



# CULINARY • HISTORIANS • OF • NEW • YORK

## Chairman's Letter

On behalf of the membership, I would like to thank most particularly four people I respect for their contributions to CHNY this year.

Millie Delahunty has been quietly and efficiently, through many adversities, our newsletter editor for almost four years. To publish a quarterly piece of interest in a timely fashion, she has endured missed deadlines by her contributors and her own physical illness. In addition, she has also been the co-editor of the Long Island District Family & Consumer Scientists newsletter and finally, as a Certified Home Economist, she is President of Microwave Cuisine. If I had the space to mention all her books, articles and lectures, you would acknowledge her superiority in time management.

Sally-Jo O'Brien took over as Membership Chair this year. Susan Dempsey, in addition to being our previous Chairman, handled the membership data base. Computers do not always speak to each other and Susan's would not communicate with Sally's. Consequently Sally, in addition to in-putting all the current members, has continued to add our many new members. When she is not peering at her computer for CHNY, she, as a food stylist, recipe developer and tester, has been working with Sally Schneider on her upcoming book and doing the same for Roseanne Gold. Sally-Jo is a graduate of Peter Kump's Cooking School Career Culinary Program.

By living in Connecticut, I am forever begging for an apartment in which to hold meetings. Dorothy Max and Isabel Sobol have been more than willing hostesses. Both are long time members and supporters of the organization. Dorothy has served on the board in a variety of capacities, including being program co-chairman with me, and Isabel, in addition to being one of our earliest program chairmen, has been the treasurer for the last few years. She has also agreed to coordinate programs with Eve Jochnowitz next year.

I'd be remiss if I did not thank all others who helped CHNY this year. As I have reiterated many times, as a volunteer-driven organization the membership are CHNY's employees and staff.

Enjoy a summer of relaxation.

Helen Brody, Chairman

## The Holley Boarding House

by Helen Brody

The recent discovery of a recipe from the turn of the 20th century for Welcome Cake offers evidence of the reception a visitor must have received as he climbed the stairs to the first verandah of the Holley boardinghouse in Cos Cob, Connecticut, a coastal village of Greenwich.

In 1890 Josephine and Edward Holley had opened their house to members of the Art Students' League in New York City. They were studying with Impressionist artist John Twachtman who had recently moved to the Round Hill section of Greenwich. The house continued into the 1920s as a boarding house for artists, operated by the Holley daughter Constant and her artist husband Elmer Livingston Macrae. It is today the Bush-Holley Museum, a National Historic landmark as the home of the first art colony in Connecticut.

The Holley House was a comfortable setting for the artists. Often referred to by Childe Hassam as the "Old House," it had been built as a saltbox in the early 1700s, but with additions had become an appealing, rambling farmhouse providing relief from the fast paced industrialization of late 19th-century New York City and offering the artistic and intellectual stimulation that the artists craved.

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## The Holley Boarding House

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Cos Cob in the late 1800s was only a 45-minute train ride from New York and the boardinghouse only a five-minute walk from the station. It was located on Strickland Brook, a tidal creek off the Mianus River leading to Long Island Sound. Active with packet boats, fishing schooners, oyster sloops and lined with shops, warehouses and a mill, the locale provided an ever-changing scene for the artists. The sun rose in front of the house over the water and set over gardens of flowers and vegetables in the back. To the north was a millpond with waterbirds and lanky marsh grass which produced impressionistic shadows as the sun moved from east to west - an irresistible stage for artists who thirsted for such a backdrop.

As word of the existence of this small enclave of artists spread, the boardinghouse and neighboring tavern evolved into a center for bohemian life quite apart from the rest of Greenwich, its great estates

and wealth. Meals brought together artists, musicians, and writers. Poet Ridgley Torrence wrote to his family in a letter dated May 7, 1906. "I went out to Cos Cob Saturday afternoon and staid until this morning. It costs me \$4.50 every time I go over there for Sunday but that includes R.R. Fare, board and lodging - everything and it is worth the money. The board is simply fine, home cooking and the place is so homelike that I don't realize it is to be paid for."

The artists themselves took an enthusiastic hand in the food preparation. In a March 17, 1904 letter from Constant Holley MacRae to her husband Elmer, she cites Henry Fitch Taylor as making "rarebit and salad dressing." Also in the Holley-MacRae letters there is mention of New Englander Childe Hassam preparing Boston clam chowder. Fudge making and popping corn in one of the four large fireplaces were popular with the boarders in the evenings.

Much of the foodstuff was grown or caught nearby. Strickland Brook yielded fish, clams, eels, oysters and lobsters for meals at home as well as for clambakes and picnics on nearby beaches. Behind the house was good farmland that provided vegetables, herbs and fruits to feed the large numbers who visited the house, and for which the artists probably enjoyed foraging. A 1909 gardening record book lists celery at "2 ft 11" from crown, cauliflower, okra, bush beans." Other vegetables grown on the farm, listed in a decorative diary with leather spine and corners, are lettuce, peas, beets, eggplant, cucumber, carrots, sweet peppers, lima beans, Hubbard squash, and Swiss chard.

There are paintings of a grape arbor that crosses the property - part of which remains today. Also, there is a photograph of a grape vine climbing the wall of the house. Concord and catawba grapes were believed to have been grown. Duck and chicken eggs also appear in various written inventories as well as an article on how to preserve

them "for nine months or more in a solution of silicate of soda, commonly called water glass."

Holley recipes reflect the late 19th-century transitional period for recipe text. Measurements are sometimes a teacup and dessert spoon while others specify the more precise tablespoon and measuring cup. Although baking powder dates to 1857, and advertisements for "premixed" baking powder appear in the Holley files, their handwritten recipes continued to use the leavening mix of cream of tartar and saleratus (two parts to one) for cakes. Baking times and oven temperatures were most often left up to the baker. A wood or

coal burning stove was in the house at the time of its purchase by the Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich in 1957, but was probably not installed before the early 1900s.

Recipes recorded by the boarding house proprietors were simple and straightforward - often

reflecting the need to stock up for the winter. To provide oysters at the table when the creek was frozen over, they were pickled. An interesting handwritten recipes for pepper stuffed with cabbage read, "They will not be 'ripe' under three weeks but are very fine when they are. They will keep for several years." Another for mayonnaise dressing would frighten a cook of today. After mixing egg yolks, sugar, seasonings, vinegar and lemon juice and adding two stiffly beaten egg whites, "Set dish into hot water until just heated through (the just is underlined in the recipe). After heated, pour immediately into glass jars. This will keep for weeks."

Judging from what I have uncovered thus far, sweet recipes, although not elaborate, seemed to be the most often recorded. It is apparent that in a boardinghouse, as in a restaurant, the last morsel a guest eats is what he most often remembers. A "Cream Cake" and "Cream Drop" cookies were noted as "good" - a clear understatement for a young artist craving just such a rich finale. A recipe for ice cream consisting of milk, cornstarch, sugar and eggs might work as a low-fat recipe today with the cornstarch as an extender. There is no mention of chilling or freezing the ice cream; it can only be assumed.

There is a recipe from "Aunt Libbie" for "Hermit Cakes (soft)" and another "Hermits (brittle)." The brittle are rolled out "thin, cut in fancy shapes and baked in a moderate oven" and the soft are dropped from a spoon. Tea rusks made with yeast also rated a "good" classification. Japonisme was at its crest and the Historical Society in its archives houses photographs of Japanese artist Gaingero Yeto conducting tea ceremonies. Perhaps the rusks were served at that time.

With the onset of World War I, and the increased urbanization of Greenwich, with a changing artistic direction, Cos Cob began to lose its appeal to the artists. By 1920, they had moved on to other venues.

*Recipes recorded by the boarding house proprietors were simple and straightforward - often reflecting the need to stock up for the winter.*

## CULINARY HISTORIANS PROGRAM UPDATES

by Phyllis Isaacson

At our final meeting of the year on May 29, we were extremely fortunate to learn the excruciating story of *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin*, published in Fall 1996. Three CHNY members, all of whom were involved in its publication, spoke about the background and ultimate publication of the book.

Not strictly a cookbook, *In Memory's Kitchen* is rather a testament to its creators - four elderly women who survived, for a time, their incarceration at Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, Hitler's "model ghetto," by recreating on paper the dishes they had prepared for their families.

Dalia Carmel was given the frail, yellowing, hand-sewn notebook by the daughter of one of the women, and described its tortuous journey of over 25 years - from Prague to Israel, back to Prague, and finally to New York. Bianca Steiner Brown, a Native Czech and fluent in German as well, was asked to translate the recipes.

As she movingly admitted, Bianca first refused. It was only later that she confessed that she had suffered at Terezin as a teenager. Bianca related to us the difficulties she had with the translation, both emotional and professional. However, she did persevere, and what we have are both lovingly reproduced traditional Czech recipes and fragments of once vibrant lives.

Cara De Silva, editor of the book, asked us to look at what was left out of the recipes (missing ingredients or steps in preparation) as a reflection of the hardships and deprivations of the women's wartime experience, as well as their decline in mental function as they slowly starved to death in the camp. None survived.

## Food-Related Museums Addenda

*Thanks to Jeanne Lesem for this information on a new addition to our Food-Related Museums listing:*

### The Jell-O Gallery

716/768-7433

LeRoy, New York

(about 30 minutes south of Rochester and about six minutes from Exit 47, New York State Thruway)

The gallery was scheduled to open June 1, and this year will remain open only until Labor Day because its building is a long-unused and unheated schoolhouse. After Labor Day it will travel as part of a fund-raising program of the LeRoy Historical Society, which owns the building and the artifacts on display. The society hopes to use some of the money raised by the traveling exhibit to install a heating system that would allow the gallery to remain open year-round, starting in 1999.

Jell-O was introduced in LeRoy 100 years ago by Pearl B. Wait, a local cough medicine manufacturer, whose recipe was adapted from one introduced by Peter Cooper in 1845. The current exhibit originated in 1993 as a joint venture of the historical society and the Strong Museum of Rochester, where it ran for 11 months. The Gallery Association of New York State (GANYS) then retrofitted the exhibit so that it could travel.

*Your editor found information on the following exhibits/museums paying homage to fast-food:*

### Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers

614/464-4656

257 E. Broad Street

Columbus, OH

On the site of the original outlet (dating to 1969), this museum/restaurant houses interactive kiosks with award-winning Wendy's commercials, and miscellaneous memorabilia.

### McDonald's

614/761-1606

7190 Sawmill Road

Columbus, OH

Similar to the original which was founded in 1955 in Des Plaines, Illinois. Has miscellaneous memorabilia such as old-style employee paper hats, and vintage photos.

**Please submit all material for the CHNY Newsletter in writing.  
You have a choice of three methods.**

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The preferred methods are Mail and FAX. E-Mail is good for rapid communication and queries, but punctuation/specialty editing marks do not always transmit well.



# THE CULINARY BOOKSHELF

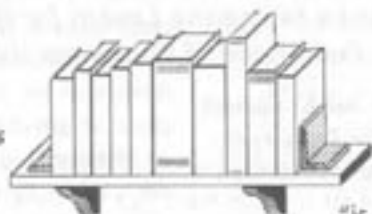
by Jeanne Lesem

## THE WORLD OF JEWISH COOKING

(subtitled *More Than 500 Traditional Recipes from Alsace to Yemen*)

by Gil Mark

Simon & Schuster, 1996, \$30



Choucroute Garnie instead of cholent for Sabbath lunch? Passover Charoseth with dried figs, dates, sesame seeds, cinnamon, ginger, ground coriander or cardamom, dry red wine, and cayenne? Black-eyed peas with veal for Rosh Hashonah, the Jewish New Year? The choucroute, in which beef and beef sausages substitute for pork, became traditional among Alsatian Jews, whose cuisine is closely related to that of the Ashkenazim of Eastern Europe, Marks tells us, although it "lacks the Slavic influences of eastern Europe." The dried fruit and spices in the Charoseth suggest Middle Eastern origins. But who would have guessed that the black-eyed pea dish came from Syrian Jews instead of the American South, where Hoppin' John (black-eyed peas and rice) has been a New Year's tradition for generations?

Author Marks is a rabbi, chef, writer, and historian. Appealing as his recipes are, it is the historic aspect of his book that hooked me, an assimilated Jew with Alsatian and Ashkenazic roots.

Marks provides the provenance of each recipe, along with fascinating information about the Jewish communities in which they developed. Writing of the Italian Jewish community, he tells us that only 29,000 Italkim survived the Nazis of World War II. Their numbers dropped from 47,485 in the 1931 census, and "...most of the small and intermediate-size Jewish communities disappeared." The Jewish population doubled after the war, he adds, as refugees arrived from elsewhere in Europe, and from North Africa. More than half the current Jewish population of 50,000 now lives in Rome, he writes, and their cookery more closely resembles Sephardic cuisine than Ashkenazic. One example: they eat rice but avoid dairy products at Passover.

The third-largest Jewish ethnic group is the Teimanim, or Yemenites, who are often labeled Sephardim, where the Italkim are often called Ashkenazim. "Yet, the Jewish communities of both Yemen and Italy predate those of Sepharad and Ashkenaz, and both produced cultures of their own," Marks writes. In addition, Jewish cultural communities have sprung up worldwide, including in Iran (Persia), Georgia (in the former Soviet Union), Uzbekistan/Bukhara, Kurdistan, India, Ethiopia, and even in Kaifeng and Canton, China, although none of the descendants of the Chinese community still identify as Jewish.

Adaptation quickly became the central feature of Jewish cooking, as Jews dispersed throughout the world, and it is marvelously illustrated by the choice of recipes in this book. In fact, many recipes that may date back generations appear contemporary. One example: Z'chug, a Yemenite green chili

paste that, one spice (cardamom) excepted, could have come straight from the American Southwest menu of the late 1990s.

Manty, or Bukharan Steamed Filled Pasta, "is derived from the wonton, reflects the Chinese influence on Uzbek cuisine, while the filling reflects the Persian influence."

As the author points out in his introduction, the twentieth century has been unkind to ancient Jewish communities, many dating back 2,000 to 2,500 years. Almost all have experienced decimation or outright destruction.

Their foods remain important, he reminds us, "because food is the part of life that most closely touches people's day-to-day existence as well as their periods of celebration, we can get a taste of a once-vital Jewish community - its nature, history, and customs - through its traditional dishes. By discovering the past, we can learn much about our collective selves." Yes, indeed.

## EVERYBODY EATS WELL IN BELGIUM COOKBOOK

by Ruth Van Waerebeek with Maria Robbins

Workman, 1996, \$14.95 paperback, \$24.95 hardcover

Traditional Belgian cuisine may be one of the last strongholds in the late 20th century untouched by diet- and weight-conscious fads. Ms. Van Waerebeek's book is a tribute to a kitchen more highly ranked among many gourmets than the French kitchen - one in which butter, cream, and other rich, caloric ingredients are commonplace. Although Belgian food is basically Flemish, many dishes have French connections.

As far as I know, this is the first Belgian cookbook to be published in more than 25 years. There was Juliette Elkön's *The Belgian Cookbook*, subtitled *A Sampling of Belgium's Regional Dishes*, in 1958, Nika Hazelton's *The Belgian Cookbook* and Time-Life's *A Quintet of Cuisines*, both in 1970, and *The Art of Belgian Cooking* by Sarah Miles Watts with Rene Colau the following year. In the Time-Life series, Belgian cookery shared a chapter with that of Holland, the second of the Low Countries.

Ms. Van Waerebeek, a native of Ghent, Belgium, is both a teacher at a New York cooking school and a chef, but her recipes are those of three generations of her family, her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. The Belgian attitude to food, she writes is best expressed in this motto: "We eat three times a day, so we'd better try to make a feast of it every time."

It is no accident that the painters of Old Master paintings tend to picture their subjects as plump, well-fed men, women, and children. They had to be, on a diet rich in pork liver pate with prunes, hearty soups, crispy Belgian fries, eels and fresh

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## THE CULINARY BOOKSHELF

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herring, many meat dishes cooked in beer, waffles and pancakes afloat in fruit compote or topped with melted cheese or simply sugared. And dessert! In addition to some of the world's finest chocolates, there are buttery cookies, spiced beer cakes, and fruity things.

Over the centuries, Belgium was invaded by almost every other European nation, from Holland, France, and Germany, with which it shares borders, to the Romans, the Vikings, and Spain. But Belgium's culinary roots were planted, so to speak, in the Middle Ages, when food was fuel against harsh winters as well as a pleasure for those who could afford to eat well. When indigenous American foods arrived in the fifteenth century, potatoes became so popular that Ms. Waerebeek devotes an entire chapter to them. When wealthy Belgians praised their delicacy and flavor, the authors write, they were called "little truffles." Today, fries are among Belgium's most traditional foods, a national mania.

While we Americans spend less and less time cooking, Ms. Waerebeek's compatriots spend considerably more time than we do shopping for, talking about, cooking, and eating good food.

Belgians "...are fond of saying that our food is cooked with French finesse - and served in portions of German generosity," she adds.



by Susan Asanovic

### THE ORIGINAL MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE, MEDIEVAL RECIPES FOR TODAY

by Barbara Santich

Chicago Review Press, 1996, \$15.95

Pasta sans tomatoes, gnocchi senza potatoes; no ratatouille, no polenta! Today's images of Mediterranean cuisine are nothing like that Medieval Catalan, Italian, and French chefs cooked up in drafty fortresses and crowded cities. Santich, an Australian culinary historian, explores the roots of today's Med cuisine, the renaissance after the draught of the Dark Ages. Her most thought-provoking premise demonstrates that it was the Arabs' caravans of spices and new produce which spurred the thirteenth-century Mediterranean culinary reawakening. This influx of exotic ingredients from all of the known world parallels the New York cook's world where we can have practically anything from anywhere.

Their kitchen gardens and orchards would be the envy of any twenty first-century Californian; even asparagus, which the Romans adored, was reintroduced by the Arabs, along with camel-loads of spices. And like the Romans, excesses and conspicuous consumption were prominently practiced by the rich. Reaching back to Clement VI (1342), Santich discusses not only foodstuffs, but tableware, manuscripts, and fascinating street food. A 1488 Milanese wedding banquet

with "whole calves' heads, gilded and silvered" wouldn't tempt any bride today, but quinces cooked with sugar, cinnamon, pine nuts, and artichokes (yes!) is intriguing - unfortunately no recipe is offered. Sugared artichokes?...

For those fascinated by language it is a joy to have the recipes in the original text, with and English translation, and clear, adapted directions. A phrase here and there charms... "if by chance you don't want to add sugar, use good honey." We can really cook the Chickpeas with Herbs and Almond Milk, Homemade Verjuice, Garlic and Almond Sauce, and Saffroned Asparagus.

We are swimming in Mediterranean cookbooks; Med/Rim, Med/Asian/Eastern, Southern, and Regional Med. But Medieval Med is unique; revealing the basis for today's trendy dishes, yesterday's grandmothers' food, and tomorrow's unknowns. Wonderful woodcuts and a list for Further Reading complete the pleasure.

### THE SERIOUS PIG

by John Thorne with Matt Lewis Thorne

North Point Press (Farrar Straus and Giroux), \$30

*The Serious Pig* is not all pork, all the time, but serious musings on the Thornes' favorite foods and foodways. It's a traveling feast of John's always provocative, sometimes irritating, highly opiated essays.

John Thorne can write about any culinary subject, digress, and capture the reader with an almost stream-of-consciousness prose, which nonetheless has definite destinations and method. This collection of culinary vignettes from his quarterly, *Simple Cooking*, meanders in three directions - his native New England coast, Louisiana Cajun, and Texas cowpoke.

The lively, engrossing chapters are illustrated by appropriate recipes from contemporaneous local sources and enhanced with pithy quotes. On the basics, I've always considered John Thorne's versions a prototype. His buckwheat cakes are perfect; no combreads are better. Samples from his travels include a *kaleidoscopic Gumbo Zhebes*, explained in nineteenth-century quotes, proverbs, and Thorne's notes, which we found as addictively delicious as it is healthy. It also provides him with a springboard to write on rice, the varieties of local produce, and black Creole cooking in general. "*Jadin loin, gombo gate* ("garden far, gumbo spoiled.")

Another digression traces the development of chili from 1880, through sixteen recipes; and again another with rice and beans, (our favorite is the Jamaican version with rum!), lobster, or fast food. And when you've read "The Combread Skillet" no further combread education is required.

None of the author's own uncomplicated recipes require much skill; if anything, they are quite plain by today's standards. But there's Maida Haetter's and Fannie Farmer's and many from local cooks. Most importantly they all enhance the topic. No one can fault Thorne's thoroughness and total involvement in whatever culinary topic strikes his fancy. An extensive bibliography provides a rich source for further reading. Surely he too will be quoted a century from now.

The *CHNY Newsletter* welcomes letters to the editor, food history articles, news of upcoming food-related events, and book reviews from readers. Submissions will be published at the discretion of the editors, and may be edited for clarity and/or space limitations. All material must include the name, address and telephone number of the writer. Please type and double-space submissions if possible.

We will try to respond to all submissions, and will return unpublished material if an SASE is enclosed. You may wish to query the editors first. Send queries or copy to Millie Delahunty, 32 Harvard Street, Garden City, NY 11530-4004.

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Deadline for the Fall 1997 issue is  
August 1, 1997.



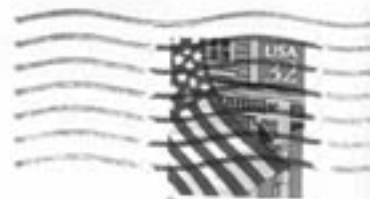
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*First Class*