taffy by hand. Photo: Delta County Historical Society, from Elyssa Bisoski’s article in *Michigan History* (Jan.-Feb. 2017).

Herbert M. Dickenson, assigned the patent to Herbert L. Hildreth for producing “Hildreth’s Original and Only Velvet Candy”. Hildreth sold large quantities of this taffy to lodgers at the Hotel Velvet, his tourist resort located on Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

“Taffy was especially popular at beach resorts, in the form of salt water taffy (which is not really made using salt water)”, writes Jean-Luc Thiffeault, a Univ. of Wisconsin mathematician who spoke about taffy devices at the Univ. of Michigan last September. On the other hand, Samira Kawash, in her book *Candy: A Century of Panic and Pleasure* (Faber and Faber, 2013), listed the unseemly substances that were often thrown into the mixing bowl for taffy, “that lowest of confectionery forms” (pp. 60-61). Such practices helped inspire passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Federal Meat Inspection Act, two bills that were signed on the same day in 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt. ■

## 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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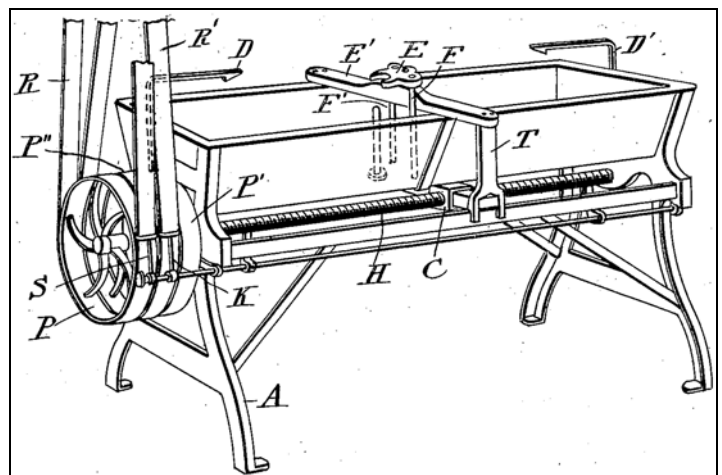


Diagram from Herbert M. Dickenson’s 1906 patent for a mechanical taffy puller. The reciprocating rods (E and F) are tripped to exchange positions when they reach the stops (D and D’).

Image: Jean-Luc Thiffeault, “A Mathematical History of Taffy Pullers”, July 30, 2016, <https://arxiv.org/abs/1608.00152>.

# “MY LIFE WAS TRANSFORMED WHEN I BEGAN TO WORK AS A COOK”

by Frank Carollo

*Frank Carollo is a Managing Partner at Zingerman's Bakehouse in Ann Arbor, which he co-founded in 1992. Prior to that, he had cooking stints at three Ann Arbor restaurants: Bicycle Jim's, Maude's, and Zingerman's Delicatessen. His earlier article, "Bread is a Big Deal at Zingerman's" (Repast, Spring 2006), recounts the history and philosophy of the Bakehouse itself.*

I grew up in the suburbs of Detroit, the middle child and only boy in what felt like an ‘ethnic’ family. My dad’s parents came from Sicily in the early 1900s, and while he was born and raised in Detroit, I definitely identified as being Italian. My mother was from Austria, so I was a product of two cultures where food played a pretty significant role. My memories of childhood are largely of being either in our basement, at my Grandma’s, or at an Aunt’s house, sitting at a long table with dozens of relatives preparing to celebrate a holiday or birthday. And that celebration was always centered on food.

As a kid, I often felt uncomfortable about being different. My mom liked to have us behave like ‘Europeans’; for example, we brought our own bags to the grocery store, a source of incredible embarrassment for me long before our culture got with the program. I longed to be just like everyone else in my neighborhood— American. This sense of not really fitting in followed me throughout my childhood, adolescence, and into my college years.

I moved from St. Clair Shores to Ann Arbor in 1972, and that 58-mile move was like moving into a different galaxy. Ann Arbor in the early 1970s was a world unlike any that I had seen before. I further continued not fitting in by studying engineering in a place and time where that field of study wasn’t popular or the norm. While engineering school at the Univ. of Michigan was challenging, I did well enough to earn good grades there. But as I approached graduation, I realized I didn’t really feel qualified to be an engineer. So what choice did I have but to go to grad school?

That’s when something really special happened for me. On a whim, I applied for work in a restaurant in Ann Arbor where all of the employees had just revolted and quit— I viewed that as an opportunity to convince the owner that I would be a good choice to work in the kitchen as a cook. I managed to convince him to give me a chance, and a week later I started a journey that is now in its 40<sup>th</sup> year.



Photo: Zingerman's Bakehouse website

On some level I felt that my life was transformed when I began to work as a cook while I was still an undergraduate student. Instantly, I felt like I was doing work that I loved doing, and I remember feeling a little guilty that I was getting paid to do it (all of \$2.45/hour). What turned out to be kind of interesting was that while I might not have felt qualified or confident to be an engineer, many of the engineer qualities were hard-wired in me and were suddenly useful now that I was in a kitchen.

What I found was that in the food business, two very valuable skills to have are being organized and creating systems, which are pre-eminent qualities of engineers. It seemed that my coworkers liked to work with me because things went smoothly when I was on, and that made work more enjoyable for me as well. It was really the fact that we acted as a team, that we were making good food, and that we were joyful in doing it, that made me really want to keep doing this work.

Thus, during the last four months before graduation at UM, I was feeling more and more like continuing to cook, and less and less like pursuing my master’s degree in bio-engineering. My acceptance into the master’s program was good for one year, so I thought that I’d keep working, save up some money (I was of course a poor student), and start grad school the following September. When September rolled around, I decided to keep working as a cook until it was no longer fun, and then I could go back to school.

Twelve months later I was working at a restaurant in Ann Arbor called Maude’s as a cook. And within a few months, I met my future partners there, Ari Weinzweig and Paul Saginaw. That began what has become a 39-year period of friendship in life and partnership in business. ■



# MEMORABLE EATING: THE EVOLUTION OF A HOOSIER PALATE

by Tom Overmire

*Born and raised in Indiana, Thomas G. Overmire, a biologist by training, has had a varied career. He has been a high school teacher, university professor, college dean, executive director, curriculum consultant, science writer, and project management officer. He has worked at Ball State Univ., the National Science Foundation, the Univ. of Michigan, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research—and elsewhere. His 200+ publications include a biology textbook and an article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Now retired, he lives in Ann Arbor with his wife, Joan. CHAA member Sonia Manchek deserves praise for encouraging Dr. Overmire to write this recollection.*

Sometimes, something we eat sparks a magic taste moment. The taste becomes the standard against which all other encounters with that food will be compared. If this “best ever” moment happened when we were young, we remember it as, “Nothing compares with Mom’s cooking!” When we are older, some of our “best ever” food memories can be linked to specific events or occasions.

My wife Joan fondly remembers the home-made, hand-cranked ice cream that she ate as a child when she and her family would visit her grandmother. The joy of eating that cold mixture of raw (unpasteurized) cream, vanilla extract, and eggs is hard-wired into her memory.

Several “best ever” food moments happened early in my life as well. My own first memory of ice cream traces to when I was about 4 years old. I had the mumps, and my Uncle George, who was living with us at the time, would walk down to the drug store soda fountain and bring home to me a scoop of vanilla ice cream in a little paper container. The ice cream was delicious and very soothing to my throat. And it still is memorable.

## Indiana Memories

My formative childhood experiences with food reflect the customs of the Midwest, and especially Indiana, where I was born in 1926. When my brother and I were little kids we were nicknamed Honey Joe and Apple Butter Tom. My Grandpa Garner was a blacksmith, but he raised bees as a hobby and harvested the honey. And every Fall, Grandma



Tom and Joan Overmire

Garner would build a bonfire in the back yard, fill a big iron pot with apples and cook them all day, producing rich, deep-brown apple butter. These two home delicacies were imprinted on us when we were very young.

One hot sunny afternoon when I was about 9 years old, my Auntie Mid picked up a salt shaker, took me out into her vegetable garden, and picked me a ripe tomato. I had had no interest in tomatoes before then, and I still remember the luscious taste and feel of that hot tomato, squished in my hand. Years later, when Joan and I were students at Indiana Univ., Auntie Mid helped sustain us by providing quart jars of home-canned tomatoes. These fruits continue to be a basic staple in our diet, to this day.

My great-aunt Myrtle would gather ripe fruit from her apricot trees and store them directly on the ice in her icebox. There is no better Summer snack than a cold, dead-ripe apricot.

When I was in high school, a couple of persimmon trees grew at the Youth Camp in Columbus, IN. A buddy and I claimed their splendid fruits as our own, and his mother would bake persimmon pudding for us. It was also while I was in high school that my mother taught me how to make lemon meringue pie, using the recipe that was on the can of Carnation<sup>®</sup> condensed milk. Later, as an undergraduate at Purdue Univ. in West Lafayette, I became somewhat of a celebrity at our co-op house for being able to prepare that classy dessert.

My Grandma Overmire made raisin-filled cookies. These soft, moist, fist-size cookies seem to have disappeared from history. At least, I’ve never seen them at any bakery or found their recipe in any cookbook.

When I grew up, the unofficial “Hoosier State sandwich” was breaded pork tenderloin. This was in the years before hamburgers became the nation’s sandwich of choice. I still order a tenderloin sandwich whenever I find it on a menu. Chili was also a popular regional dish by the time I was growing up. Blacker’s Chili Parlor in Indianapolis used to feature 25 different kinds of chili.

I probably inherited my appreciation for Limburger cheese, liverwurst, and salt-rising bread from my dad. I haven’t tasted any of these in a long time. My mother undoubtedly contributed to my fondness for wilted lettuce, salmon croquettes, and Post® 40% Bran Flakes.

The Summer when I was 17, I trimmed trees at Indiana Univ. and Hanover College. Sometimes, after work, we would go out along a river and fish until sunset. Supper would consist of any fish we caught, plus, more importantly, sweet potatoes that had been baked in the ashes of our campfire while we fished.

In October 1944, I joined the U.S. Army as a draftee. It was during my first week as a soldier that I had my first taste of Army-style bread pudding. This military staple was made with stale bread and enhanced with peaches, pineapple, or any other available fruit. The pudding was sometimes topped off with condensed milk if you wanted it. And I always wanted it.

After the war, Joan and I were both students at Indiana Univ. in Bloomington. During those years I remember encountering a number of previously unfamiliar foods from Joan and her family. For example, soon after we were married Joan introduced me to fried eggplant, which became one of my favorites. It was from Joan’s brother, Charles, that I first learned about pickled herring. I became quite fond of it, and found that I preferred the pickled-in-wine variety (in fact, we have some in our refrigerator right now). Joan’s mother, Opha, used to make a type of cheese cake that she concocted from pineapple, cottage cheese, lemon-flavored Jell-O®, and a Graham-cracker crust. The recipe might not have been orthodox, but I remember her cheese cake as being as good as any I’ve ever tasted.

I learned about chanterelles in McCormick’s Creek State Park, just west of Bloomington, in the Fall of 1952. Chanterelles are orange-colored, fabulous-tasting mushrooms that are shaped like inside-out umbrellas. Dried chanterelles are readily available in European markets but the mushrooms are hard to come by in the U.S., unless you pick them yourself. Which I did.

By the mid-1950s my teaching career was underway, and Joan and I were raising a family in Indianapolis. In 1955, we were at a social event at a fellow teacher’s house when he announced, “We have all the shrimp you can eat!” What a challenge and what a joy! That made a big impression on us, and remains my most memorable shrimp moment ever. During this same period, one Thanksgiving Joan prepared a steamship round of beef for a family reunion. Once again it was pure joy to watch our kin folk, the kids especially, sidle up to that huge roast and carve off thick slabs. Incidentally,



Tom with a pair of silverside salmon caught from the Pacific Ocean near Eureka, CA, in 1954.

Joan has always been a marvelous cook, and her leftovers are the world’s best.

#### Coasts and Cornfields of America

From time to time, travels that took me further away from Indiana exposed me to a wider range of foods. In the Summer of 1947, for example, I hitchhiked to Ithaca, NY, to visit a former Army buddy and his new wife. Each evening we would build a bonfire and then roast ears of sweet corn while they were still in their husks. My mouth still waters at the remembrance of their taste.

During a Summer break from studying at Purdue, a friend and I hiked more than 125 miles on the Appalachian Trail, sleeping along the way in open, trail-side shelters. One night near Harpers Ferry, WV, we were so dead-tired that all we had for supper was boiled onions. The exquisite taste of those onions has never been forgotten. Incidentally, I’ve been an onion fancier ever since I read in *Boy’s Life* (the Scouting magazine) that “eating onions peps up your stomach.”

Once while driving through Georgia, Joan and I ventured far enough off the I-75 freeway to look for someplace different for lunch. We were rewarded in a small town whose only restaurant had a big black chalkboard stating: “Lunch. \$2.67. Pick any three items from the following list.” One of the items we selected was fried okra. We had never imagined that the slimy vegetable prevalent in gumbo could be so delicious.

*continued on next page*



## HOOSIER PALATE *continued from page 5*

My all-time citrus moment came in June 1952. Joan and I had just reached California after a long and tiring cross-country drive from Indiana. Near San Clemente we came upon an orange-shaped, orange-colored Drive In, where, for 25 cents, we could have all of the orange juice we could drink. Wow! How refreshing!

The following Summer, while working at Big Sur State Park in California, I was invited to go “fishing” for abalones. I soon learned that this involved using a screwdriver to pry the abalones off the rocks at low tide. To prepare each of them for eating, you need to cut off the snail’s “foot”, pound it until it is tender, then pan-fry it.

In 1954, I caught two, 20-inch-long silverside salmon while fishing from a rowboat in the Pacific, just off the coast in northern California. This was the first and only time that I’ve ever been deep-sea fishing. I became so seasick, however, that I had to be brought back to shore early, where I was dumped on the beach and left to suffer. Fortunately, by evening I was fit as a fiddle, and Joan grilled the fresh salmon over an open campfire built from Presto Logs<sup>®</sup>.

My fondness for lobsters can be traced to Bar Harbor, ME, where I worked at Acadia National Park during the Summer of 1956. Live lobsters were available at \$0.75 each, and it was not unusual for us to have a lobster stashed in our bathtub, awaiting its fate.

For someone reared in the Midwest, southern California was an especially fertile area for discovering new foods. On a business trip to Los Angeles in the 1960s I had two back-to-back memorable taste experiences. At breakfast in a hotel coffee shop, I ate my first-ever Crenshaw melon; then, at a business luncheon at the same hotel on the same day, I ate my first artichoke heart.

In 1969 we moved to Ann Arbor. Traditional foods in Michigan differ in a few ways from those of Indiana, including wider availability of fresh fish from the Great Lakes. Incidentally, Brown Fisheries Fish House, a quite old business in the Upper Peninsula (Paradise, MI), has the tastiest whitefish that I’ve ever eaten. The whitefish you eat for lunch was swimming that morning. The restaurant usually closes by supertime because the fresh fish is gone by then.

While visiting New Orleans in the 1970s, Joan and I ate several of our best meals at a modest, family restaurant, where we had oysters — specifically, Oysters Rockefeller (prepared with spinach) and Oysters Bienville (prepared with cheese). I love oyster stew, and fried and smoked oysters, but I’ve yet to try a raw one.

Some of my earliest encounters with foreign dishes actually occurred within the borders of the U.S. In 1964, I ordered eggplant parmesan at Duke Zeibert’s Restaurant in Washington, DC. It has remained my favorite Italian dish ever since. My classic duck dish is *cassoulet maison*. Both times that I’ve had it (in 2002 and again in 2013) occurred at the Fandango, a classic Spanish restaurant in Pacific Grove,

CA. This peasant dish from southern France is a simple but delicious stew incorporating duck and navy beans.

I tasted my first Chinese food when I was in San Francisco, just after the end of WW2, but all I remember of the meal is that there were cold peas in the salad. In the mid-1950s Joan and I had our first sweet and sour pork, which is still my favorite Chinese dish. The most fun that we’ve ever had eating Chinese food occurred in the mid-1980s. We and two other couples were traveling in San Francisco and stumbled upon a tiny Chinese hole-in-the-wall, where we gave carte blanche to the chef. The seven-course meal that resulted was very interesting, very delicious, and very inexpensive.

About 2005, my daughter, Jane, took us for lunch at Las Posas Country Club in Camarillo, CA. There, I had the best hamburger that I’ve ever tried, a spectacular-tasting burger made from Japanese Kobe beef.

### Around the World

On a trip around the world in 1966, our family stayed one night in the Nikko-Kanaya mountain lodge in Nikko, Japan. The *flan* that we had for dessert that evening set a high bar for the many other *flans* we would enjoy as we continued. My first taste of a mango came in Hong Kong on that same trip. Subsequently, I ate lots of them in India. Mangoes are still my favorite fruit, bar none. One Summer, while living at my Aunt Grace’s house in Sunrise, FL, we feasted repeatedly on the fruits of the mango tree in her backyard. Mangosteens (which are not related to mangos) are another delicious tropical fruit. In my opinion, mangosteens are the most exotic fruit in the world, but it seems you must travel to Thailand to get them.



Tom’s drawing of his own mango tree in Florida.

I well remember a meal that our family enjoyed at the classy Ashoka Hotel in Delhi, India, in 1967, complete with a white tablecloth, *tandoori* chicken, and a 12-piece orchestra. Much of the appeal of Indian cuisine, however, has eluded me. I do like its various kinds of bread, and curries are okay as well, although their after-effects can be troubling.

Likewise, Japanese cuisine still seems strange to me, even though we spent a week in Japan. I am slowly warming to a few types of sushi, but most raw fish seems tasteless to me. Maybe something is wrong with my taster?

Nor, when we lived in Kuwait for several years, was I particularly impressed with the Arab cuisine. However, I loved the dates there. We would hang a three-foot-long date-palm frond in our kitchen and watch the dates slowly change from green to rich brown, picking them off, one by one, as they ripened over the next few weeks.

Mediterranean cuisine definitely intrigues me. In 1976 our son Jeff returned from a year of studying in Nice, France, and taught us how to make *ratatouille*. This lovely vegetable dish of eggplant, squash, green peppers, onions, and tomatoes soon become a welcome part of our diet. (In Kuwait, we grew fond of shrimp that was cooked together with Hero prepared *ratatouille*, a brand based in Switzerland.)

Sardines and beer are our preferred snack while sightseeing along the coast in Europe, such as on cruises. The country being visited is incidental, but I remember enjoying

such snacks while visiting Barcelona and Lisbon, to name two places. And I shall never forget the fish *meze* that we had in Cyprus in 1979. It consisted of a dozen small plates of different kinds of seafood (oysters, octopi, fish, etc.). In some respects, a Greek *meze* resembles a Spanish *tapas* crawl or a Swedish *smörgåsbord*.

*continued on next page*



Joan enjoying a snack of sardines and beer in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2002.



Shrimp for sale in Kuwait, fresh from the sea, during the 1970s when Tom and Joan lived there for several years.



HOOSIER PALATE *continued from page 7*



Oranges in Cypress, April 1979.

Our first trip to Spain, in 1991, gave us our first real taste of *gazpacho*, *tapas*, and especially anchovy-stuffed olives. It's a funny thing about anchovies: for years I didn't like them at all, thinking that they were only good for fish bait, but now I like them on Caesar salad, as well as when they are stuffed in olives. We also became very fond of Spanish *paella*. In fact, Joan has prepared that dish several times back home for Thanksgiving or Christmas, rather than turkey.



Sweet corn for sale from a wheelbarrow in Chile.

In Rome in 1979, Joan and I visited an ice cream store that our son Andy had discovered the previous Summer. The *gelato* was every bit as delicious as he had reported it to be. On a Mediterranean cruise in 1999, we enjoyed a different flavor of *sorbet* each evening, including a flavor called Blue Hawaii that made our lips and mouths turn blue.

I look forward to trying many other food delicacies in the future. ■



A display of *gelato* flavors in Italy in 2002, including orange, mango, strawberry, raspberry, blackberry, passion fruit, lime, and lemon.



# MEMORIES OF MAKING *BIRYANI* WITH MY GRANDMOTHER

by Anique Afshan Newaz

*Anique Newaz and her husband Golam are Repast subscribers who live in Ann Arbor. Anique holds two degrees in South Asian Studies: a Bachelor of Arts from the Univ. of Michigan, and a Master of Philosophy from Cambridge Univ. At present she is a homemaker and an independent researcher and writer.*

Some of the most vivid memories that I have of my birthplace, the capital city Dhaka in Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan), are of cooking with my family, particularly with my maternal grandmother. Ever since I was a little girl, I took a great interest in cooking. I keenly observed the *baburchis*, or master chefs, cooking outdoors in great big *degchis*, the aluminum pots mounted over clay stoves, heated by fires of burning *lakri* (wood).

But where I truly learned how to cook was by observing my mother, grandmothers, and aunts in their kitchens. Both sides of my family have lived in Dhaka for generations. After providing some background, I want to relate to you some cooking experiences with my maternal grandmother, whom I lovingly addressed as *nanu* and who to us was quite a chef! Even today, while cooking a dish such as *biryani* in America, I can connect to the culture and history of the country.

## *Biryani* as an Emblem of Mughal Culture

As a historical capital, Dhaka has a rich and vibrant history. The city gained and flourished economically, commercially, socially, and culturally after Babūr arrived in India from Central Asia, becoming the first Mughal emperor (1526-30) in a Muslim dynasty that ruled most of South Asia. Dhaka was named the provincial capital or *subah* of the Mughals in 1608. Ever since then, there have been further migrations of diverse people hailing from different lands and different backgrounds, enriching the culture and cuisine of Dhaka.

The rice dish called *biryani* is a famous part of the Mughal, or more properly *Mughlai*, culinary heritage in South Asia. The *baburchis* who have kept this tradition alive for generations, especially in old Dhaka, have truly perfected it. The famous extra-long-grain *basmati* rice harvested from the foothills of the Himalayas, or a special local variety of aromatic rice such as *kali zeera* or *chini gura*, cooked with succulent pieces of chicken, mutton, or other meat, a special blend of spices, and delicate fragrant *zafraan* (saffron) and rosewater (*gulab* or *kewra paani*), gives *biryani* its unique mouthwatering taste. The popularity of *biryani* spread throughout South Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka), and the dish has become world-famous.



This painting by Anique's friend Najma Sharif beautifully depicts the setting in which Anique learned to cook *biryani* with her grandmother, including the type of stove.

*Mughlai biryani* has remained a mainstay of Bangladeshi cuisine and finds a permanent home in Dhaka. Even when Dhaka was capital of Eastern Bengal (part of India) in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the dish continued to be popular. The art of cooking would be handed down from generation to generation within the family of a *baburchi*. Whenever there was a *daawat*— a special invitation to a party hosted by a family member, especially a wedding ceremony— these *baburchis* were hired. I once met the grandson of a legendary *baburchi* named Fakhruddin (1927-1995), whose version of *kachchi biryani* is known the world over. These master chefs, who are overwhelmingly male, are experts not only in *biryani* but in everything that accompanies it, from *burhani* (a gently spiced yogurt or buttermilk drink) to flatbreads (such as

*continued on next page*

**MAKING BIRYANI** *continued from page 9*

*Shirmal roti, naan, and Mughlai paratha*) and skewer-roasted or fried meats (such as *seekh kawabs*, chicken roasts, and *shami kawabs*).

I must emphasize that the culinary heritage of Dhaka is exceptionally rich, boasting many other jewels in addition to *Mughlai biryani*. For example, Bangladeshis are also famous for fish and for other rice dishes. As my late cousin Tariq Shams acknowledged, “The Bangladeshi cuisine is far more diverse than classical spicy dishes handed down from the Mughals in the sixteenth century.”<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, mutton *biryani* and *murgh pulao* (chicken *biryani*) form an essential part of my country’s culinary history. They give an authentic identity to this ancient land.

An Ensemble of People and Ingredients

Once when I was in grade nine or ten, I went to spend a night with my *nanabhai* and *nanu*, grandfather and grandmother, in their simple bungalow home in a residential area of Dhaka known as Eskaton Garden. My mother brought me there because I was keen to see how *nanu* made her delicious *biryani* dish.

As my mother and I arrived at the house in a rickshaw, *nanu*, smiling radiantly, emerged from a room with her typical white *saree* wrapped around her small frame. The tiny silver ringlets of her hair over her shiny forehead peeped through the *saree’s anchal* or end part, which framed her bright face like a veil. Sometimes I would notice a yellow mark from spices on her *saree* as she cooked.

*Nanabhai*, tall and slender, the quintessential gentleman, a retired professor of English from Jagannath College, was the one to whom I used to come for help in English and Bengali literature. Fluent in Persian as well, *nanabhai* was the one who inspired me to learn, and it was actually during such visits that I became exposed to the world of *nanu’s* cooking.

With them lived old and bent Jumman, of Pathan or Afghan stock, a helper who had found a permanent home with my grandparents since his boyhood, even before my mother was born! I called him Jumman *mamu* as though he were my mother’s brother. One would see him chopping wood regularly in the backyard for *nanu’s* cooking.

*Nanabhai, nanu* and old Jumman *mamu* were elated to see me as I alighted from the rickshaw. She had invited most of my aunts— her four daughters, including my mother— and all their family, that is, aunts, uncles and cousins, for the following afternoon to taste her special *kachchi biryani* made with *khashir gosht*, fresh mutton. Although it is typically made with mutton, it can also be made with chicken. From relatives I learned that the meat for this *biryani* is the leg or breast part and preferably fresh, not frozen.

*Kachchi biryani* is literally *biryani* made with marinated raw meat and rice cooked together, while *pakki biryani* requires meat to be fried and cooked beforehand in the spices. According to Dhaka’s local scholar Habiba Khatun, *kachchi biryani* was introduced during the period when Dhaka was the capital of East Pakistan, prior to Bangladeshi independence in 1971. It had become popular to serve it during weddings with *aloo Bukhara* or dried-plum chutney.<sup>2</sup> *Aloo Bukhara*, which in the Dhaka of my childhood was usually imported from Iran, is commonly added during the preparation of this and other *Mughlai biryanis*. I saw *nanu* had these dried fruits and other items ready on a dining room table.

Marinating the Meat

After an early dinner *nanu* and I set to work preparing the first part, marinating the meat for *kacchhi biryani*. She took a lot of large pieces of meat and kept describing the recipe while she was preparing. The meat had already been cleaned, rinsed, and drained. She explained how a standard measurement is used, usually a combination of four cups (one pound) of rice and three to four pounds (just over two kilograms) of meat.

I remember that among the spices that she mixed into the plain yogurt were crushed, crispy-fried shallots, grated garlic, grated ginger, salt, *garam masala* consisting of caradamoms, cinnamon, whole black pepper, and cloves, and most importantly, tiny amounts of mace and nutmeg. Then she crushed the saffron previously soaked in a little rosewater and thoroughly mixed the meat with all of these ingredients.

Next she spread the meat in a large heavy *degchi*, with rounded bottom and rather wide diameter. She took a few small and evenly-round potatoes, rubbed them with a little salt and the saffron-infused water, lemon juice, and a little sugar, and fried



Anique’s chicken *biryani* cooked with saffron and golden *aloo Bukhara*. Photo: Zeenya Meherally



them lightly golden on all sides. She spread them over the meat along with *aloo Bukhara*. These lend a tangy sweet taste and become soft with cooking. On top of this she strewed some sliced pre-soaked almonds and spread at least half a cup of *malai*, or the cream collected from the top of scalding milk. *Nanu* covered the pot with a lid and sent it next door to one of my aunts to be refrigerated.

*Nanu* did not have a refrigerator nor a gas or electric stove. But she had a homemade wood-burning stove, which was an innovation of an aunt, my mother's older sister, Tayyeba Huq, who was an original author of a Bengali cookbook<sup>3</sup>. This innovative model functioned like the native *maatir chuula* (clay stove) and still used *lakri* as fuel. But instead of clay, it was made of iron! On the right side was a large hole to feed the sticks, and on the left, a compartment with a door for baking. On the top surface were two burners, or more correctly carved holes, on which to set the cooking pots, pans, and kettle. A chimney allowed smoke from the burning sticks to escape through a window in a nook of *nanu's* kitchen.

In her endearing tone *nanu* addressed me in my nickname, "Tomorrow, Chippy dear, I will wake you up a bit early as everyone is arriving in the afternoon for lunch; you will be the cook and complete the *biryani* so all the *mehman* (guests) will be astonished!"

#### The Long, Slow Cooking Called *Dum*

Next morning, four hours ahead, I ate a hearty breakfast with my *nanabhai* consisting of *chapatti roti* flatbreads that Jumman *mamu* made, and vegetables and *halwa* (a sweet) that *nanu* made.

I stepped into the kitchen adjacent to the small dining room. Of course, the marinated meat had arrived from aunt Tayyeba's house. *Nanu* and I started to prepare the rice. A large *degchi* of measured water was set on the stove; immersed in it was a teaball with extra whole spices and a broken bayleaf. When it came to a rolling boil, *nanu* carefully spooned the gently rinsed rice in it and allowed it to come to a second boil. She told me to carefully monitor the rice and stay near it and not go anywhere lest it get overcooked. She frequently checked a grain of the rice, pressing it between fingers. She explained that it should be just

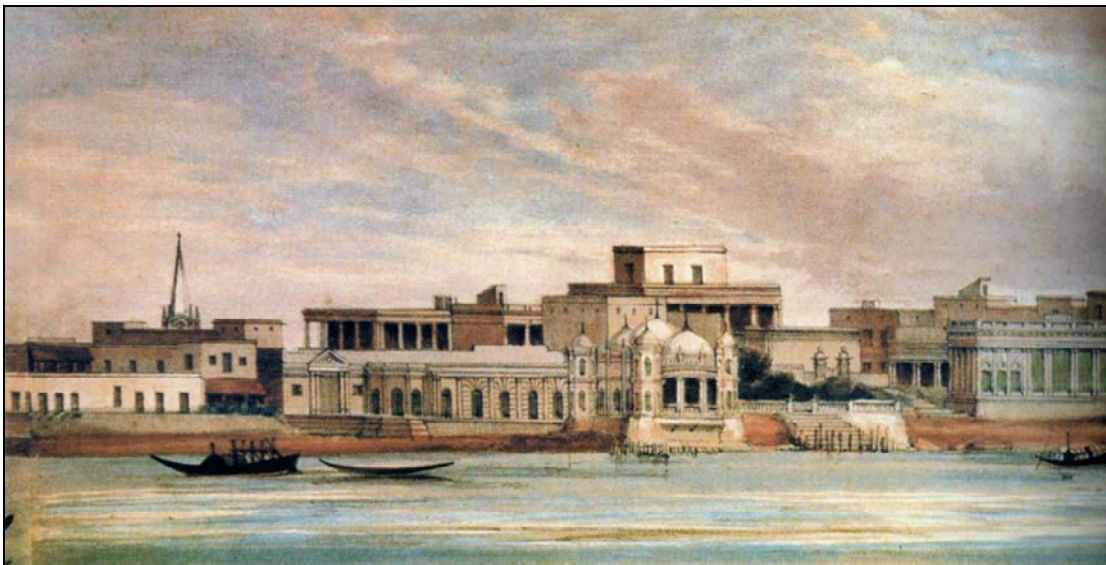
cooked, yet remain firm. This condition is known as *panch phota*, literally rice cooked until five cracking lines appear on the grain! It is hard to be so careful, but all one need remember is that after the water in which the rice was poured comes to a rolling boil again, one should cook only about two to four minutes further so that the rice is not soft but still has a firm texture.

Without further delay, *nanu* took this heavy pot of boiled rice off the stove and poured it over a strainer that was ready and mounted over another container to capture some glassfuls of the rice water; the rest would be discarded. *Nanu* allowed me to spread the rice over the uncooked marinated meat in the *degchi* that had been brought back from next door, and I pressed it down with a very wide spoon. She made me form a few holes with the back of a spoon handle and asked me to pour most of the reserved rice water, milk, and rosewater-soaked saffron, some of which we had saved initially during the marinating process. Then we closed off the holes by smoothing the surface. I spread half of the golden fried onions and a little extra oil or *ghee* from the pan in which the onions were fried. The rest could be used for garnish.

*Biryani* is typically cooked in a process called *dum*, which is cooking for hours over low heat in a tightly-lidded pot. We sealed off the lid with moistened *atta*, a dough made with wheat flour and water, and *nanu* placed a large kettle filled with water on top of the lid. (*Baburchis* cooking outdoors instead use coal to cover the lids. Today, as a convenience I use aluminum foil to tightly seal the lids for any *dum* cooking. I even use some of the packaged *biryani* spices to substitute for part of my own spice mixture prepared from scratch, but I follow my inherited method of cooking instead of completely relying on the package directions.)

A subtle smoky aroma is achieved when one cooks on a wood-burning stove. Since hardly anyone cooks on wood-burning stoves anymore, my aunt's cookbook suggests a different way to impart some smoky aroma: before the uncooked *biryani* goes into the oven or stove, place a separate open container filled with lit coals on top of the food, and cover the vessel of *biryani* for 3-5 minutes.

*continued on next page*



The Golam Pir Mosque stands at the center of this view of Dhaka as seen from the Buriganga River. The image is a segment from a hand-colored lithographic panorama of the city, originally published in London ca. 1850.

From Haque (2009), Plate 482, p. 272.

## MAKING BIRYANI *continued from page 11*

I remember that my relatives, and my family of parents and siblings, had arrived. Sunshine was filtering through the shutters in *nanu's* dining room. There was a lot of excitement and commotion in her bungalow, and we all ate the long-awaited *biryani* accompanied with *burhani* that *nanu* had made. *Nanu* announced that Chippy had made the *biryani*. It was a success! The meat, spicy enough and tender enough mixed with the fragrant rice, made tasty mouthfuls. I can never forget that happy day, which became a springboard for me to carry on my family's cooking tradition.

### Dhaka Cuisine and the Mughal Legacy

That Dhaka was a key city for Mughal culture was a conclusion documented by scholar Hakim Habibur Rahman in a book compiling radio shows that he hosted in 1945 from the All India Radio center in Dhaka.<sup>4</sup> This small published work, now quite rare, includes some of the earliest surveys of food and culinary traditions of Dhaka. M. H. Haider alluded to the book in a 2015 newspaper column:

Topics include various foods, cuisines and culinary traditions of Dhaka, the different 'tupis' (caps) people used to wear, recreational activities, etc. This book is very different from more or less all the others about Dhaka from the perspective that it almost solely discusses Dhaka from a lifestyle perspective (food, fashion, etc.).<sup>5</sup>

The late Dr. Kaniz e Butool, a wonderful family friend and a former professor in the Department of Urdu and Persian at Dhaka University, concluded that:

Dhaka's food is an inseparable part of its society, culture and heritage. What is Dhaka's *oithjhhobahi* or

famous cuisine? It is the coming together or fusion of local Dhaka food and that of its neighboring areas.<sup>6</sup>

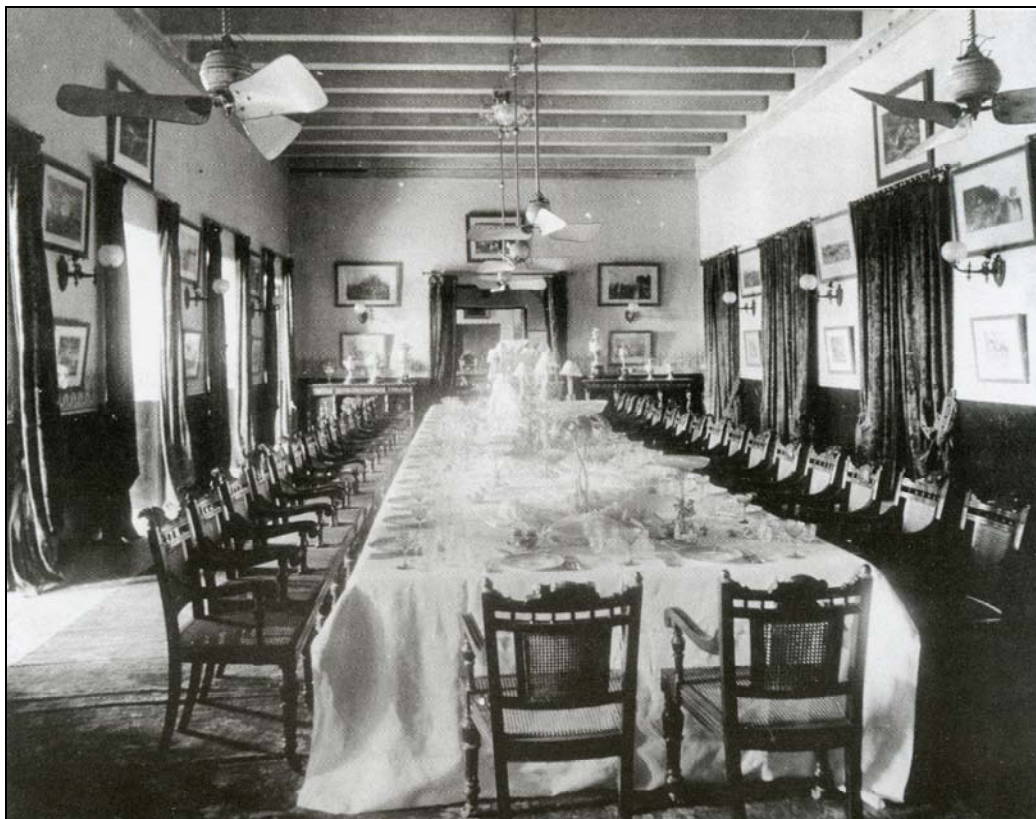
In the same book, the historian Sharif uddin Ahmed rightly declares that "food and food habits are a nation's cultural heritage. As an author, I strongly feel that it is necessary and incumbent upon us to preserve Dhaka's *oithjhhobahi khabar*."<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere he points out, "The Mughal architecture, dress, food and social manners are still the most important ingredients of the cultural heritage of the citizens of Dhaka."<sup>8</sup>

Firoza Yasmin and Afroza Yasmin reveal that before birthdays and Bengali New Year (*Pahela Boishakh*) became important celebrations, it was a *rewaj* (custom) for whole families to get together to eat *biryani* accompanied with *burhani*. Even if some customs have changed, the article emphasizes how *kachchi biryani*, *burhani*, and other accompanying dishes became an integral part of what is known as '*Dhakai' khana* or Dhaka cuisine.'<sup>9</sup>

Millat Hosain mentions that all of the special *baburchis* of the Dhaka *nawabs* (princes) used to cook in their residences, such as at the famous Ahsan Manzil, which today is a museum and heritage site. The *nawab* family names, such as Abdul Ghani, Ahsanullah, and Salimullah, are intricately connected to the growth and development of Dhaka, and these families played an outsize role in contributing to *Dhakai* cuisine. Hosain claims that there were expert male as well as female cooks employed in those days by the *nawabs*.<sup>10</sup>

*Biryani* and other famous dishes of Dhaka's cuisine continue to be made in the older part of Dhaka as well as in the branches of modern restaurants. Fakhruddin's *Biryani* restaurants as well as other *biryani* houses have spread to newer parts of Dhaka as well. These *biryani* houses are ever so popular.

*continued on page 14*



A dining room inside the Ahsan Manzil, a palace for the *nawab* (prince) of Dhaka, completed in the 1870s by the *nawab* Khawja Abdul Ghani. Historically, the *nawab* families played a major role in shaping the city's cuisine.

Photo by Fritz Kapp, ca. 1904, from Haque (2009), Plate 324, p. 148.



Book Review

# PLACES THAT ANN ARBORITES REMEMBER, KNOW, AND LOVE

Jon Milan and Gail Offen,  
*Iconic Restaurants of Ann Arbor*  
 Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016  
 95 pp., \$22.95 pbk.

by Art Cole

*Art and his wife Joanne are longtime CHAA members. Art has retired from the automotive industry, and from his career as President of Edwards & Drew, Inc., a logistics management firm. His most recent article for Repast was a review of The Georgian Feast in our Winter 2011 issue. He and Joanne began eating in Ann Arbor restaurants several decades ago.*

Any devoted patron of Ann Arbor’s dining scene will find it impossible to resist this entertaining little book. CHAA members Jon Milan and Gail Offen make it even more enjoyable through their approach: instead of merely a list (or worse, some sort of ranking), they have compiled a collection of succinct and informative sketches, illustrated with menus and photographs, of many—most—of the local places Ann Arborites remember, know, and love.

“Iconic” is a wise and clever criterion for inclusion, giving the authors wide discretion in their choices. They do not reveal their methodology, but Zingerman’s Ari Weinzweig, in a helpful introduction, relates “iconic” to its traditional religious definition, implying that these are places that provide people with “a moment of connection with something larger than themselves. A trigger to reflect. A setting in which solitude and community come together in the same space” (p. 7). Each restaurant in this book will create such feelings in some readers, and Milan and Offen’s well-researched text amplifies them. In a word, this book is thought-provoking. Less pretentiously, one could describe the book as a selection of Ann Arbor’s “go-to hangouts”, although that sells short the reminiscences and associations that it summons up.

The authors find that most iconic Ann Arbor restaurants are likely to be close to downtown and to the Univ. of Michigan, with a stable and loyal clientele of UM people, students, and townies. Newer restaurants apparently don’t have enough history to be iconic, while fine dining places evidently don’t attract the frequent diners needed to become an icon. Chain restaurants obviously can’t be iconic, nor can many neighborhood places beyond walking distance from the Diag. Being idiosyncratic

certainly helps a place become iconic! The sketches of Drake’s (pp. 60-61), Thano’s (p. 71), the original Pretzel Bell (pp. 57-59), and Bimbo’s (pp. 30-31) are enlightening even to veterans of those now-gone icons.

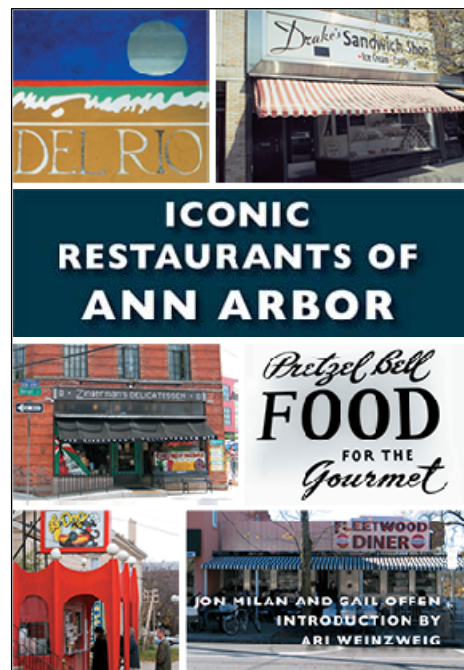
The book is organized into seven sections—student hangouts, long-ago favorites, etc.—but it lacks an index, which I would have appreciated. The omission might be intentional, since an index would diminish the serendipitous fun of paging through the entire book; however, it more likely was space-related.

“The legendary and the long forgotten” places— all gone by the mid-1970s— described in the book’s first section provoke mixed feelings. They are part of Ann Arbor’s food legacy, but the photos and descriptions imply that few if any of today’s Ann Arbor diners would be comfortable in these places, let alone be regular and loyal customers. Indeed, many probably deserve both their legendary and their long forgotten status. After reading this section, you will probably look at certain buildings in Ann Arbor in a different way.

Under the heading of “Local Favorites and Student Standbys” is a collection of places both here and gone. The description of Dooley’s (p. 35), where Scorekeepers is today, is a revelation; it also is a great example of the authors’ economical, deeply researched, and ironic style. The description of The Moveable Feast (p. 33) highlights the excellent food, but omits the detail that for several years U-M Med School professors enjoyed interviewing prospective surgical faculty here; the animated and frequently detailed discussions of difficult procedures often discomfited diners at tables within earshot. The Pantree on East Liberty (p.34) had an amazingly diverse customer base; back in the days before 24/7 workdays, it was among the few choices available to those of us with odd hours who didn’t feel like another trip to the Fleetwood.

The “I Sure Miss” category is a feast of nostalgia. Small local businesses are not eternal: owners retire and accidents happen, and farewells are often sad but not tragic. In this category the book gives extensive space to the (original!) Pretzel Bell, Whiffletree, Maude’s (how many know it occupied what was once an Edsel dealership?), and others. Even here the text is often too brief. Those who loved Greg Fenerli’s Oyster Bar and Spaghetti Machine (p. 72) will always recall chef “Gun” Williams working his magic in the compact, super-efficient open

*continued on next page*



**ICONIC RESTAURANTS** *continued from page 13*

kitchen that Greg designed, and the Catch-22 warning on the rarely-changing menu: “Do not order our whole-wheat noodles unless you have had them here before.”

It might be surprising to younger diners, accustomed to Ann Arbor’s wide selection of cuisines, but Milan and Offen remind us it was not always that way. A generation ago, Ann Arbor had the usual college-town collection of Chinese, Indian, and Greek restaurants, but it was exceptional in at least two ethnic categories. Joanne and I had lived several years in Germany before moving to Ann Arbor, so our standards for good German food were pretty high. We were amazed to find not just one, but *three* German restaurants in Ann Arbor, and found the food to be reasonably authentic *gasthaus* fare. The other amazing discovery for us was the large selection of Middle Eastern restaurants, most of which were unfortunately too short-lived to become icons; only Jerusalem Garden, with its marvelous *mjaddara* (“almost a perfect food”, a doctor once told me) and other treats, made the cut. And almost unbelievably, until Argiero’s (p. 55) came on the scene, all the Italian restaurants in town were primarily pizza and spaghetti houses. Soon after Argiero’s, The Earle and later Gratzl changed that situation.

The last two sections describe restaurants “still going strong”, among them The Brown Jug, Knight’s, Casey’s, the Earle, and of course Zingerman’s. Since they are more familiar to most readers, there are fewer of those “who knew” nuggets in the sketches, but they are there. When Angelo (the cook) and his wife bought the restaurant at Catherine and Glen (p. 76), it was already named Angelo’s! Details like that keep the reader glued to the book despite the absence of plot and drama. Including the lyrics to Dick Siegel’s song about Angelo’s is a nice touch.

The authors’ flexible and eclectic criteria encourage readers to reach back into their own memories. Eclectic because they include The Beer Depot (p. 41), which is certainly iconic, but is it a restaurant? The Gandy Dancer (p. 92) began as part of the Chuck Muer chain: since Chuck was sort of local, it sort of qualifies. Ayse’s deserves inclusion as a North Campus icon, but it’s not well-known on Central Campus. Perhaps in a future (and larger) edition, Mediterraneo and Paesano will have their iconic status confirmed. And although new, Bill’s Beer Garden and Mark’s Carts are already unique Ann Arbor icons to many. Finally, in the “I sure miss” category, how about the brief but wonderful series of feasts offered in Bob Sparrow’s Kerrytown market—a “must-go” for townies?

Milan and Offen probably would be delighted to take up these and other points, since icons are supposed to provoke reflection and thought, as well as debate. Their book brings to mind the restaurants that have made the Ann Arbor dining scene—not just the food and furnishings, but also the people and experiences—a unique and memorable expression of the spirit of the town.

I intend to keep a copy of this book on the coffee table or shelf in plain sight, so visitors will pick it up and start a conversation about their connections and memories. It would make a splendid gift for friends who have moved away from Ann Arbor. ■

**MAKING BIRYANI** *continued from page 12*

My personal, deep interest in preserving and spreading the recipes that I learned from my grandmothers’ families and from my mother is to spread the message that our histories are long, rich, and truly deep-rooted. ■

**Endnotes**

1. Tariq Shams, “Introduction” in Newaz (2010), p. 10.
2. Khatun and Khatun, eds. (2010), p. 121.
3. Tayyeba Huq, *Shasthya, Khadya o’ Ranna* (1965) was the earliest cookbook in the Bangla language. A selection, translation, and adaptation of recipes from the book has been published by Anique Newaz (2010).
4. Rahman (1949).
5. Haider (2015).
6. Butool (2010), p. 249.
7. Sharif uddin Ahmed, “Preface” in Khatun and Khatun, eds. (2010), p. 10.
8. Sharif uddin Ahmed, “Chief Editor’s Note” in Islam and Mahmud, vol. eds. (2011), p. 9.
9. Yasmin and Yasmin (2010).
10. Hosain (2010).

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- Rahman, Hakim Habibur, *Dhaka Panchas Baras Pahle* [Dhaka Fifty Years Ago] (Dhaka: publisher unknown, 1949).
- Yasmin, Firoza, and Afroza Yasmin, “Dhaka’s Cuisine in Bangladesh Times”, pp. 125-142 in Khatun and Khatun, eds., 2010.



## CHAA Theme Meal

# SHARING SOME HOLIDAY FOOD MEMORIES

History with a “big H” and history with a “little h” were nicely intertwined in the theme for our participatory meal last Nov. 20 at the Ladies’ Literary Club of Ypsilanti. “Christmas Around the World... and Other Winter Holidays” encouraged us to reflect on our own personal and family traditions, and how these fit into the broader, longer-term evolution of Christmas celebrations among Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, as well as some Jewish and Asian holidays.

At this meal, described below in delicious detail, about 30 members and friends of the CHAA came together to sample the holiday dishes they’d prepared for the occasion and to share some information and stories about them. We’re grateful to member Phil Zaret for selecting the theme and organizing the meal, and to facility caretaker Susie Andrews for all of her help. Holiday decorations for the gathering were lent by Mary Bleyaert, Randy Schwartz, and Mariam Breed.

### English Sweets are Not to Be Trifled With!

At a Christmas meal in old England, which would be eaten in the early afternoon on Christmas Day, roasted beef or goose was the featured attraction for families of means. But in the 1800s roast turkey, a borrowing from America, largely replaced this centerpiece. Interestingly, the leading factor in the switch to turkey was the 1843 publication of the Charles Dickens novella *A Christmas Carol*, which went through 13 editions in its first year alone! The once-miserly Scrooge is an utterly changed man at the end of the story when he sends the Cratchits a “prize Turkey” that was hanging in the Poulterer’s shop. Just one generation later, Mrs. Beeton’s popular *Book of Household Management* (1868) suggested, “A Christmas dinner, with the middle-class of this empire, would scarcely be a Christmas dinner without its turkey.”<sup>1</sup>

The traditional end of the meal was a pudding or a trifle, both of which could classify as “cake” in the U.S. The Christmas pudding evolved from the medieval English savory white pudding of breadcrumbs with lard or suet, baked in a sausage-like casing. By modern times it was incorporating such ingredients as milk, eggs, sugar, wine, spices, almonds, and dried fruits such as raisins, currants, prunes, or figs.<sup>2</sup>

We were lucky to be able to feast on a classic example of the Christmas pudding, figgy pudding, courtesy of Bill Walker and Margaret Carney. In the mid-1980s, Bill heard a song about this English sweet and tried making it, which became a family tradition. He uses a recipe from *The Joy of Cooking* as a guide but with notable modifications— doubling the amount of fig called for by the Rombauers, and using semi-dried (not fully dried) figs, which he finely chops. He pours the batter into a special figgy pudding pan (shaped roughly like a bundt pan), and instead of conventional baking, he steams it for two hours. Bill served it accompanied by an equally traditional “hard sauce” made with eggs, butter, sugar, and brandy.



Mariam Breed

Bill Walker’s figgy pudding and, docked behind it, a boat of hard sauce.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook’s next door to each other, with a laundress’s next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs Cratchit entered— flushed, but smiling proudly— with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half a quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top. Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour.<sup>3</sup>

The trifle [Barbara and Phil Zaret], as suggested by its name, affords a lighter way to cap off a heavy Christmas meal— certainly lighter than the “cannon-ball” pudding that Dickens enshrined in the above passage. Barb used a large glass bowl to layer her sponge cake, custard, whipped cream, raspberries, and slivered almonds— there is no additional baking. The trifle is similar to the English “fruit fool”, but fools usually lack the cake component, and their typical fruit is the gooseberry rather than the raspberry. Trifles and fools both began to appear in English cookbooks in the late 1500s.

### American Accents

Anglo-American traditions at the Christmas meal, while rooted in British customs, gradually incorporated local American accents.

*continued on next page*

## HOLIDAY MEMORIES *continued from page 15*

At our meal, there was gingerbread cake [Laura and Dan Gillis] made with a recipe from Mimi Sheraton's *Visions of Sugarplums: A Cookbook of Cakes, Cookies, Candies & Confections from All the Countries that Celebrate Christmas* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981; originally 1968). Sheraton reports that gingerbread cake was a favorite of Abraham Lincoln. Her version is layered, the dark cake alternating with the white creamy layers, and it is topped with orange peel and chocolate curls. Reflecting the continued popularity of such cakes in the U.S., the very first Betty Crocker cake mix was for Ginger Cake (1947). We also tried Christmas molasses and ginger cookies [Phil and Barbara Zaret], flavored with molasses, brown sugar, ground cinnamon, and ground ginger.

Member Joanne Nesbit, after procuring a ham that was already smoked, cooked, and sliced, used a recipe from a 1911 American cookbook in the Univ. of Michigan archives as her inspiration for bathing the ham slices in a marinade of honey, molasses, orange juice, bourbon, and Dijon mustard.

A festive cranberry cornbread [Phil and Barbara Zaret], homemade and served with butter, occupies a category that we could call "more American than apple pie". The cranberries sold in stores here in the States are of a variety that is native to North America, and there is another variety native to Europe. In the U.S., cornbread with cranberries is also a not uncommon variety of dressing for roast turkey, which is itself a native American food.

In addition to corn and cranberry, other distinctly American ingredients at our meal included:

- American persimmon, which was sliced along with orange and grapefruit, and decorated with pomegranate seeds atop a bed of greens to make a citrus Christmas fruit salad [Jane Wilkinson and Howard Ando]

- vanilla, used in vanilla-chip cookies with nuts [Rich Kato] from *John Hadamuscin's Home for Christmas* (New York: Harmony Books, 1995)
- Maytag blue cheese, accompanying sliced raw Brussels sprouts, radicchio, and pickled red onion in a salad [Jan Arps and Tavi Prundeanu] from the *Vegetarian Times* (Dec. 2012). The salad is tossed with olive oil. Jan dubbed this "Red and Green Salad" and feels that it deserves to become a Christmas tradition on the strength of its colors as well as its flavors.

### A Nordic Glow

In largely Lutheran Denmark, the main Christmas meal is traditionally a close family affair occurring around 6 p.m. on the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup>. In the country's long agrarian history, farm hands were also considered part of the family and were part of this meal. Such a meal usually featured roast goose (or duck) with a stuffing and side dishes. A single goose, fattened a long time for the occasion, often had to suffice for the many hungry stomachs.

The Danish side dishes often include sweet-and-sour *rødkål* (red cabbage), made for our meal in a joint effort by members Mariam Breed and Randy Schwartz and Mariam's parents, Eric and Mermone Van Deventer, who also live in Ann Arbor. Eric is Danish with Dutch and Indonesian heritage, while Mermone is Afghani; thus, Mermone has introduced some stronger Eastern spices to this dish. She cooks sliced red cabbage, onion, and Granny Smith apples in vegetable oil, followed by chicken bouillon, traditional Danish spices (whole cloves and ground cardamom and cinnamon), additional Eastern spices (ground coriander and cumin, curry powder, and the Indonesian mixture for *nasi goreng*), and apple cider vinegar.



CHAA Program Chair  
Laura Gillis introduces  
a corner of the  
desserts table at the  
holiday theme meal  
last November.

Photo:  
Mae and Len Sander





Mae and Len Sander



Mariam Breed

Two dishes from the Swedish *julbord* (Christmas table): Bob Zorn's *gravlax* with dill-mustard sauce on dark rye, and Sherry Sundling's rosette-shape *struva*.

The same cooking quartet made a batch of Danish *risengrød* (rice porridge) by cooking short-grain white rice for hours in milk, with constant stirring. In Denmark this warm dish is eaten as breakfast or, at the Christmas meal, as a first course to help fill up the stomachs before the main dishes. To increase the holiday diners' enthusiasm for such a simple gruel, a whole almond would traditionally be hidden in it: whoever found the almond won a prize, such as a chocolate or marzipan candy. In modern times, it has become common to add additional ingredients near the end of the cooking process, such as a bit of sugar and some ground cardamom (as in the version at our meal). The Van Deventer family follows the Christmas tradition of decorating each bowlful of the *risengrød* with a swirl of dark-red syrup made from *solbær* (blackcurrant). The grandest version of the dish, actually eaten as a chilled dessert, has lots of sugar along with vanilla, whipped cream, and chopped almonds; it is known as *risalamande*, from the French *riz à l'amande* (rice with almonds).

Representing Danish main dishes at our meal were delicious meatballs in a dill dipping sauce [Sherry Sundling]. Sherry, a former professional caterer, makes the meatballs with ground chuck, ground veal, Underwood Deviled Ham, whole-wheat bread crumbs, eggs, evaporated milk, grated onion, and allspice. She starts the sauce as a *béchamel*, then adds chicken base, sour cream, a bit of catsup, and fresh dill weed. The dish has been one of Sherry's favorites since the 1970s, but she's forgotten where the recipe came from.

The noun *hygge* (and adjective *hyggeligt*) expresses the Danish yearning for Winter holiday pleasure. The word, which has no simple translation into English, refers to characteristics both physical (warm; cozy; comfy) and emotional (a family feeling; having a good time with good people). On a cold and dark night, one wants to snuggle around the living-room fire with family and friends, perhaps on a couch under comforters, enjoying *gløgg* (mulled wine) and other homemade treats, and surrounded by the warm glow of candlelight and the famous yuletide home-crafted pleated hearts called *julehjerter*. For more on Danish Christmas foods and the concept of *hygge*, see:

- Mariam Breed, "Christmas Foods among the Danes", *Repast*, 25:4 (Fall 2009), pp. 7-8.
- Paul Cunningham, "Until the Winter Sun Rises", *Saveur*, 179 (Dec. 2015), pp. 46-55.
- Louisa Thomsen Brits, *The Book of Hygge: The Danish Art of Contentment, Comfort, and Connection* (New York: Plume, 2017).

We mention the Louisa Brits book as one of the best from the huge *hygge* book explosion— at least 18 titles on this topic have been published or self-published in the last six months!

Our Christmas celebration moved further north to Norway on the strength of a dish of pan-roasted duck breast with cranberry *coulis* [Gwen and John Nystuen]. This choice was inspired by a longstanding Christmas get-together in which the Nystuens roast a goose and/or duck, and their friends the Longones prepare a dish of red cabbage with chestnuts. Gwen made the *coulis* with cranberries, orange juice and zest, sugar, ground cinnamon and cloves, and orange liqueur. Incidentally, Nystuen is a Norwegian family name and also the term for a small farm.

The Swedish Christmas meal, called *julbord*, often includes an appetizer of home-cured *gravlax* [Bob and Marcella Zorn]. Bob had cured the center-cut filets of fresh salmon in a marinade of salt, sugar, and dill for a few days in his refrigerator. He served pieces of the fish on thin slices of *rågbröd* (dark rye bread), then topped these with a dollop of homemade *gravlaxsås* (a dill and mustard sauce).

*Struva* [Sherry Sundling] is a Swedish crisp-fried Christmas pastry in a rosette shape, sprinkled with confectioner's sugar. The rosette and other highly stylized floral motifs are very common in decorative rural folk art in Sweden and Norway. Sherry made her pastries in the traditional way, with a special rosette-shaped iron; it vaguely resembles a cattleman's branding iron, or a cookie-cutter on a long rod. The iron is dipped in very hot oil, then dipped in the thin batter, then re-immersed in the oil where the batter immediately crisps against the iron. At that

*continued on next page*

**HOLIDAY MEMORIES** *continued from page 15*

point the tool is quickly removed from the oil, and the pastry is separated from it with a fork. The batter itself is a plain one made with flour, eggs, milk, sugar, and vanilla. See Emily Pfotenhauer’s article on a closely related Christmas confection, “The Norwegian *Krumkake*”, *Repast*, 21:2 (Spring 2005).

Of Faith and Phyllo Dough

We sailed from the Norse lands to the sunnier climes of Byzantium when we tasted Greek *spanakopita* [Jan and Dan Longone]. This well-known, savory vegetarian pastry of chopped spinach, egg, and *feta* cheese in many sheets of thin *phyllo* dough was served with FAGE brand Greek yogurt. The dish was purchased from the Ladies Philoptochos [“friends of the poor”] Society of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church of Ann Arbor, which sells the pastries every Christmastime to raise funds for the needy. The church, now located on Scio Church Road, was originally built on North Main Street in 1935 as the first Greek Orthodox church in Ann Arbor. The almsgiving and the vegetarian fare reflect the fact that Orthodox Christians are encouraged to fast and to care for the poor in the period leading up to Christmas Day, which they celebrate on January 6 or 7 (as this corresponds to December 25 on the old Julian calendar). During that period, churches often burn frankincense and maintain a small fire of blessed palm fronds to commemorate the gifts brought by the three Magi for the infant Jesus. The Greek Orthodox churches are descended from churches that the Apostles founded in the Balkans and the Middle East during the first century after the birth. Incidentally, Saint Nicholas is the Fourth-Century Greek Orthodox bishop and gift-giver whose story inspired the legend of Santa Claus.

Ham and other pork dishes are often popular at Christmas, especially in Catholic areas of France, Spain, and other countries. This custom is partly a remnant of pre-Christian foodways, but it also became historically entrenched as an emblem of Christian faith because it contrasts so sharply with Jewish and Muslim proscriptions regarding pork. The classic Christmas dish in much of French Canada is the *tourtière de Québec*, a savory meat pie usually featuring minced pork. At our own meal we tried *cretons* on Melba toast [Robin Watson], a potted pork spread from Quebec that is close kin to French *rillettes*. It is generally made with ground pork shoulder, onion, and spices, and is often eaten on toasted bread for breakfast. Robin got the recipe from a woman she knows in Quebec.

Pouring on the Schmaltz

Potato *kugel* [Phil and Barbara Zaret] is a baked casserole or a savory pudding, made with grated potato, onion, and egg. It is a traditional side-dish for Sabbath and holidays among the Ashkenazim, the Jews of Central or Eastern European descent. Following a recipe in Shaner Greenwald’s *Treasured Jewish Recipes* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969), Phil poured into the batter a generous amount of rich *schmaltz* (from the Yiddish *shmalts*), rendered chicken fat, purchased at the local Zingerman’s Deli where it is sold in bulk. (Because of its richness, to “pour on the schmaltz” became a Broadway phrase for over-the-top sentimentality.) Historically, Jewish people in northern Europe often cooked with *schmaltz* as an alternative to butter (a milk product, and thus barred from meals involving



Mae and Len Sander

Jane Wilkinson’s beef brisket pot roast with mushrooms, wine, and dried cranberries.

meat), lard and suet (which were subject to other prohibitions). Univ. of Michigan graduate student Avery Robinson analyzed the history of *kugel* in a talk in Nov. 2013, summarized in “American Foodways: The Jewish Contribution”, *Repast*, 30:1 (Winter 2014).

We had two versions of beef brisket pot roast, a classic Ashkenazi main dish for the Jewish Sabbath and for holidays such as Rosh Hashanah in October (New Year on the lunisolar Hebrew calendar) and Chanukkah in late November or December (the eight-day Festival of Lights):

- brisket with onion, rosemary, and thyme [Rita Goss and Greg Shuraleff]. Rita adapted a recipe from *Bon Appétit*, replacing the called-for wine with a simmering liquid made from beer, canned whole cranberries, beef broth, and flour.
- brisket with mushrooms, onion, rosemary, parsley, red wine, and dried cranberries [Jane Wilkinson and Howard Ando] is a New Year tradition of Jane’s.

Brisket is kosher for Jews since it comes from the chest area of cattle (by contrast, eating the hindquarters of mammals is prohibited unless the nerves, tendons, and blood vessels have been painstakingly removed). Historically, for large, poor families brisket was also an economical cut of meat: its undesirable toughness meant that its cost was low, and it was large enough to use for a grand holiday meal and still have leftover scraps to make *knishes* or *kreplach* dumplings. To transform the cut from unpalatable to succulent (*gedempte fleisch* in Yiddish, literally “soft meat”), it is braised in cooking liquids at moderate heat for 3½ - 4 hours, usually in a big covered pot in the oven. Traditionally, some of the gravy left in the pot would be reserved for use in making soup or sauce for a later meal.

For more on Ashkenazi food traditions, see:

- the “Lower East Side” issue of *Repast*, 17:4 (Fall 2001)
- the “Adventures in Jewish Baking” issue of *Repast*, 30:1 (Winter 2014)



- Michael Wex, *Rhapsody in Schmaltz: Yiddish Food and Why We Can't Stop Eating It* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016).

### It's All in the Dipping Sauce

Asian cuisine made an entrée at our meal via a festive Japanese dish, *sake*-steamed chicken with *ponzu* sauce [Howard Ando and Jane Wilkinson]. Howard followed a recipe from New Yorker Harris Salat's blog, [japanesefoodreport.com](http://japanesefoodreport.com), as further adapted by Melissa Clark in the *New York Times* (Mar. 9, 2011). He placed equal measures of dry *sake* and water in a large stockpot, where he steamed boneless chicken breasts for an hour or so until they were tender and succulent. Slightly modifying Clark's simplified version of *ponzu* sauce (which is itself a Japanese adaptation of a punch or juice mixture called *pons*, introduced by Dutch traders), Howard used juice concentrates from orange and passion fruit, along with soy sauce, *miso*, *mirin*, rice vinegar, chopped ginger root, and minced garlic; these are all whisked together, but not heated. He spooned some of this *ponzu* sauce over thick slices of the chicken that he arranged on a platter, beautifully surrounded with segments of sweet orange and sprinkled with thinly sliced scallions and black sesame seeds. Extra *ponzu* for dipping was available on the side.

*Jiaozi* dumplings [Mae and Len Sander], most popular in northern China, are traditionally eaten on the fifth day of the lunisolar Chinese New Year (late January or February). Wherever ethnic Chinese live, New Year is a festive time to honor their deities and ancestors. To make the dumplings, thin rounds of dough are filled with chopped vegetables or ground meat, then crimped closed. They are either steamed or boiled, and are served with a dipping sauce. The Sanders purchased these dumplings from a local restaurant, taking their cue from a hallowed Jewish-American holiday tradition: spending Christmas at a Chinese restaurant followed by a movie! ■

### Endnotes

1. Les Standiford, *The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), p. 185.
2. For a discussion, with many historical recipes, see Peter Brears, "Hog's Puddings and White Puddings", *Petits Propos Culinaires*, 106 (Sep. 2016), pp. 69-81. See also Regula Ysewijn, *Pride and Pudding: The History of British Puddings Savoury and Sweet* (Sydney, Australia: Murdoch Books, 2016).
3. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol in Prose, being A Ghost Story for Christmas* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1957), p. 64.

## Ragged-Trousered American Eats

The Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor are honored to host husband-and-wife team Jane Ziegelman and Andrew Coe on May 21, 2017, to speak about their new book, *A Square Meal: A Culinary History of the Great Depression* (HarperCollins, 2016). As Coe commented to the Culinary Historians of New York, "Our book looks at the Great Depression through the prism of food, covering everything from recipes for liver loaf to starvation and the Washington policy debates over feeding the hungry. We show how the Depression decade helped bring an end to 19<sup>th</sup>-Century patterns of eating, particularly in rural America, and usher in the modern food world in which we now live." Examples of this include:

- Today's homogenized U.S. cuisine is in many ways rooted in the packaged and processed convenience foods— such as the Kraft Macaroni & Cheese Dinner— that were introduced during this period by rising conglomerates.
- In response, however, there was a revived interest in authentic regional American cooking— as seen in the WPA's "America Eats" project— an interest that continues today.
- Today's "Dietary Guidelines for Americans", grounded in nutrition science, had their forerunner in the dietary recommendations promulgated in the 1930s by the U.S. Bureau of Home Economics and championed by Eleanor Roosevelt.

A few other recent works have also explored the history of eating habits among Americans of lesser means:

- *Food in the Gilded Age: What Ordinary Americans Ate* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2016) was written by Robert T. Dirks, an emeritus professor of anthropology at Illinois State Univ. It details dietary patterns of the late 1800s, notably among workers, African-Americans, immigrants, tenement dwellers, and other urban poor; and among Appalachians, farmers, lumberjacks, and other rural people. Dirks relies particularly on contemporary field inventories carried out by nutrition scientists commissioned by the USDA. He also includes 12 contemporary recipes along with a discussion of their historical context. His Chapter 3 is an expanded version of his article for *Repast* (Spring 2010) about early studies of African-American dietary patterns. Dirks is making presentations about the book, including to the Culinary Historians of Chicago (May 21, 2016) and the Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (Apr. 5, 2017).
- In *How the Other Half Ate: A History of Working-Class Meals at the Turn of the Century* (Univ. of California Press, 2014), Katherine Leonard Turner documents the changing diets of workers and immigrants in cities, rural mill towns, and company towns, and probes how technologies such as industrialized agriculture, refrigerated transport, and electric kitchen appliances revolutionized mass-market foods and women's kitchen chores.
- *Three Squares: The Invention of the American Meal* (Basic Books, 2013), by Abigail Carroll, shows that because of commercial and industrial work schedules, lunch in U.S. cities evolved into a smaller, briefer meal, often eaten at a lunch counter or out of a lunch pail. Dinner became the large meal of the day, with families sitting down together around a table to eat, a previously rare occurrence among laboring people. In the 1930s, promotional advertising encouraged the rise of fast foods such as cold cereals and hamburger, peanut-butter or other sandwiches, and snack foods such as potato chips and candy bars.

## C.H.A.A. FALL 2016 MEETINGS REPORT



# HOMEGROWN: FOODS OF ANN ARBOR AND OUR REGION

Our Fall programs, summarized below, focused on the foodways of the First Nations of Michigan; the history of Zingerman's Delicatessen; and the new downtown Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace. Our December participatory theme meal, where members shared holiday food experiences, is summarized on pages 15-19. Program Chair Laura Gillis has our gratitude for organizing this series.

### The People of the Three Fires

Shiloh Maples and Chantel Henry were the presenters for our Sep. 18 talk, "The People of the Three Fires: Food in Celebrations and Ceremonies of the Ojibwa (Chippewa), Odawa (Ottawa), and Potawatomi Tribal Groups of Michigan". Both presenters are employed at American Indian Health and Family Services (AIHFS), a Detroit-based agency that serves seven Michigan counties by promoting healthy lifestyles and traditional foods. The AIHFS "Sacred Roots" program is one of many organizations working to revitalize First Nations foodways via community and commercial gardens and kitchens, seed banks, etc.

The People of the Three Fires are Great Lakes tribes within the large Anishinaabe family. Shiloh affiliates with the Little River Band of Ottawa (Manistee and Mason Counties, MI), and Chantel with the Chippewa of the Thames (Elgin County, ONT). Traditionally, these tribes were semi-nomadic, migrating between food camps to gather *min* (berries), *manoomin* (wild rice), *zhiiwaagamizigan* (maple syrup), and other foodstuffs. In addition to hunting, fishing, and foraging, they also cultivated some plants, most importantly New World corn, beans, and squash. These last were known as "the three sisters" because they grow well together and are nutritionally optimal when eaten together. The corn of this region was mainly white corn; many traditional varieties are now rare or extinct. The corn could be dried for the Winter, ground into meal or flour, or made into soups. Meat was eaten occasionally and sparingly, such as for feasts and ceremonies.

Such food-related activities gave shape to the yearly calendar and to tribal identity itself. Humans were seen as partners with plants and animals, and maintaining harmony entailed restraint, including not wasting anything. Edibles were used not only for nourishment but also for spiritual, medicinal,

and gift-giving purposes. A "spirit plate" of small bites of food was often offered to the spirits of ancestors. Autumn "ghost suppers" were communal meals centered on favorite foods of the loved ones.

### How Zingerman's Made a Mark

Our Oct. 16 speaker was Paul Saginaw, who co-founded Monahan's Seafood Market in 1979 and Zingerman's Delicatessen in 1982, both now iconic Ann Arbor institutions. After screening the movie "Deli Man" (see sidebar on next page), Paul spoke about his own life in the food world. As was also the case with his Zingerman's co-founder Ari Weinzwieg, Paul and his family weren't really "foodies" when he was growing up, but they did enjoy certain traditional Jewish foods. Lou's Finer Deli and Fredson's Deli were highlights in his northwest Detroit upbringing. You could eat foods, such as pickled herring, that are now all but forgotten as deli fare. In Ann Arbor, Paul majored in zoology and then worked as a chemist at Gelman Sciences before launching into restaurant work at Real Seafood Co. and later Maude's, where he first met Ari, a dishwasher and Russian history major from Chicago.

Paul and Ari had few resources when they began. Zingerman's had only two employees besides themselves. Paul recounted that he often telephoned his mom to get advice on how to make specific foods. They'd invented the name Zingerman's to stand out in alphabetical directories and to sound German Jewish, but with pizzazz (as in "Zing!"). Their rye, pumpernickel, and other ethnic breads were trucked in from the Chene Modern Bakery in Detroit [Vasko Maksimovski, who founded it in a Polish neighborhood on Chene Street in the 1930s, passed away in April 2015].

What was of greatest value was their vision and principles:

- to be unique and to remain a small, one-of-a-kind place
- to lead and manage based on good ideas and shared decision-making, rather than on mere authority (Ari's study of Bakunin and Kropotkin might have been influential here)
- to make customer service a central focus rather than a merely post-purchase concern
- to grasp the importance of educating customers, since artisanal products are unusual and expensive
- to create an atmosphere that is friendly and inviting instead of imposing, elitist, or "gourmet".

These principles allowed Paul and Ari to succeed and to grow. Paul's focus has been on business and financial operations and philanthropy. Over the years, taking on new partners from among their employees, they have expanded into a whole community of businesses in Ann Arbor, including a bakehouse, a creamery, a roadhouse restaurant and more, and most recently Miss Kim, a Korean restaurant.

### New Hope for Healthier Urban Diets

Our Nov. 13 program was a field trip to neighboring Ypsilanti to preview the new downtown Farmers MarketPlace. Amanda Edmonds, Executive Director of Growing Hope, led the tour of the site on S. Washington Street, a former warehouse and a former bank drive-through separated by a parking lot. For many years this downtown block was half vacant, but the two



buildings have now been renovated as the hub of a farmers market, incubator kitchen, and community gathering place. Initially, the new Farmers MarketPlace is open on Tuesday afternoons (outdoors in the Summer, indoors in the Winter and in inclement weather), with additional days planned in the future.

Each year, Growing Hope raises on the order of \$60,000 in grants and contributions to help sustain the two Ypsilanti farmers markets (Downtown and Depot Town) and the accompanying Mobile Farm Stand. The goal of these efforts is to increase access to healthy food in urban communities in Ypsilanti, which has far more working-class people than does Ann Arbor. In this, they are succeeding: nearly 30,000 customer visits were recorded during the six warm months of 2016, with

an estimated 54% of the customers saying they eat more fruits and vegetables thanks to the markets, and 64% saying they gain increased access to healthy food. The markets are also commercial incubators, enabling 85 farmers and other market vendors to do business there, resulting in a local economic impact of roughly \$1.3 million. These vendors are local, small-scale or family-owned operations such as Marks Farms in Britton, MI (fresh produce and eggs, beefalo and chicken meat), Shoreline Wild Salmon, and Delice Patisserie. Growing Hope helps train these small businesspeople by offering a workshop series called “Building Blocks for Local Food Entrepreneurs”. It also educates shoppers at the markets by organizing on-site taste samples and cooking demonstrations. For more information, visit <http://growinghope.net/programs/farmers-markets/>. ■

## Ziggy Gruber is the Deli Man

“When I cook, I feel my ancestors around me” confesses David “Ziggy” Gruber, the 40-something co-owner of Kenny & Ziggy’s New York Delicatessen Restaurant in Houston, TX, in the 92-minute documentary “Deli Man” (2014). Directed by Erik Greenberg Anjou, the work portrays contemporary delis and also surveys the whole history of delis in America. Screened as part of the CHAA program on Oct. 16, the video is well worth watching on YouTube.

Ziggy, the central focus of “Deli Man”, is a son of Eugene Gruber, the founder of the Rialto Deli, the first deli established on Broadway in New York (1927). Eugene’s father, in turn, was the son of Yiddish-speaking immigrant deli owners from Hungary and Romania. As part of following in their footsteps, Ziggy soaked up their Jewish culture and food know-how, even amassing a collection of menus from the classic delis of old. Eventually he relocated out west, where he has found fulfillment in bringing some real *Yidische tam* (Jewish flavor) to Texas. We witness all of his Tevye-like troubles and joys there, and we see him wed his forbearing physical therapist, Mary McCaughey, in an old synagogue in Budapest.

As the film recounts, the first delis on the Lower East Side of Manhattan were established by urbane German Jewish immigrants in the mid-1800s. They served kosher food, although very little of it was originally Jewish: back in Germany, it had simply been adapted from the broader food customs there. Beginning in the 1880s, New York experienced a larger influx of Jews from the *shtetls* and villages of Russia and of Eastern and Central Europe. In a process that Anjou characterizes as “Americanization”, these poorer Jews emulated the earlier delis and their German fare, which was fancier and spicier than their own. An exception was *pastramă* (“pastrami”), a cured meat from Romania whose spiciness rivaled the delicacies of Germany and whose fame grew in Manhattan, where Romanians were disproportionately represented among deli owners.

By 1931, we learn, thousands of delis dotted the five boroughs of New York, about 1,550 of them kosher and a larger number non-kosher. The actors and audiences of the thriving Yiddish Theater District flocked to delis such as The Stage, Lindy’s, and Reuben’s. Two blocks from Carnegie Hall, the Carnegie Deli (R.I.P. 1937-2016) was frequented by come-



dians; it pioneered brash waiters and four-inch-stacked pastrami on rye. But every corner of the Lower East Side had its deli, the pride of surrounding tenement dwellers and other residents. Over the next two decades, as Jewish people entered the American mainstream, so did deli food. But after World War 2, many Jews prospered and moved to the suburbs, the main factor in the gradual decline of the deli. Today, there are only about 200 in the entire U.S.

Since Yiddish culture and authentic Ashkenazi communities have disappeared, preparing Jewish food in America today is based mostly on memory. Ziggy tells us that when he first walks into a deli, he gives it the smell test, a deep inhale to see if it reminds him of his grandma’s kitchen. Other telltale signs of an authentic Jewish deli are:

- the food is “earthy” rather than fancy or refined, and the flavors are vivid rather than subtle or nuanced
- the atmosphere and personality are more important than is efficiency
- the operation is very hands-on, reflecting pride in the food being served
- the customers are often finicky, which echoes the tradition of food having special significance for Jews
- running the place is tough and all-consuming physically, financially, and emotionally.

As evidence, the film provides smaller vignettes of many other contemporary delis, such as Jay’s Best (Queens, NY); Hobby’s (Newark, NJ); Caplansky’s (Toronto, ONT); Canter’s (Los Angeles, CA); and Nate ’n Al (Beverly Hills, CA), opened by Detroiters in 1940.

# MORSELS & TIDBITS

CHAA member Dr. **Margaret Carney** reports that the Dinnerware Museum (est. 2012) has a new name that better reflects its mission: the International Museum of Dinnerware Design (IMoDD). The Ann Arbor-based museum's most recent exhibit, called "a la carte", ran at Washtenaw Community College from Jan. 9 to Feb. 18, and another pop-up exhibit is in the works to open on May 13 in Ann Arbor. Carney, who is Founding Director and Curator of the museum, spoke to The Wedgwood Society of Washington, DC, last Nov. 13 about "Anomalies and Curiosities of Dinnerware". The meeting was held at the Total Wine store in Chantilly, VA.

"The Edible Monument: The Art of Food for Festivals" has been visiting the Detroit Institute of Arts for four months, Dec. 16, 2016 to Apr. 16, 2017. This exhibit, organized by chief curator **Marcia Reed** at the Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles), concerns historical European banquets and feasts in medieval and early modern Europe. A display of historical manuscripts and other materials, drawn from the collection of the Getty and from that of Anne Willan and Mark Cherniavsky, allows visitors to learn about the purposes of these grand meals and how their magnificent dishes, centerpieces, and other staging elements were physically arranged and "pulled off". The show also includes some sugar sculptures created specifically for this exhibit by renowned English food historian and food sculptor Ivan Day.

Elsewhere there are also some exhibits of interest:

- "Edible City: A Delicious Journey" is an exhibit at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, WA, Nov. 19, 2016 – Sep. 10, 2017. Curated by **Rebekah Denn**, it chronicles how palates have evolved in Seattle, from the origins of the Rainier cherry and the earliest oyster middens, to the emergence of Pike Place Market, the city's first sushi bar, and the modern four-star restaurants.
- "Global Kitchen: Food, Nature, Culture" is a traveling exhibit organized by the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Its current run is at the Milwaukee Public Museum from Mar. 3 to Jul. 9, 2017. The show examines the intersection of food, nature, culture, health, and history, and considers some of the most challenging food issues of our time. Visitors can learn about the science, culture, and systems of food, compare tastes in the demonstration kitchen (regionally sponsored by Meijer), cook a virtual meal, see rare artifacts, and peek into the dining rooms of famous figures throughout history.
- "Heroes of the Knish: Making a Living and Making a Life" is an exhibit running Feb. 12 – May 7 at the offbeat City Reliquary Museum in Brooklyn, NY. Admission (\$5) includes one knish (Knishery NYC and Gabila's Knishes) and pickles. The show was curated by **Laura Silver**, who wrote "Raider of the Lost Knish" in *Repast* (Winter 2014), as well as a book, *Knish: In Search of the Jewish Soul Food* (Brandeis Univ. Press, 2014). The exhibit tells the story of courageous women and men who churned out potato pies and paved lives for

themselves and their families. Items on display include a stock certificate from Mrs. Stahl's Knishes of Brighton Beach; the knish correspondence of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt; a song about Ruby the Knishman, who sold potato pies to schoolkids in Canarsie; and records of the Knish Crisis of 2013, when, following a factory fire, Gabila's was forced to stop production of square, Coney Island-style knishes for nearly six months.

- "Sour, Sweet, Bitter, Spicy: Stories of Chinese Food and Identity in America" is an exhibit running Oct. 6, 2016 to Sep. 10, 2017 at the Museum of Chinese in America in Manhattan, NY. **Herb Tam**, Curator and Director of Exhibitions, reports that the show is an imaginary banquet in which 18 different regional cooking styles are represented through ceramic sculptures presented on a monumental dining room table. A video installation weaves together stories of 33 Chinese and Asian-American chefs, including pioneers such as Cecilia Chiang and Ken Hom, new restaurateurs like Peter Chang and Vivian Ku, and persevering home cooks like Biying Ni and Yvette Lee. The exhibit explores the meaning of Chinese food as a cultural form of expression and identity, a platform for experimentation, a test of authenticity, a means of immigrant survival, and a microcosm of Chinese culture.
- "Antwerp à la Carte" is a permanent exhibition that opened May 14, 2016 at the Museum Aan de Stroom in Antwerp, Belgium. It explores the city's relation to food from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to the distant future, including the dishes and ingredients eaten, how they're procured and prepared, and the waste disposed of. In the Middle Ages many gardens and cattle sheds were located within Antwerp's walls; today, most food is shipped more than 6000 miles. Visitors can stroll through re-enacted markets, inns, cafés, restaurants, and kitchens, taste contemporary versions of recipes from the 16<sup>th</sup>-Century *Cockbouck*, and see historical artwork depicting food. See information below about an accompanying conference on Jun. 8-9, 2017.

CHAA member **Robin Watson** of Taylor, MI, wrote several entries for *The Oxford Companion to Cheese*, an encyclopedic work edited by Catherine Donnelly and issued this past November. One of Robin's entries is about John Jossi, a Swiss immigrant cheesemaker in Wisconsin who is credited with inventing Brick cheese in 1877. Another traces the history of cheese cradles, the large coasters used as resting spots for single wheels of cheese in an aging-cave or in shops and kitchens. Her other entries focus on the respective cheeses of Croatia and South Africa, and on two individual cheeses: Casatella Trevigiana (Treviso, Italy) and *tulum* (Turkey).

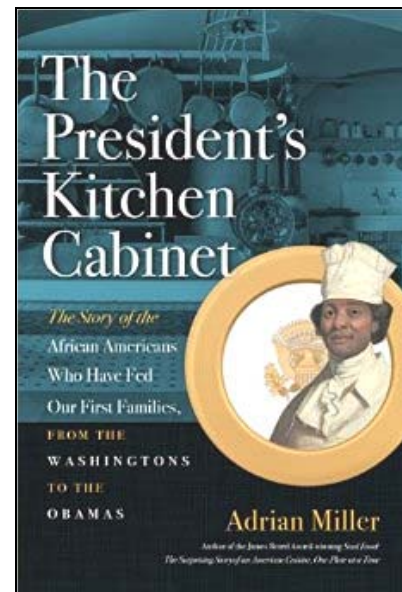
Repast editor **Randy Schwartz** wrote an article summarizing discoveries made in Portugal by the late botanist and CHAA member **George F. Estabrook**. "The Wisdom of Peasants: George Estabrook's Studies of Traditional Sustainable Agriculture in Portugal" appears in *International Agenda*, 16:1 (Winter 2017), pp. 27-31, which is a second periodical that



Schwartz edits. The issue is available at <http://www.schoolcraft.edu/a-z-index/international-institute/international-agenda>.

Several friends of CHAA have recently published books:

- The latest from prolific author **Andrew F. Smith** (New School Univ., Manhattan) is *Food in America: The Past, Present, and Future of Food, Farming, and the Family Meal* (ABC-CLIO, 2016). The work has three volumes: “Food and the Environment”, “Food, Health and Nutrition”, and “Food and the Economy”. Andrew’s most recent article for *Repast* was “Starving the South”, for our Civil War Sesquicentennial theme (Part 1, Summer 2011).
- **Amy Bentley** (New York Univ.) wrote *Inventing Baby Food: Taste, Health, and the Industrialization of the American Diet* (Univ. of California Press, 2014). Organized chronologically in five chapters spanning the 1890s to the present, the book considers trends such as the rise of industrial baby food, new child-rearing approaches such as “early solids”, and the revolt in favor of natural and homemade foods. Amy wrote a cover story on “Gerber and the Industrialization of Baby Food” for *Repast* (Spring 2001).
- **Adrian Miller**’s new book is *The President’s Kitchen Cabinet: The Story of the African Americans Who Have Fed Our First Families, from the Washingtons to the Obamas* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2017). The work brings together the words and other details of more than 150 African American men and women who worked in the presidential food service of every First Family as chefs, personal cooks, butlers, stewards, and servers. Adrian spoke about the book to the Culinary Historians of Chicago on Feb. 11. He wrote “Cold Tea and Colored Cooks’: African-Americans and Congressional Foodways in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century” for *Repast* (Spring 2013).
- **Michael W. Twitty**’s *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African-American Culinary History in the Old South* (Amistad, 2016) is a memoir of cuisine and food culture. The author uses food as a means to trace his own ancestry— both black and white— from Africa to America and from slavery to freedom, and through the charged politics surrounding the origins of soul food, barbecue, and all Southern cuisine. Michael wrote about African-American okra soup in *Repast* (Spring 2010).
- **Frederick Douglass Opie** has just published *Southern Food and Civil Rights: Feeding the Revolution* (The History Press, 2017), which uses oral histories, contemporary news accounts, and dozens of historical recipes to summarize roles that food played in African American struggles over the past century. Major topics include boycotts of segregated grocery stores and restaurants in the 1930s; the almost-forgotten Afro-American Cooking School in Baltimore/Washington (1920s-60s); food workers’ support of actions such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-56), the New York hospital worker strikes (1959-62), and the March on Washington (1963); restaurants that became havens for civil rights activists, such as Dookie Chase’s (New Orleans) and Paschal’s (Atlanta); and Nation of Islam farms, dairies, and bakeries in the 1960s. Dr. Opie, who teaches history and foodways at Babson College, wrote “Zora Neale Hurston on Lowdown Floridian Food and Culture” in *Repast* (Spring 2015).



- **Ken Forkish**’s new book is *The Elements of Pizza: Unlocking the Secrets to World-Class Pies at Home* (Ten Speed Press, 2016). Forkish is owner of the popular Portland, OR, restaurants Ken’s Artisan Bakery, Ken’s Artisan Pizza, and Trifecta Tavern & Bakery. His earlier book *Flour Water Salt Yeast: The Fundamentals of Artisan Bread and Pizza* (Ten Speed Press, 2012) won an IACP Award in the category of Baking: Savory or Sweet, and a James Beard Foundation Award in the category of Baking and Dessert. He wrote the article “The Croissant, and Why It’s Important” in *Repast* (Spring 2006).

Upcoming conferences in Europe:

- Apr. 22, 2017: Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions, “Birds at the Table!” (Friends’ Meeting House, Friargate, York, UK), <http://www.leedsfoodsymposium.org.uk>
- Jun. 1-2, 2017: Third annual International Conference on Food History and Cultures, organized by the European Institute for Food History and Cultures (IEHCA) (François-Rabelais Univ., Tours, France), <https://foodanthro.com/2016/09/23/third-international-conference-on-food-history-and-cultures>
- Jun. 8-9, 2017: European Society for Nineteenth-Century Art (ESNA), “Food, Glorious Food: Food at the Heart of Nineteenth-Century Art” (Museum Aan de Stroom, Antwerp, Belgium), in conjunction with the exhibition “Antwerp à la Carte” (see above), <https://esnaonline.wordpress.com/conferences/2017-esna-conference-food-glorious-food/>
- Jul. 7-9, 2017: Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, “Food and Landscape” (St. Catherine’s College, Oxford, UK), <http://oxfordsymposium.org.uk>
- Oct. 27-28, 2017: “Food and Drink as Symbols: Historical Perspectives” (Dept. of History and Material Culture of English Speaking Countries, Pedagogical Univ. of Krakow, Poland), <http://foodassymbol.weebly.com/useful-information.html>
- Nov. 17-18, 2017: Fourth annual Amsterdam Symposium on the History of Food, “Making Sense of Taste” (The Aula of the Univ. of Amsterdam), <http://bijzonderecollectiesuva.nl/foodhistory/amsterdam-symposium-on-the-history-of-food>. ■

# CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. and are held at the Ann Arbor District Library – Malletts Creek Branch, 3090 E. Eisenhower Parkway.)

Sunday, February 19, 2017

2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.,  
Detroit Institute of Arts  
(5200 Woodward Avenue, Detroit),  
Beth Carver Wees (Curator of American Decorative  
Arts, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York),  
“‘The Cups that Cheer’: Coffee, Tea &  
Chocolate in Early America”,  
followed by a viewing of the DIA exhibit  
“Bitter|Sweet: Coffee, Tea & Chocolate”

Sunday, March 19, 2017

Susan L. Nenadic,  
local author and historian,  
“Dining with Shakespeare”

Sunday, April 23, 2017

Margaret Carney (Founding Director and  
Curator, International Museum of  
Dinnerware Design, Ann Arbor),  
“Timeless Dinnerware Designs”

Sunday, May 21, 2017

Jane Ziegelman and Andrew Coe  
on their new book, *A Square Meal:  
A Culinary History of the Great Depression*

Sunday, July 16, 2017

4-7 p.m., Ladies’ Literary Club of Ypsilanti  
(218 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti),  
Members-only participatory theme meal,  
“International Vegetarian Cookery” (details TBA).

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

- Spring 2017: The Food Culture of Portugal, Part 2
- Summer 2017: The Food Industry: Pages from History.

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume XXXIII Number 1, Winter 2017

*First Class*