



The Food Journal

The Culinary Historians of Southern California Vol. 5 no 2 Summer 2005

Dedicated to pursuing food history and supporting culinary collections at Los Angeles Public Library

Program Notes

by Nancy Zaslavsky

Happy Birthday CHSC! To celebrate our 2005 tenth anniversary, we'll soon become a Friend of LAPL thanks to the work of Library Liaison Billie Connor-Dominguez, Treasurer Donna Cheney, C.P.A., and member-attorney Lynn Olsen.

Sunday, August 7 is coming up fast: it's our annual used cookbook sale and fundraiser at the Hollywood Farmers' Market. Donate those dusty books from hard-to-reach shelves! Beg your foodie friends for unwanted books and be a sport--offer to pick up and deliver their box with your load to the Central Library. Call Billie Connor-Dominguez at 213-228-7201 to arrange a delivery time, and/or to volunteer at the sale. And remember, this year, only the committee is allowed to browse pre-sale (hey, ya gotta work to reap a harvest!).

We're also pleased to announce the availability of wireless headphones at future programs in the Taper Auditorium for people who can use help hearing. Wireless hearing necklaces are also available for those wearing hearing aids. If you feel that one of these devices may help, call Billie Connor-Dominguez a week before each program. Our next lecture is September 10.

Do you love entertaining and party planning? We need a Hospitality Committee Co-Chair. If you've been thinking about getting more active in CHSC, this platform will let you flaunt your stuff! Call Ricki de Kramer or Fran Garbaccio.

It's sheer glee to ponder the first half of 2005: Charles Perry's "Bluebird Cafeteria and Pink Rat Café: L.A. Dining in the 1920's" soon followed by his "Mildred Pierce" talk with our pie raffle at Glendale's Alex Theater. We cried, "Hasta la vista, baby" at Dan Strehl's retirement dinner, drank beer in a blissful mood with Justin Jennings, and got wired with Jerry Baldwin's Peet's and Starbuck's stories. Patricia Rain soaked us in vanilla history before Tom Apostol and Akrevoe Emmanouilides treated us to all good things Greek. See Upcoming Dates, on the last page, for future delicious programs.

Jackie, Charles, and the Ninth-Century Eggplant

by Dan Strehl

Jackie Knowles has several valued traits: a good sense of humor, curiosity and tenacity. Without her stick-to-it-iveness, you wouldn't be reading this today.

About ten years ago, Susan Kent, the then-new City Librarian, asked the library's cultural programs manager to organize a food program similar to a popular one Kent had done in Minneapolis. So, Bill Stern, then food editor for Buzz Magazine, and I curated a successful series, "Breaking Bread." People wanted more, but the amount of work and the presenters' diva-like natures had been too much for the manager.

Enter Jackie who'd just come from a year in Boston, where she had attended Culinary Historians of Boston meetings, and she definitely wanted more. Her tenacity led to meetings with library management about how viable community programming could be. Ellen Rose, Russ Parsons, Jackie, and I lunched at Cafe Pinot with the Central Library Director, Betty Gay Teoman, and we all assured her that there would be interest and a good base of people in Los Angeles to provide programming.

A rather skeptical management finally gave the go-ahead. We soon had our first program: Charles Perry on "The Eggplant in 9th-century Baghdad." Although my friends in library management smirked (9th-century eggplant?) we filled Meeting Room A to overflowing, and we were on our way.

It wasn't long before we moved into the auditorium for a series of programs orchestrated by Jackie, including some of my favorites--Andy Smith on the history of ketchup (more smirks from my friends), and the tuna program that changed my life (well, made me a tuna-eater of fine oil-packed fish from Italy). We owe the deepest thanks to Jackie for activating our group.

After several years organizing dynamic programs, Jackie turned the job over to Nancy Zaslavsky, who continues to find informative, inspired presentations. Ricki de Kramer has taken on post-program hospitality for years and deserves special thanks. When we began, I thought we'd do well with fif-

teen attendees. The group has grown incredibly and developed into something I could not have imagined (much of what has happened in my career at LAPL has been beyond my imagination). The social aspect has been especially important to the group's success. Bess Petlak and Kirsten West organized our first "Scholar's Potluck," and Helen Allen and crew (Glenous Absmeier, Rose Marie Wright and Joan Nielsen, among others), keep the semi-annual parties one of membership's perks.

The symbiotic relationship of CHSC and the library has resulted in a better library collection and a better educated group. We've presented nearly ninety programs, and I've learned something from them all.

Working with CHSC has been terrific, and I've met a memorable cast of characters and friends, but it's time to leave for Tucson, probably around September if I get all my projects here done. Don't think I'm done with culinary history. I've had discussions with historian Madge Griswold, and we're starting a group in Tucson this fall. If you know anyone who's interested, let me know. Thanks for the memories.

News and Notes

• **Sandy Schuckett** is pleased to announce the publication of her book, *Political Advocacy for School Librarians: You Have the Power!* Copies may be ordered from Linworth Publishing, Inc, www.linworth.com.

• Culinary historians **Sandra Oliver, Shirley Cherkasky, and Alice Arndt** announce the formation of **NACHO**, the North American Culinary Historians Organization, a free electronic umbrella group for culinary historians to share information, resources, and event calendars. For now, see Sandy's website, www.foodhistorynews.com for information.

A Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Historians,

CHSC's 10th anniversary marks a big change as founding member Dan Strehl retires and leaves L.A. Those of us who've relied on this walking card catalog for research guidance will sorely miss his generous assistance. Dan, we hope you won't mind the cookbook challenges we'll send your way electronically.

Speaking of Dan's generosity, our gallant librarian pens an exit piece and reports from Ann Arbor about the inauguration of the Longone Center for American Culinary Research at University of Michigan's Clements Library, an important collection sure to be a culinary historian's "destination resort."

While in Michigan, Dan attended meetings for the newly-formed North American Culinary Historians Organization, an electronic, free (for now) network. NACHO will keep us in the know about other groups' events and apprise them of ours. A listserve is planned for some good dialoguing.

In April, Nancy Zaslavsky and I attended the history-rich IACP conference in Dallas where we heard Harvard anthropology professor Richard Wrangham speak about paleo-gastronomy; Rachel Lauden on cultural research; Laura Shapiro in a lively exchange with representatives from Kraft and Campbell Soup about how corporate test kitchens have influenced American cooking; and Andy Smith, Alice Arndt, Barbara Haber and Sandy Oliver debate what's American about American food. We learned about chuck wagons and celebrated Texas cookery at the Endangered Treasures dinner to benefit the IACP Culinary Trust's library grant program for cookbook preservation. Speaking of which, our friend Andy Smith, the Trust Board's president, has started an historic cookbook reprint project. See ordering info on page 3

Bon appétit,

The Culinary Historians of Southern California
Los Angeles Public Library
bconnor@lapl.org

President	Charles Perry
VP-Programming	Nancy Zaslavsky
VP-Membership	Susanna Erdos
VP-Hospitality	Ricki de Kramer Fran Garbaccio
Treasurer	Donna Chaney
Secretary	Denise Resetar
Publicity	Helen Nielsen Allen
Library Liaison	Billie Connor-Dominguez
Editor	Amelia Saltzman
Art Director	Rodolfo Buonocore

Upcoming Dates

July 17

Members-only picnic, "Beard at the Beach"
Portuguese Bend Beach Club

August 7

CHSC Annual Used Cookbook Sale. Hollywood Farmers' Market 8AM. Volunteers needed. Contact Billie Connor-Dominguez (213) 228-7201.

September 10

Carol Selvah Rajah, Malaysian Cooking, including Nonya Cuisine

October 15

Luigi Ballerini, "The Renaissance and the Modern: The Art of Eating Well in Italy"

November TBA

Members-only tour and lunch at Graber's Olives

November 12

Jet Tila, "The History of Thai Cuisine in Los Angeles"

December TBA

Members-only holiday party

January 14

Annual Charles Perry lecture

Does your internet provider think CHSC mass communications e-mails are spam? If so, you could be missing important announcements! Contact your provider to let them know our secretary Denise Resetar's address, denise@stellarevents.com, is A-OK.

Don't Miss Out:

Don't Miss Out! Make sure Membership Chair Susanna Erdos has your correct contact information, including e-mail address. We need to keep postage costs to a minimum by sending more e-mail announcements and less snail mail! \$5 dues mailing cost surcharge to members wishing to receive all CHSC correspondence by US mail.

Please direct all questions to Susanna Erdos: serdos@aol.com or (323)-663-5407.

Hospitality Co-chair and Saturday morning Volunteers needed! Contact Ricki de Kramer (626) 799-5314 and Fran Garbaccio (626) 355-6536 or fgarbaccio@aol.com.

Longone Center and Culinary Archive Inaugurated

by Dan Strehl

Ann Arbor, MI---Lilacs perfumed the air and tulips garnished the University of Michigan campus the weekend of May 13-15, 2005, as the Longone Center for American Culinary Research and the Janice Blustein Longone Culinary Archive were inaugurated at the Clements Library. In addition, the Center hosted its first biennial symposium on American culinary history.

The symposium featured curators from the Clements Library highlighting treasures from the collection (including a wonderful Porkopolis poster from the first American centennial). Later, there were familiar speakers: Anne Willan and Mark Cherniavsky; Andy Smith, and Darra Goldstein. A grand reception featuring American foods and Michigan wines (much improved) was held in the reading room of the Clements. There was also an excellent brunch at Zingerman's Roadhouse. The grand finale was an America Banquet with a presentation of American Culinary Music.

Jan spoke to us in 1996, her speech titled "The Cook Not Mad," after an early American cookbook. She ran the Wine and Food Library, an antiquarian bookstore in Ann Arbor, for many years. The culinary archive consists of over 20,000 items from her personal collection, and it is slowly being given special cataloging. The Center is developing some special databases, and will sponsor symposia on American cuisine every two years. The next will focus on regional and ethnic foods. For more information, see their website at www.clements.umich.edu.

Check it Out Cambridge World History of Food

by Helen Haskell

Where can you look to find out about algae as a vegetable supplement, llamas and alpacas as food sources, what prehistoric people ate and the histories and cultures of food and drink in Asia, Europe and the Americas? If you answered "Central Library," you would be right. You could come to the library and conduct research that might well include several subject departments and a variety of resources. Or you could use the *Cambridge World History of Food* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). Editors Kenneth Kiple and Kriemhild Conee Ornelas gathered writings from 224 experts over a period of seven years resulting in two large volumes covering food topics in depth and breadth. Library patrons who attend culinary schools use the Cambridge history to answer assignment questions. Other library regulars use the two-volume set simply to satisfy a curiosity.

The Cambridge differs in its organization from other culinary encyclopedias. Volume One describes and analyzes dietary liquids and foods while Volume Two

considers food and drink within a cultural context and by specific regions such as the Arctic and Sub-Arctic, the Pacific Islands and the Low Countries.

Volume One includes an entry on "Sea Turtles and Their Eggs." Author James J. Parsons discusses the lives of varieties of sea turtles, their exploitation, world attitudes and laws, history of the London turtle trade and turtle soups. Other entries offer pictures of water buffalo and lengthy articles about breeds, domestication, distribution and uses in history and modern times. You'll even find a map of "Tribal Groups Practicing Buffalo Sacrifice." Perhaps you want to know what amino acids are in rabbit meat or what insects are used as food by specific stages of life cycle or that Witchetty grubs were once an important food source for Australian Aborigines (and are currently on the menus of some interesting Australian restaurants). Did you know Kola or cola tonics were advertised as highly nutritional during the late nineteenth-century in Britain? The latter portion of the first volume is dedicated to vitamins, minerals, and nutrition-related diseases and disorders.

Volume Two explores such topics as food trends, the historical and physical effects of nutrition, and food taboos. Volume two concludes with an extensive dictionary of the world's plant foods, an index of Latin names, a proper name index and a detailed subject index.

Whether you wish to browse through the volumes or have a specific food related question, reference and circulating copies are available in the Science, Technology and Patents Department at Central Library. The Lake View Terrace Branch also has a reference copy.



The California Bear-Chef first appeared in the Pan-Pacific cookbook, 1915.

Call for winter newsletter stories and member news!

E-mail or tell me your story ideas, news or questions for the query corner for *The Food Journal*.

Story submissions are due electronically by November 15, 2005 to

Amelia@ameliasaltsman.com

International Association of Culinary Professionals
Food Without Borders
An IACP Forum on Culinary Diversity
Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, England
August 25-28, 2005
www.iacp.com
(800) 928-4227

Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery "Authenticity"

Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, England
September 3-4, 2005
www.oxfordsymposium.org.uk

CHSC Annual Used Cookbook Sale

Sunday, August 7, 2005
8:00 am to 1pm (or until we sell out!)

Hollywood Farmers' Market (at Selma and Ivar)

Volunteer and get first crack at all the books!
Donate books and make room on your bookshelves for new acquisitions!!

Buy books and raise funds for future LAPL acquisitions!!!

To volunteer or donate books contact:
Billie Connor-Dominguez (213) 228-7201
or bconnor@lapl.org

In Store: Greek Markets

by Akrevoe Emmanouilides

Would you like to prepare a Greek dinner like those described at the June meeting?

C&K Importing at Pico and Normandie, near St. Sophia Cathedral, has served the Greek community for decades. Proprietor Chrys Chrys (Papa Christo) stocks countless imported products that will remind you of an Athenian *agora* (marketplace). You'll find Greek cheeses including yellow grating-cheese kefalotyri, Cypriot halloumi for saganaki, and kasseri, a semi-sharp table cheese. You'll find olives of course, felo, tarama, soutzoukakia (spicy sausages), gigantes (large dried limas), lentils, coffee, Greek wines, ouzo, and dried herbs and spices to enhance traditional cooking. If you'd rather buy than do-it-yourself, there are triangular *petes* (cheese and spinach), fresh house-baked bread, and traditional desserts such as baklava, custard cups, koulourakia (butter cookies), and kataifi. The store has a deli counter where you can order lunch and offers a Family Night Dinner on Thursdays.

Hawthorne Market in Torrance stocks similar products and has a fresh produce section for its Greek and Near Eastern patrons. In Downey where there is a large Greek population, Greek House Importing serves a discriminating clientele.

If you want to celebrate a traditional Greek Easter next year, C&K and Greek House sell spring lamb you can thread on a spit and barbecue Greek-village style. Summer festivals sponsored by Greek Orthodox churches from Santa Barbara to San Diego sell prepared foods and cooking ingredients. At these events, guests can savor Hellenic cuisine and enjoy *philoxenia* (hospitality).

C & K Importing

2771 W. Pico Blvd., L.A.
(213) 737-2970

www.papachristo.com

Hours: Tu-Sat, 9AM-8PM, Sun, 8:30AM-4PM

Greek House Importing

7856 E. Firestone Blvd., Downey
(562) 862-1220

Hours: M-F, 9AM-9PM, Sat, 9AM-7PM

Hawthorne Market

24202 Hawthorne Blvd., Torrance
(310) 373-4448

Hours: Mon-Sat, 8AM-8PM, Sun, 9AM-7PM

Home for the Holidays

by Ricki de Kramer

Judy Cohn's lovely Northridge house provided a warm Southern California setting for our CHSC winter holiday 1950s feast. The previous cold weather gave us a respite for the day, enabling Helen Allen and Doris Arima to have Mimosas and Bloody Marys ready for us on the patio. President Charles Perry, clad in vintage Hawaiian shirt (how 50s!), gave us a little period history before we dug into classics like Cheese Strata, Corned Beef Hash, Chicken a la King, Tomato Aspic, and Layered Salad. For some guests, these old favorites were new taste treats—that's what the Culinary Historians are all about after all.

Thanks to all who worked to make the event a success: Joanna and Susanna Erdos, Denise Resetar, Fran Garbaccio, Eve Otaola, Glenous Absmeier, Shirley Thomas, "expediters" Don Corbett, Janet Fahey, and Stacey Rain Strickler, and host Judy Cohn. Special thanks to Glenous who brought her usual charm and enthusiasm to the raffle which netted \$465.00 for LAPL's culinary collection.



Stick a Fork in Him, the Roast Is Dan

by Charles Perry

What do the Culinary Historians do when one of our founders retires? Give them a historical roast, of course. On March 7, 2005, a group of us gathered at the 82-year-old El Cholo Restaurant on Western Avenue to mark Dan Strehl's imminent retirement to Arizona.

Hendrik van Leuven was the rotisseur-in-chief, but the funniest roast of the evening was Helen Allen's skit on what it's like to try to reach Dan by phone at the Hollywood Library. We always assume that's because Dan is busily running around, but I must reveal that Dan once showed me a private garden patio where the librarians can retire from all that hurly-burly of looking up books and stuff.

Now that I think about it, I should have brought that up when it was my turn. As roasts go, mine was a mild sauté, just a reminiscence of running into Dan at food conferences and then being approached by him to join this project of a culinary historians' association associated with the L.A. Public Library.

Hendrik had done his research. He'd discovered that he and Dan had gone to the same high school in northern San Diego County—and that Dan had been a drum major there. We also learned that he has been a proud member of the La Jolla-based Unicorn Film Society since the 1960s. These unexpected revelations led Dan to reminisce about the time he spent in Nigeria, and his involvement in a local opera performance there.

Billie Connor-Dominguez sent a toast—not a roast—to her library colleague, which was read aloud. And dinner co-chair Don Corbett reminisced about often running into Dan at the Hollywood Farmers Market and working together at the annual used cookbook sale. It was Don who presented Dan with a parting gift from the Culinary Historians: a generous gift certificate from Sur La Table, so that our tallest historian could indulge his keen kitchen interests.

Romaine Ahlstrom said some nice things about her husband, but Nancy Zaslavsky warned her that Dan (who thinks chorizo is another food group) was in love with another woman—Encarnacion Piñedo, whose 19th-century recipes Dan edited as *Encarnacion's Kitchen*. Have no fear, Romaine.



L-R: Tim Castle, Event Co-Chair Joan Nielsen, Romaine Ahlstrom, Dan Strehl, Event Co-Chair Don Corbett



Helen Nielsen Allen: "Dan, are you there?"



L-R: Hendrik Van Leuven, Dan Strehl, Romaine Ahlstrom, Charles Perry

Early Cookbook Reprints Available!

- Mexican Cooking (Gebhardt Chili Powder Company, circa 1908)
- Lone Star Cook Book (Ladies of the Dallas Free Kindergarten and Training School, 1901)
- El Paso Cookbook (Ladies' Auxiliary, Y.M.C.A., 1898)
- The National Cookery Book (Women's Centennial Executive Committee, 1876)

Contact:

Applewood Books: www.awb.com or (800) 277-5312 (M-F, 9am-5pm Eastern)

Japanese American Contributions to the Los Angeles Culinary Landscape

by Daniel Lee

Hamanosuke Shigeta, locally known as Charlie Hama, opened the first restaurant by a Japanese immigrant in Los Angeles in 1884 at 340 East First Street in what is now Little Tokyo. No menus have survived, but it is unlikely that sushi was offered. Due to the gender imbalance of the American West, early Japanese American men found the jobs most open to them were what was generally considered “women’s work,” such as preparing food for mainstream Americans. (Chinese men cooked and opened laundries for the same reason.) After learning to prepare Western food as servants in a private home or working at railroad camps, and with the assistance of bilingual cookbooks, enterprising immigrants could open restaurants with minimal capital. They served typical American dishes of the era, (which they hadn’t even heard of before arrival), with perhaps Japanese food off the menu for Japanese customers.

In addition to mainstream American food, many Japanese were able to take advantage of the popularity of American-style Chinese food to run what they called “chop suey” cafes. [See photo] Japanese food did not achieve the same degree of exposure or acceptance. It was served in restaurants in Japanese American neighborhoods, but only the most adventurous mainstream Americans tried Japanese cuisine and it had little impact on what most Americans ate.

One unexpected result of this vocational niche was that many Japanese American men had experience with Western cooking, far more than they had with Japanese cooking. Some used this knowledge to introduce new foods and methods

to their families. At times, however, conflicts developed with wives who had not expected rivals in the kitchen.

Japanese Americans first began to influence the tastes of mainstream Americans following World War II, in the 1950s. Growing United States political involvement in the Pacific, including the thousands of America servicemen who had been stationed there, contributed to a rising interest in Japan. From the mid-fifties, images of Japan became increasingly prominent in American popular culture, including plays and movies such as *Teahouse of the August Moon* and *Sayonara*, construction of Japanese-style gardens, and Japanese design motifs. This interest found culinary expression in sukiyaki restaurants, which marketed themselves as exotic places to celebrate special occasions. Prominent examples in the Los Angeles area included the Imperial Gardens (Hollywood), Yamato (Century City), Miyako (Pasadena and Torrance) and the Kawafuku Café (Little Tokyo, moving to Gardena in

the early 1970s). Suki-yaki restaurants paid much more attention to décor than pre-war Japanese establishments, featuring indoor gardens, oriental bric-a-brac, and carefully costumed waitresses. Their food was not so different from standard American tastes—its main contribution was to feature soy sauce as a seasoning for cooking beef and vegetables. There was little fish, though some restaurants did feature limited sashimi. (One menu described sashimi as “fresh fish fillets,” which must have been a surprise to the uninitiated.) However, what the restaurants did offer was the opportunity to engage an unknown culture, not just through the dishes and the décor,

but also through speaking directly to the kimonoed waitress who cooked the food at the table. (The lyrics to the 1963 pop hit song “Sukiyaki” have nothing to do with the dish, but show the degree to which the word was associated with things Japanese at the time.) Similar to sukiyaki, the table-top grilling chain Benihana, which first opened in 1976, introduced a showy and interactive form of cooking, but with flavors that were largely familiar to mainstream diners.

Sushi was the first Japanese food to challenge mainstream American eating habits through taste and texture as well as presentation. In the mid-1960s, Noritoshi Kanai, a recent immigrant, decided to promote sushi as a product that other companies would not be able to copy. Though Japanese Americans had always eaten sashimi, most of them originally had come from Western Japan, where sushi was generally large rolls and inari (ingredients inside a fried tofu wrapper) sushi filled with vinegared rice and vegetables with minimal use of raw fish. Kanai decided to market eastern Japanese (Tokyo) style sushi, which uses more raw fish, to the growing numbers of Japanese businessmen, most of whom came from Tokyo.

In order to get sufficient quantities of fish at a practical price, Mr. Kanai’s company innovated the use of frozen fish for sushi, importing it from Korea. (Chefs in Japan prided themselves on using fresh and seasonal fish. Eventually, supply difficulties would prompt most of them to follow the American example.) Chefs in the United States also innovated the use of broiled eel as a sushi topping (as opposed to the traditional method of serving it over or mixed into a bowl of rice),

which eventually spread back to Japan, blazing a trail for California rolls and other American inventions.

Gradually, adventurous mainstream Americans began to encounter sushi, and the first sushi bar aimed at non-Japanese, Osho, opened in Century City in 1973. Unlike sukiyaki, sushi introduced unfamiliar tastes and ingredients as well as the novel experience of eating at the sushi bar, ordering directly from the chef. As Los Angeles Times reviewer Lois Dwan wrote of the Gardena restaurant Masukawa in 1973, “Summon up your courage if you have never tried sushi (different combinations of raw fish with vinegar rice); delicious and a pleasure to watch skilled chefs prepare.” The number of Southern California restaurants with a sushi bar more than quadrupled between 1977 and 1980 to 172. Then, the 1980

television mini-series “Shogun” accelerated the boom in other parts of the country. Today, about 2,000 restaurants in Southern California serve sushi, including many non-Japanese Asian establishments, mainstream seafood places, and even unlikely venues such as Starbucks.



Cherry Blossom Café in the Grand Central Market, c. 1930s. The café specialized in chop suey, with its menu listing both American and Chinese varieties. Gift of Fujiko Watari and Family, Japanese American National Museum (96.479.7)



Little Tokyo Businessmen’s meeting at Kawafuku Café, Little Tokyo, 1952. Photograph by Toyo Miyatake Studio, Gift of the Alan Miyatake Family, Japanese American National Museum (96.267.171.4P)

Daniel Lee is an associate curator at the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo and is curating an exhibition on Japanese American food culture to open Fall 2006