

Food Customs of India

Part 2



Photo: Charlee Brodsky

Khari singh (roasted peanuts) are sold as a snack by street vendors on nearly every corner in Kolkata. Redskins like these are roasted on coals, and served crunchy and warm in cones improvised from sheets of newspaper.

WHAT'S "NEW" IN REGIONAL AMERICAN FOODS

David Shields's article in our Summer issue, "Of Strife & Sweetness: The Civil War and the Rise of Sorghum", must have hit a chord, judging by the mini-revival of publications about sorghum. October saw the release of *Sweet, Sweet Sorghum: Kentucky's Golden Wonder* (CreateSpace, 2011; 132 pp., \$26.95 pbk.), self-published by Rona Roberts, a native of Monticello, KY. Roberts is a devotee of local food self-sufficiency and has taken inspiration from Kentucky poet, farmer, and eco-thinker Wendell Berry, who once warned about the U.S. food system, "Long supply lines create great weaknesses." Indeed, the sorghum plant can thrive in many places where sugar cane and sugar beets cannot, and Roberts has found that not only is the syrup delicious and nutritious, its production is also wholesome for the family farm, the community, and the planet. Her book treats sorghum's production process and terminology, its history and geography, and its culinary uses and nutritional value. She concludes with about 50 pages of recipes, from Molasses Crinkles to a Kentucky Slaw with sorghum vinaigrette dressing.

Two months later, on December 28, the *New York Times* Dining section followed suit with an article by Kim Severson, "Sorghum Speaks with a Sweet Drawl". Severson pointed out that sorghum syrup, unlike molasses, cane syrup, or honey, is sweet without being overbearing, and "complex enough to hold your interest". The article reported several Southeastern chefs now using artisanal sorghum syrup in their cooking, such as Linton Hopkins (of Restaurant Eugene, in Atlanta), who grew up with the syrup on the family dinner table, and Sean Brock (of Husk, in Charleston), who still recalls trips to sorghum syrup-making parties while growing up in rural Virginia.

Texas Eats: The New Lone Star Heritage Cookbook (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2012: 304 pp., \$25 pbk.) is an admiring survey of the cuisines of the Lone Star State, both traditional and modern, by food writer Robb Walsh. Organized by region, the book treats everything from Tex-Mex and Cajun to seafood dishes, and fusions thereof, such as Galveston oysters on nachos. The book is especially strong on lesser-known immigrant contributions, from the older arrivals (Czechs, Germans, and Hungarians) to newer ones such as Southeast Asians (Texas Pho, Banh Mi on the Bayou, and Spicy Viet-Tex Mayo).

Repast

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On a subject closer to home, we discovered the profusely-illustrated new book, *Coney Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2012; 136 pp., \$24.95 paper). It was written by



Free Press reporters Katherine Yung and Joe Grimm (although Grimm has now moved on from the Free Press to WSU's Journalism Dept.), who have been speaking about the book this year at venues around Southeastern Michigan. For the not-yet-initiated, the Coney Island is a natural-casing hot dog in a bun, topped with all-meat chili, chopped raw white onions, and bright yellow mustard. It is a distinctive regional fare and a source of identity in Michigan, where there are hundreds of independent as well as chain Coney restaurants. The book surveys these restaurants across the state and even a few beyond. It treats the history of the Coney Island hot dog from its introduction by Greek/Macedonian immigrants roughly 100 years ago to the profusion of eateries devoted to it and to its many modern variants, such as Coney tacos, pizzas, and omelets. The publisher warns, "Not a book to be read on an empty stomach." ■

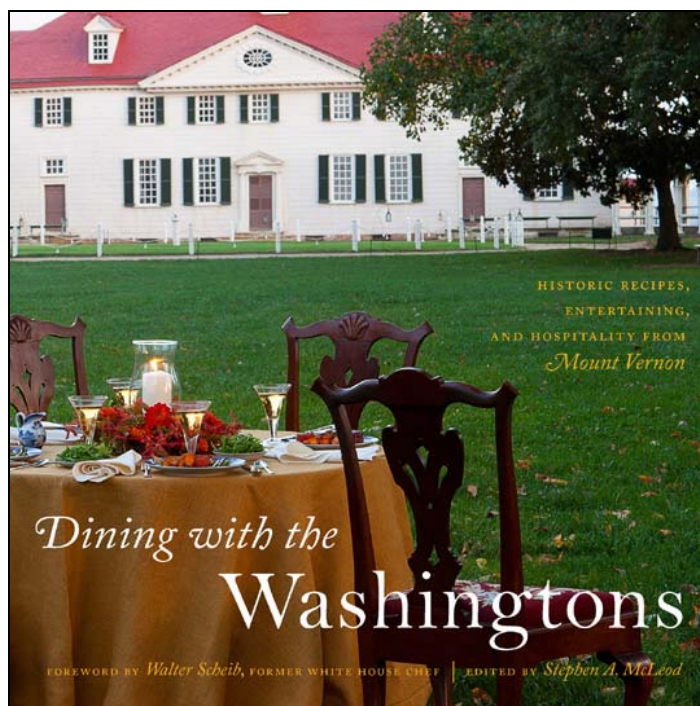
FOUNDING FOODS

An important new book for American culinary historians is *The Founders of American Cuisine: Seven Cookbook Authors, with Historical Recipes* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011; 296 pp., \$38 pbk.). The author is Harry Haff, a chef instructor at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts (Atlanta, GA). Separate chapters of this well-thought-out work summarize how eight key players exercised a formative influence on American cuisine:

- the Native Americans who had developed expertise in harvesting and eating such New World foods as corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, maple sugar, and clams
- Amelia Simmons, whose *American Cookery* (1796) stands as the first truly American cookbook
- Mary Randolph, whose *The Virginia Housewife* (1824) stands as the first regional American cookbook
- Eliza Leslie, author of the best-selling *Directions for Cookery* (Philadelphia, 1828)
- Abby Fisher, whose *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking* (1881) was one of the earliest African-American cookbooks
- Lafcadio Hearn, whose *La Cuisine Creole* (1885) set a standard for Louisiana cooking
- Charles Ranhofer, chef at Delmonico's in New York and author of *The Epicurean...A Franco-American Culinary Encyclopedia* (1894)
- Chef Victor Hirtzler, whose *The Hotel St. Francis Cook Book* (1910, 1919) fused French and Californian cooking.

A large second section of the volume includes scores of recipes selected from the historical cookbooks, each accompanied by commentary and an adaptation for the modern cook.

When it comes to the Founding Fathers, it turns out that the Washingtons, like the Jeffersons a bit further south, were connoisseurs and innovators of fine food, drink, and entertainment. This we learn in *Dining with the Washingtons: Historic Recipes, Entertaining, and Hospitality from Mount Vernon* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2011; 224 pp., \$35 hbk.). In this collection of essays by several historians, edited by Stephen A. McLeod, we read of a stretch of 291 days in 1768 when the Washingtons held 82 dinner parties at their elegant mansion on the Potomac. Besides such feats of hospitality, the essays treat aspects of everyday dining, table style, how food was grown in fields, gardens, and orchards, and such labors as the milling of flour and the smoking of meat, as well as the diet of the slaves who did most of this work. Martha maintained a manuscript of family recipes going back to the 1500s, and George distilled brandy using apples from the orchard. There is a second section consisting of over 90 historical recipes, with modern adaptations by Nancy Carter Crump, a member of the Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C. A related two-day symposium was held earlier this year at Mount Vernon, kicking off its exhibit, "Hoecakes & Hospitality:



Cooking with Martha Washington", which runs Feb. 18, 2012 through Aug. 11, 2013. The exhibit, curated by Susan Schoelwer, displays Martha's cookbook and about 125 other historical artifacts.

"A Rich Spot of Earth": *Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2012; 288 pp., \$35 hbk.) is by Peter J. Hatch, who has been Director of Gardens and Grounds at Monticello for over 30 years and has written several previous books on the subject. This latest boasts a Foreword by Alice Waters, a notable American innovator in her own right. Jefferson was one of those Founding Fathers (we can rank Franklin among them as well) who were transatlantic in their thinking and in their travels. Not only letters but also seed boxes were exchanged in Jefferson's prolific correspondence. His botanizing is rightly called "revolutionary" because of his work not only in growing indigenous plants but also in acclimating others from the Old World to the New, such as asparagus, cauliflower, rutabaga, eggplant, fig, olive, upland rice, peanuts, and okra. All told, Hatch estimates that 330 varieties of vegetable and herb were grown in the 1000-foot-long terraced garden at Monticello, and 170 varieties of fruit in the six-acre fruit garden. The resulting synthesis was remarkable. A soup recipe left by Jefferson's daughter Martha, for example, was an early form of gumbo, incorporating okra, pattypan squash, lima beans, and tomato—at a time when most Anglo-Americans believed the tomato to be poisonous.

In *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011; 349 pp., \$30 hbk.), British historian of design Andrea Wulf argues that all four of the first U.S. presidents were visionary horticulturalists. They, along with Franklin and other founders, used their home gardens to help chart the path toward a self-sufficient agrarian republic, modeled after the nation of farmers in Virgil's *Georgics*. ■

BACK TO THE LAND

As our “Morsels and Tidbits” column has noted for the past few years, the Midwest is experiencing a resurgence of interest in locally-grown foodstuffs and small-scale farming and gardening, even among urban residents.

“Remembering Our Roots: Local Food Victories Past, Present, and Future” was the theme of the fourth annual HomeGrown local food summit, held at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor on April 2. The keynote was Allegan, MI, author and historian Larry B. Massie speaking about Michigan’s unique heritage of food and agriculture.

Similarly, on August 25 the best of Detroit’s local-food movement will be highlighted in the Live Love Local celebration at Eastern Market (see www.greeningofdetroit.com).

The Eastern Market and the blossoming of urban community gardening in Detroit, including the Grown in Detroit cooperative, are among the stories that Tracie McMillan included in her new book, *The American Way of Eating: Undercover at Walmart, Applebee’s, Farm Fields, and the Dinner Table* (New York: Scribner, 2012; 338 pp., \$25 pbk.). She argues that the problems in the American diet and food supply rest not so much at the level of consumers’ personal decisions about what to eat, but in how big business has been shaping those decisions for decades. To research and write her book, the young woman worked as a produce stocker in a suburban Detroit Walmart, an intern at the Detroit *Metro Times*, a kitchen employee in an Applebee’s, and a produce picker in California.

Community-supported agriculture (CSA), in which consumers agree to buy shares of a local farmer’s crop, has helped to save certain heritage foods from virtual extinction. In recent years the rutabaga, an historically important product in Michigan (especially the Upper Peninsula), had increasingly been relegated to use as fodder and genetically engineered for biofuel. But Lisa Patrell, in a January article in the *Old West Side News*, noted a rise in local interest in cooking with this root vegetable. Residents of the historically-German Old West Side of Ann Arbor are buying rutabagas through a CSA arrangement with Sunseed Farm, which is located near Joy and Maple Roads and is owned by Tomm and Trilby Becker. In addition, David Klingenberg, proprietor of a small local business called The Brinery, is grating and pickling rutabagas (much as with sauerkraut) that he purchases from another local source, Wilczewski Greenhouse & Farm in Howell, MI. He sells the resulting product, Rutabaga Sunshine, at the Ann Arbor Farmers’ Market.

Restaurants here in Ann Arbor have recently forged a new type of CSA arrangement. In March, Zingerman’s Deli and Roadhouse as well as The Ravens Club signed an agreement to

purchase organic greens directly from Tilian Residency Farm and CSA, located off Pontiac Trail. Under this arrangement the restaurants pay for their share of the crop before it is planted, terms that are instrumental in motivating farmers to grow certain crops such as these where direct demand from consumers has been relatively low.

Historical Family Farms

A number of memoirs of family farms in the American Heartland have been published recently.

CHAA members Nancy and Robert Harrington brought to our attention Dorothy Kapp Shear’s *Farm Girl in a Feed Sack Dress: Memories of a 1940s Michigan Family Farm* (self-published, 2011; 374 pp., \$14.99 pbk.). This lovingly assembled and profusely illustrated volume describes German-American family life on the Kapp dairy farm, which was established in 1931 at Nixon Road and Pontiac Trail, just north of Ann Arbor. The book treats all facets of life during the late 1930s through the 1950s, from farming operations to gardening, churchgoing, trips into town, and social functions. It includes a chapter on the kitchen, “The Heart of the Home”, with several German-American recipes. The book can be purchased at Barnes & Noble, and autographed copies at Curves Health Club (2535 Jackson Ave., Ann Arbor). Interestingly, the author’s brother Dale still works the Kapp farm. A photo of the farm was printed over a decade ago in *Repeat* 16:4 (Fall 2000).

continued on next page

Below, a tractor runs a threshing machine on a farm near Jackson, MI, in Fall 1941. Photo by Arthur S. Siegel, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information.

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Call Number: LC-USW3- 016421-E.)



The late Ann Arborite Luther Buchele (1920-2008) and his twin brother Wesley co-authored *Just Call Us Lucky: A Kansas Farm Family During the Great Depression* (Manchester Center, VT: Shires Press, 2008; 67 pp., \$9.95 pbk.). It recounts how their family held onto their farm during terrible years that brought a collapse in commodity prices, droughts, dust storms, invasions of grasshoppers, a disastrous family lawsuit, and the death of their father from syphilis when they were 10. Luther went on to serve for more than three decades as director of the Inter-Cooperative Council, the student housing co-ops at the University of Michigan. Wes, an agricultural engineering professor at Iowa State University, co-invented the large round-bale hay baler and other farming technologies, and co-authored *The Grain Harvesters* (1978).

Former University of Michigan professor Hemalata Dandekar wrote *Michigan Family Farms and Farm Buildings: Landscapes of the Heart and Mind* (University of Michigan Press, 2010; 288 pp., \$70 hbk., \$27.95 pbk.). Based on 15 case studies of family farms in both the Lower and Upper Peninsulas, the book combines oral history, photography, and scholarly analysis to document the traditional uses of farmland and farming structures, the value systems underlying small-scale farming, and the residents' gutsy determination to maintain their traditional farms and lifestyles against all odds. (Dr. Dandekar's article on her native state of Maharashtra, India, appears elsewhere in this issue of *Repast*.)

Food and Everyday Life on Kentucky Family Farms, 1920-1950 (University Press of Kentucky, 2006; 280 pp., \$35 hbk.) was co-authored by John van Willigen and Anne van Willigen; he is an anthropology professor at the Univ. of Kentucky, and she is a regional consultant at the Kentucky Dept. for Libraries and Archives. Their book is based primarily on dozens of taped interviews conducted in the early 1990s for the university's Kentucky Family Farm Oral History Project, supplemented with archival research, as well as ethnographic field notes that John compiled while working in bluegrass country in 1978-80. Photographs, recipes, and especially the voices of those interviewed make for a vivid document of rural food customs in the Upper South during these years. There are chapters on the various types of work that needed to be done in the farm, home, and kitchen in order to grow, preserve, and prepare foods, and discussions of characteristic food customs and dishes such as skillet corn, shucky beans (a type of green-bean dish), beaten biscuits and gravy, cracklin' cornbread, hushpuppies, fried chicken, country ham and eggs, scalloped oysters, and chowchow. The book also documents how various social forces impinged on farming life, such as the federal Meat and Poultry Inspection Acts, rural electrification, New Deal programs related to farmers' credit and market quotas, the establishment of a statewide agricultural extension service, the rise of farm mechanization and other technologies, and mass migration from rural to urban areas.

Former Ann Arborite Ronald Ahrens, a freelance writer and photographer, has recently assembled an online site, "Our Grandfathers' Grain Elevators", located at the Internet address <http://ourgrandfathersgrainelevators.com>. It documents the story behind the towering elevators that were built of slip-formed concrete in Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa by J. H. Tillotson (his grandparents' firm), Mayer-Osborn Construction, and other companies. Ahrens, who wrote the article on Detroit's stove-making history in *Repast* 26:3 (Summer 2010), recently moved from Ann Arbor to Monrovia, CA. ■

JULIA CHILD CENTENNIAL

In addition to Jan and Dan Longone's presentation "Reminiscences of Julia" this May, the CHAA has scheduled a members' participatory theme meal on August 12 that will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Julia Child's birth. Further information will be sent out shortly.

Three days later, on August 15 (Julia's actual birthday), Zingerman's Roadhouse in Ann Arbor will present a special dinner, "The French Chef: In Celebration of Julia Child". Chef Alex Young and French-born sous-chef Emmanuel Saintin will showcase recipes from Julia's many books. The meal is scheduled for 7-10 pm, and tickets are \$45/person. Further information and reservations are available at <http://www.zingermansroadhouse.com>.

A new book has been added to the corpus of Julia Child literature, *Julia Child's "The French Chef"* (Duke Univ. Press, 2011; 312 pp., \$84.95 hbk., 23.95 pbk.). The author, Dana B. Polan, was until recently a professor of Critical Studies at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television, and is currently a professor of Cinema Studies at New York University. In his book, he considers what made "The French Chef" an extraordinarily popular TV show during its decade-long run, and why Child remained an enduring influence on American cooking and culture. He examines the development of the show, the day-to-day production, and the critical and fan reception. Polan argues that "The French Chef" changed the conventions of television's culinary culture by making personality an indispensable ingredient. Although Child was an effective and unpretentious instructor, her cooking lessons were never just about food preparation but also about social mobility, the discovery of foreign culture, and a personal enjoyment and fulfillment that promised to transcend domestic drudgery. ■

Below, Julia Child gives a cooking demonstration to an audience at KUHT-TV in Houston, TX.

Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries. UH Digital Library, Call Number kuht_201010_300.jpg



Aubade

by Zilka Joseph

The crows are loud. The sun beats

red upon the backs
of men washing at the water
tap. They hack and spit,

brush teeth with neem
twigs, some with Colgate
toothpaste or homemade
black toothpowder. The women fill

metal dishes, yellow and green
Dalda cans, long-necked
terracotta vessels; chat and
fight over who's jumped

the queue. Mouths are red-smeared
with paan, eyes sleepy,
kohl smudged. Some sing,
wash clothes, bathe their thin

children, scrub bottoms pink. Glass
bangles clink on stone. Keys
swing from the corners of their sari
pallavs. A mother walks home

with one little one hitched on a hip,
another, maybe two
tugging at her fingers,
and bargains for bruised vegetables

in pul Bazaar. Maybe today,
just today, they will be lucky

and the family will get a second meal.

Zilka Joseph, whose work appears here and on pages 11 and 17, is a prize-winning Ann Arbor poet, as well as the Academic Affairs Program Manager at the Univ. of Michigan's Center for South Asian Studies. She has an MFA degree from UM, and has taught writing classes and workshops at locations around southeastern Michigan.

Zilka considers food an important part of her cultural background, and it plays a frequent role in her writing. She was born in Mumbai, but her family relocated to Kolkata when she was young, and she has spent most of her life there. In 1997, she and her husband, John Joseph, moved from India to Chicago, later to Auburn Hills and Rochester Hills, MI, and finally to Ann Arbor in 2009.

The poem "Aubade" appeared previously in the literary journal at Schoolcraft College (Livonia, MI), *The MacGuffin* 27:1 (Fall 2010).



Photo: Charlee Brodsky

The Kolkata street scenes shown here and on pages 1 and 11 were captured in August 2007 by Charlee Brodsky, an award-winning documentary photographer and a professor of photography in the School of Design at Carnegie Mellon Univ. (Pittsburgh, PA). They were part of her exhibition (and accompanying book), *India: A Light Within*, which was a collaboration between Brodsky and the writers Neema Bipin Avashia and Zilka Joseph.

For more information, see
<http://www.zilkajoseph.com/collaborations/>

COOKING TRADITIONS IN MAHARASHTRA STATE

by Dr. Hemalata C. Dandekar

The most veteran members of CHAA might recall that Hema Dandekar spoke to us in January 1984 on the subject of her book, Beyond Curry: Quick and Easy Indian Cooking Featuring Cuisine from Maharashtra State (Univ. of Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies [UM-CSSEAS], 1983). At the time, she was a professor of urban planning at UM; she later served as Director of UM-CSSEAS and as UM's Associate Vice President for Research. In the years since leaving UM, she has taught urban planning at a number of universities, served as head of the School of Planning and Landscape Architecture at Arizona State Univ., and is currently professor and head of the City and Regional Planning Department at California Polytechnic State Univ. in San Luis Obispo.

Dr. Dandekar earned her Bachelor's degree in architecture at the Univ. of Bombay, her master's in architecture at UM, and her Ph.D. in urban and regional planning at UCLA. She conducted her doctoral fieldwork in the rural Deccan Plateau areas of her native state of Maharashtra, India. Besides her early book Beyond Curry, she has written a number of books on urban planning and, most recently, Michigan Family Farms and Farm Buildings: Landscapes of the Heart and Mind (Univ. of Michigan Press, 2010). Much of the material below is drawn from Dr. Dandekar's book Beyond Curry and her article "Women, Food and the Sustainable Economy: A Simple Relationship", Progressive Planning 158 (Winter 2004). All four drawings are by B. L. Johnson and appeared originally in Beyond Curry.

Indian cuisine varies greatly by region, as well as by religion and social class. My native state of Maharashtra, with its capital Mumbai (formerly Bombay), is situated in the western region of the Indian subcontinent. About the size of France, it has a population of over 112 million people, a majority of whom speak a language called Marathi. Although more urbanized than other Indian states, Maharashtra is still predominantly rural, and in the countryside, by and large, people cook with, and eat, what they grow.

My mother's family was from the dry, peanut-and-millet-growing region of the Deccan Plateau, while my father's family originated in the rice-growing, coconut-fringed coastal plains of the Konkan, both in Maharashtra. Both sides of the family had long abandoned their rural roots, but urban culture had not erased the grounded specificity of their preferred cuisines. As Brahmins by caste, their traditional dishes were vegetarian. Peanuts were used in many of them, and favorite desserts included fillings of coconut and sugar, flavored with cardamom.

In traditional societies such as this, food and its preparation remain predominantly the purview of the women of the household. A cook's judgment—adding a pinch of this or a



Inside a traditional Maharashtrian home kitchen

handful of that—adds the personal stamp that gives identity to the foods prepared by an excellent cook. The comment that she has a “good hand” in the kitchen was the ultimate praise in my own extended family in India, an important ingredient of being a cultured and accomplished woman.

Except in the most elite and affluent households, the women tend to be very parsimonious in their cooking. Every element of a potential food source is gleaned with care; little is thrown away—the outer skin of the mango, for instance, and the flesh, the seedpod and seed are all treated in a variety of ways. I still remember the triumphant gleam in my aunt's eyes the time she finally succeeded in conjuring up very palatable chutney from the outer, particularly-bitter skin of a type of gourd that she normally had thrown away. This parsimony and relish of the whole food source is a characteristic of much of the cooking, baking, and food preparation in the Third World.

A Typical Brahmin Meal

The basic eating and cooking rituals in most parts of India are characterized by simplicity tempered by custom. Traditionally, the diner eats in front of a serving plate while sitting cross-legged on the floor, or rather, on the two-inch-high wooden seat called a *paat*.

A typical, well-rounded meal in a Brahmin household in Maharashtra consists of a first course of white rice with a very plain, boiled split-pea soup, called *sadha varan*, which is made from *toor dal* (split pigeon-peas) and served with a squeeze of lemon and a dash of *ghee* (clarified butter). This is eaten with a salad, a chutney, a pickle, one or two dry spiced vegetables, possibly a bean curry, and some spiced snack such as *papad* (deep-fried wafers of lentil or rice) or *bhajji* (deep-fried vegetable fritters). This is followed by several helpings of hot, freshly-prepared *chappati* (griddle bread) liberally covered with *ghee*; *amti*, a soup-like lentil curry; and additional helpings of vegetables, chutneys, pickles, and salads. Plain yogurt and buttermilk or milk accompany the final helping of rice. On special occasions one or two sweet dishes such as *jilebi* or *gulab*

jaum (two kinds of deep-fried snacks covered in sugar syrup) are added to this menu, along with a course of spicy vegetable rice (*masale bhat*).

In my part of Maharashtra, foods are always served in a strictly defined order on *taats* or *thalies*— large brass (now stainless-steel) platters, up to 14 inches in diameter, with raised edges. The *thali* has a higher (one-inch) edge. In the coastal area of the Konkan, where banana trees are plentiful, meals, especially at feasts for marriages and births, used to be served on freshly-cut banana leaves. In the upland plateau region of the Deccan, round plates and bowls are fashioned out of a particular type of dried leaves stitched together with small twigs. Now plastics and Styrofoam containers have largely supplanted these highly disposable and biodegradable ones, except in the more remote parts of the countryside.

On the *taat*, in the upper right quadrant, straight-edged metal bowls called *waties* are placed to hold the liquid preparations. A pinch of salt and a piece of lemon are arranged at the top of the *taat*. To its left, chutneys, pickles, and salads are served in that order. To its right are placed wet and then dry vegetables. Rice and *chappati* are served in the middle and directly in front of the person.

This order of serving food on the *taat* is quite different in households belonging to other castes. I remember once being served a meal in a rural Maratha household and absent-mindedly turning my filled *taat* around almost 180° so that the foods were in locations more familiar to me. The hostess, observing my rearrangement, smiled and said, “You must be a Brahmin!”

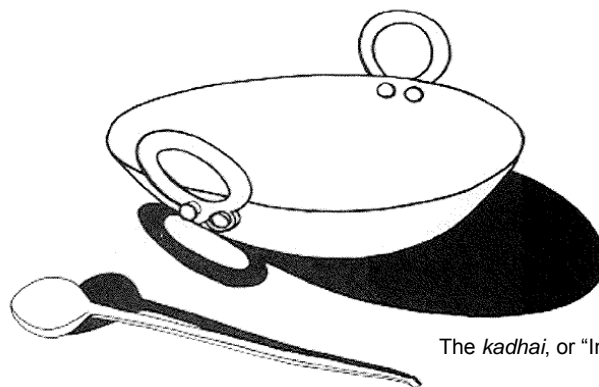
The meal is eaten using only the right hand. Strict rules of etiquette govern. Only the fingers are used; the palm of the hand must remain dry and clean. To allow curry to dribble down your arm is considered poor form. Pieces of *chappati* are torn off using only the right hand (a technique that can be learned only by observing the skilled) and wrapped around vegetables and pickles, or used to scoop curry into one’s mouth. Rice, too, is mixed with other food and eaten with one’s fingers. Some people will use a spoon, for the accompanying curry, but this is not the norm and most meals are served without any cutlery. The left hand is used to drink water, to wave away the flies (important, especially in the rural areas), and to help oneself to more food. After one has started eating, the right hand is not used to serve oneself, since that would be defiling the food that is served to everyone from the common pot.

Cooking Techniques

Traditional cooking equipment in Maharashtra is elegant in its utility and simplicity. The bulk of Indian cooking, particularly in rural areas and in households of the poor, is done on wood- or charcoal-burning mud stoves. Stoves are cleaned and scoured with ash and grit, and without benefit of hot water; in fact, even cold water is sometimes scarce. A kerosene stove is a luxury, and bottled gas is out of reach for most.

Most cooking utensils are very sturdy and quite basic. The key ones include:

- a cast-iron griddle called a *tawa*
- a *wok*-like pot called a *kadhai*



The *kadhai*, or “Indian wok”

- a ladle (*pali*)
- two varieties of spatula (*zara* and *ulathna*)
- a pair of tongs (*chimata*) to place and remove utensils on the stove.

Cast-iron utensils give a unique, smoky flavor to a spice base and are therefore always used in the preparation of certain dishes, such as these:

- boiled lentil curry, which is laced with an aromatic hot butter-and-spice seasoning
- *pithale*, a chickpea-flour curry that is spiced only with oil, fresh green chilies, turmeric, and mustard seeds
- the spicy sauce that is often used to accompany a popular snack called *dhokla*, which is a steam-cooked fluffy cake made with Cream of Wheat, chickpea flour, fermented milk, and other ingredients.

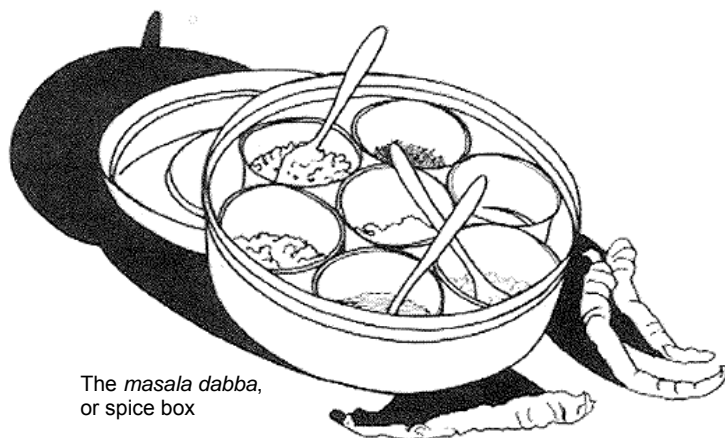
One of the most important basic steps in Indian cooking is the preparation of an oil and spice base, which in Marathi is called a *phodani*. To this base will be added the vegetables, cooked beans, rice, lentils, and other ingredients. The purpose of a *phodani* is to cook the various spices in oil to the different temperatures needed to draw out their full flavor. A properly made *phodani* causes the cook and spectators to cough and snuffle. If this happens, continue undaunted; a successful *phodani* is underway.

For those who assume there is a spice called “curry”, I have disappointing news: the word does not even exist in the Marathi language. In English, the word *curry* is used to describe a wide range of stew-like dishes made from vegetables, dried beans and lentils, meat, fish, or fowl, but it does not refer to any one of a combination of spices. The confusion seems to stem from the fact that all these dishes contain some combination of hot, aromatic spices that gives the liquid sauce a mouth-watering, spicy-hot flavor. The various mixtures that are sold as “curry powder” in Western countries resemble different combinations of spices called *masalas* in Marathi. Self-respecting Indian cooks make their own special *masalas*— wet masala, made and used day-to-day, or dried varieties that can be stored and used over a period of 10-12 months.

The reason I consider the use of “curry powders” to be a cardinal sin for the knowing Indian cook is that most of them contain turmeric. Turmeric is a wonderful, essential spice in Indian cooking. However, to bring out its full aroma, it must be

continued on next page

MAHARASHTRA STATE *continued from page 9*



The masala dabba,
or spice box

cooked to a certain high temperature. This is usually achieved by adding it early to the oil and spice base of a recipe. Coriander and cumin powders, which occur in high concentrations in prepared curry powders, are added later. Mixing these with turmeric prior to cooking prevents one from frying the turmeric at the required high temperature, as the other spices would burn. Consequently, when curry powder has been used, I can always detect a slight aroma of raw turmeric in the food.

A Few Simple Dishes

Red Lentils and Rice Khichadi

Khichadi, the most basic of meals, a one-dish complementary rice and lentil combination, is widely consumed all over India and understood to be nutritious and healthy. It is India's chicken soup. Bhima, the strongest of the five brothers in the epic *Mahabharata*, favored this dish, which, we all learned as children, helped maintain his great strength. It is made from rice, the widely-cultivated lentil, and spices grown locally or in the region.

Basic Ingredients

- 1 c. rice (preferably long-grain)
- 1 c. *masur dal* (orange or "red" lentils)
- 1T. vegetable oil
- 4 dried red chilies, broken in half
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. salt

Heat the oil in a cast-iron pan. Add cumin, bay leaf, and red chilies. When cumin browns, add turmeric and stir until it turns color. Add rice and lentils and stir until they are coated with the oil (about 2 or 3 minutes). Add 4 cups of water, salt, and sugar, and bring to a boil. Continue boiling for a minute or two, lower heat and cover. Simmer for 10 or 15 minutes, until rice and lentils are soft, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Add water if necessary.

Other Bean Khichadi

Khichadi can be prepared with other lentils or beans, such as *urad dal* (split black gram), black-eyed peas, mung beans, or European lentils. If the lentils and beans are sprouted, the *khichadi* is particularly delicious. European lentils cook quicker than rice, so, with a plain lentil *khichadi*, add the rice first and fry it well before adding lentils. With black-eyed peas, add the peas first. *Khichadi* can be made substituting *ghee* or butter for the oil and using fresh green chilies. This has a different and very good taste.

Sanja or Upmaa

Ideal for all those who love Cream of Wheat (and perhaps even those who don't), *sanja*, known in South India as *upmaa*, is hot and spicy; *sheera* is a sweet version of the same dish. *Sanja* is served for breakfast in South India and as a mid-afternoon snack in Maharashtra. It can also be served for lunch with yogurt and/or a salad. Very nutritious and quick to make, it is an important dish to master. It is very successful taken along on picnics and served cold with yogurt salad or chutney.

Basic Ingredients

- 1 c. Cream of Wheat
- 1 c. onions, finely chopped
- 1T. vegetable oil
- 1 or 2 dried red chilies, broken in half, or fresh green chilies, cut in pieces (to taste)
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- 1 bay leaf (optional)
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 3T. *urad dal* (split black gram, optional)
- 1 c. peanuts, preferably raw, with skins (to taste)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2-3 c. boiling water

Heat the Cream of Wheat in a cast iron pan, stirring constantly (as it tends to burn), until it is slightly roasted and turns a darker yellow-brown. The Cream of Wheat gives off a delicate fragrance and sounds slightly grainy, like sand, when it is stirred. Remove from pan and set aside.

Have all ingredients pre-measured and at-hand, as the pace picks up here and the spices can get burned. Heat oil in the cast-iron pan. Add cumin, bay leaf, and chilies. When the chilies begin to sizzle, add turmeric and stir. When turmeric turns dark yellow, add the *urad dal*, peanuts, salt, and onions. Stir and cook until the onions are a golden yellow. Add the Cream of Wheat and 2 cups boiling water. The Cream of Wheat will expand rapidly and absorb the water. Stir, turn down the heat, cover, and cook for 5 minutes until the Cream of Wheat feels soft to the touch and tastes "done". Additional water (up to 1 cup) may have to be added before the Cream of Wheat is fully cooked. A dish of *sanja* is delicious garnished with fresh grated coconut and chopped fresh coriander or with some plain yogurt.

continued on page 18



Kaulee Haddi

Photo: Charlee Brodsky

by Zilka Joseph

Savory crunch of soft bone,
how good it tasted in curry,
kaulee haddi,

peninsular tip of breast bone
from a small desi chicken
dad bought on the pavement

at Pul bazaar. Mom grumbled as she picked
clotted sand from its thin tight skin
before she cooked it,

kept feet, gizzard for stock.
My father loves boki flesh,
tender breast meat steeped in flavor,

falling off the triangle
of translucent bone. The supple end
curves to a pliant tongue

drunk with masala –
ginger warm, garlic sharp,
coriander mellow. But he rarely

This poem is from Zilka's chapbook, *Lands I Live In* (Woodstock, NY: Mayapple Press, 2007), which was nominated for a PEN America Beyond Margins Award. Reflecting her family's origins in Mumbai, the poem has some Marathi words in it. *Kaulee haddi* means "soft or tender bone", as in the tip of the chicken breastbone.

ate it, breaking off that kaulee tip
with his wiry engineer fingers
salty with memories

of sea, flecked with rice and curry,
so that even when we were grown,
and especially

when we returned to visit, he fed
my sister, or me the precious kaulee haddi.
His harsh words forgotten,

we watched him bend,
melt the hard beaten bones
of his tough maritime heart.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF RICE IN INDIA

by Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh Kumar

Tuktuk Kumar (née Ghosh) is currently Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. She was born in Patna, the capital of Bihar state, in 1955. She attended the University of Delhi, where she earned a BA in history (Hindu College) and a Ph.D. in ancient Indian history and archeology. Her doctoral thesis was published as the book, History of Rice in India: Mythology, Culture and Agriculture (Delhi, 1985). Dr. Kumar was a Lecturer at the Hindu College between 1979 and 1981 before undertaking a career in public service, in which she has held a succession of important posts in state and national governments. She and her husband Sujit Kumar have two daughters.



Pounding has been used in India since ancient times to husk rice and to flatten husked rice. Drawing found in K. T. Achaya, *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), p. 45.

The cultivation, consumption, and ritual significance of rice are deeply enmeshed in Indian culture. One of the factors underlying this is the sheer antiquity of rice agriculture in the subcontinent, a historical depth that has been underestimated by some scholars.

In this survey, I will document the long ancestry of rice in India by summarizing evidence derived from historical texts and inscriptions as well as archeological remains, together with botanical, linguistic, and ethnographic considerations.

Background

The history of research on ancient Indian agriculture can be traced back to the principally botanical writings of Roxburgh (1832), de Candolle (1886), Hooker (1897), and Watt (1908). They were concerned with the botanical names of ancient plants, the distribution of their cultivated and wild (where applicable) varieties, their names in Sanskrit and regional languages, and general speculations on the antiquity of their cultivation. The early textual data were mentioned only in passing, and no relevant archeological data existed at the time.

Agriculture received only sporadic attention in the general works on ancient Indian economic history, published in the early years of the 20th Century.

The consideration of excavated plant remains is a feature of the comparatively recent period. A beginning was made with the identification of plant remains at Harappa, the ancient site in the Indus valley. But the archeo-botanical studies in the Indian context date by and large to the period following Indian Independence in 1947. This has been due to a number of factors:

- First, archeologists have become increasingly aware of the importance of plant remains in reconstructing the economic activities of the ancient period.
- Second, botanists are now more keen on knowing the

antiquity of the crops they study. This has led them to become increasingly involved in identifying excavated remains of plants and crops.

- Third, the problem of the origins of agriculture has become a burning issue in modern archeological research.

The study of agricultural history has many facets and is essentially multi-disciplinary. One of the important facets is the history of agricultural technology, which includes such features as the modes and implements of cultivation, systematic knowledge of plant life, soil, climate, etc. Another significant facet is the beginning and spread of agriculture and agricultural communities. Orthodox archeological research and archeo-botanical analysis play the most important roles in the reconstruction of this facet of agricultural history. The third, and perhaps most significant, facet is the history of individual agricultural crops, including the determination of their probable centers of origin. This last facet is important because it throws a flood of light on the plant migrations and thus on the pattern of cultural dispersals as well.

Beginnings of the Written Record

As concerns rice, the key words in the *Rigveda*, the earliest literary record, are *yava*, *dhana*, and *anna*. *Yava* has been translated as either any grain yielding flour or meal or barley. *Dhana* is taken to denote rice, although this has been disputed. The precise meaning of *anna* in this case is uncertain, but it might not extend beyond a generic term for staple cereals. The contexts in which these terms occur do not permit a precise identification in any case.

The primary agricultural terms used in the *Rigveda*, apart from the verb *krsh* (to cultivate), are *sunā*, *sira*, *sita*, and *phala*. *Sira* may be a plow, whereas *sunā* and *phala* may be

plowshares. *Sita* indicates a furrow and/or deity presiding over agriculture. The other important agricultural terms in this text are *ksetra* (field) and *datra* (sickles). It is logical to deduce from the occurrence of the above-mentioned terms in the *Rigveda* that the element of pastoralism in this text has been overemphasized by scholars. The *Rigveda* was familiar with rice. It may be noted that rice was an important crop in the later Vedic literature and this suggests a long ancestry of rice cultivation, which should logically go back to the period of the *Rigveda*.

In the *Taittiriya Samhita* of the Black *Yajurveda* the key words are *vrihi*, translated as rice, and *nivara*, translated as wild rice. The varieties of rice mentioned are black rice, swift-growing rice, large rice, and white rice. *Vrihi* and *nivara* were offered to deities. The rice crop was harvested in Autumn.

In the *Vajasaneyi Samhita* of the White *Yajurveda* the preparation of rice cakes in rituals is described at length, from taking the rice grain from the cart, winnowing and pounding it, to cooking an offering.

Rice as Life-Force

Although the Samaveda does not specifically mention rice, the terms for rice in the *Atharvaveda* are *vrihi* and *dhanyam*. Rice (along with barley) was supposed to have possessed medicinal and recuperative powers and was closely identified with *prana* ("breath", "prosperity"). Rice was offered to deities in the form of *odana*, *charu*, *purodasa*, and *tandula*.

The Aitareya Brahmana mentions ritual rice offerings in the form of *charu*, *purodasa*, and *payasa*. Small-grained and large-grained rice are mentioned among the ritual items of a coronation ceremony.

In the *Satapatha Brahmana* two preparations of rice— rice cake, the preparation of which has been elaborately described, and what has been called *anvaharya* mess— were offered in rituals. Different varieties of rice were offered to different deities: fast-grown rice (*plasuka*) to *Savitri Satyaprasava*, quick-grown rice (*asu*) to *Agni Grihapati*, wild rice (*nivara*) to *Brihaspati Vak*, red rice grains (*hayana*) to *Indra*, and black rice grains to *Nirriti*. Malted rice also appears as part of the offerings in certain rituals. Rice was ascribed an auspicious quality.

Rice is mentioned in the context of rituals in the *Panchavimsa*, *Jaiminiya*, and *Gopatha Brahmanas*. Rice (*vrihi*) occurs in the philosophical analogies of the *Upanishads*. A couple's fertility was supposed to be enhanced after partaking of various rice preparations.

The *Sutra* literature, particularly the *Srauta*, *Grihya*, and *Dharma* sutras, is full of references to rice in rituals, its varieties and preparations. The *Apastamba Dharmasutra* put restrictions on Brahmins regarding trade in rice. The *Vinaya Pitaka* mentions two varieties of rice: *vrihi* and *sali*. *Sali* is supposed to be rice that is sown in rainy season and harvested in Winter. There are references to some rice-growing areas: Champa, Sravasti, Rajagriha, and Magadha in general. The extensive, terraced rice-fields of Magadha are described, and there is mention of wagon-loads of rice. Terms such as *odana*,

bhatta, and *sukkhakura* are used to denote different rice preparations, and there is also mention of liquor obtained from cooked rice. Rice was not considered a suitable diet for certain ailments.

Rice for the Monk's Bowl and the King's Coffers

In the *Sutra* literature, we also find that the size of a monk's bowl was measured by the amount of rice it could hold. Most of the references relate to how monks should collect and utilize the rice they received. Stealing or coveting others' shares was frowned upon, as was wastage. A shortage of rice was spoken of when there would be a drop in alms-giving.

The following varieties of rice have been mentioned in the *Majjhima Nikaya*: hill paddy, wild rice, rice from which the black grains have been removed, and large-grained rice. The preparations of rice mentioned are: boiled rice, rice cooked in milk, and gruel and powder of rice husks. There are references to the distribution of rice by the laity to the monks. [Editor's note: "Paddy" means rice that has not been milled but has been threshed, i.e., the inedible husk has been removed. It corresponds roughly to what is called "brown rice" in the West. "Hill paddy" is paddy grown on dry fields rather than wet fields. "Red rice" or "red paddy", mentioned further below, is a particular variety of rice or paddy grown on wet fields.]

Rice distribution as alms is mentioned in the *Samyutta Nikaya* which also refers to a Brahmin offering a preparation of rice with *ghee* (clarified butter) in a religious ceremony.

The *Jatakas* refer to the following varieties: hill paddy, wild rice (*nivara* and *sayamjatasali*), red paddy, etc. Rice grains were known as *tandula*, and preparations of rice as *bhatta* and *payasa*. Rice growing areas such as Gandhara, Varanasi, Sravasti, and Magadha were mentioned. The lack of water brought a drop in rice yields. There is a reference to excess rain damaging the rice crop, and also to drought. There is mention of the storage of rice in overflowing granaries. Wagon-loads of rice crossed the highways. Fresh, mature, and scented rice were in common use. Rice given as alms is frequently mentioned and praised. Rice seems to have been a form of remuneration for both domestic and agricultural workers. The king probably received some tax in kind, specifically rice. Other uses of rice were as an ingredient of liquor and in religious offerings by the Brahmins. The medicinal use of rice is also mentioned.

The *Suttanipata* mentions rice given as alms. In the *Thera* and *Theri Gatha* there is mention of threshing, pounding, and boiling of rice. Rice was offered to the Buddha and his followers. Wild rice seems to have been available in a forest glade near Rajagriha. The term *kura* possibly denoted some kind of wild rice and it was found at Sravasti.

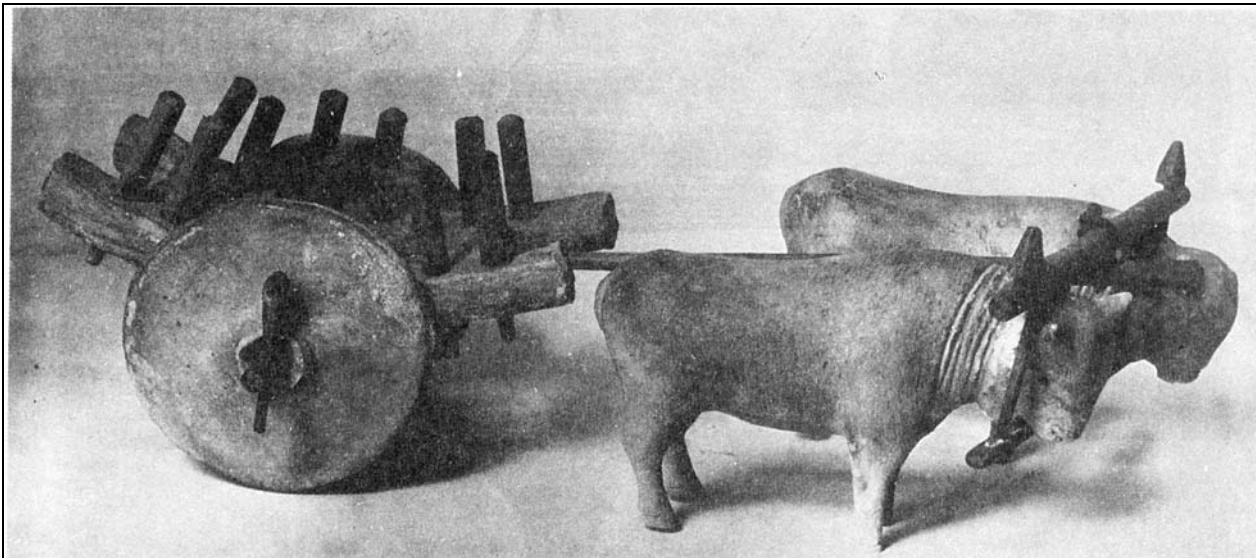
A Trousseau of 500 Cartloads of Rice

Red rice, hill paddy, and wild rice are mentioned in the *Dhammapada*. There is also a detailed description of a rice field. Women acted as keepers of rice fields. Storage of rice under famine conditions was possible for the better-off section of the society. The regions associated with rice cultivation are

continued on next page

RICE IN INDIA

continued from page 13



A clay model of a bullock cart of the type used in the Indus valley.

Source: The Archeological Survey of India (ASI), New Delhi.

Photo found in K. T. Achaya, *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), p. 20.

Uttarakuru, Varanasi, Sravasti, the territories of the Sakiyas and Kaliyas and Kosala. Rice was donated to the Buddhist congregation by all sections of the society. There is a reference to the fact that 500 cartloads of rice, along with agricultural implements, were a part of a trousseau. Remuneration by way of rice is mentioned.

The *Astadhyayi* of Panini mentions *vrihi*, *sali*, *lohita sali*, *hayana*, *mahovrihi*, and *nivara*. Rice preparations (*charu*, *purodasa*) and the use of rice in religious offering are also mentioned.

In the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya the treatment of individual crops is not detailed, but *sali* and *vrihi* are mentioned along with two new terms, *udaraka* and *varaka*, which are two new varieties of rice perhaps introduced during this period. In Patanjali's *Mahabhasya* there are references to *sali* and *vrihi* and also to the use of rice in rituals. Rice figures as an important crop in the *Milinda Panha*. Of the two types of red rice mentioned in this text, one (*parumbhaka*) is supposed to be unhealthy. In the *Mahabharata* there are references to *sali*, *nivara*, the use of rice in rituals, and the auspicious character of sun-dried rice and fried paddy. In the *Ramayana* there are references to rice in different ceremonies: marriage, daily oblations, funeral ceremonies, etc.

The most significant references relate to the use of rice in judicial proceedings, rituals, and penances. In the Puranas the references to rice in rituals are overwhelming. The following varieties are mentioned: red rice, *sali*, *vrihi*, *aman* rice, white rice, black rice, *nivara*, *samthi* rice, plain rice, and small-grained rice, *markandeya*, *syamaka* rice, and *ṣaṣṭika* rice. The different parts of a rice plant are explicitly described in the course of a philosophical discourse. The medicinal properties of some varieties are listed. The use of rice in the cleansing of pearl-seeds is mentioned. There are references to liquor distilled from rice and to the hypothecation of paddy [i.e., the use of rice as pledged collateral for a debt] and the rules relating to it.

The legal and medical literature also mentions different varieties and preparations of rice. The inscriptional evidence

throws light on the payment of rice as revenue, the payment of allowance in rice, the payment of interest in rice, and the use of rice for the procurement of articles for consumption.

The key points that emerge out of the written references are the following. First, rice was known to the Rigvedic people, and rice was a well-established crop in the later Vedic literature, established enough to be identified with *prana* or breath and prosperity. The references to rice in the later Vedic literature involve three categories: (1) the mention of different varieties of rice beside the general references to *vrihi* and *nivara*; (2) the use of different rice preparations as offerings in rituals; and (3) the mention of medicinal and recuperative properties of rice. What makes these categories of references interesting is that these constitute the basic pattern of all the subsequent references to rice in the Sanskrit literature up to the early group of Puranas. To be sure, the subsequent references are more elaborate, but the general pattern may be said to have remained unchanged throughout. Although there are some secular details in the Sanskrit literature, particularly of the later period, by and large it is the Buddhist literature that provides more secular details such as the giving of rice as alms, the description of a rice field, the mention of a few rice-growing areas, the use of rice as a remuneration in kind and also as royal tax, etc.

Secondly, the literary sources quite explicitly suggest a deep-rooted antiquity of rice cultivation in India. The way in which rice figures in the later Vedic literature cannot but be the result of a long familiarity with, and the realization of the importance of, this crop.

Thirdly, although it is impossible to identify in botanical terms the varieties of rice mentioned in the texts, one may safely claim that many of these varieties must be continuing in different regions of India. For instance, it is interesting to come across the varieties called *aman* and *samthi* in the *Markandeya Purana* and the *Matsya Purana*, respectively, because these two varieties are commonly grown in modern times. The former is a Winter crop, while the latter is described as belonging to a race with a short, strong stem, an ear partially enclosed in the sheath, and a grain husk that is dark-colored or

black. The mention of different varieties of rice in the texts is unlikely to be an exaggeration. Even in recent times there are many regional varieties of rice, each with a distinct local name.

The Pattern of Archeological Data

The most significant archeological record of rice in India is the occurrence of wild rice in the advanced Mesolithic context at Chopani-Mando (9th–8th Millennia BCE) and domesticated rice in the Neolithic context at Koldihawa and Mahagara (6th–5th Millennia BCE). The dating is based on evidence derived from stone-tool sequences and from direct and indirect radiocarbon analysis. All three of the sites are in the Belan valley, in a geographical area that may be said to constitute a plateau fringe to the central Gangetic valley.

Interestingly, rice husk was used as a tempering material in the clay used for Neolithic pots at Koldihawa and Mahagar, which clearly suggests familiarity with this crop at these two sites during an early period.

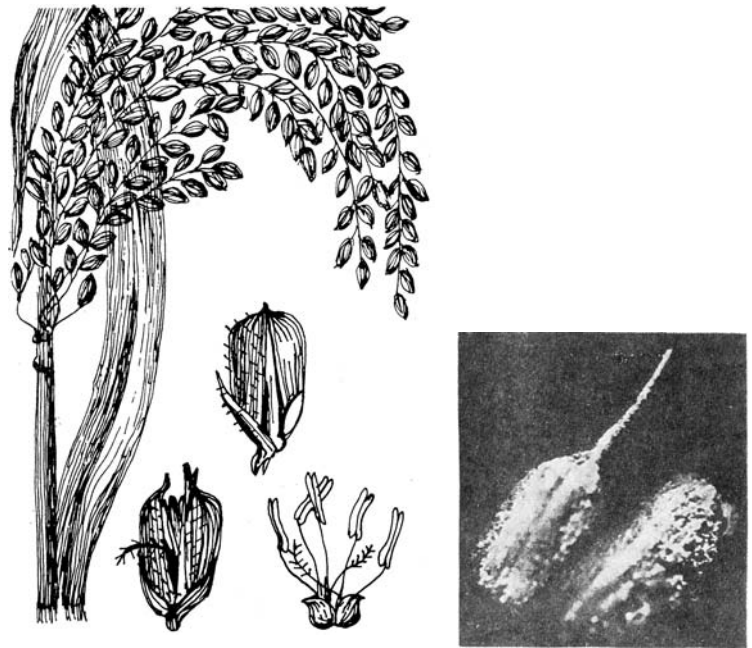
Broader evidence suggests a deep-rooted tradition of rice cultivation in each of three broad geographical clusters: southeast Rajasthan (Ahar) and Gujrat (Lothal and Rangpur), the upper (Atranjikhhera) and middle (Chirand) Gangetic valleys, and the northwest (Gandhara Graves). By the second half of the 3rd Millennium BCE, the tradition of rice cultivation was well-established in disparate geographical areas, presupposing a long period of growth behind it. By the second half of the 2nd Millennium BCE, the evidence becomes more extensive.

The pattern of distribution did not change significantly during the early historic period, and the available evidence suggests that by c. 1000 BCE, rice cultivation in India assumed its basic geographical character.

On the basis of archeological records, it has not been possible to establish the varietal diversities of the crop in different regions. For instance, it has been observed that Navdatoli rice grains belong neither to the Japonica (short-grain) type nor to the Indica (long-grain) type, but possess characteristics of both types, suggesting their hybrid nature. Almost the same thing has been said about the rice in the Painted Grey Ware level at Atranjikhhera. This does not fit into any of the sub-species (Japonica and Indica), suggesting that it was passing through a state of evolution in which the process of mutation was very active.

The Botanical Perspective

What is most significant in the botanical context is the wide distribution of a number of wild rice species in India. *Oryza coarctata* Roxb. is said to be confined to the Bhagirathi delta in West Bengal, the Mahanadi delta in Odisha, the Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh, and the Indus delta in Sind. The distribution of *O. meyerina* extends from Assam to Malabar through the Khasi hills (Meghalaya), Sikkim, the Chotanagpur plateau region of West Bengal and Bihar, the Eastern Ghat region of Odisha, Tamil Nadu including the Nilgiri hills, etc. *O. perennis* Moench is found in Manipur, Assam, West Bengal (more or less in the western parts of the state and in the Deltaic 24 Parganas as well), Bihar, and Jhar-



Left, a rice plant and grains; right, carbonized rice grains unearthed at Hastinapur, Uttar Pradesh (c. 1000 BCE). Sources: A. H. Church, *Food-Grains of India* (London: South Kensington Museum Science Handbooks, 1886); The Archeological Survey of India (ASI), New Delhi. Both graphics found in K. T. Achaya, *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 42, 16.

khand, Uttar Pradesh (apparently the eastern U.P.— Gonda, Gorakhpur, Faizabad, Lucknow, Rampur), Odisha (the Eastern Ghats region from Balasore to the Jeypore tract and the Mahanadi delta), Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh, the Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala. *O. rufipogon* (also known as *O. sativa* var. *fatua*) has apparently the most extensive distribution— the Surma valley in Bangladesh, West Bengal, Bihar, eastern U.P. including Allahabad and Varanasi districts, Odisha, M.P., Maharastra, the Godavari delta, the Kangra valley (Himachal Pradesh), Punjab, and the northwestern region.

The cultivated rice species *O. sativa* is said to be derived from either *O. perennis* or *O. rufipogon*, and the general opinion seems to prefer *O. perennis*. The distribution of both these species is strikingly extensive in India, taking in singularly large tracts of the country in a sweep. The most important loop of this distribution is from Assam to Kerala through West Bengal and Odisha. Two loops branch off this, one covering Bihar and U.P. and the other going to western India through Madhya Pradesh. A third (apparently detached) loop is spread over the Kangra valley, Punjab, and the northwestern region.

The identification of the probable centers of origin of rice domestication and cultivation does not seem to be an easy and undisputed problem. The botanical research has delineated a number of probable areas, but the solution of the problem will hinge on archeological discoveries of early rice-bearing contexts.

The archeological evidence of wild rice at Chopani-Mando and domesticated rice at Koldihawa and Mahagara make this

continued on next page

RICE IN INDIA

continued from page 15

The Ethnographic Data

plateau fringe a likely center of origin of rice domestication and cultivation in India. However, there is no theoretical reason why it should be considered the only early center. The botanical opinion suggests an extensive belt in east and south India, but as things stand, our knowledge of the Mesolithic and the Neolithic in this belt is still inadequate.

The Linguistic Evidence

The terms used for rice and other crops and for activities related to these crops in various Indian language-families can throw light on how a particular crop figured in the lives of the respective peoples. In the Indian region there are four major language-families— Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Munda, and Tibeto-Burman. The borrowing of certain terms by a particular language-family from another is often indicative of the primary association of that particular crop with the language family from which the relevant terms were disseminated.

The Indo-Aryan language family includes many instances of all five primary terms for rice as documented in ancient texts: *śāli*, *tandula*, *dhānya*, *bhatta*, and *vr̥hi*. *Śāli* has cognates in 27 languages, with no great difference in form and meaning (growing rice, and rice in general). *Tandula* occurs in about 20 languages. The main connotation is that of husked rice, but occasionally it has meant some kind of corn (Gujrati), rice in the field (Gawar Bati), and boiled rice (Shina). *Dhāna* or *dhānya* occurs in about 16 languages and means in most cases unhusked rice or rice paddy. The form is more or less the same in all these languages. About 22 languages have *bhatta* or its cognates in the sense of boiled rice, with the exception of Konkani where this means the husk of rice. *Vr̥hi* occurs only in 4 languages: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, and Sinhalese. In the first three this stands for rice, and in Sinhalese “growing rice”.

There is a great abundance of rice and rice-related terms in the Dravidian language family. Tamil alone has 32 such terms. The figures for the other relevant languages are: Kannada (22), Telugu (20), Malayalam (16), Tulu and Kodagu (8 each), Kuruh and Toda (6 each), Kota (5), Kui and Kolani (3 each), Malto, Gondi, Konda and Gadba (2 each). There is no doubt that the rice-related terminology is remarkable in the Dravidian language-family.

In the Munda language-family, Santali has about 24 terms related to rice and activities associated with rice. In Santali there is also an extensive set of terms for “rice fields” and “rice lands”. What, however, is most interesting is that there are 102 terms for varieties of rice plant in Santali. Terms for rice liquor, rice husk, etc., occur in other Munda languages as well.

The number of relevant terms in the Tibeto-Burman language-family is not large.

The linguistic data might not be historically conclusive, but the occurrence of 102 terms for varieties of rice plant in Santali (Munda language family) and the extensive rice vocabulary in the Dravidian language family might indicate a broad sweep of concentration of rice-related terminology in east India (the Chhotanagpur plateau region which is the main distribution area of Santali) and South India.

The ethnographic data on the regional modes of cultivation of an individual crop and the place of that crop in various peasant or tribal customs and rituals can reveal correspondence with the ancient historical sources, and thus establish or suggest a pattern of continuity between the past and the present. In the Indian context this element of continuity is a significant issue.

The ethnographic data brings out details on the regional modes of cultivation of rice from Assam in the east to Baluchistan in the west. On the basis of the archeological data it is possible to argue that by the time one reaches the early historic period, the basis of rice cultivation was secure in all the major areas of the subcontinent, and that during the early historic period itself there was possibly a considerable expansion of rice cultivation. The ethnographic data provide some insights into the different regional modes of rice cultivation during these periods.

The place of rice in certain tribal rituals suggests that the ritualistic role of rice mentioned in the corpus of early texts is not merely a feature of the ancient Indian literary tradition (which continues even now in Hindu society), but also a feature of those levels of Indian society that lie on the fringe, or outside, of this tradition. While no specific historical inference can be drawn, this surely shows how deeply rice has been a part of the Indian ethos.

Southeast Asia and China

A critical and comprehensive review of the early occurrence of rice in the archeological contexts of Southeast Asia and China has been made by Glover (1979), and following him it is possible to identify the chronological points of the beginning of rice in the archeological record of this region.

From the earliest contexts in Thailand, carbonized grains and spikelets of rice embedded in pottery have been found at Non Nok Tha and Ban Chiang in northeast Thailand dating to the late 4th Millennium BCE. There appears to be some doubt about the cultivation status of rice at the first site, but not at the second. Thus, the emergence of cultivated rice in Thailand in the late 4th Millennium BCE seems beyond dispute.

In Vietnam, the first definitive remains of rice are in the middle 2nd Millennium BCE but it has been asserted, although without positive proof, that the “early Neolithic” Bac-son culture (c. 8000 BCE) was familiar with the cultivation of hill rice. From the “late Neolithic” of about 4000 BCE there is a list of cultivated plants including rice.

In China, rice seems to be fairly common in the 3rd Millennium BCE sites. The earliest contexts that Glover reports are the Sung-tse site of Ch’ingpu, Shanghai (3395 ± 105 BCE) and the Lungshanoid-type site of Ho-mo-tu in Chekiang province (3945 ± 115 BCE and 4360 ± 100 BCE).

The chronological picture of the beginning of rice in China, southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent is thus varied, and clearly underlines the multiple origins of this crop over a wide area.

The above detailed description helps us understand why and how rice is so deeply enmeshed in all things Indian. ■

By Zilka Joseph...

The Puchkawallah of Park Circus

Forbidden from eating street food,
and carrying a four *anna* coin in my pocket,
I sneaked off as a young girl

to eat puchkas – only from
my puchkawallah. When I went to college,
he replaced his brown saal-leaf

basket with a shiny metal case, his wicker
stand with a smooth wooden stool, clay pot
with a plastic jar. I hardly walked by

his way, ate from the Russell Street
puchka man instead. I looked for him one day,
he was gone. No vendor could tell

where. Was he charming the New Market
memsahibs now? Or the lovers
in the gardens

of Victoria Memorial? Maybe
he was dead? His salt-sweet spirit
become a diya in a leaf boat

on the Ganga? I will come back
here – where the gaudy trams turn
into the depot,

buses blow dirt into teeth and hair,
I shall crunch each perfect puchka,
and with each stinging mouthful, remember.



Photo by Aamina Nizar, a freelance photojournalist originally from Sri Lanka

Eating Puchkas

Like a hypnotized fly I surrender

to the spicy-sour reek of chilies,
black salt, cumin, and tamarind

coming from the puchka man's stand.
He wipes sweat from his face with a coarse

red-checked gaamcha. Light brown-eyes smiling,
Kemon achho, chotdi? he asks. He knows my taste,

and will drop only a few slivers of green chili,
but plenty of cilantro into the crushed cumin-potatoes.

Tucking the edge of my cotton kurta out of the way,
I wind my long dupatta around my neck,

hunch over and wait. One by one, he fills
a hollow crisp-fried flour shell with this mix,

immerses it in tamarind water, drops it quickly
into the dried saal-leaf-cup in my hand. Eyes

closed, my mouth opens to the whole globe
of the puchka. It crunches against my palate, breaks.

I am a slow chewer. He is a patient man.
My cheeks fill, eyes tear up, skin glows.

My feet pull back and sideways quickly –
a quick dance to save me from the dripping leaf.

Again, he swirls the pungent water in the round belly
of the terracotta pot with his coconut shell ladle,

fills the next puchka, dunks it in the liquid,
drops it in the leaf. My hands are poised,

teeth bite down, the spice
hits the right notes,

I wait, mouth open, for the next one.

These two poems appeared previously in the literary journal at Schoolcraft College (Livonia, MI), *The MacGuffin* 25:3 (Spring/ Summer 2009). "Eating Puchkas" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

MAHARASHTRA STATE *continued from page 10*

Onion-Tomato-Peanut-Yogurt Salad

Salads are consumed mixed with rice or scooped up with bread. In Indian cuisine they are not stand-alone components of a meal. This salad, which is extremely simple to make and has countless possible variations, is a useful complement in many meals.

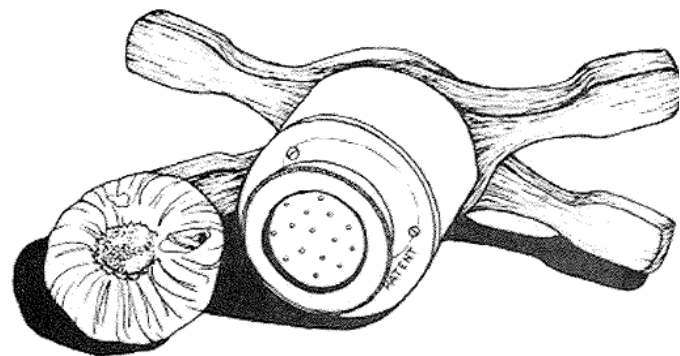
Basic Ingredients

- 2 c. tomatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, finely chopped or sliced lengthwise
- 1 c. dry-roasted peanuts, chopped
- 1½ c. plain yogurt
- 1 tsp. sugar (to taste)
- 1 tsp. black pepper, ground (to taste)
- 1 tsp. salt (to taste)
- 1 or 2 fresh green chilies, finely chopped (optional)
- fresh coriander leaves, finely chopped (optional)
- sprig of fresh mint, finely chopped (optional)

Sweet onions may be used, if preferred, or soak cut onions in cold water for 30 minutes to remove some of their hotness. Drain and mix with remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Wait at least 15 minutes before serving to allow the flavors to mix.

Variations—

1. Omit the yogurt and squeeze 2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice on the salad. Reduce salt to ½ teaspoon only.
2. Omit the yogurt and add 2 cups shredded lettuce and 3 tablespoons lemon juice.
3. Omit the onions and substitute scallions or finely chopped, preferably unpeeled, cucumbers.
4. Add thinly-sliced or freshly-chopped bell peppers.
5. With a spicy meat dish like beef or mutton curry, a salad consisting of only onions or of onions and yogurt is delicious and helps to cut the greasy taste of the meat. Follow the above procedure, using only onions or onions and yogurt. ■



Welcome to Our New CHAA Officers

We're pleased to announce that the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor is the beneficiary of a great two-for-one deal: longtime members **Margaret Joanne Nesbit** and **Judy Steeh** have volunteered to serve as co-Presidents.

We also want to express our gratitude to outgoing President **Carroll Thomson** for the wonderful job that she did for more than a decade (since Summer 2001), and to her husband **John** for his faithful assistance.

Joanne Nesbit was a writer for the Univ. of Michigan for many years, focusing on the arts, and recently retiring as a Public Information Officer. She is a transplanted Hoosier who came to Michigan in 1994, and tells us, "I've had more than 27 jobs in a variety of professions some of which were mundane, some challenging, all interesting and others absolutely fascinating." Besides culinary history, her interests have included cooking and organic gardening, and now in retirement she volunteers for a wide variety of local organizations.

Judy Steeh is a mostly-retired science writer and technical editor. She and her husband live in the Burns Park neighborhood of Ann Arbor. Although born in Ann Arbor, Judy grew up in Mt. Clemens, MI, and lived in England for nine years and in Japan for six. Food and books are her twin passions, so it's not surprising that CHAA (along with the Culinary Collection at the Clements) and AAUW, with its huge used book sale, are the organizations that take up much of her time.

We also welcome **Marionette Cano**, who is taking over the handling of the CHAA membership lists and mailings from **Bonnie Ion** (Bonnie and her husband **Patrick** are headed overseas for a stint in the Peace Corps). Marionette is an Administrative Assistant in the Univ. of Michigan School of Music.

MORSELS & TIDBITS

LSA Magazine, published by the Univ. of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, has a special Food Issue this Spring. It was inspired in part by a course that 22 UM professors from different disciplines put together this past Winter, "22 Ways to Look at Food", designed to expose sophomore students to the diversity of perspectives within the liberal arts. Examples of topics covered in the magazine:

- UM professor David J. Hancock and his book on the history of Madeira
- UM professor Daniel Okrent and his book on U.S. Prohibition
- UM professor Peggy McCracken, an expert on cannibalism
- UM Lecturer Laura Motta's course in Classical Archeology, "Food in the Ancient World"
- from the UM Clements Library collection, Armour & Company's color-lithographed "Food Source Map" (1938), whose headline trumpeted, "The Greatness of the United States is Founded on Agriculture"
- profiles of three UM-alumni chefs: Stephanie Izard of Girl and the Goat, a recent winner of Bravo TV's "Top Chef"; Rick Bayless of Frontera Grill, a recent winner of "Top Chef: Masters"; and Sara Moulton, star of TV shows such as "Sara's Weeknight Meals"
- unusual foods encountered by UM students in their study-abroad semesters
- a Detroit bagel bakery started by two recent UM graduates
- UM experts on the neurology of taste, smell, and the pleasure sensation
- UM experts on the economic viability of farmers' markets
- increased sustainability in the UM dining-hall system.

Those of us who have a sweet tooth also have two new works to gnaw on:

- CHAA member JJ Jacobson, Curator for American Culinary History at the Univ. of Michigan's Clements Library, wrote "Islands of Sugar" for the Clements publication *Quarto* 36 (Fall-Winter 2011). Using several historical treatises from the Clements collection related to the British West Indies colonies of Barbados, Grenada, and Jamaica, she traced the rise of sugar-plantation monoculture; the evolving technology of sugar production powered by windmills, draft animals, and enslaved labor; and the increasing popular demand, back in Britain, for sugar in cooking as well as in hot beverages (chocolate, coffee, and tea).
- Deborah Jean Warner, a member of the Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C. (CHoW), wrote *Sweet Stuff: An American History of Sweeteners from Sugar to Sucralose* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2011; 304 pop., \$29.95 hbk.). The book is comprehensive, covering

everything from honey, cane sugar, beet sugar, sorghum, and maple syrup to corn derivatives and chemical sweeteners. And she doesn't sugar-coat anything, either, but drags into a glaring spotlight the chicanery of the sugar lobby and other industry barons across U.S. history.

Among culinary historians, the Manhattan writer James Garfield Trager, who passed away on Feb. 29 at age 86, is probably best known as the author of a valuable reference work, *The Food Chronology* (Henry Holt, 1995). It is an encyclopedic, year-by-year compendium of red-letter dates in the history of food— some familiar, some obscure, all fascinating in their detail. Originally an ad writer, Trager had already written a couple of books exposing tall tales concerning food and nutrition before he began his chronologizing. Besides food, he also wrote comprehensive chronologies on women and on New York City. From *The Food Chronology*, we learn that exactly 150 years ago, in 1862, the world's first commercial sales of mechanical refrigerators occurred after several of the new devices were displayed at the International Exhibition in London; they had been manufactured by Daniel Siebe based on the design of Australian inventor James Harrison. On the same page, from the same year, we read about a dozen or two other developments, such as a crop failure in Lancashire; an ergotism outbreak in Finland, where rye bread was the peasants' staple; the effect of the U.S. Homestead Act; the Morrill Land-Grant Act; Congress's attempt to finance Union forces by taxing beer at \$1 per barrel; the founding of the U.S. Produce Exchange in New York; and a patent issued to a man in Maine for an improved process to preserve green corn.

"Chosen Food: Cuisine, Culture, and American Jewish Identity" is an exhibit running from February through September 30, 2012 at the Jewish Museum of Maryland (15 Lloyd Street, Baltimore). Curated by Karen Falk, the exhibit depicts not only the diversity of Jewish food customs, but the way these have reflected culture, identity, and worldview.

The 31st annual Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, this year with the theme "Stuffed & Wrapped Foods", will be held at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, UK, on July 6-8, 2012. For more information or to register, visit the website <http://www.oxfordsymposium.org.uk/>. The 27th annual Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions was held on April 21, 2012 at the Friends Meeting House in York, UK, with the theme of Vegetables, their usage and lore from medieval times onwards.

On the Back Burner: Due to delays in certain promised articles, we have adjusted our publication schedule as follows: Civil War Sesquicentennial, Part 3 (Summer 2012); Making the World Safe for American Cookbooks: How the American Century Assimilated French, Italian, Jewish, and Other Cuisines (Fall 2012); Civil War Sesquicentennial, Part 4 (Winter 2013); and African-American Cookbooks (Spring 2013). We welcome suggestions for future themes or articles.■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, May 20, 2012

Jan and Dan Longone,
founders of the Janice Bluestein Longone
Culinary Archive and of CHAA,
“Reminiscences of Julia”
(marking the centennial of Julia Child’s birth)

Sunday, August 12, 2012

4-7 p.m., Earhart Village Clubhouse
(835 Greenhills Drive, Ann Arbor)
Participatory theme meal marking the
centennial of Julia Child’s birth
(CHAA members and guests only)

REPAST
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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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First Class