

## Where the Buffalo Roam... Again

By Tae Ellin

THE bison is ingrained in our culinary history as nourishment for the American Indian, as food for European settlers traveling west, and then for their near extermination by white men. Today bison are celebrating a comeback. As wild herds are returned to the plains and bison ranching can be found in all 50 states; nutritionists recognize their meat as a valuable food source, and after more than 65 years, their image is back on the nickel.

Although commonly referred to as American buffalo, bison is not a buffalo at all. Its scientific name is *Bison bison*, and it is a larger cousin of the European *wisent*. Only the African buffalo and the Asian water buffalo (the milk of which is used to produce *Mozzarella di Bufala*) are true buffalo, which in appearance look far more like cows than bison. There are many theories as to how *Bison bison* came to be called buffalo, but the term first appeared in print in 1754 Mark Catesby's *A Natural History of Carolina*.

The first bison traveled to North America approximately 600,000 years ago, by crossing the land mass that once connected Asia to Alaska. These large ancestors moved south and east, and as the climate began to change, two new bison appeared, *Bison antiquus* and *Bison occidentalis*. *Bison antiquus* died out, but *Bison occidentalis* thrived. From this species, two more species were born, *Bison*



Courtesy of Western History Department, Denver Public Library

*First Buffalo: The first known drawing of an American buffalo published in Europe (1552–53), from Francisco Lopez de Gomara's Historia de las Indias.*

*athabascae* (the wood buffalo) and *Bison bison* (the plains buffalo).

By A.D. 1000, the two species had firmly established themselves. The wood bison roamed throughout the Rocky Mountains down through New Mexico and possibly the Appalachian mountains. The plains bison lived on the prairie and plains of North America and Canada.

The population of the wood bison, which was never as great as the plains bison, was killed off largely by white men, between the seventeen and eighteen hundreds. The last free-roaming wood bison was reportedly killed in 1801 in Pennsylvania leaving only the plains bison to represent the species. To the early American Indians, bison

was not merely a part of their diet. The website of the National Bison Association lists over 120 byproducts of bison at the time, including dolls made from the beard, cooking vessels made from the stomach liner, rattles from the scrotum, and fuel from the chips.

The first European to record having seen a bison was the Spanish explorer Hernando Cortez, in 1521, in a menagerie kept by Montezuma II, whom he had recently conquered. The Spanish historian Antonio de Solis y Rivadeneyra wrote, "It has a Bunch on its Back like a Camel: its Flanks dry, its Tail large, and its Neck covered with Hair like a Lion: It is cloven-footed, its Head armed like

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Papers demonstrating serious culinary history research will be considered for inclusion in issues of the CHNY newsletters. Please contact Helen Brody, newsletter editor. Matriculating students of culinary history or related topics are invited to contribute.

# FROM THE CHAIR

WITH the opening of CHNY's 20th season of programming, we can all be proud that our organization has diversified its educational mission by awarding the first annual Amelia Scholar's Grant, a \$1,000 unrestricted stipend to support scholarly investigations in culinary history. The grant went to Elizabeth Alsop, a CHNY member and PhD. candidate in Comparative Literature at CUNY, who proposes to study northeastern American culinary traditions from the "America Eats" project, a fascinating venture undertaken by the Works Projects Administration between 1935 and 1942 to document regional foods and foodways exhibited at fairs, church suppers, and the like. The WPA never completed the project, but archives brim with source materials, and Ms. Alsop will use the Amelia Scholar's Grant to underwrite trips to examine these materials firsthand. We will look forward to hearing her report next year.

There were four other applicants for the grant; each was meritorious. The inspired topics ranged from an analysis of an early nineteenth century cookery manuscript held by the Maryland Historical Society, to the culinary exchanges between France and her colonies in Guadeloupe, Morocco, and Vietnam, through what the lavish dinners orchestrated by Catherine de Medici reveal about French and Italian culture of the Renaissance, and concluded with how gingerbread has evolved and been used for elaborate showpieces. All members of the reviewing committee found ranking the proposals difficult, and we wished we could have supported each project financially. On behalf of CHNY, I would like to

thank Ellen J. Fried, Anne McBride, Anne Mendelson, Linda Pelaccio, and Diana Pittet for giving generously of their talents and experience in evaluating the applications, and Diane Klages for efficiently attending to all of the paperwork required by the grant applications.

One other bit of news is of a more technical nature: CHNY is currently being reorganized from an unincorporated not-for-profit association to a not-for-profit corporation. This change in legal status, which should be completed this fall, is designed to protect all members of CHNY in the event that the organization was sued. We already have been incorporated under the name Culinary Historians of New York, Inc., and will soon have that corporation registered as a non-profit with the IRS. In the meanwhile, CHNY will continue to operate as a not-for-profit association until all the filings are complete and CHNY transfers its assets and operations to CHNY, Inc. The current members of the steering committee will act as the initial directors of the corporation. Our thanks to Patterson, Belknap, Webb & Tyler, LLP, and particularly Emily Ritter, Esq., who have tirelessly represented CHNY on a *pro bono* basis.

If anyone is interested in examining the new by-laws of CHNY, Inc., joining the board of directors, joining the reviewing committee for the Amelia Scholar's Grant, or has any other questions or comments about CHNY, please contact me at [chairman@culinaryhistoriansny.org](mailto:chairman@culinaryhistoriansny.org) or (212) 673-6905.



# Fund Raiser for the Culinary Historians of New York “The Larder Invaded”

WILLIAM WOYS WEAVER, Professor of Culinary Arts & Food Studies, Drexel University, and contributing editor to *Gourmet Magazine*, is offering CHNY members and friends an opportunity to own a culinary classic and help CHNY as well!

“The Larder Invaded” is believed to be a rare and unique surviving copy of a work issued by Philadelphia print seller William Smith sometime about 1850–55. The artist is D. Wüst or Weist, about whom very little is known. The print is assumed to commemorate an important culinary event in Philadelphia, and may be a humorous take-off on the hunt and animal paintings of Landseer. The print image measures about 19 x 25½ inches and is very beautifully hand-tinted.

The print served as the crown jewel and frontispiece for the catalog of the the largest exhibit on American food history ever assembled: “The Larder Invaded: Reflections on Three Centuries of Philadelphia Food and Drink.” The 1986–87 exhibition was held jointly by the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The print was later exhibited at the Campbell Soup Museum in Camden, NJ, when a small portion of the exhibition was moved there for continued display. The print is presently matted in the original acid-free matting created for it by the Library Company staff. It is not framed but is in large acid-free folders.

No other copy of this rare print has come on the market, so it is dif-

ficult to establish a value beyond its price of \$7,500 insured by the Campbell Soup Foundation. William Woys Weaver, who purchased the print at the Hamburg, PA, antiques show a number of years ago, is offering it for sale to CHNY members and collectors of fine prints for the insured value. The buyer may send \$1,000 of the purchase price directly to CHNY scholarship fund to gain a tax advantage where permitted by law—in addition to owning a magnificent print.

Color scans of the print are available on CD to interested buyers. For more information contact William Woys Weaver, Box 75, Devon, PA 19333-0075. Tel: (610) 688-9185; fax: (610) 989-0976; E-mail: W3Food@aol.com.



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# Culinary Bookshelf

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## *Eating Architecture*

Edited by Jamie Horwitz

and Paulette Singley

Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2004

*Eating Architecture* is a collection of scholarly essays which promises to investigate “what can be learned by examining the intersections of the preparations of meals and the production of space.” Anyone expecting a straightforward review of the kitchen will be disappointed; “architecture” in this context means the inherent structures of meal, the rituals of dining, and views things culinary through a prism of design, broadly defined. Readers must be willing to cope with jargon-laden essays and parse semiotic analyses, but the effort is richly rewarded with a series of quirky essays by international scholars. The beautifully produced book is lavishly illustrated, and the stunning images alone could

justify adding the volume to your collection.

New Yorkers will find Dorita Hannah’s “Butcher’s White: Where the Art Market Meets the Meat Market in New York City” an intriguing exploration of sacrifice, art, and filth, organized around the uniting color white. Walking through the far West Village’s remaining wholesale butcher’s markets, one sees the blood-smeared aprons and glimpses into the cool, white, refrigerated rooms where carcasses are broken down into consumable units. Slaughterhouses become temples of ritual sacrifice. This reality is juxtaposed with the burgeoning art gallery scene, where again sterile white temples of art draw in gentrifying New Yorkers who must cautiously sidestep the gore that is sluiced out onto the cobblestone streets. Hannah asks whether the “museumification” of

the meatpacking district is a form of purification.

Allen S. Weiss’s essay, “Culinary Manifestations of the *Genius Loci*,” focuses on modern art and modern cuisine, arguing that both are driven by invention. Issues of *terroir* and authenticity play against the need of the artist—culinary and plastic—to invent, and, perhaps, rebel against tradition. Weiss considers the work of Michel Bras, a three-starred Michelin chef in the Aubrac region of France, whose *cuisine verte* makes abundant use of local plants: one can find herbs and flowers from the auberge’s gardens on the plate. But this sense of immediacy, while obviously important to the meal, must be considered *in situ*. The carefully designed dining room, allowing the diner’s eye to drift from the setting sun on the distant horizon to the immediate garden, evokes French symbolism from Versailles and the Sun King, whose court saw the dawn of French *haute cuisine*. The dining room is simultaneously deemed referential and iconoclastic, by rejecting traditional Albertian perspective. Weiss argues that the design of the dining room offers a “brilliant aesthetic and symbolic effect,” which, he rues, has been lost in a recent renovation to increase visibility of the landscape.

*Eating Architecture* will not appeal to everyone. But scattered throughout its pages, including an all-to-brief posthumous prologue by Phyllis Pray Bober elaborating on Vasari’s description of Andrea del Sarto and the Company of the Trowel, a Florentine eating society where artists created magnificent subtleties for their pleasure and competitive spirits, are scintillating nuggets that will stimulate those willing to invest the time and effort needed to tackle this challenging work.

—CATHY KAUFMAN



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# Program Summaries

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**NEW YORK CITY FOOD**  
Presented by Arthur Schwartz  
March, 2005

On a snowy evening, to the sounds of Liza, Ella, Bobby Short, and even the cast of Annie singing songs about New York, New York, the culinary historians were welcomed to a talk about New York City food with a multi-cultural rainbow of some of our city's fabled foods: Yiddish knishes, Italian meatballs, Chinese sesame noodles, Sardi's Katherine Cornell salad, Dr. Brown's Celery Tonic and (created in New York—who knew?) Bloody Marys. We were being primed to hear Arthur Schwartz, New York food maven and radio host, Italian cooking teacher and author of the recently released book, *New York City Food*, who would in turn fascinate and regale us with tales of popular New York dishes and how they came to be.

Schwartz began by saying that our city speaks in 132 languages and that we are more of a tossed salad than a melting pot. He went through the history of food in this city century by century, starting with the cruller and cole slaw, both introduced when the Dutch East India Company came to New York with Henry Hudson in 1609. In 1664 the English came and introduced the chop house, Keene's being the last of that breed. In 1825 the Erie canal opened access to the Great Lakes, making New York a trading capital. Two years later Delmonico's opened and served dishes that the chef created, such as Lobster Newburg and shell steak (or "New York steak" as it is known elsewhere). Further uptown, from the late 19th

century until prohibition, lobster palaces thrived in the "bird and bottle" joints around a somewhat racy Times Square (then known as Longacre Square).

The Germans arrived in the 1840s and gave us rye bread, salt and caraway sticks, onion buns and sausages. They opened delicatessens (*delicat*— "delicate," *essen*— "to eat"). From the German delicatessen evolved, with the arrival of the Jews, the Kosher delicatessen. In the 1870s, when Coney Island was an elegant retreat from the city, Feltman's Coney Island Beer Hall hired a hot dog bun-splitter named Nathan, who went on to found Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs across the street. Nathan wooed away Feltman's customers with lower prices (five cents) and an image of health by offering doctors free hotdogs if they came in their white coats. Other Jewish contributions were sour milk, borscht, kosher meats, herring, lox, and the egg cream, created, it is said, by Louis Auster. Today's egg cream contains neither egg nor cream, but Schwartz feels that Auster's original secret ingredient was a combination of the two.

In 1845 the potato famine initiated an influx of the Irish who brought with them their scones and who adapted their native bacon and cabbage by stealing the idea of corned beef and cabbage from the Germans.

Porterhouse steaks got their name in the early 19th century. A Porter House was a dive on the waterfront that served beer, porter, and a grilled slice of top loin. The cut's popularity spread and became known as "porterhouse" steak.

Southern Italians began to come to America after the unification of Italy in 1870 but their influence was not important until the early 20th century beginning with the opening of Lombardi's Pizza. Italians, like so many immigrants, adapted many of their native dishes to the ingredients at hand in their new home, giving us such other delights as Shrimp Francese.

Schwartz went on to describe the arrival of newer classic New York restaurants such as Horn & Hardart, Childs, Schrafft, Choc Full o'Nuts, and the "21" Club. He outlined the arrival of the Poles, of Caribbean and African food, Russian food, and the glories of Korean produce markets.

At the end of the evening we left in a New York frame of mind chewing thoughtfully on what we had learned and on Black and White cookies from Glaser's Bake Shop.

—JOHN JENKINS

**PIG PERFECT:**  
Encounters with Remarkable Swine  
Presented by Peter Kaminsky  
May, 2005

Peter Kaminsky is passionate about pork. Enough so for the distinguished food writer and naturalist to devote his most recent book to the subject. His quest for the true flavor of pork, all but lost over the years as factory-farming has taken its toll, led him to farmers and scholars, archeologists and chefs, both here and abroad. He shared his findings with us on a warm June evening at the French Culinary Institute (FCI) in a program tracing the culinary history of American pigs from their free-roaming origins in Europe to the heritage breeds lovingly raised by dedicated traditionalist farmers across the country today.

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## Program Summaries

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Kaminsky's journey began in a small village outside Beaune at the "cochonaille," or communal butchering, of cheese maker Pierre Moines's hogs. Raised on the whey from the cheese-making process along with fruits, grains, vegetables, even lobster shells contributed by chef friends, these hogs thrive on Michelin-starred feed. During the course of slaughter they are transformed into fresh pork and a variety of sausages; the hams are salted, seasoned, smoked, and aged. After a year, the finished product is a fine, distinctive French country ham.

From there it was a natural progression to Spain, where ham-making goes back to Roman times. Western Spain is home to the "pata negra," the free-roaming, black-hoofed, acorn-loving hogs who become Jamon Iberico, the ultimate cured ham. Finding his way to the "dehesas," the carefully preserved forest environment where these descendants of the Mediterranean wild boar forage and feed on a diet composed in large part of acorns, Kaminsky wangled an invitation to a ritual community pig killing, or "matanza." Similar to the French "cochonaille," the slaughter results in the fresh and cured pork and sausage products that sustain the community through the year. Here, however, the hams, their muscles marbled with precious fat, are taken aside and gently cured according to techniques denomination-controlled by the twenty-six members of Iberico Real. A minimum of eighteen months later, they are served sliced into glistening, translucent "lascas" of incomparably deep and complex flavor—heaven on a plate.

In this country, fine hams used to be produced from pigs carefully

raised and humanely slaughtered, the meat cured and aged for at least one year. These hams are virtually extinct today. Profit-hungry American farmers mass-produce extra-lean pigs in squalid and unnatural conditions to provide today's consumer with the tough and tasteless "other white meat." Iberico pigs originally arrived in Cuba with Columbus on his second voyage to the New World, and were ferried to the mainland by Hernando de Soto in the 1500s. It was common for Iberian explorers and conquistadores to travel with their favorite food source. Flummoxed by the scarcity of good pork today, Kaminsky delved into his research. He flew to the Netherlands to consult with Dutch ecologist Franz Vera, a specialist in grazing and forest history. He attended a conference on Pigs and Humanity in the north of England, and consulted in Washington with the head archeologist in the anthropology division of the Smithsonian to get to the bottom of

the "pork taboo" in Middle-Eastern and Western culture. All along the way further leads presented themselves. Finally he found descendants of Iberian pigs on Ossabaw Island off the coast of Georgia, and has enlisted his farmer and chef friends in an effort to spread the word and reclaim the true flavor of pork.

Kaminsky brought his journey home to us with rich, atmospheric photos on the FCI theater's big screen. After the program we tasted some great pork for ourselves in the form of two artisanal hams organically raised and cured seventeen months by farmer Nancy Newsom in Princeton, Kentucky, one braised by New York City Chef Louis De Lucca, and a selection of recipes from Peter Kaminsky's book, *Pig Perfect: Encounters with Remarkable Swine and Some Great Ways to Cook Them* (New York:Hyperion, 2005) prepared by FCI Chef Lee Anne Wong and her exceptional student crew.

—DONNA GELB

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## Member News

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**Jean Anderson** has a new website at [www.jeanandersoncooks.com](http://www.jeanandersoncooks.com). She is immersed in writing a new southern cookbook for HarperCollins that will be rich in history, legend, and lore. It will be a personal memoir, the story of her upbringing in North Carolina as the daughter of Yankee parents and of her life-long love affair with southern food.

**Elizabeth Alston** is the author of *The New Woman's Day Cookbook*, due this fall from Filipacchi Publishing, New York, NY. Alston, who was Food Editor or Executive Food Editor of the magazine for 16 years,

selected recipes from the past four to five years.

At this year's Oxford Symposium, the title of **John Carafoli's** talk was titled "Communicating Authenticity: How Do We Communicate Authenticity to the Consumer Through the Visual Presentation of Food."

In August **Betty Fussell** delivered NYC's first Beef Tasting of both modern and heritage breeds, such as Wagyu, Corriente, Beefmaster, Red Poll, Highland, Angus, and Buffalo in a workshop called Beef 101 at Murray's Cheese Shop. Wagyu was

a way to segue into a panel on The History, Dynamics & Ethics of Luxury Dining, which she will be part of in September for the San Francisco Professional Food Society in that city. She will also attend a meeting of the Culinary Historians of Northern California at Cody's Books.

**Billy Holliday**, Special Projects Manager at Lefferts Historic House in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, has completed the supervision of the fabrication by volunteers of the main section of the outdoor kitchen exhibit, which includes a working outdoor fireplace and beehive oven. He and CHNY member **Peter Rose** are now bringing Lefferts family receipts from the museum's collection to life. In celebration of the new addition, the museum is extending an open invitation to CHNY members who would like to use the oven or fireplace from December 1, 2005–June 30, 2006. Please call (718) 789-2822 x 12 for information.

**John Jenkins** is a docent and helps with hearth cooking demonstrations at the Crane House in Montclair, NJ. The house, built in 1796, was moved to its present location in 1933. Two days a week, third and fourth graders come to watch a demonstration of open hearth cooking and to learn about the foods and cooking methods of the time. Unfortunately, a shortage of docents has forced the historic site to turn down schools who want to participate. Those interested in volunteering should call (973) 744-1796.

**Cathy Kaufman** presented a paper, "Feeding Pharaoh," at the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, in which she proposed a model for creating "authentic" ancient Egyptian recipes. The paper was inspired



*Susan McLellan Plaisted at work.*

by her forthcoming book, *Cooking in the Ancient World* (NY, Greenwood Press), a cookbook-textbook designed to teach high school students about the history and ancient food ways of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Greco-Roman world.

**Alexandra Leaf** was recently inducted as a Dame d'Escoffier. This summer she continued to lecture to museum audiences across the country including the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., the Taft Museum of Art in Cincinnati, the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. Her feature article on CHNY member William Woys Weaver appeared in the September issue of *Country Living Magazine*. Her chocolate tours, offered through the Institute of Culinary Education (ICE), will resume in October.

**Renee Marton** is the new editor of NY Food Museum newsletter, the quarterly publication of [www.NYFoodMuseum.org](http://www.NYFoodMuseum.org), a website which offers exhibits, both virtual and physical, about the foods we eat. The quarterly newsletter details the

stories behind the foods we eat in a scholarly yet approachable way. To request a copy of the newsletter, please visit the website.

**Susan McLellan Plaisted**, proprietress of Heart to Hearth Cookery, presented a lecture on the bake oven at the 2005 Leeds Symposium of Food History and Traditions. The theme of the conference was "Baking: From Cereal Crops to Oven Baked Goods." The title of her program was "Baking in the 18th Century Oven: Bread, Cakes, and Biscuits." The conference was held in York, England, in April and she was the first American speaker to appear at the prestigious Leeds Symposium. (See photo above.)

**Lyn Stallworth** spent three July weeks in Europe; flew to London on the 7th, the day of the bombing—no panic at Heathrow. Took the Eurostar to Paris, TGV to Lyon for eight days.

Best dish in the City of Food was the tripe soufflé at Chez Mounier. Thence to Avignon for eight more days; Lyn recommends Heile Lucullus, a restaurant beloved of Elizabeth David.

## Buffalo

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that of a Bull, which it resembles in Fierceness, with no less strength and Agility.”

Bison had long been used by the Indians to manufacture pemmican, the energy bar of the times. Made from pounding bison meat flat, drying it, then muddling with fat and berries and forming it into a jerky-like substance, it became a complete source of nutrition that sustained many explorers in their travels across the nation. Travelers who consumed pemmican, which could last almost indefinitely, never suffered scurvy, an ailment many travelers and explorers moving west died from.

Bison meat was a welcome addition to the diet of Americans moving west. In 1846, Charles Stanton, a member of the fated Donner Party of migrants, wrote as they reached the plains, “The buffalo and other game are becoming plentiful. Every day one or more is killed, and we are again luxuriating on fresh meat. I think there is no beef in the world equal to a fine buffalo cow—such a flavor, so rich, so juicy, it makes the mouth water to think of it.”

The tongue and the hump were the two most sought-after cuts of the animal for consumption. In 1859, Randolph B. Marcy wrote in *The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions*, “The tongues, humps, and marrow-bones [of buffalo] are regarded as the choice parts of the animal. The tongue is taken out by ripping open the skin between the prongs of the lower jaw-bone and pulling it out through the orifice. The hump may be taken off by skinning down on each side of the shoulders and cutting away the meat, after which the hump-ribs can be unjointed where they unite with the

spine. The marrow, when roasted in the bones, is delicious.”

It was not until the Spaniards brought horses and guns to North America that the Indians learned to hunt from the mount. Previously, they had used pedestrian hunting methods, such as a “buffalo jump,” where a herd would be tricked into running off a cliff by chasing it past strategically placed fires. The comparatively easy method of hunting from horseback meant that many tribes replaced farming and foraging with selling or trading bison meat and goods for their livelihood. The Europeans and new Americans, recognizing the Indian dependence on bison, in an effort to reduce the tribal populations, gave the destitute Indians whisky in trade instead of needed supplies and began a slaughter of the majestic plains animals.

When it became apparent to the new Americans that the way to exterminate the Indians was to eliminate the plains bison, the slaughter was quick and brutal. Before the Europeans arrived, there were greater than 30 million bison. In a survey taken by Ernest Thompson Seton in 1895, only 800 remained. Left over from the hunt was a sea of bones from the thousands of dead bison left to decay on the prairies. Andrew C. Isenberg in *The Destruction of the Bison* notes, “[Poor homesteaders and Indians] scavenged the plains for bison bones, which they sold to bone dealers for delivery to sugar refineries for fuel or fertilizer plants. It took one hundred skeletons to amass one ton of bones, which sold for \$4 to \$12.” Though they didn’t get rich, this was a viable means of survival through the 1880s.

In the 1890s, when private reserves, ranchers, and the government started concentrating their efforts on increasing the bison population, their numbers began to rebound.

One early conservation campaign was led by a Crow Indian lawyer, Robert Yellowtail, then superintendent of the 2,500,000-acre Crow Reservation. Yellowtail wanted to restock the reservation with bison and return tradition to the Crow Indians. In 1933 he asked officials at Yellowstone National Park to give him their excess animals—those that had ventured out of the park. The officials gave him forty. Three years later the Crow had 400 in their herd and Yellowtail began an annual autumn hunt. The meat was cured, stored, and distributed to the tribe gratis; the hides and byproducts were sold and the proceeds returned to the tribal treasury. An article in *The New York Times* noted that, “It will be the first time that many of the Crows have tasted the food of their ancestors.” In the late 1950s the tribe’s bison herds were roaming outside the reservation and many tested positive for brucellosis, a bacterial disease. It was decided by the Crow, in cooperation with the U.S. Government, that the only solution to prevent the spread of the disease would be to eliminate the stock, which took place from 1962 to 1964. The Crow tribe reintroduced bison in 1971 and currently has the largest number of free-ranging bison owned by a single Indian tribe, exceeding 1,500 head.

Yellowstone currently has the largest free-roaming herd of bison in the nation, numbering approximately 3,500 head, all descendants of twenty-three bison who survived in the Park’s backcountry and possibly the only purebred bison in the wild. Unfortunately, their increasing numbers do them more harm than good. According to the Buffalo Field Campaign, an organization whose mission is to protect the Yellowstone bison, the Park does not provide sufficient winter range, and animals

naturally leave the park to forage on lower elevation grasses. Although no case of wild bison transmitting brucellosis to livestock has ever been documented, Montana law states that bison leaving the park must be slaughtered to prevent the spreading of the disease. During the harsh winter of 1996-97, nearly 1,100 bison were slaughtered when they left the park, and combined with those that died due to the severe conditions, nearly two-thirds of the population was lost. No winter has been so severe as 1996, but a large number of bison continue to be slaughtered as they leave the park to forage.

Today's commercial bison business began slowly in the late 1960s. In 1972, the bison population in North America numbered approximately 30,000, many of them being raised by private citizens who were doing so only to preserve the species or for the novelty of it. In 1968, Tommy's Joynt, in San Francisco, was using 600 pounds of bison meat a week in its buffalo stew. "Tourists are attracted to it because it has so much romance," said owner Tommy Harris. "They know the pioneers lived on it, and it gives them a feeling of going back in history. Besides, it makes good eating." In 1973, the Durham Meat Company of San Jose, California reported 2,250 head, and had customers for their bison meat in all fifty states.

In 1986, The Buffalo Tasters Club was formed out of Kansas, promoting preservation and better health, citing the non-allergic and low cholesterol benefits offered by dining on bison. In 1988, Bloomingdale's department store in New York City sold memberships to the club, which included a bison cookbook, a ten-percent discount on retail buffalo meat purchases, and a newsletter. By 1989, approximately 10,000 bison were

being slaughtered for market annually, and the number of firms selling bison meat was growing steadily.

In January 2002, media mogul Ted Turner, already a bison aficionado and ranch owner, opened the first Ted's Montana Grill, which featured bison on its menu. Today Ted's, a casual, steakhouse-style chain, offers twenty variations of bison burgers, sandwiches, such as a bison French dip, and all cuts of bison steak. The chain has thirty locations with future growth planned. In March 2005, with the purchase of a 58,230-acre ranch in Nebraska, Turner became the largest private owner of bison in the country, with approximately 40,000 head on thirteen ranches in the Western United States. Turner is said to dine on bison four times a week.

The health benefits of bison are unquestionable. A 100 gram serving of the meat contains 2.42 grams of fat, versus 10.15 in the same weight of cooked beef or 10.97 in salmon. A 100 gram serving has 143 calories, versus 190 in skinless chicken. It is high in iron and B-12, and low in cholesterol. Bison are handled as little as possible, not given hormones and as they only spend one or two months in a feedlot before slaughter, they graze naturally most of their lives. *Reader's Digest* listed bison as one of the five foods women should eat due to its high iron content. Although likely as susceptible as bovine to contract mad cow disease, bison are less likely to be contaminated by meat or bone meal in their food, and they are generally slaughtered at smaller slaughterhouses



Photo: Jim Bailey

es which will not accept "downer" animals and use knives instead of machines to butcher. Bison meat has the full body and richness of beef and is not gamey in taste.

In a nation currently concerned about obesity, hormones, and additives in food, as well as the preservation of the nation's heritage, bison meat continues to increase in availability and as an important food resource in our daily lives. A number of farms have opened their doors to the public and one can get an up-close look at these massive beasts, and purchase bison meat and other goods in their stores. The resurrection of the bison is inspiring, and its story is an important chapter in this nation's culinary history.

For information on bison, where to purchase meat, locations of the organizations mentioned in this article, and a bibliography, please visit our website at [www.culinaryhistoriansny.org/newsletter/bison](http://www.culinaryhistoriansny.org/newsletter/bison).

*Tae Ellin* is project manager of *The Institute of Culinary Education in NYC*, and co-chair and webmaster for *CHNY*.

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# New Avenues for Culinary Research

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IN the last six months culinary historians have been blessed with the dedication of an enlightened research facility linking the study of American history with the eating and preparation of food, the establishment of two national symposia on American culinary history and food studies, and a proposed national culinary history organization. For a subject that has existed in the shadows of public interest for years, this is a pretty remarkable set of happenings in a short period of time.

The William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, established in 1923, is recognized as one of this country's foremost repositories for early American history original source material. By accepting the collection of Janice and Daniel Longone and holding the dedication of the The Longone Center for Culinary Research in May, the University and the Library recognized the interconnection of America's political and economic past with that of her everyday life, particularly as it relates to cooking and food—what Jan Longone calls “a symbiotic relationship.”

To further encourage the study of the inter-workings of food and history, the Longone Center plans to conduct symposia with presentations by recognized professionals in their fields. The first Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History was held as part of the dedication of the Center and the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive.

The program opened with the library's director John Dann expressing a desire to take the national leadership in the study of culinary history. Jan Longone, Curator of

American Culinary History, followed by defining her field as one that covers “everything that influenced or influences America and everything that America influenced or influences in culinary matters.” Jan's fellow curators of graphics, books, maps, and manuscripts then proceeded to lay out areas of research for scholars that they may have not yet tapped. Other speakers included Anne Willan, Mark Cherniavsky, Ari Weinzwieg, Dan Longone, Darra Goldstein, and Andrew F. Smith. The next symposium is scheduled for May 2007 with a focus on regional and ethnic traditions. Information on last May's symposium and the Longone Center's future activities can be found at [www.clements.umich.edu](http://www.clements.umich.edu).

To alternate years with the Longone symposium, the Culinary Historians of Chicago, with allied

institutions throughout the country, have proposed an international conference that would give all Americans interested in food studies an opportunity to present and discuss their research in open forums and to have their work published.

Recognizing that modernization and industrialization are causing the disappearance or homogenization of foods and foodways in every part of the hemisphere, the theme of the first Foodways Symposium of the Americas (FSA) will be “Lost Foods of the Americas.” Included in each conference will be sub-themes such as those relating to oral traditions, science, technology, or archeology. Contact Bruce Kraig of the Chicago Culinary Historians at [bkraig@jps.net](mailto:bkraig@jps.net) for more information.

The North American Culinary Historians Organization (NACHO) was hatched in Ann Arbor by a committee representing various regions and organizations in the country to become a loose association of



*Clements Library director John Dann, curator of maps Brian Leigh Dunnigan, curator of graphics Clayton Lewis, curator of books Donald Wilcox, and curator of manuscripts Barbara De Wolfe at the first Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History.*

culinary history organizations and individuals. A primary purpose of NACHO is to serve as a research source for residents of the country's rural areas and to be an informational contact for those who wish to establish a culinary history group. The committee also hoped that NACHO will foster the exchange of newsletters and other resource materials. An ad-hoc advisory board was formed to establish an e-mail tree and a listserv. Sandra Oliver, editor of *Food History News* agreed to establish a link to her website (foodhistorynews.com) and act as the newborn organization's temporary base of operations.

—HELEN BRODY



# Member Reminders

Membership renewals are due. If the form mailed to you has been misplaced it can be downloaded off the website at [www.culinaryhistoriansny.org](http://www.culinaryhistoriansny.org).

CHNY's webmaster is seeking short member biographies (including links to member websites), notices about member hosted events, and historical recipes for the CHNY website at [www.culinaryhistoriansny.org](http://www.culinaryhistoriansny.org). Submittals may be sent to [Tae@iceculinary.com](mailto:Tae@iceculinary.com) and will be posted and/or edited at the discretion of the website editors.

## Membership Application

(For current members, please write "Renewal" at the top)

At monthly meetings, the Culinary Historians of New York explore the historic, esoteric, and entertaining byways of food. These events are led by noted historians, authors, anthropologists, and food experts, many of whom are CHNY members.

Membership benefits include advance notice of all events, a membership directory, and the CHNY Newsletter with culinary history articles, news of members, events, and book reviews.

Individual – \$45 per year    Household – \$65 per year  
 Corporate – \$130 per year    Student/Senior – \$25 per year  
 Senior Household – \$35 per year

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Eve. Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Profession: \_\_\_\_\_

Culinary Interests (20 words max; information to appear in the next CHNY membership directory)

Willing to help with: Programs: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership: \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to CHNY and send with completed form to: The Culinary Historians of New York, PO Box 3289, New York, NY 10163.

# UPCOMING PROGRAMS

October 27 — **“Some Like It Hot: History of the World’s Spiciest Cuisine”** by Clifford Wright

November 17 — **Restaurant Review Symposium: History and the impact of reviews on the New York Dining Scene.** Panel: William Grimes, Gael Greene, Bob Lape, Michael Batterberry, Mitchell Davis

December 5 — **Dining with the Gods: The Greek Symposium** by Andrew Dalby

January 31 — **Gastronomy and Gluttony in Early Modern China** by Joanna Waley-Cohen

February 23 — **The Dark Side of Rum** by Jared Brown and Anistatia Miller

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