



Repast

Quarterly Newsletter of t

of Ann Arbor

CONGEE COMFORT

by Etta Wong

After a childhood spent in Hong Kong and Canada, Etta Wong has been living in London, England for many years. She earned a Ph.D. in art history at London University, then completed a film studies program. She works as a freelance documentary filmmaker and scriptwriter, and also contributes articles to art and architecture journals. Etta says that she adores cooking and learned about Repast on the Internet.

Congee, plain rice gruel, has a unique status in China. Humble, unremarkable, this transubstantiation of rice, by virtue of its simplicity, possesses an appeal that is the very opposite of common. If Chinese cuisine is characterized by an *outré* sybaritic quest for taste sensations, this compulsion to improve the natural flavors of cooking ingredients may be attributed to a debatable view: that culinary artifice is the index by which one judges how far a nation has come from the caves. That said, it is strange but true that the sophistication of a *gourmand* in China is measured by his appreciation for pure white rice porridge. Congee, for the discerning palate, is the ultimate taste challenge.

At heart, I think, the Chinese are purists. Congee is the ultimate and iconic comfort food. Unprepossessing in taste, texture and appearance, it is reassuring. There are no surprises there, just liquid warmth that soothes the *dantien* (solar plexus). Its nutritional value may be negligible, but being so renders it medicinally neutral. And the placebo effect cannot be ignored, either. Chinese like myself are raised with a faith in congee's power to heal. I don't quite know how the belief triggers the effect, but I do know that congee will cleanse, it can expurgate, and at a push it can cure all. It also helps to remember that congee is epic stuff, supreme sustenance that saw Chinese families through millennia of famine and hard times.

As it turns out, the word "congee" is really English, not Chinese. It derives from *kanji*, the southern Indian name for this gruel. The term used in the rice-growing regions of

southern China is *joke*, while variations on this appear in the dialects of other regions in China (*juk/jook/tsuk, zhou/chu*).

Arguably the most popular food in China, *joke* is one of those dishes that transcends geography and history. It straddles comfortably the divides of North/South, wheatbelt/ricefield, rich/poor, *élite*/commoner, and traditional/ contemporary. A lot of Chinese people like *joke* but they are also partial to their own versions. Woe to our cook back in Hong Kong: every morning, he had to cater to my father, who liked his congee thick, the consistency of porridge; to my mum, who thought the Cantonese emulsion, runny and smooth, was perfection incarnate; and to Gran, who preferred hers light, watery and clear.

You can almost always tell which part of China someone comes from by his *joke* preferences. Like dialects, the consistency of congee varies from one region to the next. For example, along the coastal Chiuchow region of Kwantung province, the locals like their congee, called *muoi*, barely cooked, with the grains discernibly whole and separate from the broth. Further north, in Jiangnan, south of the Yangtse River, the natives like theirs the consistency of runny mash. In the north of China, traditionally the wheat-eating region, the *beifongren* ("northerners") prefer their rice gruel, called *dien*, thick. But they also have a flowing version, *hsi-fan* ("thin rice"), which they serve at breakfast.

An Ancient Standby

It seems fitting that *joke* should play a part at the start of the day. After all, its existence dates back to the beginning of Chinese written history, or even earlier. In *The Origin of Things*, a 3rd-Century BCE text, congee was said to have been the invention of Huang Di, the mythical first emperor of China. This nation that reveres ancestry has a habit of ascribing the origin of every known thing to early semi-divine figures. But there is etymological evidence to support such an attribution. The root of the word *joke* comes from a pictogram, that of rice being poured into a metal cauldron,

continued on next page

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24

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*Foods from
China: Part 2*

CONGEE COMFORT *continued from previous page*

the Neolithic *ting*. In the *Li Chi* ("Book of Rituals") from the Chou Dynasty (c. 1050 – 480 BCE), it was said that whenever disaster or famine struck, rice gruel would be distributed by the government to the needy. For a staggering 3,000 years, an evocation of agrarian belonging has been the enduring appeal of rice gruel.

Besides being ancient, another crucial thing about congee is that it is far from instant. In other words, cooking it takes a good while. Plain *joke*, known in Cantonese eateries as "open fire white congee," takes at least three hours. Water and rice, after they have been brought to a boil, are left to bubble over a high-ish heat for several hours. The desired state is a complete dissolution of the rice grains. Some may like their gruel seasoned with salt, others with a handful of finely chopped preserved vegetable.

To make congee more flavorful, restaurants prepare stock congee, referred to as "vegetarian *joke*," with pork bones, dried scallops and fish. This in turn can be used as a base for a variety of savory *jokes*, which are made by throwing in paper-thin slices of meat, offal, or seafood. A classic favorite is "Cup-D *joke*," a congee deemed fit for a *chiang yuen* (the official ranking of the prize-winning scholar at the Imperial Exam, who is destined for a high government post). Standard Cup-D is made from an amalgam of three pork products: meat balls, liver, and intestines. The addition of pork kidney and heart turns it into a "Five-color Cup-D"; and the crowning glory, "Rainbow Cup-D," features fish and egg as well.

The most celebrated *joke* ritual is the *Lap Bat* ("wax eight"). Since ancient times, once each year, when the moon is waxing on the 8th day of the 12th month of the lunar calendar, which is an important Buddhist holiday, every Chinese family would partake of a big *war* ("pot") of *Lap Bat joke*. This dish combines the five flavors—sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and hot—and makes use of all available grains—oats, millet and barley in addition to the main components, long- and short-grain rice. Legumes (such as red or green beans, soy beans, peanuts) and lotus seeds or melon seeds may be added if locally available, as well as assorted nuts (like chestnuts, pine nuts, almonds, walnuts) and dried fruits (*jujubes*, *longans* [similar to *litchis*], raisins, citrus peel) and lily bulbs as well.

In a recipe for *Lap Bat joke* found in a Chin Dynasty almanac, the instructions read as follows: "On the evening of the 7th, soak the dried ingredients and peel the fruits. On the dawn of the 8th, put the five grains and miscellaneous foodstuff into a pot. The fire should be strong at first, and then subdued. When the dish is half or almost cooked, stir in the dried fruits. Just before eating, add red or white sugar and mix well..."

Perhaps because the *Lat Bat joke*-making ritual is so redolent of ancient rural traditions, few urban Chinese observe it today. The literature of pre-revolutionary China referred to it with a frequency that suggests currency. But after the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, less and less is heard or read about it. Those who know of the ritual must be diminishing in number, and even fewer practice it now.

If literary China has forsaken *Lap Bat joke*, it is still moved to sobbing at the image of sitting down at the table with plain congee, the great binding experience. Writers wax lyrical over the virtue of congee, if indeed food can be deemed virtuous. For plain folks, congee is simply breakfast, a part of the morning ritual. For me, it is one of those foods one never tires of eating, something I will happily ingest three times a day. To snuggle down with a bowl of congee at lunchtime when the weather is bad, or when the world seems unfriendly, is a treat. To congee-wash away the disagreeable when one is feeling jaded or under the weather, that is a must.

The Tender Cares of the Amah

When I was born, in the late 1960s in Hong Kong, it was still possible to employ Chinese women who devoted their lives to being domestics. They were called *amahs*. They wore black and white as a sign of their professionalism and sisterhood. These women came from the villages in China, places frequently too impoverished to offer them employment. They found work in the cities, in order to send money home. But by custom, once someone made the decision to be an *amah*, the commitment was akin to taking irreversible nunhood. They went through a ceremony to desexualize themselves and keep a vow of celibacy, making themselves acceptable to future employers.

Our family had always been very lucky with *amahs*, and

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in my eyes they were a symbol of what is good in Chinese culture. Although repressed, they were always selfless, endlessly patient, long-suffering, invariably genuine and appreciative. For the pittance they earned, they looked after dozens of family members and relatives, sending them food and medicine, building houses for them, starting them in businesses, even adopting, supporting and educating unwanted children. In some ways, such a system was China's welfare state. And these *amahs* were almost always illiterate, which sometimes makes me wonder whether literacy is as big a deal as it is made out to be (I have also met Tibetan saints who are illiterate).

As a sniffly little kid, I used to watch *amahs* marinate rice grains with oil and salt before cooking gruel. How matter-of-factly they approach the preparation, I thought. And no one, I noticed, other than my inconsequential self, queried why ginkgo nut must be added in combination with soymilk skin? Thus I was fed a variety of traditional concoctions, and noted that each unique blend of flotsams lent the congee a different shade of taste. All these, I was told, were to make me strong. I cannot say if I owe my health to the congees, or to the enormous fuss that surrounded their making. But the thought of it still makes me feel pampered, and restored.

I did come to wonder whether a taste for this gruel has been hardwired into our genes or, instead, one must have grown up with congee for its nursery comfort to take effect? After all, boyfriends of mine who aren't Chinese have found congee plain dreadful. Plain to begin with, and after the first mouthful, dreadful.

Perhaps their reactions say more about my cooking than the desirability of *joke*, because a woman friend of mine swears that everyone within her orbit, regardless of nationality, loves congee. Even her late Greek husband loved her rice porridge— with lemon. After he died, she swore that she would remarry only a *joke* lover, inasmuch as she practically lives on the stuff herself. She did eventually marry a New Yorker (originally from Ohio), who fell in love with her *joke* as he did with her, and was delighted to swap his Häagen Dazs for her gruel. And after seven years, he still behaves like someone in the first throes of infatuation. The moment his plane lands, wherever he is, he beelines for Chinatown to have his *joke*.

Different Places, Different Tastes

The rice used for one's daily congee depends very much on what is available locally. There is a general tendency to use short-grain rice in northern China, and glutinous rice in the south. Restaurants tend to use a mixture of glutinous and long-grain rice. The glutinous rice releases a greater quantity of starch, which makes the mixture creamy, similar to using *arborio* rice for *risotto*. At home, the *amahs* just use normal long-grain rice, either from Australia or America, seldom the Thai variety. Now imagine Chinese people in the days of old, before their rice had been modified genetically for high yield: their congees must have been very different from those eaten today in taste, texture and appearance.

"The most
precious things
are not jade
and pearls,



but the five
sacred grains"
[rice, millet,
glutinous millet,
wheat/barley, and soybeans].



— proverb from Han-dynasty China

Many people even make congee from leftover cooked rice. Now me personally, I use pudding rice. I *double* cheat. First, I brown the rice in oil and wine, then cook the rice until soft for about half an hour, and then I use my blender. The result is by far tastier, although nonpurist. Also, I like my congee totally grainless. But when I decide to be healthy, I make it from either brown or red rice and leave it grainy. This I take as a medicine.

Often when I am traveling, or have been on the road for a while, I long for a bowl of *joke*. For decades, friends of my grandparents have been reluctant to travel because few hotels outside of Asia offer congee at breakfast. An uncle of mine used to insist on having his rice gruel in the morning even when he was traveling. His wife, my aunt, would smuggle a mini rice cooker into hotels, so that wherever they went, she could make breakfast congee in the privacy of their chambers.

Even today they cleave to the same routine, except that they no longer boil away surreptitiously. Instead, they demand the privilege of *joke*-making outright when they book their hotels. My aunt then turns up with a maid who takes over what used to be her own congee-making tasks.

If you think about it, most international hotels offer breakfasts that cater to different tastes: French/continental, German/Northern European, Anglo/American. They have porridge; how is it that no one has thought to put *joke* on the menu? It is, after all, a food older than leavened bread.

Try your hand at making your own congee one rainy Sunday, and let me know how you like the results. ■

EPISODES IN GLOBAL DIFFUSION



TOFU FROM CHINA TO AMERICA

by William Shurtleff

Bill Shurtleff and his wife Akiko Aoyagi founded and run the Soyfoods Center in Lafayette, CA, the world's leading source of information on soyfoods. They have intensively studied the subject for thirty years, six of them while living in Tokyo and other parts of East Asia. The couple has written The Book of Tofu and some 40 other works on soyfoods production and cookery. Most of the chronology below is drawn from their computerized SoyaScan database of 63,000 records dealing with the history of soyfoods production, from 1100 BCE to the present. The line drawings are by Akiko Aoyagi.



A traditional hand-turned millstone (quern) used to grind soybeans for the production of soy milk and tofu.

220 CE: An interesting image of a kitchen scene (discovered in the 1980s) suggests that soy products were being manufactured in northern China during the Eastern/Later Han period (25-220 CE). The image appears on a mural incised on a stone slab in Han Tomb No.1, at Da-hu-ting (Ta-hu-t'ing), Mixian (Mi-hsien), Henan Province, in northern China. Part of the scene clearly depicts two steps in the preparation of soybean milk and curd: the use of a rotary quern to grind the beans in water, forming a purée that will be boiled to produce milk, and the use of a square wooden press to squeeze whey from coagulated milk to expose the curd. Such curd, or *doufu*, will become especially popular in Buddhist monasteries, where vegetarianism is a rule.

965: *Doufu* is first mentioned in China in a surviving document, the *Ch'ing I Lu* (*Anecdotes, simple and exotic*), by T'ao Ku. It states: "In the daily market were several catties [1 catty ≈ 1 1/3 lbs.] of *doufu*. People of the region called *doufu* the 'vice mayor's mutton.'" It goes on to tell the story of a vice mayor named Jishu, who was so poor that he couldn't afford to buy mutton. Instead he bought a few pieces of *doufu* every day and ate them as a side dish with rice. Soon people in the area came to call *doufu* the "vice mayor's mutton." The story implies that *doufu* was widely consumed in China in those days and that it was less expensive than mutton.

1183: The earliest surviving mention of *tofu* in Japan is recorded in the diary of Hiroshige Nakaomi, a Shinto priest of the shrine at Nara; the *tofu* was used as an offering at the shrine's altar. The food custom had been brought to Japan by Buddhist monks and priests, probably before 750.

1489: The word *tofu* is first written in Japan with the characters used today. *Tofu*, once enjoyed mainly by monks, is being popularized among lay people as restaurants specializing in *shojin ryori* (Zen temple cookery) spring up in the major temples of Japan's larger cities.

1603: Portuguese Jesuit missionaries living in Nagasaki, Japan compile the *Vocabulario da lingua de Iapam...* (*Vocabulary of the language of Japan*), the earliest dictionary of the Japanese language written by Europeans. Here, *tofu* is mentioned by name (variously *cabe*, *tôfu*, and *taufu*) for the first time in a European-language document.

1613: For a second time the word *tofu* is mentioned in writing by a Westerner, albeit indirectly. Captain John Saris, commander of an expeditionary fleet of the English East India Company, observes of the Japanese: "Of Cheese [presumably meaning *tofu*] they haue plentie. Butter they make none, neither will they eate any Milke, because they hold it to bee as bloud [blood], nor tame beasts."

1665: *Tofu* is first described by a European, Domingo Fernández de Navarrete, in his book *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*. Navarrete, who serves as a Dominican missionary in China, writes: "Before I proceed to the next chapter, because I forgot it in the first book, I will here briefly mention the most usual, common and cheap sort of food all *China* abounds in, and which all men in that empire eat, from the emperor to the meanest *Chinese*, the emperor and great men as a dainty, the common sort as necessary sustenance. It is call'd *teu fu*, that is, paste of kidney-beans. I did not see how they made it. They draw the milk out of the kidney-beans, and turning it, make great cakes of it like cheeses, as big as a large sieve, and five or six fingers thick. All the mass is as white as the very snow, to look to nothing can be finer. It is eaten raw, but generally boil'd and dressed with herbs, fish, and other things. Alone it is insipid, but very good so dressed and excellent fry'd in butter. They have it also dry'd and smok'd, and mix'd with caraway-seeds, which is best of all. It is incredible what vast quantities of it are consum'd in *China*, and very hard to conceive there should be such abundance of kidney-beans. That *Chinese* who has *teu fu*, herbs and rice, needs no other sustenance to work; and I think there is no body but has it, because they may have a pound (which is above twenty ounces) of it any where for a half-penny. It is a great help in case of want, and is good for carriage. It has one good

quality, which is, that it causes the different airs and seasons, which in that vast region vary much, to make no alteration in the body, and therefore they that travel from one province to another make use of it. *Teu fu* is one of the most remarkable things in *China*, there are many will leave pullets for it. If I am not deceiv'd, the *Chineses* of *Manila* [Philippines] make it, but no *European* eats it, which is perhaps because they have not tasted it, no more than they do fritters fry'd in oil of *Ajonjoli* [sesame seed] (a very small seed they have in *Spain* and *India*, which we have not) which the *Chineses* make in that city and is an extraordinary dainty."

May 1765: Soybean plants are first grown in the Western Hemisphere after Samuel Bowen, a Georgia seaman on an East India Trading Company voyage to China, brings soybeans back to Georgia via London; the beans are planted by Henry Yonge, Surveyor-General of Georgia, on his farm in Savannah. Some of the beans are used to produce soy sauce and noodles for export to England.



Jan. 11, 1770: A letter of Benjamin Franklin is the earliest known document in which an American mentions *tofu*. Visiting London, Franklin writes back to John Bartram of Philadelphia, PA, sending him some soybeans and enclosing "Father Navarrete's account of the universal use of a cheese made of them in China, which so excited my curiosity, that I caused enquiry to be made of Mr. [James] Flint, who lived many years there, in what manner the cheese was made, and I send you his answer. I have since learned that some runnings of salt (I suppose runnet) is put into water, when the meal is in it, to turn it to curds." The "runnings of salt" mentioned by Franklin refers to mineral salts, usually sea salts, traditionally used to coagulate soymilk into curds. Franklin calls soybeans themselves "Chinese caravances" ("caravance" being a variant of the word "garbanzo"). Although James Flint had been on the same voyage as Samuel Bowen five years earlier (see 1765), Franklin is unaware that soybeans have already been introduced to colonial Georgia.

1821: The second known reference to *tofu* in America, and the first to be published there, appears in *The Domestic Encyclopedia* by A. F. M. Willich of Philadelphia, PA. Speaking of soybeans (which he calls "the seeds of the Chinese plant *Dolichos soja*"), he writes: "These seeds are used in China and Japan as food; they are made into a kind of jelly or curd, which is esteemed very nutritious, and which is rendered palatable by seasonings of different kinds."

Summer 1851: Soybeans are first introduced to the Midwestern U.S., after Dr. Benjamin Franklin Edwards is given seeds by a Japanese seaman; Edwards brings the seeds to Alton, IL (on the banks of the Mississippi River), where his friend, engineer and businessman John H. Lea, plants them in his garden and disseminates their offspring to others in the Midwest.

Dec. 1870: The term "bean curd" is first used. Emil V. Bretschneider, writing in English in the *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* (Foochow, p. 173), notes that "Bean-curd is one of the most important articles of food in China," and follows this with an accurate description of how it was made.

1878: The earliest *tofu* manufacturer in the U.S., Wo Sing & Co., is in business at 708½ Dupont Street in San Francisco, CA, making both fresh and fermented *tofu*. The company is one of many food producers that arise to serve the wave of Chinese immigrants settling in the Western states.

1880: French horticulturalist Nicolas-Auguste Paillieux publishes a seminal 117-page article "Le Soya, sa composition chimique, ses variétés, sa culture, et ses usages" in the *Bulletin du Société d'Acclimatation* (Paris). The article analyzes the botany and nutritional composition of soybeans, their cultivation and uses in Asia and Europe, and summarizes the Society's experiments since 1858 in producing *teou-fou*, *miso*, *shoyu* and other soyfoods. These mark the first European successes in producing *tofu*, although not yet on a commercial scale.

1895: Hirata & Co. of Sacramento, CA, the earliest known Japanese-American company in the U.S., starts production of *tofu*.

Jun. 1896: *Tofu* first appears in print in an American scientific journal in an article by pharmacist Henry Trimble, "Recent Literature on the Soja Bean" (*American Journal of Pharmacy*).

1906: Chinese immigrant Sing Hau Lee of San Francisco, CA establishes Quong Hop & Co., a shop where *tofu* is made fresh daily, and which survives today at 171 Beacon Street as the oldest *tofu* maker in the U.S.



Li Yu-ying
1881-1973

1910: Europe's first commercial soyfoods manufacturer, Caséo-Sojaïne, is founded by Li Yu-ying, a Chinese citizen, biologist and engineer, at 46-48 Rue Denis Papin, Les Valées, Colombes, near Asnières, a few miles northwest of Paris. By May 1911 he is making and selling *tofu*, and by August he has added smoked *tofu*, pressed *tofu* sheets, fermented *tofu* cheese (in Gruyere, Roquefort, and Camembert flavors), and soymilk. Soon he has produced mock ham and other meats. Li is granted numerous French, British and American patents for the production of such foods.

1923: The oldest surviving Japanese-American *tofu* company, H. Iwanaga Daufu, is founded at 1031 Aala St. in Honolulu, HI. The company will be renamed Shoshiro Kanehori Tofu in 1926, and Haruko Uyeda Tofu in 1937, still at the same address. In about 1939, the company will be

purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Shokin Yamauchi, who later rename it Aala Tofu Co., as it is named today.

1929: Henry Ford in Dearborn, MI sets his scientists and engineers intensively researching soy products for food and industrial uses. The effort becomes an important part of the "farm chemurgy movement," which seeks to bolster the position of farmers by enabling them to produce for industry. Ford inspires hundreds of farmers in southeastern Michigan to begin soybean production, and he remains the leading soybean man in the U.S. until soy farming skyrockets in the Midwest after World War 2.

Nov. 1929: T. A. Van Gundy, a Seventh-day Adventist and founder of La Sierra Industries in Arlington, CA (near Riverside), introduces La Sierra Soya Cheese, thereby becoming the first non-Asian to produce *tofu* commercially. His product is canned, and a pimiento is added to prevent graying after canning. Interestingly, the first five Caucasian-run *tofu* companies in the Western World were all founded and run by Adventists, a group known for its interest in health, diet and vegetarianism (the Kellogg family of Michigan are another famous example); in each of these five cases, the *tofu* product was canned, and the word "cheese" was used in the brand name.

Early 1930s: Azumaya Tofu Seizo-sho, later renamed Azumaya Co., begins production of *tofu*, *yaki-dofu* (grilled cakes), and *ganmodoki* (deep-fried patties) in San Francisco, CA at 1636 Post Street, between Buchanan and Laguna Streets. The company itself, owned by a Mr. Teranishi, might have been founded as far back as the early 1920s. In Feb. 1937, it will be sold to Saichi Mizono and his wife and two sons (George and Jack).

Dec. 1932: Madison Foods (a company run by students and faculty of Madison College, a pioneering work/study school of medicine and agriculture in Madison, TN and affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventists) is producing Soy Cheese and a calcium-fortified soymilk. By 1939 it launches Cheze-O-Soy (seasoned *tofu*), and by 1940 a canned *tofu* bologna named Yum.

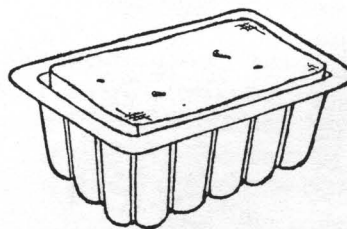
1934: Loma Linda Food Co. (Adventist) in Loma Linda, CA, has been producing Loma Linda Vege-Cheese (canned *tofu* with pimiento).

Sep. 1942: Dr. Harry Miller, an Adventist physician who had worked for many years in China as a medical missionary, adds Miller's Soya Cheese (canned *tofu*) to his line of soymilk products made in a large brick plant in Mt. Vernon, OH.

Sep. 1944: Butler Food Co. in Cedar Lake, MI (southwest of Mt. Pleasant), another Adventist-owned business, introduces Butler's Soynut Cheese (canned *tofu*).

1946: Shoan Yamauchi, son of Shokin Yamauchi (see 1923), who has worked for years in the family *tofu* business, moves to Los Angeles, CA and purchases the Hinode Tofu Co.

1958: A letter from journalist George Yoshinaga prompts Los Angeles, CA to pass a new regulation requiring that *tofu* be sold in individual containers. The world's first commercially packaged *tofu* is introduced in the city by Hinode Tofu Co. owner Shoan Yamauchi, who has conceived of the idea of putting individual cakes of *tofu* each in a plastic bag with water, sealing the bag with a heat sealer, placing the bag in a stiff paper deli carton with a wire handle, then folding the top over. Yamauchi sees the crossover potential of the product and places it in the Boy's Market chain of about a dozen stores across the city, the first marketing of *tofu* in any U.S. supermarket.



1966: Shoan Yamauchi, owner of Hinode Tofu Co. (see 1946, 1958), becomes the first to package *tofu* in the plastic trays and tubs that are standard today. Yamauchi asks the Sealright Company of Los Angeles to devise a waterproof plastic tray for his *tofu*. His

own innovations in packaging include a very deep tray, holding 26-28 ounces; a method for heat-sealing a plastic film to the flange of a tray which has cold water flooding over it; and high-speed sealing machines to pack and seal the *tofu* in his plant.

1973: As the price of meat in the U.S. skyrockets, a new soybean product, textured vegetable protein (TVP), enjoys a huge burst of popularity as a meat extender and substitute.

1974: Grace F. Kikuchi of Ann Arbor, MI publishes *Tofu Recipes* (Braun-Brumfield Inc.), a 47-page velo-bound book bringing together her adaptations of Japanese, Chinese and Korean dishes. The publication rides a wave of interest in natural and vegetarian foods among University of Michigan students.

Mar. 1975: Alec Evans founds the Welcome Home Bakery and Tofu Shop (Corvallis, OR). He is the first Caucasian American, other than the Adventists, to produce *tofu* commercially.

Dec. 1975: William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi publish *The Book of Tofu: Food for Mankind* (Autumn Press, Emeryville, CA). The book instructs readers how to shop for *tofu* products or make their own, how to store and cook them, along with nutritional characteristics and traditional production techniques. Under the heading "America's Soy Protein Tragedy," the authors decry "the present situation in America, the world's largest producer of soybeans, where the majority of people have not yet tasted, seen, or even heard of *tofu*." The book will play a key role in popularizing *tofu* in Europe and the Americas, with sales reaching about 550,000 by 1997. During the 1970s and 1980s, a total of 65 books on *tofu* (at least 48 pages long) will be published in Europe and the Americas, 40 of these in the U.S. alone.

Aug. 1977: Takai Tofu & Soymilk Equipment Co. publishes its first English-language equipment catalog. Two years

later, Shurtleff and Aoyagi publish *Tofu & Soymilk Production* (Soyfoods Center, Lafayette, CA). These publications will be utilized in the establishment of hundreds of *tofu* manufacturing companies in the Americas, Europe, and some Third World countries. By April 1982, there will be 242 manufacturers of *tofu* in the Americas and Europe, including 173 in the U.S. alone

Sep. 1977: White Wave, owned by Steve Demos, starts producing *tofu* at 1738 Pearl Street in Boulder, CO.

1977: Morinaga Milk Industry Co., Ltd. in Japan introduces the world's first aseptically packaged *tofu*, in a Tetra Brik carton.

1977: The first *tofu* in the Western World to be labeled "organic" goes into production by Swan Foods Corporation, owned by Robert Brooks and Mary Pung, at The Soybeanery, 5758½ Bird Road, Miami, FL. Swan Foods is also the first American company to make a wide variety of soyfoods, and the first to open a soy deli. The following April, Nasoya Foods, owned by John Paino and Bob Bergwall, starts producing water-packed Nasoya Organic Tofu at Mechanic Street Exit, Leominster, MA.

1983: House Food Industrial Co., Ltd. of Japan purchases 50% ownership in Yamauchi Enterprises, formerly Hinode Tofu Co. in Los Angeles (see 1946, 1958, 1966). The company is renamed House Foods & Yamauchi, Inc. Ten years later, House Foods Corp. of Japan will purchase the remaining 50% and rename the company House Foods America Corporation.

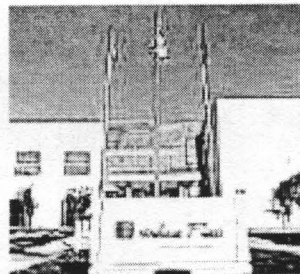
Summer 1986: Some 45 brands of *tofu* "ice cream" have been introduced in the U.S. in the past few years. The wildly popular product is made by blending chilled *tofu* with sweeteners and other flavorings.

Aug. 3, 1990: Hong Kong Soya Bean Products Co. Ltd., makers of Vitasoy® soymilk since 1940, acquires Nasoya Foods (see 1977). In June 1993, it will also purchase Azumaya Inc. (see Early 1930s), the largest *tofu* manufacturer in the U.S., for an estimated \$4-\$5 million.

1994: The U.S. soybean crop, grown mainly in the Midwest, exceeds 2.5 billion bushels for the first time, representing 52% of world production.

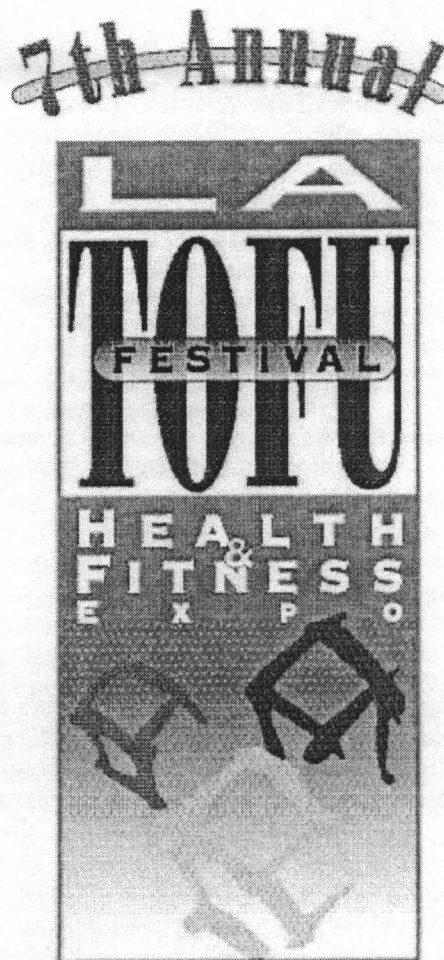


1996: The Little Tokyo Service Center hosts the first annual Los Angeles Tofu Festival, attracting over 10,000 people. By 2002, the Festival will include a cooking competition as well as a health & fitness expo.



Mar. 12, 1997: House Foods America Corporation (see 1983) holds its ceremonial opening of America's largest *tofu* factory, in Garden Grove, CA; the company closes its central Los Angeles plant.

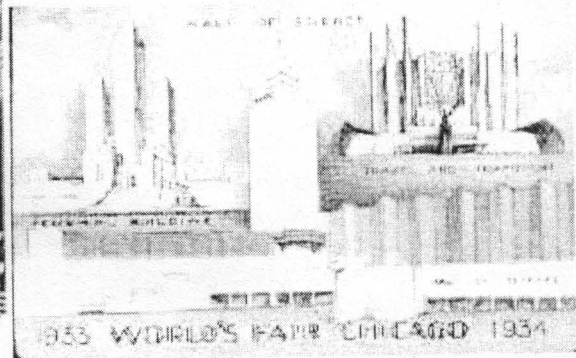
Nov. 2000: Hsing-Tsung Huang, a biochemist at the National Science Foundation (Washington, D.C.), publishes *Fermentations and Food Science* as Volume 6 Part V of the late Joseph Needham's monumental project *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge Univ. Press). Huang had served as Needham's assistant on the project beginning in 1943. His section on soybean processing and fermentation, running 86 pages, represents the most authoritative historical treatment ever written of *tofu* and other soyfoods. Alan Davidson, in a review, predicts "this 740-page book will, for the purposes of world food history, be the most important book of the decade." ■



HENRY FORD CRANKS UP THE SOY INDUSTRY

03

BACK TO THE FUTURE



by Randy K. Schwartz

Picture, if you will, 1934's Chicago Century of Progress World Fair with its sleek, futuristic pavilions of concrete and steel. Now, imagine how puzzled the fairgoers must have been when they arrived at the exhibit of the Ford Motor Company—the world's leading industrial corporation—and they gazed upon rows of soybeans planted beside an old 1863 hay barn. Then, entering the barn, which had been hauled in from Dearborn, Michigan, visitors listened and watched as machinery methodically pressed oil out of dried soybeans, then turned the residual meal into high-grade industrial plastic!

A special treat at the Fair was the dinner served up inside the Ford exhibit on August 17. As described by William Adams Simonds in *Henry Ford and Greenfield Village* (New York: Henry A. Stokes Company, 1938), the meal consisted entirely of dishes incorporating “a plant common to Manchukuo [Japanese-occupied Manchuria], the soybean.” This was the menu:

- Tomato Juice Seasoned with Soybean Sauce
- Salted Soybeans
- Celery Stuffed with Soybean Cheese
- Purée of Soybean
- Soybean Crackers
- Soybean Croquettes with Tomato Sauce
- Buttered Green Soybeans
- Pineapple Ring with Soybean Cheese and Soybean Dressing
- Soybean Bread with Soybean Butter
- Soybean Macaroons
- Apple Pie (Soybean Crust)
- Cocoa with Soybean Milk
- Soybean Coffee
- Assorted Soybean Cookies
- Soybean Cakes
- Assorted Soybean Candy

The futuristic nature of this dinner becomes more clear when we compare its foods to others now familiar to us. For instance, “Salted Soybeans” were made by soaking the beans in water and roasting them in soybean oil, much like the soynuts we enjoy nowadays. And “Soybean Cheese” was none other than *tofu*, made from soymilk in the Asian manner. Simonds described the *tofu* as “similar to cottage cheese except in flavor,” a likeness that must have inspired the “Pineapple Ring” experiment. “While somewhat insipid in taste,” he added, “the cheese proves very useful when mixed in salads, sandwich spreads, [and] croquettes with a

food having a strong flavor.”

It was daring for the Ford exhibit to serve salad dressing and *ersatz* butter made from soybean oil, but today such items are ubiquitous on grocery shelves. (In fact, soybean oil now accounts for 80% of Americans' consumption of edible fats and oils.) Munching on “Buttered Green Soybeans” shucked from tender young pods will also strike a chord with anyone who has enjoyed the *edamame* that are the rage now in Japanese and other restaurants in North America. Green soybeans were already being sold in cans in the early 1930s back in Dearborn at Ford's Greenfield Village campus, thanks to a canning process perfected there by a team of food and diet researchers directed by Dr. Edsel Ruddiman. As reflected on the dinner menu, the team had also discovered how to use lecithin (a lipoprotein extracted from soybeans) as an emulsifier for chocolate sauce and a coating for candies, still among its key uses today.

Henry Ford had launched his corporate soybean campaign in 1929. The stock market would crash in October, but American farms had already sunk into depression a few years earlier; the auto tycoon vowed to help relieve their plight. At Greenfield Village, he opened chemical and nutrition labs to search for industrial and culinary uses of soybeans, wheat, corn, melons, sugarbeets, sunflowers and other crops. Soybean oil was successfully turned into paints, enamels, varnishes, diesel fuel, foundry cores and other items useful to the auto industry, as well as ink, soap, and margarine and other food products. Soy meal was made into plastic for molded car parts, and stalks and fibers into fabric, pressboard and solvents.

A Fledgling Soyfoods Industry Takes Flight

Within two years, Ford had conducted \$1.25 million worth of soy experiments, and the company was harvesting over 7,400 acres of soybeans from its own fields in southeastern Michigan. To encourage other farmers to follow suit, it offered loans of soybean seed, payable in kind from later harvests. Ford scientists soon developed a new variety of soybean, the Greenfield, whose yield per acre exceeded that of other varieties by 30-60%. A soy plastics factory was built at the River Rouge complex at a cost of \$4 million.

Ford's soybean success, especially in devising edible

products, was not a bolt from the blue. He built upon earlier know-how from Asia, Europe, and America. Since well before the U.S. Civil War, some soybeans had been cultivated in the U.S. to make soy sauce (*shoyu*). During that war, when coffee was scarce, troops brewed a substitute using soybeans. Both "Soybean Sauce" and "Soybean Coffee" were included in Ford's 1934 dinner.

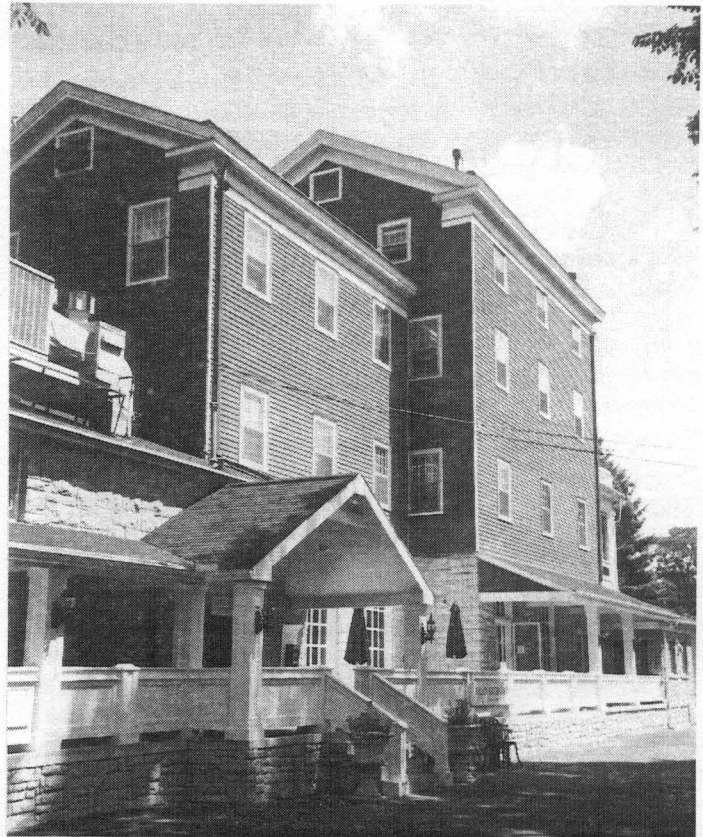
After the boll weevil struck the South in 1892, devastated cotton fields were sometimes planted with soybeans to be sold as cattle fodder. Could more of these beans be diverted for human consumption? In 1904 the well-known African-American agrochemist George Washington Carver, at the urging of his vegetarian friend Henry Ford, began studying soybeans at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Carver soon discovered the beans' value as a rich source of protein. In addition to soy oil and soymilk, he developed a soy flour as a nutritious addition to bread. When wheat flour was at a premium during WW1, the U.S. government encouraged homemakers to use soy flour in bread, meat loaf, croquettes and other dishes, but such flour was not yet widely available. Later, loaves of "Carver's Colonial Bread," baked using a 1925 commercial recipe, were sold to Ford employees in Dearborn.

Chinese immigration to the Midwest also spurred the use of soyfoods there. When anti-Chinese sentiment erupted in California in 1875, groups of Chinese immigrants began fleeing to cities like St. Louis and Chicago. By 1891, there was a community of some 500 Chinese living on South Clark Street in Chicago. In 1911, the Chinese Community Center there moved to 22nd Place and became the anchor of a Chicago Chinatown that still exists. That same year, the Chino-American Publishing Co. in Chicago came out with one of the first Chinese cookbooks in the U.S., Jessie Louis Nolton's *Chinese Cookery in the Home Kitchen* (the book was actually published in Detroit).

The April 1935 issue of Ford's *Bulletin of the Edison Institute of Technology* was devoted to "Soy Beans (brought from China by Henry Ford)." It was prefaced by a quote from the chairman himself:

I believe that Industry and Agriculture are natural partners. Agriculture suffers from lack of a market for its product, Industry suffers from lack of employment for its surplus men. Bringing them together heals the ailments of both. I see the time coming when the farmer not only will raise raw materials for industry, but will do the initial processing on his farm. He will stand on both feet— one foot on the soil for his livelihood, the other in industry for the cash he needs. Then he will have a double security. That is what I'm working for!

Although Ford's envisioned goal, to "industrialize agriculture" as he put it, would have to await the rise of agribusiness in the late 20th Century, his impact on the soy industry was more immediate and had global consequences. Previously, the soybean crop in America had been relatively minor, and localized in the South. "Soya beans were used as animal feed," sums up Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat in *A History of Food* (Paris, 1987), "and in particular in the oil manufacturing industry. The Ford factories made plastics for car accessories from the residue of oilcake left after the oil



This was the main building of the Ford Soybean Mill in Saline, MI. In 1937, Ford dammed the Saline River and built this water-powered mill there. Soybeans, purchased from hundreds of local farms, were cleaned and stored in this building, which featured two large hydroturbines. The beans were processed into meal in an adjacent one-story plant. After U.S. entry into WW2, the property was refurbished to produce aircraft bearings. Following the war, the company sold the property and it was run by Soybrands, Inc. Today, it's a restaurant called Weller's Carriage House, at 555 W. Michigan Ave. (Photo: Randy Schwartz, 1998.)

had been pressed out. Suddenly American farmers reacted: soya growing began in the Central West of the United States, spread fast, and soon covered some 20 states. The USA, which had been the biggest importer of fats before 1940, now became their biggest exporter."

Readers who want to learn more about Ford's work with soybeans, and about other aspects of soyfood history in America, can visit the online Museum of Soy at the address <http://www.thesoydailyclub.com>, which includes a number of essays by William Shurtleff. Shurtleff's database at the Soyfoods Center includes 235 items on the farm chemurgic movement, and 748 on Ford company research. Soybean cookery as carried out personally for Henry Ford is detailed in a memoir by Jan Willemse and Eleanor Eaton, *Cooking for Henry: The Memories and Recipes of Chef Jan Willemse, Former Pastry Chef at Dearborn Inn and Personal Party Chef for Henry Ford I* (Virginia Beach, VA: Donning Co., 1993), available at the library of the Henry Ford Museum at Greenfield Village. David E. Wright, head of the Intellectual Integrity Office at Michigan State University, is completing a book-length version of his 1998 booklet *The Farm Chemurgic: Changes in Agricultural Entrepreneurship Between the Two World Wars*. ■

C.H.A.A. PROGRAMS

❧

FROM THE ART OF COOKING TO THE POETRY OF EATING

A Delicious Sense of Rhythm and Rhyme

A cornucopia of poems about food was the source of delight at our group's January 20 meeting. We were led by Marvin A. Brandwin, an emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Michigan Medical School and now himself a compulsive rhymester. Dr. Brandwin shared some two dozen of his original poems with us— short, whimsical pieces about everything from matzo to the artichoke, from dieting to the “you are what you eat” dictum. Thus emboldened, we all took turns reading verses that we'd found or written ourselves. Examples included William Thackeray's “The Ballad of Bouillabaisse”; George Martin Lane's “One Fish Ball”; “Stewed Duck and Peas,” an example of the “recipes in rhyme” that were fashionable in women's magazines and charity cookbooks one century ago; the Cole Porter lyric “The Tale of an Oyster” from the 1959 play “Fifty Million Frenchmen”; and “Arriving at Onion” by Chicago performance artist Kelly Williams, with its last line “I have more layers than you have endurance.”

Honest Talk About Honest Food

“Most restaurant food in Ann Arbor doesn't rise to the level of intelligence of this town,” declared restaurant manager/owner Jean Henry; her partner, chef/owner Matthew Banks, pressed the offensive with a critique of “vertically towering food, and fancy garnishes.” In their joint talk on February 17, “Honest Food: Cooking Food with Integrity and Common Sense in the Real World of the Restaurant Business,” the pair expounded a philosophy of cooking shaped by their experiences in the restaurant worlds of Michigan and California, and most notably influenced by the example of Alice Waters at Chez Panisse in the Bay Area.

Jean and Matt have converted the Jefferson Market, a small, brick corner store on the west side of Ann Arbor, into a popular neighborhood eatery and carryout featuring an open kitchen and a rotating dinner menu. They advocate short menus and dishes prepared from scratch; fresh, locally-grown ingredients and time-tested, time-devouring cooking methods (stewing, braising, simmering, etc.); combining the best of diverse international cooking traditions; further democratizing the dining experience by breaching the chasm between “high” and “low” cuisine; and steering clear of institutional-food giants and gimmicky marketing approaches.

From Meager Gruels to Rich *Tajines*

At our March 17 meeting, *Repast* editor Randy Schwartz spoke on “Islam and the Transformation of Foodways in Medieval Morocco.” The PowerPoint presentation incorporated photos from his stay in Chefchaouen during Summer 2001. Randy described the social and economic forces that created one of the world's most refined cuisines in Morocco and neighboring Iberia. Islam's spread across North Africa in the 7th Century had unleashed forces that encouraged the gradual settling of pastoral peoples into farming plots, villages, towns and great cities. Ingredients such as wheat, butter, and irrigated fruits, once scorned by nomads as symbols of extravagance, became desirable markers of wealth.

Islam didn't simply sweep away pastoral traditions. Humble meals such as *'asidah* (a barley gruel), *tharidah* (a crumb soup) and *bissara* (a fava bean purée) were dramatically elaborated into rich *tajines* (ragouts) of fruits, vegetables and meats, and dishes such as the famous *bastilla* (pigeon pastry). A far wider spectrum of foods was available in this empire than ever before. Even social, medical and religious doctrines became factors in modernizing the cuisine. Galen's theory of humoral balance was revived and used to justify an endless cascade of spices and other ingredients. Islam virtually banned the consumption of alcohol, but adopted sweets and other stimulants as symbols of Paradise. The Moors helped whet the appetite of Europe to import spices and to harvest sugar cane, appetites that later helped create the modern world.

Taste and Fashion in the Food Industry

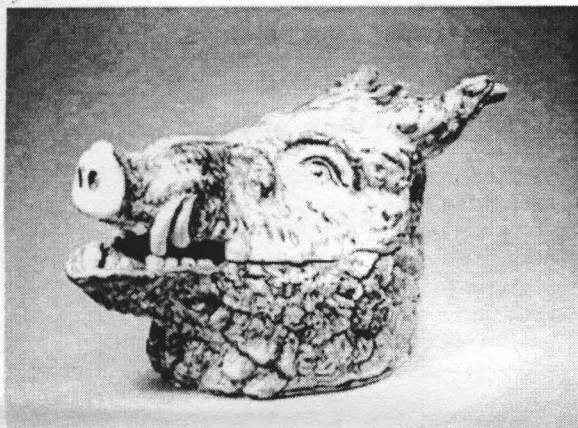
On April 21 we were honored to chat with Julee Rosso, who has returned to her native Michigan having achieved success and fame in New York City. There, in 1977, she and Sheila Lukins co-founded the Silver Palate restaurant and catering and retailing business, and later served as joint Food Editors for *Parade* magazine. Three different CHAA members came to the meeting with goods baked from *The Silver Palate Cookbook*, the first of several recipe books published by the duo. Rosso now runs the Wickwood Country Inn, an acclaimed small inn that she founded in Saugatuck, MI.

Among the formative influences on her early cooking, Rosso cited Simone Beck/ Louisette Bertholle/ Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961, 1970) and Roy Andries de Groot's *The Auberge of the Flowering Hearth* (1973). She praised two current periodicals, Edward Behr's *The Art of Eating* and David Rosengarten's *The Rosengarten Report*, while disparaging what she sees as the increasing homogenization of cookbooks themselves, which tend toward the coffee-table variety and reflect their editors' tastes as much as their authors'. Rosso also criticized “fusion cooking” as an adulteration of traditions. Notwithstanding an ebb of cooking artistry in modern homes, she sees hope in the growing realization that the use of high-quality and local ingredients obviates the need for Herculean efforts in the kitchen.

continued on next page

MORSELS & TIDBITS

The exhibit "What's In Your Tureen: Soup, Stew, or *Ragoût?*" continues through August 11 at the **Carnegie Museum of Art** in Pittsburgh. The show centers on ten large stewpots and tureens, such as a graceful 1740 porcelain tureen from the Meissen factory in Germany, and a 1760 French tin-glazed earthenware tureen in the shape of a boar's head (see below), complete with menacing tusks, and jowl apertures to vent steam. The display discusses the foods appropriate to each item, including recipes from La Varenne, Carême, Escoffier, Hannah Glasse and Amelia Simmons. The opening on Feb. 7 featured a tasting of three of these historical soups and an accompanying lecture by cookbook author **Barbara Kafka**, who has just published *Soup: A Way of Life*.



CHAA member Judy Goldwasser calls our attention to a fun piece called "Novel Recipes," written by **Tom Nugent** of Hastings, MI, a former colleague of hers at the *Detroit Free Press*. In his whimsical article, which appears in the September 2001 issue of *Johns Hopkins University Magazine* and also on the Internet (<http://www.jhu.edu/~jhumag/0901web/ruminate.html>), Nugent figures out a way to cook four different snacks whose reconstruction just might shake the literary world: "Chocolate Chip Cookies Madeleine" from Marcel Proust's *A Remembrance of Snack-Times Past*, "Pan-Fried Mountain Trout in the Afternoon" from Ernest Hemingway's *Valiant Swimmers*, "Cracklin'-Broiled Pigs' Feet Vainglorious" from William Faulkner's *Valiant Recipes*, and "Bobbie Sue's Double-Fried Fiery Chicken Violence" from Joyce Carol Oates' *Fire in the Kitchen!*

On a sadder note, we learned that the scholar **Phyllis Pray Bober** passed away on May 30 at the age of 81. Bober, a humanities professor and graduate school dean at Bryn Mawr College (PA) beginning in 1973, was a highly respected classical archaeologist and historian of art and cuisine. She was most proud of her decades-long project, "The Census of Classical Works Known to the Renaissance," but among culinary historians she was perhaps best known for her book *Art, Culture and Cuisine: Ancient and Medieval Gastronomy* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999; 480pp., \$50 cloth). The volume covers ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Greece and Rome as well as medieval Europe, showing that cuisines, like other fine arts, are mirrors that deeply reflect the social and

intellectual currents that prevailed in a given time and place. Bober's discussion was never dry or abstract, and her book includes a section of adapted recipes to exemplify each cuisine. She was famous for organizing elaborate banquets to bring past cultures to life; one Roman feast at Bryn Mawr featured a 102-lb. wild boar roasted in a college oven. Bober's death cut short her plans to complete a follow-up volume covering Renaissance through modern cuisines.

We also mourn the passing of **John Haughton D'Arms**, 67, longtime professor of classical studies and graduate school dean at the University of Michigan, who died of brain cancer on January 22. D'Arms was a specialist in the history of ancient Roman cities, culture and society and the author of two scholarly books, *Romans on the Bay of Naples: a Social and Cultural Study of the Villas and Their Owners from 150 B.C. to A.D. 400* (1970) and *Commerce and Social Standing in Ancient Rome* (1980). He was especially well known for his analysis of Roman *convivia*, or public and private feasts. In articles such as "The Roman Convivium and the Idea of Equality" and "Slaves at Roman Convivia," he mined records of these spectacles in order to gain rich insights into Roman attitudes toward wealth and social class. In October 1996, at the University of Michigan's Food in Global History Conference, he gave a talk on "Ancient Roman Spectacle and the Banquets of the Powerful." At the time of his death, D'Arms was serving a distinguished term as president of the American Council of Learned Societies, while researching a book-length general study of the social and cultural conventions concerning food and drink in Roman society, a work now regrettably never finished. ■

C.H.A.A. PROGRAMS *continued from previous page*

Cookbook collecting: "A gentle lunacy"

Collecting cookbooks was always "just a hobby" for Maureen Hathaway, a longtime radio and newspaper executive who now heads her own consulting firm in Holly, MI specializing in online media. But as Maureen told us at our May 19 meeting, her "hobby" might be better described as "a gentle lunacy." She owns literally thousands of cookbooks, some inherited from her mother and grandmother, but most of them hunted down in earnest from the 1970s on. She also showed us examples of such culinary ephemera as commercial promotional brochures, public-school cooking guides, and newspaper-sponsored cooking-school circulars.

Hathaway has collected some 3,000 food-related items from Michigan alone, about two-thirds of them charity and community cookbooks. She owns books from every county in the state, and from hundreds of towns therein. Michigan food traditions include such specialized topics as the use of fruits and berries, dairy foods, salt, fish, and maple syrup; the history of Gerber and other commercial baby foods; health foods, from the days of Kellogg and Post through the youth culture; and such ethnic traditions as Dutch, German, Finnish, Black, Jewish and Chinese. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Except where noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6pm at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

July 21, 2002

Summer participatory picnic
 "Celebrating Julia Child's 90th Birthday"
 3-6 p.m. at Midge and Bob Lusardi's home
 12726 Vernon, Huntington Woods, MI

September 15, 2002

3-5 p.m. at Univ. of Michigan Clements
 Library
 (joint meeting with Washtenaw County
 Historical Society)
 Janice B. Longone, Curator of American
 Culinary History
 "Dr. Chase and His Famous 19th-Century
 Recipe Book"

October 20, 2002

Marguerite Humes, author of
 Celebrating 300 Years of Detroit Cooking
 1701-2001 (Detroit Historical Society)

November 17, 2002

Prof. Jeffrey R. Parsons, Univ. of
 Michigan Dept. of Anthropology
 "Traditional Salt Making in Ancient and
 Modern Mexico"

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Volume XVIII Number 3, Summer 2002

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