

# The Food Industry

## *Pages from History, Part 1*



Leonard Stern/ *New York Times*

The Four Seasons Restaurant in 1960, one year after it opened inside the Mies van der Rohe-designed Seagram Building at 375 Park Avenue in Midtown Manhattan.

# MORSELS & TIDBITS

Best known for his novels, his poetry, and his Hemingway-esque view of life, **Jim Harrison**, the Northern Michigan native who passed away last year at age 78, also left behind a corpus of writing on various aspects of food, including hunting, cooking, and especially eating and drinking. Once, he and Orson Welles had a dinner together that included, he wrote, “a half-pound of beluga with a bottle of Stolichnaya, a salmon in sorrel sauce, sweetbreads *en croûte*, a miniature leg of lamb (the whole thing) with five wines, desserts, cheeses, ports”, etc. Harrison owned hundreds of cookbooks, some of them little-known treasures, and he had a regular food column in *Esquire* magazine called “The Raw and the Cooked”. *A Really Big Lunch: Meditations on Food and Life from the Roving Gourmand* (Grove Press, 2017) is a posthumously published collection of his essays on gastronomy that first appeared in a wide range of venues, from *Playboy* to *The New Yorker* to the literary magazine *Smoke Signals*. Harrison died of a heart attack, pen in hand, at his ranch house near the Sonita River in Patagonia, AZ.

## Repast

ISSN 1552-8863

Published quarterly by the  
Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor (CHAA)

<http://culinaryhistoriansannarbor.org/>

An archive is available at <http://cooks.aadl.org/cooks/repast>

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**Paula Wolfert's** devoted young friend and former editor at *Food and Wine* magazine, **Emily Kaiser Thelin**, has published *Unforgettable: The Bold Flavors of Paula Wolfert's Renegade Life* (Berkeley, CA: M&P, 2017). Launched by Kickstarter and five years in the making, this work is a biography that explores the relationship between food and memory and also includes over 50 classic recipes from Wolfert, an expert on the cookery of several countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

Several friends of CHAA were among the winners of the annual James Beard Foundation Media Awards, presented at a gala in New York City on May 1:

- **Jane Ziegelman** and **Andrew Coe**, members of the Culinary Historians of New York, won the 2017 award in the Nonfiction Book category for their study, *A Square Meal: A Culinary History of the Great Depression*. Andrew spoke to CHAA in May about the book (see report on page 18).
- **Hanna Raskin**, Food Editor and chief food critic for *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, SC), won the award in the Local Impact Journalism category for three of her reports, “Free Crabs!”, “A Significant Goodbye”, and “Feeding the Prison System”. Hanna, an Ann Arbor native, wrote “Gebhardt and La Choy: Making Ethnic Food Safe for Middle America” in *Repast* (Summer 2007).
- **Lidia Bastianich** won the award in the Broadcast Special category for “Lidia Celebrates America: Holiday for Heroes” (PBS-TV, Dec. 16, 2016), in which she met with a diverse set of seven U.S. military veterans and cooked holiday foods from their respective family traditions. Lidia’s personal reminiscence, “Growing Up in Istria”, was the cover story of our Summer 2016 issue. Premiering later this year is a new cookbook, *Lidia’s Italian Style*, and a new season of “Lidia’s Kitchen” on PBS-TV.

The Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies at the Univ. of Oxford, UK, is hosting a scholarly meeting on Sep. 6-8, 2017. The Bountiful Sea Conference will focus on fish processing and consumption in Mediterranean antiquity, in which the Roman Empire witnessed many challenges that we face today— population expansion, mass migration, border disputes, and over-exploitation of resources.

Medieval Institute Publications University Press at Kalamazoo, based at Western Michigan Univ., invites book proposals for a new series, “History and Cultures of Food, 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries”. The series aims to publish the best work that is being produced in this field today (including scholarly monographs and edited volumes in English by both established and early-career researchers), and thereby to make a contribution toward establishing a canon for interdisciplinary research in food history. To submit a proposal, contact series editor **Allen J. Grieco** ([allengrieco@gmail.com](mailto:allengrieco@gmail.com)) and acquisitions editor **Erika Gaffney** ([Erika.Gaffney@arc-humanities.org](mailto:Erika.Gaffney@arc-humanities.org)). ■



# HOW WE LOVED TO BE ROMANCED AT FINE RESTAURANTS

by Arno Schmidt

*Chef Arno Schmidt has worked in kitchens in eight countries, including at the Grand Royal Hotel in Stockholm, the Hotel Victoria in Zermatt, Switzerland, and the Regency and St. Regis Hotels in New York. From 1969 to 1979 he served as Executive Chef of the Waldorf Astoria New York, whose hotel and restaurant date to 1893. Chef Schmidt has published several books, including a memoir, *Peeking Behind the Wallpaper: The Gilded Age of Hotel Dining* (2012). His article, "Fresh Food in War-Torn Austria", appeared in our Spring 2016 issue. What appears below is Chapter 1 of his new 12-chapter book manuscript, tentatively entitled *Musing and Moaning about Chefs, Cooks and Straight Talk*.*

This piece is about the food served at fine restaurants, mostly the classic establishments in New York City in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is also about both the famous and the unsung workers who make such a restaurant possible, and about the customers who come back and are willing to try out new dishes there.

My observations are made from the vantage point of my own perch. I had the fortune, luck, misfortune, or just plain destiny to experience peeling frozen and rotten potatoes, to practice making "butter cream" roses with shoe polish (we had no butter) in postwar Austria, and 30 years later to order 45 pounds of beluga malossol caviar for one party in the Ballroom at The Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan. In between were stints in fine hotels, coffee shops, looking for work in new countries, learning languages, and learning about food.

One benefit from my having grown older is that I have had time to think, reminisce, muse, rant, and criticize without having to worry that an employer might feel insulted and blacklist me. True, I might still have to worry about the reactions of colleagues when I describe some behavior I do not agree with, or I might upset somebody in the legion of food writers when I make fun of statements I consider foolish. So there will be fewer wreaths at my wake.

*continued on next page*



Captain Themis Sackos and Executive Chef Arno Schmidt present beluga caviar, Dom Pérignon Champagne, pheasant with wild rice, and hot apple Charlotte dessert, which were served to over 700 guests in the Grand Ballroom of The Waldorf Astoria hotel (Manhattan) at an event in honor of the 1974 premiere of the film "The Great Gatsby".

The Archive of the Waldorf Astoria New York, item no. 06.04.063.001, <http://www.hosttotheworld.com>.

## FINE RESTAURANTS

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But my criticisms are mild. I admire and love my colleagues struggling every day to put a meal on the table that is accepted by their customers. I don't envy them for the pressure to produce something new and meet the budget. There are many young chefs producing wonderful new dishes and with refreshing ideas. I admire the small restaurants gentrifying neighborhoods, and staffed by young people who seem to meld harmoniously together the front- and back-of-the-house employees.

### Customs and Accoutrements

When dining at a fine restaurant, there was always an etiquette to follow. The man was expected to wear jacket and tie. He checked his hat in the coatroom, and if— God forbid— he showed up without tie or jacket, the coatroom girl would lend him one for a good tip. The woman had to wear a dress— slacks were not acceptable. The famous German restaurateur Alfred Walterspiel mentions, in his book *Meine Kunst in Küche und Restaurant* (My Art in the Kitchen and Restaurant) (Berlin, 1952), how important it was to build out *banquettes* a few inches away from the wall so that a lady would not be inconvenienced by her hat touching the wall behind her as she sat.

After the diners negotiated the haughty *maitre d'* at the door, the waiter brought the menu. All waiters spoke a smattering of French, even if they came from Albania, Slovakia, or Greece. Ornately printed menus set the tone of the evening. They were typically large, often decorated with tassels, invariably printed on expensive parchment-like paper, and usually cumbersome to handle at a table already cluttered with glasses, show plates, flatware, and candles or flowers. Many menus were difficult to read: the typeface was ornate, the paper was tinted to match the décor, and the light level was usually low. The descriptions of dishes were often esoteric to the hilt, leaving diners with very wide latitude for educated guesses. Those who wrote the menus seemed to feel that the customers were gullible and probably unqualified to judge gastronomic jargon. Glowing adjectives, foreign words, and phrases written in a culinary "Esperanto" promised creations that were often beyond the ability of the cooks to produce and obscured what eventually came out of the kitchen. How the partner on the first date maneuvered through the jungle of names and adjectives was a litmus test.

Wine lists were as impressive as the food menus. They were usually bound in leather and presented to the male host at the table— never to the woman— with a solemnity resembling handling a Bible or opening a Torah scroll. The *sommelier* would stand by while the man tried to find a medium-priced bottle with a name he could pronounce confidently. The wine came in a cradle, regardless whether it was needed or not, and sniffing the cork and tasting a sip was again a man's job. In French restaurants the *sommelier* would invariably recommend as white wine a Pouilly Fuissé, because it was easy to pronounce and came from Burgundy, the universally recognizable origin of fine wines. Getting the wine into a glass involved much sniffing, first the cork and then the wine, by the captain or *sommelier*. Sophisticated customers were expected to repeat the procedure, followed by much swirling in the glass and finally nodding approval and the expectation that the wine would be extensively commented on by table companions. The notion that wine is a

beverage to be drunk and enjoyed had not yet entered the mind-set of the average diner. The idea of selling wine in screw-capped bottles would have been met with complete disbelief.

### All Things French

Fine restaurants, and not-so-fine restaurants with aspirations, had their menus written in French. Such menus were not meant to communicate, but to create an aura of sophistication and mystery. Le Café Chambord was a renowned restaurant in Manhattan serving French Provincial Cuisine par excellence. The menu included veal kidneys, sweetbreads, calf's brains, tripe, and even calf's head. This last was elegantly described as *Tête de Veau en Tortue* ("calf's head, tortoise style"), without any further elaboration as to how it was prepared. For most diners without classical culinary training, the convoluted dish would have been a disappointment: it consisted of boiled calf's head pieces cut into medallions and arranged in a china *cocotte* with tiny veal dumplings, gherkins, olives, crayfish, slices of calf tongue, calf brains, truffles, and *croutons*, covered with highly seasoned brown sauce, and, as a crowning touch, a small fried egg with half of the white removed. The dish was expensive— priced only slightly lower than lamb chops— so as not to arouse suspicion that it was made with a less esteemed part of the animal.

Serving innards is a time-honored tradition in many parts of Europe, but not in the U.S. Just about the only well-accepted offal meat was calf's liver, usually served with bacon. When it appeared on the menu *à la Lyonnaise*, i.e., smothered in onions, the French phrase already kept some people guessing. It stands to reason that many business clients and dating couples inadvertently ordered dishes they would not have ordered if the menu had been written in English.

An absolute "must-have" on all French restaurant menus was a dish of *Cuisses de Grenouilles Provençales*, frog's legs cooked in butter and seasoned with garlic, herbs, and often a dollop of melted tomatoes. Another must-have was *Escargots Bourguignons*, made with imported canned snails, stuffed in their little houses along with garlic butter and baked until the butter bubbled (see photo on next page). They were always presented on special indented plates and served with a pair of snail tongs, awkward metal contraptions which allowed the diners with practice to hold the shells in place while picking out the little black morsels of meat. Diners lacking practice chanced getting garlic butter splashed all over them. *Bœuf à la mode en gelée*, another must-have staple on Summer menus, signified the reappearance of a now-cold pot roast, garnished with tiny vegetables and served on top of jellied gravy. *Terrine de Canard* and *Pâté Campagne* appeared on just about all French menus as appetizers, while the dessert menus invariably featured *Mousse au Chocolat*, *Île Flottante* and *Éclairs*.

### A Few of the Legendary Establishments

The esteemed Brussels Restaurant, operated by André Pagani on East 54<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, featured *Châteaubriand*, *Sauce Béarnaise* and the preferred potato accompaniment was *Pommes Soufflées* served on a folded napkin. These potatoes were usually charged *à la carte*, because making them was time-consuming and needed skill, and the re-



Photo: eatingeast via Wikimedia Commons

### *Escargots Bourguignons*

sult was never foolproof. The preparation consisted of deep-frying precisely-sliced Russet potatoes at a low temperature while constantly shaking the pot, followed by a second frying in very hot fat. The trapped moisture in the potato slices made them puff up like little pillows. One New York restaurant named appropriately Charles à la Pommes Soufflées offered these potatoes with everything as “signature” dish. Apparently they employed a fry cook who was able to make them just right every time, or else he was lucky enough to do so most of the time. Some cooks had a knack for making them while others failed frequently and wasted many potatoes. The story goes that *pommes soufflées* were invented by a chef in a rattling railroad dining car sloshing the potatoes around in hot fat.

Serving food from beautiful silver and copper dishes placed on ornate carts called *guéridons* was considered *de rigueur* in these days. When the meat was carved by a captain in front of the customer, it was reflected in a higher price and suitable gratuity to reward the captain for his— it was never her— skill. It did not always work as planned: a roasted bird might be tough and not yield to a few elegant swift incisions. Occasionally, envious cooks were known to deliberately leave a few little extra bones on the *carré d’agneau* (rack of lamb) just to make some unloved captains struggle in front of their customers when carving.

For many years the finest French restaurant in New York was Le Pavillon. It was established 75 years ago, in 1941, by Henri Soulé, the chef heading a large team from overseas who were hired to run the restaurant in the French Pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair. His menu was written in French, as anticipated. For *Déjeuner* (lunch), it listed the expected range of egg dishes, innards, and occasionally *Ballotines de Volaille*, an elegant description for stuffed chicken or duck legs, which is a good way to use these less desirable and less expensive parts. For dinner, Le Pavillon featured *La poularde étuvée au Clicquot*, which was a fattened chicken braised in Veuve Clicquot Champagne and elegantly dissected at the *guéridon* in front of the customers. *Quenelles de brochet* sounded so much better than fish dumplings, and *Mousse de Sole Pavillon, Sauce Cardinale* was to die for. The latter was composed of the light-

est, most delicate poached fish mousse, decorated with black truffle slices, and served with *Sauce Cardinale*, a rich lobster sauce which, despite its name, has no religious connotations other than the fact that the sauce has the color of the red hats of the princes of the Church.

At Le Pavillon, Henri Soulé also introduced New Yorkers to the Bordeaux Merlot Château Petrus, when the wine was still somewhat unknown and thus relatively inexpensive. It was reported that he always kept a choice table open for the Duke and Duchess of Windsor whenever they were in town, in case they decided to dine without making a reservation. Even when they didn’t show up, the publicity was worth the lost revenue.

Soulé was able to choose his clientele according to social rank and money. The story is told of a young couple from rural America on vacation, dressed nicely, wandering by the Pavillon restaurant in the Ritz Tower on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street. They noticed the restaurant sign and, feeling hungry, walked right in. Monsieur Soulé gave them a frosty look. No room, all reserved, sorry. The couple looked at the half-deserted dining room and left speechlessly. They went to the next payphone and called in a reservation, which Soulé accepted. Minutes later they walked in again. Soulé could not believe his eyes, but his Gallic humor took over; he seated the couple, treated them generously, and presented no bill.

Right at the heel of the Pavillon Restaurant followed *Lutèce*, named after the ancient Roman city that became Paris. Eventually, the chef André Soltner and his wife Simone were able to purchase the restaurant, and for a while it was the best and most expensive French restaurant in the U.S. The kitchen entrance was adjacent to the dining rooms, and André greeted many guests.

The Four Seasons Restaurant, a great restaurant created by Restaurant Associates, opened in 1959. The menu and décor changed four times a year, right down to the matchbooks and cocktail napkins. Around the gently bubbling pool in the main dining room, much work was done by the captains, carving their famous duckling, wheeling around trolleys with appetizers and later with desserts. It was a spectacular restaurant, changed owners a number of times, and lost its lease to the new owner of the building. Restaurant Associates also operated the Tower Suite on top of the Time & Life Building, located at the Rockefeller Center on the Avenue of the Americas. It introduced boldly personalized butler and maid service (the term “maid” was still politically correct then). It was the first foray into today’s sometimes annoying custom in which servers saunter up to a table and announce, “I am Jack and I’m your waiter tonight.” The Tower Suite “service team” presented three soups to choose from elegant silver tureens, which was followed by a choice of main courses, served from large silver platters and finally, an impressive array of desserts. As the sun set over the Hudson River, the walls started to glow softly thanks to tiny embedded lights.

In the 1960s, The Forvm of the Twelve Caesars romanced customers with Pheasant Baked in Clay, ceremoniously presented by servers in togas, the shell cracked open with a tiny

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silver mallet while busboys dressed as “Roman Slaves” removed the shards. Wild boar was available as a roast, with the trimmings ground into *Pâté de Marcassin*. Ersatz Roman helmets served as ice buckets, and “Flaming Fiddler’s Crabmeat” made a sly reference to Roman Emperor Nero, who allegedly fiddled while Rome burned. Despite all this cleverness, the restaurant was a very good one indeed.

The long-gone restaurant Voisin was loved for classical *Gâteau Saint Honoré* (a puff pastry) and *Pot de Crème* (a type of custard).

## Hotel Restaurants

Hotel dining rooms served stylish food, usually a blend of French cooking adapted to American tastes. It was not always particularly healthy, and sometimes was not even good, but the customers loved it.

In those days, Crabmeat Remick served in Little Neck clamshells was popular. There was no logical reason for the marriage of fine lump crab meat with discarded clamshells. Making Crabmeat Remick started by telling the oystermen in the kitchen to save the clamshells. They had to be scraped of course, because little pieces of abductor muscle remained attached on the shell. Then they were soaked for a few days, boiled to disinfect them, and stored in a box under of the table at the *Garde Manger* chef’s station. The filling— it was delicious, consisting of fresh lump crab-meat blended with mayonnaise, chili sauce, and seasoning— was spooned into the shells, sprinkled with cheese, and quickly baked. It was a good dish and is worthy of resurrection, minus the clamshells.

The masculine Oak Room at The Plaza Hotel politely and proudly refused to serve ladies for lunch. The northwest corner *banquette* was reserved for Mr. George M. Cohan, the songwriter, impresario, and producer, who spent his afternoons at the Oak Room before the evening performances. One of the captains that I knew there, Fred, started as a bus boy in 1939 and steadily climbed the ladder as a faithful union member and a dedicated and loyal Plaza employee. He knew the regulars and remembered their likes, dislikes, and seating choices. Chicken Pot Pie was on the menu of New York hotels every Tuesday, and he dutifully trotted out the dish to a regular customer because he had ordered it once before. After three weeks the customer said: “Fred, can I please see the menu? I don’t like chicken pot pie.”

The large New York City hotels had nightclubs with elaborate floorshows and big-name entertainers. Among the famous were the Maisonette in the St. Regis, the Persian Room at The Plaza, and the Empire Room at The Waldorf Astoria. The Maisonette operated only during the Winter season; during the Summer, the St. Regis Roof was opened for dinner dancing with a large band and vocal accompanists. Customers attending the first show were expected to eat a whole dinner, from soup to dessert, in less than the hour allotted before the performance started. The dinner menu featured the usual mix of French and American dishes, such as *Sole Marguery*; *Pompano Veronique*; *Tournedos Ambassador*; *Chateaubriand*, *Sauce Béarnaise*; *Duck Montmorency*; and Rack of Lamb *Persillé*, usually sporting paper frills on the bones. The dishes were served from silver

platters, and serving required delicate maneuvering by waiters, because the tables were tiny and closely packed together. There was a malicious anecdote that described how nightclub headwaiters were licensed by the city. They had to go downtown to the Licensing Bureau and were asked only one question: “How many people can you seat at a table for two?” The minimum passing answer was four, but six was better.

For the second show, a supper menu was used. That supper menu had to be fancy and featured dishes served *à la carte* instead of a complete menu *table d’hôte*. One popular supper item was Welsh Rarebit, a gooey mass of melted cheddar cheese, flavored with beer and cayenne pepper, served over soggy toast. It was hardly a dish that would encourage romance at the end of an evening. Much more elegant was Boned Frogs’ Legs *Poulette*, quite a production for the *Chef Poissonnier* (the elegant French title for fish cook), who had to poach the frogs’ legs in white wine with mushrooms and shallots, peel the precious little meat off the bones, put it in a silver dish, and cover it with *sauce poulette*, made with additional shallots, white wine, mushrooms, and cream. Easier to prepare and probably a better bargain for the customer was Crab Meat *au gratin*. It was made with choice lump crab-meat, carefully warmed with Amontillado sherry without breaking the lumps, and covered with *glacage*, a white fish sauce rich with *hollandaise* and whipped heavy cream.

## Turtle Dishes

In the 1960s, terrapin was still found on supper menus. Cooking terrapin turtles was a lengthy process and never worth the trouble. The poor creatures were purchased live and delivered in bushel baskets. The baskets had to be kept tightly closed— otherwise the creatures would climb out and waddle silently under tables and refrigerators. It was reported that one terrapin found its way from the basement kitchen to the 19<sup>th</sup> floor in the freight elevator and was spotted in a guest corridor, terribly frightening one guest and two maids. Security was called to hold the beast at bay with a broom until a kitchen man grabbed it and wrapped it in his apron. That turtle did not escape the fate of his fellow creatures.

When cooking terrapins, the first step was to get the creatures into boiling water. Since the critters would obviously pull their neck back into the carapace when hitting the boiling water, the procedure was to stick the neck between the tines of a butcher fork and stick the terrapin headfirst into the boiling water. It might have been a more human way of killing them quickly but also had the advantage that the neck was kept straight, making it easier to remove the skin after the turtles were cooked. The turtles paddled like wild for a minute, until they expired and then were boiled for a little while longer. Next, the shell was broken apart, the gall, liver and eggs carefully removed, the black skin peeled off, the claws pulled out and the gelatinous, stringy muscles simmered in a flavored veal stock until tender. Since it was impossible to tell the age of the turtles, the meat had to be tested frequently, as some pieces cooked in an hour or less while others stayed tough and stringy for a far longer time. The meat and stock were preserved in sterilized jars, one serving to a jar. They could be held in the refrigerator for months.



There were two accepted turtle dishes: Terrapin Maryland and Terrapin Baltimore. Why Maryland gets the blame for such culinary atrocities is a mystery to me. Both dishes involved heating the terrapin meat with its stock and a generous amount of sherry. Terrapin Maryland involved thickening the sauce with cornstarch, while for Terrapin Baltimore the thickening agent would be sieved boiled egg yolks or else *hollandaise*. Really fancy places added one terrapin egg to each order, carefully preserved when encountered in the terrapin after boiling; if none was found, a fake egg was substituted, made with sieved chicken-egg yolks and flour and shaped like a little dumpling. The great culinary master Escoffier decreed in his recipes that terrapin should be served in terrapin-shaped porcelain dishes.

Turtle soup appeared on banquet menus well into the 1970s. By that time it was no longer possible to purchase live turtles, except in New York's Chinatown, but it was legal to buy canned turtle meat. It was a gelatinous mass with little flavor and it was terribly expensive. So it wound up only as a soup garnish, while the soup itself was a rich beef consommé heavily dosed with "turtle herbs", plenty of Amontillado sherry, and thickened with arrowroot, to give the soup a gelatinous consistency and sheen. "Turtle herbs" came from France in beautifully-decorated metal tins, embossed with the image of a maiden dressed only with a garland. The herb mixture was supposedly a secret, but Escoffier described it as a blend of rosemary, marjoram, basil, thyme and coriander seeds, all herbs and spices readily available from kitchen shelves. However, the most conscientious chefs still insisted on using the spices in those pretty tin boxes.

One offspring of turtle soup was Boula Boula, which was turtle soup blended with green pea soup, served in soup cups, topped with whipped cream, and browned under the salamander. There was even a version of turtle soup blended with sorrel herbs.

Long after serving turtles became illegal, "turtle soup" still appeared on menus, served without turtle meat (which nobody really missed) but with the same herb-flavored *consommé* as described above. To prepare this, some very clever chefs substituted genuine turtle meat with boiled calf's head, because it had the same gelatinous consistency and when it was cut in tiny dice, it was too small for most customers to identify.

### Soups and Consommés

Whether camouflaged with turtle herbs and meat, or served plain with a seemingly endless variation of garnishes, good *consommé* in commercial quantities is not easy to make without a large kettle. It started with making a strong stock with bones, continued with enriching the stock with vegetables and tomatoes, and finally clarifying the broth with egg whites. Since the clarifying process removed some meat flavor, it had to be replaced with ground meat, usually lean beef shank meat; for this, the term "double *consommé*" (meaning double strength) arose. *Consommé* is wonderful when fresh, but loses its flavor quickly after sitting for a few hours in a steam table. Following an overnight stay in the refrigerator, *consommé* will become a brownish meat broth without the freshness that characterizes the real thing.



## What Waiters Say

by Marvin Brandwin

When dining recently in restaurants at dinner time or luncheons I notice that there's been a change in how a waiter functions. The waiter often brings the menu and with a touch of fervor Lets me know what is his name and says, "Today I'll be your server." But when an usher shows me to my seat when I attend the theater, I never hear the usher's name or "Tonight I'll be your seater." And when a barber says I'm next I never hear the barber utter, "Let me provide you with my name, for today I'll be your cutter." I much prefer the older way but if the waiter's choice is newer, I'll cheerfully announce my name and say, "Today I'll be your chewer."

*CHAA member Dr. Marvin A. Brandwin is an Asst. Professor Emeritus of Psychology in the Dept. of Psychiatry, Univ. of Michigan Health System. This poem is from one of his collections, A Smorgasbord of Verse: Easy to Digest Food Poems (Ann Arbor, MI: Charing Cross Press, 2009).*

Unfortunately, many contemporary kitchens do not have the steam kettles that are needed to make stock and, from it, *consommé*. It is impractical, if not downright dangerous, to lift large stockpots onto the stove, fill those with bones and water, and simmer the broth many hours while it occupies precious stove space. Getting the pot down to the floor and straining the stock could be hazardous and incredibly cumbersome. Then the procedure had to be repeated, blending the lukewarm stock with the clarification mixture and nursing it back to a gentle simmer. Many chefs didn't have the time to make *consommé* every day, so it was often made once or twice a week, heated every morning, and then left to sit around in steam tables all day. In too many restaurants, the *consommé* eventually devolved to a mix of water and soup powder, which should be totally unsatisfactory in better restaurants. Many chefs had to suffer when menu writers did not understand what equipment is required to produce properly and efficiently what they were promising on the menus.

*Consommé Madrilène* has disappeared from most menus, perhaps only kept alive in country clubs where a few nostalgic members still demand it. It is a tomato-flavored *consommé* and is a delicious soup on a hot Summer evening when served slightly jelled and cold. It is not difficult to make, but the process is time-consuming. After the stock is clarified, lots of

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tomatoes must be added to give the *consommé* its slightly acidic tomato flavor. It should be naturally somewhat jelled when knucklebones have been added to the basic stock. If it can be cut with a knife like Jell-O, it is too firm. Unfortunately, the natural red tomato color disappears during the clarification process, and the soup turns out to be more brownish than red. That's why chefs were forced to add a few drops of red food color, because the public and the servers expected *Consommé Madrilène* to be a deep, bright red. Making it properly requires, beside time, steam-heated soup kettles. The food industry discovered a market niche and began selling canned, cherry-red, heavily jellied *Consommé Madrilène*. After many years, this commercial version almost became the industry standard. But this disappeared from menus when the public became more food-conscious, suspicious of the bright color and the artificial insipid taste, and realizing that it had come from a can and not from the soup kitchen.

One soup that was ridiculously easy to make, but sinfully loaded with cholesterol-laden fat, was *Billi-bi*, a mussel soup made only with mussels, shallots, a sprig of thyme, and equal amounts of dry white wine and rich heavy cream. The soup was incredibly delicious served hot or cold. *Billi-bi* was made fresh every morning by the Chef Poissonier in small batches, sometimes only a few quarts. Any leftover soup made a wonderful base for mussel-flavored fish sauces. It has mostly disappeared because it is too rich for today's taste, but it can still be found on menus in France where the use of cream peacefully holds sway among chefs and the dining-out public.

After the Bolshevik Revolution and World War 1, members of the Russian nobility fled westward and, if they were able, to Paris or New York. Many of them had imposing titles but usually little cash. However, this did not seem to deter some of them from frequenting the *banquettes* at Maxim's in Paris and El Morocco in New York. In the U.S., there were eligible young women with considerable inherited money but no titles. The two came together, as it was a most sensible arrangement to marry money to prestige. New York City hotels, including the St. Regis and the Ambassador Hotel on Park Avenue, were quick to respond to this market and in the mid-1950s featured "Russian Kitchens", which were normally one corner in the kitchen turned over to a Russian-born or Eastern European cook. The daily menu featured several Russian dishes, such as *blinis*, served with caviar dished out with an ivory spoon from the original two-kilo tin; *Potage Rossolnik*; *Potage Selianka*; *Coulbiac*; and *Borscht*. *Borscht* was carefully made with beef, cabbage, and plenty of red beets, and was available either served with its meat and vegetables or strained. Competing with the hotels for authentic Russian food was the Russian Tea Room, which served excellent *Borscht* and is now serving it again. Cold strained *Borscht* was called *Borschok*, and was served with sour cream. It resembled *Consommé Madrilène* and was absolutely delicious. It should not be confused with Jewish *Borscht*, which is purely vegetarian (containing no meat stock at all) when served with sour cream.

### Food Served in Glass, Paper, or Foil

Dishes served "under glass" are among those that have disappeared into obscurity. They consisted of nothing more than small "glass bells" placed over the finished dishes. This did not add anything to the flavor, but the customers loved it and were

willing to spend extra for the show. The bell was strictly "showbiz". Expensive bells had small vent-holes to let the steam escape, but the cheaper ones were usually steamed up by the time the dishes arrived at table.

The concept started with Pheasant under Glass. A roasted pheasant breast was garnished with a little sauce and perhaps a few chestnuts, and was served under a glass bell. When pheasant became less popular, mushrooms replaced them. The menu read correctly *Champignons sous Cloche*, and the dish was exactly what the menu promised. A few mushroom heads were put on a slice of toast; the normal garden variety of mushrooms ("button") was used. At that time the culinary world in the U.S. had not yet gotten excited about *chanterelles*, *portobello*, *porcini*, *shiitake*, and those other exotic mushrooms available now even in supermarkets. Even *cremini*, America's brown parents of today's lily-white mushrooms, were not available. Noble mushrooms had to be white, because the *Champignons de Paris*, cultivated once in caves around the City of Light, were pure white.

The French invented a service style called *en papillote*, which signifies food baked in a paper bag. It was a complicated procedure that did little to improve the dish, but it presented a really great show. A piece of parchment paper was cut into a heart shape and buttered. A pre-cooked piece of fish or meat with an appropriate sauce and garnishes was placed on one half of the paper heart, the other half was folded over, and the paper turnover pocket was crimped to make it airtight. When the servers called for it, the bag was put in a hot oven and the resulting steam puffed up the paper bag. In the dining room the server or captain would split open the bag, and all those captured aromas would waft through the room. *Pompano en papillote* was considered the epitome of fine dining in the 1950s. Pompano was a popular fish; it was caught around the Florida Keys and rushed north to the Fulton Fish Market to supply all the elegant New York restaurants.

*Pompano en papillote* made for a nice spectacle in the dining room, but its preparation in the kitchen was loaded with pitfalls. The method was not space efficient because the bags took up a lot of room on the Chef Poissonier's station, and it was difficult to put more than two orders in the oven at the same time. In addition, the oven temperature had to be carefully controlled—hot enough to make the bag puff up, but not so hot as to burn the paper. The paper was expected to be slightly brown and dried out, to prevent it from collapsing before it reached the table; but if it got too brown, there would be brittle little "chards" of paper, ready to fall into the food when the bag was cut open in the dining room. Further, if the oven temperature was too high, any delicate fish sauce, usually made with heavy cream and egg yolks, would curdle in the bag. Timing was crucial; to get the browning and puffing just right, a waiter had to be standing by to get the platter into the dining room quickly. Not too long ago, diners demanded that all fish had to be well done, and an undercooked piece would be sent back with loud protests. Since it was just about impossible to judge when the fish hiding in the paper bag was properly cooked, many chefs resorted to placing a completely cooked piece of fish or meat in the bag. The whole process became strictly "show business". Even that French bible of gastronomy, the *Larousse Gastronomique* (1938 edition), includes a





From left: a Supreme (<http://www.foodservicedirect.com>); a Longwy porcelain *compotier* (<https://www.rubylane.com>); a *fricandeau* of veal with *hôtelet* garnishes, as prepared by Ivan Day (<http://www.historicfood.com>)

photograph of a fully-cooked veal chop being placed in a paper bag! Putting food *en papillote* is one of those techniques that properly belong in the dustbin of gastronomy.

A more modern version of baking food in a bag is the use of aluminum foil bags. This method makes sense because the raw food, combined with other suitable ingredients, can easily be placed in the sealed foil bag where all of the items steam together. The result can be wonderfully-concentrated flavors. Of course, these bags will not puff up, because the foil is not elastic, but good timing is still necessary to make sure that the food is cooked thoroughly but not over-cooked. Some backyard barbecue chefs and campers are masters of this process.

Baking in foil is less used in restaurants, except for baked potatoes. However, when a potato is wrapped in foil, it becomes a steamed rather than a “baked” potato. For the food service industry, ready-to-use foil-wrapped baking potatoes are available in a variety of colors, and there are caterers who will specify the foil color on the kitchen menu sheet— to match the color of the bridesmaids’ dresses, perhaps? However, “baked” potatoes they are not!

#### Food Elevated

There was hardly a fine restaurant that did not feature Supreme of Fruit Cocktail. The term makes little sense, except that *suprême* is the French term for the highest or best. It found its way onto French menus in reference to poultry breasts, because the breast is supposed to be the highest part, although of course on the live bird the breast is facing down. Go figure! Someone invented a silver dish consisting of three parts: a footed outer bowl, a silver ring, and an inserted inner bowl (see photo, above left). Since it lifted the food up high, the result was called a Supreme— and just about anything served chilled became Supreme, as long as it was lifted up.

The procedure for making a Supreme was to fill the outer bowl with shaved ice, place the ring on top, and place cold food in the insert, normally fruit salad or shrimp. In practice, few

servers bothered to fill the outer bowl with ice; they simply placed the three-part assembly on the table. For banquet service, the bowl was never ice-filled because the Supremes were placed on the table long before any guests entered the ballroom, and the ice would have melted by the time of clearing. Moving water-filled stands would have the potential to create quite a mess.

One equipment company introduced and touted an “improved” Supreme. A plastic ring with little holes drilled in it replaced the silver ring. The concept was to place a small piece of dry ice in the bowl, add boiling water, and the white smoke would swirl through the holes, shrouding the food in a mysterious haze. For a while it was popular, but it disappeared, as did the more traditional Supreme stands.

Chefs just loved to have food elevated. The better-equipped restaurants often used inverted silver covers, placing them on platters to lift food up. Still popular are one-legged stands called *compotiers*, upon which cookies, *petits fours*, candies, and dainty fruits could be passed around at the end of dinners (see photo, above center). These stands reappeared, sometimes sporting two or more levels, and are popular for the more informal dining style of today in which customers can take food from one stand placed in the center of a table.

Another genre of tableware designed with the intent of romancing the diners, but getting in the way of serving good food, were the decorative skewers called *hôtelets* (see photo, above right). These were usually made of silver, about eight inches long, and resembled swords. Their tops were suitably adorned with little statues of game birds, fish, or meat. They had no other use than to embellish a roast or whole fish.

We still like to romance our customers. The world has changed, but we have expectations when we go out to dine. Fortunately these expectations are met most of the time. ■

# ANN ARBOR'S PEOPLE'S FOOD CO-OP: YESTERDAY TO TODAY

by Patti F. Smith

*Patti Smith, a new member of CHAA, is an Ann Arbor native who lives on the southeast side of town with her husband, Ken Anderson. She serves as the board administrator for the People's Food Co-Op and recently wrote a book, History of Ann Arbor's People's Food Co-op, available exclusively at the co-op. She also wrote the earlier Images of America: Downtown Ann Arbor (Arcadia Publishing, 2014). A former legal-aid lawyer and now a special-education teacher in western Wayne County, Patti holds a bachelor's degree from Adrian College (1994), a Doctor of Law degree from the Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison School of Law (1996), and a master's degree in education from Eastern Michigan Univ. (2012). Patti is a frequent writer for local periodicals and can be spotted all around town as a civic volunteer, public speaker, and storyteller.*

It is a Saturday morning at Café Verde, the fair-trade coffee bar attached to the People's Food Co-op. Professors, students, people from the nearby farmers' market, blue collar/white collar/pink collar workers, parents, kids, babies, townies, and newbies are all gathered around the tables. There is lively conversation, crossword puzzles being worked on, laptops being used. The mood is convivial; much laughter is heard. Coffee is consumed, bakery goods are eaten, and people are happy. The place is so packed that it is hard to remember that it wasn't always part of our community. But how did it all get started? And what does it mean to be a cooperative?

A consumer's cooperative, or co-op, is the ultimate example of working together. Outwardly it might look like any other market, but what's going on behind the scenes is what makes a co-op differ from other business models. Currently, about 46% of purchasers at the People's Food Co-op are PFC members. When you join a co-op and become a member, you also become an owner. You have a say in how the co-op is run, can seek a seat on the board of directors, can attend the open meetings, and will receive surplus revenue in the form of a rebate. When you shop at a co-op, you are supporting the basic principles of democracy, economic participation, autonomy (accountability to the member-owners), a commitment to education, training and information, cooperation and community. The food will be a variety of fair-trade, organic, local, and fresh—and as a member-owner, you have a say in what products are carried.

Above all else, while traditional businesses exist to earn a profit for investors and corporate shareholders, a co-op exists to serve its members. This concept, which was once radical, is now fairly mainstream.



**People's Food Co-op**  
722 Packard  
Ann Arbor • 761-8173  
Sunday - Friday 11-1, Saturday 11-2

**APRIL SPECIALS**  
Specials expire April 31 unless specified.

*Food for Profits. Who cares about people.*

Contains no vegetable shortening! <b>Spam</b> ... <b>4/\$1</b> Limit 36 per visit.	<b>All Hostess Products</b> ..... <b>20% OFF</b> <i>Discounted from our already low-priced selection of Twinkies</i>
Organically grown, Guatemalan <b>Bulk Marijuana</b> ... <b>39<sup>95</sup></b> Reg. \$44.95 per ounce Cash only. No questions asked.	From Deadflour Bakery <b>Wonder BREAD</b> ... <b>.29</b> per loaf Contains absolutely no natural ingredients!
From Fried Frog Produce Midland, Michigan <b>Brite-Red Grapefruit</b> <b>4/\$1</b> EDB sprayed, commercially treated	<b>Vegetarian Cheese Whiz</b> ... <b>.89</b> per 8 oz. can Rennetless; No dairy ingredients
From Kreeger Farms Fresh, dripping <b>Bulk BEEF</b> ... <b>1<sup>59</sup></b> per pound Bring your own knife and towel	Co-op label — Quality <b>Tuna-Dolphin MIX</b> ... <b>.89</b> per 6 oz. can

*All specials available while our cash flow lasts.*

This April Fool's Day spoof advertisement reflects the counter-cultural stance of the cooperative movement in the 1970s.

## Roots of the Cooperative Movement

The modern-day consumer's cooperative movement began in Rochdale, England, in 1844. Over two dozen flannel weavers had attempted to organize a strike for better wages in 1843. Their unsuccessful efforts led to their firing and ultimate blacklisting by their factories. The next year, they registered with Parliament as the "Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers", with the hope that they could organize for lower prices as consumers even if they could not organize for better wages. After a year of raising capital, the group opened a store with a small selection of staples such as sugar, flour, butter, and candles. Soon, they were known for providing goods of high quality. Ten years later, there were nearly 1,000 co-ops in the British cooperative movement.

By 1900, the Rochdale co-op had more than 12,000 members and was experiencing the equivalent of about \$1,500,000 in annual sales. The cooperative system included a laundry, coal delivery service, bakeries, dairies, painting services, and corn mills. Eventually, they purchased the very mills that had blacklisted them the century before.

In America, agricultural cooperatives began to thrive in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Petroleum cooperatives grew in the Midwest, as more farmers used tractors and other gas-powered vehicles. The Great Depression spurred action toward consumer cooperative movements. Farmers were growing food, but couldn't





The People's Food Co-op in the early 1970s was located in a house at 722 Packard Road, in a high-pedestrian area just south of Central Campus.

sell it to people who had little or no spending money. In 1932, in Compton, CA, an unemployed man walked to a farm and offered his labor in exchange for a sack of vegetables. The next day, a neighbor went with him and made the same offer to the farmer. Two months later, over 500 families had joined the Unemployed Cooperative Relief Organization. In this way, cooperative ideals became strongly rooted in our country and have not stopped growing since.

#### Cooperation Comes to Ann Arbor

It was also during the Great Depression, in 1936, that the Ann Arbor Co-operative Society was formed to buy rock salt and coal for its members. Ultimately, their purpose became to "protect and advance the interests of its members as consumers and to provide quality items and services at reasonable prices." From 1939 to 1955, the Society ran a grocery store, a feed and appliance store, a gas station and coal yard, all located in a large, brick building, the former Ann Arbor Buggy Company factory at 637 S. Main Street (the building would later house the Ark and the Firefly music clubs). The Society ran a gas station/grocery store at the corner of Catherine and Detroit Streets, in a building that would later house Argerio's Italian Restaurant, recently closed. The Society disbanded in the mid-1980s.

In 1932, the Student Socialist Club at the Univ. of Michigan had organized Michigan Socialist House at 315 N. State Street, the first cooperative student housing in town. Within a decade, there were eight men's and women's cooperative houses on campus. In 1937, the Inter-Cooperative Council (ICC) was formed to be the coordinating body for these houses; it became a non-profit in 1944. The ICC continues to thrive, with 16 houses

near Central Campus and another large house on North Campus. In these houses, the student residents own shares in the ICC, and they do cooking, cleaning, management, finances, and other tasks collectively through a system of work credits.

#### The People's Food Co-op Is Formed

The origin of the People's Food Co-op is simple and timeless: a few people wanted to share their food. Tales of people breaking bread together appear in religious texts, hunters and gatherers shared food to survive, and today people share holiday or Sunday meals with families and friends. Sharing food is something that feeds our humanity.

And that is exactly what a few souls in Ann Arbor wanted to do! In Feb. 1971, they began their cooperative effort by setting up an outdoor table in front of the Little Things shop on State Street. The friends sold peanuts, peanut butter, honey, sunflower seeds, brown rice, and soybeans. Initial weekly sales totaled \$30. No one may have realized it at the time, but the seeds of the People's Food Co-Op had been planted.

Demand was such that the group moved to a rented indoor space at 802 S. State Street, downstairs from Pizza Bob's. Customers would climb down a few steps to a narrow little room where they would select and weigh their purchases, and then use the honor system of payment to check themselves out. Articles of incorporation were filed in Aug. 1971, officially establishing the People's Food Co-op!

In 1972, the co-op lost the space on State Street when the owners sold the building and the new owners evicted the group. This led to a move to a nearby house at 722 Packard Road, the first time the co-op had its own space— 900 square feet of it! Volunteers ran the store at the beginning, making all decisions via the consensus model. Revenue increased such that the co-op gave interest-free loans up to \$100, and then began to sell wholesale to other co-ops around the state.

A number of other informal food co-ops had begun operating around Ann Arbor in the early 1970s, including a vegetable co-op that was run by the leftist, anti-racist White Panther Party, a local political collective.

By contrast, at the People's Food Co-op operations became more formalized during 1972-74. Paid coordinators were hired; members elected corporate officers and a board of directors; and the board enacted a membership fee. In 1974, members held their first annual meeting, and the board drafted and adopted the first set of bylaws.

#### Four Decades of Growth

Sales at the PFC continued to grow throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Cashiers were introduced to the store in 1977, replacing the do-it-yourself system. Consumer demand was solid, and the board of directors began fundraising efforts to open a second location. About \$3,200 was raised, and the Free People's Clinic made a loan of \$1,000. In Jan. 1975 this money, along with membership fees, was used to open the market at 212 N. Fourth Avenue, right in the heart of the popular Kerrytown shopping district.

*continued on next page*





The store in Kerrytown opened in 1975 at 212 N. Fourth Avenue.

## FOOD CO-OP

*continued from page 11*

Both co-op outlets thrived for years, enjoying the cooperative model and supplying the community with healthy and organic food. When the lease at the house on Packard expired, the store moved up the street to 740 Packard, opening on Sep. 7, 1985.

In Aug. 1994, the store at 212 N. Fourth Avenue was moved to a larger location around the bend, at 214 and 216 N. Fourth Avenue in the Eisele block. The Eisele block enjoys a storied history of its own. After its founder, Volney Chapin, passed away in 1870, the lot was sold to John and Anton Eisele, stone cutters from Germany who at one time owned the largest marble works in Washtenaw County. It was John W. Eisele who built the stone structure on this block in 1870, incorporating arched windows and other wonderful design features still visible today. At various times, the same location held Zachmann's Meat Market, the Basso wholesale fruit storage warehouse, an ice house, and a marble works company. When the PFC took over the space in 1994, workers removed the enamel panels that had covered the façade and found remnants of tomb stones on the property!

While the new store on Fourth Avenue continued to prosper, the same could not be said for its sister store. Although it was a beloved location with a core of loyal customers and employees, the board ultimately decided that it was no longer sustainable. In 1997, with a ceremony and many tearful goodbyes, the store at 740 Packard was closed; it is now the home of Jack's Hardware and Sushi Town.

Café Verde opened up on Fourth Avenue just three years later, and every day people from all over Ann Arbor and beyond enjoy organic, fair-trade coffee and tasty treats made in the co-op's own bakery.

Even though a lot has changed at the People's Food Co-op, its foundation remains the same: the store exists to serve its members. The seeds that were planted over 40 years ago continue to thrive. Long may it grow!



The store at 722 Packard was adjoined by a laundromat (at right)



The People's Food Co-op in its current location at 216 N. Fourth Avenue.

#### Co-ops Proliferated in the Fourth Avenue District

In the 1970s, the People's Food Co-op was not the only cooperative business in the Fourth Avenue corridor. The **Wildflour Community Bakery** at 208 (now home of the Heavenly Metal boutique) baked many varieties of whole-grain and other wholesome breads, rolls, and confections. For some years, the bakery let anyone come in, wash up, put on an apron, and work a couple of hours to earn a loaf of bread. More than one person describes Wildflour breads and pizza crusts as the best they've ever had. Several of the ICC co-ops, mentioned earlier, had large, standing weekly orders for the loaves of bread.

In Nov. 1976, the **People's Produce Co-Op** opened at 206 N. Fourth Avenue (where Tea Haus is currently located). Much like the original food co-op, this new co-op had no paid staff and relied on volunteer day coordinators. Around the same time, another worker-owned business, the **Ann Arbor Tofu Collective** (later called The Soy Plant), started to produce tofu for sale in the co-ops. In 1978, the **People's Herb and Spice Co-Op** opened at 211 Ann Street, sharing space with The Soy Plant. The Herb and Spice Co-Op was a branch of the People's Food Co-Op, and was financed by PFC money and community loans.

Also in 1978, a cooperative organic grain mill called **The Daily Grind**, which had originally opened in Jun. 1974 at 404 W. Washington Street, was relocated to 220 Felch Street (a building now home to the Ann Arbor Distilling Co.). It supplied flour, rolled oats, and other items to consumers and to other co-ops, as well as to local businesses such as Zingerman's Bakehouse. In the late 1990s, the mill moved to Caro, MI, under new ownership.

#### Other Local Co-Ops

Many cooperatives existed in Ann Arbor in the 1970s. Below is a description of just some of those connected to the PFC.

The **Michigan Federation of Food Co-ops** (MFOFC) was an incorporated body that was formed to serve as a network, giving food co-ops the ability to communicate, train, and form alliances with one another. Every member co-op paid a member share as an investment in the federation, and members of the federation's board were regional representatives of the member co-ops.

In 1972, MFOFC opened the **People's Warehouse** in a rented space at 404 W. Huron. This facility moved to Jackson Road, and eventually ended up in warehouse space off Ellsworth Road near the city airport. The Warehouse included a physical warehouse, administrative staff, and staff who made deliveries all over the Lower Peninsula, Toledo, and some cities in Indiana. It was managed by a collective that tried to make most decisions by consensus; over time, they hired a general manager to oversee operations. It was the Warehouse that opened the above-mentioned Daily Grind; thus, it was one of the few, if not the only, area grain wholesalers to have its own grist mill. The Warehouse closed in the early 1990s.

The **Free People's Clinic** was founded in Jan. 1971 by a small group of volunteers. Health care was provided free, with donations encouraged but not required.

**Local Motion** was an alternative funding organization that started in Feb. 1975 and lasted until 1978. Members worked cooperatively to raise funds and ensure that services such as legal aid, child care, and health care could prosper and grow in Ann Arbor. They raised money from voluntary 2% surcharges in retail goods and services. The businesses would collect the surcharge from willing consumers, and turn the money over to the Local Motion board, who would then make distributions. Their seed capital was loaned from several local businesses including Ozone House, the Free People's Clinic, and People's Food Co-op. ■



# MORE SNAPSHOTS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY

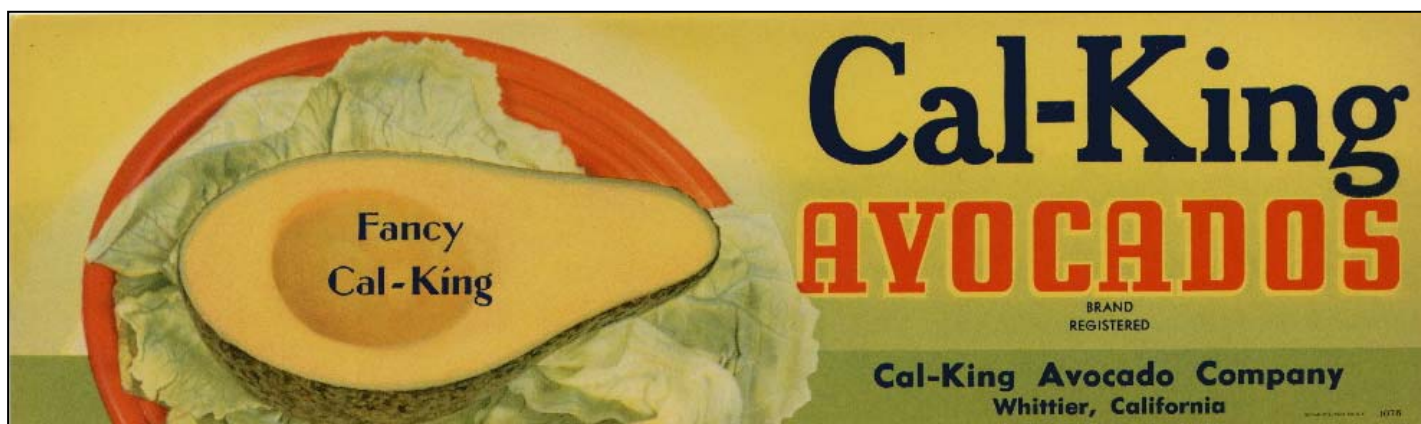
In a Stroh's poster from 1890, at right, the young woman has decked her hair with a wreath of hop and barley spikes. Established by German immigrant Bernhard Stroh in 1850, the Stroh Brewery Co. of Detroit, MI, grew to become the largest privately-held beer producer in America. During Prohibition it launched a successful sideline, ice cream production. A new book by heiress Frances Stroh, *Beer Money: A Memoir of Privilege and Loss* (Harper Perennial, 2017), explains how her family's business collapsed in the 1990s.



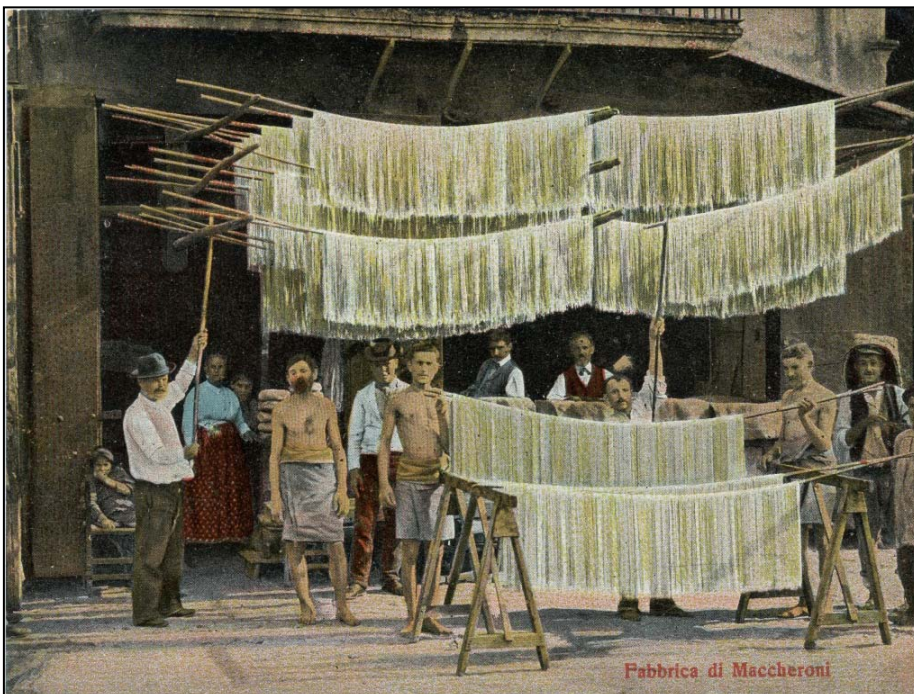
Below, a Piggly Wiggly grocery store in Colorado Springs, CO, ca. 1929-35. Piggly Wiggly, founded in Memphis, TN, one century ago in 1916, was the first self-service grocery store. In former times, a shopper would hand a list of the goods they wanted to a clerk at the front counter, who would then walk along the stock shelves and gather the items, entailing high labor costs. Boasting lower prices, Piggly Wiggly spread quickly via franchising, with more than 1200 stores in the U.S. by 1923. (Photo: <http://csdailyphoto.blogspot.com>)



Below, a crate label from the Cal King Avocado Co. of Whittier, CA, ca. 1930s. The pictured variety, which dominated California's production until the 1970s, is the Fuerte (Spanish for "strong"), so named after it survived a severe frost in the state in 1913. (Label and photo from the collection of Dwayne Rogers, Chico, CA, <http://www.thelabelman.com>)







In this postcard image from the early 1900s, strands of pasta are hanging out to dry in the yard of a factory near Naples, Italy. Pasta had become an inexpensive staple food for the Italian masses in the 1700s, thanks to the advent of machinery for extruding the noodles. (Postcard from the collection of Randy K. Schwartz)

A Depression-era storefront window of the Mandaro Latticini Freshi cheese shop, 276 Bleecker Street in Greenwich Village (Manhattan, NY), in 1937. At the time, nearly 20% of New Yorkers were of Italian heritage. Note that the whole-cream ricotta cost a nickel more per pound than the regular. Shops such as this one imported goods from the old country that had been unaffordable to the Italians when they had lived there. (Photo by Berenice Abbott, from the Collections of the Museum of the City of New York, item 40.140.29, <http://collections.mcny.org>)



Boasting "15 Minute Service", the original Little Caesars pizza store in Garden City, MI, is seen here shortly after it was opened in 1959 by Mike and Marian Ilitch. "Mr. I", the son of Macedonian immigrants, died in Feb. 2017 at the age of 87. The pizza chain is now the third-largest in the U.S., after Pizza Hut and Domino's. (Photo: <https://littlecaesars.com>)

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Many Southerners won't use any mayo other than Duke's, which is richer and tangier than most other brands due to its high content of egg yolks and cider vinegar. Mrs. Eugenia Duke of Greenville, SC, created the product one century ago, in 1917, for preparing sandwiches that she sold in local drugstores and to soldiers stationed at nearby Fort Sevier. She launched her successful company after a local grocer agreed to take on consignment a few bottles of the mayo itself. (Photo: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/DukesMayo>)

Below, three students at the National School of Meat Cutting, Inc., in Toledo, OH, in 1957. The school, which lasted from 1923 to 1985 and drew students from around the world for its 8-week course, had purchased the older Kurtz Market (established in the 1860s), seen here, as its retail meat market. The student in the middle is Allison H. "Al" Ittel, a 25-year-old just-married Korean War veteran who'd grown up as a meat-shop owner's son in rural Fairfax, MN. (Photo: "Minnesota Elders" Oral History Project, <http://minnesotaelders.blogspot.com>)



## C.H.A.A. WINTER PROGRAMS



# GOOD EATS AND CLEVER VESSELS

Our five programs in Winter 2017, summarized below, focused on iconic Ann Arbor restaurants; the history of coffee, tea, and chocolate; foods of Shakespeare's times; timeless dinnerware designs; and measures related to food and hunger during the Great Depression. We have our Program Chair, **Laura Gillis**, to thank for organizing this series.

### Thumbs Up for Local Dining

Our first event served as a fitting kickoff for Ann Arbor Restaurant Week. On Jan. 15, a large and appreciative crowd of about 50 people turned up at our habitual meeting place, the Malletts Creek Branch of the public library, to see an illustrated talk by CHAA members **Jon Milan** and **Gail Offen** about their book, *Iconic Restaurants of Ann Arbor* (Arcadia Publishing, 2016). Readers will recall that Art Cole reviewed this book in our Winter 2017 issue.

The authors began their presentation by noting that you can tell that a restaurant is iconic when its mere mention makes someone smile and tell a story. That's certainly true, for example, of The Brown Jug, a student hangout just east of campus on South University Ave., the oldest continuously-operating restaurant in the city (1936). Many other legendary spots are long gone, such as The Haunted Tavern, which flourished in the 1920s and 1930s and was one of a number of restaurants established inside what had been grand old homes and mansions.

Ann Arbor's Division Street was so named in the mid-1800s as the boundary between the campus area (where alcohol was banned) and the town itself. After the Prohibition era, liquor wasn't available in local eateries until 1960. Greg Fenerli at The Rubaiyat (1960-1970s), a dining and dance club on the "town" side of Division, was one of the first owners to obtain a liquor license, and the first to serve wine by the glass; the latter required state legislative action. The Pretzel Bell (1934-84), just west of campus on Liberty Street, was "Food for the Gourmet" and became a mecca for Univ. of Michigan sports fans; patrons who had just reached drinking age (21) were encouraged to try to drink 21 beers and were awarded a cardboard bell if they succeeded. Many places that arose later were expressions of newly emerging preferences, such as countercultural yearnings at the Del Rio Bar (1970-2003), where future chef Sara Moulton was a cook; classic French cuisine at La Seine (1966-67), where future food writer Ruth Reichl was a waitress, and at A. Escoffier (1981-2004); and provincial French and Italian fare, with live jazz, at The Earle (est. 1973).

## “Sober Infusions” that Changed the World

On Feb. 19 we journeyed to see an exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA), “Bitter|Sweet: Coffee, Tea & Chocolate”. Our visit was preceded by an illustrated lecture from **Beth Carver Wees** (Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), “The Cups that Cheer”: Coffee, Tea & Chocolate in Early America”, and was followed by an informal discussion with the exhibit’s curator, **Yao-Fen You** (Assoc. Curator of European Art at the DIA). We should also note here the related book by Melanie King, *Tea, Coffee, & Chocolate: How We Fell in Love with Caffeine* (Oxford, UK: Bodleian Library, Univ. of Oxford, 2015).

Dr. You assembled historical paintings, prints, and sculptures, as well as porcelain and metal coffeepots, tea canisters, and chocolate pots, to trace the story of how these exotic hot beverages reached European tables during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. They caused a near-revolution in drinking habits, social customs, and tastes, and stimulated the desire for colonial expansion into Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as for slavery-based production of sugar:

- Tea originated in East Asia, and in ancient and medieval times the dried leaves began to be exported westward, mostly along Silk Road routes. Later, the Dutch and Portuguese controlled a thriving maritime tea trade. When English king Charles II married the Portuguese princess Catherine of Braganza in 1662, the dowry included not only the colony of Bombay (now Mumbai) but also a chest of tea leaves that fascinated the royal court, staking the beverage its first foothold in Britain. “Twinings” became a very popular tea purveyor after 1717, when Thomas Twining opened The Golden Lion, a tavern on The Strand in London; unusual for the time, women were allowed in.
- The use of coffee berries might have first arisen in what is now Ethiopia, where people still pour from a traditional *jebena* (coffeepot) like the one that was exhibited. The custom of brewed coffee spread from nearby Yemen into the Middle East and from there to Europe, where it was often called “the Turkish drink”. An oil painting on display, by Carle Van Loo (France, 1755), depicted an African servant girl handing a cup of coffee to a Mme. de Pompadour, who is dressed like a sultana in a headdress and other Turkish garb; it is she who reportedly first popularized the beverage at the Palace of Versailles.
- Cacao is native to tropical regions of the Americas; its use in making chocolate spread to Spain and then, slowly, from there to the rest of Europe. Chocolate was a very thick beverage until the 1830s, when a technique to remove the cocoa butter was developed. We viewed an example of a *jicara*, a traditional cup used to drink chocolate in Spanish colonial Peru, and we tasted samples of hot chocolate that replicated styles from the Aztecs (with vanilla, honey, red pepper, and annatto seeds) and 18<sup>th</sup>-Century France (with milk, vanilla, sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper). This was the DIA’s first-ever exhibit to engage all five senses.

Caffeine, the key stimulant in both coffee and tea, was first identified in 1804. Chocolate has small amounts of caffeine and much larger amounts of a closely related stimulant, theobromine, first identified in 1841 in cacao beans.



The Morgan Library and Museum, New York

“Cavalier and Lady Drinking Chocolate”, a hand-colored engraving from between 1690 and 1710, by Robert Bonnat (France)

Tea was introduced to the Thirteen Colonies by British and Dutch settlers, and by 1668 coffee was also in general use there. At first, tea was enjoyed in the Asian style, “black” and in handleless cups; later, the drop in sugar prices in the 1700s helped establish cravings for sugary tea. Formerly, ale or other alcoholic beverages had often been drunk at breakfast; substituting a stimulant for a depressant in the morning routine had a big effect on society. One writer of the time called tea a “sober infusion”, while English poet William Cowper referred to “the cups that cheer but not inebriate.” Coffee and tea were also served in taverns and coffeehouses, and there were tea parties where young people could gather and socialize. By 1770, tea was being drunk twice daily by at least one-third of the British colonials, but the beverage never regained its full status in America after the Boston Tea Party (1773) and boycott. Dr. Wees also reviewed the history of coffee and tea services and vessels made of pewter, copper, silver, or porcelain, with evolving styles including Baroque, Rococo, *chinoiserie*, and Neoclassical. Dr. You noted that tea pots were generally broader than coffee pots so as to allow room for the leaves to expand as they steeped. A “tea kettle” was simply for keeping hot water on hand to make additional cups, and generally had a bale handle instead of a side handle.

*continued on next page*



## C.H.A.A. PROGRAMS *continued from page 17*

### Elizabethan Eating

Our Mar. 19 event, “Dining with Shakespeare”, was presented by local teacher, author, and historian **Susan L. Nenadic** based on her recent independent research (2016 marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bard’s death). She reviewed a number of features of Elizabethan-era culture that affected foodways, including religious and medical doctrines. A system of legal penalties enforced roughly 120 days per year for Christian fasting, when fish but no meat could be eaten. Rooted in Galenic medicine, humoral theory viewed the stomach as a cooking vessel; the four bodily humors, whose qualities were hot, cold, wet, or dry, needed to be kept in balance by the judicious selection of ingredients and cooking methods. Banqueting scenes were often used in Shakespeare’s plays to comment on social stability or instability. At formal banquets, place cards were used to assign seats in pecking-order fashion. A diner might bring his or her own knife to the table, but mostly one ate with one’s hands, wiping the fingers on a cloth napkin.

Susan also reviewed a number of now little-known food terms of the day, including sippet, a triangular piece of toast; chuet or chewet, a spicy stew of meat and dried fruits; cate, the choicest food in a larder; humble pie, a pie made with less-desirable cuts of meat; fool, a dessert of mashed fruit and whipped cream; kickshaw (from French *quelque chose* or “something”), a fancy but insubstantial dish, usually of foreign origin; small beer, meaning diluted beer; isinglass, a collagen obtained from fish bladders, used to coagulate jelly or to clarify beer; manchet (from French *manche* or “sleeve”), a type of yeasted, refined wheat-flour bread, shaped like the puffed and gathered part of a sleeve. Our refreshments included manchets homemade by Phil Zaret; Shrewsbury cakes and mincemeat tarts by Sherry Sundling; and gingerbread by Laura Gillis.

### Timeless and Timely Dinnerware

“Timeless Dinnerware Designs” was the Apr. 23 illustrated talk by CHAA member Dr. **Margaret Carney**, founding director and curator of the Ann Arbor-based International Museum of Dinnerware Design. She observed that designs are timeless according to how well they succeed in both function and aesthetics. Ancient examples include prehistoric cups made of shells or other natural materials, and bevel-rimmed bowls from Mesopotamia (ca. 3500 BCE). In the industrial era, timeless designs must also be consistent with mass production. Much of the presentation focused on the Mid-Century Modern period of design (1933-65), which was influenced in part by the bold shapes and colors of the Art Deco movement (1920s-1930s). Examples include American Modern tableware (1939-59) from Steubenville Pottery (Steubenville, OH), which was designed by Russel Wright; Museum White china (1940s) from Castleton China, which was designed by Eva Zeisel and manufactured by Shenango China (New Castle, PA); and a curvy snack set (ca. 1953), ideal for soup and a sandwich, made of ceramic glazed in Viridian (a blue-green) by Glidden Pottery (Alfred, NY).

There have also been timeless designs for utensils that are edible or disposable, such as ancient plates of pressed leaves in Asia and South America; *kulhar*, the single-use terracotta bowl

common in South Asia for the past 5000 years; trenchers and other edible plates and bowls made of bread; the ubiquitous cardboard takeout boxes for Chinese food, first patented in 1894; partitioned aluminum “TV dinner” trays; and disposable cups and plates of paper or plastic. Dr. Carney foresees edible ware as a growing trend and a timely measure for global sustainability, as evidenced by Bakey’s edible cutlery, a firm founded in Hyderabad, India, in 2010; and savory or sweet edible utensils now being made by the famous Poilâne Bakery in Paris.

### Getting a Square Meal in the 1930s

**Andrew Coe** of the Culinary Historians of New York (CHNY) spoke to us on May 21 about a book co-authored with his wife, **Jane Ziegelman**, *A Square Meal: A Culinary History of the Great Depression* (HarperCollins, 2016). The study, which won the Beard Foundation Award for 2017 in the Nonfiction Book category, considers the Depression from the perspective of a national food crisis and the policy responses thereto. Those who missed the talk can view a 41-minute video recording of it at [http://www.aadl.org/aadl\\_events\\_20170521-andrew\\_coe](http://www.aadl.org/aadl_events_20170521-andrew_coe).

The effects of the financial collapse of October 1929 were compounded by drought conditions in the South and the Great Plains. With millions standing in bread lines or sleeping in camps of the unemployed, upon his election in 1932 President Franklin D. Roosevelt formed the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) to coordinate aid to the needy, and the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation (FSRC) to distribute surplus farm products to local charity groups. The relief boxes of food for the jobless were informed by nutrition science. Designed to sustain hungry people only for a brief time, they consisted largely of flour, milk, bread, potatoes, and salt; later, certain other foods were sometimes included such as canned beef, salt pork, beans, cornmeal, wheat germ, and apples. But these government handouts were terminated in 1935 because, FDR said, “continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber.” Mr. Coe stated that the number of Americans who starved to death during the Depression likely reached into the thousands.

The government’s focus turned from outright food handouts to employment stimulus measures, home economics campaigns, food stamps, and increases in school lunch programs. The crisis made people, especially women with children, much more receptive to the food science pioneered decades earlier in the Progressive Era. The USDA’s Bureau of Home Economics encouraged community gardening and canning; distributed publications to teach women how to make inexpensive meals that were “protective” of health; and supplied radio stations with “Aunt Sammy” scripts popularizing nutritious foods and recipes. Such recipes often had awkward combinations of ingredients—deviled eggs topped with tomato sauce, or a cabbage and peanut salad with boiled dressing. Our own refreshments were rather more appealing: Joanne Nesbit made a slumgullion or “Hoover stew” of macaroni, sliced hot dogs, and canned tomatoes and corn; Judy Steeh made a mock apple pie using Ritz crackers.

Depression-era practices permanently affected food attitudes in the U.S. They solidified the notion that food choices should be guided not just by what tastes good but also by economics and nutrition; and the notion that in a time of national crisis, to eat frugally and scientifically can be an act of patriotism. ■

# "THE EDIBLE MONUMENT"

On the same day that CHAA visited the "Bitter|Sweet" exhibit (see page 17), some of us also took in another show at the DIA, "The Edible Monument: The Art of Food for Festivals", which has been on tour from its home base at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. Assembled by head Getty curator **Marcia Reed**, this exhibit includes about 140 prints, rare books, and serving manuals, many of them from the Getty's own collections, and others from the collection of **Anne Willan** and **Mark Cherniavsky** in Los Angeles. A book of essays, with the same title as the exhibit, was edited by Reed and published by the Getty in 2015; an additional brief illustrated essay by Willan is available online at <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/how-raw-sugar-transformed-the-european-banquet>.

In medieval and early modern Europe, elaborate artworks were created from food ingredients and displayed at royal feasts and civic celebrations. "*The Edible Monument*" explores how the professional kitchen was used as a workshop or laboratory for the creation of such works of art. As banquets and festivals grew more elaborate, kitchens developed into a series of complex spaces dedicated to different parts of the meal. Specialized cooking methods required several ovens and new culinary tools, and the more sophisticated fare also required special experts such as pastry chefs and master carvers.

At court festivals, magnificent table monuments with heraldic and emblematic themes made of sugar, flowers, and fruit were displayed on banquet settings and dessert buffets:

- In England, centerpieces of gilt-sugar pastry, called "triumphs", often depicted gods or displayed emblems representing the king's virtues. The title page of an exhibited festival book, commemorating a feast for the 1685 coronation of King James II, shows an illustration with the king and queen at the head banquet table facing long lines of seated guests. The book lists the name, status, and seat location of each guest, as well as the menu of 1,445 dishes served at the event, such as pistachio cream, anchovies, jelly, crayfish, Bologna sausage, pickled oysters, hogs' tongues, and cheesecake.
- In England in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, decorative baskets made from sugar paste were often used to hold sugar flowers and brightly colored bonbons. To make the baskets, sugar paste would be pressed into finely-carved molds of boxwood called "mosaics", the components of which were then folded into place. The designs were modeled after famous porcelain baskets from the manufactories at Meissen and Sèvres.
- In France, an impressive centerpiece, or *surtout* (literally "over all"), typically held fruits, candies, flowers, and candelabra. The *surtout* would be made of silver or another metal and was often placed on an elevated mirrored platform. It was surrounded by individual table settings (gilt plates and folded napkins) separated from one another by lines of colored sugar, a layout recalling the ornamental gardens of Versailles.
- A highlight of the exhibit is "Palace of Circe", a sugar sculpture set on an eight-foot table of mirrored glass. It was created in 2015 by famed English culinary artist and



"Costume of the Cook", an etching and engraving from about the 1690s, by Nicolas I de Larmessin (France).

Collection of Anne Willan and Mark Cherniavsky

historian Ivan Day, based on a table-plan print from Menon's cookbook *La Science du Maître d'Hôtel, Confiseur* (1776 edition), on view nearby. It features sugar paste sculpted into a classical temple with sugar statues and sugar-sand gardens. The figures were meant to instruct banquet guests on the consequences of gluttony, using a story from Homer's *Odyssey* when Ulysses and his men land on the island of Aeaëa.

Apart from royal premises, lavish civic banquets and feasts were sometimes held to celebrate the wealth of a city or the genius of its leaders:

- At feasts in Renaissance and Baroque Italy, major artists such as Bernini and Giambologna might be commissioned to create the design for a table sculpture. A confectionery would then craft it out of ice, butter, sugar paste, or marzipan. Artificial flowers were made of silk, paper, or sugar paste and used as garnishes atop pyramids of dried fruits or arranged in baskets. In Bologna in 1693, a two-month feast was held in the great hall of the Palazzo Vizzani to mark the retirement of Senator Francesco Ratta. The banquet table was topped by a grand sculpture of La Felsina, the city symbol, which had been created by the artist Giuseppe Mazza for this occasion. Displayed silver and glass items on the sideboards were reflected in mirrors hung angled downward.
- Public celebrations and street parades featured large-scale edible monuments made of breads, cheeses, and meats. Here, even poor people could get some free food and participate in games and contests. Inspired by the triumphal marches of ancient Rome and the festive processions of medieval times, these urban events were scheduled on Carnival days, saints' days, or other traditional holidays; on days of royal coronations and weddings or rulers' birthdays; or on days designated to celebrate the wine harvest or other seasonal events. ■

# CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. and are held at the Ann Arbor District Library – Malletts Creek Branch, 3090 E. Eisenhower Parkway.)

Sunday, July 16, 2017

4-7 p.m., Ladies' Literary Club of Ypsilanti  
(218 N. Washington St., Ypsilanti),  
Members-only participatory theme meal,  
"International Vegetarian Cookery"

Sunday, September 17, 2017

Shiloh Maples,  
American Indian Health and Family  
Services of Southeast Michigan,  
"Our Bodies Tell Our Histories:  
Recovering Land, Life, and Foodways in Native America"

Sunday, October 15, 2017

Dr. Margot Finn,  
Lecturer in the University Courses Division  
at the Univ. of Michigan,  
discusses her new book, *Discriminating Taste:  
How Class Anxiety Created the American Food Revolution*

Sunday, November 12, 2017

2-5 p.m., Detroit Institute of Art (5200 Woodward Ave.),  
"The Dutch Table: Food and Drink in  
the Dutch Golden Age",  
a private tour led by Dr. Yao-Fen You,  
Assoc. Curator of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts.

**On the Back Burner:** We welcome ideas and submissions from all readers of *Repast*, including for the following planned future issue. Suggestions for future themes are also welcome.

- Fall 2017: The Food Industry: Pages from History (Part 2).

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Volume XXXIII Number 3, Summer 2017

*First Class*