



Culinary Historians of Boston

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PROGRAM NOTES

February 19, 1997

Virginia Bartlett KEEPING HOUSE: WOMEN ON THE PENNSYLVANIA FRONTIER
1790-1850

In 1990, the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania approached me with an interesting idea. In their collection, they said, they had a manuscript cookbook from western Pennsylvania dated 1790 which they felt could shed substantial light on the concerns and the everyday life of Pennsylvania women of that time. They didn't want a cookbook: rather they wanted to know more about 18th and 19th century women, and hoped that the cookbook, in conjunction with appropriate letters, diaries and other materials, might be a way to learn more about frontier women..

I was immediately intrigued by the idea. In recent years there have been tons of materials published about women on the far western frontier, keeping house in covered wagons, and enduring the hardships one usually associates with western treks. But there was little or no information about life in between the relatively sophisticated cities of Boston or Philadelphia and the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. It's a long way from Boston to Pittsburgh by mule and wagon over the Alleghenies, but who knew anything about that part of the journey?

I agreed to take on the task and immediately discovered I had two major problems: first, there were 3 cookbooks, not one. There was indeed one from Pennsylvania, but it had been begun in New Jersey in 1790 and the owner had moved to Pennsylvania - but who knew when the New Jersey recipes stopped and Pennsylvania started? One other cookbook was clearly

written by a man - a very rich man, judging by the ingredients he called for; and the third was in almost indecipherable German. Even my German speaking friends couldn't read it.

The second problem was much more serious. The alleged letters and diaries apparently did not exist. I used every research technique known to womankind and failed to turn up any substantial manuscript sources. The folks at the historical society didn't believe me at first. "Oh, surely there is a collection SOMEWHERE," they said. but they knew of none themselves. My research associate and I combed obscure files. talked with a zillion people, and muttered to each other, "Somewhere, in somebody's attic, there is a trunk full of stuff and we will FIND it!" We never did. Newspaper stories asking for help were to no avail. We were also fond of saying to one another, "The day after the book is published, someone will call and say, "Oh, by the way, would you like to see my great-great grandmother's diary?" But no one ever called. Ever.

There are probably very good reasons for this - lost family records, lack of time and opportunity, illiteracy - but the fact remains that the lives of Pennsylvania frontier women are very sparsely documented. There are a few published diaries which proved to be useful and interesting, primarily travel accounts of trips over the mountains or on river boats, but not enough to accomplish my proposed task.

So what to do? After much wringing of hands, I decided to look at the only sources available to me: accounts of frontier life written by men. This was not an easy decision, but I finally convinced myself that it was possible to filter the experiences of women through the reminiscences of men, and with a little imagination and a lot of common sense, arrive at something close to reality.

I gradually developed what I have come to call my Yeah, Sure Test. For example, here is an account of Sunday breakfast, written by a young man on the frontier.

My sister every Sunday morning. and at *no other time*, made short biscuit for breakfast....made out one by one. in her fair hands, placed in neat juxtaposition in a skillet or spider, pricked with a fork to prevent blistering. and baked before an open fire not half baked and half stewed in a

cooking stove.

Yeah, sure.

Once I got going, it wasn't all that difficult. It was fun to put myself in the place of a woman performing a particular task. I know how it feels to do six loads of laundry in a Maytag washer. What if I had to do it by hand, carry the water from the spring, heat it over an open fire, stir the kettle (having made the soap several days before), carry more water, heat it, rinse the clothes, wring them by hand, and spread them on the bushes to dry, only to have it rain before nightfall. And then my husband just might write in HIS diary, "There is nothing so heady as the perfume of the freshly washed and dried clothing which my good wife happily prepared for us today."

Yeah, sure

The manuscript cookbook, written by one Margaret Bunyan, was fascinating, but only a beginning. We know very little about her beyond the bare genealogical details. She married John Morgan in 1790, five years before her first cookbook entry, and the next year the couple moved to Pennsylvania with her father-in-law, Colonel George Morgan. Colonel Morgan had been an Indian trader at Ft. Pitt in the frontier outpost of Pittsburgh, then a troop commander, then an Indian agent, and later a colonel in the commissary department of the army. No one knows why he decided to leave New Jersey and return to frontier territory. Whatever the reasons, the family was apparently educated and probably affluent. But they still had to make the same treacherous journey over the Allegheny mountains as their contemporaries, rich, poor, educated or illiterate.

In 1790, if you were 18 and recently married to a strong and handsome young farmer, a new life in the west sounded exciting and romantic. If you were 30, with four children who needed your attention, leaving a supportive family and friends would have been daunting. And if you were 50, with a dozen grandchildren and painful rheumatism, the journey was one to contemplate with fear and trembling.

There were many reasons men chose to go west -the opportunity for a better life for one's children, the desire for land, the need to escape debtors, and perhaps most compelling, the thirst for adventure. And go they did, in every possible kind of conveyance - mule, ox and horse driven

wagons, covered chaises, and many families on foot, packs strapped to their backs, some pulling hand carts, some carrying small children. The trails over the mountains - few would dignify them with the name of road - were covered with brush and prickly bushes, huge rocks in the center of the path, small rocks slippery underfoot - and' always the hills and mountains to be climbed. Sometimes it was necessary to get out of the wagons and walk. Sally Hastings crossed the Alleghenies in 1800 with her sister and brother-in-law's family.

Yesterday we crossed the Laurel-hill; which is very steep and so rocky that no one could venture to ride over it. The rain and snow began to fall in great abundance; which, freezing, formed a crust on the rocks, and rendered them so slippery, that the utmost Caution was insufficient to prevent our receiving some severe Falls. The Cold was intense; Night came on with pitchy darkness; and my sister, unaccustomed to Difficulty, and totally exhausted with Fatigue, was obliged to sit down with her Children on a rock; where she wept

Judge Samuel Wilkeson described his family's journey in 1784, as one of 20 groups that emigrated from Carlisle to the West. His father and mother, three children, and an indentured lad of 14 crossed the mountains on three pack horses:

...On one of [them] my mother rode, carrying her infant, with all the table furniture and cooking utensils. On another were packed the stores of provisions, the plough irons, and other agricultural tools. The third horse was rigged out with a pack saddle, and two large creels, made of hickory with [boards] in the fashion of a crate, one over each side, in which were stored the beds and bedding, and the wearing apparel of the family.

Wilkeson and his sister were laced in between the creels, "so that only our heads appeared." Each family took one or more cows, whose milk furnished the morning and evening meal for the children.

Although family groups tried to find overnight accommodations in local taverns, the women often felt that camping outdoors was preferable to the filth, the bad food and the crowds they encountered at the inns. One young lady traveling with her parents took matters into her own hands and went ahead of the party each day with her broom to sweep out the dirty rooms

they were given. Another related her frightening experience with the wagon drivers who also stopped at the inn.

I took off my frock & boots, & had scarcely lain down, when one of the wretches came into the room & lay down by me on the outside of the bed-I was frighten'd almost to death & clung to Mrs. Jackson who did not appear to mind it - & I lay for a quarter of an hour crying and scolding and trembling, begging of him to leave me. At last, when persuaded I was in earnest, he begg'd of me not to take it amiss, as he intended no harm & only wished to become acquainted with me-A good for nothing brute, I wonder what he suppos'd I was.

Most of us, when thinking about the wilderness, picture endless expanses of uninhabited forest, but by 1780, the roads were well travelled, even crowded. One writer describes seeing 18 or 20 pack caravans a day, and another tells of trying to cross a creek where more than 100 wagons were waiting in line. She wrote, "I think the state of Ohio will be well filled before winter."

All these Americans on the move had a profound impact on the food supply - the game was running out. Hunters and trappers were forced to move further and further west in order to make a living, although one man's idea of crowded conditions was another man's isolation. In 1777, an English visitor stopped overnight at a small cabin in the mountains.

The captain was not at all pleased that the neighborhood was beginning to be so thickly settled. "It spoils the hunting," he said, "makes quarrels; and then they come and want to collect taxes; it is time some of us were leaving, and getting deeper in the country." Hence we supposed we should find a thickly settled region, but had not to go less than seven miles before we came to the next neighbor.

On the trail, women were expected to prepare meals including clean the game their husbands provided, cook it, clean up, and care for the children and the elderly. They were expected to be cheerful, brave, uncomplaining and supportive of their husbands. Both men and women endured incredible hardships, but those who wrote about their experiences seemed relentlessly cheerful and eager for the next day's adventure. Margaret

Dwight wrote to a friend in Philadelphia: "We have concluded the reason so few are willing to return from the Western country, is not that the country is so good, but because the journey is so bad....! have learn'd, Elizabeth, to eat raw *pork* & drink whiskey - don't you think I shall do for a new country?"

What happened when the exhausted travelers reached their destination? Much of what we learned in elementary school about the pioneers is true - building a log cabin near a spring and filling the chinks with mud and animal hair - improvising furniture - clearing land for planting - killing game for food - picking wild fruit, berries and edible plants. There is a romantic glow cast over the picture of the strong and stalwart pioneers carving a new home in the wilderness. But I found myself asking, surely there must have been some settlers who weren't all that clever with an ax or a saw, and when I started looking, I found more than a few who were downright inept. No matter what their professional credentials might be - lawyers or bankers, perhaps- some proved incapable of feeling comfortable in the woods. One family built their house facing north and suffered chilblains all winter.

Rebecca Burland's husband had no carpentry skills, so the family went without a table for weeks. When he finally tried to build one, the boards were too short to make it useful, so they nailed a few more boards to the end and covered it with a cloth to conceal the mistakes. Her husband had no rifle, so he was unable to shoot deer or other game, but one day he managed to capture what he assumed to be a turkey.

...and [brought home his game with as much apparent consciousness of triumph, as if he had slain some champion hydra of the forest." The couple dressed and boiled their prize and happily presented it to a guest. Surprised by their feast, he asked to see the head and feet. "But the moment he saw them, he exclaimed, 'it's a buzzard,' a bird which, we subsequently learnt. gourmandizes any kind of filth or carrion, and consequently is not fit to be eaten." They tossed out the offending bird and dined on a little bacon and coarse Indian meal pudding.]

There were many gender specific tasks, as one might expect, but social historian Jack Larkin has defined them in an interesting way. Larkin tells us that "the farmyard, garden, house, kitchen and hearth, in diminishing concentric circles, enclosed and bounded women's daily realm." Men's tasks

went outward, beginning with the farmyard, but then reaching out to the barn, the workshop, the fences, fields, pastures, woods and roads, leading away from the farm.

Many of a woman's tasks were tied to the seasons - planting, preserving, butchering, cheese making, churning. But there was a relentless list of chores to be done each day. I tried to imagine what an ordinary day in the life of a pioneer woman might be like, and what it must have been like was frightening.

Forget about the cleaning, the mending, the sewing, the candle and soap making, the knitting, the spinning, the weaving. Think only about food. For breakfast, rise at dawn or before. Fix up the fire, or if it has gone out, send a child to a neighbor for coals, or resort to flint and tinder. Bring water from the spring, heat it. Milk the cow for the morning's mush. Make the mush. Fry bacon or salt pork. Heat hominy, or make johnny cake or pancakes or biscuits. For dinner at noon, speculate on the time and energy involved in presenting each item: cabbages, potatoes, turnips, beans or peas, sometimes cooked together, sometimes separately. (Plant and tend the garden patch, pick the vegetables, trim them, clean them, fetch the water, boil it, cook the vegetables); wheat, corn or rye bread with butter and cheese (Corn planted, harvested, dried, ground into meal, bread mixed, left to rise, baked, cow milked, butter churned and molded, cheese processed); salt pork and gravy, squirrel pot-pie, or venison stew (animals skinned, cleaned and cut, then cooked); pie or pudding (fillings to be picked, peeled or cleaned, processed, lard rendered, pastry to be made, pies baked, puddings steamed or baked, requiring fuel to be gathered, ovens heated, water boiled for steaming).

Then there were occasional but very important tasks, such as soap making, laundry, and that most dreaded of all jobs, making candles. Harriet Beecher Stowe has written eloquently about this exhausting process.

I used to dip sixteen dozen in the fall and twenty dozen in the spring. For the spring candles I boiled the tallow in alum water to harden it for summer....I can fancy my poor tired shoulder and strained arm are now in sympathy with the toil of tallow. Not like practicing two hours on the piano, which when you are tired you can stop, but from three to four mortal hours the right arm must be in constant movement. If a rest is given to the arm the candles become too hard and break, or the tallow in the pot gets

too cool. so dip, dip, dip, six candles at a time; each time the candles grow heavier, and the shoulder more rebellious.

It is always difficult to know what families actually ate two hundred years ago, but I think it is safe to say their everyday fare was not based on the recipes Margaret Bunyan chose to record. Many of them called for exotic ingredients she was unlikely to find in the frontier town of Washington, Pennsylvania - dishes such as creamed lobster, buttered crab, clam soup and coconut puffs. The recipes are an interesting mix of basic foods - gingerbread, stewed spinach, bread pudding - East coast specialties - cranberries and seafood - and somber remedies for a variety of diseases, possibly added after she came to live in the country - strong paregoric, syrup for a consumptive cough, how to deal with rattlesnake bite. Her book is clearly the work of an educated, well-to-do lady. Most frontier women cooked by instinct and necessity and even if they could write, saw no need to record everyday fare.

The staple foodstuffs of the frontier family were corn and pork. Without corn, the settlers would have starved. No need to plow - just scratch a little dirt and stick the seeds in the ground. It was eaten fresh from the ear, dried for the winter, made into hominy, ground into soft and hard meal, coarse and fine, baked into puddings, fried for pancakes and johnny cake, boiled for mush and sometimes served at every meal. Corn cobs were boiled to make a kind of molasses for mush and burned to make saleratus, a substitute for baking powder from the ashes. If no milk was available for mush, it was mixed with sweetened water, bear grease or fried meat gravy.

The most ubiquitous food next to corn was pork. Settlers brought their low maintenance pigs with them. They ate table scraps and foraged in the woods. One butchered pig yielded a remarkable number of products besides the obvious bacon, ham and salt pork - tubs of lard, scrapple, headcheese, jowls, spareribs, and pigs feet, while the entrails and bits of leftover fat went into the tallow barrel for candles. Margaret Bunyan's cookbook has a recipe for roast pig and tells us the we will know it is done when the eyes drop out. As one housewife wrote:

As for bread, I count that for nothin'. We always have bread and potatoes enough; but I hold a family to be in a desperate way when the mother can see the bottom of the pork barrel. Give me the children that's raised on good sound pork afore

all the game in the country. Game's good as a relish and so's bread; but pork is the staff of life.

There was an astonishing abundance in America. Settlers spoke in awe of the fruits, berries, nuts, and edible plants and herbs. These harvests did not come without hazards, however, as wolves, panthers, rattlesnakes and unfriendly Native Americans were all dangerous adversaries. Most settlers harvested wild crops in groups, with guns at the ready.

Many travelers have commented on the large amounts of protein available to Americans, even after game became scarce. Fish, birds, squirrel, venison, bear were readily available when there was time to hunt and fish. Some writers have commented that the large amount of protein Americans consumed accounts in part for the energy and inventiveness of the early years of the Republic.

Frances Phipps in her book *Colonial Kitchens* has pointed out that the American kitchen was the first room built in the house but the last room to change. The hearth, the utensils, even the recipes were essentially the same from the time the earliest immigrants settled Plymouth to the mid 19th century. "It was not until industry followed the settlers' trail, until mills were constructed with furnaces to fire new and more powerful forges, that the iron cooking range, with its built in oven supplanted the colonial hearth."

We are all familiar with the colonial hearth and its capacity to scorch and badly burn the cook or a child who makes a misstep. The utensils are in every historic house and re-creation -the spider, the skimmer, a long-handled frying pan, a ladle, a dutch oven, a trivet or gridiron - and of course, the ubiquitous and indispensable kettle, of cast iron or copper, good for everything from soup to meat to puddings to mush. I have long been puzzled by where the kettles and heavier utensils came from. No one mentions carrying the heavy pots over the mountains. No one mentions buying them, even from peddlers. Perhaps like the ladies from Dedham who, when asked where they bought their hats, replied, "We don't buy them, we *have* them"

We are also all familiar with the ovens built into the fireplace. In the earliest days, the ovens were built into the back of the hearth - designed by a man, no doubt - so the housewife has to reach directly over the fire to

have access. It wasn't long before reality struck and they were moved to the front and side of the hearth. We all know stories about how to know when the oven is hot enough for baking - throw in a little flour and see if it browns - keep your hand in it for a specified number of seconds, etc. But my favorite is the lady who sang three verses of the Doxology to judge the correct temperature.

In addition to protein, there was one other commodity settlers had in abundance. Booze. Hard cider was the beverage of choice for men, women and children. It was used to sweeten mush, offered to guests, mixed with honey to make an even stronger drink, and by 1850, the average farmer put up 30 barrels a year. Pennsylvania was a natural place for whiskey as well, with large crops of corn and honey. That's what the Whiskey Rebellion was all about. Farmers could transport gallons of whiskey over the mountains in much larger quantities than they could haul unwieldy bags of grain, so when the government slapped a new tax on distilled spirits, the farmers were understandably irritated and decided to fight. It was a short but bloody rebellion, and the farmers lost. But ironically, shortly after the hostilities stopped, the tax was removed.

There are shocking reports of the amount of drunkenness in taverns and on the streets of villages and cities. By 1820, it was estimated that every American imbibed 4 gallons of 200 proof whisky each year. Small wonder that temperance societies gained increasing importance. Families suffered when the husbands and fathers drank themselves into oblivion, drank up the family savings, lost their jobs and were frequently jailed. It's easy to make fun of the Carries Nations of the world, but most WCTU members had devastating personal experiences with family members. It's also easy to make fun of the old songs and ballads, especially this one - but please, listen to words very carefully and you won't find it so amusing.

Temperance Song

Father, dear father, come home with me now,
The clock in the steeple strikes one;
You said you were coming right home from the shop,
As soon as your day's work is done.
The fire has gone out, our house is all dark,
And mother's been watching for you;
With poor brother Benny so sick in her arms,
Without you, oh what can she do?

Come home! Come home! oh father, dear father, come home!

Father, dear father, come home with me now,
The clock in the steeple strikes two;
The night has grown colder and Benny is worse
But he has been calling for you.
Indeed he is worse. Ma says he will die,
Perhaps before morning shall dawn,
And this is the message she sends me to bring,
"Come quickly or he will be gone!"

Father, dear father, come home with me now.
The clock in the steeple strikes three;
The house is so lonely, the hours are long,
For poor weeping mother and me.
Yes, we are alone, poor Benny is dead,
And gone with the Angels of light;
And these were the very last words that he said,
"I want to kiss Papa goodnight."

Hear the sweet voice of your own little child.
As she tearfully begs you to come,
Oh, who could resist this most pitiful pray'r,
Please father, dear father, come home!

Despite the notion that everyone in the family worked together - which indeed they did - there is plenty of evidence that all was not sweetness and light. There are accounts of physical abuse. The newspapers of the time carried ads in almost every issue, trying to find runaway wives, or husbands declaring they were no longer responsible for debts incurred by their wives. Here is my favorite:

Whereas my wife, Isabella Culbertson, has gone off with one John Deary, alias Rounney, and [they] have carried off some valuable property belonging to me. I hereby offer a reward of FIVE DOLLARS to any person or persons who will secure the said John Deary. And I hereby advertise that no person credit the said Isabella Culbertson, as I will pay no debts on her account. It is said they stole a canoe and went down the river. -J.C..
Pittsburgh. March 23.1787.

N.B. Said Deary has taken with him the subscriber's certificate of the oath of allegiance to this state. and may pass himself by my name.

Surely there is a plot for a novel here. Did Isabella marry Culbertson for security? Was he many years older than she was? And was John Deary, a handsome young hired hand, full of blarney, ready to comfort her. Did they take everything they could lay their hands on, including a certificate which would lend credence to their story, steal a canoe and flee into the wilderness never to be heard from again? Perhaps they drowned in the river, or were captured by Indians, or died of snakebite. Is there a chance that they lived happily ever after? The odds are against it.

The difficulty of dealing with the reminiscences of frontier men is that they tended to view their earlier lives through a golden haze of memory. The children were all rosy-cheeked and healthy; the men strong, stalwart and invincible, the women stoic, loving, indefatigable, radiating health and strength.

Yeah, sure

There is some truth in this, of course. These women had to be determined and intrepid. But I think it's well to remember they were also angry, exhausted, irritable, joyful, shy, impatient, anxious, greedy, delightful, sickly, gossipy, generous, curious, mean-spirited, loving and frightened. Just like us.

KEEPING HOUSE: WOMEN'S LIVES IN WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
1790-1840

Virginia K. Bartlett
University of Pittsburgh Press: 1994

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

Three CHB members have books which have just come out or will shortly. Ellen Messer's *The Hunger Report 1995*. Edited by Ellen Messer and Peter Uvin. Gordon and Breach Harwood Academic is a report from the World Hunger Program at Brown University. Included are articles on *The State of World Hunger*, *Progress in Overcoming Hunger in Southeast Asia*, *The Human Right to Food* and many others. Those of you who know Ellen's

work, know how thorough and knowledgeable she is.

CHB founder Joyce Toomre also has a new book coming out in June. It is *Food in Russian History and Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. The catalogue description book calls it a "sparkling collection of original essays [which] gives surprising insights into what foodways reveal about Russia's history and culture." Joyce Toomre is a first rate scholar. This book will be an excellent addition to any food history collection.

Virginia Bartlett, who recently spoke to the CHB has come out with *Keeping House: Women's Lives in Western Pennsylvania 1790-1850*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. There is substantial material here on foodways and women's role in the production and preparation of food as well as information on other aspects of material culture. Virginia's research methodology as explained in the book and in the notes in PROGRAM NOTES above are of particular interest.

Grant, Mark, Translator and Editor. *Anthimus: De Observatione Ciborum: On the Observance of Foods*. Devon: Prospect Books, 1996. Anthimus was a 6th century Greek physician who was ambassador to the king of the Franks. He wrote this treatise on what foods to eat and how to prepare them in order for the king to maintain himself in good health. Though written at the beginning of the 6th century, the manuscripts used for this translation date to the 9th century. Grant has provided an excellent introduction placing Anthimus in history and in the history of medicine. He states that this is probably the first French cookery book. There is an excellent commentary and Latin and English are presented on facing pages. Has a bibliography. Available from Joe Carlin, Nach Waxman and Johan Mathiesen.

Montanari, Massimo. *The Culture of Food*. Translated by Carl Ipsen. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. This is a very interesting look at the development of the culture of food in southern and northern Europe from the Roman period to the present. It looks at rural versus urban food practices and feasting and fasting among other things. Available from Joe Carlin, Nach Waxman and Johan Mathiesen.

Wilkins, John and Hill, Shaun, Translators and Editors. *The Life of Luxury - Archestratus: Europe's Oldest Cookery Book*. Devon:

Prospect Books, 1994. Wilkins and Hill have excerpted all of the references to Arcestratus in Athenaeus. There is an excellent commentary. Has a bibliography. Available from Joe Carlin, Nach Waxman and Johan Mathiesen.

Several booksellers dealing in works on food, food history and drink have come to our attention. Both, in sending along their recent catalogues, have provided a *raison d'être* for their businesses which we think you will find of interest.

Louis & Clark Booksellers located at P.O. Box 5093, Madison, WI 53705 have an extensive catalogue which represents only a portion of the inventory. The catalogue is available from the above address or call (608) 231-6850. Louis & Clark will do book searches.

Dear Culinary Historians:

Your association and newsletter was recently brought to my attention and I thought that our business might be of interest to your members who are book collectors or are looking for culinary books no longer in print. ...

Louis & Clark Booksellers is entering its sixth year as a specialist mail-order business offering old, rare, and collectible books on all aspects of food and drink: cookery, gastronomy, wine, spirits, other beverages, restaurants, the food industry, domestic history, as well as etiquette and travel. In addition to general catalogues we produce special lists for customers with more narrow interests, such as children's cookbooks or books about beer and brewing. We also provide a free search service for individual titles - everything from the rare item to a book just out of print.

Each year we travel widely and review thousands of books to select the best of the lot for our catalogues and lists. We have built our inventory over the years guided by the belief that cookbooks and other culinary writings capture a rich heritage and are relevant to many fields of serious research: the history of gastronomy, the development of tastes and styles in food preparation; regional customs and traditions which reflect the great geographical variations and demographic diversity of this country; foreign and ethnic influences and the patterns of immigration; foodways in the light of religious beliefs and cultural identity; food and dining as treated in the arts throughout history; women's lives and the evolving roles of women; developments in food technology and the equipment of

food storage, processing, and preparation; agriculture; economics, including such topics as world trade patterns, wartime exigencies, and famine; nutrition, medicine, diet; animals, both wild and domestic. In fact, the history of food is a significant part of the history of every country and people and is a daily part of all human life. We are committed to finding the best books to illuminate these areas while remaining mindful of the practical nature of many of these books and their usefulness to individual cooks.

Our customers include culinary historians, food writers, chefs, restaurants and caterers, libraries, museums, cooking schools, vintners, social scientists, and, of course, the dedicated private collector. We believe that our catalogues meet the bibliographic standards desired by the serious, methodical collector while offering descriptions sufficiently detailed for someone to select a book without previous knowledge of the title.

Bee & Thistle Books, 11 Gay Road, Brookfield, MA 01506-1822, (508-867-6748) is owned by Margaret Ferguson Savilonis. Meg's latest catalogue has an interesting selection of both antiquarian and just plain interesting food related works.

I have always been passionately interested in books and in food. As a small child, I startled adults by firmly announcing that I planned to be an archaeologist when I grew up. Though I never realized that ambition, I haven't strayed so far from the path: my interest in gastronomy is nothing if not the study of social and cultural history; my artifacts are the written records of food and its acquisition, preparation and enjoyment through the ages.

Visitors to our home, inevitably stunned by the number of books in evidence, are even more astonished when they discover how many are related to food. "You must be a wonderful cook," they murmur, uneasily (Especially if they've spied something like Du Cann's *Offal and the New Brutalism* on the shelf, and dinner is imminent.) Well, I do enjoy cooking, but the truth is that the books are primarily for reading. I am incurably curious about what tastes good and why and to whom. Most of my actual cooking relies upon intuition and serendipity, rather than written recipes (except for baking, when the process somehow breaks down). The books I most enjoy are not really cookbooks at all; they're about the pleasures of

the table, other meals in other times and places, the adventure of gastronomy, the sensual experience of food in all its diversity, the ineffable taste of history. Creating a meal, however simple, is a gift to ourselves and to others; sharing a meal is a form of communion centered on one of life's most basic requirements. How that elemental need has been, is, and will be met is part of the fabric of the culinary history of mankind.

Left to my own devices, my inventory would be short on cooking manuals and filled with the sort of gastronomic literature that endlessly absorbs me, but I'm told that people want cookbooks. A visit to the cookbook department of my local mega-bookstore seems to confirm this, so I also stock lots of cookbooks. My favorites are the "personal" cookbooks, the ones with so strong a sense of author/cook that they are possessed of a "magic carpet" capacity to transport me to that other kitchen, whether geographically or temporally near or far. An anonymous printed recipe seems to me a dry, dead thing, an empty shell. At times - as in the case of the ghostly recipe in pale, spidery script on the back page of a 19th century cookery manual - it must suffice, but I'm frustrated by all those loose ends. Who wrote it? From whence came the recipe, and for whom did she (and one can only assume it was she) prepare the dish? When? Where?

Many of us frequently prefer to pursue our gastronomic odysseys in the comfort of a favorite armchair (or bed - it's astonishing - or is it? - how many cookbooks find their way to the bedroom!), so I stock an eclectic selection of excellent reads requiring no *batterie de cuisine* beyond the imagination.

Much as it pleases me to be able to satisfy a request "off the shelf" I am in some ways more delighted to receive an inquiry for a book that's unfamiliar, because it entails the research, the hunt, and ultimately (one hopes) a particularly satisfied client.

Ed. note. We think you will agree that each of the foregoing demonstrates clearly a passion which we, as CHB members certainly share.

There are a goodly number of newsletters with reference to food and food history available. Thanks to Joan Kriegstein, here are a few which we haven't reported in the CHB newsletter.

Cinnamon Hearts. Published bimonthly by Marilyn Helton, P.O. Box 578340, Modesto, CA 95357-8340. \$21. This is a newsletter with a health conscious bias.

Culinary Sleuth. Published five times a year by Lynn Kerrigan and Gail Jennings. P.O. Box 194, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-0194. \$15. Has resource information, culinary news letter reviews and recipes.

Gloria Pitzer's Secret Recipes Newsletter. P.O. Box 237, Maryville, Mich. 48040-0237. \$16. Ms. Pitzer provides recipes for popular menu items from various restaurants.

Healthy Exchanges. Edited by JoAnna Lund. P.O. Box 124, DeWitt, Iowa 52742-0124. \$22.50. Includes low-fat, low-sugar, etc. recipes.

NOTES AND QUERIES

Garum

Madeleine Kamman sent along some notes from the "Condiments" and "Sauces" chapters of *The New Making of a Cook* which is due out in the fall and a translation of the recipe for pissala from *La Cuisine du Comte de Nice* by Jacques Medecin.

From the chapter on Condiments. In the Mediterranean Cultures, mashed anchovy is very often added to preparations to create a most delicious concentration of taste and literally an explosion of flavor on the palate. This ancient habit is derived from the use in Ancient Rome of a condiment elaborated from fermented fish called garum or liquamen; if you want to know exactly what garum tasted like, try to find on the French Riviera and in the back country of Nice a true PISSALAT, which by now has become an extremely rare but still existing form of true liquamen. Although less rare, Worcestershire sauce with its anchovy and vinegar base could be considered a descendent of the oxygarum, the ancient Roman mixture of vinegar and garum.

From the chapter on sauces. Lessons from the Romans. It is wise for the sake of plain and simple understanding of the Western sauce heritage to go straight to ancient Rome and investigate rapidly the Roman way with sauces. Looking at Rome will also give us a window on the ancient Greeks since the Roman way to cook was strongly influenced by Greek slaves and

Greeks manumissioned to Roman citizenship. There were as many Greek cooks in ancient Rome as there were Greek teachers and artists.

To better understand Roman food and the Roman way with sauces, here is the formula for a sauce, extracted from the Apicius Roman Cookery book, compiled sometime between the 4th and the 5th century A.D. To accompany a roast meat, the writer advises to make a sauce containing: one quarter ounce each of pepper, lovage, parsley, celery seed, dill, asafoetida root, hazelwort (root of a hazel bush or infusion of hazel leaves?), a little pyrethum (aromatic leaves of a type of chrysanthemum), cyperus (?), caraway, cumin, ginger, 2 generous cups of liquamen and finally 8 ounces of oil.

No technique is indicated for this particular formula; it is not impossible that all the elements were mixed together to obtain a very fragrant mixture of spices and herbs, seasoned highly with the pungent both sulfuric and oniony smell and taste of the asafetida, the high salt of the liquamen and the fruity olive oil of Italy, which was probably whipped into the mixture to provoke an emulsion identical to those we make when we prepare salad dressings. To be a true dressing this mixture would have to contain an acid, which it does not, but perhaps some of the spices and herbs used were acid. Also other sauces in the book contain plenty of vinegar and/or mustard and are really what we call "salad dressings".

It is important for us to find out which components of such a sauce are still in use nowadays: most of the herbs, the ginger and the oil are part of our daily larder. Liquamen may be unfamiliar; it was a preparation which today, would belong to the family of fermented fish sauces of ancient China, and the modern fish sauces of Thailand and Vietnam.

The little Roman city of Antipolis, still in existence as Antibes on the French Riviera, used to be one of the greatest centers of production of liquamen. ...I strongly believe that the Provencal Pissalat - a fermented mixture of salt, anchovies or sprats and aluminum oxide - is a direct descendent of the liquamen. Liquamen came like all fermented condiments of its type, in diverse types of thickness and quality. In Greek it was called Garon or Haimation. After fermenting the fish in salt for two months in the sun, most of it liquefied, lost its smell of fish and acquired a smell of cheese. It was strained through fine weave baskets and with its solid residues, one prepared another type of fish sauce called Hallec.

Liquamen could be cut, mixed or reduced with water to become hydrogarum, with wine to become oenogarum or with vinegar to become oxygarum.

You may wonder why all this information on a product that really does not exist anymore, but if we do not use the product itself, we still use the concept of fermented fish sauce with Nuoc Mam, Nam Pla and some of our sauces are still prepared with mashed anchovies preserved in salt and/or oil. We can assume that the mixture of anchovies is the last and most modern replacement in Provencal and some Italian styles of cooking of the liquamen of the Romans. Which brings to mind the question of where the concept of liquamen really came from; did the technique of making it follow the Silk Road all the way to the Mediterranean or were all the fish sauces simply universal concepts in existence at the edges of large bodies of salt water such as the Mediterranean, the two China Seas or the Gulf of Thailand? The question seems legitimate since a large amount of the spices used by the Romans came from the Spice Islands or the Silk Road.

Madeleine Kamman's translation of the recipe for Pissala from Jacques Medecin's La Cuisine du Comte de Nice.

LOU PISSALA -Coulis of salted fish

Pissala in its classic form is made of "palaia" or mixture of brisling sardines and anchovies. Since it is not easy to find such small fish outside of the Mediterranean Basin, one has taken to the habit of making pissala from salted anchovies.

Less orthodox, but more accessible, the second formula tends to be generally used, but, the first recipe remains the favorite of true connoisseurs.

2 kilograms of palaia (brisling sardines and anchovies) (4 pounds)
500 grams (1 pound) of salt mixed with 1,500 kilograms (3 pounds)
cinnabar*

cloves - bay leaf - thyme - peppercorns - olive oil

1. Remove the heads and innards of the fish.

2. In a large non reactive container which should not be too large**, arrange a layer barely one inch thick of fish, a layer of (coloured) salt*, 3 cloves, a few grains of pepper, 1 bayleaf and one pinch of crushed thyme leaves; continue in this way building successive layers until one has reached the top of the bowl, the final layer must consist of salt and

aromatics.

(Translator's note - Medecin probably forgot to instruct to sprinkle with a layer of olive oil, see the next two steps.)

3. Place the container in a cool place away from dust.

4. On the 8th day, remove the oil that has come to the surface and stir the fish paste with a wooden spatula reaching all the way down to the bottom of the container. Each and every day, for a full month, repeat this operation, taking care each time to discard the oil that has come to the surface.

5. After a month strain the palia through a drum sieve (horsehair tamis) to completely eliminate the scales, the bones and the aromatics.

6. Place the puree in a glass jar and cover it with a thin layer of olive oil.

7. The pissala can be consumed immediately. Remember always to cover its surface with oil after use.

Pissala, which is much appreciated by the people of Nice, is a condiment used to enhance the taste of many diverse foods; hors-d'oeuvres, fish, cold meat, boiled meat etc. and with which one can prepare anchovy puff pastry sticks, anchovy butter and the pissaladiere (as you know the anchovy and onion tart, formerly foccacia of Nice, MMK).

Practical pissala":

One can prepare larger quantities ahead of time.

1 kilogram of salted anchovies plus the remaining ingredients given in the list of ingredients above.

1. Using 1 kilogram of salted anchovies, soak them well in water under (slowly, MMK) running water for at least 12 hours.

2. Strain the anchovies through a horsehair tamis. Gather the puree (coulis, MMK) in a glass jar and treat exactly as indicated for the true pissala above.

*Cinnabar, probably artificial mercury sulfide, a coloring agent which is bright red; the source of that was probably in Les Baux de Provence where aluminum has been extracted for centuries. And I always wondered where the colour of the garum was supposed to come from. This is a precious information.

**He probably means one of those glazed brown or grey containers which in Provence they call a "toupine" and which is deep and has straight sides. Toupines come in diverse sizes.

Jackie Knowles sent along an excerpt from Baron Cuvier on the Mackerel and the Garum of the Ancients. (We do not have the complete citation.)

"This is the place to say a few words of the Garum, - a preparation so celebrated among the gourmands of Ancient Rome, and which was made chiefly with the intestines and blood of the scomber. According to Pliny, it was an invention of the Greeks who prepared it with a fish which they gave the name of *garan*. In point of fact this name is found in a verse of Sophocles, cited by Julius Pollux.

Different receipts have been preserved for preparing this celebrated sauce. According to one, the intestines of fishes such as atherines, anchovies, mullets, &c. were partially salted, then put into a vessel and exposed to the sun, turning the mass over many times to excite decomposition to a certain extent. When the favourable moment arrived, a kind of close-worked basket was inserted. The liquid portion of the mixture which percolated through the meshes of the basket was the *garum*, that which remained on account of its firmer consistence, bore the name of *alec*.

In Bithynia a different process was followed. The fishes were put into a vessel with flour, adding to each modium two measures of salt. After remaining thus for a night, the mixture was placed in an open earthen vessel, which was exposed to the sun for two or three months, stirring it carefully. It was then covered up. Some poured above the mixture a double quantity of old wine. There was also a way of preparing this *garum* much sooner by artificial heating, or cooking, in place of exposing it to the sun. For this purpose a pickle was made strong enough to carry an egg; the fish was put in with a little marjoram, and after boiling and cooling, the liquid was passed through a strainer till clear.

Finally, a better *garum* than these was made by enclosing in a vessel the intestines and blood of the tunny with salt, and leaving the mixture for nearly two months, after which the vessel was pierced. The liquid which flowed out was the Sanguinolent *garum*.

The Coffee Gallery, 65 King St., Northampton, MA 01060, carries a wide variety of fine foods such as extra virgin olive oils, mustards, coffees, etc. which you may need to recreate period, or other recipes.

EVENTS

July 13 - 15, 1997. Heavy Metal Meets Culinary Mecca: The 1997 Annual Antique Stove Association Convention. Culinary Archives and Museum of Johnson & Wales. For information call the Museum at (401) 598-2805.

Kathleen O'Neill of Culinary Expeditions in Turkey, P.O. Box 1913 Sausalito, CA 94966, will be conducting tours to various regions of Turkey in the coming month.

Aegean and Mediterranean - June 12-23 and October 2-13

Gaziantep and south east Turkey - September 18-27

Istanbul - June 5-7, September 11-13 and October 16-18.

For further information write or call (415) 437-5700.

FACTINIS

According to Mary Taylor Simeti in her marvelous *Pomp and Sustenance: Twenty-Five Centuries of Sicilian Food* (NY: Knopf, 1989), A "capacious" stomach was so closely associated with nobility and character that Guido of Spoleto lost his crown in 888 because he lacked just such a stomach. He ate so little at a banquet given by the Archbishop of Metz that the Archbishop gave the crown to someone else "claiming that anyone who could be satisfied by a cheap and meager meal was unfit to reign over the Franks." (103)

NEWSLETTER

The CHB news letter is printed six times per year - September, November, January, March, May and July.

We rely on your for information. If you have anything which you feel would be of interest to our membership, please send it along to Pat Kelly, 345 A Neponset Ave., Dorchester, MA 02122-3103. (617) 282-0478.

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We wish to thank Marge Leibenstein for her leadership over the past two years. Her effort and tremendous affection for the CHB membership has been an inspiration to all of us.

Nancy Stutzman will be serving as our new Chairperson. Nancy has endless

energy and is a wonderful organizer. We can look forward to some interesting programs in the coming years.

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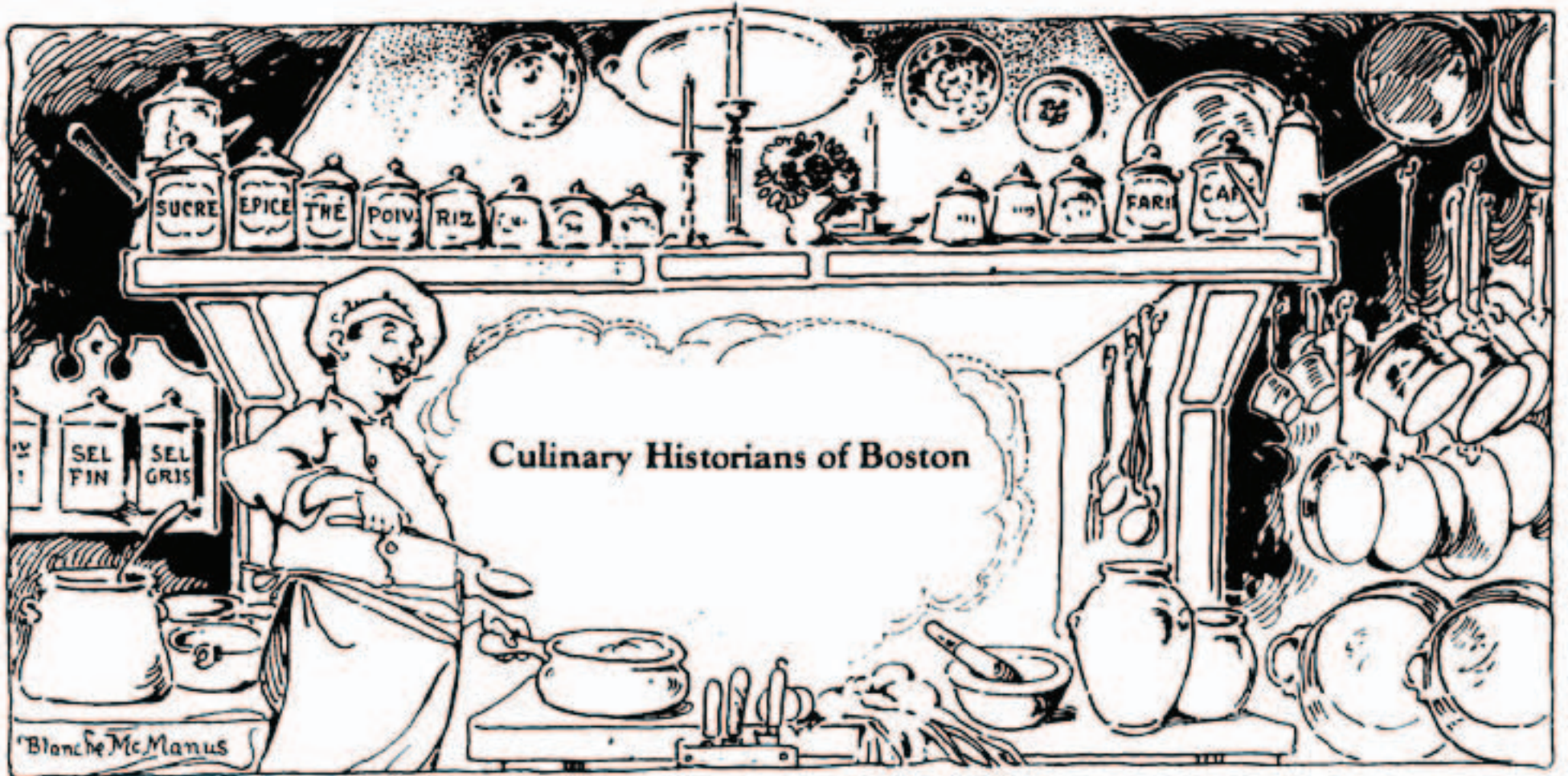
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