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# CULINARY • HISTORIANS • OF • NEW • YORK

## FROM THE CHAIR...

January 1, 1997

To CHNY Members and Friends:

The Steering Committee met December 4 and is pleased to announce that the Culinary Historians of New York is growing! Forty-five new members this year, according to our new and capable Membership Chair Sally Jo O'Brien. Sally replaced Susan Dempsey, to whom we are indebted for her guidance as CHNY Chair and her years of updating and publishing the membership directory.

Program Co-chair Tamara Holt has announced that in February Shirley King will be speaking about her book *Pampille's Table*, a translation and adaptation of Marthe Daudet's 1919 classic; a tasting will follow.

In March, Eve Jochnowitz will present her paper Polish Food, Past and Present. She will examine the "paradoxical role" of Jews in Polish history, particularly noting the phenomenon of Jewish food and cooking in Poland.

Please remember that a special-interest organization relies on its membership for survival. Those who have been willing to give of their time have done so unselfishly. Other members, possibly unconsciously, have enjoyed the organization but not considered what makes it work.

Positions that need special attention are those of Treasurer and Program Committee Chair. Having been Program Chair myself for two years, there is no doubt that it can be time-consuming - but oh, the people you have an opportunity to speak with and meet!

With corporate downsizing putting additional time constraints on all of us, consider working for CHNY as a leisure activity that also benefits your brain. Suggestions are always welcome, but can only become reality when they are combined with a member effort.

My best to you all, and Happy New Year!

Helen Brody, Chair

## Quelle Salade! Or, When is a Salad Not a Salad

by Susan Asanovic

In the last six hundred years my favorite course has been celebrated, glorified, ignored, transformed, and finally corrupted into strange forms. Salads have now mushroomed into an undefinable food category, a non-classified classification encompassing any dish a food writer or cook wants to throw together and portray as "light" (read "not fattening"), frivolous, not too serious. Remember "rabbit food, ladies, food?" People state that they had "just a salad" for lunch when in fact that meant fried chicken set on rust-colored iceberg lettuce.

My criteria closely matches the original; it must have some salt, an acid, excellent oil, include raw or barely shocked greens, plant foods should predominate, and it should be served cool or barely warm. (Pouring a vinaigrette over cold steak does not a salad make.) John Evelyn, in *Acetaria*, 1699, advises that in the composure of a salad (implying only greens) "... oil should be a pallid olive greens, ...the vinegar the best wine vinegar infused with flowers or herbs. The salt should be the 'brightest Bay salt' and pepper not bruised to a dust."

The "sallets" of medieval Britain, as recorded in 1390 by Richard II's master garde-manger, reads in part "Take parsley, sage, garlic, onions, leeks, borage, mint, porette, fennel, watercress, rhue, rosemary and purslane...mix them well with raw olive oil. Lay on vinegar and salt." His salad could be on today's trendiest menu description and Evelyn's advice reads like one of the new "chefs' cookbooks."

-continued on page 2

### INDEX

pg. 2	Flash!
2	FIAF a la carte
2	Food-Related Museums Addenda
pg. 3 & 4	News of Members
pg. 5	The Culinary Bookshelf
pg. 6	Report on CHNY's September 1996 Program
pg. 6 & 7	ESCOFFIER AT 150: The Man, The Legacy
pg. 7	Diner Auguste Escoffier

## Quelle Salade! Or, When is a Salad Not a Salad *-continued from cover-*

By the 16th century, salads included meats and vegetables and were called *salamagundis* (our *salades composees*). Sixteenth-century Italians Salvatore and Costnaco Felici wrote about the gastronomic and medicinal benefits of eating herbs and greens with salt, vinegar and olive oil; and today, writes Lorenza de Medici, "in Italy salad is almost a religion, and the home of what ...gourmets consider the ultimate salad." This is my idea of salad...like the *Misticanza* of Rome, a mixture of herbs and wild greens.

If we accept early salads as a model, then today's misnomers which may have either no oil, no acid, no vegetables, or are served hot, need a different appellation. Some of the worst examples of mixtures masquerading as salad include the very forgettable horrors of the 1920s and '50s which appear to owe much to the availability of iceberg lettuce. There was jellied Ginger Ale Salad, Banana and Popcorn Salad, and canned everything salads which included marshmallows, nuts, cheese, and more. (See Sylvia Lovegren's *Fashionable Food* for further delicious details.) I've even seen Salad Soup, a frugal cook's horror based on rancid leftover greens and tasting of musty dressing. Gazpacho, in essence a salad soup, is a totally different and quite wonderful dish.

Contemporary cooks also push the envelope. *The New York Times* published a Warm Barley and Mushroom Salad over Portobellos which is served hot and has no acid. It is a delicious grain dish, but salad it's not. Marian Burros' Paella Salad is just cold Paella, but at least has an acid and is served cold. Larry Forgione adds a sauce enriched with hot butter to an otherwise terrific Salad of Grilled Cepes, Asparagus and Sweet Peas which destroys its saladness; and Rozanne Gold's barley with buttermilk is just not salad by me.

We need a new name for grain salads based on rice, quinoa, or bulgur (tabbouleh is nice) and for those mixtures of tuna, egg, and chicken which are also confusing the field. Pasta salads, the buffet table staple, are usually so poorly made that if the eating of cold pasta became as rare as rue and tansy, little would be lost.

*Salades Composees* properly done can be wonderful, if not light, summer meals in the Mediterranean tradition. We can evolve without becoming ridiculous. Today's salad bars look like cheap cafeterias; old British "sallets" and the word "salad" have become irrelevant.

Then there are the fruit salads, which can't decide if they are dessert, palate cleansers, or what. Only oil and endive save Fanny Farmer's (1996) Apple and Tangerine Salad with dates and nuts from becoming a very sweet finale. Still, all of the above beat Jello and marshmallows on a lettuce leaf; but if any Rising New Chef 2000 puts arugula under a scoop of white peppercorn and green tea ice cream, I'm going to run screaming from the restaurant! Bon Appetit.

**Further reading:** Raymond Sokolov's *Addressing Salad* from *Natural History* July 1986, and op. cit. *Fashionable Food*.

*Ed. comment: Does anyone else remember being served a Candle Salad (a half-banana standing on a pineapple slice, the banana topped with a maraschino cherry, and whipped cream or cream cheese dribbled down to represent melted wax)? It was a special treat at my aunt's dinners, though sometimes we children had a Snowman Salad made with a canned pear half, carrot stick arms, and cinnamon candy eyes and mouth. She also served Perfection Salad which, since we were Mid-Westerners, was called a congealed salad rather than a jellied salad.*

## FLASH!

The Institute for the Advancement of the Science and Art of Chinese Cuisine will holding a conference on Chinese Food and Medicine on Saturday, April 5 at New York University. For registration or other information, write Jacqueline Newman, ISACC, P.O. Box 91, Kings Park, NY 11754.

## FIAF a la carte

The French Institute/Alliance Francaise has several programs open to the public, including French dinners at Manhattan restaurants and a Cheese & Wine Tasting at the Institute. For information on all programs, call Laura Skoler (212/355-6100).

## Food-Related Museums Addenda

Thanks to Nach Waxman for suggesting that we add the following to the listing of Food-Related Museums published in the last issue:

### Mount Horeb Mustard Museum

109 E. Main Street  
P.O. Box 468  
Mt. Horeb, WI 53572  
608/437-3986  
*All about mustard*

Thanks to Alice Mackin (a non-member) for this information on a spot that's not really a museum but an interesting place on Long Island:

### Peconic River Herb Farm

Christine Spindler  
310-C River Road  
Calverton, NY 11933  
516/369-0058

By the way, you all probably realized that the museum listing was arranged alphabetically by state. We felt this was more convenient for our traveling members.

If anyone would like to add a food-related museum to the listing, please send the information (see above for what's needed) to:

Millie Delahunty  
CHNY Editor  
32 Harvard Street  
Garden City NY 11530-4004

## News of Members

by Jeanne Lesem and  
Millie Delahunty

Major contributions to food history were made last fall with the publication of four books: *In Memory's Kitchen*, *Stand Facing the Stove*, and *Pure Ketchup*, all of them the work of CHNY members; and *The True History of Chocolate* (Thames and Hudson, \$27.50) by **Sophie D. Coe**, a longtime CHNY member who died in 1994, and her husband Michael who completed the book after her death. A review in the December 1996 issue of *Gourmet* describes it as "A pleasure not just for chocoholics but for anyone who enjoys lively, thorough sleuthing via the printed page."

*In Memory's Kitchen* (Aronson, \$25), translated by **Bianca Steiner Brown** and edited by **Cara De Silva**, is a collection of 70 recipes that *The New York Times* described in its list of Notable Books of the Year 1996 as "...a Holocaust document, compiled as an act of defiance in a (Nazi) concentration camp and miraculously transmitted to the compiler's daughter in 1969." The compiler, Mina Pachter, who later died in the camp, Theresienstadt in the former Czechoslovakia, had entrusted the manuscript to a friend, hoping that he would survive and that the book would someday reach her daughter, who had emigrated to Palestine and later to New York City. A third CHNY member, **Dalia Carmel Goldstein**, was instrumental in bringing together the translator (Bianca, herself a survivor of the Czech camp) and the editor (Cara, a former food feature writer for *New York Newsday*, now a freelance writer and editor) after Dalia was shown the manuscript by Mrs. Pachter's daughter, Anny Stern.

As *Times* readers know, the paper has so far published a long feature about the book and a full-page review in its Sunday Book Review section. That's the tip of the iceberg. This slim volume has been reviewed or made the subject of newsfeatures by so many other publications and radio and

television programs that we have space to mention only a few of them here: *The Washington Post*, *The Associated Press*, *Newsday*, *The New York Daily News*, *The Los Angeles Times Syndicate*, *Gourmet*, *Newsweek*, *People*, and *Elle* (the French edition), CNN, National Public Radio's All Things Considered, and PBS's News Hours. The original manuscript is now in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. According to *Publishers Weekly*, the initial print run for the book was expanded to about 25,000 copies in six additional printings, but it is still hard to find in New York stores. A trade paperback edition is scheduled for publication by Dell's Delta imprint in September 1997.

*Publishers Weekly* described the book in its December 2, 1996 Book News column as the "Mitzvah Project" because the contributors donated their services in preparing the handsewn manuscript for publication, and promoting it. *Mitzvah* is the Yiddish word for a good deed that expresses God's will.

While the recipes are printed in both German and English, they have not been edited for kitchen use. Measurements are metric, directions are skimpy, and some omit key ingredients. But this is, as reviewers emphasize, not a cookbook. The *Times'* critic called it "...an act of defiance and resistance, a means of identification in a dehumanized world. It was a life force in the face of death." Incidentally, it is not the only recipe collection to have survived Hitler's death camps. Cara told me she had learned of at least eight others while editing the manuscript and writing the introduction (which is described in *Gourmet's* The Cookbook Shelf column in the December issue as "tersely illuminating.")

**Anne Mendelson's** *Stand Facing the Stove* (Henry Holt, \$29.95) might be called a triple biography - of Irma S. Rombauer and her daughter, Marion

Rombauer Becker, and of their legendary cookbook *The Joy of Cooking*. First published privately by Mrs. Rombauer in 1932, it has become a best seller over the years and through many revisions and printings. Like the preceding book, it's getting a lot of press attention. In the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jeanette Ferrary describes it as a "...thoroughly researched book (that) also provides a cogent, insightful history of American cookery." The *New Yorker*, in a three-page review by Nancy Franklin, praised it as "...an entertaining double biography of a mother and daughter, a detailed social history that opens up to offer a broad view of twentieth-century America. Mendelson is excellent on the social mores of the Midwest and on the way changes in technology have affected how we eat and cook..." Franklin adds that the book "...is as good an illustration as I've ever seen of the pugilistic publishing industry, and of what can happen when a stubborn amateur crosses swords with a professional bully."

What few of us *Joy* devotees knew until now was that Mrs. Rombauer undertook to write and self-publish the first edition when she was a 53-year-old widow in St. Louis, a once-prosperous sociable mother of two whose financial situation was destroyed by the Depression and the suicide of her beloved husband. Within a few years that little book had become what *Newsweek's* Laura Shapiro described as "...the definitive best seller on 20th-century American cookery...(which) makes a wonderful story and food historian Anne Mendelson tells it splendidly." Neither she nor her daughter, who became her collaborator and, after her death, sole author, had any training as chefs or writers. This very amateurism, their biographer argues, is what helped endear their book to millions of readers over the years.

-continued on page 4-

## News of Members

-continued from page 3-

"Cooking in itself had scant charm for her (Irma) except as another expression of the social gift that she had so intensely bent on her acquaintance. All who knew her cooking at first hand agreed that her real talent was for contriving clever meals in no time flat - out of whatever chanced to be hanging around the place," Anne writes.

Irma's daughter, graduate of a prestigious Northeastern college for young women, was a champion of fresh ingredients and organic farming years before these causes became "politically correct." Marion Becker died one year after completing work on the 1975 anniversary edition. The first revision since then is scheduled for publication in Fall 1997 by Scribner, postponed from the spring of 1996. "An estimated 80 of the nation's best cookbook writers, recipe developers and consultants have been assigned to write chapters on their specialties or revised the work of their colleagues," Laura Shapiro wrote in *Newsweek*, November 11, 1996. One wonders what Irma and Marion would have thought about their book being rewritten by a large committee.

*Pure Ketchup, A History of America's National Condiment* (University of South Carolina Press, \$24.95) by **Andrew F. Smith** begins with the red sauce's polyglot parentage, attributed variously to Southeast Asia, Europe, Mexico, China, and even Vietnam, long before the Americas and their tomatoes revolutionized the condiment. Like so many of our condiments today, American ketchup (catchup or catsup, take your pick) began as a made-at-home product that commercial manufacturers eventually took over and made into a national icon. Fifty pages are devoted to recipes whose primary ingredients range from anchovies, apples, and apricots to liver and lobster, pudding, raspberry and rum! Although recent market research

indicates that ketchup has become second fiddle to salsa in the trendy 1990s, we doubt that it will ever take America's popular red condiment off the table entirely. At least one manufacturer we know of is fighting salsa with, predictably, a salsa-style ketchup.

Although it is essentially a cookbook, *Fresh & Fast* by **Marie Simmons** (Chapters, \$29.95) will become part of the food history of tomorrow, reflecting as it does the demand by 1990s time-pressured home cooks for recipes made with fresh, unprocessed ingredient that can be prepared quickly. As Marie points out in side notes, planning ahead is the key to success. One technique I've found very useful: adding fresh vegetables to the pasta pot for its final few minutes of boiling. As Marie points out, this saves a little cooking as well as cleanup time, with one less pot to wash.

**Jacqueline Newman** has been elected to the Editorial Advisory Board of *Appetite*, a British journal about determinants and consequences of eating and drinking. She has also been elected to the National Board of Directors of the American Institute of Wine and Food, and continues as Editor-in-chief of *Flavor & Fortune*, the publication of The Institute for the Advancement of the Science and Art of Chinese Cuisine, of which she is Editorial Director. *Flavor & Fortune* is published quarterly; for information on the Institute or the publication, call Jacqueline at 718/997-4153 (days).

**Alexandra Leaf** was the featured speaker at The Art of Gastronomy dinner/lecture series. Three evenings celebrated Monet, Manet, and Toulouse Lautrec, all with menus designed especially for the meals.

**Andrew Smith** is getting around. He wrote an article on popcorn history

for the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor and will be speaking for that group on May 18 about the History of Snack Food. The Houston Culinary Historians' Newsletter featured his article on *How the Tomato Became America's First Food Fad*.

**Elizabeth Andoh** spoke to the Houston Culinary Historians about the history of the Japanese obento, its regional and seasonal differences, and why it remains popular today. The obento is a boxed meal that can range from the simple rice sandwich in bamboo leaves to a beautifully arranged picnic.

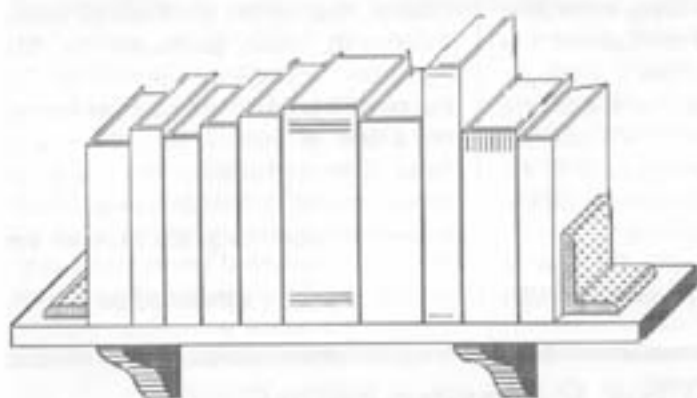
This spring **Richard Glavin**, **Andrew Smith**, **Michael Kronld**, **Annie Hauck-Lawson**, **Robert Kaufelt**, **Lyn Stallworth**, **Tamara Holt**, and **Marie Simmons** will be teaching in The New School Culinary Arts Program. **Martin Johner** is Coordinator of several classes Behind the Scenes at the Great Restaurants of New York. **Gary Goldberg** is beginning his tenth year as Executive Director of Culinary Arts and currently serves on the Board of Directors of The American Institute of Wine & Food, NY Chapter. For information on the Culinary Arts Program, call 212/255-4141.

**Elizabeth Andoh** sends "Best wishes to everyone at CHNY!" Daughter Rena has moved from Ann Arbor to New York and is in a graduate program at Mannes Conservatory. Elizabeth has been having computer problems, keeping her from surfing the "net" and exchanging E-mail with many of you.

New member **Sharon Gintzler** is editor and publisher of a new culinary publication *Global Gourmet*, devoted to the cuisines of the world and published three times a year. The premiere issue was July 1996. For information call Sharon at 908/727-3749.

# THE CULINARY BOOKSHELF

by Susan Asanovic



## FANNIE FARMER COOKBOOK; 13TH EDITION

edited by Marion Cunningham  
Knopf, 1996, \$30.00

It's hard to improve on Fannie Farmer, but the Queen of Americana, custodian of American culinary tradition Marion Cunningham has done it again in this 13th edition of the Fannie Farmer Cookbook.

If you have a dog-eared, coffee-stained older copy, or never owned one, update now.

Fanny Farmer was a dedicated teacher, and this is really a complete cooking treatise. To paraphrase the Preface, she felt that if you put your heart and soul into cooking, whether male, female, inexperienced or expert, you will get great satisfaction.

In January 1997 this classic was one hundred. However, it has been revised and modernized over the years. There are 325 new recipes focusing on how we eat today, with chapters on vegetarian dishes, grilling, and ethnic cuisines.

Other new updates include a section on food safety, and nutrition information tables. But it's still as American as apple pie (which is really British) with meatloaf, hot dogs and roasts, but also salmon tartare, rice bran banana muffins, cucumber sushi, and a microwaved polenta which is the easiest and most successful method I ever tried. With almost 2,000 recipes, not every one pans out. The Homemade American-Style Noodles calls for an unbelievably large amount of salt, for example. Stick with the Italian method; and toss them into classic Sour-Cream Baked Noodles (my great-grandmother's Noodle Kugle).

This is not light, low-fat fare; the amounts of butter and cream sauces are, well...authentic. The bland illustrations are faint line drawings, perhaps a nod to that period feeling. But it would be hard to find a better reference about American cookery...past, present, and future.

## THE SEPHARDIC KITCHEN

(subtitled *The Healthy Food and Rich Culture of the Mediterranean Jews*)

by Rabbi Robert Sternberg

Harper Collins, 1996, \$30.00

Fish and Chips came from the Sephardim? This is but one of the many facts and folklore learned in reading Rabbi Sternberg's rich, colorful, and delicious new book (His first was *Yiddish Cuisine*). Here he paints an edible picture of the culinary travels of the Mediterranean Jews, how the diaspora influenced their food and foodways, and their influence on their new countries.

We learn that *Sephardic* cooking (from Separad, Spain) developed during the "golden age" of Spanish Jewry between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, and therefore find many Arab overtones. Sternberg seasons his book mainly with dishes from the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, Greece, and the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, with a few from Europe and the Americas. Sephardic cuisine incorporates the foods we like to eat today...grains, beans, a huge variety of vegetables, fish, herbs, nuts, olive oil (which substitutes for North African fat-tailed sheep fat).

He follows the thread of a dish, an ingredient, through the Sephardim's travels, for example in the range of salad styles, the many faces of *hamin* (the Ashkenazi cholent) or *Huevos con Tomates* Macedonian, Syrian, Tunisian, or Turkish style.

Light and Kosher is no longer an oxymoron; not here the leaden kugels, knishes, and soups oozing schmaltz. Med-Rim Kosher-style is not chopped liver! Recipe difficulty ranges from easy to quite involved, but the book is well illustrated. Particularly inviting are the Passover Minas (pies), Coucous with Seven Vegetables, and the colorful salads. Kosher restrictions required cooks to create delicious vegetarian dishes, such as soups without meat stock, and stuffed grape leaves. Three pages are needed for an authentic B'stilla; you can substitute chicken for pigeon, but authenticity has its price. Helpful menu suggestions follow each dish.

Much more than an unusual recipe collection, this book offers an overview of Sephardic history, social customs, holidays, notes on Kasruth, and sample Shabbat menus. The stories are wonderful. One Foodlore section explains why the Jews cook Sabbath rice with saffron; a folk tale tells the "Baklava Story."

Perhaps the best recipe we learned from Sephardic Cuisine is the Ladino proverb "Whether you are or did not eat is not what matters. What matters is that you sat down at table." Offering and enjoying hospitality, and the joy of eating together are the secret ingredients.

Oh yes, fish and chips with malt vinegar are an adaptation of Marinated Fried Fish, saved from Friday night dinner to eat cold on Shabbat.

# ESCOFFIER AT 150: The Man, The Legacy

by Alexandra Leaf

On October 28, 1996, Auguste Escoffier, the father of modern French cookery, was feted throughout the world on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth. From the Waldorf Astoria in New York, to select French restaurants throughout the United States, France, England, Germany, Japan, and Spain (to name some of the participating countries) Escoffier's genius was celebrated over a six-course Diner d'Epicure. In all, nearly 150 dinners were held on that same day the world over in honor of the great French chef.

The menu for this historic dinner (see page 7), which was proposed by the Escoffier Foundation in Villeneuve-Loubet, France, was chosen from among the menus of former Diners d'Epicure organized and/or attended by Escoffier. The premise of these legendary dinners as outlined by the Ligue des Gourmands (an association of chefs and food lovers dedicated to "the goal of demonstrating to the entire world the superiority of French food and wine") was that "anywhere in the world that any six lovers of good living want to join together for an excellent meal, a Diner Auguste Escoffier will be served where the menu will be exactly the same, as far as possible." Thus the celebratory menu proposed by the Foundation Escoffier was the same menu prepared by all of the participating restaurants on October 28.

In addition to the dinners and symposia held throughout the world in Escoffier's honor, an English language edition of the chef's memoirs entitled *Memories of My Life* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1996) was published. Translated by Laurence Escoffier, the wife of Auguste's great-grandson, the book serves to introduce readers to Escoffier the man, and his endeavors beyond the confines of the kitchen.

The work chronicles Escoffier's early interest in food through his retirement from the Carlton Hotel in London in 1920. Of particular interest is the charity work in which Escoffier was involved, from feeding the poor

from leftovers from the Savoy to creating La Maison de Retraite des Cuisiniers, a retirement home for French chefs. In fact, one of the purposes of the Diners d'Epicure was to serve as a fundraiser for various causes in an age prior to the existence of any government-sponsored "safety net" social programs.

Traditionally, Auguste Escoffier is remembered for his partnership with

Charles Ritz, for his fondness for Sarah Bernhardt, and perhaps for his legendary ice cream confection La Peche Melba (poached peaches served on a bed of vanilla ice cream in a metal dish set between two wings of an ice carving of a swan, covered with a layer of sugar icing; the peaches are

-continued on page 7-

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## The Relevance of Amelia Simmons 200 Years Later:

*A report on CHNY's September 1996 program*

by Susan Asanovic

Did Amelia Simmons really exist? Or was she the forerunner of Betty Crocker, Aunt Jemima, and Uncle Ben? John Hess' half-facetious theory was advanced because of the inconsistencies in her recipes, cookery techniques, and directions between the different editions of *American Cookery*. On the other hand, panelist Karen Hess assumes that there was a real Amelia, and it's generally believed that she lifted recipes from diverse sources, mostly English. Culinary plagiarism is still alive and well today, if more cleverly packaged.

Panelist Betty Fussell addressed themes in Amelia's writing which are still relevant today; family values, moral improvement, and the "C" word - character. Amelia believed in empowering women, and indeed was, if nothing else, a successful female entrepreneur. Like today's cooks, she was involved at a time of technological advances: the ice box, tin can, and cast iron stove (although she still cooked mainly by the hearth). Her keen interest in gardens and markets is right up-to-date with today's concern with sustainable agriculture and preserving heritage seeds. For example, she grew six kinds of potatoes and six kinds of cabbage.

Moderator Nach Waxman reminded us that it is important to examine how much a cookbook writer assumes readers know. Apparently Amelia assumed a lot, except when it came to dissecting and cleaving a turtle! Again, today many accomplished cooks turned writers assume a level of culinary expertise which upwardly mobile would-be cooks simply do not have. "Upwardly mobile" was yet another 18th-century theme underlying *American Cookery*. We heard that she cooked mostly desserts and meats, and used a lot of sugar - all expensive items for that time.

Panelist Molly O'Neill brought out the fact that the upwardly mobile function of a cookbook has never been far from its success - still a very contemporary, yet 200-year-old principle. Simmons' writing was the forerunner of today's armchair culinary guides, oozing sophistication; food, as always, distinguishes class. Perhaps Simmons was an 18th-century Martha Stewart and Julia Childs.

Finally, we wonder if Amelia (or whoever wrote *American Cookery*) really expected the recipes to be cooked? How many of today's cookbooks have the same approach: Admire (my recipes) and Aspire (to cook them). They don't really think that, except for food professionals, more than a dedicated, adventurous few will actually produce the beautifully styled, photogenic dishes pictured on the glossy pages of kitchen dreams.

topped with a raspberry coulis.) He should, though, also be remembered for his efforts in working to improve the image of the chef as well as bettering working conditions for people laboring in infernally hot kitchens.

During Escoffier's time, cooks were largely uneducated, frequently drunk on the job, and often physically abused by their employers; this was especially true when young boys first began work as apprentices at age twelve or thirteen. Deeply concerned about the plight of his cooks, Escoffier devoted much of his life to bringing attention to the miserable conditions under which so many cooks toiled.

Bestowed the title "the chef of kings and king of chefs," Auguste Escoffier is no doubt the most famous chef in the world. Even long after his death in 1935, he was still revered absolutely, and continued to reign supreme over the culinary kingdom throughout the world.

However, in the late 1960s and '70s in France a group of young chefs, among them Paul Bocuse, Jean and Pierre Troisgros, Roger Verger, and Michel Guerard, felt that the time was ripe for change, and a fresh new

approach to dining displaced Escoffier's more traditional "repertoire." Their inventive cuisine was christened "la nouvelle cuisine" by the French food writers Henri Gault and Christian Millau. (It should be noted that the terms "nouveau" and "nouvelle" had already been applied to cuisine in France several hundred years earlier. "New" is a relative concept.)

In our consideration of where we are today in French food as a result of Escoffier's legacy, we should not view Escoffier in opposition to nouvelle trends as these chefs did when they first proclaimed their independence of expression. Too often, Escoffier's innovations are not properly understood. We are reminded, though, that what he sought to do was to "modernize" the principles and techniques of Antonin Careme (1783-1833), the man Escoffier deemed to be his "Maitre." Auguste Escoffier well knew of the need to adapt oneself to one's times. In reading from *Le Guide Culinaire* which was published in 1903, we must consider the taste of the time and compare those recipes with recipes found in Careme's books, not those created by Patricia Wells, Daniel

Boulud, or Jean-Georges Vongerichten.

As students of culinary history, we must be ever mindful not to judge the past by our twentieth-century taste, but rather to try to understand an epoch on its own terms. The strength of Escoffier is that he provided the basis for cooking by codifying French cuisine. He never intended that cooks after him be restricted by his guiding principles.

As evidence of the great chef's enlightened attitude regarding food and its evolution is this quote from the preface to his *Livre De Menus* (*The Book of Menus*): "A progressive change will inevitable occur in humankind's diet and eating habits...This means lighter meals are in future an inescapable necessity, and constitutes one more argument...in favor of shorter menus."

On the occasion of Auguste Escoffier's 150th birthday, let us remember him not as a nineteenth-century figure, but rather as the forward-thinking humanitarian individual that he indeed was.

\*Alexandra Leaf's interview with Julia Child appears in the Introduction to *Auguste Escoffier's Memories of My Life* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1996).

## Diner Auguste Escoffier

For those of you who'd like to replicate the menu served at selected restaurants worldwide on the 150th anniversary of Escoffier's birthday (1846-1996), here is the menu (translation courtesy of Alexandra Leaf):

PETITE MARMITE HENRI IV  
(Chicken and Beef Consomme)

TURBOTIN AU GRATIN  
COULIS D'ECREVISSES  
(Turbot with Crayfish Coulis)

SELLE DE CHEVREUIL  
SAUCE GROSEILLE AU RAIFORT  
PUREE DE MARRONS  
(Saddle of Venison with Currant and Horseradish Sauce  
Chestnut Puree Garnish)

MOUSSE GLACEE AUX MANDARINES  
(Frozen Tangerine Mousse)

FRAISES SARAH BERNHARDT  
(Strawberries Sarah Bernhardt)

MIGNARDISES  
(Assorted Mini-Sweets)

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 Spring 1997 issue is  
April 1, 1997.



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***First Class***