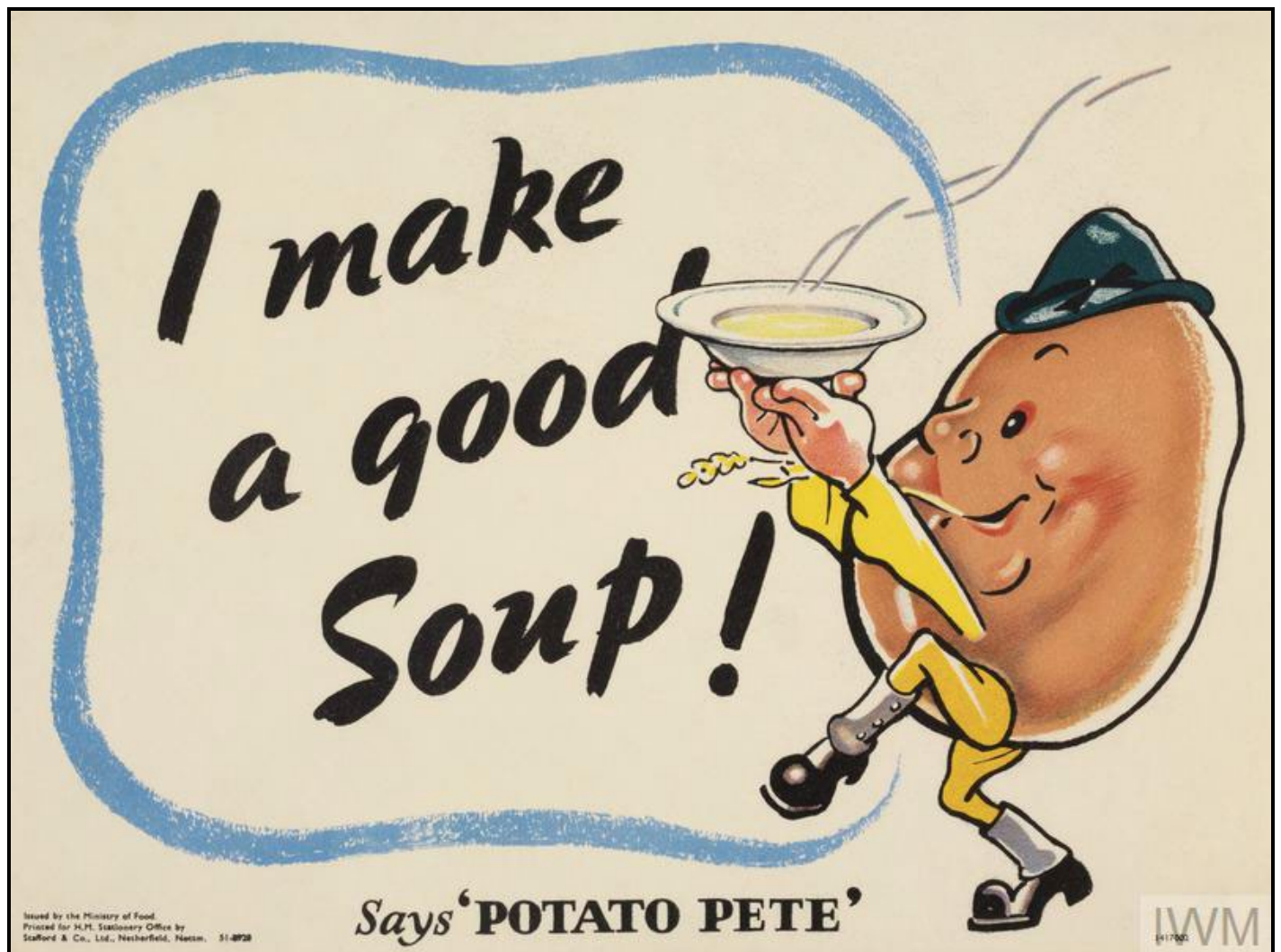




Snapshots of Culinary History in England, Part 4

From Fairground Treats to Food Rationing:
England in Bounty and Austerity



© Imperial War Museum (Art.IWM PST 6080)

A lithographed World War 2 poster from the British Ministry of Food.



Image: Samantha Bilton

Ginger snaps (top row) and gingerbread parlies, so named because a shop in Waverly, England supplied them to members of the Scottish Parliament.

Repast

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ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR



GINGERBREAD AT HISTORIC ENGLISH FAIRS

by Samantha Bilton

*Sam Bilton is a food historian, writer, and cook in Sussex, England. She maintains a blog at comfortablyhungry.com and is an Awards Coordinator for the Guild of Food Writers. At her home she hosts a historically-themed supper club—called, coincidentally, Repast—where she recreates recipes from the past. Sam's first book addressed the history of gingerbread, entitled *First Catch Your Gingerbread* (Prospect Books, 2020). Her second book, *Fool's Gold: A History of British Saffron*, is due out from Prospect in June 2022.*

In an age when there is no end of audio and visual stimuli in the form of television, social media, and streaming services, it is hard to imagine the excitement that our forebears experienced with the coming of a fair.

For short periods at key points during the year, such as a particular saint's day, townsfolk in England would eagerly gather to buy or sell livestock and hire laborers. However, once the business had been concluded it was time for the fairgoers to seek refreshment and to “let their hair down”. Ben Jonson's 17th-Century play *Bartholomew Fair* mentions puppeteers, a hog roast, a man selling trinkets, and a lady selling gingerbread. By the 19th Century the entertainment could include things such as wild beast displays and peep shows. Who can forget Michael Henchard in Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, who gets into the spirit of the fair at Weydon-Priors by consuming several bowls of furmity (a boiled grain dish similar to porridge, sometimes spelled “frumenty”) liberally laced with rum? In his drunken stupor, he sells his wife and child to a passing sailor for five guineas.

The Rise and Fall of English Fairs

The ancestry of the English fair can be traced back to the medieval era, when the right of a town to hold a fair was granted by royal charter. The aim of these charters was to provide revenue for the crown by way of an annual fee payable by the city or town. Between 1199 and 1350 over 1,500 charters were issued across England to towns like Ormskirk in Lancashire, which is renowned to this day for its gingerbread.



"Bartholomew Fair",
a hand-colored print
made from an 1807
etching by Thomas
Rowlandson.

Image: Metropolitan
Museum of Art (via
Wikimedia), Drawings
and Prints 17.3.888-
14, Harris Brisbane
Dick Fund, 1917.

It was considered good luck to eat a piece of gingerbread bought at one of these events. Long before candy floss (known in America as "cotton candy"), doughnuts, or hotdogs became *de rigueur* fodder at the fair, gingerbread was the go-to treat. A small treat or keepsake purchased at a fair, especially a piece of gingerbread, was often referred to as a "fairing". In 1803 the romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote to his Aunt Kate in Horsham, Sussex, requesting: "Tell the bearer not to forget to bring me a fairing, which is some gingerbread, sweetmeat, hunting nuts and a pocket book."

In Cornwall, a "proper and complete" fairing was a spicy ginger biscuit adorned with lambs' tails, candied angelica, almond comfits, and macaroons. The "tails" in question are actually caraway seeds coated in colored sugar to about the size of a pea. Candied angelica are sugar-crystallized strips cut from the stems of garden angelica, an herb similar to lovage. Almond comfits, also called Jordan almonds or dragées, are almonds coated in colored sugar, while macaroons are small, sweet cakes of almond paste that are leavened with egg white before baking.

One of the most famous fairs in Britain was Bartholomew Fair in Smithfield, the renowned market district in Central London. Established in the 12th Century, this fair originally lasted for three days over the feast of St. Bartholomew on 24 August. Like many fairs, it had been conceived to sell cattle and merchandise, particularly cloth. By the time Jonson wrote *Bartholomew Fair* in the 17th Century, the emphasis had shifted from commerce to pleasure. After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the fair would become a 14-day event that was opened by the Lord Mayor of London.

Although events like Bartholomew Fair were popular with most people, they did have their detractors. In his play, Jonson captures the spirit of some of the less favorable opinions of the fair and the tradespeople attending. The character Joan Trash, a gingerbread seller, is accused by a fellow stall holder of peddling "gingerbread progeny" made with "stale bread, rotten eggs,

musty ginger, and dead honey", despite Trash's protestations that her gingerbread is made with "nothing but what's wholesome". Trash is criticized further by a puritan pastor, Zeal-of-the-land Busy, who describes her gingerbread wares as being a "basket of popery". Convinced that the fair and its attractions create sinful intentions fueled by, among other things, Trash's spicy gingerbread, Busy overturns her basket. However, the stallholders have the last laugh when Busy is put in the stocks for preaching at the fair.

Bartholomew Fair became so disreputable during the 17th Century that Queen Anne ordered it to return to a three-day event in the hope that it would become more respectable. However, the lawlessness continued. On one September morning alone in 1815, some 45 felonies were reported at this fair. Consequent public outcry saw the great carnival diminish to a few wild-beast shows and a handful of gilt gingerbread booths. After a run of more than 700 years, the final Bartholomew Fair was held in 1855.

Gingerbread Souvenirs in Fanciful Shapes

Often the gingerbread souvenirs that were available were molded into particular shapes, such as famous or patriotic figures like the Duke of Wellington sitting on his horse. Royalty was a very popular subject, but sometimes the same design could be utilized for different monarchs, making it quite tricky to date some molds. What made these molded gingerbreads particularly special was the fact that they were often gilded. Gold leaf may well have been used to decorate early gingerbreads in medieval noble households. However, by the 19th Century this golden decoration was more likely to be Dutch gold, an alloy of copper and zinc that mimics the tone of real gold leaf. According to English journalist and sociologist Henry Mayhew, in the early 19th Century a gilded King George on horseback was popular and "was eaten with great relish by his juvenile subjects".

continued on next page

GINGERBREAD *continued from page 3*

Aside from the famous personages molded in gingerbread, generic human shapes known as “gingerbread husbands” were also sold at fairs. Gingerbread husbands were particularly popular in the southern counties of England. The *Chelmsford Chronicle*, for instance, on Friday 14 May 1847 reported of the Spring Fair that “there were upon the stalls rows of gingerbread husbands for little ladies, and on the pavement rows of young gentlemen for larger ones, looking almost as gay if not quite so soft and tender”. Sometimes the gingerbread gentlemen would be carrying a stick or an umbrella, and they were often decorated with touches of gold. Florence White, the founder of the English Folk Cookery Association, commented: “just imagine a child’s joy in the gingerbread husband, and her grief when the gilt wore off!” It was particularly a custom to buy a gingerbread husband on Valentine’s Day. Gingerbread wives were also available and are mentioned by John Newbery in his 1764 tale, *The Fairing*:

Please buy a Gingerbread wife, Sir? Here is a very delicate one. Indeed, there is too much Gold upon her Nose; but that is no Objection to those who drive Smithfield bargains, and marry their wives by weight.

However, after World War 1 it was hard to find gingerbread spouses for sale anywhere in the country.

Another popular design for gingerbread fairings was the alphabet block known as a hornbook. The hornbook was an early form of children’s primer that had the alphabet letters written on an animal skin stretched over a wooden board; this was covered with a thin transparent layer of horn to protect it from dirty hands, hence the name. A piece of gingerbread baked in the form of a hornbook had the benefit of being both educational and a delicious incentive for the pupil to learn the alphabet: every letter correctly memorized could be nibbled away. The Museum of London has a fragment of an alphabet gingerbread from the 1814 frost fair, still wrapped in blue sugar paper; it had been bought by a Thomas Moxon for his child. The frost fair of early February 1814 was the last of its kind in London, as the river Thames has failed to freeze solid since that date. Between 1092 and 1814 the Thames froze 25 times, providing the opportunity for an impromptu “frost fair” held right on the frozen tideway. Piping-hot gingerbread and other edibles were sold at inflated prices by peddlers who would buy their wares from professional bakers. Gin was also available in abundance should the gingerbread fail to warm your cockles.

Gingerbread “Nuts”

If an elaborate molded gingerbread was a little beyond your purse, you could settle for a bag of “gingerbread nuts” instead. These were small, hard biscuits of gingerbread. The nut reference relates to the size and shape of the pieces of biscuit dough, which were usually rolled into balls the size of a walnut before being flattened for baking. This is illustrated by the recipe in Dr. William Kitchiner’s *The Cook’s Oracle* (1817):



Image: Samantha Bilton

Gingerbread Nuts, sometimes known as Hunting Nuts.

Gingerbread Nuts

To two pounds of sifted Flour, put two pounds of Treacle, three quarters of a pound of Moist Sugar, half a pound of Candied Orange-peel cut small, one ounce and a half of ground Ginger, one ounce of ground Caraways, and three quarters of a pound of Butter oiled:- mix all well together, and set it by some time - then roll it out in pieces about the size of a walnut, - lay them in rows on a baking-plate; press them flat with the hand, and bake them in a slow oven about ten minutes.

When discussing Greenwich Fair, Charles Dickens explained that the regular fairgoers would carry a pound or two of these biscuits tied up in a cotton pocket-handkerchief to nibble on as they wandered around the attractions. In a *Punch* sketch of 1845, Mrs. Caudle berated her husband for having too much fun at Greenwich Fair (a thoroughly disreputable thing for a married man and father to do) and for not bringing a single gingerbread nut back home for his children!

Vendors and Lottery Hawkers

While you could simply buy a bag of gingerbread nuts from a vendor, it was perhaps more fun to take part in a gingerbread lottery to see if you could win these sweet treats. The gingerbread lottery must have been fairly commonplace by the 19th Century, as it was frequently mentioned in the popular musical comedies of the day.

An Irish sailor, Daniel Clarey, began selling gingerbread nuts by way of a lottery after the loss of his leg during “an engagement on the ‘Salt Seas’.” Endowed with the gift of the gab, Clarey assured his customers that his lottery was no “South

Sea Bubble” (a reference to a 1720 financial boom and crash). As there were no blanks in Clarey’s game, every player would win and receive a prize. The lottery took the form of a box with strings attached to the bottom. For a halfpenny, you pulled a string and a doll’s head would appear in one of the 27 numbered holes. If you had chosen that number, then you won 100 gingerbread nuts. If not, you were still rewarded with at least seven gingerbread nuts. Clarey boasted that “some of his gingerbread shot are so highly seasoned that they are as hot as the noble [Admiral] Nelson’s balls [bullets] when he last peppered the jackets of England’s foes”. Ever the self-assured salesman, Clarey had no qualms in stating that his wares were so fine “should any one of his noble friends prove so fortunate as to draw a prize of one hundred of them, he would be entitled to those of half the usual size, so delicately small that they would be no bigger than the quack doctor’s pills”. But perhaps Mr. Clarey was not quite as honest as he would have his customers believe!

The ground for gingerbread vendors like Clarey had been paved in the 18th Century by a flamboyant gentleman named Mr. Ford, more commonly known as Tiddy Doll. He acquired his nickname as a result of his penchant for singing “ti-tid-dy, ti-ti, ti-tid-dy, ti-ti, ti-tid-dy, ti-ti, tid-dy, did-dy, dol-lol, ti-tid-dy, ti-tid-dy, ti-ti, tid-dy, tid-dy, dol” to the tune of popular ballads. But it was his appearance that really made him stand out, as described by the writer and satirist William Hone:

In his person he was tall, well made, and his features handsome. He affected to dress like a person of rank; white gold laced suit of clothes, laced ruffled shirt, laced hat and feather, white silk stockings, with the addition of a fine white apron.

Tiddy Doll also made bold statements about his gingerbread, claiming that it would “melt in your mouth like a red-hot brickbat, and rumble in your inside like Punch and his wheelbarrow.”

Little is known of the true identity or life of Tiddy Doll, but whoever he was he certainly made a lasting impression. He appeared in contemporary prints such as “The Idle Apprentice Executed at Tyburn” (1747), where the engraver William Hogarth depicted him selling gingerbread nuts at a public hanging. In the next century, the radical writer and journalist Thomas Frost would claim that Tiddy Doll had been so well known that on one occasion when the vendor was missing for a week from his usual stand in the Haymarket, a pamphlet that included an account of his alleged murder had been sold in the streets by the thousands. In reality, Tiddy had merely decided that he fancied a change of scenery and had left London for a week to tout his wares at a country fair. However, Tiddy Doll’s life eventually did come to a violent end: on 17 June 1752, the paper *The True Briton* announced that the famous gingerbread seller had been found murdered in Chelsea Field. His assailants made off with £20—a considerable sum in the 18th Century.

Even long after his death, Tiddy Doll continued to capture the imagination of artists and writers. In 1806 the satirical caricaturist James Gillray used him as the model for his depiction of Napoleon (with an emphasis on the feathered tricorne hat) as a great French gingerbread baker shoveling gingerbread kings and queens into an oven.

It appears that gingerbread was also popular at public gatherings other than fairs. For instance, it was sold at the last execution to take place in Horsham (a market town in West Sussex), which occurred in 1844 when John Lawrence was publicly hanged for the murder of Police Superintendent Mr. Soloman. The spectacle attracted sightseers and peddlers from miles around. In a slightly morbid twist to the tale, when the Horsham jail was demolished the following year, the murderer’s body was exhumed and exhibited at the stables of the Queen’s Head pub at the price of two pence for admission.

While gingerbread vendors like Tiddy Doll and Dan Clarey were characters in their own right, there was still something disreputable about touting wares on the street or at a fair. In Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1896), lovers Sue Bridehead and Jude Fawley have been socially disgraced by leaving their respective spouses to set up home together. They contemplate becoming gingerbread stallholders at markets and fairs, “where people are gloriously indifferent to everything except the quality of the goods”. When illness prevents him from working as a stonemason, Jude, who had grown up in his aunt’s baking business, takes to building gingerbread houses called Christminster cakes, complete with “traceried windows, and cloisters”.

With the exception of Tiddy Doll’s success, it seems that selling gingerbread was not a lucrative business. If John Smith is to be believed, selling gingerbread reaped little financial reward, since the profits made were “generally spent in gin and hot suppers”. A stinging indictment for those who were just trying to get by through introducing a bit of spice into the lives of their neighbors. ■

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DINING WITH DIANA: A MEMORANDUM BOOK DURING QUEEN ANNE'S REIGN

by Marion Maule and Perry Staker

Marion Maule and Perry Staker, who live in two different towns in England, first met one another at the British Library in London three years ago with a shared interest in the history of food and dining. More recently, they have participated in some of the CHAA's monthly talks via Zoom. Marion J. Maule, of Bedford, is a retired teacher who has taught English as a Second Language, French, and gender studies. Using historical manuscripts from the local county archives, she wrote the original Wikipedia entry on Diana Astry, the subject of this article. Marion's interest in food first arose at boarding school in Jamaica, and later blossomed into a lifelong fascination with international cuisine and historical cooking methods and gadgets. Using her extensive collections, she gave illustrated lectures all over Britain, the U.S., Italy, and Japan on "Granny's Kitchen", "The History of Tea and Coffee Drinking", "The Japanese Tea Ceremony", and food associated with weddings. Perry Staker, who lives in the historic town of Thaxted in the county of Essex, had a varied career in the film/theatre costume industry and the British Civil Service, including nearly 30 years working in the Lord Chancellor's Dept. (now the Ministry of Justice). Retired since 2005, she now lectures on a variety of subjects, including the history of food and dining, and is a tutor at Marlborough College Summer School. In 2018 she took on the role of Victorian Cook for the BBC-TV series "The Victorian House of Arts and Crafts", screened in 2019-20.

Measuring just 7" × 3½" (17 cm. × 8 cm.), Englishwoman Diana Astry's very personal vellum memorandum/pocketbook is a gem, allowing us to share the bills of fare of 22 private and intimate dinner parties that she attended between 1701 and 1708. The book is of historical interest because Diana not only recorded the date and place of each party, but also who was present and what food was actually placed on the table. (There were a few published British cookbooks at this time, but there is little doubt that some of their dishes were aspirational and not widely prepared.)

Most of the guests mentioned in Diana's notebook were, like her immediate and extended family members, employed in the legal profession and offices of state. Surviving letters indicate that another lucrative source of family income was

investments in coal mining in several areas around Bristol, including the villages of Henbury and Long Ashton. In nine cases the recorded parties took place at Diana's family home, "the Great House" in Henbury; in six other cases, in the homes of her sisters in Long Ashton; in two cases, at her family members' residences in London; and in the remaining five cases at the homes of eminent and influential friends of the family. This was a very wealthy family, and there would have been many servants on hand to help with kitchen and other household work.

Diana's memorandum book also gives insight into the commensality and conviviality that constituted an important aspect of the social life of the English gentry when Queen Anne was on the throne (1702-14). A number of significant historical events took place in England during that time, including the Act of Settlement (1701), which ensured that the descendants of Sophia of Hanover—the Georges—would succeed Anne; the Act of Union of Scotland and England (1707), which created the Kingdom of Great Britain; and the War of Spanish Succession (1702-13) in Europe, which ended with the Treaty of Utrecht. The war resulted in the acquisition by Britain of Gibraltar, Minorca, and what is now northeastern Canada, and it secured Britain's monopoly over the African slave trade to Spanish America.

Apart from the memorandum book (manuscript OR 2393), there are two other extant manuscripts with direct links to Diana:

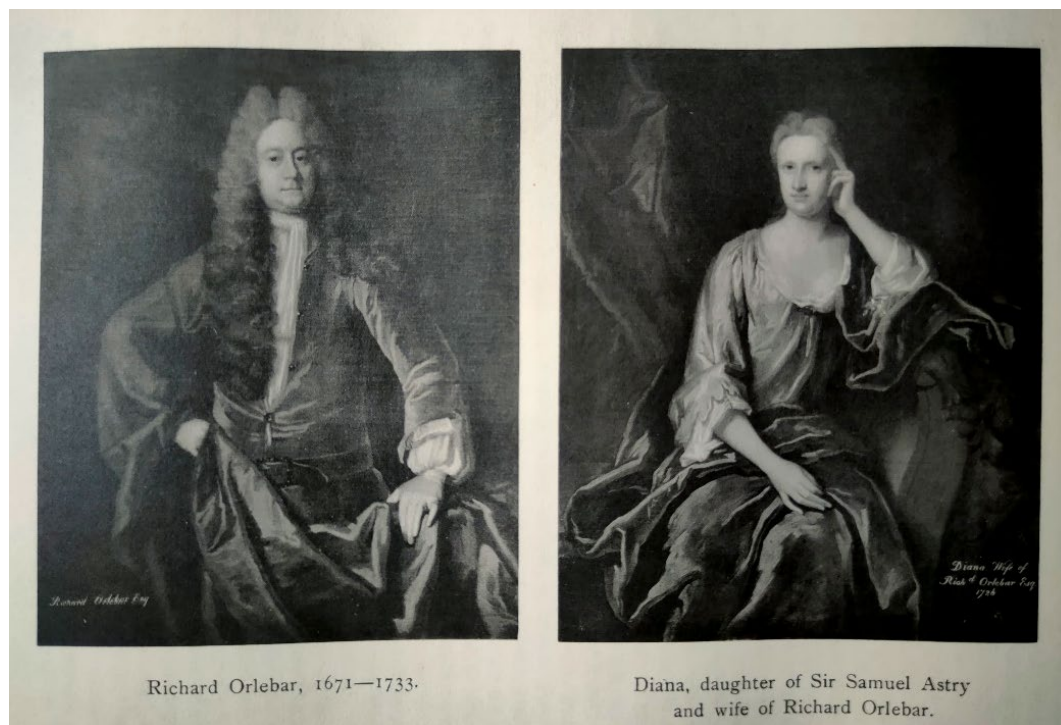
- An account book (OR 2396) details all aspects of the construction of Hinwick House, the country home in Bedfordshire where Diana and her husband Richard Orlebar lived from 1714 until her death in 1716. The six-year building project was funded by Diana.
- Her large receipt book, the chief source of her fame today, contains 375 numbered recipes acquired by Diana from various duly-acknowledged sources, including friends and family, and neatly written out by her. This manuscript was sold by Bonhams auction house in 2020 for £9,437 (U.S. \$12,395); the current owner is not publicly known.

Throughout this article, "OR" refers to items held in the Bedfordshire Archives, the oldest county record office in England. Located in Bedford, the collection there includes the Orlebar Family treasure trove and many manuscript cookbooks, beginning with Elizabeth Daniell's Book of Receipts (1660).

The receipt book and the memorandum book of Diana Astry were edited by Bette Stitt and published in a 1957 volume of the *Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*.

Origins of the Memorandum Book

Diana was one of the four daughters and two sons of Sir Samuel and Lady Elizabeth Astry. She lived at the Great House in Henbury from 1670 until, at age 38, she married Richard Orlebar at Lincoln's Inn Chapel, London, on December 17, 1708. She must have married with "her mother's consent" because Sir Samuel's will, drawn up in 1699, stipulated that without it, Diana would not inherit her share of his estate, her share being £6000 (equivalent in 2022 to roughly £1,421,000 or U.S. \$1,862,000). When her mother died shortly thereafter on December 27, 1708, Diana was left another £1000.



Richard Orlebar, 1671—1733.

Diana, daughter of Sir Samuel Asty
and wife of Richard Orlebar.

Portraits of Diana and Richard Orlebar.

Courtesy of Michael Orlebar.

clear that there was a wide range of cooking techniques: she recorded items that were roasted, baked, stewed, fried, boiled, broiled, larded, buttered, potted, creamed, whipped, fricasseed, scalloped, hashed, and scotched.

Contrary to the assertion that the English showed their patriotism by being great beef eaters, in Diana's 22 bills of fare there were only three instances after 1705 in which

Was it some personal interest in the dinner parties themselves, or the desire to be able to relive such occasions and to share them, that prompted Diana to record them? Perhaps she was encouraged by Sir Robert Southwell, whose home nearby she visited on October 20, 1701 and August 28, 1702. In correspondence with William Petty, Sir Robert, a diplomat who had mediated the peace between Portugal and Spain in 1667, and who was Clerk to the Privy Council and President of the Royal Society, discussed good methods in the keeping of notebooks.

The memorandum book consists of 12 pages of vellum (calfskin) in a case with a decorated metal clasp. It is a jumble of ink-stained hasty jottings. Diana was somewhat free with her spelling, which was rather inconsistent, and the presence of many ink blots throughout the manuscript is evidence of her over-enthusiastic desire to record the occasions. Three of the entries start with "I", and others with "we". Perhaps such hastily-written notes were intended to be written up later in a more formal diary, complete with observations.

Cooking and Dining Habits

Diana recorded entries for about 22 dinners, and on three of these occasions she also recorded observations about a supper that was served later the same day. Dining times varied: while the farming, working, and merchant classes had dinner at 12 noon, the gentry ate dinner at about 2:00 in the afternoon, with supper usually taken sometime between the hours of 5:00 and 8:00 p.m.

Diana's entries keenly recorded such details as the cuts of meat offered and the cooking methods used at these meals, apparently with an eye to being a future hostess in her own home. The cuts of meat that she mentioned include haunch (especially of venison), side and shoulder, breast, neck, forequarter, chine, head (for example, calves' head is listed six times), spareribs, giblets, and tongue. Diana's notes also make

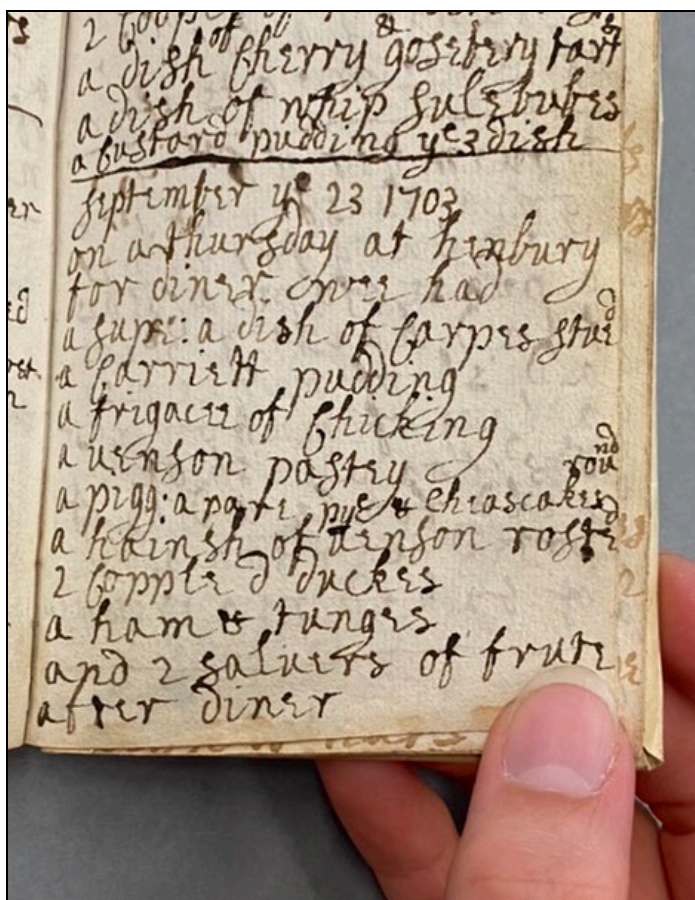
beef was prepared (once roasted and twice boiled), whereas lamb and mutton have 13 mentions, and turkeys five. Venison, wild fowl, larks, pheasants, partridges and pigeons, hares and rabbits, freshwater salmon and carp, ducks and geese would have come from the Asty and other family estates, while certain other fish (such as sturgeon) and lobsters (which were buttered and broiled) could be purchased in nearby Bristol. Diana also mentioned oysters, which were either broiled, put in loaves, or partnered with "scoth scollps" of veal, her spelling of scotch collops (to "scotch" meant to tenderize, and collops are slices of meat).

It was reported that a copy of the fourth edition (1678) of Robert May's *The Accomplisht Cook* was discovered in Hinwick House, where Diana and Richard lived after 1714. It's fair to assume that she was familiar with the book, since recipes for many of the dishes that she mentioned can be found within its pages. The book by May, a French-trained chef who worked for several different aristocratic households in England, was first published in 1660.

The photograph on the next page shows Diana's notes from a dinner at the Great House in Henbury on September 23, 1703. Reading the entry gives a sense of the lavishness of the dining; about a dozen dishes were prepared for this meal. Three in particular attracted our attention: carrot pudding, fricasee of chicken, and venison pastry. In each of the three boxes on pages 9-10, we have given the title and recipe for the dish as found in Diana's large receipt book—verbatim, including the original spellings—followed by our own adaptation for the modern kitchen. Baking temperatures are given for conventional and convection ("fan") ovens, and the equivalent gas mark is also provided.

We have very much enjoyed testing these and other recipes. As we continue to work on others, we would be grateful for help

continued on next page



Bedfordshire Archives

The September 23, 1703 entry from
Diana Astrý's memorandum book.



Illustration ©Peter Brears, reproduced with his permission.

A late-17th Century English dining table, such as might have been seen in the home of a wealthy and fashionable merchant, included turned and carved wooden chairs, wine served in glasses, and knives and forks provided for all of the diners.

DINING WITH DIANA *continued from page 7*

in identifying these mysterious terms from Diana's notebook:

- staton nuts (December 1, 1706) (hazelnuts?)
- parigeds (September 9, 1701)
- partgeas (July 31, 1706) (partridges?)
- sturing (October 3, 1701)
- sturionn (September 13, 1706) (sturgeon?).

Setting the Table

The household inventory of Diana's mother, Lady Astrý—which is included in full in *The Orlebar Chronicles*, the published records of the Orlebar family—shows that, unusually, dining at home in the Great House at Henbury took place upstairs (in the long gallery), whereas the drawing room was downstairs. Among the dining-related items mentioned in the inventory in 1709 (OR 1562/, OR 2071/109, and OR 2071/110 & 111) are knives (probably with pistol-style handles and rounded ends) and forks and other silverware, a mustard mill, and a coffee mill. A monteith (a large punchbowl with a scalloped edge) bearing the Astrý coat of arms appears to have belonged to Sir Samuel Astrý.

At the dining parties described by Diana, dishes, bowls, side stands, and salvers (silver trays) were used in serving mushrooms, boiled creams, puddings, venison sauce, tongue, fruit, oranges, nuts (walnuts and almonds), raisins, syllabubs,

and jellies. Chocolate creams and sometimes-outlandish sweetmeats (dry or wet) were served on salvers, dishes, or "basons".

At this time, porcelain wares were expensive status symbols imported from China, for this type of ceramic was not "invented" in Europe until 1708. In the 1709 inventory, 169 pieces of china were recorded, including 25 bowls. Various types of china (spelt "chiney" by Diana) were used for serving preserved apricots, lemons and limes, "crudes" (curds), cream, codlins and pippins (apple varieties), and other items.

Her Dearest Wishes, Sadly Unfulfilled

A number of lengthy gaps in Diana's memorandum book are still unexplained. There were no diary entries, for example, between September 23, 1703 and October 8, 1705. Was this because Diana was mourning her sister Anne—who was a mother of eight children when she died in childbirth and was buried on August 6, 1703—and also mourning her father's death on September 25, 1704? Another lengthy break occurred between December 31, 1706 and September 2, 1708. Perhaps Diana and Arabella, the two still-unmarried sisters, moved to Pendley Manor in Hertfordshire when their wealthy mother married Sir Simon Harcourt on July 22, 1707. A friend commented, "The alterations [to Pendley] are truly admirable

and the new wife [Elizabeth Astry] a piece of rich furniture". Sir Simon and his son are mentioned as dining at Henbury on September 2, 1708. Diana married Richard Orlebar on December 17, 1708, and her mother died only 10 days later.

In letters to her sisters, Arabella and Elizabeth, Diana mentioned that her "dearest wish" was to have children. Sadly, she was denied this wish, and her death in 1716 at age 45— after she and Richard had lived in Hinwick House for only two years following its completion— meant that she was unable to put her careful preparations to be mistress of her own home into practice for very long. We like to imagine, however, that during her eight years of marriage she continued to help plan the bills of fare when dinners were held at Henbury which, we know from letters in the Orlebar Archives, she continued to visit until her death.

The last of Diana's entries was recorded 314 years ago. Will the food photos taken so obsessively these days, and the IT equipment to access them, be available to provide food historians of the future with as much detail about our own culinary habits as we learn about Diana's from her memorandum book? ■

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Below are three recipes selected from Diana Astry's large manuscript receipt book, each one followed by an adaptation for the modern kitchen.

"To make a Carritt Pudding"

Take 2 peny white loves and grate them. Then take as much raw carritt gratted as the bread, then stir in 1 pt of cream, 2 spoonesfulls flower, a whole nutmeg grated, 4 spoonesfulls of sack, as much orange flower or rose water, ½ lb lofe sugar, finely beaten, ½ lb butter melted thick; the yolks of 8 eggs, the whites of 4 of them; all these being well mingled together put it in a dish, well buttered, then bake it in the oven 1 hr. Then turn it out on a dish and melt some butter, sack and sugar and orange flower water and power over it. So serve it up – or you may put some puff peast round the brimes of the dish and so bake it.

Note: The weight of a penny-loaf of bread in Britain varied according to the cost of wheat, but is estimated at 6-8 oz. in the late 17th and early 18th Centuries.

- 7 oz. white breadcrumbs
- 7 oz. grated carrot
- 1 Tbsp. plain flour
- 1 tsp. grated nutmeg
- 4 oz. caster sugar
- ¼ pint light cream (single cream)
- 2 Tbsp. dry sherry
- 2 Tbsp. orange flower water or rose water
- 1 egg lightly beaten

For the topping:

- ½ oz. butter, melted
- ½ oz. sugar
- 1 Tbsp. dry sherry
- 1 Tbsp. orange flower water or rose water

Heat oven to 180° C. (fan 160° C., gas mark 4). Mix the breadcrumbs and carrot in a large bowl, add the flour, nutmeg, and sugar, and mix to combine. Add the cream, sherry, and aromatic water, and stir until fully blended. Then add the beaten egg and mix well.

Pour mixture into a well-buttered ovenproof dish or loaf tin and bake for one hour. Combine butter, sugar, sherry, and aromatic water to make the topping. After removing pudding from oven, spoon this over the top. Serve either hot or leave to cool completely and cut into slices; either way, serve with thick cream.



©Perry Staker

Carritt pudding

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DINING WITH DIANA *continued from page 9***“To make a white frigacee of chicken (Lady Holt)”**

Take your chicken and cut them a usully do for a frigacee and lay them in water 3 hrs. shifting them 8 or 10 times, then take them out in your hands wringing oue the water and put them in a frying pan with a good peice of butter; toss them over the fire till thay be enough; put one onion and a small rowle of bacon with a clove stuck in it, a little salt, then put to it a good peice of butter, 4 or 5 yokes of eggs, 6 or 8 spoonefulls of cream wich is thick, some minced paresly, ½ spoonful of elder vinegar, ½ nutmeg; shake all in the pan over the fire, have a care of crudling it and pouer the sace over the chicken in the dish.

Note: Elder vinegar was a vinegar infused with dried elderberry flowers.

2 chicken breasts
1 oz. butter
1 egg yolk
¼ pint light cream (single cream)
¼ tsp. grated nutmeg
1 onion sliced
1 slice unsmoked back-bacon, rolled up and stuck with a clove
½ Tbsp. white wine vinegar
1 Tbsp. chopped parsley
milk (optional)

Fry the chicken breasts in half of the butter in a frying pan until cooked, and leave to rest. Mix the egg yolk with the cream in a small bowl together with the nutmeg. Sauté the onion in the rest of the butter in a pan with the roll of bacon until softened. Add the vinegar and then stir in the egg-cream mixture; keep stirring as it thickens, adding a little more cream or milk if needed for a creamy result. Finally, stir in the chopped parsley.

Place the chicken on serving plates and pour the sauce over it, sprinkling a little more chopped parsley as a garnish if wished.

Serves two.

“To make venison pasty (Mrs. Pugh)”

To a side of venson put 1 peck flower and 6 lb. butter and 10 eggs, 6 of the whites of them, a little nutmeg; rub your butter well in the flower and mingle the eggs and well with it, and wet it with cold water and mould it to a peast; and take your veanson and bone it a skinn it well and season it with ½ oz. peper and 2 nutmeggs and as much salt as you think fit. Put some suet in the bottam and what butter you see fitt on the top. When you bake it put some gravey made with the bones or water and bake it in a pasty pan with past in the bottam of the pan and over it then bake it 4 or 5 hrs. in a oven well heated as for bread.

Pastry:

8 oz. plain flour
4 oz. butter
2 medium eggs (2 yolks; 1 white)
1 extra egg to seal/glaze pastry

Venison:

8-oz. piece of venison
¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
salt
freshly-ground black pepper
½ oz. beef suet
½ oz. butter, softened
1 Knorr® Beef Stockpot (28 g.) or similar
amount of strong beef gravy

Rub the butter into the flour using your fingertips or a food processor, then blend the 2 egg yolks and 1 white and as much water as needed to make the pastry. Wrap in clingfilm and cool in the fridge for 30 mins.

Heat oven to 220° C. (fan 200° C., gas mark 7). Season the piece of venison with salt, pepper, and ground nutmeg to taste. Roll out the pastry on a lightly-floured surface until large enough to make a round roughly 23 cm. in diameter, using a plate to trim it to shape. Sprinkle the beef suet in the center, place the venison on top of the suet, and smooth the stockpot/ gravy over the top followed by the softened butter. Beat the extra egg, and brush the pastry all the way around the edge with it. Carefully draw up both sides so that they meet at the top, then pinch them together to seal. Lift onto a greased baking tray and brush with remaining beaten egg to glaze.

Bake for 10 mins., then lower oven to 180° C. (fan 160° C., gas mark 4), and cook for 45 mins. more until golden.

FRENCH-TRAINED CULINARY STARS IN 19TH-CENTURY LONDON

by Ellen Meshnick

CHAA member Ellen Meshnick of Decatur, GA, is a former Home Economics teacher and a former restaurant reviewer for Key Magazine, a free tourist publication that was found in hotel rooms and hotel lobbies.

“The Rise of the Celebrity Chef: The London World of Carême, Soyer, Francatelli, and Escoffier” was a delightful webinar that I joined on Oct. 20, 2021. The talk was given by Carl Raymond, a food historian, trained chef, and licensed tour guide in New York City who also conducts classes and tastings (<https://www.carltalksandtours.com>). The event was hosted by The Royal Oak Foundation, which is the U.S. partner of The National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Raymond’s discussion followed the careers of French and French-trained culinary stars in 19th-Century London, from the beginning of the century—when upper classes dined at home or men dined in men’s clubs—to the end of the century, by which time London had a flamboyant restaurant in the Savoy Hotel, where rich men, as well as women, could flaunt their wealth and good taste (literally). He focused on four leading chefs, as I summarize below.

Marie-Antoine Carême (1784-1833) was abandoned by his poverty-stricken parents when he was 11, at the height of the Reign of Terror in France. He was propitiously found by a cook who put him to work in his chophouse, and later he was apprenticed to a pastry chef. He taught himself to read in the library and loved travel books. Carême channeled this sense of grandeur into *pièces montées*, decorative spun-sugar centerpieces in architectural or sculptural forms used for table decorations at formal banquets. These were revolutionary, because previously, table decorations were constructed of fruits and vegetables.

Carême cooked for Napoleon and Talleyrand and was lured across the Channel to London by Prince Regent George Frederick (the future King George IV), a Francophile who enjoyed Carême’s cooking so much that he often dined in the kitchen. Among Carême’s challenges was creating meals in Carlton House, the Prince’s London residence—where there was a 250-foot-long dining table—and in the not-quite-finished Royal Pavilion in Brighton. At a state dinner for

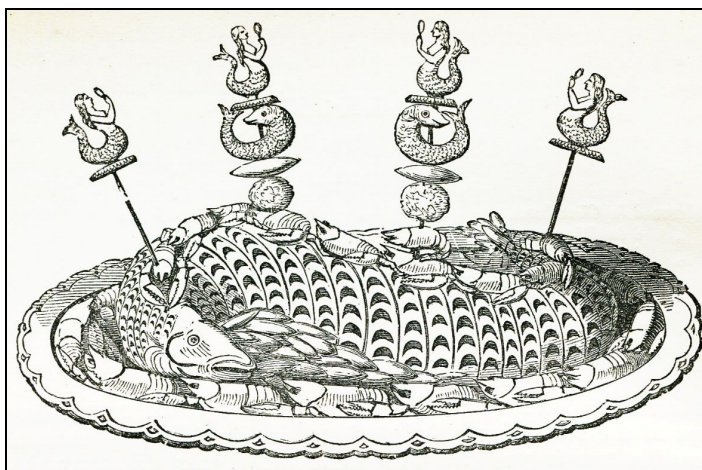


Image via Wikimedia

An engraving of the celebrated dish *Salmon à la Chambord* from Francatelli’s *The Modern Cook* (28th edition, 1886). The salmon is first boiled, skinned, and braised in wine with aromatic herbs and vegetables, then decorated with crayfish, mushrooms, truffles, and quenelles of whiting. The braising juices are made into a buttery sauce that is spooned around the fish before serving.

Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia (the future Tsar Nicholas I), Carême served 149 dishes in eight courses, including, of course, dozens of pastries. Among the *pièces montées* was a replica of the Royal Pavilion itself.

Carême was noted for organizing his kitchens with a steam table in the center to keep foods warm, with pots and pans stored on one wall for efficiency, and with ventilation throughout. At that time, leftovers were sold to outsiders by senior kitchen staff, with profits divided among the entire kitchen team—but when buyers demanded dishes made by Carême himself, he started selling his own leftovers and pocketing the proceeds. This did not make him popular with the rest of the staff.

Not surprisingly, Carême had trouble overseeing British sous-chefs and left London. He subsequently worked for Tsar Alexander I of Russia (elder brother of Nicholas) and wealthy French families such as the Rothschilds. He codified recipes and wrote the five-volume *L’Art de la Cuisine Française*, as well as many other cookbooks.

Alexis Benoît Soyer (1810-1858) loved theatre and opera and creating dramatic presentations of food. He worked for the Duke of Cambridge, among other royalty, eventually moving to the Reform Club, where he installed a state-of-the-art kitchen and sold lithographs of it for his own profit. He was famous for grouse salad and for mutton dishes.

For Queen Victoria’s coronation in 1838, Soyer oversaw a banquet breakfast for 2,000 people complete with tables adorned with *pièces montées*. For a state visit of the Pasha of Egypt, he created a spun-sugar replica of the Step Pyramid, which was written up in the newspapers.

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ADAPTING TO SURVIVE: JEWISH FOOD ENTERPRISE IN LONDON

by Rachel Kolsky

Historian and author Rachel Kolsky is a popular and prize-winning London Blue Badge Tourist Guide and a guest lecturer on cruises. Throughout the pandemic, she has been a regular participant in CHAA's Zoom talks. Her company, Go London Tours (www.golondontours.com), offers virtual and live walking tours of the city with many social-history themes, from unknown neighborhoods to the worlds of shopping, entertainment, and public art. A librarian by profession, Ms. Kolsky was formerly a professional researcher in the financial services industry, a longtime member and President of Special Libraries Association Europe, and served for over 20 years as Trustee of her local independent cinema, The Phoenix. She has published several books including Jewish London: A Comprehensive Guidebook for Visitors and Londoners; Secret Whitechapel; and Women's London: A Tour Guide to Great Lives.

The phrase "Jewish food in London" conjures up a multitude of themes, from the recipes and meals themselves to restaurants, bakeries, and retailers. But most of all, it recalls certain memories and evokes questions such as, Who produced the best smoked salmon? Who baked the best bagels ... or should that be beigels? And why did the most famous kosher restaurant in the world close down?

Pondering why some Jewish food establishments exist no more, while others survived into the 21st Century, leads us to the broader story of Jewish London, a story of adapting to survive. While most Jewish food brands are barely known beyond the Jewish community, a small number have broken through and have become well known. Some of these have benefited from the arrival in London's East End of a new and dynamic young demographic group. These young people were pulled east by redevelopment associated with the 2012 Olympic Games and by the East End's proximity to the financial district, which is centered in the City of London proper.

In this article I will briefly chronicle the rise and evolution of the Jewish presence in England and London, then delve into London's Jewish culinary heritage. There, I will concentrate on six businesses, two each from three key food trades: smoked salmon, baked goods, and meat products.

The Jewish community in the U.K. as a whole currently numbers around 280,000 people, with 70% of them living in London. Certain other English cities also have a rich Jewish heritage, but with their communities now depleted, it is in London where the buildings, associations, and personalities that have shaped the Jewish presence are concentrated.

The Jewish Footprint in London

King William I, whose rule followed the Norman invasion in 1066, is credited with first inviting Jews to England when he needed to develop a system of lending and credit. Jewish communities were established in county capital towns such as Norwich and Lincoln, but the main concentration of medieval Jewry was in London, in the area now called the City of London. In 1290, Edward I expelled most of the Jewish population, which by then had dwindled in number. However, during this period, known as the Expulsion, a small number of Jews secretly remained, including some who were given protection because they were needed as doctors and lawyers.

Oliver Cromwell allowed Jews to return to England in 1656 and, following this Resettlement, Sephardi and then Ashkenazi Jews settled to the east of the City and beyond, where they established cemeteries, synagogues, businesses, hospitals, and schools. By the early 1700s, the area around Aldgate was nearly 25% Jewish. The wealthy soon bought palatial homes and country estates, mostly to the north and south of London. A move westwards also began, and an Anglo-Jewish aristocracy developed in the West End including the Rothschilds and Moses Montefiore, whose wife authored the world's first English-language Jewish cookbook and household manual (1846). By the mid-1800s, branch synagogues were built throughout London and by the 1870s key Jewish communal initiatives had been established, including *The Jewish Chronicle*, Board of Guardians, Board of Deputies, and the Jews' Free School.

In the 1880s, persecution of Jewish populations in Eastern Europe led to tens of thousands of migrants arriving in London. They lived and worked near their point of arrival in the already-crowded and impoverished districts of Whitechapel and Spitalfields. Two square miles soon became the Jewish East End, numbering 125,000 people and 65 synagogues, and dominated by the sweatshop trades of tailoring and cap- and shoe-making. But vibrant street markets, youth clubs, and Yiddish theater also thrived. This life was replicated in the smaller enclaves of Soho and Fitzrovia in London's West End. To relieve overcrowding, the community was soon encouraged to move east to Stepney and north to Hackney, which were then green suburbs.

The inter-war years saw affordable housing built alongside new lines of the Tube (underground railway), enabling an escape from the crowded East End to semi-detached suburbs. East End synagogues closed down and new ones arose in suburbia, but Jewish businesses typically remained in East London. In the 1930s a new group of Jewish immigrants arrived: Austrians and Germans escaping Nazi rule. Urban, educated, professional, and assimilated, they did not go east but settled in northwestern districts such as Hampstead, where housing was then cheap and plentiful.

The waning of the Jewish East End continued in the period after World War 2, with its mass evacuations and loss of housing. In the 1950s, additional large suburban communities were established in northwest London such as Stanmore, Kenton, and Kingsbury. By the early 1970s, with the second generation opting for the professions rather than working in “the family business”, the Jewish East End was nearly at an end. Soho and Fitzrovia followed the same pattern. Jewish London establishments remain concentrated in Northwest London, even though membership in synagogues there declined in the late 20th Century. Newer suburbs proliferated outside London with a full range of facilities including synagogues, schools, and shops, while some inner-city suburbs such as Willesden and West Hampstead are experiencing a renaissance.

One aspect unites all of the current communities: they are composed, in the main, of descendants of the East European immigrants who were at the core of the Jewish East End. These groups all have their favorite food memories and favorite contemporary bakeries. Indeed, almost every Friday night begins with the question: “Where did you get your *challah*?”, the ritual Sabbath bread of Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jews.

The Blessed Flavor of Fine Smoked Salmon

A bagel topped with smoked salmon is a quintessential Jewish eating experience, maybe everywhere in the world. But there is an interesting transatlantic twist: in the U.S. the most popular pairing is with a schmear of cream cheese, whereas in England the favorite is sliced cucumber. (In addition, there has been a surge in popularity of the Salt Beef Beigel, a sandwich filled with warm, slow-simmered salt beef— similar to thick-cut corned-beef brisket in North America— with spicy English mustard and sliced pickle.)

The bagel had originated in Poland, where the rounds of raw bread dough would be boiled before being baked in a very hot oven. This type of crusty, chewy bread roll was introduced to London with the influx of Jewish migrants in the 19th Century. The ring-shaped bagels were sold displayed on thin wooden poles inserted through the hole at the center, or else— as many remember from the bagel ladies, Annie and Esther in Brick Lane— they were simply sold straight from the sack. The story went that if you passed these two women hawkers without a purchase, they would curse you in Yiddish in such a terrifying tone that you felt compelled to double back and buy some bagels from them!

Many Jewish families’ early businesses were in smoked salmon. One of the earliest was Barnett’s, on Frying Pan Alley near Petticoat Lane, the famous street market in the heart of the Jewish East End. Established as fishmongers by 1879, Barnett’s survived into the mid-1900s, supplying local customers plus an upmarket clientele including Harrod’s department store, the Prime Minister’s residence at Downing Street, and the Queen Mother. They used the tagline, “Top Smoked Salmon for Top People”, along with some wonderfully inventive marketing. An example was a 1966 pastiche of an Italian tourist making a pil-



Image ©, by Rachel Kolsky

The current home of salmon purveyor H. Forman & Son sits on Fish Island in East London. Housing a smokery, restaurant, and art gallery, it was built in 2006 with the exterior shape and pink color of a cross-cut slab of salmon. Forman, a Jewish immigrant from Odessa, started the business in 1905.

grimage to Barnett’s for “Il Salmon di Londinium”, and who advised sternly: “... never any oil, never— most despicable— lemon ...”.

Goldstein and Forman are two other salmon smokeries with roots that extend back more than 100 years, and which still operate today in London.

Wolfe Goldstein, who was English but of Portuguese descent, began smoking salmon in 1911, ultimately becoming one of the most skilled of the salmon filleters and curers working for established smokeries in London. Almost a half-century later the first Goldstein-owned smokery opened in 1960 at 17 Leyden Street, just off Petticoat Lane. It later moved eastward to Alderney Road in Stepney, remaining in the Jewish neighborhood and still relying on traditional methods. In 2000 it relocated to Stanmore, a northwest London suburb. Goldstein’s salmon, now a fourth-generation business run by Wolfe’s great-grandson, Nick, is strictly kosher and is certified by the London Beth Din and Kedassia, which are leading orthodox rabbinical authorities in the U.K.

Aaron (later Harris) Forman, a Russian immigrant from Odessa, established his business in 1905, selling smoked Scottish salmon in the heart of the East End. Over the years, H. Forman & Son (more often called Forman’s) migrated to various other London districts northeast of the City— to Stepney, then Dalston, then Hackney Wick, then in 2002 to brand-new purpose-built premises in Stratford (not to be confused with Stratford-upon-Avon). Alas, in 2005 it underwent compulsory purchase as part of municipal preparations for the 2012 Games, but it bounced back the next year when it relocated to a salmon-pink premises, including a restaurant and art gallery, overlook-

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JEWISH LONDON

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ing the new Olympic stadium that had been built on its previous site.

Like Goldstein's, Forman's is still in family hands. The current managing director, Lance Forman, is the fourth generation to run the business and is proud of his family's heritage. In 1934 his grandfather, Louis Forman, was pictured with the biggest salmon ever sold at Billingsgate, which is the nation's largest inland fish market, located at Canary Wharf in London. By then, the shop concentrated on the luxury trade, such as the hotel restaurants at The Dorchester and The Connaught. It still does so today; in 2016, the Queen herself enjoyed Forman's salmon for her 90th birthday dinner at Bellamy's in Mayfair. The menus at top restaurants and hotels proclaim Forman's London Cure, a process awarded the prestigious Protected Geographical Indication status in 2017. Since 2014, production at Forman's has also been overseen by the London Beth Din, enabling its wares to be sold in the orthodox Jewish market.

The taste of traditionally smoked Scottish salmon cannot be beaten. Heed the words of both Lance and Nick, who describe the process as using just three ingredients: salmon, salt, and smoke. Both of these salmon-smoking businesses have survived, Goldstein's by remaining focused on its core products and Forman's by diversifying into catering and corporate hospitality.

Daily Bagels and Rye, and the Sabbath *Challah*

When it comes to the bagels accompanying salmon or other toppings, every family has its own favorite Jewish bakery. Names such as Ostwind's, Goldring's, and Kossoff bring back memories, but those bakeries no longer exist. True, there is a Kossoff bakery, but it uses the name rather than being part of the original business, which was founded in 1908 and had 14 branches by 1966.

However, two bakeries more than a century old do survive: those of Grodzinski and Rinkoff. As with Forman's and Goldstein's, the two use very different business models.

In 1888 Harris Grodzinski emigrated to London from Varonovo, a *shtetl* (Jewish-majority village) in the Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, now situated in western Belarus near the city of Lida. Grodzinski and his family settled in Whitechapel, in the heart of the Jewish East End. His wife Judith was from the Goide baking family, who were immigrants from Vilna, now Vilnius in Lithuania. At a shared bakery in Bell Lane she made *challah* rolls that Harris sold in the local market. In the 1890s the couple established their own bakery on nearby Fieldgate Street. With a growing Jewish population, there was high demand for their Jewish-style rye bread and the weekly loaf of *challah*. *Challot* (plural of *challah*) are made with fine white flour, yeast, eggs, and sugar, and the dough is traditionally baked in plaited loaves that are eaten on the Sabbath and religious holidays.

Both Harris and his son, Abraham (Abie), died young, but Bertha, Abie's widow, continued the Grodzinski baking business. "Grodz", as it became affectionately known, opened



Image ©, courtesy of Jonathan Grodzinski

This 1909 photo shows Abie and Bertha Grodzinski in front of their bakery on Fieldgate Street, in the Jewish East End of London. The bilingual (Yiddish/ English) placard in the window proclaims the bakery as a Trade Union Shop.

new retail shops when additional Jewish communities were established: first in Stoke Newington (in the borough of Hackney, in north London) in 1903, then Notting Hill to the west in 1917. In 1930 they opened a second bakery in Stamford Hill, also in Hackney, and this proved fortuitous since the original East End bakery would be bombed beyond repair during WW2.

Still before the war, the third-generation brothers Harry and Reuben Grodzinski spearheaded a rapid suburban expansion, including the northwestern suburbs Cricklewood, Hendon, and Willesden. In the postwar years there was another surge of branch openings, with a total of 24 outlets by the mid-1960s. In fact, social historians can trace the "Jewish journey" from the East End by following this network of Grodz branches. But with outlets throughout the West End, there was a considerable non-Jewish clientele as well. In the 1970s, competition from Israeli "in-store" bakeries seriously dented Grodz's business, and branch closures were inevitable. Now rebranded "Grodz" to reflect the long-used nickname, it is still family-owned into the fifth generation, but there are only two branches baking on-premises: in Golders Green and Edgware, both orthodox Jewish suburbs in northwest London. Some of the branches that were sold off retained the famous Grodzinski name.

Back in Whitechapel, it is Rinkoff's bakery— which never even sought branch expansion— that has stood the test of time in the East End. At Rinkoff's café on Vallance Road, the face of a distinguished-looking gentleman with a handlebar moustache looks out onto the street from the brick wall, painted there in the early 2000s but exemplary of an old style of ads once seen on walls all over London. The visage is Hyman Rinkoff, a Ukrainian Jew who moved to London in 1906 and in 1911 founded his family bakery business on Old Montague Street, off Brick Lane. Rinkoff's bakery remained there until 1971 when a compulsory buyout order prompted its move, not far away, to O'Leary Square off the Mile End Road. The satellite café on Vallance Road opened in 1978 at a corner site that had been sel-



Image ©, by Louis Berk

This food display outside Rinkoff's bakery includes a traditional Jewish loaf of *challah* and trend-setting crodoughs. The bakery, now located on O'Leary Square in the Stepney district of East End London, was first established in 1911 by Ukrainian Jewish immigrant Hyman Rinkoff.

ling bagels since the 1940s under several bakeries, with Rinkoff succeeding the famous Blue and White All Night.

Hyman's grandson Ray, who joined the family business in 1968, still works there with fourth-generation Rinkoffs Deborah, Jennifer, and Lloyd, and the fifth generation joined in 2021 via Lloyd's son, Ben. He has seen some big changes. Back in the 1970s the Sunday queues snaked around the block, but Sunday is no longer their busiest day. Meanwhile, the wholesaling proportion of their business soared, shifting from 5% to 70%, with top department stores Selfridge's and Harrod's among current clients. Keeping up with fast-changing tastes in bread and pastries, Rinkoff's invented the delicious Crodough, which is the London version of the Cronut, or combined croissant and doughnut. They also bake something called the rainbow bagel, celebrating the LGBT community. But the staple Jewish *challot* and cheesecakes are still fixtures. And Rinkoff's has never sought to become a chain; it is still a bakery and one satellite café.

A baker's life is very hard work, and that was especially true a century or more ago. The workday began at 3:00 am when the ovens were lit, and bagel bakers might toil for over 18 hours a day at low wages. The London Jewish Bakers' Union was founded in 1905, following an unsuccessful 1904 strike that demanded a 12-hour day, restricted overtime, and a minimum weekly wage of 26 shillings (equivalent to about £168 in 2022, or U.S. \$222).

Regular strikes, particularly one in 1913, did bring about a shorter workweek, increased pay, and union recognition. Consumers were encouraged to buy Union Bread only, thereby supporting bakeries that treated employees decently. By 1920 the union had 120 members working for 35 bakeries. A large painted silk banner for the union, dated ca. 1925 and displayed at the Jewish Museum in Camden Town, depicts worker solidarity, a loaf of Union Bread, and a plaited *challah*, one side of the banner in English and the other in Yiddish. The union, with 150 members at its height but only 12 remaining in the late 1960s, closed in 1970 as the longest-lasting Jewish union in the country.

Keeping Kosher with Sausages, Beef, and Chicken

Adapting to survive is also a theme pervading the very different tales of two meat-oriented Jewish East End businesses: Bloom's, a restaurant and food manufacturer, and the much smaller S. Cole, a poulterer.

Bloom's, self-proclaimed as "The most famous kosher restaurant in Great Britain", began as a food factory off Brick Lane, producing mainly sausages. Founded by Morris Bloom, a Lithuanian immigrant, it relocated to larger premises where Brick Lane meets Great Montagu Street, a junction soon known locally as Bloom's Corner. This is where Esther and Annie, the bagel ladies, would often be seen. Bloom's the restaurant was opened in 1920, and a larger factory producing tinned foodstuffs and processed meats was built close by on Wentworth Street, into which the restaurant soon moved. Seeking further expansion, Morris Bloom acquired a prominent site, but WW2 interrupted his plans.

In 1952, a year after Bloom died, his son Sidney opened M. Bloom & Son on Whitechapel High Street. It was here that celebrities flocked and mingled with the locals, all craving the salt beef sandwiches or the dinners of roast chicken or *lokshen kugel* (an Ashkenazi noodle casserole that is well-suited to kosher

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Image ©, by Rachel Kolsky

Memories, menus, and matchbooks like this one are about all that remains of the famous Bloom's kosher restaurant in Whitechapel after it went out of business in 1996.

meatless meals). As the diners queued up, Evelyn, Sidney's wife, would bring out trays of thinly-sliced salami to ward off their hunger pangs. Inside, the brusque patter of the waiters was legendary.

A branch of Bloom's was opened in the Golders Green suburb in 1965, and another in Edgware in 2007, but both closed in the 2010s. In between, inexplicably to many people, the famed Bloom's restaurant in Whitechapel went out of business in 1996. The reasons are enshrined in myth, but what is indisputable is the irony of the timing: the place closed just as interest in the Jewish East End was increasing manifold, and the area was becoming a magnet for visitors hot on that trail. The area was also repopulating with young, high-earning workers from the neighboring City of London. Alas, now there was no longer any Jewish food available for them, with the Kosher Luncheon Club on Greatorex Street having closed in 1994. The final indignity was that the Bloom's premises became a Burger King.

While Bloom's closed, a few minutes' walk away on Leyden Street another long-established Jewish business was striving to survive: S. Cole, poulterers. Janie Cohen had founded this enterprise in ca. 1890 at the corner of Cobb and Leyden Streets. On her death in 1920, the poultry business passed to her two sons, Isaac and Sydney, who traded under the name "S. Cole". In the next generation the owner was Joe Cole, and upon his death his widow sold the original site. However, their daughter, Rochelle Cole, continued the business at a new address a few yards away, not only ensuring family continuity but also a female line of management.

After a period trading as Liverpool Street Chickens, Rochelle recently reverted back to the name S. Cole. But to survive, she has had to adapt the operation to a whole new demographic. The local Jewish community is long gone, but the new immigrants from Bengal, Africa, and elsewhere found their own use for the chewy, free-range chickens that had previously been used to make chicken soup, affectionately known as "Jewish penicillin". Apparently, this type of meat is perfect for dishes such as Nigerian-style "hard chicken" and Caribbean-style "jerk chicken". There was also a new demand for chicken feet, often discarded by the Jewish families.

As the 21st Century progresses, London is blessed with a growing array of Middle Eastern and Israeli eateries; they are spearheaded by Ottolenghi Restaurants and Delis, an Israeli-Palestinian partnership with its largest branch in Spitalfields in the old Jewish East End. As a result, today's gourmards see Jewish food in a new way. But the newer enterprises co-exist with Goldstein's, Forman's, Grodz, Rinkoff's, and S. Cole, each of them a fourth- or fifth-generation family business that has provided London with over a century of Jewish food. ■

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The Jewish Roots of Fish and Chips

Few meals are more basic to English pubs and take-away shops than fish and chips. But the concept of deep-fried potatoes actually arose in France, and was popularized in 19th-Century London via Irish-immigrant chip shops. Even the deep-fried fish has non-English roots.

As recounted by food historians such as Claudia Roden in *The Book of Jewish Food*, the deep-frying of fish in olive oil was brought to England in the 1500s by Sephardic Jews from what is now the Netherlands. Defying the exclusion of Jews from England, they migrated to London in secret, their families having earlier been expelled from Portugal and Spain. In their homes, they often battered and fried fish ahead of time to eat cold on the Sabbath day, when labor of any kind violated *halakhic* law. Oil made the dish *pareve* (neither meat nor dairy), thus suitable for Jews to accompany with any other food.

"The Jews way of preserving salmon, and all sorts of fish", a recipe in the Appendix to Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* (London, 1774 edition), described how filets were batter-fried "in a great deal of oil", and how these could then be pickled in vinegar and spices for up to a year. The London chef Alexis Soyer, in *A Shilling Cookery for the People* (1845), included "Fried Fish, Jewish Fashion" as a recipe "constantly in use by the children of Israel, and I cannot recommend it too highly." Frying in oil, instead of the lard or beef tallow favored by non-Jews, makes the dish costlier but superior in flavor, Soyer wrote. He added, "It is excellent cold" and, without pickling, "will keep good several days in the summer, and I may almost say, weeks in winter".

"Fish Fried in Oil", a recipe that Lady Montefiore included in *The Jewish Manual* (London, 1846), the first Jewish cookbook in English, called for the fish to be dipped in beaten egg, then dredged in flour before deep-frying in oil. She wrote that sole, plaice, and salmon are best suited for this, and added, "Fish prepared in this way is usually served cold." The next recipe, a non-Jewish version titled "Fried Soles in the English Way", was identical except that breadcrumbs were used instead of flour, and butter instead of oil. Because of the butter, it was not *pareve*; and to prevent rancidity, it had to be eaten fresh and hot rather than kept for hours or days.

A Jewish fishmonger, Joseph Malin, opened the first fish-and-chips shop in East London in 1860, and by 1933 there were 148 such Jewish-owned shops in London alone, not counting street vendors. At that time they served mostly Jewish customers in the working-class East End. But Jews increasingly migrated to other neighborhoods, and their fry shops would likewise "go forth and multiply".

— RKS

MOBILIZING THE KITCHEN FRONT



HOW THE MINISTRY OF FOOD HELPED BRITAIN CARRY ON IN WW2

by Glenda Bullock

*The Program Chair for CHAA, Glenda J. Bullock retired in 2020 from her marketing position at the Univ. of Michigan's School of Information. Originally from Grand Rapids, MI, she has also lived in Wisconsin and previously worked as a college English teacher. Her most recent previous article for Repast (Summer 2020) was a review of the book *Jell-O Girls: A Family History*.*

Over the past two years, the pandemic and related supply-chain issues have accustomed shoppers to empty store shelves and restrictions on purchase quantities. But these inconveniences pale in comparison to the privations of the British public over the 14 years following the onset of World War 2 in 1939, when basics such as butter, sugar, milk, and tea were rationed, and many other foods simply disappeared.

That the British populace was kept fed and healthy was due to careful planning and management by the government's Ministry of Food. That morale remained strong and the country supportive was thanks to the intelligent leadership and multi-pronged public relations campaigns initiated by Frederick Marquis, Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food during 1940-1943.

A Blueprint for Rationing

Britain's first Ministry of Food Control had been established in 1916, midway through the First World War. The government had grown concerned that food supplies were being threatened by the activities of U-boats (German submarines), which were hampering commercial shipping. Initially the government tried voluntary rationing through public relations campaigns that appealed to patriotism with slogans like "Men at the front must have full rations" and "Food is Ammunition. Don't Waste It."

Eventually, however, Britain was forced to limit some staples, specifically sugar, meat, butter, margarine, and cheese. To facilitate distribution, ration books were printed for these goods, which were restricted only from early 1918 to 1920. In



Image ©Imperial War Museum (D 7958)

A tray containing a ration book and the weekly ration of sugar, tea, margarine, "national butter", lard, eggs, bacon, and cheese, as issued to an adult in Britain during 1942.

1921, rationing ended and the Ministry of Food Control became a small department of the Board of Trade. There it remained until the renewed threat of war gave it a new purpose and identity in 1937 as the Food (Defence Plans) Department. This department became the Ministry of Food (MoF) at the outbreak of war in 1939.

By the time World War 2 began, plans for rationing had been in the works for years. These were accelerated after the Munich crisis of 1938, and took as their blueprint the rationing system developed in World War 1. The need for these preparations was alarmingly obvious: in 1939, about 70% of what Britons ate came from abroad. Half of the meat, 90% of fats and cereals (for both human and animal consumption), and 70% of the cheese were being imported to this island nation by ship.

Thus, in Summer 1939, while the country was still at peace, Britain took the precautionary step of printing 50 million ration books; these were distributed to the public that Fall after Britain entered the war on Sep. 3. In a 1939 newsreel produced by Pathé News, the first Minister of Food (1939-1940), William S. Morrison, explained to the public:

These little books may seem a bit complicated at first, but their purpose is quite simple. They mean that if, in the course of the war, we are short, for a time, of this or that article of food, rationing will give everyone—rich and poor alike—an equal share of all that's going.

He went on to encourage some self-rationing as well, expressing the optimistic sentiment that every listener will "buy your fair share and no more."

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Basic food rations for one adult for one week (Summer 1941)

4 oz. bacon or ham
 Meat to the value of 1 shilling two pence (approx. 1 lb. of meat)
 2 oz. butter
 2 oz. cooking fat
 4 oz. margarine
 2 oz. cheese
 3 pints of milk
 8 oz. sugar
 2 oz. preserves
 2 oz. (makes 15-20 cups) tea
 1 fresh egg, if available (plus one packet of dried egg powder, making 12 eggs, every month)
 3 oz. sweets or candy

Vegetables, fruit, bread, chicken, and fish, although they were not rationed during the war, were not always available in the shops.



Source: warhistoryonline.com

Lord Woolton, Minister of Food from 1940 to 1943, accepting a cup of tea from a mobile canteen.

KITCHEN FRONT *continued from page 17*

Rationing went into official effect in January 1940. To begin, only bacon, ham, sugar, and butter were rationed, similar to WW1. Over the next several months, though, other items were added to the list (see box above), with sweets being the last to be rationed in July 1942. (Sweets were also almost the last to be de-rationed, in 1953.) Throughout the war years—and well beyond—other items were put on or taken off the list depending on supply, and the quantities that one was allowed to buy varied.

“We not merely cope, we care”

In April 1940, Neville Chamberlain appointed Frederick Marquis, Lord Woolton, as the Minister of Food. This prominent businessman, chairman of Lewis’s department store in Liverpool, quickly became the public face of the ministry and personified the food program that was set in place. With his background in retail, Lord Woolton was an inspired choice for a role that would rely on marketing and public relations skills in order to reach all levels of society.

According to food blogger Laura Drury, “public relations for Woolton were more than just a protocol for keeping people on side. Propaganda—back when the word could still carry a positive meaning—was central to his brief; and not just the motivator but the educator in him exploited it keenly.”

In the late 1930s, Britons received most of their news through three outlets: newspapers, radio, and the cinema. The BBC had ceased television broadcasting at the outset of war. Only 20,000 TV sets were in use at that time, whereas three-fourths of the population had radios. So it was through the use of these media that the Ministry of Food conducted its massive promotional campaign to educate the public about rationing, nutrition, conservation, and production.

As Minister, Lord Woolton had one primary objective: to ensure adequate nutrition so that the populace stayed fed and

healthy during the war years, despite restrictions. But he realized that simply restricting food purchases was not going to be sufficient. He launched an all-out campaign to educate the British public, particularly its women. After all, they were the ones who would be doing the queueing, shopping, and cooking, and they needed to know how to stretch, conserve, and create nutritious meals based on goods available.

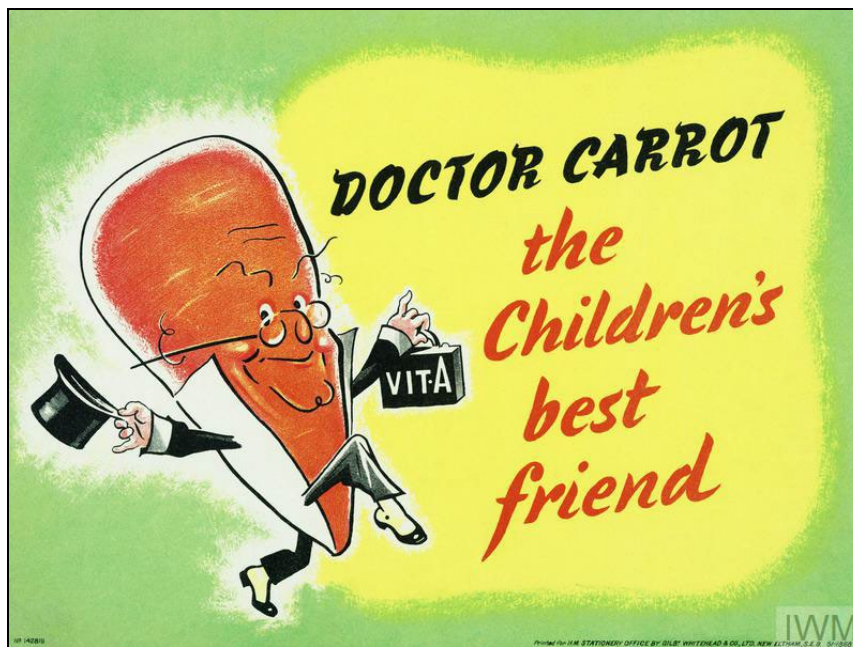
Since the majority of working-class and middle-class women at the time would have left school at the age of 14, the government launched an all-out crash course in cookery and nutrition. At the beginning of the war the average housewife might not have known what a calorie is, but by the end she could probably give a lecture on energy levels in wholesome food.

Lord Woolton saw the role of the MoF as not only to inform, educate, and persuade, but also to create a bond with the public. Over the MoF staff entrance was the inscription, “We not merely cope, we care.”

Potato Pete and Dr. Carrot

These public information campaigns used humor, an informal tone, cartoon characters, and even light verse to convey their messages. Two popular cartoon characters were Potato Pete and Dr. Carrot, “the children’s best friend”, who appeared when the ministry launched its Dig for Victory initiative in 1941. According to *Smithsonian Magazine*, “Dr. Carrot was everywhere—radio shows, posters, even Disney helped out. Hank Porter, a leading Disney cartoonist designed a whole family based on the idea of Dr. Carrot—Carroty George, Pop Carrot and Clara Carrot—for the British to promote to the public.”

The MoF had a substantial promotional budget with which to deliver its message: about £600,000 in 1943-44, representing nearly half of the home advertising budget of the Ministry of Information, of which it was a division. While the lion’s share of the budget was spent on printed materials, Lord Woolton truly understood the power of the airwaves. His direct speeches to the public announcing a new policy or restriction contributed greatly to his popularity. While he relied on newspapers to carry the of-



A lithographed
World War 2 poster
from the British
Ministry of Food.

Image:
©Imperial War Museum
(Art.IWM 8105)

ficial announcements, he used the medium of radio to speak directly to the public to explain what the policies meant for the average citizen. He conveyed compassion, spoke plainly, and delivered his messages as if he were speaking to one individual. In fact, his avuncular tone earned him the nickname “Uncle Fred”.

“Lord Woolton was always so sympathetic and if he could not give us more butter, he added an extra ounce to the margarine”, wrote one housewife quoted by Norman Longmate in his book *How We Lived Then*. “We all trusted and loved him.”

“The Kitchen Front” Broadcasts

It was apparently Lord Woolton himself who coined the phrase “the kitchen front”, in an early Food Economy campaign. The phrase encouraged housewives to play their part in the war effort by reducing the dependence on imported food through a variety of strategies, from starting victory gardens to reducing waste. The phrase first appeared in a *Times* article quoting Lord Woolton in April 1940, and within a few months the concept had been adopted as a slogan as well as the title of a new radio program.

In June 1940, the BBC introduced a five-minute morning program produced in association with the MoF called *The Kitchen Front*. *The Kitchen Front* was aimed at the average housewife and aired six days a week between 8:15 and 8:20 a.m., when women would be planning the day’s meals and getting ready for the day’s shopping. Initially, the program featured two male hosts: cookery writer Ambrose Heath, and a popular travel writer, S. P. B. Mais. Resisting the ministry’s efforts to make the program more “official”, BBC producer Janet Quigley began introducing more elements, more presenters (including women!), and more entertainment.

The Kitchen Front was a new kind of informational program for the BBC. It was straightforward, authoritative, practical, and entertaining. Between 1940 and 1944, the BBC produced over

1200 installments of this radio program for the wartime Home Service, and some 5-7 million listeners regularly tuned in. The program was especially popular with working-class women, a group that the BBC had previously had some difficulty reaching.

Sketches by two comediennes, sisters Elsie and Doris Waters as charwomen Gert and Daisy, added a lighter touch, as did Grandma Buggins (actress Mabel Constanduros). Gert and Daisy reinforced the theme and title of the program with lines like, “We’re the housewives on the Kitchen Front and we’ve got a lovely uniform ... a cap and apron.” Lord Woolton himself occasionally made appearances, verbally sparring with Gert and Daisy.

In her book *Spuds, Spam and Eating for Victory*, Katherine Knight runs down the topics covered by the show in March 1941. These included a meatless Sunday lunch, marmalade made with carrots, a visit to a Works Canteen (a factory cafeteria), the proper way to prepare a French omelette, and a plug for the National Wheatmeal loaf. One week, a doctor took on the difficult task of explaining why the foods that people wanted but couldn’t get weren’t always good for them; that vegetable protein could do the same job as meat; and that manual workers didn’t really need more meat, just more energy foods.

The programs also promoted the various leaflets that the MoF made available by request. These leaflets, called *Food Facts*, included recipes, household tips, news of bonus rations at holiday time, suggestions for meals, instructions on how to grow vegetables, and new foods to try. By the end of the war, the MoF had produced over 500 leaflets, as well as cookbooks such as *ABC of Cookery* and *Fish Cookery*. Excerpts from *Food Facts* also appeared weekly in newspaper advertising around the country— some 40 million ads overall. Knight comments that it is not clear exactly whom these were for, but they seemed to be aimed at the middle class.

One way that *The Kitchen Front* engaged listeners was by inviting them to send in their own recipes and tips for ways to

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Marguerite Patten (left) presenting her BBC-TV show “Can You Cook?” in 1950. The last WW2-era food rationing in Britain ended in 1954.

Image:
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-33082773>

KITCHEN FRONT

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stretch rations and cut down on waste. The BBC received thousands of recipes throughout the war years and shared many of them on the air or published them as cookbooks. The BBC monitored the popularity of the program throughout the war. While it was initially considered very useful and enjoyable, its popularity seemed to wane as the war continued. Researchers concluded that it was likely that women were tired of the war and had become somewhat impervious to government propaganda.

In addition to print and radio, film was a third mass medium employed by the Ministry of Food. While many members of the working class did not read books and newspapers and were less likely to have a radio, nearly everyone went to the cinema. Newsreels and short films had a captive audience. In 1942-46 the MoF produced over 200 short “Food Flash” films that were shown in British theatres, each reaching an estimated 20 million viewers on average. Lasting less than 30 seconds, these informational nuggets opened and closed with a clash of cymbals and gave useful food tips using a bit of humor and wordplay, and whenever possible, a pretty girl. Some examples can be found via the Imperial War Museums webpage.

The Queen of Ration-Book Cuisine

One frequent contributor to *The Kitchen Front* went on to a very long and distinctive career as one of Britain’s best-known cooks and one of its first television cooks. Marguerite Patten (1915-2015) was a home economist working for the Eastern Electricity Board and for Frigidaire when the war began, giving cooking demonstrations using electrical appliances. With the introduction of rationing, she continued demonstrations with recipes that she had adapted to foods available, incorporating tips from *Food Facts* pamphlets.

In 1942, she joined the Ministry of Food’s Food Advice Division, which maintained food demonstration centers around the country staffed by home economists like herself. They travelled to factory canteens, market squares, hospitals, and welfare clinics. “Our campaign was to find people, wherever they might be, and make them aware of the importance of keeping their families well-fed on the rations available”, Patten

wrote in a 2005 memoir cookbook, *Feeding the Nation: Nostalgic Recipes and Facts from 1940-1954*. She admitted that “Looking back, I feel we were horribly bracing and never sympathized with people over food problems if they grumbled. Most people, though, never complained and appreciated that we were trying to be helpful.”

By the end of 1943, she was running the MoF Food Advice Bureau located in Harrod’s department store in London, giving twice-daily demonstrations Monday through Friday and one on Saturday. “Many of the ingredients available ... were a challenge to any cook,” she recalled, “but it was surprising how we learned to cope with these and produce edible dishes.... We all felt that we were playing a vital role towards the ultimate victory when we could all look forward to eating much more varied and exciting dishes once again.”

“Considering we won the war”

Rationing actually intensified after the war, and some items that had not been rationed previously, such as bread and potatoes, were now restricted. As in much of Europe, food continued to be scarce in England for several years after the war, and rationing was phased out only gradually over another nine years.

In December 1947, a housewife complained: “Our rations now are 1 oz bacon per week – 3 lbs. of potatoes – 2 oz butter – 3 oz margarine – 1 oz cooking fat – 2 oz cheese & 1/- [one shilling] meat – 1 lb jam or marmalade per month – ½ lb bread per day. We could be worse, but we should be a lot better considering we won the war.”

While the populace had been generally supportive of the need for rationing during the war, resentment began to grow when it was continued. The new restrictions inspired protests by the conservative British Housewives League, which formed in 1945 and reached a peak membership of 100,000. Its protests against rationing were a thorn in the side of the Labour government, and helped contribute to its defeat in 1951.

The government continued to use mass media to communicate its messages of conservation and nutrition. The

MoF continued to produce leaflets and newspaper advertising. The BBC resumed TV broadcasting and began producing cooking programs, including one hosted by Marguerite Patten, that demonstrated recipes within the parameters of ingredients available.

Finally, in 1954, the last item to come off rationing was meat. With the end of rationing, the Ministry of Food was de-commissioned and absorbed into the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. One might assume that after 14 years of constant messaging and a new diet, the British public would have significantly changed its eating habits, consuming less meat, more vegetables, and more whole-grained bread. Instead, after a decade and a half of unremitting austerity, people eagerly returned to foods that they had missed (such as white bread, fried foods, and red meat), and they added new but less healthy conveniences to their diet (such as fast food and processed food).

A Legacy for Stressful Times

The work of the MoF during WW2 addressed the food inequalities that existed in Britain at the time and strove to ensure that nutritional needs were met at all levels of society. In 1941, *The Times* quoted Lord Woolton saying, “I am determined that we shall organize our food front that at the end of the war, we shall have preserved, and even improved, the health and physique of the nation.” Virtually all of the data gathered at the end of the war indicate that that goal was accomplished; far from starving during the years of privation, the British people were in fact healthier in 1945 than they had been in 1939.

But unfortunately, in the decades following the war, Britain—along with many other western countries—saw a rise in illnesses related to poor eating habits. In a campaign to improve the country’s knowledge and nutrition, celebrity chef Jamie Oliver revived the name and goals of the Ministry of Food in his TV series, *Jamie’s Ministry of Food*. The series aimed to recreate the successes of the MoF in encouraging healthy eating. According to the show’s website, the program grew into a movement that has reached 100,000 people worldwide, “getting people cooking again and inspiring them to eat better and more nutritious food.” Thus, in an age of abundance, another public figure is using the bully pulpit of mass media, in this case television, to preach the importance of good nutrition and home cooking.

As in World War 2, today’s global pandemic has illuminated the food disparities between the haves and have-nots in Britain. At the same time, faced with the consequences of Brexit and with such trends as an alarming rise in food-related illness, the British government is again looking at how to transform the nation’s food system. In 2020 a parliamentary committee proposed appointing a Minister of Food Security “ensuring that everyone, and especially the most vulnerable, have access to enough affordable nutritious food.”

A National Food Strategy plan put forward in 2021 includes many recommendations for improving the British diet that are similar to those instituted by the Ministry of Food, including nutrition education and cooking lessons. If the plan is adopted, it might be a good idea to reopen Lord Woolton’s playbook and take another look at how he employed popular media, humor,

and personality in his campaign to achieve the goals of food security and better health for all. ■

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Fiction

The Kitchen Front by Jennifer Ryan (Ballantine Books, 2021) follows four women during World War 2 who enter a cooking contest to win a job co-hosting the BBC radio program *The Kitchen Front*.

STARS IN LONDON *continued from page 11*

At the height of his renown, he focused on charity. He developed recipes for and organized a soup kitchen in Dublin during the Irish potato famine of the 1840s, where he fed nutritious food to some 9,000 destitute people a day. He partnered with Florence Nightingale to ameliorate the ill health of British soldiers at the front of the Crimean War (1853-1856) by inventing a portable camp stove.

Soyer created a “brand” of himself: he wore a red beret and featured his likeness on products that he sold. He developed new ways of heating and cooling foods more efficiently and wrote many cookbooks, among them *The Gastronomic Regenerator: A Simplified and Entirely New System of Cookery with Nearly Two Thousand Practical Receipts Suited to the Income of All Classes*.

Charles Elmé Francatelli (1805-1876) was born in London and trained in France. He worked for wealthy families, for Crockford’s (a gentlemen’s club in London), and eventually for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He took advantage of his royal associations to market his cookbooks, most notably *The Modern Cook* (29 editions), which was targeted to members of the upper class who wanted to emulate royalty. His most famous recipe was for an elaborately ornamented Salmon à la Chambord.

Georges-Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935) was part of the team brought in by impresario Richard D’Oyly Carte (founder of the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company) to run his new, stylish Savoy Hotel in London. Escoffier was head chef and César Ritz was hotel manager. Even though there were hotel restaurants in London, there had been none where rich people could go to show off, and the Savoy—which targeted well-heeled, well-traveled Americans and Europeans—caught on with Londoners, for whom going to dine as entertainment was new. This trend, imported from France, changed London dining forever.

Escoffier reorganized the kitchen and focused on lighter, modern cooking. He created celebrity dishes such as *Fraises Sarah Bernhardt* and *Pêches Melba*, many of them included in *Le Guide Culinaire*, one of his many cookbooks. He fostered respect for and among sous-chefs, made them dress in whites, insisted that they wear a proper hat and tie to and from work, and banned drinking in his kitchen.

What these celebrity chefs had in common was an ability to create buzz by:

- having the creative genius to do something new
- having an artistic temperament
- working for royalty and wealthy families
- publishing cookbooks
- creating branded products
- giving back to the less-fortunate.

At the end of the webinar, I was hungry to learn more about these sparkling culinary stars!

“HINDUSTANI” COOKS: FROM SERVANTS TO MASTERS OF ENGLAND

by Randy K. Schwartz (Editor)

Last September, I watched a 10-minute online talk by English writer Shahida Rahman, “The History of Indian Restaurants in Cambridge”. Because of England’s naval strength and its history of colonial trade, South Asian fare has had a lengthy presence in that country, especially in London where traces of it can be found back to the 1600s. What I found most remarkable in the presentation is how the popularity and prestige of Indian food experienced a complete turnabout in England during those centuries.

Ms. Rahman focused some of her material on Cambridge, where she was raised in a restaurant-owning family and is a co-founder of the website Cambridge Muslim Heritage. Her talk was sponsored by the Mill Road History Society in Cambridge as part of Heritage Open Days, an annual nationwide festival of English history and culture; the recording is available at <https://millroadhistory.org.uk/event/the-history-of-indian-restaurants-in-cambridge>. The 2021 Heritage theme was “Edible England”; many more of the talks are linked at <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/news-desk/news/edible-england>.

The first Indian restaurant operated in Britain by an Indian, Ms. Rahman noted, was the Hindoostane Coffee House, established in Westminster, London, in 1810. Its founder, “Sheikh” Din Muhammad (anglicized as Sake Dean Mahomet), was a native of Patna, India, who had served in the East India Company’s army. When Muhammad’s commanding officer retired he brought him as a servant back to Ireland, where he eventually mastered English, married an Irish woman, and moved with her to London. His restaurant, targeted at British returnees and wealthy Londoners, offered moderately spicy Anglo-Indian foods such as chicken curry, pineapple pulao, kedgeree, and mango or tamarind chutney. But it failed after two years; apparently, most native Englanders were not yet ready for Asian fare.

Some of the *lascars* (South Asian sailors on British trading vessels) who had learned to cook at sea would subsequently open cafés and restaurants in seaports of England, catering mostly to fellow lascars. By the early 1900s, there were about 70,000 South Asian immigrants in Britain, mostly servants, students, and ex-sailors. As the number of Asians entering Britain increased, Rahman said, so did the demand for more Indian restaurants, and business within the Indian cuisine market gathered momentum. Several new eateries were established in

London, the most famous being *Salut-e-Hind* (1911) and the *Shafi* (1920). The first high-end restaurant, drawing in non-Indian customers, was *Veeraswamy* on Regent Street (it still operates there today); it was founded in 1926 by Edward Palmer, an Anglo-Indian food merchant who had retired as an officer of the British Indian Army.

The Indian restaurant community started to expand beyond London in the years between the World Wars. A group of enterprising brothers, the Bahadurs, opened a line of restaurants in London, Brighton, Northampton, Manchester, Oxford, and Cambridge, which were run by retired lascar cooks. The one in Cambridge, the *Kohinoor* (1943) on Mill Road, was the earliest Indian restaurant in that university town. It was followed there by the *Shalimar* (ca. 1952) and the *Taj Mahal* (ca. 1956). The speaker's father, Abdul Karim, a 1957 immigrant to Cambridge from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), established the *New Bengal Restaurant* (1963) and the *Bengal Tandoor Mahal Restaurant* (1973). The *Curry Queen*, which survives, was the first eatery in Cambridge with a tandoori oven, a bell-shaped, wood- or charcoal-fired clay oven in which food can be cooked or baked at very high temperatures either inside cooking vessels, on skewers, or pressed onto the oven walls.

The large influx of Asians to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s had prompted the introduction of more authentic dishes, and *Patak's* (1958) became the leading provider of South Asian spices and bottled sauces to restaurants and caterers. By 1971, the menu at the above-mentioned *Taj Mahal* in Cambridge included *surathi biryani* (fried rice with curried meat and vegetables, from Muslim Bengal); *Madras chicken curry*, which is very hot; *bhuna kofta*, a Pakistani dish of balls of spicy ground meat served in a sauce rich with tomato and fried onions; condiments such as mango chutney; *papadams*, deep-fried crunchy wafers of bean dough; and for dessert, canned fruit in syrup, such as mango or guava.

In the 1970s and 1980s, English people made curry places their favorite nighttime spots to hang out after closing times at clubs and pubs, although too often they abused the staff and premises. The mild, creamy *Chicken Tikka Masala*—skewer-roasted pieces of marinated chicken in a sauce made with tomato, yogurt, and *masala* spice mix—became the most popular curry in the nation and is now considered a naturalized British dish. Other restaurant adaptations included “prawn purée” (a prawn cocktail) and “Bombay aloo” (fried potato cubes topped with a spicy tomato sauce). Spicier dishes on menus were often labeled “Madras” (medium hot) or “Ceylon” or “Vindaloo” (both very hot). ■



At left, Din Muhammad, who founded the *Hindoostane Coffee House* in Westminster, Central London, in 1810, the earliest Indian-owned restaurant in Britain featuring Indian fare. This colored lithograph by Thomas Mann Baynes is from ca. 1820, after Muhammad's restaurant had failed and he had established a successful bathhouse in Brighton.

Image: Wellcome Collection (Univ. of London), reproduced in Gerald Zarr's article, “The Shampooing Surgeon of Brighton”, *AramcoWorld*, 69:2 (Mar./Apr. 2018), pp. 32-37.

Below, Abdul Karim, the father of the presenter Shahida Rahman, inside one of his two Bengali restaurants in Cambridge in 1973.

Image: cambridgemuslimheritage.co.uk



CHAA CALENDAR

*Check the CHAA homepage for the latest updates: <http://culinaryhistoriansann Arbor.org/>
These programs are being held online-only via Zoom, and begin at 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time.
Registration is free and open to all via the CHAA homepage.*

Sunday, April 24, 2022

Jacquelyn Ottman, fifth-generation member
of a pioneering family of NYC butchers,
“Unpacking the Meatpacking District Legacy
of Ottman & Company, New York’s
Storied Meat Purveyor”

Sunday, May 15, 2022

Laura Shapiro, author of *What She Ate:
Six Remarkable Women and the
Food That Tells Their Stories*,
“What She Ate and Why I Wrote About It:
Women, Food and Biography”

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

- Summer and Fall 2022: Fruits of
the World and How to Use Them
- Winter 2023: Foods of the Ancient
Roman World.

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First Class