

# The Food Culture of Portugal

## Part 1— A Unique Corner of Europe



Photo: <http://pasteisdebelem.pt/>

Custard tarts called *pastéis de Belém*, available commercially since 1837, are one of the famous “convent sweets” of Portugal. These here are about to be devoured at the historic Casa Pastéis de Belém, a café in Lisbon that guards its secret recipe.

# WHY PORTUGAL CAPTIVATED GEORGE ESTABROOK

November 24 marks five years since the passing of George F. Estabrook (1942-2011), a CHAA member and *Repast* writer whose years of work in Portugal were the inspiration for this theme. My full obituary article about him was included in our Winter 2012 issue. I really miss George’s energy and erudition, and I’m dedicating these two issues in his memory.

George was a longtime professor of botany at the Univ. of Michigan, where his two basic courses were “How People Use Plants” and “Biology of Human Nutrition”. He also gave public talks about “The Roots of Soul Food” and other topics, and for the CHAA he spoke about “The History of Citrus Fruit” (Jan. 2006) and “The Domestication and Spread of Bananas” (Jan. 2009).

In the 1980s George became interested in the ecology of the countryside in Portugal, where he had been giving talks and doing research for many years. He spent Summers and sabbaticals at the University of Coimbra, serving as an Invited Professor of Anthropology there and carrying out fieldwork on traditional agriculture in the remote mountainous interior. He

would observe and analyze centuries-old farming techniques to identify practices, some of them ingenious, that foster sustainability and that might be adaptable to more industrialized countries. For example, he studied how the fertility of shale soil is maintained by such traditional techniques as rotating food crops with *giesta* (a leguminous shrub), grazing sheep, and using living-grass ditches for irrigation. He learned to speak fluent Portuguese and, more impressively, the rural mountain dialect, so that he could talk with both farmers and scientists.



Photo courtesy of the Estabrook family.

Once, when an interviewer back at UM kept asking George how he was planning to “help” the Portuguese by teaching them what he knew, he made clear who was learning from whom: “I’m not there helping farmers at all. I’m there learning from farmers how they’ve managed to pull this off for the last 800 years.”

He collaborated with Virginia E. Hutton— a UM anthropologist who would become his second wife— on fieldwork and research in Portugal. They purchased an apartment in the town of Torres Vedras, in the west central region of Estremadura. Alongside their work, they also enjoyed observing the citrus harvest and sampling the excellent home-style food and local wine of the region.

George and Virginia liked participating in CHAA’s semi-annual participatory theme meals. The arrangement was that George would make main dishes, and Virginia would make desserts. For our July 2007 meal, “Sandwiches from Around the World”, George prepared *bolo de presunto e queijo*, literally a “cake” of ham and cheese, a substantial pastry served at holidays and special events in the Douro region of northern Portugal. Adapting a recipe from Maria de Lourdes Modesto’s *Cozinha Tradicional Portuguesa* (Lisbon, 1982; also published in English translation, *Traditional Portuguese Cooking*, in 1989), he made a yeast-leavened dough, placed it in a pan greased with olive oil, and filled it with slices of dry-cured ham and *fontina* and *mozzarella* cheese. Then he baked the cake at high heat for 30 minutes, until the crust was browned.

George once mentioned to me that he hoped to write an article for *Repast* about some of his Portuguese experiences. But not long afterward, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and this ultimately felled him.

This issue includes three articles about Portugal (pp. 4-9). Our second installment (Spring 2017) will focus on the influence of Portuguese foodways globally, in places like Brazil.

—RKS ■

## 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>

Editor.....Randy K. Schwartz  
 CHAA Presidents.....Joanne Nesbit and Judy Steeh  
 CHAA Program Chair.....Laura Green Gillis  
 CHAA Treasurer.....Dan Longone  
 CHAA Membership Secretary .....Marionette Cano  
 CHAA Website Editor.....Judy Steeh  
 CHAA Founder and Honorary President...Jan Longone

✠

*The material contained in this publication is copyrighted.  
 Passages may be copied or quoted provided that the source is credited.*

For submissions or inquiries about *Repast*, contact:

Randy K. Schwartz  
 1044 Greenhills Drive  
 Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2722  
 tel. 734-662-5040  
[rschw45251@aol.com](mailto:rschw45251@aol.com)

Subscriptions are \$20/year. To subscribe to *Repast* or to become a CHAA member (which includes a subscription), contact one of our Co-Presidents:

M. Joanne Nesbit and Judy Steeh  
 tel: 734-213-2412 / 734-665-5813  
[a2culinaryhistorians@gmail.com](mailto:a2culinaryhistorians@gmail.com)

Or download a membership form from the web address given near the top of this box.

# HIGH AND LOW ON THE HOG

In conjunction with Zingerman's annual Camp Bacon last June, Christopher Wilson, one of the presenters, wrote a thoughtful essay for [smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com). Wilson, who is Director of the African American History Program for the Smithsonian museums, cited plantation records as well as 1930s interviews from the WPA Slave Narrative project to correct some misconceptions about enslaved African American workers in the South before the Civil War.

Wilson criticized the notion that slaves had no agency at all in shaping their own lives and that they subsisted mostly on scraps that their masters didn't want—stereotypically, the less-desirable parts of a pig such as feet, ham hock (knuckle), cracklings (rind), and chitterlings (intestine). Wilson examined the antebellum Hermitage Plantation in Chatham County, GA, and estimated that at slaughtering time, more than 200 hogs were butchered to produce about 30,000 lbs. of pork. He concluded:



Interior of the kitchen at Refuge Plantation in Camden County, GA, ca. 1880. Photo: Historic American Buildings Survey, via Vlach 1993.

It doesn't stand to reason that the white planter family would eat all the "high on the hog" parts, because there would just be too much[...] At least in the Lowcountry rice plantations, the conventional view of what slaves ate doesn't stand up to evidence.[...] Where the conventional "soul food" myth does ring true on Lowcountry plantations is that enslaved people were generally allowed to prepare for themselves all the excess pork that couldn't be preserved. In other words, the enslaved community was "given" all the pork parts that the "master didn't want," but that wasn't necessarily all they were allowed to eat (Wilson 2016).

Wilson's conclusions are corroborated by more recent cultural memories and first-hand experiences. When "soul food" was first becoming a fad, Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor cautioned that the concept tended to pigeonhole the broad phenomenon of African-American cooking in the South by narrowing it down to a few stock dishes eaten by plantation slaves. As for what those slaves ate, she said, it's too simplistic to believe that whole diets "developed out of master's

leftovers" (Smart-Grosvenor 1970, p. xxxiv). Middle-class food enthusiasts had encountered a handful of these foods, she wrote, such as ham hocks and collard greens, and were portraying them as if they were the standouts of the Black culinary repertoire. At one point, terrapin stew served in the turtle shell became the latest soul-food craze. The stew itself was, indeed, an old custom on the Atlantic Coast between Maryland and South Carolina (recipe #126 in Abby Fisher's 1881 cookbook). But Smart-Grosvenor said about terrapin:

Ain't nothing but swamp turtles. They used to be plentiful on the eastern seaboard. So plentiful that plantation owners gave them to their slaves. Now they are the rare discovery of so-called gore-mays. White folks always discovering something ... after we give it up.[...] By the time they got to pigs' feet, black people were giving up swine (Smart-Grosvenor 1970, p. 41).

Smart-Grosvenor, who died on Sep. 3 at age 79 in Bronx, NY, had grown up in the South Carolina Lowcountry, where the Geechee (now more often called Gullah) culture represents one of the best-preserved African remnants in the U.S. At age 10 her family moved to Philadelphia, and at age 19 she went overseas and joined the bohemian expatriate arts community in Paris. She became not only a food writer and a cooking-show host on NPR, but also a musical performer and an actress. She was in Jonathan Demme's film

"Beloved" (1998) and in Julie Dash's "Daughters of the Dust" (1991), this last a breakthrough in its portrayal of Gullah culture. Now Dash is repaying the favor by making a biopic about Smart-Grosvenor's fascinating life, "Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl", set for release in 2017. ■

## References

- Smart-Grosvenor, Vertamae, *Vibration Cooking: or, the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* (Athens, GA: Univ. of Georgia Press, 2011; first published in 1970).
- Vlach, John Michael, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1993).
- Wilson, Christopher, "Studying Bacon Has Led One Smithsonian Scholar to New Insights on the Daily Life of Enslaved African-Americans", Jun. 2, 2016. <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/studying-bacon-led-smithsonian-scholar-new-insights-daily-life-enslaved-180959288>.

# A CULINARY ADVENTURE IN PORTUGAL

by Rita Goss

*Rita Goss of Grosse Pointe Farms, MI, is a longtime CHAA member. She is a retired Special Education and Home Economics Teacher in the Detroit Public Schools. In the past two years she has made trips to India, Portugal, and Scandinavia.*

In October 2015, a friend and I went on an organized tour of Portugal that was titled “Country Roads of Portugal”. Fortunately not every hour was scheduled, and we had the most interesting times when we explored on our own.

Starting in Lisbon, we spent several hours climbing the hills to reach the Jardim Botânico, the botanical gardens at the Univ. of Lisbon, where my friend wanted to celebrate her birthday.



Because the most accessible entrance was under construction, we had quite an adventure trying to find the gardens. We continually inquired, but the locals simply pointed higher and higher.

We had better luck in our culinary adventures and in our introduction to the country’s famous *bacalhau*, or salt cod. George Mendes, a prize-winning Portuguese executive chef at the Aldea restaurant in New York, aptly describes *bacalhau* as “having an incomparable fresh sea flavor and silky texture”. It has been a mainstay of Portuguese life since fishermen began catching cod off the Newfoundland coast and preserving it by salting at sea, 400 years ago. The local waters have been depleted by fishing, and today most of the cod comes from Norway and Iceland.

So that same evening in Lisbon, looking for dinner, we again walked the hills and luckily arrived at Relicário, a local hidden gem of a place that also happened to be a *fado* spot. *Fado*, which means “fate”, is a distinctive Portuguese soulful sound somewhat like New Orleans jazz. So we unexpectedly got to enjoy an additional form of local culture with our meal. The music was the perfect background for our first taste of *bacalhau*. My friend described hers: “Thick as a fillet, juicy and tender with the right amount of flake resulting in an unpretentious fresh-fish melt-in-your-mouth release of flavor.”

One of our first organized visits in Lisbon took us west to the Belém district where we visited the historic Casa Pastéis de Belém, a café that has managed for almost 200 years to keep secret its recipe for the beloved *pastel de Belém* (plural *pastéis*), which is reputed to be the best in the city. These wonderful custard tarts, one of the emblematic foods of Portugal, were originally created in a nearby monastery and first sold in 1837. It is rumored that one of the main ingredients, egg yolk, was a regular “leftover” in the monastery at that time, the remnant of eggs whose whites were used as clarifying agents in the production of red wine and by the nuns for pressing and starching their habits. Two other key ingredients, cinnamon and sugar, were imported from the Portuguese colonies. The nuns at various convents competed to produce the tastiest sweets, whose sales were an important source of funds.





Because this café bakery produces such quantities of *pastéis de Belém*, serving 20,000 or so of the tarts each day, they are always hot and crunchy from the oven and especially delicious when sprinkled with cinnamon and powdered sugar. The bakery swears that it all comes down to zealously choosing the ingredients to be baked according to traditional processes. Every day their *pâtisseries* recreate in the “Secret Room” the cream and the pastry used to make the *pastéis*.

Our most adventurous experience occurred in the enchanting walled city of Évora, a UNESCO World Heritage site located in the Alentejo region in the central part of the country. We were fortunate to be staying in the old town, contained within the medieval wall and traversed by a Roman aqueduct. We read about a tiny but acclaimed restaurant, Tasquinha do Oliveria (“Olive-Tree Tavern”), operated by a charming husband-and-wife team (at right). We set out in the dark to find it, traveling by foot amidst a maze of narrow cobbled streets with two goals in mind: locating the restaurant and more importantly, obtaining two of their 14 precious seats!



After quite a trape through the web of unlit streets and alleyways, we found the Tasquinha do Oliveria and were quickly served after only a short wait, probably because by the time we found the place, everyone else had eaten. We put ourselves in the owner’s hands for dinner and started with thin slivers of *presunto* (shown in the photo), a dry-cured ham for which the area is famous, similar to Spanish *jamón* or Italian *prosciutto*. The entrée of sizzling, succulent lamb chops and melt-in-your-mouth thin potato chips made us glad we had trusted the owner.

*continued on page 18*

# PORTUGUESE CUISINE—MORE THAN *BACALHAU*

by Ronnie Hess

*This essay is adapted from a forthcoming culinary travel guidebook written by Ronnie Hess and Joan B. Peterson, Eat Smart in Portugal (Madison, WI: Ginkgo Press, early 2017). Hess, who wrote an earlier book in the same series, Eat Smart in France (2010), was raised in New York and earned a master's degree in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is an award-winning journalist who has worked for CBS News in Paris as well as for public radio stations in the Midwest. She studied cooking with Liane Kuony at the Postilion Restaurant and School of Culinary Arts in Fond du Lac, WI, and was restaurant critic for several years for Madison Magazine. Peterson, the Editor at Ginkgo Press and the founding head of the Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (CHEW), has written for Repast about corn in Mexico (Spring 2003) and halvah in Ottoman Turkey (Winter 2009).*

The saying goes that there are 365 *bacalhau* or salt-cod dishes in Portugal, one for each day of the year. Cod is a staple in the nation's cuisine, even the emblem of Portuguese culture shared by residents and expatriates alike. But, it alone does not define Portuguese food. In addition to an abundance of other kinds of fish and shellfish—Portugal is one of the largest consumers of seafood in Europe—there are also distinctive meats (especially sausages and hams), game, poultry, fruits, vegetables, grains, eggs, and dairy products that characterize the Portuguese kitchen. And especially, there is bread—night and day, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, standing alone or molded into a dish.

But first, a few general remarks are in order regarding Portuguese cuisine and what sets it apart from others.

## A Special Place in Iberia and in the World

The wealth of fish and shellfish dishes underscores Portugal's geographic place on the western edge of continental Europe. Besides the Atlantic Ocean to the west and south, the only boundary is that with Spain to the east and north. This proximity to Spain has given rise to a misconception about Portuguese gastronomy. It is often, incorrectly, lumped with Spanish (or, more generally, Iberian or Mediterranean) cookery. While the two countries share common ingredients—for example, onions, garlic, olives and olive oil, tomatoes and peppers, rice and fish—as well as cooking methods, and while both cuisines are straightforward, honest, hearty, robust, and filling, there are many distinctions between the two.

Portuguese cooking has been called more nuanced and florid than that of its neighbor. The common use of spices, such as cinnamon and cumin, and “exotic” fruits and vegetables, is a legacy of Portugal's early maritime and colonial history, and of its global trade routes (including a slave trade) that began in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Portuguese cooking is also said to be more buttery, richer and creamier, than Spain's. The plethora of creamy-rich desserts, often called “convent sweets”, recalls the important role of religious establishments in the spiritual and economic but also the gustatory life of Portugal.

The diminutive size of Portugal, about 350 miles wide and 115 miles across, a land area about the size of the U.S. state of Indiana, might suggest that there is not much culinary diversity across its regions. Yet, given Portugal's distinctive and variable geography, until recently its lack of speedy transportation across the land, and its relative poverty compared to other western European nations prior to its accession to the European Union in 1986, the country has managed to preserve hundreds of different regionally-specific cooking traditions. This is especially true when it comes to the kinds of breads and cakes produced. These, as well as some other foods, attest to the importance of community and tradition in Portugal even in the globalized world that it helped create centuries earlier.

The uniqueness and diversity of the nation's cuisine is reflected in the results of a 2011 opinion survey, held to identify the Seven Marvels of Portuguese Gastronomy. With nearly a million opinions tallied, the winners were as follows:

- *arroz de marisco*, or seafood rice
- *queijo Serra da Estrela*, an artisanal mountain cheese, made from raw sheep's milk curdled with wild thistle
- *caldo verde*, literally “green broth”, a soup made from mashed potatoes and the leaves of *couve galega*, i.e., curly kale or similar plants in the cabbage family
- *sardinhas assadas*, grilled fresh sardines
- *leitão da Bairrada*, suckling pig crisp-roasted on a spit in a wood-burning oven
- *pastel de Belém*, a flaky custard tart invented in a Lisbon monastery
- *Alheira de Mirandela*, a sausage made with bread and with meats other than pork, invented by crypto-Jews.

## Bread at the Heart of the Cuisine

Arguably, bread is more at the heart of Portuguese cuisine than *bacalhau*. Historically, it has been a staple, sometimes the sole food in a peasant's diet, particularly in periods of hardship when there was little to eat. Bread has been a form of currency: a landowner might pay his agricultural laborers in bread instead of cash. It has also been “coin of the realm” in death and burial customs: the dead were often buried with millet-bread soaked in wine, and the mourners consoled with rye and wheat bread.

The peoples who settled what is now Portugal began harvesting early forms of wheat and millet thousands of years ago. But Portuguese breads have also been made with barley, rye, corn (from the New World), or chestnut flour. One of the best ways to understand the differences in breads is by region



Classic examples of stone *espigueiros* (corn bins) in Soajo, a village near the Minho River in far northwestern Portugal. The slits in the walls are for ventilation and dryness; the pillars are to keep out rodents; and the crosses are an appeal for providence.

Photo by Josep Renalias (2008)/Wikimedia Commons.

and by grain. Here's a very general rule of thumb: corn in the northwest, rye in the east, and wheat in the south.

French social anthropologist Mouette Barboff notes that there are dozens of Portuguese breads across the country, varying in ingredients, size, shape, proofing and baking times, color, texture, and taste. Corn, she writes, was introduced to Portugal by 1525 and was grown in the northwestern part of the country because of the region's favorably warm and humid climate. Corn replaced the more traditional millet in bread making, but the two cereals shared the same name, *milho*. (Millet is *milho miudo* or "small millet", while corn is *milho grosso* or "large millet".) The term *broa*, and an earlier variant, *borona*, referred originally to millet bread, but in modern times to corn bread.

Made in round loaves from cornmeal and other flours, *broa* is unlike American cornbread in that it is dense and bready rather than cake-like. A food that is associated with the Minho region in the northwest, it is traditionally served with *caldo verde*, the country's iconic soup mentioned earlier. Today, rye (*centeio*) can be incorporated into *broa* to add gluten, which makes the dough lighter with air pockets. Rye is also used in wheat breads to lend a more robust taste and to extend shelf life.

*Pão* is the Portuguese word for bread, but not all bread goes by that name; as just noted, for example, corn bread is called *broa*. *Folar* is a bread loaf studded with meats such as ham and sausage, unless it's sweet and filled with anise or cinnamon, or with eggs at Easter. Smaller wheat breads go by names such as *padas*, *papos-secos*, *bicas*, and *bijús* (from the French word *bijou*, "jewel"), to name a few. *Pão-de-ló* isn't a bread at all, but an airy sponge cake.

For centuries, bread has been an indicator of social class in Portugal. White, refined-wheat breads were traditionally more expensive, eaten mainly by wealthy Portuguese. Rye and corn bread, on the other hand, were deemed food for peasants. Not so long ago, people from the southern Alentejo looked down their noses at folks from the northwestern Minho region, calling them "corn pickers" (*picamilhos*) and disparaging their corn bread as so much birdseed.

"Bread always was, and still is, a structuring element of our nourishment" writes Virgílio Nogueiro Gomes, an author who specializes in Portuguese gastronomy. Gomes grew up in the northeastern Trás-os-Montes region (literally, "beyond the mountains"). He recalls that the best-tasting bread was rye, especially in Winter when it was toasted "over an open fire, spread with lard." Cookbook writer Edite Vieira remembers coffee *migas* (breadcrumbs) as a special treat when, as a child, she visited her grandmother at the family farm east of Lisbon: at breakfast, Vieira's bread would be crumbled into black coffee along with a sprinkling of sugar.

While corn was at one point the principal cereal for bread making, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century it was surpassed by wheat (*trigo*), grown mostly east of Lisbon on the golden plains of the Alentejo. Today, Portugal is one of the leading wheat producers in Europe. Bread is found at virtually every meal across the country, either on the side or as an ingredient in any number of dishes. Beyond breakfast, bread can be included in a glass of wine as a mid-day pick-me-up called *sopa de cavalo cansado* ("tired-horse soup"). Bread is found in lunch- and dinner-time soups and stews—the *sopas*, *açordas*, *ensopados*, and *migas* that are usually but not always distinguishable by their bread-to-liquid ratio. *Migas* is generally the driest category of the group. Sliced bread can also be incorporated into a dessert, such as sweet and sticky *rabanadas*, Portugal's version of French toast. ■

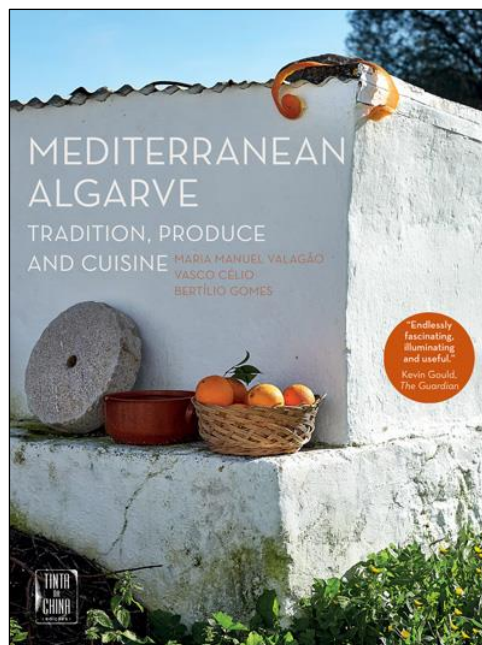
Book Review

# PORTUGAL'S ALGARVE AS A MEDITERRANEAN CULINARY REGION

Maria Manuel Valagão,  
with Vasco Célio and Bertílio Gomes,  
*Mediterranean Algarve: Tradition, Produce, and Cuisine*  
Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2015 (two editions, English and Portuguese)  
320 pp., €34.90 pbk.

by Wendell McKay

*CHAA member Wendell McKay of Ann Arbor is a cook at Zingerman's Delicatessen, where he has been employed for several years. Originally from Baton Rouge, he holds an M.A. in history from the University of Akron and has taught classes on Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian history and culture. Wendell has reviewed several other books for Repast, most recently Angela Jill Cooley's To Live and Dine in Dixie in our Winter 2016 issue.*



of, say, *filho de canudo* (fried dough turnovers). A scholar (Valagão), a photographer (Célio), and a chef (Gomes), the three authors bring their disparate talents together to create what is, in effect, a pictorial culinary geography of a specific region, something this reviewer can't remember encountering anywhere before.

Dr. Valagão, a specialist in Environmental Studies, has previously completed

culinary surveys of three other regions in Portugal (Minho, Alto Douro, and Alentejo). Here, she chronicles and assembles the history and foodways of the Algarve, systematically breaking them down into separate yet linked categories: history, ingredients, recipes, and the social occasions that transform these into causes for celebration. Célio's crisp photography, interspersed every couple of pages, provides helpful visual context at the same time that it fulfills its central role of making the food appear appetizing and delicious. Last but not least, Gomes, a distinguished chef with Algarvean roots, puts together recipes that honor the past traditions of the region's cuisine while also acknowledging its potential appeal for contemporary consumers.

## History and Foodways

Until Portugal's rise to world power at the end of the Middle Ages, the Algarve was probably the part of the country that was most affected by outside currents.

Silver deposits nearby had sustained the ancient kingdom of Tartessus, at the mouth of what is now the Guadalquivir River in southern Spain. The later Roman power centered there had its greatest reach and effect in what we now call the Algarve. This was also the part of Portugal that remained longest under Moorish rule, in the Middle Ages. As with nearby Andalusia, the lingering effects of Moorish cuisine were enormous. Following the expansion of Portugal's overseas empire, the region became something of a backwater in comparison to outer-directed cities such as Lisbon and Oporto, but this had the effect of leaving its cuisine largely unchanged (save for the introduction of New World staples like tomatoes), at least until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Valagão discusses the Algarvean physical backdrop with an almost encyclopedic approach, citing specific soils, climate, and in general a *terroir* (strongly reminiscent of Mediterranean varieties) that helped shape the cuisine. In doing so, she gives plenty of meat to the book's apparent claim that the Algarve is so close to the Mediterranean, not just in location but also in climate, geology, etc., that it might as well be considered a protuberance of the Middle Sea.

The book *Mediterranean Algarve*, much like its title, is a weird beast. On the face, it's a beautifully photographed work that would proudly adorn anyone's coffee table. Within, though, it's a different story: a well-sourced, thorough exploration of a very particular kind of geographic foodway. In this case, the subject is Portugal's Algarve region, presented here with scholarly thoroughness and artistic flair by Maria Manuel Valagão, Vasco Célio, and Bertílio Gomes.

The Algarve (a name derived from the Arabic *al-gharb*, "the West") comprises most, if not all, of the southern coast of Portugal. It is a region that intrinsically has little to do with the Mediterranean, since the entirety of Portugal's coastline faces the Atlantic, a fact that had such famous and far-reaching consequences in the nation's history and development over the last several centuries. However, as indicated by the book's title, the authors make the case that the Mediterranean region has had a controlling influence on the cuisine of the Algarve, where the techniques and traditions of conquerors from the east were confronted with the sterner conditions and differing foodstuffs of the Atlantic coast.

Although the illustrations throughout would recommend *Mediterranean Algarve* to lovers of food photography, the inquiry into and discussion of techniques and recipes, history, etc., is pretty thorough and thought-provoking, making a sometimes odd fit alongside the sumptuous colors and textures



Nestled, for the most part, into the Gulf of Cadiz, the Algarve's relative shelter from the larger Atlantic world provides plenty of room for its own unique culinary culture. Although it is a coastal region, much of its cuisine is decidedly rural in character. But the widespread arability of the land is complicated by semi-mountainous sierras nudging against the coast. This geography results in quite a variegated cuisine for a region of such small area, less than 2000 square miles.

Valagão takes pains, too, to note how local culinary traditions and techniques have overcome scarcities in ways that might be applied more widely today. For example, the aquatic saltwater plant samphire, sometimes called "sea asparagus" (green and crunchy, it looks startlingly like asparagus when cooked), has been consumed since time immemorial by the coast-dwelling Algarveans. Samphire could prove valuable as a culinary resource in a time of growing fresh-water scarcity, especially in relatively arid regions like much of the Iberian peninsula.

One of Valagão's great strengths is her sympathetic and insightful portrayal of the Algarvean culture. She shows little of the unconscious condescension or "peasant chic" that all too often mars similar treatments of traditional ways of life. Célio and Gomes have roots in the region, and it's certainly possible that being from a country that is often overlooked in global culinary culture sharpens their empathy. Whatever the cause, Valagão's discussion of Algarvean cuisine delves deeply into the ways and means of cooking, often incorporating testimonies from locals of varying ages. She also treats some related endeavors; there's an interesting discussion of the area's vineyards and of the vicissitudes in the reputation of their wines over the years. What emerges is a perhaps familiar picture of a workaday "traditional" cuisine in a contemporary, "globalized" world, but a picture given added depth by Valagão's scholarly perspective on ingredients and techniques. Her discussion, for example, of the history and importance of olive oil skips seamlessly from general explanations to specific Algarvean uses.

### Imagery

Célio's photography is, in some ways, the book's most noteworthy feature. Although the discussion and recipes provide a detailed and engrossing picture of the cuisine and culture on levels both academic and celebratory, without the photos the book might have lacked a more immediate feel.

While much of the imagery is fairly standard for food photography (though very well-done at that), more than a few of the shots are out of the ordinary, thanks to the holistic approach of the book. Some depict standard features of Algarvean culinary life: markets, bakeries, and smiling chefs, including Gomes. Others depict the tools, techniques, and ingredients used to produce recipes and celebrations, such as mortars and pestles, and any number of fruits, vegetables, poultry, and meats. Lemons are a particular focus, as a Moorish introduction vital to the cuisine of southern Iberia in general. The processing of tripe is visually striking. There's also a magnificent close-up "portrait" of a cuttlefish about to go under the chop, set against a vivid crimson background, likely a cooking dish. This image brings to mind hair-raising tales of the Kraken and other giant monsters, until one remembers that the cuttlefish is dead and

probably only about a foot or less in length. Still, the photo's grandeur and artistic qualities are examples of why Célio's photography is so special.

### Techniques and Recipes

Gomes's recipes provide the end result of the aforementioned approaches, often blending and altering traditional Algarvean dishes to produce his own creations—all, of course, lovingly portrayed by Célio in the photography.

A chef with global experience, including studies in Europe and at the Culinary Institute of America, Gomes brings an international perspective to a personally cherished tradition. That is a combination not unfamiliar in such cookbooks—those by Gerald Hirigoyen, a Basque chef in San Francisco, come to mind—but it is given added heft here through Valagão's thorough academic approach.

Scattered throughout the book are some authentic traditional recipes that Gomes leaves unchanged, often served with *papas* (a porridge of corn grits) or *tomatadas* (a thick tomato sauce), respectively the Algarve's answer to Italian *polenta* and Basque *piperade*. But in other cases, the chef takes his inspirations and runs with them to create original, succulent dishes found in recipes collected at the end of the book. Some of these, like cabbage *cozido* (baked stew), are inspired by Matilde Romão or other local practitioners. Based on Célio's collaboration, the dish of sea urchins with samphire and eggs comes off best, but there are treasures throughout.

In what appears to be its main goal—charting the cultural and culinary geography of a single region—*Mediterranean Algarve* succeeds brilliantly. Although the region's history is somewhat summarily recounted at the beginning, both the history and the culture come through in the recipes that are provided and the techniques discussed, which show the varying influences that continue to pervade Algarvean cuisine. What nags the reader, though, is the apparent further claim that the cuisine provides a kind of inspirational model for world cuisines in general. True, its combination of a traditional culinary ethos and native ingenuity has been salutary in a region of relative scarcity, and regions of scarcity are becoming all too common across the planet today. But while it seems to work for the Algarveans, one wonders whether the circumstances can be replicated anywhere else or whether this is simply a discrete feature of specialized culinary environments.

Questions, too, come to mind regarding the occasional citation of the Mediterranean diet and its oft-praised health benefits. Algarvean cuisine is itself a classic example of the "peasant" food that's been championed by the various Slow Food movements in the West, primarily in Western Europe and North America. An entire section titled "healthy cooking" deals more with the traditional techniques of Algarvean cuisine than with any major scientific claims, and that in itself is a strength. The ingredients and preparation are left to stand on their own, for the most part, as a testimonial to the benefits of the balanced diet that the former suggest. Given how delicious most of the recipes sound (and look), there's not much of a leap required to get one's mouth watering, whether through a desire for healthy eating or more (happily) basic impulses. ■

## C.H.A.A. MEAL REPORT

# TWO QUEENS OF MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

A familiarity with Mediterranean flavors is taken for granted by young people in America today. But in the “Baby Boom” years of their grandparents, the authentic foods of Spain, Italy, and Greece, not to mention Morocco, Lebanon, or Turkey, were still considered exotic. On July 17, the Culinary Historians celebrated two women who were major forces behind this transformation. “Paula Wolfert and Marcella Hazan, the Queens of Mediterranean Cuisine” was our participatory theme meal at the Ladies’ Literary Club of Ypsilanti, where 28 CHAA members sampled dishes from this region that they’d researched and prepared themselves.

When Marcella Hazan (pronounced mar-CHELL-ah huh-ZAHN) died in 2013, CHAA Program Chair Laura Gillis suggested that we could honor Hazan’s work with one of our famous theme meals. Later, *Repast* Editor Randy Schwartz suggested that Paula Wolfert could be added as a second focus to round out a Mediterranean theme. Member Phil Zaret actually organized the meal, with assistance from Gillis and from our co-Presidents, Judy Steeh and Joanne Nesbit. We’re also grateful to the facility caretaker, Susie Andrews, for all of her help. Schwartz provided table decorations consisting of Mediterranean food-related objects that he’s collected, along with tent-card annotations.

The first two cookbooks written, respectively, by Marcella Hazan and Paula Wolfert were both published in 1973. Over the course of four decades of work, including several more influential cookbooks and other writings, broadcasts, and classes, they taught American cooks about both the fresh foods and the ingeniously preserved foods of this region, and how to prepare them for the table. Their successful careers were based on their commitment to culinary authenticity, which in turn grew out of their respect for national and regional cultures and for their histories and traditions.

The well-known food writer Joan Nathan was once asked which people have been her primary influences. She replied:

There are three: Marcella Hazan, Julia Child, and Paula Wolfert. Paula Wolfert and Julia were not natives to the area but they learned food like a good reporter learns. They weren’t afraid of getting their hands dirty. They learned what people are doing and they went into their kitchens. I believe as a food writer that there is no substitute for taking that subway or train or car or plane to get into that kitchen and watch all the people. That’s why I respect all of these women. Basically, a really good food writer is someone who is taking a culture and preserving it. That’s what I feel like I’ve been trying to do my whole life, and I learned it from these women (Goss 2013).

## Pasta from the Home

Italy’s most original and important contribution to cooking is the vast repertory of homemade pasta. However, every treatment I have seen of it has been

cursory, inadequate, or, even worse, misleading. Here, with the first fully detailed exposition of the subject in English, I have tried to give even the most inexperienced cook easy access to the techniques and the inexhaustible satisfactions of homemade pasta. The step-by-step analysis of both handmade and machine-made egg pasta should guide any willing beginner safely past the early difficulties toward a well-grounded proficiency in making pasta at home. Once you have mastered the fundamentally simple mechanics of rolling out a thin sheet of egg-pasta dough, you can move on to execute any one of dozens of delicious variations on the pasta theme.

—Marcella Hazan (1983, pp. 51-52)

It seems that Phil Zaret heartily accepted Hazan’s exhortations in preparing his *spaghetti alla carbonara*, which featured his own homemade noodles. His *spaghetti* were *al dente* and delicious, with real character. Going against the tide of American cookery, Hazan once wrote that “soft pasta is no more fit to eat than a limp and soggy slice of bread”, a point that she fought for even though “it is very tempting to ingratiate oneself with one’s readers by not pressing the issue” (Hazan 1983, p. 90). For the *carbonara*, Phil used *pancetta*, onion, garlic, white wine, Romano and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheeses, parsley, and plenty of olive oil, omitting the raw egg due to caution for our large group meal. *Carbonara* is a relatively recent dish, dating to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century; for information on the rise of pasta in medieval and Renaissance Italy, see Schwartz (Spring 1999).

Besides the spaghetti, other grain-based items at our meal included:

- *risotto con gli asparagi e gamberetti* (asparagus and shrimp *risotto*) [Marion and Nick Holt], sprinkled with Parmesan cheese and chopped parsley. The cultivation and consumption of rice, which had originated in Asia, became widespread in the Mediterranean with the rise of Islam in medieval times. *Risotto* is a particular cooking method (described in Hazan 1997, pp. 214-219) that produces rice that is sticky and creamy. The technique arose in the Po River valley of northern Italy, where the fertile, swampy plains are ideal for growing rice. Once, in the late 1990s, Hazan sent a letter to Mario Batali chewing him out for making *risotto* in a sauté pan rather than a saucepan on his TV show, “Molto Mario”. The two became good friends.
- homemade mini-pita loaves (wheat flatbread “pies”) [Pat Cornett and Mel Annis] using a recipe from Wolfert (1994a, pp. 57, 61). Just before baking, the bread rounds are spread with a mixture of olive oil and the spice trio *za’tar*. These flatbreads were traditionally baked just outside the home on the inner walls of a *tannūr*, a small, dome-shaped, open-fire clay oven that goes back to ancient Mesopotamian times (Wolfert 1994a, p. 37; Helou 2016).

In imperial Rome, the basic daily breads and gruels for citizens and soldiers were made with wheat or barley, most of which was imported from the North African colonies (Schwartz 2004). The



**Marcella Hazan** (1924-2013) was born Marcella Polini in Cesenatico, a fishing village on the Adriatic coast of Emilia-Romagna. Her family also spent some years in Alexandria, Egypt. She earned doctorates in natural sciences and in biology at the Univ. of Ferrara. At age 31 she married Victor Hazan (an Italian-born, New York-raised Sephardic Jew) and they settled in the Forest Hills section of Queens, NY. She knew no English and had never cooked before the wedding, but Victor, who later became a renowned wine writer, gave her a copy of Ada Boni's classic 1928 Italian cookbook. Marcella retained its no-frills approach but gradually developed her own cooking style, shaped by her life experiences and vivid taste memories. She later recalled the dinners that she and Victor would eat together on a rickety, dangerously-sagging bridge table in their tiny apartment:

Every evening I produced a complete dinner in the Italian family style, first course, second course, and a vegetable side course. When I was in particularly good form, I'd add an appetizer and, much less frequently, a dessert.... On those occasions when it seemed that my efforts had been particularly triumphant, he would rush out of his chair and throw his arms around me (Hazan 1997, p. 2).

When Marcella took her first cooking course, on Chinese cuisine, after a few sessions the instructor quit to go on sabbatical. The other students prevailed upon Marcella to take over the course and teach them how to cook Italian! She found that she was good at teaching, and began giving cooking lessons in her own apartment. She opened a cooking school in 1969, was "discovered" by *New York Times* food editor Craig Claiborne, and soon published her first book, *The Classic Italian Cook Book* (New York, 1973). The only significant antecedents in the English language were Elizabeth David's *Italian Food* (London, 1954), Nika Hazelton's *The Best of Italian Cooking* (Cleveland, 1967), and Waverly Root's *Time-Life Cooking of Italy* (New York, 1968). But none of these had quite the same depth or authenticity as Hazan's book. Food journalist Mark Bittman recalled that "it was the first popular Italian cookbook to go beyond red sauce."

Hazan's approach was precise, but was also notable for its simplicity; her recipes weren't "gussied up", as it was put recently by a chef heavily influenced by her. Hazan always wrote her recipes in Italian; Victor translated them and supplied headnotes. At the time of her passing, the couple were living in Longboat Key, FL, and Marcella was working on a book about the proper selection, storage, and use of foodstuffs. Her husband completed the work: Marcella and Victor Hazan, *Ingredienti: Marcella's Guide to the Market* (Scribner, 2016).



Pat Cornett's za'tar pies at our meal. Photo: Mae Sander.

breads of Rome were often wheaten loaves raised with a natural starter such as grape must, and the loaves were baked by guild-organized professionals in arched, masonry-construction ovens that the Romans had perfected from earlier Balkan designs.

### Salting Away the Fruits of Citrus and Olive Groves

Chicken with lemon and olives is one of the great combinations in Moroccan cookery, the dish that most often seduces foreigners and turns them into devotees of Moroccan *tagines*. There are numerous variations on this exquisite theme; I have included four, each one delicious, each one unique .... There is, and I cannot emphasize this enough, no substitute for preserved lemons in Moroccan food.... To not use preserved lemons is to completely miss the point, and also to miss a whole dimension of culinary experience. Preserved lemons are easy to make ....

— Paula Wolfert (1973, p. 189)

Jillian Downey and Elph Morgan brought us an excellent *tagine el lahm emshmel*, a festive Moroccan dish of chopped lamb shoulder stewed with quartered salt-preserved lemons and Kalamata olives (Wolfert 1973, pp. 263-264). The fresh herbs include parsley and onion, while the ground spices include ginger, turmeric, cumin, paprika, and black pepper. As Wolfert taught Americans, a *tagine* is a sort of stew that is simmered for a very long time in an oven or over a flame, traditionally in a

*continued on next page*

## MEDITERRANEAN *continued from page 11*

heavy earthenware pot with a conical lid that returns all condensation to the bottom, creating a thick and delicious sauce and a succulent dish.

Beyond salt-preserved lemons and olives, in her book on the Eastern Mediterranean (Wolfert 1994a) Paula described how to use several other preserved foods. These included yogurt, *kaymak*, *laban*, *labne*, and other fermented milk products; *bulgur* or *burghul*, dried cracked wheat; and *tarhana* and *kishk*, which are powders made by drying a mixture of fresh or fermented milk and wheat, usually *bulgur* or semolina flour. To this list of famous Eastern Mediterranean preserves we could also add *qawarma*, or meat confit.

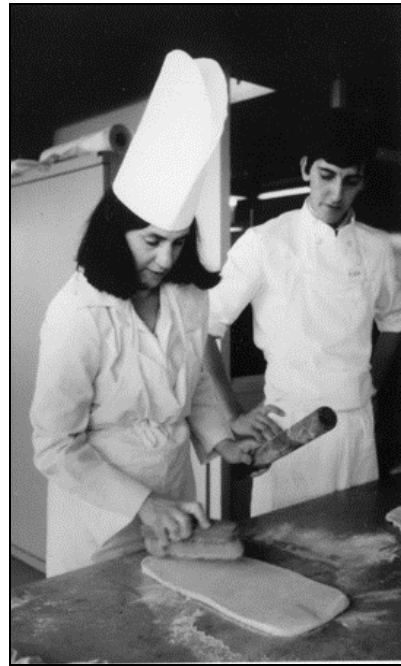
The olive is one of the few fruit trees that need little water to grow. For this reason, the olive has been a staple crop in parts of the Mediterranean region that receive little rainfall. All around this region one finds market stalls that sell nothing but preserved olives, in many varieties and colors. In addition, olive oil is the region's most common fat used with food (see sidebar on next page). Another dish incorporating the olive at our meal included *insalata di rinforzo col cavolfiore* [Joanne Nesbit], a cauliflower salad with capers, red bell pepper, black olives, anchovies, vinegar, and oil (Hazan 1986, p. 293). Hazan explains that it is traditionally made just before Christmas and that the term *rinforzo* signifies that it is "reinforced": each day that the salad is served, fresh ingredients are added to replenish the ones eaten.

Fran Lyman and Mae and Len Sander each brought versions of a simple but refreshing salad of sweet orange slices, arranged in an overlapping pattern and sprinkled with rosewater, confectioners' sugar, and cinnamon (Wolfert 1973, pp. 82-3).

Oranges, lemons, and other citrus fruits originated in rain-drenched parts of the Far East (Estabrook 2009). As their cultivation spread westward to drier areas, they came to symbolize luxurious, sedentary living because of the extensive, socialized irrigation needed to sustain the groves (Schwartz Summer 1999). Yet it was in the Mediterranean region that several celebrated varieties of citrus were developed or brought to fame:

- the *etrog* or *cedrat* (citron) of Palestine, often used to flavor preserved olives
- the sweet *shamūṭī* (Jaffa orange) of Palestine, which by the 1800s was gracing the tables of kings in Western Europe
- the navel and blood oranges of Sicily
- the bergamot orange of Calabria, Italy
- the Sorrento lemon of Naples, often used to make *limoncello*
- the Clementine orange of Misserghin, Algeria
- the tangerine of Tangiers, Morocco
- the bitter orange of Seville, Spain, used to flavor marmalades and other foods.

The Medici family, based in Florence, was renowned for its cultivation of citrus fruits. The Grand Duke Cosimo III (1642-1723) grew 116 citrus varieties in the Medici gardens. The Villa di Castello, situated in the hills outside Florence, boasted a *limonaia*, a huge glass house where lemon trees, each in a large pot with the Medici family insignia, could be havened in Winter (Sonneman 2012, p. 44).



**Paula Wolfert** was born Paula Harris in Brooklyn, NY, in 1938. As an aspiring writer and a bohemian, majoring in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century literature at Columbia University, she met and quickly married a kindred spirit, Michael Wolfert. Paula's mother, who otherwise had no interest in food, treated her to a \$50, six-lesson culinary course at Dione Lucas's Cordon Bleu Cooking School in Manhattan. Paula later recalled, "It was magical. An entire new world opened up to me" (Sens 2009). As the course ended, Paula quit school, and Ms. Lucas allowed her to do full-time office work for a year in exchange for further lessons. Afterward, Wolfert worked with James Beard for six months and catered parties for *literati* in Manhattan and Cape Cod.

In 1959, Paula and Michael moved to Morocco, where they worked at a small English-language school in Tangiers. For much of the next decade they lived and traveled around the Mediterranean and in Paris. Paula hunted down information on local foods with an ethnographic approach: she often began a project by asking a group of women, "Who makes the best such-and-such in town?" then sought out the home cook or chef to ask whether she could observe and record their way of preparing the dish. A single published article might take six months of research.

In 1968, when Paula and her husband divorced, she returned to New York with the children and resumed professional cooking. At a Greenwich Village party she met crime writer William Bayer, who eventually became her second husband. At the urging of food writer Diana Kennedy, Paula moved to Morocco with Bill and the children so that she could gather material for her first book, *Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco* (1973). She later made extended stays in Southwestern France, Sicily, and Turkey. Paula and Bill still live together in the San Francisco area, where they moved in 1994. Diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2012, she is collaborating with Emily Kaiser Thelin's plans for a Wolfert biographical cookbook.

## Paula Taught Us about Olive Oil

Long before Rachael Ray began shouting “E-V-O-O!”, Paula Wolfert made the point about olive oil and its central role in the kitchen:

Olive oil is the great medium for Mediterranean cooking. The Mediterranean cook can do without butter if she must. She can even work without fat. But without olive oil she is lost. Olive oil is the backbone of the Mediterranean diet (Wolfert 1994a, p. 402).

Up to that point, few American home cooks had even considered olive oil as a cooking medium; it was simply a nice-tasting but expensive salad oil. Paula went on to explain that olive oil is even ideal for deep frying, “because it preserves and protects the true taste of food” and, due to its high smoking point, “you can use the oil several times, if you filter it.”

Paula was an ideal evangelizer for olive oil in the U.S. because of her years of first-hand observations of Mediterranean cookery. After all, people in the region have been making and using this oil since time immemorial. Near ancient Jerusalem, at the foot of the Mount of Olives that figures so prominently in the Old and New Testaments, there was a community olive press located in what became known as the Garden of Gethsemane (from the Aramaic *gath*, “press”, and *shemānī*, “fat”). Rome would spread the use of such olive presses all over the Mediterranean via its colonies; for more details see Lyman (1999) and Schwartz (2004).

In antiquity, the vast majority of harvested olives was used in producing oil. The amount of olive oil needed for cooking was dwarfed by the amount needed for an even more basic function: dipping one’s daily bread (Safrai 1994, p. 120). For Jews, olive oil was an especially important dietary fat since it is *pareve* or neutral in kosher dietary laws, i.e., permissible for use alongside both meat and dairy. By contrast, among non-Jews the Aramaic term for fat, *shemānī* (*samīn* or *sammah* in Arabic), came to refer not to olive oil but to a form of butter clarified for use in cooking.

Among the table decorations at our meal were bars of soap made from virgin olive oil (Arabic *zayt*) with the addition of alcaleic soda (*qilw*). Such soap, which has almost no scent, has been a specialty product of Palestine for over 1,000 years. Batches of it were traditionally boiled in cauldrons by village women for household use; the *qilw* component had to be procured via trade with desert-dwelling bedouins. By the 900s, the first small factories for making olive-oil soap had appeared in towns such as Nablus and Hebron, both now located in the West Bank. This commercial production represented some of the earliest shoots of industrial capitalism in the world (Doumani 1995). By the 1300s, soap production had become a major industry in Nablus, with exports across the Middle East and to Europe. By the 1600s similar factories had been established in Marseille, on the French Mediterranean. In 1907, Nablus reportedly had 30 factories producing nearly 5,000 tons of olive-oil soap annually, over half of all soap production in Palestine.

## Juiced, Dried, or Macerated Fruits

Pomegranate molasses (called *nasrahāb* in Georgian and *dibs rumman* in Arabic), is an essential eastern Mediterranean ingredient that may be purchased at Middle Eastern groceries or by mail order. A good-quality brand is Cortas, imported from Lebanon. Pomegranate molasses has a wonderful flavor and a heady aroma, and its thickness and dark color make food look very appealing.

— Paula Wolfert (1994a, p. 401)

Cecilia Filetti used pomegranate molasses in the labor-intensive but delicious *muhammara* (Arabic for “reddened, roasted”), a red-colored paste or dip from Aleppo, Syria, that Paula Wolfert popularized in a *New York Times* food column (Wolfert 1990). Among other ingredients, Cecilia used roasted red bell peppers, Hungarian chili pepper, ground walnuts, cumin, olive oil, and lemon juice along with the pomegranate molasses, for a combination of rich, sweet, tart, and hot flavors. She garnished the dish with pine nuts and additional cumin, and served it with crackers and *crudités*. In Syria the paste is used on bread, *crudités*, and grilled kababs.

Pomegranate molasses— not to be confused with grenadine— is a thick, dark-red liquid made by boiling down (reducing) the juice of a tart variety of the fruit. The pomegranate itself originated in Persia, but already in ancient times it was under cultivation in what is now Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. It was the Phoenicians who spread it from there all around the Mediterranean coast; we’ll learn the details in a forthcoming book (Stone 2017).

A platter of fresh or dried fruits, and sometimes nuts, is the traditional way to end a meal in North Africa, Italy, and many other parts of the Mediterranean. Jan and Dan Longone prepared a platter of dried fruits featuring medjool dates and Turkish dried apricots. In ancient Greece and Rome, dates were luxury imports from Egypt and Phoenicia; Pliny the Elder gave them a lengthy and fascinating discussion. The medjool variety was discovered in Morocco but is of unknown origin, which accounts for its name, from Arabic *majhūl*, “unknown” (Nasrallah 2011, pp. 52-56). The Turks and especially the neighboring Syrians are renowned for rolling dried apricots into thin sheets, called in Arabic *qamar ad-dīn* (“moon of the faith”). This paste or “leather” can be enjoyed as-is, or else sliced up and dissolved in water and rosewater to make a thick, refreshing drink. The drink is especially popular for breaking the Islamic daily fast during the lunar month of Ramaḍān, which might account for the moniker “moon of the faith”.

Another fruit dish that we enjoyed was *pesche e frutta di bosco con il Prosecco* [Mae and Len Sander], a bowl of peaches and blueberries macerated in Prosecco wine, granulated sugar, and lemon zest (Hazan 1997, pp. 414-415). Hazan described this as “refreshing” and an example of preparations “that are as lovely to see as they are effortless to produce” (p. 413).

*continued on next page*

## Beans and Cheeses: The Meats of the Poor

“Hah, you are making pork and beans!” said my raised-in-America son when he saw me working on this recipe. In responding I allowed as how it could be described as pork *with* beans, but I begged him please never to call it pork and beans. No offense intended, my Boston friends.

— Marcella Hazan (1997, p. 330)

Jan Arps made us the above-described *polpettine di maiale e fagioli borlotti*, a dish featuring meatballs made from ground pork, milk-soaked breadcrumbs, egg, onion, and parsley. The meatballs are browned in olive oil, garlic, and sage, then stewed with cooked dried beans and canned peeled tomatoes. Like most Italians Hazan loved beans (see sidebar below), and these New World *fagioli borlotti* (cranberry beans) were among her favorites. Especially prized is the variety called *lamon*, a cranberry bean grown in the Venetian province of Belluno. In Lombardy, *borlotti* are famously used in rice dishes.

Chickpea *ratatouille* [Sandy Regiani] is a casserole dish featuring one of the four great pre-Columbian beans of the Medi-

terranean. The economic importance of these beans is reflected in four aristocratic family names of ancient Rome: Cicero, Fabius, Lentulus, and Piso (Latin for chickpea, fava, lentil, and green pea, respectively).

Italy is famed for preserved foods such as dried pasta, dried beans, aged cheeses, cured meats and sausages, pickled fruits and vegetables, and of course wine and vinegar. Adapting some of this to the modern home kitchen is the goal of Domenica Marchetti’s new book, *Preserving Italy: Canning, Curing, Infusing, and Bottling Italian Flavors and Traditions* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

On July 17, the very day of our meal, the *New York Times* reported (Campanella 2016) on the tasting of a Pecorino Romano cheese that had been saved ever since a Brooklyn grocery store closed in 1941! This type of sheep’s-milk cheese, which originated in the Roman countryside, is salted and dried to such a low moisture that it resists decay for decades; as such, it was a staple for the troops of ancient Rome, as reported by Columella and Pliny the Elder. Romano cheese, used in Phil Zaret’s *carbonara* dish mentioned earlier, is a North American adaptation that can be made from almost any kind of milk.

## Marcella Loved Her Beans

The Marcella bean is a new American variety of the *fagiolo di Sorana* that was named for Marcella Hazan shortly after her death in 2013. It commemorates her great love of the *Sorana* and other Italian beans.

The Marcella is now being grown in small quantities by a network of farmers in the American West and is marketed by Rancho Gordo (<https://www.ranchogordo.com/>), a company in Napa, CA, that specializes in heirloom beans and other New World heritage foods. The firm is owned by Steve Sando, who emigrated to the U.S. from Milan, Italy. One of his most loyal mail-order bean customers was Marcella Hazan in Florida, and the two became “online buddies”. When he asked her which bean she missed most from the Old Country, she immediately replied by e-mail that the *Sorana*, a very thin-skinned variety of cannellini, is “the most precious bean grown in Italy.... The wonderful thing about the bean is that its skin is impalpable. Each bean is just a single sweet, creamy substance” (Goode 2016).

Sando had never heard of the *Sorana*, but he told Hazan that he would try to introduce it to the U.S. market. He and his staff learned that it’s grown in small quantities on slopes along the Pescia River near the town of Sorana, Tuscany. They managed to import some high-quality seeds to the U.S., and reaped their first tiny harvest— alas, just after Hazan died. Since the *Sorana* is a Geographically Protected Brand the Californians needed to market it with some other name, and Victor Hazan gave them his blessing to use “Marcella”.

Sando recommends simmering Marcella beans gently for 1¼ - 2 hours in plain water, olive oil, and kosher salt until they are creamy, and eating them smashed roughly with a

fork on a slice of buttered, crusty bread toast. In the early 1800s Rossini, the famous opera composer (and gourmand), once accepted several pounds of *Soranas* from another composer as payment for correcting a musical score!

With the UN General Assembly having declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses, it’s fitting to note how heavily Italian cuisine relies on beans, peas, and lentils. In traditions that go back well before Columbus, the fresh or dried pulses are used in many kinds of soups, in stews (with or without meat) that are often served on bread, and in boiled or baked dishes of pasta or rice. Italians in general, and Tuscans in particular, are so fond of beans that they are referred to as *i mangiafagioli*, “the bean eaters”.

But this didn’t happen just because of the creamy, dreamy taste, but mainly because the bean is a protein source that is eminently affordable. Umberto Eco, the Univ. of Bologna semiotician (and novelist), wrote a short essay “How the Bean Saved Civilization” that was published as part of the “Best Invention of the Millennium” issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. In the Middle Ages, Eco explained, most peasants could afford to eat meat only occasionally:

So when, in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century, the cultivation of legumes began to spread, it had a profound effect on Europe. Working people were able to eat more protein; as a result, they became more robust, lived longer, created more children and repopulated a continent. ... Without beans, the European population would not have doubled within a few centuries... (Eco 1999).

Cheese was also key in some of our other dishes:

- French *panade* [Margaret Carney and Bill Walker], a slow-cooked Winter soup, so thick that we ate it with a fork. Margaret added chanterelle mushrooms to a recipe (Wolfert 2003, pp. 88-89) that calls for leeks, onion, and garlic sautéed in olive oil; chunks of bread; milk and Gruyère-style cheese; and leafy greens boiled with lemon juice, pepper, and nutmeg.
- a mushroom tart [Sonia Manchek] made with *ricotta* cheese, egg, onion, garlic, cinnamon, cumin, and cracked pepper. Sonia found the recipe in one of the series of books by Sarit Packer and Itamar Srulovich, a married couple in London who run an “Israeli soul food bistro” called Honey & Co.

### Gifts from the Sea

The section on fish is relatively brief, which may startle anyone familiar with the excellence and (before polluted waters) the abundance of Italian fish. But while green beans, chicken, and even veal may give roughly the same results here that they do in Italy, there is very little in American waters that resembles Italian fish. Not one of our species of shellfish coincides with an Italian one.... We do not have sea dates or sea truffles, or miniature squid and cuttlefish, or the small red mullet. And we have nothing that can approach the Adriatic sole, the world’s finest flat fish. Some of the varieties of ocean fish, however, do lend themselves to an Italian taste in cooking.

—Marcella Hazan (1983, pp. 209-210)

Despite such formidable obstacles, several of our members were able to present very credible versions of Italian dishes that made use of fish and seafood available in the U.S.:

- We’ve already mentioned the anchovies in Joanne Nesbit’s cauliflower salad, and the shrimp in Marion Holt’s *risotto*.
- Judy Steeh brought us *pasta con le sarde* (Hazan 1992, pp. 190-191), a delicious tradition in Palermo, Sicily. Judy butterflied some sardines and boiled some *ziti* noodles, then layered these in a casserole with a sauce that she’d made from tomato paste, anchovy filets, pine nuts, raisins, fennel greens, and onion. After a brief 5-minute bake, the dish is topped with toasted breadcrumbs and almond pieces.
- Sherry Sundling outdid herself with a gorgeous-looking *vitello tonnato* (Hazan 1983, pp. 276-278), a Northwest Italian dish of cold sliced roast masked in a sauce made from canned tuna and anchovy filets and homemade mayonnaise. Sherry used 12 alternating layers of sauce and meat, substituting breast of turkey for Hazan’s *vitello* (veal).

Anchovies were the most common ingredient used to make the fermented fish sauces, such as *garum* and *liquamen*, that were such important condiments in Greco-Roman times. The ancient industrial production and use of these sauces all around the Mediterranean is described in Zaret (2004) and Schwartz (2004).



Sherry Sundling’s *tonnato* of roast turkey. Photo: Mariam Breed.

### Meat and the Mediterranean Diet

*Pancetta* is exactly the same cut of pork as bacon, except that it is not smoked. Instead, it is cured in salt and spices. It comes tightly rolled up in a salami shape, and it is sliced to order. The convenient way to buy it is to get ¼ to ½ pound in thin slices and an equal amount in a single slice. For some recipes you will use the slices just as they are, while for others you will cut the larger piece into cubes or strips. *Pancetta* keeps up to three weeks in the refrigerator, if carefully sealed in plastic wrap. When it is of good quality, *pancetta* can be eaten as it is, like prosciutto or any other cold cut. In Italian cooking it is used as a flavoring agent in sauces, pasta fillings, vegetables, and roasts. When used next to veal it bastes as it cooks, and keeps it from drying.

—Marcella Hazan (1983, pp. 13-14)

“As a flavoring agent” is exactly how *pancetta* was used in Phil Zaret’s *carbonara* dish, mentioned earlier, and in Hazan’s great recipe for *sedano e pomodoro all’olio* (celery and tomato braised in olive oil) [Julie and Bob Lewis]. Julie removed the celery strings and cut the stalks into three-inch pieces, then sautéed them with *pancetta* strips, coarsely-chopped plum tomato, and very thinly-sliced onion. The sautéing process took a full hour; as Hazan noted of the celery, “the longer you cook them, the softer and sweeter they will become.”

*continued on next page*

MEDITERRANEAN

*continued from page 15*

Other examples of meat dishes at our meal included:

- the Turkish *yaprak dolması* [Gwen and John Nystuen], grape leaves stuffed with a mixture of ground lamb and a little beef, white rice, meat stock, egg yolks, and herbs. Adapting this dish from a Greek recipe, *dolmadakia me avgolemono* (Wolfert 1994b, p. 271), Gwen also added currants and pine nuts for a more festive touch, with a very flavorful and moist result. Gwen noted that stuffed grape leaves are often made without meat and can be eaten hot, cold, or at room temperature.
- a Moroccan casserole, *djej bi'l-zaytūn meslalla* (chicken smothered with green cracked olives) [Randy Schwartz and Mariam Breed]. Wolfert (1973, pp. 185-187) recalls how a man once recited to her from memory, without preparation, a list of 50 different traditional ways to prepare chicken in the city of Tetouan, in far northern Morocco. This dish (pp. 194-195) was #18 on his list.

As seen in our discussion up to this point, the mainstays of the traditional Mediterranean Diet are cereals and grains, fresh and preserved fruits and vegetables, nuts and legumes, dairy products, and olive oil. To supplement the protein from these sources, people have relied mainly on lean meats such as fish and poultry. Pork, beef, lamb, and goat are typically used more sparingly as flavoring agents, except on special occasions. As one of our members once explained about classical Greece, for example:

The farming people ate meat when they could get it, but for many households this was only an occasional treat. There was not enough pasture for large herds of cattle, so beef usually appeared only when animals were sacrificed at important festivals, a symbolic portion being burned and the rest divided out by the local butchers at public expense. Cow's milk was available if someone's plow-animal calved. Sheep and goats provided most of the milk and cheese, and they too were butchered only on occasion, so as to protect the milk-yield (Cooper 2004, p. 1).

Surprisingly, in the first one and a half centuries of the ancient Greek Olympic Games (676-532 BCE) athletes followed a training diet that was traditionally vegetarian, featuring “dried figs, moist cheese, and wheat” (Grivetti 2004, p. 6).

In designating the Mediterranean Diet as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013, UNESCO focused less on particular repertoires of ingredients than on:

a set of skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols and traditions concerning crops, harvesting, fishing, animal husbandry, conservation, processing, cooking, and particularly the sharing and consumption of food. Eating together is the foundation of the cultural identity and continuity of communities throughout the Mediterranean basin. It is a moment of social exchange and communication, an affirmation and renewal of family, group or community identity. The Mediterranean diet emphasizes values of hospitality, neighbourliness, intercultural dialogue and creativity, and a way of life guided by respect for diversity (UNESCO 2013).



Marion Holt's asparagus and shrimp risotto. Photo: Mariam Breed.

**The Siren Call of Sweetness**

At a family dinner, the first course of pasta, risotto, or soup begins to tip the scales of one's interest and capacity. Once one has progressed through the meat or fish course, accompanied by vegetable and salad, there is little interest in or capacity for anything of substance. In fact, most meals in Italy end on a light note. It is likely that even an enterprising Italian cook will bake no more than one cake or batch of cookies during the whole year. Nor would it be surprising if in a lifetime of cooking she (because it is almost always “she”) produced nothing more elaborate than a bowl of fruit.

— Marcella Hazan (1997, pp. 412-413)

Hazan recalled that in Italy, the desserts of home cooks were very simple; cafés and pastry shops were alluring, in part, because they offered more elaborate desserts (Hazan 1983, p. 427). Paula Wolfert noted that sweets in North Africa are often eaten before or together with the meal, not as “dessert” (Wolfert 1973, pp. 292-293); a leading example is *shabbakīyya*, the honey-drenched semolina fritter that often accompanies *harīra* soup (pp. 303-304). In addition, sugar or honey might be used as part of an otherwise savory dish, the most opulent case being the *baṣṭilla* of Fez, a pigeon pastry (pp. 97-119).

At our meal, an example of a sweetened savory dish was Rich Kato's version of “Winter Carrots Cooked in the Style of the Nineteenth Century” (Wolfert 1988, p. 286). Wolfert wrote that



she found this recipe in an old French cookbook that referred to it as the “original” *carottes à la Vichy*. Rich used local, organic carrots purchased at the Ann Arbor Farmer’s Market, and he modestly substituted honey for the sugar that Wolfert called for.

There was widespread distrust of sweets in the Mediterranean and other regions in pre-modern times. Apart from fruit, eating desserts was often seen as indulgent, and unhealthful in excess. The Greek philosopher Epictetus advised Olympic athletes, “you will have to obey instructions, eat according to regulations, keep away from desserts...” (Grivetti 2004, p. 11).

*Melipitta* [Jan and Dan Longone] is a Greek cheese pie sweetened with both honey and sugar. The recipe (Wolfert 1997, pp. 281-282) also calls for cottage cheese, cream cheese, eggs, flour, grated lemon rind, and ground cinnamon. Historically, cooking or baking with honey was the older, humbler custom; cane sugar wasn’t introduced to the Mediterranean region until medieval times by the Arabs, and producing it required copious amounts of water and slave labor. Ironically, to Muslims white sugar seemed to symbolize religious purity and paradise (Schwartz Summer 1999). The use of refined sugar in Europe, at first among wealthy and powerful families, gradually replaced honey at center stage (Schwartz 2010).

If Hazan and Wolfert are the queens of a cuisine not famous for homemade sweets, then we felt privileged to sample two of their rare, regal indulgences:

- *kabak tatlısı* [Margaret Carney and Bill Walker] is a Turkish baked dessert of winter squash. In this recipe (Wolfert 2003, p. 291), the squash—Margaret used butternut squash—is cubed and macerated in white sugar before a long spell in the oven. It is served at room temperature in its sugary syrup, garnished with sautéed walnuts and an optional dollop of *crème fraîche*.
- *strazzate* [Sherry Sundling] are Italian chocolate-almond cookies. They’re made with flour, butter, sugar, finely-ground as well as roughly-chopped almonds, chocolate chips, cocoa powder, coffee, and Strega (an Italian liqueur flavored with mint, fennel, and orange, and colored yellow with saffron). Sherry secured the recipe many years ago from her late friend Mila Simmons, a CHAA member who happened to attend a cooking lesson that Hazan gave in Boston. ■

## References

Campanella, Thomas J., “After 75 Years of Safekeeping, the Cheese Stands Alone”, *New York Times*, Jul. 17, 2016, p. 27.

Cooper, Alison Burford, “Feasting and Fasting in Classical Greece”, *Repast*, 20:2 (Spring 2004), pp. 1, 3-4.

Doumani, Beshara, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995).

Eco, Umberto, “How the Bean Saved Civilization”, trans. by William Woys Weaver, *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, Apr. 18, 1999, p. 136.

Estabrook, George F., “Notes on the History of Citrus Fruits”, *Repast*, 25:3 (Summer 2009), pp. 12-14.

Goode, J. J., “A Friendship Built on Beans”, *New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2016, p. D4.

Goss, Emma, Joan Nathan interview, *The Jewish Week* [New York], July 1, 2013, also available at <http://www.thejewishweek.com/food-wine/fw-qa/jewish-cooking-america>.

Grivetti, Louis E., “Diet and Training of the Ancient Olympians”, *Repast*, 20:2 (Spring 2004), pp. 5-7, 11.

Hazan, Marcella, *The Classic Italian Cook Book* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1983; orig. 1973).

Hazan, Marcella, *Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992).

Hazan, Marcella, *Marcella Cucina* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

Hazan, Marcella, *Marcella’s Italian Kitchen* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1986).

Helou, Anissa, “Baking with My Syrian Aunt Zahiye”, *Repast*, 32:3 (Summer 2016), pp. 6-7.

Lyman, Fran, “The *Huileries* of Ouezzane”, *Repast*, 15:3 (Summer 1999), pp. 1-2.

Nasrallah, Nawal, *Dates: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

Safrai, Ze’ev, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

Schwartz, Randy K., “Across Oceans: Butternut Squash Ravioli”, *Repast*, 15:2 (Spring 1999), pp. 5-10.

Schwartz, Randy K., “All Roads Led to Rome: Roman Food Production in North Africa”, *Repast*, 20:4 (Fall 2004), pp. 5-7.

Schwartz, Randy K., “Morocco as Culinary Bridge”, *Repast*, 15:3 (Summer 1999), pp. 3-9.

Schwartz, Randy K., “Sugar of Barbary for the Queen’s Realm”, *Repast*, 26:4 (Fall 2010), pp. 8-9.

Sens, Josh, Paula Wolfert interview, “Cooking Under Her Influence”, *San Francisco Magazine*, Oct. 2009, also available at [http://www.paula-wolfert.com/sfmag\\_cooking\\_under\\_her\\_influence.html](http://www.paula-wolfert.com/sfmag_cooking_under_her_influence.html).

Sonneman, Toby, *Lemon: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

Stone, Damien, *Pomegranate: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books and Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, forthcoming, May 2017).

UNESCO, “Mediterranean Diet”, 2013, available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/mediterranean-diet-00884>.

Wolfert, Paula, “Aleppo’s Allure”, *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, Jul. 15, 1990, pp. 57-58; also available online.

Wolfert, Paula, *The Cooking of the Eastern Mediterranean* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994a).

Wolfert, Paula, *Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

Wolfert, Paula, *Mediterranean Cooking* (New York: Ecco Press, 1997; orig. 1977).

Wolfert, Paula, *Mediterranean Cooking: Revised with 75 New Recipes* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994b).

Wolfert, Paula, *Paula Wolfert’s World of Food: A Collection of Recipes from Her Kitchen, Travels, and Friends* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

Wolfert, Paula, *The Slow Mediterranean Kitchen* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2003).

Zaret, Philip M., “*Liquamen* and Other Fish Sauces”, *Repast*, 20:4 (Fall 2004), pp. 3-4, 8-9.

# The International Year of Pulses

Three years ago, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2016 as the International Year of Pulses. The goal of the campaign is to heighten public awareness of the importance of pulses for nutrition, regional food security, and sustainable agriculture, and to encourage advances in global production, trade, and research related to pulses. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was charged with heading up implementation (<http://iyp2016.org/>).

“Pulse” refers specifically to dried peas, beans, and lentils, although the word came from a European root that meant porridge. For millennia, foods made from pulses— such as peas porridge, *dal* stews, and *tofu*— have sustained millions of people because they are inexpensive sources of protein. So, pulses have played a huge role in the history of Europe, India, China, and most other parts of the world (see sidebar on page 14). Today, India is the planet's leading producer of pulses.

Want to learn more? Natalie Rachel Morris, who teaches in the Sustainable Food Systems Program at Mesa Community College in Arizona, has a forthcoming book in the Edible Series, *Beans: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books and Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press). And don't forget an earlier work by Ken Albala, *Beans: A History* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007).

## A Paean to Southern Peas

by Roy Blount, Jr.

Though English peas or snow peas  
Have their appeal,  
Southern folk who know peas  
Are going to tell you, “We'll  
Have black-eyed peas, yellow-eyed peas,  
Butter peas, white acre peas, crowder peas,  
Zipper peas, mush peas, pink-eyed peas,  
Purple hull peas, lady cream peas,  
Or medium early or very young small sweet peas,  
Please.  
Or perhaps  
Fancy tiny field peas with snaps.”

From Roy Blount, Jr., *Save Room for Pie: Food Songs and Chewy Ruminations* (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2016), pp. 126-7.



## PORTUGAL ADVENTURE *continued from p. 5*

For lunch the next day, while still in Évora, we again experienced salt cod at the rustic Café Alentejo. Three preparations of cod were listed on the wall: codfish baked in the oven, codfish *gratin* with coriander, and fried codfish with eggs. I ordered the first, which is one of the most typical *bacalhau* dishes: creamy-textured salt cod, prepared with potatoes and onions and garnished with black olives and parsley (below in photo). This entrée arrived in such a large portion that it could easily have served a family of four, demonstrating the generosity of the portions and peoples of Portugal.



# MORSELS & TIDBITS

CHAA members **Gail Offen** and **Jon Milan** have published a pictorial history of Ann Arbor restaurants: *Iconic Restaurants of Ann Arbor* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016). The photograph-rich, 128-page book treats everything from The Pretzel Bell, The Gandy Dancer, Weber's and Metzger's, to Drake's, The Chatterbox, The Brown Jug and the Fleetwood Diner. The authors will speak on Jan. 15 (see next page). From the same publisher this October comes a book co-authored by Susan L. Nenadic and CHAA co-President **M. Joanne Nesbit**, *Legendary Locals of Ann Arbor*, which profiles prominent and/or fascinating Ann Arborites from throughout the town's history.

**Darra Goldstein**, who was founding Editor of the award-winning journal *Gastronomica* from 2000 to 2012, is now the founding Editor of a magazine *Cured* whose focus is on preserved foods (and a few preserved non-food crops). The magazine, published by Zero Point Zero Production and with the first issue due out this October, is being printed on heavy paper stock with gorgeous photography. Examples of articles scheduled in the first two issues: chef Edward Lee's story on persimmon vinegar; a profile of Kwang Uh, chef at Baroo in L.A., whose favorite kitchen technique is fermentation; food writer Betty Fussell's report on *tejuino*, a cold, sweet fermented corn drink popular in the Mexican state of Jalisco; and Japan scholar Merry White's story on the *tsukemono* (pickle) shops of Kyoto. For the latest, see <http://curedmagazine.com/>. Prof. Goldstein is retiring in 2017 at Williams College, where she has taught Russian since 1983.

This October, three members of the Culinary Historians of New York (CHNY) have books coming out in the Edible Series, which is edited by **Andrew F. Smith** (CHNY) and published jointly by Reaktion Books (UK) and the Univ. of Chicago Press: **Judith Weinraub**, *Salad: A Global History*, and **Constance Kirker** and **Mary Newman**, *Edible Flowers: A Global History*.

"Bitter|Sweet: Coffee, Tea & Chocolate" is an exhibit organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) and running there from Nov. 20, 2016 to Mar. 5, 2017. The exhibit, organized by associate curator of European art **Yao-Fen You**, retraces the story of how these fashionable hot beverages reached European tables during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, causing a near revolution in drinking habits, social customs, and tastes, and stimulating the desire for colonial expansion into Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The works on display include porcelain and metal coffeepots, tea canisters, and chocolate pots, as well as paintings, prints, and sculptures. This will be the DIA's first-ever exhibit to include multi-sensory interpretive elements that engage all five senses.

In addition, from Dec. 16, 2016 to April 16, 2017 the DIA is hosting "The Edible Monument: The Art of Food for Festivals", an exhibit from the Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles) assembled by its chief curator, **Marcia Reed**. This show explores how the professional kitchen was used as a workshop or laboratory for the creation of edible works of art in medieval and early modern Europe. It includes about 140 prints, rare books, and serving manuals. A highlight is a sugar sculpture, based on an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century print, that is set on an eight-foot table and features sugar paste sculpted into a classical temple with sugar statues and sugar-sand gardens.



Lach in her *Sun-Times* test kitchen. Photo: *Chicago Sun-Times*.

"Alma Lach's Kitchen: Transforming Taste" is an exhibit running Sep. 19, 2016 – Jan. 6, 2017 at the Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery at the Univ. of Chicago Library. **Alma S. Lach** (1914-2013) was a Chicago-area chef, food journalist, and consultant who also wrote cookbooks, launched her own cooking school, and hosted TV cooking shows. She was Food Editor at the *Chicago Sun-Times* during 1957-65, and is perhaps best known for her 1970 book, *Cooking à la Cordon Bleu*, republished in 1974 as *How's and Whys of French Cooking*. She also popularized Asian cuisine and getting children involved with cooking. In her 90s, Lach lived here in Ann Arbor to be close to her only child, Sandra Lach Arlinghaus, who is a longtime Adjunct Professor at the Univ. of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment.

Two new documentaries related to the U.S. restaurant industry were produced this year. "City of Gold", directed by Laura Gabbert and released on March 10, follows **Jonathan Gold**, restaurant critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, to explore his deep and complex relationship with the city's food and culture. The Pulitzer-winning writer has become famous for discovering small-gem, family-owned ethnic eateries. "The Founder", directed by John Lee Hancock and released on August 5, is the story of McDonald's Corp. and its CEO **Ray A. Kroc**, played by Michael Keaton. The film, not authorized by McDonald's, includes the unflattering claim that Kroc, a former milkshake-machine salesman, reneged on parts of his 1961 agreement to purchase the firm from its founders, the MacDonald brothers. This year, 2016, is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the first McDonald's, near Pasadena in 1941, which was the same year as the first Dairy Queen stand, in Joliet, IL. On a higher plane, the same year 1941 brought openings for the restaurants Le Pavillon (New York) and Romanoff's (Los Angeles). ■

# 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, November 13, 2016

Ypsilanti Farmers MarketPlace  
(16 South Washington Street)

Amanda Edmonds,  
Executive Director of Growing Hope,  
gives a tour of the new MarketPlace.

Sunday, November 20, 2016

4-7 p.m., Ladies' Literary Club of Ypsilanti  
(218 North Washington Street)  
Participatory Theme Meal for  
CHAA members and friends,  
“Christmas Around the World. . .  
and Other Winter Holidays”.

Sunday, January 15, 2017

Jon Milan and Gail Offen, authors of  
*Iconic Restaurants of Ann Arbor*  
(Arcadia Publishing, 2016).

**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.

- Winter 2017: unthemed
- Spring 2017: The Food Culture of Portugal, Part 2.

REPAST  
1044 GREENHILLS DRIVE  
ANN ARBOR, MI 48105-2722



Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Volume XXXII Number 4, Fall 2016

*First Class*