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Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Local Pageantry

The Food Festival Issue



Dancers perform Czech folk dances before the main grandstand during the 2006 Kolache Festival in Prague, Oklahoma, a celebration of the *kolache* pastry and other customs brought from the old country. See Sharon Maggard's article on page 11.

MORSELS & TIDBITS

In connection with MLK Day in January and Black History Month in February, we want to bring several items to readers' attention.

Well-known author and scholar **Jessica B. Harris**, Assoc. Prof. of English at Queens College in New York, recently became the first appointee to the Ray Charles Endowed Chair in Material Culture at Dillard University in New Orleans. The position, made possible by a bequest from musician **Ray Charles** upon his death in 2004, will focus on the study of culinary history and other aspects of Black culture. "African-American cuisine is a discipline gaining respect around the world", Harris stated in a talk, "Creole Cousins: Culinary Connections and the African Atlantic World", her inaugural lecture as a scholar-in-residence at Dillard.

CHAA founding member **Jan Longone's** discovery, first reported in 2001, of **Malinda Russell's** *A Domestic Cook Book* (Paw Paw, MI, 1866), the earliest-known African-American title on cookery, was the subject of a Nov. 21 *New York Times* story by food writer **Molly O'Neill**, "A 19th-Century Ghost Awakens to Redefine 'Soul'". The article, which was reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune*, included comments from Jan and from **Leni A. Sorensen**, **Sandy Oliver**, and **Toni Tipton-Martin**. The last said that the cookbook, which is now available in a facsimile edition from the UM Clements Library, "dispels the notion of a universal African-American food experience, which is why the term 'soul food' doesn't work for so many of us."

CHAA member **Ari Weinzwieg**, a founding partner of Zingerman's deli and community of businesses in Ann Arbor, prepared for MLK Day this year by writing a substantial essay for Zingerman's *News-*

letter (Jan.-Feb. 2008), "African American Foodways: Food, Fear, Race, Art, and the Future". An augmented version of the essay is available online at <http://www.zingermansroadhouse.com> (click on "Learn 'bout our food", then "Foodways"). In the essay, Ari describes how his participation in the annual Southern Foodways Alliance symposia helped dispel his hesitancy to deeply explore African-American food and to become proficient at preparing it and writing about it. He also discusses the three main historical sources of these foodways (the contributions of Africans themselves and those of Native Americans and Europeans) and four key regional subcuisines (Low Country, Creole, Deep South, and Chesapeake). Ari concludes with a list of suggested additional readings, and a roundup of great African-American foods available at Zingerman's Roadhouse. At the Roadhouse on Jan. 16, **Sallie Ann Robinson**, a native of the Gullah islands on the Georgia-South Carolina coast, cooked a special Gullah dinner with Roadhouse Chef **Alex Young**. Robinson is the author of *Gullah Home Cooking the Daufuskie Way* and other books. There was a follow-up article, "The Gullah Way: Expert's Cookbooks About More Than Just Food", by **Nan Bauer** in the *Ann Arbor News* (Feb. 20).

George Washington Carver (c. 1860-1943), renowned African-American economic botanist at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, is the subject of a new exhibit at the Field Museum (Chicago) that includes artifacts, photography and film, plant models, and hands-on activities. **Whitney Owens**, Director of Traveling Exhibitions at the museum, reports that the show will continue there until July 6, then tour the country for three years, including a stay at the Henry Ford (Dearborn, MI) from Nov. 20, 2010 to Feb. 27, 2011.

CHAA member and Univ. of Michigan ethnobiologist **George Estabrook** gave his annual talk on "The Roots of Soul Food: African-American Nutritional Traditions of the Late 19th Century in the Southeastern U.S." at UM on Jan. 21.

Barbara Smith, the famous model turned cooking professional, was honored in a Feb. 21 champagne reception gala at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. The event, sponsored by Lawry's, was called "Cooking Up Culture and Couture". Smith, who gained fame as the first Black woman on the cover of *Mademoiselle* (Jul. 1976), went on to found the "B. Smith's" bistro restaurants in Manhattan and Washington, D.C. and wrote *B. Smith's Entertaining and Cooking for Friends* (1995).

Anne L. Bower, a well-known food scholar now retired from the English Department at Ohio State University-Marion, edited the recent essay collection *African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press Food Series, 2007; 200 pp., \$35 cloth). The essays—by Bower, **Robert L. Hall**, **William C. Whit**, **Anne Yentsch**, **Doris Witt**, **Psyche A. Williams-Forsen**, and **Rafia Zafar**—take up both the history of African-American food (including trans-Atlantic exchange, historical cookbooks, and Black entrepreneurs) and its enduring cultural reverberations in literature and iconography.

On the Back Burner: We invite ideas and submissions for these planned future theme-issues of *Repast*: The Revival of Native American Cooking (Spring 2008); Evolution of Foodways in the Middle East (Summer 2008); Episodes in the History of Breakfast Cereals (Fall 2008); Scandinavian-American Food Traditions (Winter 2009); History of American Restaurants, Chefs, and Menus (Spring 2009). Suggestions for future themes are also welcome. ■

Repast

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CHAA FALL PROGRAMS

SPOTLIGHT LOCAL

FOOD TRADITIONS

Traditions associated with our town, campus, and surrounding rural areas were featured in our first three Fall programs. An unfortunate ice storm caused the cancellation of our December participatory theme meal, “A French Bistro Evening”—the first such cancellation in our long history. It is hoped that the theme can be rescheduled in the not too distant future.

In Autumn weather on Sept. 16, some 28 CHAA members were treated to a tour of the **Rentschler Farm Museum** in Saline, just outside Ann Arbor. The farm and apple orchard were established by German Lutheran immigrants over 100 years ago and remained in the Rentschler family for generations. Visitors to the still-functioning farm see aspects of local German-American life from the period 1900-1950, especially the transition to mechanized agriculture. Our tour was led by museum docents, including Agnes Dikeman, Public Relations Coordinator for the Saline Area Historical Society, which operates the farm. (See Agnes’s related article, “Depression-Era Cooking on a German-American Farm in Michigan”, Repast Spring 2007.)

The farmhouse itself, which dates to 1906, is interpreted as that of a 1930’s Depression-era homestead. A high point of our tour was viewing the kitchen and its equipment, including a 1930’s gas stove, a butter beater, and various types of pots. Agnes used the rather temperamental stove to prepare a 4½-pound roasting chicken. She also made other dishes typical of a noon Sunday meal, including German potato salad, applesauce, stewed tomatoes, a loaf of bread, and apple pie. Sites viewed outside the farmhouse included a kitchen garden, ice house, mechanical wheat thresher, corn binder and husker, hay barn, hog house, coops for poultry, and barns for sheep and dairy cows.

Laura Meisler, Outreach/Education Coordinator for the **People’s Food Co-op** (PFC) in Ann Arbor, spoke on “History of Food Cooperatives and the Natural Food Movement” on Oct. 21. PFC was founded as a buying club in the late 1960’s by grad students in social work at the University of Michigan. It incorporated as a co-op in 1971, and its focus has gradually shifted from low-income customers to providing healthy and natural food alternatives for all. Co-op food wholesalers have had trouble keeping up with growing demand, and today PFC, with 6000 formal members, buys food mostly from privately-owned corporations.

The co-op movement in the U.S., which had roots in New Deal and earlier experiments, mushroomed with the youthful back-to-the-roots movements of the late 1960’s and early ’70’s. Earlier antecedents included British workers’ attempts to break the grip of company-owned stores, notably a worker-owned foodstuffs store begun in Rokedale, England in 1844. Laura



Tour leader Agnes Dikeman in the Rentschler farmhouse kitchen on Sept. 16. Beyond her is the 1930’s-era gas stove, a “Hostess” model manufactured by the Detroit Stove Works. (Photo: Randy Schwartz)

said that the most important aspects of co-ops are joint ownership and democratic control; educating current and prospective members as to the importance of equity (becoming a paying owner/member) is also crucial. She also identified some of the pioneering work relevant to the natural foods movement, from Rudolf Steiner’s biodynamic principles and Sir Albert Howard’s classic *An Agricultural Testament* (U.K., 1940), to writings by John Irving Rodale, Rachel Carson, and Michael Pollan.

Christopher Carr, a Michigan-born executive chef who is Director of Catering at the **University of Michigan Unions**, gave a talk “U-M Mixing Bowl: The Union’s Food History from Beans to Bridezilla” on Nov. 18. Chris reviewed his own history of work in various restaurants and organizations, and noted that the status of chefs has risen considerably in his lifetime. In his current position, he is responsible for food catering operations based at the three different student unions on campus. The main Union was founded in 1904 as an all-male facility, while the League was established in 1929 for women; these gender barriers began to fall in the mid-1950’s. Chris showed us sample menus from the early decades of the Michigan Union, when it served as a student dining club. The third union, Pierpont Commons, was established with the development of North Campus in the 1980’s; its catering functions are held mainly at off-site locations.

Currently, about 15,000 U-M catered events take place annually. About 40% are for student organizations, 51% for university offices, and 9% for commercial purposes. The last are very upscale functions designed to earn revenue for the University. Recent trends that have affected the catering operations include the rise of Asian and other fusion cuisines; increased incidence of vegetarianism; use of organic ingredients; donation of leftover food to local rescue operations; and donation of vegetal waste to community and botanical gardens. ■

FOOD AS CULTURAL EXPRESSION



FOOD FESTIVALS IN NORTHWEST OHIO

text and photos by Nathan C. Crook

Nathan Crook is a Doctoral Candidate in the American Culture Studies Program at Bowling Green State University (Bowling Green, OH), where he also teaches film studies. He is Assistant Director of the Northwest Ohio Foodways Traditions Collection Project, begun at BGSU in 2006. Project director Dr. Lucy Long and the others on her team conduct interviews and collect recipes in order to study regional foods that express a Midwestern identity.

Over the past two years, I have studied and documented over 50 different food festivals within a one-hour drive of the greater Toledo area. This article draws upon the numerous interviews I have conducted with cultural producers affiliated with four of the festivals I have studied. The demographics of Northwest Ohio offer a 50/50 split of urban to rural populations and early to late immigrant groups, while the plethora of food festivals in this area provides a varied sampling of ethnic, religious and product festivals upon which to gain insight into Ohio, Midwestern, and by extension American foodways.

My goal here is to see how food is being used at these festivals to construct a notion of place, heritage, ethnicity, and public identity. First, I would like to lay out an interpretive framework for understanding the cultural work of contemporary food festivals in NW Ohio. Then I will provide examples of four different types of food festival, based upon the activities occurring there and the motivations for holding these events.

Festivals Shape Communities

Food festivals function as a site for the production and performance of community memory and identity.¹ They also display what event organizers and segments of the host community consider to be representative local foodways. At food festivals in NW Ohio, foods such as bratwurst, cookies, melons, and maple syrup are elevated from the everyday to stand in for or represent a cultural group. By looking at these events as intensifications and idealizations of the everyday, we can better understand the conditions and choices facing those who comprise the group.

The power to choose what foods represent is the power to define and shape culture. The foods chosen to represent a group identity or a place may say as much about the individuals who decide to celebrate these specific foods as they do about the heritage, group, and place associations that the foods represent.² In addition, food festivals reflect issues of gender, ethnicity, and class. They can also be seen as extending the family and community to welcome outsiders and visitors³, and as a way of honoring and preserving local foodways traditions by perpetuating community traditions and family recipes⁴.



Evelyn Snavelly greets visitors to the family maple camp at the 2007 Seneca County Maple Festival. Admission comes with hotcakes, sausage, vanilla ice cream, beverage, and all the fresh maple syrup you care to use.

I have noticed that while rural food festivals in NW Ohio tend to celebrate crops or the personalization of a product, urban food festivals tend to celebrate the linkage of participants and organizers to a specific ethnic group. Many of the featured foods are familiar to the intended audience and may be considered comfort food to a particular ethnic group. The inter-generational cooperation apparent at many food festivals, where the older generation passes on methods and techniques to the younger generation, contributes to perpetuation of a notion of public memory by highlighting identity, heritage and place through food.

Four Types of Food Festival

By examining the primary and secondary activities at these festivals and the motivations for holding these events, four basic categories or types of food festival become apparent.

The first type tends to celebrate or construct a notion of heritage through living history and the idealization of historic foodways.⁵ For seven generations, the Snavelly family of Republic, Ohio has tapped the same woods to produce maple syrup. For Paul Snavelly, Treasurer of the Ohio Maple Producers Association Board of Directors, maple syrup is a money-making hobby instead of a big business, and every two years he and his family host the Seneca County Maple Festival. His primary motivation for hosting the festival is to promote maple syrup production in Ohio, to educate people on where real maple syrup comes from and what it takes to make syrup, and hopefully to sell their product. The festival lasts for about five hours on a single day in March and draws around 800 visitors on a good day. At the festival, attendees are invited into the woods and the sugar shack to tour the entire process of tapping the trees and collecting and evaporating the sap, and to see the final product. There are demonstrations of making maple sugar, maple candy, maple popcorn, and suggestions of how to use maple syrup. Admission to the festival comes with the beverage of your choice, a stack of pancakes, locally-produced hand-made sausage, a scoop of vanilla ice cream, and all the fresh *real* maple syrup you care to cover your breakfast with. While Snavelly maintains that what he



Perhaps the sweetest event of all at the 2007 McComb Cookie Festival. Free cookies and other snack items are provided to festival attendees at the Consolidated Biscuit Company booth.



Festival attendees at the 2007 Bucyrus Bratwurst Festival waiting for a Bucyrus original. Over the span of three days the festival, which was started in 1968, can attract more than 100,000 visitors to this city of around 14,000 residents.

likes best about the festival is the opportunity to extend his circle of friends, he also recognizes that it is an excellent venue for advertising and promoting his product.

The second type of food festival focuses on local participation in national foodways by recognizing the industries that bring jobs to the area. Foods presented at food festivals in NW Ohio can have class-specific meanings and implications and may suggest regional inflection and national standardization. Here, it is important to remember that while every member of the community might not benefit directly from a specific food industry, the community benefits.⁶ The Consolidated Biscuit Company (CBC) was founded in 1962 in McComb, Ohio, which is about 40 miles south of Toledo, and is one of the nation's largest independent contract bakeries. The CBC plant in McComb bakes national brands and private-label cookies and crackers such as Oreos, Fig bars, Air Crisp crackers, Breakfast bars, Chips Ahoy, Oatmeal Soft Cookies, Ritz Bits, Chocolate Teddy Grahams, Mrs. Fields cookies, Fireside cookies, Royal Crest, Gurley's Nuts, and various other well-known items. CBC is the largest employer in McComb and one of the major employers in Hancock County with 1200-1800 employees, and their products are available on store shelves across the nation.

In 2004, a group of community-oriented citizens led by Larry Sudlow and Everett Latta sought to revive a Pre-Harvest Festival that was celebrated during the 1970's and early '80's but fell on hard times toward the end of the decade. They sought to promote and benefit the community of McComb by generating funds for improvements to the community park and for the future construction of an enclosed shelter house. Recognizing the potential of a food-themed festival and the prominence of the CBC plant in their community, they decided to organize the McComb Cookie Festival. The festival was launched in 2005 and serves as a reminder of McComb's place in national foodways. In addition to typical NW Ohio festival fare, there are cookies and milk for sale. Cookie-themed activities including cookie decorating, a cookie-stacking contest, and other games played with cookies. In 2007, the

cookie bake-off brought in 15-20 entries; each home baker submits 12 cookies, of which the judges sample three and the remainder are auctioned off. The top plate of cookies in 2007 sold for \$52. In addition to providing each customer a free package of cookies with the chicken barbecue, CBC has a booth at the park and gives away free cookies there.

The third type of festival recognizes the contributions of a specific ethnic population in a community and intensifies what it means to be part of the community. While not everyone in a geographic area is part of the ethnic group being celebrated, the boundaries of the community are permeable and tend to welcome outsiders while sharing a notion of ethnicity.⁷ Bucyrus lies in the grain belt of Ohio, where Route 30 follows the old Lincoln Highway through Bucyrus's central business district. The city was settled by German immigrants and developed an identity closely associated with their foods and foodways. Today it is best known for hosting "Ohio's eatingest festival", the Bucyrus Bratwurst Festival. Around 100,000 people attend the three-day event where locally-produced brats are prepared and served in a variety of ways. One may purchase a brat "Bucyrus style", on a rye bun with spicy or stone-ground mustard and sauerkraut (the way locals seem to prefer it); or simmered in chili; crumbled in the local favorite, bratwurst casserole; made into pitawurst; or in any of a seemingly endless array of other options. Every vendor who sells bratwurst is required to sell locally-produced brats from either Carle's or The BratWorks.

The fourth type of festival recognizes the place of commercial agriculture as the largest industry in Ohio and the part played by the commercial food industry in local foodways. During the canal era of the 1840's and '50's, Milan, Ohio became a major shipping center for the export of wheat to U.S. and foreign ports. While the town was bypassed by the railroad era, the automobile industry of the 20th Century brought new prosperity. With the development of truck crops (produce grown for sale in urban markets), Milan sup-

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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A LOCAL CULINARY TRADITION



FISH CAUGHT THE MAN

by Yvonne R. Lockwood

Dr. Yvonne Lockwood of Grass Lake, MI works at the Michigan State University Museum in East Lansing, where she is Curator of Folklife and Extension Specialist for the Michigan Traditional Arts Program. She is the invited scholar for the Michigan leg of Key Ingredients, the traveling exhibit about the nation's foodways, now completing its one-year tour of the state. Yvonne has written and spoken extensively about regional and ethnic foodways. She and her husband Bill Lockwood, both longtime CHAA members, were awarded the Sophie Coe Prize in Food History (2001) for their joint essay "Continuity and Adaptation in Arab American Foodways".

The Bay Port Fish Sandwich Festival and the relationship between place and food is the subject of this essay. Just how particular foods become associated with particular geographic locations, and the relationship between them, are topics of interest to food scholars.

Regional foodways are products of gradual development and are accepted by the people as the natural way of food. Often, they have heavy symbolic or ethnic associations and are important in marking the social boundaries between people in different regions. Well-known examples in Michigan include the pasty (a baked meat-and-vegetable turnover) in the Upper Peninsula; the cudighi (a spicy sausage-patty sandwich) on the Marquette Iron Range; muskrat in Monroe County; tart cherries in the Grand Traverse Bay area; the Coney hotdog in the area stretching from Flint to Detroit to Jackson; thimbleberries in the Keweenaw Peninsula; and fish fries in maritime areas throughout the state. The Bay Port fish sandwich, and the festival of the same name, is another example of a local specialty.

With its attractive natural features and cultural diversity, tourism is one of Michigan's largest industries. Competing to capture visitors' attention, community leaders and entrepreneurs eagerly commodify their locales. They have created Indian tepees with all the accoutrements of someone's idea of Woodlands Indian life, as well as Paul Bunyans, Hiawathas, and Alpine villages with an array of appropriate and inappropriate activities and objects to buy. As a major maritime and agricultural state, Michigan also hosts a cornucopia of local food festivals to attract tourists; however, in only a few of these do local and regional foods play major roles.



"Fish caught the man." This sign depicts Henry Engelhard and everyone else who travels to Bay Port for a fish sandwich. Photo courtesy of Carolyn Smith.

A Freshwater Maritime Setting

On the first weekend of August, Bay Port, Michigan is the site of the Bay Port Fish Sandwich Festival.¹ The birth of the fish sandwich pre-dates the festival that now bears its name. Over several decades, the fish in the sandwich changed from battered and breaded herring, to mullet, to whitefish, and most recently to pollack. It is deep-fried in peanut oil and served on a hotdog bun— or more recently, a hamburger bun— with mustard, ketchup, or tartar sauce. Today this fish sandwich is a tradition in both the public and private arena in Bay Port, but in 1949 it was the provenance of a single family and defined as a new product from local ingredients. Whereas food may be incidental to some tourists, the Bay Port fish sandwich became the focus of a festival that made Bay Port a popular tourist destination.²

Bay Port, population about 600, is located on the upper west side of Michigan's "Thumb", a peninsula surrounded by Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron. The Thumb was once the lumber capital of the Midwest; its land was cleared during the 19th Century. Today the Thumb is rural and its residents, many of whom are of German and Polish ancestry, are for the most part agricultural and maritime based. Two significant long-time industries are the growing and refining of sugar beets and

commercial fishing. The region is also the center of dry-bean production.

In the first half of the 20th Century, Bay Port was one of the world's largest freshwater fishing ports and the headquarters of the Bay Port Fish Company, which had 42 full-time commercial fishing tugs at branches around Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron. The company directed selling fish, supplying other fishermen with ropes and equipment, and repairing boats and engines.³ According to residents, local men were exempted from military service during World War 2 so they and the company could continue to supply the nation with fish.

Fishermen went out each morning in Spring and Fall to harvest their catches from nets (pound nets, later trap nets). It was not uncommon for a pound net in the 1920's to yield 2-4 tons of herring in a single lift. Then herring was the most plentiful catch, and fishermen took 3½ million tons from Saginaw Bay in 1930.⁴ In addition to herring, they took walleye—also prized—whitefish, suckers (mullet), carp, and trout. Herring were shipped daily by truck and refrigerated express railcars all over the Midwest and the South. Around 1956, for reasons attributed to ecological changes (primarily pollution) and heavy fishing, herring disappeared. Today, commercial herring fishing does not exist on Lake Huron and the Saginaw Bay.⁵

Bay Port is still a commercial and recreational fishing center. Although the Bay Port Fish Company is down to a small fleet of boats, fish and fishing are very much part of Bay Port's image.

The Bay Port Fish Sandwich is Born

In 1949 the local Chamber of Commerce began to plan a special homecoming festivity in conjunction with the July 4th celebration. One member, Henry Engelhard, who had begun working at the Bay Port Fish Company in 1927 and became a co-owner in 1949, argued that such an event should utilize a hometown product. His idea was "to do what Frankenmuth does with chicken... Certainly Bay Port with all its fresh fish can do better than Frankenmuth with its chicken."⁶

Henry contacted a customer in Indiana who was receiving from the Bay Port Fish Company about 250 pounds of herring a day, six days a week, for fish sandwiches. "If it can be done in Indiana," Henry had said, "we have an obligation to utilize Bay Port's fresh fish in an 'original Bay Port fish sandwich'." When the Engelhard family gave their word never to divulge the secret ingredients of the batter in which the fish is dipped, the Indiana customer agreed to travel to Bay Port to get them started.

With his instructions, Henry's wife Edna created a one-pound, batter-dipped, breaded and fried herring, topped with ketchup and German mustard on a specially-baked rectangular bun that they served to locals on July 3rd as a warmup for the July 4th celebration. The slogan became, "A sandwich so big, it takes two hands to hold one."

Edna's family, who were farmers, built a vending stand with wood from their woodlot. Detroit Edison, the electric power provider, had just introduced deep-fryers and loaned one to the Engelhards. As an indication of Henry's skills as a promoter, he requested of his senator in Washington, D.C., that jets fly over the fish sandwich stand on July 4th to call attention to them. And they did!

Tourism is based in part on the assumption that the experience offered by the destination site is not available in tourists' home environments.⁷ On this particular July 4, 1949, fried-fish sandwiches were an unknown in the Thumb. And people were very curious, asking, "What is a fish sandwich?" Rather than patronize the other food stands, they stood four-deep around the fish stand waiting for a sandwich as Edna, with only one deep-fryer, prepared fish. The sandwich was a big hit; many people bought them by the dozen. The Engelhards were invited for a number of repeat performances in nearby towns, and locals regretted that the sandwiches were available only on special occasions.

With her daughters nearing college age, Edna saw the potential for raising money by serving fish sandwiches on a regular basis. In 1952 she herself built a small stand in the front yard along the main road into town, purchased equipment, and in May opened her fish sandwich stand. The daughters, in their teens, managed the stand. Their customers included tourists, year-round residents, summer cottagers, who frequently purchased dozens of sandwiches at a time, and sugar beet and bean harvesters, who purchased "roasters full". Orders of 50-75 sandwiches were common.⁸

During hot, sticky days of Summer the stand often remained open until 5:00 a.m., serving tourists and beachcombers. During sugar beet and bean harvesting, if the harvest was delayed, the stand remained open until the day before Thanksgiving, providing sandwiches for the truckers coming and going. A crowd always congregated around the stand on Friday and Saturday evenings, and Henry entertained the waiting customers with information about fish and endless fish stories.

When herring disappeared from Saginaw Bay in the late 1950's, the Engelhards turned to white mullet, a fish with fine lengthwise fish-hook bones. A method and special board were developed to cross-cut the bones while leaving the skin and flesh intact. Considered a junk fish, the mullet was under-utilized, but in the fish sandwich it became the sweetest fish in the lake, the bones made edible by cross-cutting and deep frying, adding a distinctive nutty flavor. Mullet caught on in a big way and is still the Engelhards' preferred fish. The first chapter of the fish sandwich story ends in 1964 when Edna's aging mother required Edna's care, and the last Engelhard daughter left for college. The stand closed.

The Festival Revives a Tradition

The story picks up again in 1978 when the Chamber of Commerce planned another one-day event to promote Bay Port as a tourist destination. The members wanted to do something that would distinguish Bay Port from other places. Although chicken barbecue and a pig roast were suggested, Henry again argued for fish. Edna agreed to make fish sandwiches if the Chamber of Commerce provided her with adequate help and if the Bay Port Fish Company sold her the fish at nearly cost.

On what the Engelhards call "Resurrection Day", the fish sandwich festival was born. Despite careful planning, however, they sold the last of their 1,300 sandwiches at 1:00 p.m. Henry was mortified. "Bay Port," he cried, "the best and largest freshwater port, and it ran out of fish sandwiches!" He agreed to

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FISH CAUGHT THE MAN *continued from page 7*

hold the festival the next year, promising they would never run out of fish again.⁹ The Chamber of Commerce made the festival an annual event. Henry took the role of promoter/publicist and Edna managed the production of the sandwich.

The festival has greatly changed since 1978. It outgrew its original site and now takes place in a large tent near a special pavilion built in honor of Edna, who passed away in 1992. The event has expanded from one to three days. As anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain has noted, when more and more outsiders attend a traditional, small-town event it is not uncommon for the townsfolk to add new activities, because they believe the event is not colorful enough.¹⁰ More important is the utilization of the festival as a way for local groups (church, Boy Scouts, firemen, and fraternal organizations) to raise money for their causes.

And so it is with the Bay Port Fish Sandwich Festival. It officially begins on Friday evening with sandwiches being served at 5:00 p.m., followed by the crowning of the royal court, musical competition, and a concluding dance. On Saturday there is a parade featuring the fish sandwich Queen. Along with the fish sandwich stand, the festival includes arts and crafts booths, church bake sales, firemen's refreshment stand, a silent auction by the Bay Port Historical Society, sales of the festival t-shirt, performances of religious and popular music, juggling, karaoke, and bingo. In 1996, for the first time, outside entrepreneurs were allowed to sell their wares, which lessened the festival's local character.

The original sandwich, served with ketchup—the Engelhardts' preference—and German mustard, is now also offered with tartar sauce because customers request it. Initially a local bakery made special buns the size of hot dog buns, but today ordinary hot dog and hamburger buns are used. After Edna's death the secret batter recipe was entrusted to the eldest daughter, Carolyn Smith, who keeps it in a safe-deposit box. Community members still volunteer in the preparation and sale of the sandwich, but only Carolyn makes the batter, and out of sight of others.

As maintainer of the legacy of her parents Henry and Edna, Carolyn is very concerned about the changes and the reputation of the sandwich. With Henry's passing in 2000, the festival—its infrastructure and very essence—changed, and according to lovers of the sandwich, it is no longer of the same high quality. Rather than cross-cutting the mullet bones by hand, the process is now mechanized. In the last several years, fewer mullet are being caught. Consequently, in 2005 whitefish was offered in the sandwich for the first time and it became the predominant fish, with its own distinctive taste. Customers are offered a whitefish sandwich made with a commercial fish breeding—or else mullet, as long as the supply lasts, with the original, secret batter. Portion control has become important, and whitefish in the sandwich—a piece rather than a whole fillet—is much smaller than the mullet and does not overlap the bun, making it unnecessary to hold it with two hands. In 2007, the supply of whitefish diminished and pollack was added. Nachos also appeared on the menu for the first time, and hot dogs, once sold by local firemen, are also now offered at the fish sandwich stand.

The Making of a Legend

It is said that two languages are spoken in Bay Port: English and fish. Henry Engelhard spoke fish.

We are all familiar with photos of a triumphant fisherman showing off his trophy fish for the camera. In Bay Port, however, "Fish caught the man." A hand-painted sign located near the Bay Port Fish Company displays a large fish standing upright and holding a man upside-down by the foot. Modeled after a wooden carving made for Henry by his son-in-law, this sign has become the symbol of Bay Port. The man is Henry, and by extension all those who come to Bay Port for fish, fishing, and the fish sandwich at the festival. Henry often declared, "People come here for fish; they buy one and take home a dozen. This is the greatest event in Michigan! It's the fish they come for. It's the fish that caught the man." The slogan is a statement of local pride, and the visitor to the Bay Port Fish Sandwich Festival is also caught by fish and should be proud to be included.¹¹

Henry was a genius at promotion. He used storytelling, often tales of exaggeration, and the notions of healthful, natural eating to publicize the fish sandwich, the festival, and Bay Port. Each year he invented a story, expanding the powers of the fish sandwich and requiring a suspension of disbelief. These well-developed narratives credit the fish sandwich with magical powers that local newspapers dutifully reported. He told of President Eisenhower and the predictions of a little boy who advised doctors that the only cure for him after his heart attack was a Bay Port fish sandwich. An Air Force helicopter was sent to Bay Port in the dead of the night; the Engelhardts, who expected it, worked late into the night preparing sandwiches.

Other stories alleged that President George H. W. Bush's first solid food after a hospital stay in Denver was a Bay Port fish sandwich. For the 1991 festival Henry issued a press release: "Rumor has it that Chief of Staff John Sununu has pressured President Bush to relax regulations to permit Air Force 1 to come to Bay Port for a dozen of those famous Bay Port sandwiches. At Bay Port a landing pad is ready on a cement platform in the fish dock, walking distance from our operations."¹² Queen Elizabeth was said to have sent for fish sandwiches for Prince Charles and Princess Diana, and according to the narrative, "They lived happily ever after."¹³ Henry also told of terrorists who threatened to steal the secret batter recipe and bring the world to its knees.

Henry's genius for publicity extended to testimonials about fish as a healthy food choice. "Fish will do wonders for anyone... whether we're talking health, happiness, or wealth." He insisted that when Bay Port was first settled as a fishing town, fishermen ate only fish, and there were no deaths until hunters settled there and people began to eat game. According to Henry, couples who eat as few as two fish sandwiches a year have fewer marital problems. He used to cite examples of individuals who, after eating two sandwiches apiece, found wealth, became a winning football running-back, or became a great concert violinist because of increased finger dexterity. He recommended two sandwiches a year, but said one was better than none.



Henry Engelhard, 1997, holds a platter of fish sandwiches that are so big it takes two hands to hold one. Photo by LuAnne Kozma. Courtesy of Michigan State University Museum.

Because of media attention on Henry Engelhard, alongside the occupational and historical aspects of the festival people were conscious of its family connection. This aspect drew visitors who might otherwise have stayed away. People who do not have the cultural self-confidence to travel out of their familiar surroundings often express apprehension about not knowing how to dress, or a fear of being cheated. Bay Port's tourist brochures emphasized a safe and comfortable environment, promising a simple, informal and rural setting, but Henry and his fish stories communicated the same message, perhaps even more effectively.

Henry Engelhard made the festival thrive and his initials, H.E., tagged him as "high energy". He was the mover and shaker behind the fish sandwich, and one of his greatest achievements was the creation and successful maintenance of the festival. Called the "ultimate Bay Port promoter", he was officially recognized at the local, regional, and state levels for his successful efforts to promote the town and raise the public's consciousness about the importance of commercial fishermen. In 1987 Henry and Edna were sashed as "Mr. and Mrs. Bay Port" and were the grand marshals of the parade. The Engelhards and the fish sandwich festival were featured in *Midwest Living*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the TV program "20/20", and a Barbara Walters interview. They often hosted national and state

dignitaries and politicians in their home and at the state capital, serving up the famous Bay Port fish sandwich. Legislative proclamations declared Bay Port the only fishing port in Michigan and Ohio where the public can purchase fish directly from fishing boats.

Benefits to the community should not be ignored. Jeremy Boissevain reminds us that "one of the most striking characteristics of tourism is the way it promotes self-awareness, pride, self-confidence and solidarity", which is especially pronounced when the host community is "remote or in other ways peripheral to tourists."¹⁴ The participation of thousands of "eaters" visiting out-of-the-way Bay Port from far and wide reinforced local pride, as residents rediscovered their history and the significance of the local fishing industry. The festival's success also led to other touristic events in Bay Port, such as "Ye Olde Whitefish Fish Boil" and the annual blessing of the fishing fleet.

End of an Era

Henry Engelhard always praised the many volunteers who worked the festival, but he regarded the festival as his creation. Each year he was in the thick of things. During lengthy waits for sandwiches, he went up and down the line asking each person where they were from, how they had heard about the festival, and in return entertained them with a fish story. From 1997 on, weakened by a stroke, Henry nonetheless continued to micro-manage the festival, even telephoning from a nursing home to make sure fish and bun supplies were holding out. He passed away in 2000 at age 91.

According to geographer Douglas Pearce, the amount and type of host control are significant to a touristic event and to its host community.¹⁵ Whether intentional or not, the changes following Henry's death undercut Engelhard dominance and have affected the traditional fish sandwich. Within a few years, the mullet—succulent, batter-dipped, deep-fried to a perfect golden crunchiness—that once dwarfed the roll and took two hands to hold, is being replaced by a much smaller piece of whitefish or pollack covered with a commercial batter mix served on a hamburger bun, a kind of sandwich that is rather common in the maritime regions of Michigan.

The Engelhard family still holds the secret of the batter and, thus, control over the traditional fish sandwich. But without the respect Henry received, it is anyone's guess how much longer this traditional sandwich will be available. ■

Endnotes

1. This festival has been very well documented in local and regional newspapers since its beginning. Each year before and during the festival, announcements of the festival and feature stories have appeared. Research on the festival was initiated in 1995 as part of the MSU Extension's "Folkpatterns" workshop on maritime culture, including interviews with key individuals, observation of the festival, and consumption of the fish sandwich. Over the next decade Carolyn Engelhard Smith has kept me informed as I followed the evolution of the fish sandwich and the festival. This article is based primarily on interviews with Henry Engelhard (Jul. and Oct. 1995) and communication with Carolyn since 1995. I wish to acknowledge her valuable assistance in this project and thank her for making this essay possible.

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NORTHWEST OHIO

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Visitors still come for the melons at the 2007 Milan, Ohio Melon Festival. What started in 1959 as a way for Milan melon growers to sell their produce has grown into a three-day event that typically draws around 90,000 to this village of about 1500.

plied the markets of Cleveland with farm-fresh produce, and distinguished itself with one particular crop, melons. Since 1959 the superior taste of Milan melons has been celebrated at the Milan Melon Festival. The three-day event typically draws 90,000 visitors into the picturesque village to buy fresh-picked Milan melons, melon halves with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, or the event specialty, muskmelon and watermelon ice cream made by Toft's Dairy in nearby Sandusky.

While the cultural landscape of Northwest Ohio is dotted with instances of how Ohioans construct, maintain, and celebrate the ties that bind communities together, these food festivals consciously celebrate food and its production and consumption as representative of identity, heritage and place.

In short, festivals can be multifaceted communicative events and are an important vehicle to build, reinforce, or affirm community identity. In addition to being instrumental in preserving the old traditions while providing space for the new, they can celebrate heritage, ethnic identity, a connection to a specific place, and the foods people in a community produce. In this way, these types of festivals can be seen as a conscious celebration of what people do. ■

Endnotes

1. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2004).
2. Sociolinguists Dell Hymes and Richard Bauman see culture as a resource and suggest looking at what a person does based upon the sets of choices available such as time, money, and other factors determining availability. Performance theory based in sociolinguistics explores meaning as fluid and specific to each "event" or situation of action. An individual's background, religion, culture, class, education, socioeconomic level, etc., shape the resources they have for communicating, and that communication will then be shaped by the context of the performance.

3. Robert H. Lavenda, *Corn Fests and Water Carnivals: Celebrating Community in Minnesota* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).
4. See Angus K. Gillespie, "Folk Festival and Festival Folk in Twentieth-Century America" in Alessandro Falassi, ed., *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1985). Gillespie identifies the most important effect of the festival as the perpetuation of tradition (p. 153), but also is interested in the politics of what is presented and provided by those who promote and organize festivals (p. 159).
5. See Roger Abrahams, "An American Vocabulary of Celebrations" in Falassi, ed., *Time Out of Time*. Abrahams proposes that festivals use the normative activities as a point of departure and can be transformed by stylization or by the spirit of license. By borrowing, or "taking their cues" from the everyday, festivals represent an intensification of the everyday and "commonly operate in a manner that confronts and compounds cultural norms" (p. 177).
6. Beverly Stoeltje, "Riding, Roping, and Reunion: Cowboy Festival" in Falassi, ed., *Time Out of Time*. Stoeltje argues that significant features of daily life are reenacted in contest or festival form and festivals can reflect occupational and shared personal interests of the local populations.
7. Jürgen Habermas's notion that the site of authentic performance of identity is the private realm helps explain why many food vendors at food festivals in NW Ohio tend to simplify or streamline recipes and methods of food production and preparation at festivals.

FISH CAUGHT THE MAN *continued from page 9*

2. See Lucy Long, *Culinary Tourism* (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 2004), for a discussion about food and tourism.
3. Leslie Lynn, "Bay Port, Great Lakes Fishing Capitol", *Chronicle* 14:4 (1979), p. 5.
4. Lynn, p. 8.
5. Lynn, p. 10.
6. *Thumb Resorter*, August 8, 1999. The famous chicken dinners of Frankenmuth, MI are a tradition begun at local restaurants prior to World War 2.
7. Eric Cohen, "Contemporary Tourism— Trends and Challenges: Sustainable Authenticity or Contrived Post-Modernity?" in Richard Butler and Douglas Pearce, eds., *Change in Tourism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 23; Jeremy Boissevain, "Introduction" in J. Boissevain, ed., *Coping with Tourists* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996), p. 4.
8. Personal communication, Carolyn Smith, January 2008.
9. Henry Engelhard, interview, 1995. In 1992, however, they ran out of buns. They scoured the area for miles around for every package of hot dog and hamburger buns. Then customers had to take their fish on white sliced bread, and finally, when no more bread products could be found, fish was served on double waxed paper. That year 12,500 sandwiches were sold. Personal communication, Carolyn Smith; interview, Henry Engelhard, 1995.
10. Boissevain, "Introduction", p. 12.
11. See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), p. 101. Cited by David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Consuming Geographies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 149-150.
12. *Blade-Crescent*, Aug. 6-12, 1991.
13. In a 1995 interview, Henry said he didn't know what happened when they divorced unless they stopped eating Bay Port fish sandwiches.
14. Boissevain, "Introduction", p. 6.
15. "Alternative Tourism: Concepts, Classifications, and Questions" in V. Smith and W. R. Eadington, eds., *Tourism Alternatives* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 26.

OF PASTRIES AND PARADES

THE PRAGUE KOLACHE FESTIVAL

by Sharon Maggard

Sharon Maggard has lived in Prague, OK all of her life and has attended every one of the Kolache Festivals held there annually. Her father, Henry Pratkanis, is a full-blooded Czech whose grandparents came from what is now Czech Republic, settling in Texas and later coming to Oklahoma. Sharon has worked as publicity chair for the Prague Kolache Festival for the past 13 years. She has also served on every festival committee at one time or another, especially teaching the Beseda dance, a family tradition revived locally by her parents.

The first Saturday this May will mark the 49th Kolache Festival in Prague, Oklahoma. Everyone is always invited to come partake of the festivities, which celebrate the small town's birthday as well as its Czechoslovakian heritage.

The festival was first held in 1952 to celebrate the town's 50th birthday. It was only natural to use a Czech theme, since the town was settled by Czech immigrants and was named after their homeland in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Knowing that the residents loved the delicious fruit-filled roll called the *kolache*, it was decided to name the festival after this Czech pastry.

The festival was such a success that it turned into a yearly event through 1955, when a 10-year lapse occurred. The annual celebration once again started up in 1965 and has continued to be one of the top festivals in Oklahoma.

The festival draws anywhere from 25,000 to 30,000 people, depending on the weather, to the small town of 2,300. There is no admission charge, and all activities are held outdoors along Main Street and the City Park.

The Kolache and Czech Culture

The kolache is a sweet roll with a fruit or other filling at the center, similar to a Danish roll. The favorite fillings are cherry, poppy seed, apricot, prune, apple, and cream cheese.

The traditional process of making kolaches requires dedication because it is time-consuming. After mixing the yeasty bread dough, it must be left to rise and more than double in size. Then the dough is punched down and rolled in the hands to form a small ball. The balls are placed on a cookie sheet and left to double in size again. Then with the fingertips, the dough ball is stretched and shaped like a pie shell. The fruit filling is then placed in the center and the kolaches are left to rise a third time, about 20 more minutes. *Posipka*, a streusel-type topping made from sugar, flour and butter mixed together until crumbly, is placed over the fruit filling. (Another possible topping is a simple icing, or else coconut and finely chopped pecans.) The kolaches are then baked until the dough is slightly golden. They are especially delicious while warm.

An interesting fact about the kolache is that the women in Europe used whatever fruit was available in their region of the country. Of course, in the U.S. we have whatever fruit or filling we want, all of the time. Also, since the yeast dough must rise three times, this is not a quick-bread recipe but takes hours to make. At churches or the school cafeteria, a dough proofer is used to make the process go much faster than when kolaches are made at home. There is a knack for forming the balls of dough, then pressing them out for the filling, that is taught to the preparers by the more experienced cooks.

The local St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church has won awards for their kolaches for many years. Youth of the parish were taught at an early age to make the pastries, and today they are the teachers. The church hosts an annual Czech Heritage dinner for the community on the Sunday before the festival, featuring authentic foods such as baked chicken with caraway, klobase (a smoked pork sausage, akin to the Polish kielbasa), dilled carrots, rolled seasoned pork roast, and rye bread. These foods are much appreciated by the older generation since Prague does not have a Czech restaurant in town.

In 2001 my daughter Michelle and I visited Praha (Prague) in Czech Republic, and traveled the whole country for 10 days. While there, I observed that their desserts are not as sweet as ours in the U.S., for they do not use as much sugar as we do. In fact, when a friend of mine from Czech Republic first came to the U.S., she could not eat our desserts or candy— too sweet! So, our Americanized kolaches are sweeter than they are in the old country, as we use more sugar in the fruit fillings. However, in other respects the Czech customs that we celebrate annually are amazingly similar to those in Europe, despite 100 years of separation. During our trip, Michelle and I were able to visit a festival in Czech Republic, and in so many ways it was exactly like our own Kolache Festival that we celebrate in Oklahoma, so I was very pleased.

A Portrait of the Festival

In charge of organizing the festival each year is the Kolache Festival Association, which has officers and committee chairmen. Their goal is to promote the Czech heritage.

For months in advance, the local bakery, as well as churches and school groups, start baking the kolaches for the festival. A recipe for the pastry is provided in the souvenir program book. In addition, everyone is invited to bring their own homemade kolaches, as well as homemade bread and wine, to be judged in the Food & Beverage Contest. This competition is open to the public and is part of the festival every year. Winners receive cash prizes and plaques.

A fun event at the festival is the kolache eating contest held right before the Polka Street Dance at 7:00 p.m. The contest is divided up in age groups and the first one to eat a kolache and then give a whistle is the winner. The contestants get their choice of fruit filling.

The Beseda and Czech dances are performed at the festival every year. A group of youth, known as the Prague Czech Folk Dancers, performs several dances at two performances during the day. The Beseda is an ancient dance from Europe that combines many different favorite dances of the different regions. The dance takes about 15 minutes to perform and is usually danced by adults or older youth.

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CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY THROUGH FOOD



THE GRAND RAPIDS APPLE BUTTER FEST

by Lucy M. Long

Dr. Lucy Long is a professor of International Studies/American Cultural Studies at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH, where she teaches courses in folklore, traditional music, and foodways, and has served as editor of the journal Digest: An Interdisciplinary Study of Food. In 1988, she coined the now-familiar term “culinary tourism”, and she later served as editor of the book Culinary Tourism (Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2004). Dr. Long has adapted the essay below from her lengthier article, “Apple Butter in Northwest Ohio: Food Festivals and the Construction of Local Meaning”, which appeared in Holidays, Rituals and Festivals: Proceedings from the Conference (University of Alcalá, Spain, 2003). She also co-produced a documentary video on the festival, “Stirring Up the Past: The Grand Rapids Apple Butter Fest”, available through WBGU-TV in Bowling Green.

Apple butter, a thick, paste-like sauce of boiled apples and cider commonly used as a sweet preserve to spread on bread, is not what most people would consider an exotic or exciting food. It tends to be considered old-fashioned and is often associated with the Amish and Mennonites, both of whom settled extensively in Ohio and Indiana. It also is not crucial to meals or nutritional health—there are other ways to preserve apples, and apple butter is usually just a spread for bread. However, in at least one instance, it is celebrated through an annual festival, becoming the cornerstone for a local identity and the impetus for the construction of a tight-knit community.

Apple butter comes historically from a German food called *Latwerge*, made of plums or pears and originally used for medicinal purposes. That dish became part of folk cookery in Europe and was brought to the Mid-Atlantic colonies in the early 1700's by immigrants from the Pfalz area of Germany. These settlers, generally referred to as Pennsylvania Germans, called the dish *Latwaerrick* and used apples. Quakers in the area referred to it as “cider cheese”, the generic term “cheese” referring to boiled-down preparations of fruits or vegetables. Anglo-Americans then renamed it “apple butter”. Since apples were prevalent throughout the colonies, and settlers were expected to plant apple trees wherever they went, the butter often followed. It is now most common in the German-based areas of the eastern Midwest, the southern Appalachian region, and rural parts of the Mid-Atlantic.

In 1977, the town of Grand Rapids in northwest Ohio began an annual Apple Butter Fest. Beginning as a fundraiser for the historical society, the festival has grown into a massive one-day event that draws up to 100,000 people and is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the region, a fact that encompasses the entire



Sugar is about to be added to the hot apple butter, simmering in a 50-gallon copper kettle at the 2007 Grand Rapids, Ohio Apple Butter Festival. More than 2,300 pints of this Northwest Ohio treat are sold at the festival. Photo: Nathan C. Crook.

town both literally and symbolically. The Fest includes a little bit of everything: craft demonstrations, arts and crafts for sale, re-enactment groups, a flea market, music and dancing, puppet shows and local drama groups, food stalls, and demonstrations of “old-timey” foods, such as popcorn, cider, and of course, apple butter. The focal point of the festival is an area where large kettles of apple butter are being stirred. The butter is sold, and the revenues go into a fund that has been used to renovate older buildings and “improve” the town. Other civic organizations (scouts, school PTA, sports leagues and little leagues, and churches) sell food, raising funds for themselves. The event also provides an occasion for social gatherings, family reunions, displays of town pride and regional heritage as well as the usual commercial, social, and carnivalesque activities that go along with large outdoor festive events.

Through these events, various images of apple butter are evoked as well as invented. By celebrating this food, those images are also celebrated, and the food is transformed from simply a part of history to being emblematic of heritage, that is, of an interpretation of the past based on contemporary idealized identity. That symbolism is then transferred to the town celebrating that food. To explore this process and how food can be used in such a powerful way, let us go back to the history of the town as well as the history of the festival.

An Apple-Butter Stirring Becomes a Festival

Grand Rapids was founded in 1833 by a Scots-Irish settler. Built next to the Maumee River, the village had access to rich natural resources—fish from the river, timber and hunting grounds from the nearby oak forests, fertile farmland once the trees were cleared—as well as a transportation route for trade and commerce. Settlers, mostly of German stock, quickly populated the village as farmers and merchants. The building of the Miami-Erie Canal beginning in the late 1830's brought more commerce to the town as well as a transient population of laborers.¹ By the time of the Civil War, the village was a busy commercial center surrounded by family farms. Economic prosperity lasted only several decades, however. The canal and the river as carriers of commerce were

supplanted by railroads by the 1880's, and Grand Rapids was bypassed. It retained an agricultural identity and was primarily a locus of activity for family-run farms. By the 1950's, it had turned into a sleepy little town known more for its fishing opportunities than for its heritage.

In the early 1970's, a local businessman spurred the town's economy back into action, while an influx of retirees and commuters from the nearby industrial city of Toledo brought a concern in improving the town's cultural life and image. The Grand Rapids Historical Society was established in 1975 in order to preserve local landmarks, educate the public about the history of the area, and promote pride in local identity. When funds were needed, several members suggested drawing upon a family tradition of the Society's president, Steve Kryder. The Kryders had been residents of a neighboring county since the 1840's, and apple butter was a part of the family's life from the beginning, partly because apples were available from the orchard on their farm. Although apple butter making had died out in many local families by the 1940's, the Kryders held annual reunions around an apple-butter stirring, using the recipes and kettles that had been passed down in the family. They offered to share their tradition for the festival, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Kryders' recipe for making apple butter is remarkably similar to one published in *Buckeye Cookery* in 1876.² Fifty gallons of apple butter begins with 50 gallons of cider made from a "good blend of apples". They then boil the cider in a copper kettle over a steady fire for about a day until the cider is thickened, similar to molasses. Beginning at daylight the next day, they start the fire up again and gradually add 12 bushels of cooking apples, peeled and quartered, to the boiling cider. Preparing the apples usually required a day or two of effort on the part of the women in the family, while the men took charge of the fire and stirring. Once the apples are added, they must be stirred constantly. Wide, long-handled wooden paddles allow the worker to stand away from the open fire while stirring. There are holes in each paddle for attaching cornhusks. The husks keep the mixture from scorching and help clean the kettle. After about six hours, depending on the weather, the thickness of the mixture is checked by placing a spoonful on a plate and seeing if water runs out when the plate is tipped. If it does, the apples need to boil longer. When the apples no longer "weep" in this way, the mixture is ready to be jarred. Buckets of the apple butter are taken out and poured into sterilized jars. If sugar is to be added³, the kettle is taken off the fire beforehand so the sugar does not burn. The rate is 60-70 pounds of white sugar per 50-gallon batch of apple butter.

This process of making apple butter, being time-consuming and backbreaking, was not always pleasurable. In the Kryder family, the tedium of the task was relieved by involving the entire family, although family folklore tells of the grandfather, a state senator, who disliked the chore and frequently let the apple butter boil over the kettle, making a mess.

The process also practically demands social interaction. In fact, it is one reason that a strong sense of community has emerged around the festival. First, the apples are frequently obtained from local orchards (sometimes given as a donation). Several weeks prior to the festival, volunteers meet at the fire station to peel and core apples. Then a weekend is planned at the Kryder farm where family and volunteers stir the kettles. This apple butter is then jarred for the festival. More batches are prepared at the festival site. All of the events behind the scenes are turned into social occasions. Pizza is served at the fire station, and an old-fashioned potluck "farm"

dinner is held at the Kryders' place. (This usually includes a local tradition of hot chicken sandwiches, made from stewed canned chicken served on hamburger buns.)

It is partly because of this participation that the festival has such a family feel to it. The events are open to the public, and many community members make a point of participating, saying it makes them feel part of the festival and the town. That feeling seems to carry over to the Fest in general, where visitors, often on family outings, talk about how welcomed they feel. Both residents and festival goers observe that the festival makes them feel that Grand Rapids is "just one big family".

Why the Festival Resonates

The Apple Butter Fest evokes a number of images, so that audiences have a variety of ways to connect with it. One of these is the symbolism of apple butter itself. As an old-fashioned, pioneer food, it is associated with the values of wholesomeness, simplicity, and self-sufficiency— values that are felt to define the essence of Midwestern and American character. It also seems to represent the frugality, thriftiness, and practicality of the Midwestern heritage. It was a way of utilizing and preserving one of the crops that grew easily in numerous back yards and that tended to offer an overabundance. In recent years, the festival has also been presented as representing national heritage, partly reflecting the feeling that Midwestern culture *is* American culture. Festival t-shirts that feature American flags made from images of apple butter kettles highlight this meaning, as do other images that use likenesses of apples to supply the red color in a combination of red, white, and blue symbolizing the United States.

The food is also closely associated with the Fall season. Apples are harvested during the months of September and October; fresh apple cider is available then, and leftover apples are preserved for later use. Other Autumnal images appear on signs as well as in the arts and crafts being sold. Images of leaves and apples are combined on some posters, and decorations use both, along with sheaves of corn- and wheat-stalks. The date of the festival emphasizes its harvest and seasonal associations. It is always the second Sunday in October, which in northwest Ohio tends to be a transitional time climate-wise. The weather on the day of the festival is usually chilly and windy, signaling both the end of summer and the approaching winter. Festival goers talk about the event being their last outdoor excursion for the year, sometimes their last chance to see friends and neighbors before bundling down against the cold.

The Fall holidays are also referred to in the festival by the arts and crafts being sold. These usually include decorative towels, furniture, knick-knacks, toys, and other items that display holiday motifs for Halloween and Thanksgiving. These accentuate the seasonal associations of apple butter and also frame it as a celebratory and ritualistic item. For some festival organizers and visitors, the festival also serves as the first day of holiday gift-shopping season. For them, the Fest actually represents the beginning of a cycle of holidays that end with Christmas-New Year and the celebration of Winter.⁴

For the festival audience, the one-day event offers something for almost everyone: arts and crafts, music, food, history, educational displays and hands-on activities, sales, and entertainment. This wide range of activities attracts a wide range

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APPLE BUTTER *continued from p. 13*

of audiences. As with any celebratory event, the festival's meanings and functions vary among the participants according to personality and personal taste, and also their relationship to the festival as organizers or volunteers, as town residents, or as "day-trippers".

Although apple butter is the ostensible focal point, audiences come to the festival for a variety of reasons that frequently have nothing to do with the food. In fact, a number of festival-goers will claim that they have never actually tasted apple butter or that, if they have, they do not like it. They come instead to shop, to visit friends, to hear music, to participate in a public festive event, to celebrate the end of Summer and the beginning of Autumn. For most of these individuals, the festival is a form of recreation, although a few parents mention that they bring their children specifically to see the historical demonstrations. The festival has associated apple butter with big crowds, festivities, socializing—a good time. Through the festival, people can experience and enjoy their heritage and revel in it—not just sit on the sidelines as observers.

However, the festival isn't merely a form of entertainment; it also functions as a ritual, a recurring event with a symbolic reference.⁵ First, it serves as a rite of spectacle or conspicuous display based on the aesthetic presentation and consumption of festive foods and other items, the abundance of activities offered, and the seasonal celebration of harvest and plenty. Second, it is a rite of unity, celebrating not just the concepts of family, town, region, and nation but also the togetherness and belonging that these concepts embody. Focusing as it does on apple butter, which is not a contentious or politically charged item, the festival offers an occasion to emphasize the commonalities among people rather than distinctions and differences. Third, the festival is a rite of reversal, in which the normal order of life is turned upside-down. Streets are closed off to vehicles and taken over by pedestrians; town and state officials work alongside townspeople; historical activities are enacted in the present; snack foods are eaten all day. This reversal creates the sense of festivity and celebration, yet also affirms the normal order of things and the unity of the town.

Reclaiming the Festival's Original Spirit

While the festival is thought of as a positive event and ritual by many people, not all town residents approve of the festival. For some, it symbolizes chaos, noise, and inconvenience. Instead of celebrating their own heritage, they see the festival as celebrating someone else's heritage. Their own lives are far removed from apple butter and its references, and they have no interest in the values it is being used to promote. They also feel that the profits made by the historical society and other local non-profits do not filter down to them. Some of these individuals have started selling parking spaces on their lawns or renting space to outside commercial vendors.

Such actions caused the town to rethink the purpose of the



Visitors crowd Front Street in Grand Rapids, Ohio on the second Sunday of October 2007 for the 31st annual Apple Butter Festival. The village is home to just over 1000 residents and this annual event attracts between 40,000 and 60,000 on a single day. Photo: Nathan C. Crook.

festival, and in preparation of the 2001 event, debates raged over the character of the festival and the role of the town in it. These controversies raised questions concerning the cultural politics of the festival—whose heritage was being celebrated and in what manner should it be celebrated?

Since the Historical Society sponsors the festival, its members had to struggle with these issues. They reaffirmed the original educational intent of the festival, but also recognized its profitable aspect and the need to allow others in the community to participate. Their concern that the festival was becoming too tourist-oriented has been counterbalanced by an emphasis on the original intent of the festival as well as on the symbolic references of apple butter to family and local values. The mass volunteer activities that were instituted (apple peeling and stirring) are re-creations of family events, and can be read as attempts to reclaim the tradition and the original spirit of the festival. In the end, for the organizers at least, family tradition authenticates and validates the festival as well as serves as a model for it.

Apple butter is an example of a tradition, in a sense, coming full circle, expanding to new audiences, developing new meanings, being marketed and commoditized, and finally, being re-grounded in its original source. Yet the variety of activities offered in the festival and the lack of specific local memories of apple butter allow for individuals to impart their own meanings on the festival.

The Apple Butter Fest has contributed significantly to the identity of Grand Rapids as a destination for tourists, shoppers, and families looking for a pleasant setting for an afternoon stroll. Restaurants, antiques stores, and shops selling old-fashioned Ameri-

continued on next page

PRAGUE KOLACHE FESTIVAL *continued from page 11*



The "Kolache King", Owen Davis of Prague, OK, usually bakes around 1,000 dozen kolaches each year for the Festival. He has been making these pastries since 1967, when he purchased the Prague Bakery. He no longer owns the bakery, but still works there. Photo: Sharon Maggard, 2007.

Free entertainment of various styles of singers and dancers is offered all day at the festival at several stages, as well as a Czech Costume Contest. This is an opportunity for visitors to view the beautiful Czech costumes worn by local residents. Some of the costumes are elaborately decorated with rhinestones, sequins, and embroidery. The youth who participate in the Royalty Pageant, held the Saturday before the festival, explain in detail the meaning of their costume and why it was designed in such a fashion. Many of the costumes tell a story and family ancestry.

The festival also features a beer garden, wine and gourmet pavilion, arts and crafts, Czech imports of jewelry, fabric and trim, cut crystal vases, stemware and glassware, books and rosaries, a carnival, and activities for the children. Events change and are added from year to year.

One of the highlights of the day is the parade that starts at 11:00 a.m. It typically lasts 1½ hours and features everything from antique cars, horse-riding clubs, and the Festival queens, to floats depicting the parade theme, as well as the Oklahoma City Shriners, who bring over 50 of their individual entries.

Of great interest at the festival are the many food booths lining Main Street. Favorite items are the kolaches, klobase sandwiches, funnel cakes, caramel apple slices, corn dogs, fresh squeezed lemonade, "Indian tacos" (tacos made with fry bread instead of tortillas), smoked turkey legs, Cajun catfish, nachos, barbecue dinners, brisket, roasted corn on the cob, homemade Root Beer, beef jerky, pork skins, chocolate dipped cheesecake and bananas, fried green tomatoes, and fried pickles. The food is truly delicious and it's a tough decision on what to try.

The royalty crowning is held in the early evening to reveal the new Kolache Festival Queen, Junior Queen, Princess, and Prince. Following the crowning is the Polka Street Dance with a live polka band. The dances are easy to learn and fun to watch.

Come join us this year at our annual celebration and share in the Czech tradition of having a good time. If you have questions or would like more information, the contact phone number for the festival is 405-567-4866, or you can visit our website at www.praguekolachefestival.com. ■

APPLE BUTTER

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cana now dominate the one-block downtown area. Sidewalks have been improved, a gazebo has been built for outdoor community concerts, and paths along the canal have been maintained. Along with these physical and economic changes has come a sense of pride in the town. Apple butter has been turned into a symbol of heritage and also represents Autumn, crowds of people in festive spirits, excitement and activity, visiting with neighbors, friends, and family. In this way, an ordinary food has been transformed and then in turn has transformed the community itself. ■

Endnotes

1. Many of these laborers were Irish and tended to have reputations as rowdy womanizers and fighters. The village of Providence across the river from Grand Rapids housed these laborers. At one point, a town proclamation evicted all individuals of Irish ancestry. Ironically, several years later Providence was decimated by a smallpox epidemic. The residents of Grand Rapids were spared from the epidemic by quarantine and the river between the two towns.
2. A recipe from *Buckeye Cookery and Practical Housekeeping* (1876) reads as follows: "Boil one barrel of new cider down half, peel and core three bushels of good cooking apples; when the cider has boiled to half the quantity, add the apples, and when soft, stir constantly for from eight to ten hours. If done it will adhere to an inverted plate. Put away in stone jars (not earthen ware), covering first with writing-paper cut to fit the jar, and press down closely upon the apple butter; cover the whole with thick brown paper snugly tied down. (From Miss Sarah Thomson, Delaware)."
3. A traditional point of pride is that sugar is not necessary, so apple butter could be made completely out of homegrown ingredients. The Midwestern recipe differs considerably from the Pennsylvania one that traditionally adds fennel seed, ground cloves and nutmeg, and the Southern one that includes cinnamon and sugar. Some Midwestern makers do add "Red Hots", a cinnamon candy, for color and taste.
4. On the concept of seasonal holiday cycles, see Jack Santino, *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
5. On the ritual and symbolic aspect of festivals, see Santino, *All Around the Year*; and Victor W. Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982).

THE KUTZTOWN FOLK FESTIVAL AND ITS STEREOTYPING OF PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH COOKERY

by William Woys Weaver

William Woys Weaver, adjunct professor of Culinary Arts and Food Studies at Drexel University in Philadelphia, is a world-famous food historian, author, and seed preservationist. Among his publications are Sauerkraut Yankees: Pennsylvania-German Foods and Foodways (1983) and America Eats: Forms of Edible Folk Art (1989); he is also a Contributing Editor for Gourmet and Mother Earth News. In Ann Arbor last May, Weaver spoke at the Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History, addressing the subject of "The Amish as a Symbol of Regional and Ethnic Identity". In his current doctoral studies with University College, Dublin, he is investigating issues surrounding "authenticity" in food tourism.

The Kutztown Folk Festival, the first folklife festival in the United States, began in 1949 as the brainchild of three scholars at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, southeastern Pennsylvania. Dr. Alfred Shoemaker, Dr. J. William Fry, and Dr. Don Yoder joined forces to establish the Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center at Franklin & Marshall that same year and realized that in order to fulfill the educational mandate of their newly created center, they would have to come up with a plan that would promote Pennsylvania Dutch culture while at the same time raise money for furthering research on that large and complex subject. The result was the establishment of the Kutztown Folk Festival in 1950, a festival that has taken on a life of its own, and which has survived several managerial upheavals over the course of time.

Keep in mind that there was one significant difference between the Kutztown festival and previous folk festivals held in the United States: the earlier festivals were stage performances of folk dance and music and not much else. The Kutztown festival focused on a single American regional culture (Pennsylvania Dutch) and all of its aspects, from religious diversity to food. Furthermore, the purpose of the folk festival was to bring this culture before the American public in ways that could not be explained through books or museum exhibits. This new concept emphasized living history, using real people from the culture, farmers and their wives, to illustrate their cultural origins and way of life.

The festival was established at a time when there was a growing local interest in Pennsylvania Dutch culture. Nationally, much had already been written about Pennsylvania Dutch decora-

tive arts, and the well-known Water Gate Inn in Washington, DC had been showcasing an elegant form of Pennsylvania Dutch cookery throughout the 1940's. Thus, the timing was ripe to create a venue where the public could come face to face with the Pennsylvania Dutch themselves. Standing behind the local festivals and the sponsorship of their activities was the Groundhog Lodge Movement and the broad-based dialect renaissance of the 1930's; the lodges were male-only clubs for speaking Pennsylvfaanisch, the local Germanic language. The Lehigh Valley lodge was one of the strongest, and many of its members collaborated with the festival to help launch it. The lodge exhibit has been a feature of the festival since the beginning.

Triumph and Tragedy

The choice of Kutztown was ideal because of accessibility, available fair grounds, and several local organizations with previous experience in organizing similar although much smaller events. The apple butter festival held at Dorney Park (near Allentown) throughout the 1930's and 1940's may be viewed as a direct antecedent to the Kutztown festival; the old hotel in Dorney Park had been one of the high altars of Pennsylvania Dutch cookery, so the theme of food and regional cooking was destined to become an important component of the Kutztown experience.

The Folklore Center devised a plan by which the money earned from the festivals would provide cash for research among living informants and so create an archive of first-person accounts. This innovative idea worked to a degree. By 1958, the Folklore Center was incorporated as the Pennsylvania Folklife Society and began publishing books and monographs under that name. Some of the informant material soon appeared as society volumes. Also by 1958, the center's newspaper-like periodical called *The Pennsylvania Dutchman* had become a quarterly journal called *Pennsylvania Folklife*, a distinguished regional publication under the editorship of Dr. Don Yoder that had no equal in the United States. And no scholarly magazine has been able to pick up where *Pennsylvania Folklife* left off after its demise in the 1990's. Both the *Pennsylvania Dutchman* and *Pennsylvania Folklife* are filled with material on Pennsylvania Dutch foods and foodways.

When the festival opened at Kutztown in July 1950 it was a modest success. Programs were broadcast on local radio stations and were soon picked up by national media. The festival eventually generated so much publicity that by 1960 it had become the largest of its kind in the country, attracting 100,000 people during the festival week.

The success of Kutztown planted the idea to organize a second festival over Labor Day and to hold it on a farm near Lancaster that was earmarked to become a Pennsylvania Dutch open-air museum. This festival was held in September 1961, but the rainy weather proved disastrous and thousands were turned away, thus leaving the society faced with a huge debt that eventually drew it into bankruptcy. Much of the blame for this disaster fell on director Dr. Alfred Shoemaker, who as a result suffered a complete nervous breakdown. He ended up living as a street person in New York, and died in total anonymity some 20 years later.

The tragedy continued. By 1964 a court-appointed lawyer took charge of the Kutztown Folk Festival, and the Pennsylvania Folklife Society as well as *Pennsylvania Folklife* were transferred to Ursinus College in Collegeville, PA. Ursinus also became the repository for the society's collection of rare books and manuscripts. The property earmarked as an open-air museum is now a shopping mall. Under the oversight of the new management, the focus of the Kutztown festival was changed to emphasize Amish culture in an attempt to appeal to the type of blue-collar tourism that was blossoming in Lancaster County at that time.

This grafting of the Amish onto the original festival at the expense of other themes created the misleading impression that Amish and Pennsylvania Dutch were synonymous terms and that the Pennsylvania German majority were a vague "all the rest". Since the festival was seen by outsiders as the mouthpiece for Pennsylvania Dutch culture, this commercial endorsement of the Amish encouraged the use of similar imagery elsewhere, especially in general advertising of Pennsylvania Dutch products.

Most important in terms of the festival itself, none of the money earned under the court arrangement was reinvested to expand and improve the educational mandate of the festival. Thus, the festival petrified into the form it had assumed by 1961, remaining that way until proprietary rights were transferred to Kutztown University and the Kutztown Fair Grounds Association a few years ago. These two organizations have worked to revive the festival and its original educational function.

Ethnicity: A Contested Terrain

In order to better appreciate the intentions of the founders of the Kutztown Folk Festival, it is important for the outsider (non-Pennsylvania Dutch) to understand that Pennsylvania Dutch culture has been divided over the definition of its so-called "ethnicity".

The Pennsylvania German Society, founded in 1891, began with an academic focus largely on 18th-Century Pennsylvania and the idea that the culture established by German and Swiss settlers was a "new Germany" in America. This Germanophile emphasis is reflected in the name of the society and in the use of the term Pennsylvania German as a descriptor for all aspects of the culture. This European-oriented view persists to this day in some quarters of the community, and is most apparent to outsiders in the Mennonite commercial manipulation of the Amish as living specimens of European peasantry—a perfect example is People's Place, a cultural complex in Intercourse, PA that promotes Amish and Mennonite crafts and traditions. The Amish Experience, as it is called in Lancaster County, is not about food; it is about Mennonite missionary work and drawing the public toward conversion to a Christian lifestyle.

By contrast, the Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center was established on a much more broad-based and non-sectarian model starting with the presumption that Pennsylvania Dutch culture is an American phenomenon, a New World identity that evolved parallel to mainstream American society and yet borrowed heavily from it. This has huge implications for the way the Center interpreted food and foodways, as I will explain shortly. The philosophical mandate of the original Folklore Center and the folklife festival centered on the promotion of a culture that coa-



Mrs. Anna Henry demonstrating bread baking, although of a non-traditional type. Undated photograph, 1950's.

lesced quickly over the period of a century into a regional identity with its own distinct language (Pennsylvanisch) and certain overarching practices and beliefs that pulled together the many different religious strands within the Pennsylvania Dutch community.

The Amish image as a symbol of Pennsylvania Dutch culture first surfaced in 1933 as a response to events in Hitler's Germany. Amish images were used for the first time in 1937 as cover art for the menus of the German Village Restaurant in Lancaster, PA, a restaurant that changed its name to The Village Restaurant after Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. The Amish presence at the Kutztown Folk Festival was never large until after the change of management in the 1960's. Until then the Amish were just one of several sectarian groups represented at the festival.

In fact, from the standpoint of culinary history, the Amish were never considered the best cooks among the Pennsylvania Dutch, and their modern-day reliance on highly-sugared processed foods has led to serious dietary problems in that community. Regardless of one's opinion pro or con, the Amish do not know most of the traditional dishes found in mainstream Pennsylvania Dutch cookery, and they make very few foods that they can identify as distinctly their own. *Roascht* ("roast"), a type of baked stuffing mixed with shredded chicken served at weddings, is perhaps the most unique, although it is essentially a variant form of *G'fillsel* (stuffing), one of the ubiquitous Pennsyl-

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KUTZTOWN FOLK FESTIVAL *continued from page 17*

vania Dutch dishes still served at restaurants, fire halls, and even the Kutztown Folk Festival. The Whoopie Pie, commercialized in Lancaster County, PA as an Amish food (which indeed it has become), was developed in 1928 by a Massachusetts bakery, and only found its way to southeastern Pennsylvania after the building of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. This and many other examples of food acculturation only serve to prove that Pennsylvania Dutch culture is a product of New World evolution. In this respect it stands beside the Cajuns and Spanish Southwest as one of the key regional cultures in the United States.

The interpretation of food and foodways at the Kutztown Folk Festival has had difficulty grappling with these complicated issues. It is not easy for the visitor to spend an afternoon there and take away from that experience a clear understanding of what it means to eat Pennsylvania Dutch cooking, especially the classical dishes. My own field work has documented close to 1,000 foods and their variant forms distributed over an area of the state about the same size as Switzerland. In terms of culinary diversity, this is by far the richest regional cuisine in the country. Many dishes are highly localized, while others are known throughout the region.

This information is not readily accessible aside from what I published in *Pennsylvania Dutch Country Cooking* (1993), a trade book that was also distributed to members of the Pennsylvania German Society. Some members sent it back protesting that it did not represent Pennsylvania Dutch cooking—less a reflection on my work (which won the Jane Grigson Award for scholarship) than on the very nature of Pennsylvania Dutch perceptions about what is authentic and what is not. Much of that has been shaped by the menus that evolved early on at the Kutztown Folk Festival.

The Festival Experience

One of the brilliant concepts that made the festival work so well was organizing it in such a way that it became a walk-through experience, with vendors arranged along avenues so that visitors could spend money from the gate all the way to the exit. As people entered they were given paper bags for their loot, which only encouraged them to make purchases. Furthermore, the exhibits and demonstrations were designed to appeal to both adults and children, and many were staffed by Pennsylvania Dutch craftspeople who would not otherwise be known to the general public. This first-person contact where visitors could talk with craftspeople and learn how they do their work has been a perennial success, both financially for the exhibitors and in repeated visits from year to year by families loyal to the festival and its educational mandate.

A culinary highlight for many visitors is shopping at Dietrich's Meats, which sells a wide range of very traditional Pennsylvania Dutch meat products. But food at the fair grounds during the heat of July is subject to a number of limitations imposed by the logistics and weather.

In order to feed the public while at the festival, several organizations were invited to set up tents for serving meals. This included several church groups and local granges. One church with experience in feeding large numbers of people has participated since the opening in 1950: Zion's Windsor Castle Church (Hamburg, PA). Zion's Windsor Castle has the largest tent

and is still with the festival, providing visitors with full sit-down meals for a fixed-price ticket. Meals are served continuously, and visitors are reminded of the tent's presence by the periodic ringing of a large farmhouse dinner bell.

Strangely enough, the initial reaction from the various church ladies was resistance to the idea of serving Pennsylvania Dutch food to the public: *War dat des alt Schtoff esse?* (Who would eat this stuff?) was their commonest response. Furthermore, no one running the festival actually sat down with any of the participating organizations and suggested a menu that would best reflect Pennsylvania Dutch cookery. Essentially, it became a compromise: a simplified menu that the groups were most comfortable preparing on a large scale in a tent on a sweltering hot day became the menu for the festival meals. That menu soon became the template for Pennsylvania Dutch family-style restaurants all over southeastern Pennsylvania.

The 1959 festival program contains the menus for several church groups and granges. The Windsor Castle ladies offered *Schnitz-un-Gnepp* (dried apple slices cooked with dumplings), chicken pot pie, ham and string beans, with an assortment of side dishes such as chow chow, apple butter, and pepper cabbage. Shoofly Pie and milk tarts were offered for dessert. Another tent run by St. John's Lutheran Church of Kutztown offered turkey or ham dinners and more or less the same side dishes plus Shoofly Pie, lemon tarts, cherry crumb tarts, and several other desserts.

The format of these menus is fairly easy to deconstruct: a range of very familiar common American foods intermixed with some local specialties, most of which require little or no cooking there in the tent. In fact, while interviewing the present women's guild committee at Windsor Castle, I was informed that all food is cooked off-site and brought to the tent in the wee hours of the morning. The kitchen in their tent is used essentially for reheating.

This mix of unfamiliar local specialties with mainstream American foods is a widespread feature of all American menus that I have studied thus far (numbering in the thousands), not just those of Pennsylvania Dutch establishments. By contrast, the purely Northern Italian or purely Cajun menu found in many restaurants today typically offers a high-end dining experience for clientele seeking out culinary authenticity, but this phenomenon evolved very recently in the U.S., certainly within the past 20 years or so. No one yet has come up with a similarly purist Pennsylvania Dutch menu because this would mean assuming the risk of putting off or confusing customers with unfamiliar choices.

Furthermore, the Pennsylvania Dutch restaurant as it exists today caters almost entirely to the lower end of the restaurant business: the bus groups in particular. This food must be plain, non-threatening, and something that resembles the one-pot poverty dishes that these customers may associate with their own heritage. It is food that caters to expectations created by family mythologies and to foodlore promoted in the advertising about the Pennsylvania Dutch and their culture. Ironically, people come to the garden spot of Pennsylvania and find very little fresh food on the table. Soups, pickles, even dumplings from cans line the walls of most restaurant kitchens.

In Search of Authenticity

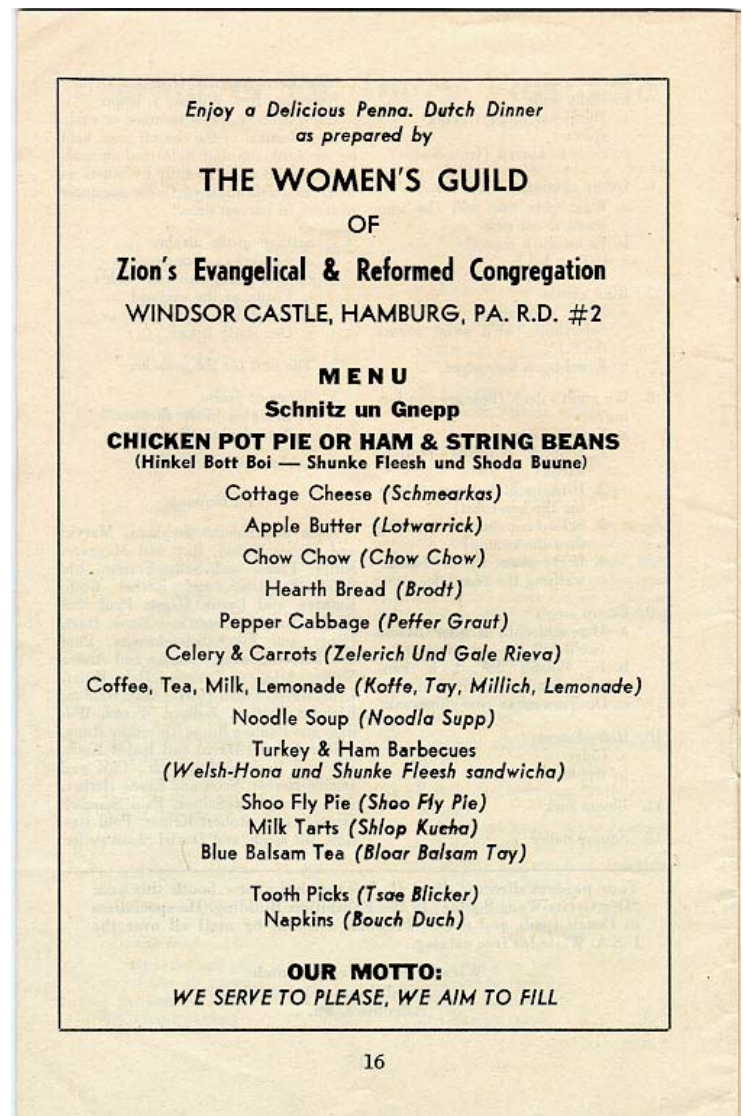
Classic Pennsylvania Dutch cookery existed on many social levels, and there was indeed a refined cookery. This was exemplified in the blue-blood atmosphere of the early-1900's Dorney Park hotel and in the fabled dinners at Kuechler's Roost on Mt. Penn near Reading, PA—much extolled in J. George Frederick's *The Pennsylvania Dutch and Their Cookery* (1935). The Roost even owned a vineyard that produced a very good red wine, but like Dorney Park, it was frequented by wealthy Pennsylvania Dutch townies. Country people did not eat out.

There were very clear-cut class distinctions in this historical cookery, which is probably one reason why some members of the Pennsylvania German Society found themselves in uncomfortable, unfamiliar culinary territory when they read my cookbook. Who remembers today that high-class versions of chicken pot pie were made with bowtie noodles, not the flat squares we see on most restaurant menus? Or that there were three types of *Riwwelsupp* (soup made with tiny egg dumplings): milk-based, oxtail, and chicken?

Nowhere at the Kutztown Folk Festival can we find the old Pennsylvania Dutch signature dishes like *Mauldasche* (pocket dumplings), corn pies that resemble empanadas, *Dampnudle* (steam-baked skillet dumplings), *Buwweschenkel* (similar to stuffed cannelloni), or *Buwweschpitzle* (quenelle-shaped dumplings) served in sauerkraut. In fact, very little sauerkraut shows up at the festival even though it is the Pennsylvania Dutch "national dish". The same could be said of *Zwiwwelkuche* (a type of onion tart), which was universally consumed in all parts of the Pennsylvania Dutch country except perhaps among the Amish. Aside from sauerkraut, the Amish never made any of these signature dishes, so the promotion of the Amish at the expense of the rest of Pennsylvania Dutch community has had the effect of culling out certain iconic foods that were still much appreciated in the 1930's and 1940's. It is also true that it takes a cook with good training to make these dishes well, and with the passing of the older generation such professional training is non-existent in Pennsylvania today.

If classic Pennsylvania Dutch cookery has a European counterpart, then it most closely resembles the cookery of rural Alsace, a cuisine also at the crossroads of two important cultures. Pennsylvania Dutch cooking is a cookery that evolved in the home and does not often adapt well to the mechanics of restaurant-style food preparation. However, Alsatian chefs have proved that it can be done, so perhaps what is lacking most in the Pennsylvania Dutch community is a fellowship of professionally-trained cooks with a good culinary foundation in the cuisine of our region. Most of all, Pennsylvania Dutch cookery is not a cuisine with a wide range of light hot-weather dishes, so presenting hearty winter fare during the heat of summer is at odds with the natural seasonality of the cookery. This is one of the long-standing issues faced by the festival.

In spite of the culinary deficiencies, which were well appreciated by the original festival management, the programs based on public lectures offered a positive counterpoint to the actual food served. In particular, the public presentations of Edna Eby Heller on Pennsylvania Dutch recipes and their preparation, and the little pamphlet cookbooks published under her name by the Folklore Center, gave the visitors something solid and useful



The menu for the Windsor Castle tent from the 1959 Kutztown Folk Festival. Participants were allowed to spell Pennsylvania Dutch terms any way they wanted, thus creating longstanding problems in festival signage that persist to this day.

to take away from the festival. They are also a very good record of the material that Heller covered in her food demonstrations down into the late 1960's. Furthermore, she included a broad range of seasonal recipes (including many with sauerkraut), so for the adventuresome cook there was plenty to try out on the family. Heller's training in home economics at Penn State University was a plus inasmuch as she was able to create recipes that were clear and workable. On the other hand, there was a certain leveling or sanitizing of the fare so that many of the quirky regionalisms that made them interesting, and especially the old emphasis on fresh herbs and greens, were more or less eliminated.

On hindsight, if I had one recommendation for the festival regarding its food, I would suggest starting with good bread. The Pennsylvania Dutch were famous for their breads baked in outdoor brick ovens. A good bakery offering bread like that on a daily basis would draw even the best Philadelphia chefs to the festival gates. Bread was, after all, the key component of the Pennsylvania Dutch meal. Once you get the bread right, everything else falls into place. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

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

Sunday, March 16, 2008

Slow Food Huron Valley Chapter
“Slow Food: Finding and Celebrating
Our Local Food Community”

Sunday, April 20, 2008

Hanna Raskin, American Table Culinary
Tours, Asheville, NC
“Chinese Takeout: How Lo Mein and
Eggrolls Became Jewish Food”

Sunday, May 18, 2008

Alex Young, Managing Partner, Zingerman’s
Roadhouse and owner, Cornman Farms
“Double Digging Deep: The Story of
Chef Alex’s Organic Garden”

We are pleased to note that CHAA founding member Jan Longone was presented in January with a Culinary Life Achievement Award by the Cordon d'Or International Culinary Arts Academy, headquartered in St. Petersburg, FL. Jan is Curator of American Culinary History at the William L. Clements Library (University of Michigan).

A recent example of Jan Longone’s enduring role as a food-history resource occurred in December, when she was interviewed by Korean Television for a documentary on the life of Dr. Ilhan New, a famed Korean industrialist and philanthropist who was also a UM alumnus and one of the co-founders of La Choy Food Company (Detroit, 1922). The TV producers were led to Longone and the Clements because the library’s collection includes about a dozen La Choy promotional pamphlets dating as far back as 1925. Readers will recall that Hanna Raskin made extensive use of these pamphlets in her article “Gebhardt and La Choy: Making Ethnic Food Safe for Middle America” (*Repast* Summer 2007).

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