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Repast

Quarterly Newsletter of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

FOOD IN THE LIVES OF SOUTHERN ITALIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CHICAGO, 1880-1930

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MORE THAN NOURISHMENT, MORE THAN SUSTENANCE

by Judy Chesen

Dr. Chesen, who has been a CHAA member or newsletter subscriber for a number of years, lives in Centerville, a suburb of Dayton, OH, with her husband and nine-year-old son. Currently, she is teaching American history and ethnic history at Wilmington College and Capital University, and conducting research on women's, ethnic, immigration and culinary history. Originally a Chicago native, she studied history, political science, and Italian language and literature at Indiana University, then earned MA and PhD degrees in history from the University of Dayton and from Miami University of Ohio, respectively. Her doctoral research, which she describes below, was noted in this newsletter at the time (Winter 1991-2, p. 3).

In the autumn of 1990, I searched for a dissertation topic that would be satisfying intellectually and would relate to a subject I had already researched. I was granted a National Endowment for the Humanities dissertation fellowship for the year 1991. This award allowed me to spend the year visiting a number of archives in order to do research, to write a cogent dissertation proposal, and to begin searching for the material that would form the basis for my work. By the conclusion of the year, I had decided to study Italian immigrant women and the importance of food in their lives.

While spending time at both the Immigration History Research Center in St. Paul, Minnesota and the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC), I came upon a body of information that would serve as the single most important source for my dissertation. This was "Italians in Chicago," the legacy of an oral history project directed by Mary Ann Batinich and others at UIC. It had been carried out during 1979-81 by faculty and students seeking to preserve recollections of immigrant first- and second-generation Italian-Americans

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who had settled in Chicago. For the purpose of my dissertation, I studied the transcripts of the women interviewees only.

My research, I decided, would attempt to learn to what extent these women continued in Chicago the food-related tasks that had been so much a part of their lives in Italy. I hoped to find out how they retained or altered the manner in which they procured, prepared and ate food.

The outlook and skills these women brought from Italy were in large part products of what they had experienced in the old country. The immigrants had come to Chicago from the hill towns of the North and from the agro-villages of the South, and life had been difficult for most of them there. It had prepared them for the hardships they would face when they came to the congested tenements that were part of the Chicago landscape.

Recollections of Life in the Villages

In southern Italy, a woman would awake to the sounds of chickens and other animals squawking. Soon, she walked to the nearest fountain or other source to obtain water, crucial in preparing the morning meal as well as for other household tasks. The procurement of water signaled the beginning of the day's activities. Only the wealthy had homes replete with springs. Others bought water from a water seller if they could afford to do so.

Women needed to feed their children, often numbering eight or more, and to feed the livestock that often lived on the first floor of their houses. Goats provided milk, and chickens provided eggs. However, the eggs and the chickens were eaten only on special occasions. On Saturday women baked bread, the majority of it going into their husbands' lunch boxes. The remainder had to be rationed carefully throughout the week in order to provide sustenance for their children and themselves. Thus, women's bread-making skills were crucial to their families' welfare.

Food supplies were so sparse that women used every resource at their disposal to supplement them. In addition to

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ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS *continued from previous page*

the bread they made and consumed, women and their children picked olives, which often helped to add spice to what might be considered a less than exciting diet. One of the participants in the "Italians in Chicago" project reminisced about her childhood in Italy, noting that in order to obtain other types of food for the family, her grandmother "used to make a wall of stone...then little by little the grass [grew] in there. Some of the holes get a little wider and what you call the snails grow in there...So my grandma used to go and...when there was time...there was a nice, little bag of snails. And she used to cure them, put 'em in salt water. And then the next day she'd make a delicious meal with *polenta*...that cornmeal mush..."¹ These snails, called *babbaluci* in Sicilian, were eaten traditionally as festival food at the Festa di Santa Rosalia in Palermo.

The *feste*, or festivals, as well as the holidays that were celebrated in Italian villages, were welcome respites from the routine of hard work there. Events revolving around food could be relied on like clockwork. Whenever sugar, salt and pepper were obtained in town, it was likely that traditional foodstuffs were being prepared for important life-cycle events and *feste*. When the sheaths of wheat lost their centers, it was time to glean, to visit the mill, and to return home to use the flour sparingly for the celebrations that were about to occur.

Food was placed on the table after planning and careful resource management by women, but it was the product of the hard work of an entire family. Food brought families together and became the focus of social and life cycle celebrations. Of all the memories connected with Italian festivals and holidays, food memories tended to be the strongest. These would be carried to Chicago and handed down to the next generation.

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Adapting to a Huge Metropolis

When Italian families came to America, their recollections were often the only things they carried with them. Some immigrant women, like Rosa Cassetari, were given a few containers of comfort-type food by their relatives in order to make the journey less forbidding.² Most, however, had only their old memories to comfort them and to use as a basis to create new ones in America.

As Italian women stepped off the trains and into the congested streets of Chicago, they heard many unfamiliar languages, saw many unusual sights, and smelled the aromas of foods they had never before experienced. After they were settled in their tenements in largely Italian areas, they would find Italian food shops filled with imported essentials and delicacies from the homeland. This enabled women to cook what they had prepared in Italy, and cook they did! More likely than not, the women who moved into these tenement apartments actually did more cooking there than they had in Italy. Groceries were less expensive in America than they had been in their homeland. Women now were cooking for boarders, which took a great deal of their time. These factors helped to keep women in the kitchen for long periods of time, and helped to cement the cultural continuity that characterized the lives of Italian families in the tenements.

Italian immigrant women took loving care to prepare dishes using ingredients similar to those they had used in Italy. Many of them found tiny pieces of land near their tenement houses and planted tomatoes there. If no land was available, they purchased huge crates of tomatoes from farmers who brought their produce into the city. Women took the tomatoes that they had either grown or purchased and set them on boards which they had placed next to the tenement houses. The tomatoes were sun-dried on the boards for several days, then made into tomato paste for sauces and other purposes. In this way, the women ensured that their families had paste similar to what they had eaten in Italy.

Grapes for winemaking were every bit as important to the Italian family in Chicago as they had been in Italy. Unlike in Italy, however, grapes had to be purchased from outside vendors. Once the grapes were brought home, they were placed in barrels, ground up, and allowed to ferment until they became wine. Gloria Bacci recalled, "We would have... barrels along the basement wall. And my father would go from one barrel to the other. He would put one or two cases of grapes and grind 'em up. And after maybe five days that the grapes were being fermented, he would put 'em in a wine press and start pressing the grapes where the liquid of the grapes become wine." This process was usually carried out in the autumn, and the wine was consumed for the rest of the year by family and boarders at many daily meals and for all important holidays and *feste*.

In the crowded tenement apartments, women made pasta as they had done in Italy. The lengths to which they went to do so were remarkable. Large amounts of water were needed to cook pasta, and in the tenements this was often a daunting task. Carmella Zoppetti remembered her mother using the same boiler to wash clothes as she did to

cook pasta.³ Water was frequently shared among a number of apartments. This necessitated carrying water from one location to another, just as women had had to do in Italy. The difference was, of course, that the distances were much shorter in America.

Refrigeration was another major problem for women living in the tenements. Women relied upon the services of the ice man to provide the refrigeration needed to keep food and milk from spoiling. Once purchased, the ice lasted for only a day or two, so that women had to be diligent about checking the ice box for sufficient supplies. They needed to make frequent trips to the grocer, purchasing and preparing only that amount of food they and their families and boarders could consume in a brief span of time.



Italian immigrant woman leaning over a tub. Photo courtesy of Jane Addams Memorial Collection, University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago.

The Rise of Italian-American Food Establishments

Italian grocers' shelves were filled with both imported foods and those that were produced by some of the recently established Italian-owned companies scattered along the urban landscape. The Red Cross Macaroni Company, the Chicago Macaroni Company and the Gonnella Baking Company were a few of the many Italian comestible establishments in Chicago.⁴

Pizzerias and other restaurants also began to emerge as important Italian-owned businesses. Women often provided the recipes and labor for these enterprises. However, when a restaurant or pizzeria became profitable, others were hired to do the cooking. In the process, women lost a certain amount of control over the recipes as well as over the preparation of the food. Dishes that had begun as home preparations for the family came to be commercialized for a wider public. Even though women lost some control over the process, they reaped benefits once the businesses became profitable.

While settlement house workers and others spent great amounts of time attempting to Americanize these Italian immigrant women, they found the task rather formidable. They were far more successful in their attempts to ameliorate conditions in the tenements and to introduce more sanitary ways to prepare food than they were in trying to indoctrinate Italian immigrant women to accept more conventional American foods.⁵ Italian women continued, to the best of their ability, throughout the immigrant generation, to eat what they had eaten for centuries. Their diets proved to be resilient, and were important in their adjustment to a new environment.

In America, *feste* and life-cycle events helped to make this adjustment easier. In Chicago, women continued to create many of the same dishes as in Italy for these celebra-

tions. The major difference was that now they could prepare and consume more of the special treats than before. Weddings and baptisms were major events in the Italian-American family, and as such were celebrated with certain special foods. Special cookies and liqueurs were omnipresent. Christmas and Easter also were important holidays, during which traditional foods abounded. *Feste* honoring the Saints continued to be important events in Chicago, and women often cooked and baked for weeks for these special occasions. Thus, the continuity of culinary traditions stretched from Italy through subsequent generations. Women were the keepers of the culinary flame.

Through their interaction with food and its preparation, women shaped family memories of sustenance and comfort. These same memories would also provide essential connections between the old world and the new as women nurtured their families, feeding them a rich cultural heritage with every loaf of bread and dish of pasta. ■

Endnotes

1. Maria Valiani, interview by Anthony Mansueto, 9 June 1980, interview VAL-80, transcript, Italians in Chicago Project, University of Illinois, Chicago.
2. Marie Hall Ets, *Rosa: The Life of an Italian Immigrant* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970), p.161.
3. Carmella Zopetti, interview by Anthony Mansueto, 9 June 1980, Italians in Chicago Project, interview ZOP 79, transcript, University of Illinois, Chicago.
4. Giovanni E. Schiavo, *The Italians in Chicago* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), pp. 196, 137.
5. Lucy H. Gillett, "Factors Influencing Work Among Italians," *Journal of Home Economics* January 1922, p.16.

CELEBRATING A POLISH CHRISTMAS: WIGILIA

by Maria Chrypinski

Dr. Chrypinski has long been active in Polish ethnic and cultural affairs. She was raised in Michigan by Polish immigrant parents. After attending the University of Michigan and living in Ann Arbor for 12 years, she moved to Washington, D.C. where she earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy at George Washington University. Currently, she organizes youth leadership conferences in the nation's capital for college students interested in civic and political activism. Maria lives with her mother on a farm near Flat Rock, MI, where she loves to garden and to cook.

Polish immigrants in America brought many customs with them from "the old country," but those of the Christmas season have survived to a greater degree than almost any of the others. The many symbolic traditions, both mystical and wondrous, pertaining to this holy season have been handed down from generation to generation. Thus, many Polish Americans who do not speak or understand the language of their forefathers, or who have spouses from a different ethnic background, still practice at Christmas time some of the special traditions they learned as children from their parents, grandparents or in-laws.

Some rituals dating back to Slavic pre-Christian times are incorporated into the Christmas season, while other traditions arose during the strong, over 1,000-year Christian presence in Poland. Originally, the foods eaten by our Slavic ancestors were simple natural ingredients gathered from the forests and fields. These centered around grains, nuts, mushrooms, dried fruits and honey, usually 'seasoned' and softened with water. Only later were they cooked over fire. Poppy seed is a staple of the Polish kitchen, along with mushrooms and assorted root vegetables and cabbages, seasoned with fried onions, orchard fruits, berries, grains and nuts. Both the foods themselves and the Christian and pre-Christian rites associated with them combine to make Christmas eve a blessed night that seems to transcend time and space. For Poles, this is the most important and beloved holiday to be celebrated.

Setting Sights for the Coming Year

The star of Bethlehem, which led the three wise men to the manger of the Holy Infant, sets the theme for the Polish Christmas festivities. The children, especially the youngest, are appointed to watch for the appearance of the first star in the sky, for it is then that the entire family may gather around the dinner table to begin the Christmas Eve supper, called the *Wigilia*. In pronunciation and in meaning, the word *Wigilia* is akin to the English word "vigil," for it means 'to watch or prepare for' the birth of the Christ child.



The *Wigilia* foretells the character of the coming year. It is a time of reflection: to pause, come together, share and heal our burdens, and celebrate faith and family in much peace, hope and joy!

The head of the family starts by distributing to everyone the *oplatek*, a holy wafer of wheat flour similar to a 'communion' wafer, and embossed with a picture of the Nativity. The *oplatek* wafer has been previously blessed by a priest. Indeed, for Poles both near and far, *oplatki* represent a 'communion of spirits,' for they are sent to far-distant relatives as a sign of unity and love. Each person in turn breaks off a small piece of the wafer and exchanges wishes with each of the others. They ask forgiveness for any wrongs, exchange blessings for health, happiness and true peace, and finish with an embrace and kiss.

When the important *oplatek* ritual is completed, all sit down at the table, which has been covered with a white tablecloth to emphasize the purity of the newborn Christ. Some hay has been placed under the table as a reminder that the baby Jesus was born in a manger. There is an empty extra place set for the Holy Child, for a distant or deceased family member, or for an uninvited guest who wanders this night, just as Joseph and Mary wandered looking for a place to rest. For on this holy night all are united and remembered, and no one should be left alone. The number of places set at the table should always be an even number, otherwise (according to superstition) within the coming year, illness will befall one of those present.

By tradition, the Wigilia is always a meatless meal. According to Catholic custom, Advent (the four weeks preceding Christmas) and Christmas Eve day were a time of fasting from meat and many other animal products. The Wigilia supper, therefore, was both a holy and long awaited feast. Originally, it consisted of 12 courses, in honor of the 12 apostles. As with many other national cuisines, regional identities within Poland are quite strongly exhibited in the particular holiday foods that are served. This can be seen in the variations of Polish Wigilia dishes that are presented for each course.

Highlights of the Twelve-Course Feast

The Polish Christmas Eve Wigilia meal begins with creamed pickled herring and bread, usually rye or pumpernickel. A soup course ensues, either mushroom or clear red beet soup (*barszcz*) made on a vegetable broth base, served with *uszka* (miniature ear-shaped dumplings with a mushroom filling); or the soup might even be an almond soup made on a milk base. Boiled potatoes with dill follow, along with various types of *pierogi*, dumplings of dough stuffed with either mushrooms, sauerkraut, potatoes, fruits or sweet cheese. The *pierogi* are boiled or pan-fried, and served with sour cream.

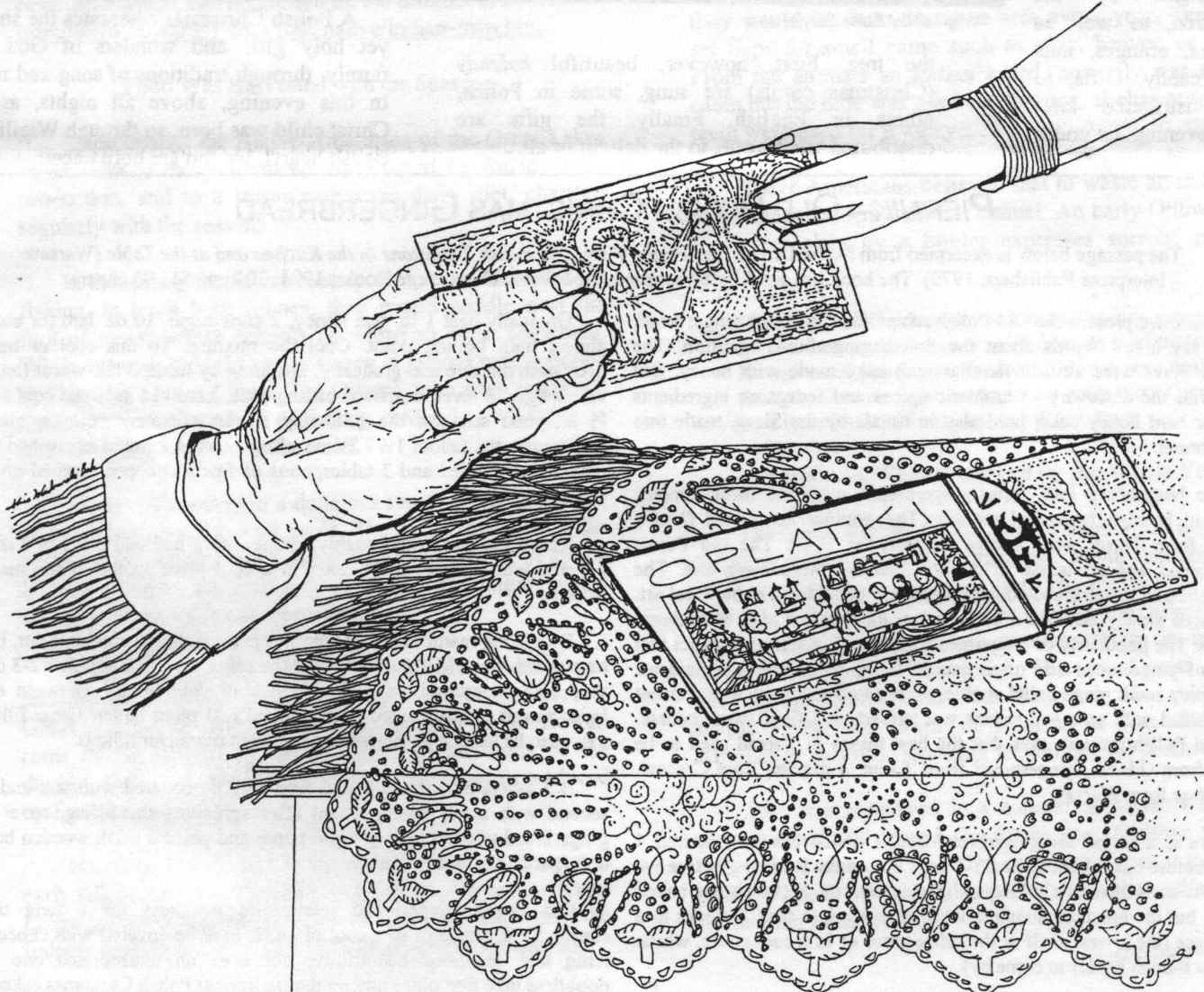
The main course is always fish, traditionally carp or

pike. The fish is usually pan-fried, broiled or baked, and filled with a cooked vegetable stuffing. Fresh fish is considered important for this special meal. I can recall spending a wonderful December in Poland, a few years back. I arrived at my great aunt's small apartment on Christmas Eve morning. Soon after, I excused myself to use the restroom. As I closed the bathroom door, I heard a splash behind me coming from the bathtub. I turned around to find, much to my surprise, a live and large, long carp swimming in my aunt's full tub, awaiting its starring role at the Wigilia evening meal!

Other Wigilia dishes include sauerkraut with peas or mushrooms; noodles with poppy seed; and *kutia* (*kucia*), a mixture of poppy seed, honey, and buckwheat berries. *Kutia* was one of the most ancient of meals, an ancestor of bread, eaten long before Slavic civilizations discovered the process of milling flour. In southeastern Poland, the wheat, poppy seed and honey are mixed with raisins and nuts. In northeastern Poland, it appears as poppy seed with barley, because barley was a less expensive and more readily available grain in this region.

After these Wigilia courses there is fruit compote, i.e., dried fruits cooked in their syrup—often 12 different fruits, if a total of 12 different courses were not available. Finally,

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pastries including *piernik* (ginger spiced honey cake— see the recipe on this page), *makowiec* (a roll of yeast dough filled with poppy seeds), or similarly *migdalowiec* (almond filled roll), and assorted other Polish tea cookies and cakes. Poland is well known for its delectable pastries, tortes and other desserts.

After Wigilia supper, a Polish-American family will gather around a lighted Christmas tree, which has been decorated with paper or straw ornaments handmade by the children, as well as apples, oranges, nuts and candy. Gifts, to be distributed later that evening, lie under



"Wigilia" by Zofia Stryjenska

the tree. First, however, beautiful *kolendy* (Christmas carols) are sung, some in Polish, others in English. Finally, the gifts are distributed one by one, to the delight of all.

A Polish Christmas celebrates the simple yet holy gifts and wonders of God and family, through traditions of song and meal. In this evening, above all nights, as the Christ child was born, so through Wigilia, in Polish hearts, we too are born anew! ■

PIERNIK – OLD POLISH CHRISTMAS GINGERBREAD

The passage below is excerpted from Maria Lemnis and Henry Vitry, *Old Polish Traditions in the Kitchen and at the Table* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1979). The book has since been reprinted (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1996; 304 pp., \$11.95 paper).

Before we present the Old Polish recipe for Christmas gingerbread, let us say a few words about the Polish gingerbread tradition. The ancient Slavs were already familiar with cake made with honey. But only with the discovery of aromatic spices and leavening ingredients was the hard honey cake, used also in rituals by the Slavs, made into gingerbread.

The Nuremberg and Torun gingerbreads were the most famous, baked in beautifully carved moulds. The popular *katarzynki* (honey cakes) from Torun were known as early as 1640. The old Polish gingerbread was no worse in quality than the Nuremberg one. The preparation of gingerbread dough was rightly considered to be a real art. It matured slowly and could be stored in its unbaked state for several months. The popularity of gingerbread in Poland is seen in the fact that a pan of gingerbread was often part of the dowry of Polish maidens. Very spicy small gingerbread cookies were eaten with vodka, and sweet gingerbread with nuts and raisins was served as a final sweet course. The old Polish proverb says that the best things in Poland used to be liquor from Gdansk, gingerbread from Torun, a maiden from Cracow, and a shoe from Warsaw.

Here is a recipe for gingerbread dough which can be prepared 4 weeks before baking and baked 3-4 days before the holidays, before we begin the most intensive holiday culinary creativity. It can also be baked earlier, but the unbaked dough must mature not less than 2 weeks in a cool place (the lowest shelf in the refrigerator or in a cool cellar, which is better though harder to come by).

Gradually heat 1 lb. real honey, 2 cups sugar, 10 oz. lard (or butter) almost until boiling point. Cool the mixture. To this cool or barely lukewarm mixture add gradually, kneading by hand, 2 lbs. wheat flour, 3 whole eggs, 3 level teaspoons baking soda dissolved in ½ cup cold milk, ½ teaspoon salt and the following spices: cinnamon, cloves, ginger, cardamom, etc. (about 1½ - 2½ oz. altogether). A handful of crushed nuts may also be added and 3 tablespoons of finely chopped candied orange peel.

Knead the dough thoroughly, shape into a ball and place in a crock covered with a clean linen cloth, in a cool place so that it can mature slowly.

Divide the matured dough into 2-3 parts and after rolling it out, bake on a metal sheet. Right after baking the cakes are hard, but after 2-3 days they become crumbly and almost melt in your mouth. Between each layer spread lightly heated, well cooked real plum butter. Other fillings may also be used, e.g., butter, nut and even marzipan fillings.

If 3 layers have been baked, one may be covered with jam and the second with a nut filling. Right after spreading the filling, cover the gingerbread with a piece of clean paper and place a small wooden board or larger books on top evenly.

Old Polish gingerbread retains its freshness for a long time, especially if it is kept in a cool place. It may be covered with chocolate icing and decorated beautifully, but even an undecorated one will doubtless take first place among the traditional Polish Christmas cakes.

NATIVE AMERICAN COOKING OF THE GREAT LAKES REGION

by Michelle Benson

Ms. Benson, who lives in Northville, MI with her two sons, is studying history at Madonna University and also teaching art at a Christian school in Ypsilanti. Michelle originally did this research for a Winter 2001 class in Michigan History, taught by Dr. Steven L. Berg at Schoolcraft College. She presented her findings at a colloquium at Schoolcraft, and treated her audience to six different dishes that she had prepared using the recipes reproduced in her article below.



An Ojibwa woman parching wild rice in the 1920s. From Frances Densmore, *How Indians Use Wild Plants for Food, Medicine and Crafts* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1974).

The Native Americans in Michigan are descendants of the Anishinabe, who migrated from east of Hudson Bay into the Great Lakes region starting around 1400. Over time, they split into the Potawatomi, Ojibwa (Chippewa) and Ottawa bands. There are currently a dozen state- or federally-recognized American Indian tribes in Michigan. A state map, indicating the location of reservation areas, can be viewed on the Internet at address <http://www.edwards1.com/rose/native/indian-map.htm>.

Food Was Harvested with the Seasons

Traditionally, the Native Americans of the Great Lakes region moved camp wherever food could be found. Food production, and to a lesser extent the daily diet, changed regularly with the seasons.

In the spring, the Indians set up camp near the water for fishing. In birch bark canoes, they would paddle near the foot of rapids where schools of whitefish were spawning. While one man held the canoe steady, a second man scooped up fish with a large dip net. The Ojibwa, who were respected for this very difficult type of fishing, referred to whitefish in Lake Superior as "deer in the water."

Maple trees provided a delicious sap that was harvested in the spring in birch-bark pails. The syrup was boiled for hours, taking 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. If heated longer, the maple syrup turned into sugar, which was used as seasoning in many dishes.

During the summer months, the Indians planted corn and squash. Nuts and berries were collected and preserved. Other seasonal favorites included the seeds of the sunflower, roots of the cat-tail, acorns of the bur oak, buds of the daylily, and leaves and flowers of the dandelion (introduced by Europeans).

Manomin ("wild rice"), collected in late summer and early fall, was a more common cereal than corn among Great Lakes Indians. Whether by canoe or along the shoreline, the Indians would beat stalks of rice with sticks, collecting the

grain for use in future months. Wild rice was preserved and traded from tribe to tribe all over the region. It is still harvested by Ojibwa and other people in Minnesota, Wisconsin and northern Michigan.

In the cold winter months, the Michigan Native Americans would sometimes travel as far as 100 miles on hunting expeditions. In order to keep animal populations up, they would not hunt the same area every year. The Indians set traps for small game such as otter, beaver, or squirrel. From the animals an Indian killed, not only was the flesh eaten but the hide was used for clothing, shelter or trade, and teeth were used for jewelry.

Native Americans believed that to waste an animal was to dishonor the spirit of that animal. An early Ojibwa prayer to a deer slain by a hunter expresses sorrow, need and apology:

I had need, I have dispossessed you of beauty, grace and life—I have sundered your spirit from its worldly frame. No more will you run in freedom. Give me your flesh for strength. Give me your casement for protection. Give me your bone for my labors, and I shall not want.

Ingredients Were Preserved for the Whole Year

The harsh winters of the Great Lakes made it important to preserve foodstuffs for future use. Meat, fish and poultry were preserved over an open fire. The Indians cut the meat into very thin strips. Then it was rubbed with ashes from the fire. After rinsing, the flesh was strung up in front of a campfire until dried like jerky. This dried meat could be used in stews at a later date. Fish was also rubbed with maple syrup and dried in front of a fire. The Native Americans also used smoking techniques for preservation.

Corn was preserved in a number of ways. Whole cobs were roasted and stored for future use. Another technique was to heat the corn in a fire, then grind it in a mortar and pestle. A corn stew-base was also made that called for the fermenting of the corn.

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Wild rice was preserved by stirring it in the heat of a fire long enough to free it from its husks and to parch it. The dried grain was put into bags or bark chests, sometimes underground, where it kept very well.

Fruits and berries were left outside under the sun for a few days, often on birch bark, until dried. The fruit could then be used into the winter months in stews and rice dishes. The sweet acorns of the bur oak were often buried underground for use in the winter or spring. These acorns could be roasted, or boiled and mashed.

Preparation of One-Dish Meals

Early Native Americans usually did not eat their food in courses. Instead, they cooked and ate one-dish meals. For example, a dish called *sagamite* was fashioned out of corn meal. The corn meal was made by pounding a bag of parched kernels between two stones. Adding hot water gave the corn meal a broth-like consistency. To this soup base, the Indians could add whatever meats, vegetables or berries were available, depending on the season.

Native Americans prepared their meals with an open fire. Food could be placed in or above the flames, or rested

directly in the ashes. If a big fire was not available, rocks would be heated and placed into a broth to heat it.

Some of the six recipes that I tried (reproduced below) are adapted for today's kitchens, with ingredients like chicken broth, beef broth, salt and pepper. Two of the recipes are from an Ojibwa woman that I met in Mt. Pleasant, and the others are from the printed sources listed.

The Native Americans of the Great Lakes enjoyed the generous array of wildlife, grains and fruits that the region had to offer. The descendants of the Anishinabe had a deep respect for nature. Their belief was that any living thing was part of a sacred cycle with a purpose. ■

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Ojibwe Berries and Wild Rice 1 cup wild rice, uncooked 3 cups water ½ cup maple syrup 1 cup each of blueberries, raspberries and cherries Cook the rice in water with maple syrup until rice is done. Strain and cool. Fold in berries. This dish can be served cold or warm, as a dessert or side dish.	Ojibwe Bannock 3 cups cornmeal 3 cups water 4 tablespoons oil 4 tablespoons maple syrup salt and pepper sunflower seeds Mix all ingredients except for oil and seeds. Heat oil in pan. Scoop the batter out by spoonfuls and fry in oil, flattening with the back of a spoon. Sprinkle with sunflower seeds. Fry until crisp and golden brown.	Sunflower Seed Soup 2 cups sunflower seeds, unsalted 3 green onions, chopped 6 cups chicken broth 2 tablespoons dill, chopped salt and pepper to taste Cook sunflower seeds, broth and onions on low heat for one hour. Stir in the rest of the ingredients and serve.
Fish and Corn Stew 1 cup dried corn 1 onion, chopped 4 cups water 1 cup wild rice 1 cup whitefish, cubed Cook everything but the fish over low heat for one hour. Add fish, cook for 10 minutes and serve.	Traditional Venison and Wild Rice Stew 2 lbs. venison, cubed 2 onions, chopped 3 cups beef broth ½ cup raisins ½ cup dried cherries 1 cup wild rice Simmer venison and onion for two hours. Add broth, raisins and cherries and cook for another hour, stirring often. Add wild rice and cook for 15 minutes or until the rice is done.	Honey Drink 1 quart water 2/3 cup honey Put both ingredients into a glass jar and shake well, until the honey dissolves.

A LOOK AT LOCAL BOOK SHELVES, STORE SHELVES, AND PLANT SHELVES

Our Fall 2001 CHAA program topics all had a local University of Michigan angle. We examined the latest work in UM's culinary archives, tracked down unusual food plants in UM's botanical gardens, and heard the story of Eden Foods from the time of its founding by UM students over 30 years ago. A report on our December *tapas* potluck will appear in the next issue.

The Docents Speak

On Sept. 16, CHAA co-founder Jan Longone and seven docents at the UM Clements Library reported on their progress building one of the leading research archives of American culinary history. Jan praised the efforts of staff and volunteers at the library, where she serves as a curator. For the past three years, Ann Fowler has been organizing and cataloguing 15-20 boxes of culinary ephemera (advertisements and brochures, cooking guides, menus, etc.) as well as etiquette books and other relevant publications. With further donations, the ephemera collection is likely to grow to 150 boxes. Kathy Schafer has been focusing on ephemera created by cooking-school heads and other culinary personalities, while Carroll Thomson is inspecting items especially important in raising a family (gelatin, cereal, dairy products, etc.) as well as cooking guides (such as those for wartime food shortages). Cheryl Mackrell has studied the ad wars between Royal Baking Powder and its rivals, as well as ads for General Mills "Betty Crocker" products, ads from stove and utensil manufacturers, and radio and newspaper ads. John Thomson is developing the first extensive online directory of menus and charity cookbooks searchable by culinarily-relevant data.

Pat Cornett is organizing the Clements collection of cooking magazines and other serial culinary publications, dating from an 1884 *Michigan Farmer*. She tries to reconstruct publication histories of the magazines, which range from *German Housewife* and *Kitchen Clatter* to *Journal of Home Economics* and *Epicure*. Julie Lewis has been studying handwritten recipes and other personal manuscripts, which date back to 1698. The library also has an extensive and growing collection of printed books on cooking and food. Julie and Carroll served us a number of sweets that they baked from recipes in the collection, including "Old Bridget" Soft Gingerbread from the *Alice D. Hall Receipt Book*, a bound manuscript (c. 1870).

Hothouse Fruits in the Michigan Winter

Elizabeth Elling, Coordinator of Visiting Programs at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, gave us a tour and talk there on "Plants and Herbs of the New World" on Oct. 21. Ms. Elling noted that by dint of geography, continents differ greatly in the type and diversity of indigenous food plants. The Age of Exploration led to a momentous cross-fertilization of species and cultures. Some of the key plants hauled back to Europe are still mainstays in our diet: tomatoes, potatoes, corn, beans, squash. On his second voyage in 1493, Columbus saw Central American natives cultivating pineapples. Eaten fresh or used to tenderize meat, pineapples soon became a trade item and an emblem when sailing home to Europe or the colonies, thus symbolizing hospitality. In the Tropical House, we saw flowering pineapples of two different species. Nearby were the edible fruits of guava,

soursop, and split-leaf philodendron ("Swiss cheese plant"). The latter is a Mexican species, *Monstera deliciosa*, with large, tubular green fruits and hole-ridden leaves. Other tropical food plants we saw included *cacao*, whose pods were used to make the chocolate beverage enjoyed by the Inca and Maya priestly class; *yerba mate*, a cousin of holly that supplies a caffeine drink; and *sopadilla* (*chicle*), the source of chewing gum.

Some edible succulents were on view in the Arid House. *Opuntia* cacti produce sweet, juicy, colorful fruits called "prickly pears" or, reflecting their rapid spread in the Old World, "Barbary (or Indian) figs," while the slab-like *nopale* leaves are eaten boiled. The Mexican *agave* (*maguey*) yields edible flowers, leaves and stalks, while its sweet sap is used for juices and syrups, or is fermented to produce alcoholic *pulque*.

Organic Farm Products Come of Age

At our Nov. 18 meeting, we heard and tasted a presentation by Wendy Esko of Eden Foods, one of the nation's leading producers of organic foodstuffs. The company was founded by UM students in Ann Arbor in 1968 as a retail co-op specializing in organic foods. By 1971, a bakery, restaurant and cafeteria were added, and a year later Eden began wholesale distribution of foodstuffs under its own label. It was also soon marketing products from Japan. Sales grew, and the company relocated to Clinton, MI. A turning point occurred in 1983 with the importation from Japan of Edensoy[®], the first commercial soymilk in North America. While the milk was popular, shipment across the ocean wasn't practical and in 1985 Eden launched its own production facility in nearby Saline. Today, organically grown beans are processed at an Eaton, IN installation, one of dozens of Eden production centers and partnerships across the U.S. and Japan. The firm now offers over 200 products, including bulk dried beans, nuts, grains and flours; dried noodles; canned and bottled beans, tomatoes, fruit juices and sauces; teas; oils and vinegars; seasonings and condiments; and snack foods.

Wendy, who has written nearly 20 books on natural foods and macrobiotic cooking, became interested in Japanese cuisine in 1970 and lived in Kyoto in 1979-80. She outlined the history of traditional soy products sold by Eden, focusing on *miso*, the fermented soybean paste used to flavor Japanese soups as well as noodle, rice and other dishes. *Miso* evolved from *chiang*, a meat or fish paste fermented with brown rice vinegar and *sake*, in China centuries before the Christian era. Later, Buddhist monks in China developed a vegetarian *chiang* from soybean meal. They introduced this version to the priestly and noble class in Japan, where it became known as *miso*. A form called *hacho* was invented that was fermented with *koji*, a mash of *Aspergillus* or other molds and spores. As knowledge of *miso* spread, peasants invented "farmhouse" varieties by adding rice or barley to the bean mash. *Tamari* sauce was a *hacho* by-product drained out during fermentation, and wheat was later added to this to produce *shoyu* ("soy sauce"). Wendy also discussed Japanese *soba*, *udon* and *somen* noodles; noodles and thickeners made from kudzu root starch; *ume*, the pickled apricot ("plum"); sea vegetables *nori*, *kanten* (*agar-agar*), *kombu* and *wakame*; green leaf and twig teas; and sea salt and other seasonings. ■

MORSELS & TIDBITS

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There were two notable food-related talks in this January's fifteenth annual Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium at the University of Michigan, which has become by far the largest set of MLK Day events on any campus in the U.S. **Judith A. Carney**, UCLA geography professor, delivered a lecture "Black Rice of the African Diaspora" on January 17. Her recent book *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001; 256pp., \$37.50 cloth) views rice not just as a grain but as a system of expertise extending from field to kitchen. By the time Europeans arrived, West Africans already had a farming culture based on domesticating an indigenous species of rice (*Oryza glabberima*, "red rice") and adapting it to three different landforms (tidal swamp, river floodplain, and rainfed upland). In colonial South Carolina, the majority of the population were W. African slaves worked on a task-labor basis; it was they who transplanted not only red rice itself, but the distinctive technologies required for its cultivation, milling, and cookery. **George F. Estabrook**, UM professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, spoke on Jan. 21 about the origins and dietary implications of "soul food." He showed that a typical meal of pre-Emancipation slaves— garden-grown black-eyed peas and turnip greens, boiled together in pork fat and served with home-ground corn grits— was "remarkably nutritious." Estabrook also explained how the liberated African-Americans became vulnerable to pellagra and malnutrition from later effects of industrialization.

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CHAA CALENDAR

(Note program changes: All programs are at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Avenue.
All programs are scheduled for 4-6pm.)

February 17, 2002

Jean Henry and Matthew Banks,
owners of the Jefferson Market, Ann Arbor
"Honest Food: Cooking Food with Integrity and
Common Sense in the Real World of the
Restaurant Business"

March 17, 2002

Randy Schwartz, editor of *Repast*
"Islam and the Transformation of Foodways in
Medieval Morocco"

April 21, 2002

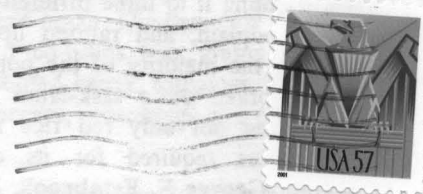
Julee Rosso, cookbook author and chef/owner at
The Silver Palate (New York) and the Wickwood
Country Inn (Saugatuck, MI)

May 19, 2002

Maureen Hathaway:
Speaking on her collection of Michigan
cookbooks

REPAST

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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~~1207 West Madison~~
~~Ann Arbor, MI 48105~~

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