

# NYFOODSTORY

*The Journal of the Culinary Historians of New York*

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## Rejecting the products of slave labor: New York City's free produce merchants

By Michelle Branch

New York City resident Lydia Maria Child expressed her fear that enslaved blacks cultivated all Southern produce consumed in Northern markets: "What is the *occupation* of the white population of the planting States? I am at a loss to know how this population is employed. We hear of no products of these States but those produced by slave labor."<sup>1</sup> Like Child, many New Yorkers of the early 19th century – embarrassed and outraged that the traditional urban marketing system depended on bound labor – promoted anti-slavery agriculture, known as "free produce." Reformers aimed their fire at two concepts guiding the prevailing marketing model: low price at any cost and cosmopolitan prestige conferred by indiscriminate international trade. Market boosters increasingly regarded the ability to supply food from all around the world



"A Colored Young Man of the City of New York," an 1835 engraving by Patrick Reason, a free man of color who studied at the African Free School of New York. This image was used on the bag that held the minutes book of the New York Association of Friends for the Relief of those held in Slavery.

independent of local terroir and seasonality as a significant advance in civilization. They frequently invited market visitors to favorably compare New York City to London and Paris, based on an assessment of their respective urban markets and the

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## In Memoriam Joy Santlofer

*With great sadness, we report that Joy Santlofer, Founding Editor of NYFoodstory, died suddenly in August. The following is an appreciation of her life based on the reminiscences of several who knew her.*

When CHNY asked Joy Santlofer to be the editor of its new journal in 2011, she had an idea: the as yet unnamed journal would be devoted to the history of food in New York. It was one of those ideas that seemed perfectly obvious – and obviously perfect – after it was proposed, but one that hadn't been attempted before. The journal that came to be known as *NYFoodstory* brought together two subjects Joy was passionate about: the history of food and the city of New York. Joy nurtured the journal with the same spirit of devotion and generosity that she lavished on her friends, colleagues and students; with the same rigor that she brought to her teaching, writing and scholarship; and the same enthusiasm and curiosity that infused her explorations of

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## New Year's cakes: A forgotten tradition

By Kimberly L. Sørensen

Fragrant, caraway-flecked New Year's cake and the carved mahogany boards used to raise designs on them have all but faded from the memory of modern-day New Yorkers. Yet throughout the better part of the 19th century, the cakes remained a cherished holiday specialty. I first discovered cake boards at the Luce Center on the fourth floor of the New-York Historical Society. Displayed amid butter molds and other wooden cookery, the cake boards drew me in because of their large size and intriguing, historical imagery.

One depicted Gilbert du Motier, the Marquis de La Fayette (1757–1834) on his horse (15-by-26-by-½ inch) while the other showed a brigade of firefighters alongside their engine (8 by-14½-by 1 inch). They both shared the same pointed-oval border as a framework for their designs, but showed different styles of carving, suggesting a specific type of confection, and not just a single carver's whimsy. This chance encounter led me all over New York City in search of answers, from museum collections to the municipal

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Culinary Historians of New York (CHNY) was founded in 1985 to stimulate and share knowledge of the ways food has affected humans (and humans, food) since earliest times.

Members of CHNY include chefs, cooking teachers, historians, anthropologists, food writers, food editors, food stylists, researchers, librarians, caterers, collectors, nutritionists and individuals who enjoy learning about cooking and eating good food.

#### Submissions

NYFoodstory accepts proposals for articles on the culinary history of New York. Send proposals of no more than 100 words to Editor-in-Chief Ari Ariel at ariel@brynmawr.edu by December 15, 2013.

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## LETTER FROM THE CHNY CHAIR

# A look back and a look ahead

## CHNY Explores the 'Complex Meanings of Food'

Cathy Kaufman

*Shortly before this issue of NYFoodStory was finalized, Karen Berman and I received the inexpressibly sad news that Joy Santlofer, the Founding Editor-in-Chief, had passed away unexpectedly. A tribute to Joy is included in this issue. We shall strive to continue NYFoodStory on the high level that she established in the inaugural and second issues, but her vision and insight into the culinary history of New York was unmatched. She is missed by all her many friends and colleagues at CHNY.*

Food is a potent symbol, the marker of nationality, the maker of identity. Celebrations involve food, usually in abundance, and the sharing inherent in such festivities is one of life's greatest joys. Even thinking and talking about food can be transporting, as shown in this issue of NYFoodstory by Cara De Silva's poignant tribute to Bianca Steiner Brown and her uncommon courage in the face of extreme privation. Exploring the many complex meanings of food as sustenance, physical and spiritual, is the *raison d'être* of Culinary Historians of New York.

In the past year we have reflected on food, both raw ingredients and those that have been culturally transformed through cookery or other processing, as a tapestry into which so many human stories have been woven. We learned of the many different forms of yogurt found in Turkey, from creamy drinks to dried and smoked stones grated into soups for piquancy; these varieties, still produced in Anatolian villages, link us to our nomadic ancestors and Neolithic lifestyles. We tasted artisanal beers and considered the distinctive styles that were brought by the different immigrant groups to colonial America. We explored the diversity of apples, the emblem of our state and clichéd foundation of American identity – if pie is the measure – from their Eurasian origins to current efforts to revive traditional varieties such as the Newtown Pippin and the tongue-twisting Esopus Spitzenberg. We were spellbound with insights into sophisticated culinary cultures spanning Russia and Latin America, as well as visually dazzled by the down-home traditions of hot dogs throughout the United States.

We have continued to promote excellence in the field of culinary history, with the Amelia Award to the prolific Andrew F. Smith, and with our ninth annual Scholar's Grants. CHNY was honored again by the magnificent generosity of The Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts, fattening the funds available to support research. This year's recipients, Professor Jennifer Wallach of the University of North Texas, and Professor Eric Dursteler, of Brigham Young University, will be conducting groundbreaking archival research. Professor Wallach seeks to "analyze how African-American food preparers, servers and consumers influenced white ideas about blackness and then examine ways that African-Americans use foodways to fight white stereotypes and to construct alternative racial identities." Professor Dursteler will be plumbing European archives to investigate "to what degree can we speak of a Mediterranean cuisine, or at the least, certain shared commodities, tastes, assumptions, and practices and what insights can these provide into broader questions of Mediterranean and early modern food culture." The grant has been renewed for 2014, a tremendous vote of confidence from The Julia Child Foundation.

Looking forward, we will be introducing several speakers new to the CHNY audience in the 2013–14 season, and, just as a little tease, I am especially delighted that we will host the erudite Robin Weir next April. Mr. Weir, one of the world's leading experts on the history of ice and ice cream, hails from London and will discuss the culture of ice cream and the ice trade that made it possible in 19th-century New York, including the little-told story of the black and Italian confectioners who made ice cream a favored Victorian treat. We look forward to continuing our mission of unraveling these threads of our culinary cultures in a most enjoyable and stimulating way. 🍷

# “Enough food history in New York to fill many, many issues”

Joy Santlofer

*Note: Editor Joy Santlofer wrote this “Letter from the Editor” before her untimely death in August when this issue of NYFoodStory was in production. Her introduction to this issue overflows with her characteristic enthusiasm for all aspects of New York’s food history. We are so very sad that she won’t get her wish to see what future issues will bring, but we will endeavor to carry out her vision for this journal in the spirit of curiosity and affection for the city and its foodways – and respect and generosity for those who study it – that she so thoroughly and graciously embodied.*

The second installment of *NY Foodstory: The Journal of the Culinary Historians of New York* continues to explore forgotten or unknown facets of the city’s food history. In this issue the articles cover a broad variety of topics, ranging from shoppers’ moral choices to forgotten food traditions, from markets and New York’s iconic foods, from restaurants to ... ballerinas! I want to thank the writers who contributed these fascinating pieces; their wide-ranging explorations give us a greater understanding of our city’s culinary past.

In this issue, Michelle Branch, a visiting professor at New York University, has written a fascinating article about the food choices made by a little-known group of New Yorkers who opposed slavery in the mid-19th century and made every effort to purchase “free produce” – agricultural products that had been grown without using slave labor. Like activists today who buy Fair Trade products to support otherwise underpaid indigenous farmers, New Yorkers in the 1840s used their dollars to challenge existing values. In advancing their cause, they created an alternative market system of like-minded merchants and retailers.

Kimberley Sørensen has unearthed the history of a long-forgotten New York culinary tradition, New Year’s cakes, charming cakes with decorative patterns “imprinted” into their surfaces. The custom of serving these cakes during yearly New Year’s Day visits from friends and family was a holdover from Dutch New Amsterdam and for about 200 years, no matter where in the city visitors might go, they were served New Year’s cakes. Sørensen has not only unearthed the history of these cakes, but in the process learned to carve the wooden molds that shaped the designs and re-created the recipe for baking them (included in this issue). She was the 2010 scholarship recipient for this research, which some members will recall from her presentation.

Meryl Rosofsky has unearthed a cookbook written by the ballerina Tanaquil LeClerc, a principal with the New York City Ballet in the 1950s. Surprisingly, many of the company’s ethereal ballerinas liked to cook – which their delightful recipes attest to – and contrary to what many think, they also liked to eat. Renee Marton has written of the history of Hunts Point Market, developed in the 1960s, to, among other reasons, combat corruption. Hunts Point actually consists of three separate markets, which together form one of the world’s largest food distribution centers.

Jimmy Carbone and Clare Goggin Sivits look at early beers made in the city. Cara De Silva has written a loving tribute to Bianca Steiner Brown, a longtime CHNY member. Brown translated and De Silva edited *In Memory’s Kitchen: A Legacy From the Women of Terezin*, remembered and dreamed about in the Czechoslovakian concentration camp where Brown was interned. And in “New York (Food) Minute,” Irene Sax looks back on her experience as the “cheap restaurant” reviewer for the *Daily News*. This meant she often covered ethnic restaurants. In all the boroughs of the ever-changing city, in neighborhoods that have transformed over the years, she visited restaurants that served foods from all parts of the globe.

There is enough food history in New York to fill many, many more issues of this journal. Judging from the articles in this (and the previous) issue of *NYFoodstory*, I for one, cannot wait to see what will be written about in the future. 🍷

## In Memoriam: Joy Santlofer

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food, art, ballet and the city of New York.

Food writer and teacher Renee Marton, Joy’s friend and colleague, remembers

her as “engaging, witty, caring, modest, a brilliant writer/storyteller, an insightful friend and dedicated, loving wife to Jonny and mother to Doria.” Renee remembers hearing Joy read a class assignment aloud when they were both students at NYU. Even then, she notes, “I knew that a wonderful food writer was in the making. [When] Joy read a piece about the disappearance of snipe, a game bird that had been very popular in the early 20th century, the class was entranced by her skilled evocation of the time, the hunt and the cooking of the bird. We watched as this bird was hunted, and felt as though we could taste it. Her descriptions were visceral and vivid. She knew what she wanted the reader to imagine, and be reminded of. Even before she coined the term ‘asphalt terroir,’ Joy knew how to create an image in the reader’s mind. ...”

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Writer Betty Fussell recalled that “I always called her simply ‘Joy’ because I constantly mispronounced her last name as ‘San-TO-fler.’ Easier on the tongue and ear, the way ‘Fus-SELL’ was easier for people to say than ‘FUS-sell.’ Joy was alert to such niceties. You could always count on her sensitivity to other people and her tact in dealing with them. It showed in her writing, her teaching and her whole personal approach to the social contexts of food and history.

“I met her first by the good luck of having her for my first mentee, under the mentoring program offered by Les Dames d’Escoffier of New York. It was a natural fit because she was taking an M.A. in the Food Studies program at NYU when food history was at last getting a chance breathe and flourish. She wanted to do the history of cracker-making in NYC when, over a century ago, Manhattan

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was still a manufacturing center of food products. And there was that beautiful multi-windowed red-brick Nabisco Building being turned into Chelsea Market. I knew nothing about her subject but I loved her vision and precision. Here was a writer in the making and I had the keen pleasure of seeing her writing grow over the years as she gained confidence and certitude and then pleasure in the rhythm of words that would match the rhythm of a city she helped to label Gastropolis.”

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Elizabeth Thacker Jones, founder of Food Book Fair and a student in Joy’s “Food in Fine Art” class in 2010, recalls that, “The class explored the intersection of food and western art. We devoured images of foodstuffs, meals and banquets throughout Western history. Joy took us on a journey, both real and imagined, of the shifting means of portrayals of food over time. Our written assignments required visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The museum time was demonstrative of Joy’s love for New York City, too. Traveling floor to floor, exhibit hall after exhibit hall, the elaborate exploration of the Met gave me the impression that Joy cherished the nooks and crannies of our city itself. Her written scavenger hunt of the Met took hours – the answers to her questions were not Google-able. We had to find the foodstuffs in all paintings and sculptures in person (written in bold and underlined on our syllabus). Not an ancient pot, pan or still-life from the Golden Age overlooked.”

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Joy Santlofer was a prolific writer of food history. She was a writer-in-residence at the New York Public Library’s Allen Room and contributed essays to *The Business of Food: an Encyclopedia of the Food and Drink Industries* (2007) *Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink* (2007); *Gastropolis: Food*

and *New York City* (2009); *Storied Dishes: What Our Family Recipes Tell Us About Who We Are and Where We’ve Been* (2010). She consulted with the Museum of the Chinese in America for the show “Have You Eaten Yet? The Chinese Restaurant in America” and was a commentator on the Food Network’s series *The Heavyweights*.

Renee Marton notes that much of Joy’s writing became part of her magnum opus, the book that she had been working on for the last several years: *Food City: 400 Years of Food Making in New York City*, which will be published by Norton. “To imagine that this will be a posthumous publication,” she writes, “is hard to grasp. The usual joy – and I use that word on purpose – that would accompany the publication of everything she strove for in history and writing will be tinged with sadness.”

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Jennifer Berg, director of the Graduate Program in Food Studies at NYU, worked with Joy to develop “Grow, Cook, Eat, Learn,” a self-contained sustainable food system and urban agricultural working laboratory that took the form of a greenhouse. The idea was to house the entire food cycle from production to harvesting, cooking, nutrition, consumption, waste and composting and their proposal was awarded NYU’s first Sustainability Fund grant. Professor Berg noted that, “Joy was the impetus for the original Green Grant that ... set NYU’s commitment to urban agriculture in motion.”

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“Joy was such an extraordinarily decent person – thoughtful, unaffected, completely herself,” writes colleague Laura Shapiro. “The work she took on in food seemed very much in character: she went right to the foundations and did the excavating. It was such new research and the kind of thing very few people were tackling. What a pleasure it was to see the pleasure she took in her discoveries.”

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Writer and former chair of the Food Studies program at NYU, Marion Nestle recalls that “Joy had the office next to mine when we were still in the old building, and it was such a pleasure to get to know her and get to check in with her every day. I was so excited about her new book, and am heartbroken that it arrives without her. This is such a loss and it’s not getting easier.”

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Writer and fellow NYU adjunct Meryl Rosofsky speaks directly to Joy in her remembrance: “Though we knew each other for a decade or more – I’ll always remember our late-night study session at your loft, feasting on Bourdieu, Geertz, and Thai food as I marveled at your gorgeously organized research files lining your office – it was only in the last year that I got to know the depth of your talent as a culinary historian and editor. You dazzled with your encyclopedic knowledge of hard tack and dainty biscuits at your NYC Lunch Hour talk at the New York Public Library last January. When you reached out to me late last year in your role as Editor-in-Chief of *NY FoodStory* to ask if I’d like to contribute something, I knew yours was a smile I couldn’t turn down. Your enthusiasm, discernment and supportiveness were hallmarks throughout the process, from initial brainstorming to belated submission. And I loved learning you were a lifelong balletomane. Your endearing story of being taken backstage at the New York City Ballet to meet one of your idols as a shy but passionate eight-year-old made as big an impression on me as that encounter made on you.

“Your parents named you wisely; your radiant smile, your love of family, the pleasure you took in your work and the pleasure others took in working with you – you were Joy. We will miss you.” ☹

#### MEMORIAL FUND

A memorial fund in honor of Joy Santlofer has been established at NYU. The fund will finance the purchase of a bench and plaque in the NYU Garden and Farm. If enough money is raised it will go toward scholarships for students to participate in the Urban Agriculture course, which Joy started with her colleague, Jennifer Berg.

Mail checks to: New York University, The Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health, Attention: Jennifer Berg, 411 Lafayette Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10003. In the memo line, write “Joy Santlofer.”

## In Memoriam Bianca Steiner Brown

Prague, August 14, 1922 – New York City, November 7, 2012



Bianca Steiner Brown in 2007

By Cara De Silva

When I first met Bianca I would never have imagined that the little fashion plate in front of me was to become such a significant person in my life. Yes, I liked her immediately, and her support of fledgling food history organizations such as ours drew me. But it was only when we worked together on *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin*, a project born of connections forged at CHNY, that she became one of the people I respected most. As editor, I witnessed the determination she brought to translating the recipes in the haunting Holocaust manuscript (acquired by Dalia Carmel) on which the book was based, recipes that were from the camp Bianca herself had survived. I saw that her sense of purpose and her fierce loyalty to those who had been interned with her, were as much part of what she brought to the project as her hard-won knowledge of "food as symbol and sustenance," to quote the CHNY statement read at her memorial earlier this year. From the profound service she performed in undertaking this heart-wrenching task sprang my abiding admiration.

But it wasn't only her approach to the difficult and inspiring work we did

together that attracted me. I adored her sense of humor. Her great curiosity. Her quirkiness. I loved hearing the ladylike Bianca lay out another driver when someone cut her off. I was moved by her boundless pride in George, her husband, and her children, Peter and Peggy. And, of course, I was always dazzled by the way she set her table, her consummate cooking skills learned in Prague and used later in the test kitchens of a number of American magazines. On one memorable visit to her home, she served me one of the most delicious dishes I have ever eaten – Czech dumplings with a couple of whole fresh cherries pushed into their centers before being simmered, drained, and topped with a sprinkling of fried buttered bread crumbs and sugar. Inside each, creating a kind of oozy sweetness, the cherries were like preserves still clinging to the pits. I very nearly swooned when I tasted one. Oh, the skill in those little hands.

It was those very same little hands that I held when I went to visit her after she had a stroke, just as she would hold mine. We would sit that way for hours, largely in silence, expressing our closeness through caresses and tender looks.

I witnessed the determination she brought to translating the recipes in the haunting Holocaust manuscript ... on which the book was based, recipes that were from the camp Bianca herself had survived.

I had come to love her, as had so many others. On the occasions when we spoke together in public, audience members would surround her, clamoring for her attention. When we did a television show together, she won the crew and everyone else's heart. Her pluck, her distinctiveness, her sense of purpose, her uncommon courage, her essential Bianca-ness touched all who knew her.

With the words written here, I thank her for gracing my life and giving of herself so unstintingly. That was her bequest to me. That with her help, *In Memory's Kitchen* became a small phenomenon, one that will live on and inform generations of culinary historians to come, was her gift to all of us. 🍷



Bianca as a teenager

# Balanchine's blini and Melissa Hayden's borsch

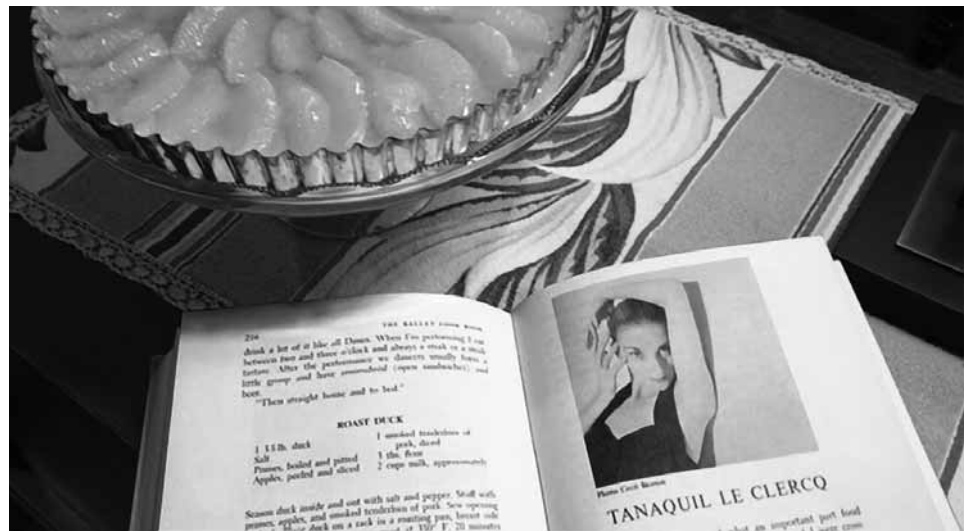
## Treasures from *The Ballet Cook Book*

By Meryl Rosofsky

"Only God creates," legendary choreographer George Balanchine once said. "I am only a chef cooking up another dish for the audience, that's all."<sup>1</sup> But what a chef he was, both metaphorically and actually. Co-founder of the world-renowned New York City Ballet and ballet master there until his death in 1983, Balanchine was an undisputed genius who revolutionized the world of dance and created here in New York "one of the foremost artistic enterprises the United States has called its own."<sup>2</sup> That he was also an exceptional cook may come as a surprise to those who didn't know him personally, associated as he was with the ideal dancer whose willowy form has come to be known as the Balanchine body. In fact, Balanchine loved food – preparing it, sharing it, talking about it. Cooking metaphors peppered his corrections to ballerinas in company class.<sup>3</sup> Lavish dinners (and no small amount of vodka) fueled his creative collaboration with composer Igor Stravinsky.<sup>4,5</sup> And Russian Easter feasts at Balanchine's Upper West Side apartment were eagerly anticipated events, for which he'd prepare "roasts, ptarmigans, fish in aspic, specially prepared horseradish and garnishes, salade Olivier and, of course, the traditional pascha and kulitch."<sup>6</sup> So at home was he in the kitchen – and in his favorite restaurants – that at the Russian Tea Room on 57th Street, Balanchine "was known to disappear into the kitchen to prepare his own dishes."<sup>7</sup>

More surprising still may be the revelation that many of the dancers from Balanchine's era were passionate cooks and eaters as well. Tanaquil Le Clercq's *The Ballet Cook Book*, a little-known tome from 1966, attests to the culinary range, tastes and backgrounds of some of the greatest dance figures of the mid-20th century. In the first sentence of her preface, Le Clercq, a former ballerina and fourth wife of Balanchine, proclaims that "Ballet dancers eat better than any other people in the world." She goes on to explain:

"For one thing they have the proper appetite for it. Because of the physical nature of their art they are always hungry, they seem always to have food on their minds, and they are always talking about it.



Tanaquil Le Clercq's 1966 *The Ballet Cook Book*, opened to the chapter of her recipes (she's seen here in a photo by Cecil Beaton), with a modern rendition of her *Tarte à l'Orange*. This photo is by Ryan Wenzel, a dance writer who spearheads the Ballet Cook Book Dinner Series with Antonio Carmena, soloist with the New York City Ballet and a trained cook, and Susan LaRosa.

"Before going on stage, of course, they eat very little. But afterward ... 'I took such-and-such a ballerina out for a snack after the performance,' you sometimes hear, 'and it cost me thirty dollars.' Or a bewildered matron may wonder aloud, 'All I invited were a few of the principals and, my dear, they descended upon the food like a plague of locusts.'"

"During the Season dancers are wined and dined – or perhaps buffet-ed – by the outstanding hosts and hostesses of whatever city they may be playing. Touring abroad, they meet the same royal gourmet treatment, and are in a position, besides, to explore the byroads of exotic cuisine on their own.

"Not surprisingly most of them take up cooking and can thus elaborate still further, and in strictly individual ways, on this major preoccupation of their lives.

"All the same when I first started asking friends for recipes [for this book], even I was startled by the frenzied response."<sup>8</sup>

Tanaquil (or Tanny, as she was known to her friends) might have added that cooking, like ballet, relies on technique and timing,<sup>9</sup> established rules and individual expression and a drive to give others pleasure and nourishment; both are sensuous, physical, creative, demanding.<sup>10</sup> But one need not force the comparison to find sense and joy in this singular volume. Published in New York by Stein and Day, *The Ballet Cook Book* is part (artistic) community cook-

book, part ballet biography, part de facto social-cultural history. Le Clercq plays collector, curator, narrator and confidante, gathering the recipes from friends and colleagues – mainly but not solely from New York City Ballet; arranging them into chapters (91 to be exact, each devoted to a different dancer or choreographer); and interweaving the artists' recipes with personal stories about their upbringings, dance lives and food.



George Balanchine at his laden Easter table, in photo by Martha Swope in *The Ballet Cook Book*.

The dishes conjure the birthplaces and far-flung travels of the dancers, the comfort they drew from the foods of their youth, iconic ballets they were known for. Here are Mexican-born Nicky Magallanes' Chicken Mole; Texas Beans from Agnes de Mille, choreographer of *Rodeo* and *Oklahoma!*; Stuffed Eggplant from Robert Joffrey, whose father, Le Clercq notes, was an "Afghan restaurateur;"<sup>11</sup> Violette Verdy's Quiche Lorraine, passed down from Maman; Pat Wilde's Cotolette di Vitella, a souvenir from New York City Ballet's tour in Florence. From Canadian-born Melissa Hayden – née Mildred Herman, later star of *Stars and Stripes* – we get recipes for Spinach Borsch, Kreplach and Potato Latkas, which she'd prepare for her children in their elegant Central Park West apartment. Other culturally revealing

One could hardly accuse George Balanchine's recipes of being overly healthful. "Take one-half of an untoasted Thomas' English muffin, cover it generously with sweet butter, say about a quarter of an inch, spread a layer of excellent black caviar over the butter, at *least* one inch thick, and cover with the other half of the muffin," he instructs.

recipes include Arthur Mitchell's mother's "Peas 'n' Rice, Hopping John," a staple of his family's New Year's Eve celebrations in Harlem; and "Squaw Bread" from Maria Tallchief, who was half Osage Indian. New York, it's worth noting, was home to all of them.

The cookbook serves, too, as a cultural time capsule. Matter-of-factly, Le Clercq confides that early in his training, Arthur Mitchell turned to modern dance "as an instrument for venting his frustrations as a Negro." Years later, as "the only Negro principal dancer with a major ballet company," Mitchell wins rapturous applause in Russia for his opening night perform-

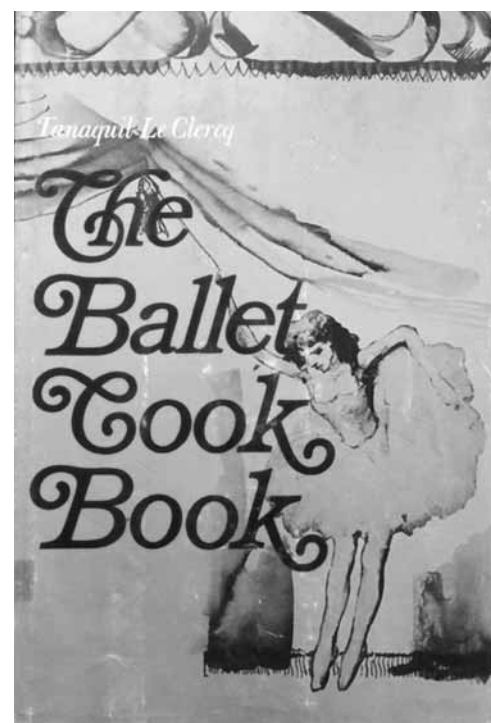
ance in Balanchine's *Agon*, garnering headlines back home that would be unthinkable today: "New York Negro Wows Moscow Ballet Fans."<sup>12</sup>

Technology of the time is captured in this snapshot as well. Jacques d'Amboise shares several sauces he learned while a guest of "a Swiss and a jet pilot on the astronaut waiting list" (several years before Apollo 11 would land on the moon). "'Superb filet mignon,' recalls Jacques, 'with sauce béarnaise, small boiled new potatoes prepared in their pink jackets and smothered with chopped parsley. ... He may have been on the waiting list to go into outer space, but I must say his béarnaise was already out of this world.'" <sup>13</sup> We're then treated to recipes for the béarnaise, along with "Hollandaise Astronaut I" and "Hollandaise Astronaut II," with orange juice and chopped cucumber, respectively. Allegra Kent is taken with the possibilities of the new Easy-Bake oven for children – perhaps she'll take one to the theater to cook hamburgers! Then there's Patricia McBride, who Tanny tells us "may well be the first true ballerina of the age of technology. The rapidly shifting contraptions of scientific developments do not affright her in the least. ... She was first with ... color T.V.," and appeared on it alongside Edward Villella, "stylishly flashing through the *Bell Telephone Hour*."<sup>14</sup> Villella was ahead of his time culinarily, too, thanks to his mother, a "great health food enthusiast" who'd go "miles out of her way [in Long Island City] to shop at a special store that sold only organically grown vegetables." Hence, here's her recipe for Wheat Germ Muffins, which, Le Clercq assures us, "though healthful are yet very very tasty."<sup>15</sup>

One could hardly accuse George Balanchine's recipes of being overly healthful. "Take one-half of an untoasted Thomas' English muffin, cover it generously with sweet butter, say about a quarter of an inch, spread a layer of excellent black caviar over the butter, at *least* one inch thick, and cover with the other half of the muffin," he instructs. As Le Clercq describes it:

"My husband's love of caviar started when he was a small boy in Russia. He would often beg his mother for it, chanting, 'Mama, Mama, caviar, caviar!'"

"No dear," she would reply, 'it bites.' Priced at ten rubles a pound, it was the pocketbook that felt the bite, but my husband envisioned every little black



The Ballet Cook Book, published in 1966 by Stein and Day. The jacket design was by Paul Omin/Graphics.

egg equipped with sharp teeth wanting to nip at him, and his enthusiasm dwindled for a time."<sup>16</sup>

If in America Balanchine indulged his cravings for caviar, it may have been both to assuage the émigré's longing for homeland and to erase the privations of his early teen years in Russia. Ballerina Alexandra Danilova, childhood friend of Balanchine's and later his muse and lover,<sup>17</sup> recalls in her memoir that at the Imperial School of the Maryinsky Theatre, shut down by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution of 1917 and then reopened the following year in a far diminished state:

[W]e had practically nothing to eat. All of us were hungry and began to develop boils – at one time I had five, but that was nothing compared with George, who had thirty. There was no nourishment. With our coupons we would go to restaurants, where they would serve us some thin soup – dirty water with potato peels in it – or seal meat.<sup>18</sup>

But Le Clercq steers clear of pathos in *The Ballet Cook Book*. The same verve she brought to her role as dance-hall girl in Balanchine's *Western Symphony* animates the pages of her culinary opus. Her tone is playful, witty and wry (cue Tanny turning this into a pun on "rye" as a segue to her husband's recipe for borsch, perhaps). Hayden's Gefilte Fish

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# HUNTS POINT

## New York's food market links past and future

By Renee Marton

On March 12, 1663, Edward Jessup, British loyalist and “patentee” of the Crown, acquired land in the southern Bronx, bounded on the east by the “Bronckx or Aquehug” river, and on the west by the Quin-nahung brook, both easily accessed by ship. This fertile agricultural area blossomed with apple, pear and peach orchards. Wheat was planted to sate the colonists’ appetite for bread and gristmills were visible in the distance. Cattle, hogs, sheep, goats and poultry were plentiful. Slaves provided the workforce (at first, Native Americans, and later, Africans, often brought from sugar plantations in the West Indies). In 1666, Edward Jessup died, leaving the property to his widow, Elizabeth. She sold one hundred-plus acres to her son-in-law Thomas Hunt, on June 20, 1668, and Hunts Point is named after his family.

Three hundred and forty-five years later, the area known as Hunts Point Terminal Market is a fortress of 329 acres of gated and barbed wire encrusted real estate, located on a promontory in the south Bronx that juts into, and is surrounded by, the Bronx and East Rivers.

Hunts Point bills itself as “The Largest Food Distribution Center In The World.” It consists of three separate markets: the Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market, the Cooperative Meat Market, and the New Fulton Fish Market. Taken together, there are more than 12,000 employees, and revenues surpass \$3 billion dollars.

As you enter Hunts Point, you might expect hustle and bustle, but such is not the case. While you might see customers buying meat or fish or produce, Hunts Point is very organized.

Most foods are shipped in and out by truck. I visited the meat market, which is vast and feels empty when no trucks are being loaded or unloaded, especially given the long rows of two-story warehouses that are lined with equally huge loading docks. That wonderful early

All parts of the market were intended to accommodate truck and rail traffic equally, but trucks became the preferred mode of transportation – they were faster than trains, if more expensive. In fact, these days, provisions arrive on trucks, trains, ships and planes from all over the world. Globalization has had the same impact on Hunts Point as has been seen elsewhere: local is now global. Whether imported or locally sourced, food supplies are exported to other states, Canada, Europe and Asia. Still, the immediate tri-state area has a customer base of 23 million consumers.

The Meat, Fish and Produce Markets are situated on their own lots. Each market was originally owned by the city until 1986, when cooperative ownership by the wholesale merchants took over, with the city as landlord. The Meat Market recently negotiated a long lease that runs until 2037.

Both the Fish and Produce Markets were in lease negotiations when this article was completed, a process made more complicated by the market’s lawsuit against the city for its choice of a security firm to investigate business and security practices at Hunts Point. A move to New Jersey or Pennsylvania is possible, with lower taxes, bigger and more modern facilities and easier transport access.

It might seem as though the Hunts Point Market has been there since the days of Thomas Hunt, but in reality, this New York institution is less than 50 years old. How the market came to be is a fascinating tale.

During Thomas Hunt’s lifetime, food markets thrived in lower Manhattan. Farmers came mainly from Brooklyn and Long Island with live animals and wagonloads of produce and fruit. Once butchered, meat had a very short



At groundbreaking ceremonies at Hunts Point in 1962, New York's Mayor Robert F. Wagner and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman viewed the architect's drawing of the planned market complex in this photo in the *New York World-Telegram* and the *Sun* by Al Ravenna.

20th century image that we have of old markets does not exist here, despite everyone’s wishful thinking about “the good old days.” What does exist is organization, refrigeration on a mass scale and car and truck traffic when things are busy.

Everyone pays a per-person entry fee, and vehicles are charged by size as well. Security is paramount, with guards in raised booths checking identification. Attempts to reduce thievery and graft are routine in this first line of defense in keeping track of what goes in and out of the market. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, bioterrorism became a major concern. Quality, quantity, safety, sanitation, legal transparency and a reliable chill chain (refrigeration from slaughter to sale) are systems in place. During Rudolph Giuliani’s term as mayor, from 1994 to 2001, even the Mafia was kicked out of Hunts Point (albeit probably not completely).

Library of Congress, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection

shelf life, especially during the summer, when rotting bones attracted hordes of buzzing flies and the odor of decomposing meat prompted complaints from those living nearby. Beef and other meats, poultry, eggs and dairy (milk in particular), had to be sold quickly. Quality, price and demand fluctuated.

In 1648, Peter Stuyvesant decreed that pigs, cows, goats and horses would no longer roam freely, and that offal could no longer be thrown into the streets. The first municipal market, on Mondays, was established that year, along the East River, selling "Meat, bacon, butter, cheese, turnips, roots, straw and other products of the farm," according to *Gotham: a History of New York City to 1898*. Butchers were licensed and paid taxes. People who did not follow the law were fined (at least in theory).

Beef was king; by 1770, permanent public slaughterhouses had been created. (Mulberry Street was called Slaughterhouse Row.) Butchers' stalls were magnets for other tradesmen; bakers, oyster sellers, dairymen, produce and fruit carts all created a more extensive market. Other peddlers sold ready-to-eat foods (often made by women householders). Sundries, such as wax, shoelaces and tools could be found. More markets followed: Catherine, Fly, Essex and Fulton (named for their street locations). By the early 1800s, there were 13 public markets competing to feed the rapidly increasing population.

But changes were coming, and the publicly regulated meat markets were deregulated in 1843. A trickle of unlicensed butchers and independent suppliers surged into a flood as private butcher shops opened and bakers, pushcarts and grocers arose to accommodate their largely European immigrant customers: Germans, Italians, Jews, Irish, Poles and other Eastern Europeans. These local shopkeepers and butchers offered convenience, although quality, demand and pricing of the most perishable items (meat, poultry, milk, eggs and seafood) varied daily at the markets. Morning prices were highest, and



These days, security is tight at the entrance to the Hunts Point Terminal Market, photographed in the summer of 2013.

decreased as they day wore on, or as the week came to a close (this is still true at Hunts Point, especially for the most perishable item: seafood).

By 1913, the population of New York City had reached 5 million, and "The Report of the Mayor's Market Commission of New York City" was published. Cyrus C. Miller, president of the Bronx, proposed building a wholesale market, specifically to bring urban provisions to the population which was expanding north of 110th street and in the Bronx. He also wanted to remedy the lack of systematic urban food organization and continuously rising prices:



Fresh produce awaits buyers at the Hunts Point Produce Market.

in 1917 between 40 and 60 percent of personal income was used to feed the family. A new ideal was taking hold: provision of safe and affordable food-stuffs for the local population was becoming a public mandate. Food provisioning could and should, be over-

Photo by Renee Marton

seen by city government, held in check with good urban planning. There was no centralized market, based on the Paris or Berlin models, which were considered state of the art. Eliminating the middleman was a pivotal goal of centralization. The estimated cost for Miller's idea was \$10 million dollars. The real cost, when the Bronx Terminal Market was built in 1917, was \$22 million.

In the Bronx and elsewhere, corruption in food markets continued to be a problem. Mayor John Hylan created the

Department of Markets in 1925 in an effort to impose controls, but his efforts had little effect on the corrupt system already in place. Layers of "funding" were a standard part of the public market matrix. Infighting among elected officials about market regulation, and the occasional highly publicized trial of racketeers, barely kept a lid on graft.

By the early years of the Depression, many purveyors were "on the brink" of collapse, although prices did not decrease, as desperation took hold. The Bronx Terminal Market was expanded in 1935, with Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia doing the honors at the ribbon cutting.

The market's primary occupants were wholesale produce and fruit sellers. By the 1960s, the market specialized in Caribbean produce and fruit. Some of these purveyors moved to Hunts Point after it opened. Today, the entire area is a shopping mall.

After World War II, immigrants from the crowded tenements of lower Manhattan were inspired to move northward and relocate in the Bronx. This emergent middle class moved to Knightsbridge, Fordham, Morrisania and West Farms, where new apartment houses were sprouting, along with parks, hospitals and schools. In 1965, when immigration quotas were relaxed, the immigrant population shifted ethnically. New immigrants were and are Asian, Indian, African, Caribbean/Latin

Photo by Danielle Brooks, courtesy of Hunts Point Produce Market

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wide range of low-cost available foods. By contrast, those who advocated free produce distinguished between the cheap and the good, contending that any truly civic marketing system must promote fair labor practices.

Despite the end of slavery in New York in 1827, fruits, vegetables and staple goods produced by nameless enslaved individuals continued to flood urban wholesalers and retailers – in large part because new transportation technologies more tightly linked New York City's vast marketplaces to the rest of the country and the world. Market observer Thomas De Voe remarked on the ease with which Southern goods could be procured: "Early in the spring from the South ... many rare vegetables and other edibles are brought to market by the facilities afforded by the rail cars and steamboats." He continued, "Now the Southern States, Bermuda Islands, etc., send their early supplies to our markets – not only vegetables, but fruits, fish, nuts, etc. – for months anticipating our native supply. From Charleston, Norfolk, Savannah, and the Bermudas, tomatoes, potatoes, peas, cabbage, onions, strawberries, cherries, are brought at least twice a week during their seasons. Some of these articles are brought by hundreds of barrels at a time."<sup>2</sup> Addressing the unfortunate irony in this confluence of both emancipation and market expansion, De Voe observed that although slaves were no longer sold or hired out in New York City markets, "now a very large business is done there with the products of slave labor."<sup>3</sup> For that reason, almost any activity that involved the consumption of food – shopping in the public markets, eating in restaurants and buying street food – likely made New Yorkers the customers of slaveholders.

Home to both America's greatest number of metropolitan consumers and its largest system of public markets, New York City performed a crucial role

in establishing an antebellum free produce culture. Boston may have served as free produce's intellectual center (as home to William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*). And Philadelphia may have served as the movement's organizational center (as home to several leading free produce associations). But New York City – because of its enormous public marketing system with regional, national and international reach – promised wholesalers, retailers and consumers who could create a more labor-conscious food economy and culture.

Unaware of the identities of those individuals who had grown, processed and packaged their foods, antebellum urban consumers – who themselves no longer kept home gardens – increasingly placed greater weight on food for its sense of pleasure and adventure.

Free produce culture took hold in New York City as a vehement reaction to the rapid growth of the city's anonymous market network. Antebellum food culture visibly displayed blissful, if possibly ignorant, dependence on crops grown and harvested by enslaved peoples. Junius Browne remarked on historical changes in food production and transportation that that allowed New Yorkers to delight in "total ignorance" of their food system.<sup>4</sup> De Voe similarly complained that the widespread lack of food knowledge motivated him to write the *Market Assistant*.<sup>5</sup> Most consumers of the day wanted to know nothing about the production or provenance of their food. Focusing primarily on the aesthetic qualities and abundant variety of their food, consumers could avoid thinking about slavery.

New attitudes arising from the perception of foods as commodities,

divorced from their producers, may have also propelled free produce culture. Unaware of the identities of those individuals who had grown, processed and packaged their foods, antebellum urban consumers – who themselves no longer kept home gardens – increasingly placed greater weight on food for its sense of pleasure and adventure. Browne's *Great Metropolis* judged the success of New York City markets by whether foods would "delight the most jaded appetite."<sup>6</sup> In *A Glance at New York*, Asa Greene classified eating choices as a personal right: "Here most persons ... do as they please; and eat and drink what they please, or what they can get; holding themselves amenable to the law only, and caring very little about their neighbor's opinion."<sup>7</sup> Antebellum consumers experienced their exposure to an astonishing variety of food tastes as freedoms and entitlements, in direct contrast to the agricultural subjugation that their new metropolitan food culture mandated.

New York City proved a critical staging area because free produce adherents identified the city's public food system as promoting slavery. According to free produce advocates, the market – more than any other institution – connected individual consumers to slavery. The antislavery paper *Friends' Review* argued "that one end of the negro's chain is in our own hands." It continued, "[w]e cannot sip our coffee, or sweeten our dinner, without either promoting or discouraging slavery and the slave trade. ... We cannot escape our responsibilities if we would: then surely this must be a 'home question.'" In this instance, the "home" often stood in as a euphemism for personal actions and decisions. New Yorkers would have read further statements like "[w]e cannot make our week's purchases over a grocer's ... counter without giving a positive monetary contribution to either slavery or to freedom" and "[f]ree labour is essentially a 'home question.'" Even domestic cooking – commonly portrayed as outside of the market's influence – relied on slavery.<sup>8</sup>

Alternative markets challenged the anonymous food culture by decommoditizing food and making it less of an abstraction. Advocates ultimately envi-

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sioned replacing slave-produced food with free produce. In free produce “markets,” shoppers could buy sugar, molasses, rice and chocolate certified as free. To accomplish this goal, free produce merchants traced a food’s origins and connected it with local labor conditions. Often merchants would visit foreign countries to ascertain labor conditions and then report back to newspapers and their readers. For example, the knowledge of merchants collaborating with free produce associations generated reports that Cuban slaves labored 17 hours per day, which limited a worker’s life expectancy to just 10 years after beginning field work. This revelation led Philadelphia’s Free Produce Association of Friends to conclude that what money consumers saved on slave-produced sugar was “actually the price of blood.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the *Liberator* likely obtained from free produce merchants and traders its knowledge about international coffee growing conditions. The paper advised that free coffee could be obtained from Africa and Haiti, but not Java, which used Malaysian prisoners of war to cultivate coffee. Confusion often resulted because while free men produced Javanese sugar, enslaved men cultivated Javanese coffee.<sup>10</sup>

Although urban public markets promised buyers a comprehensive array of products, free produce staple goods could not always be found or identified in the public markets. But starting in 1826, dedicated free produce stores multiplied throughout the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, expanding to more than fifty across the United States before the end of the Civil War. Located next to export routes, free produce merchants flourished. New York City boasted some of the most reputable traders. Joseph Beale, Charles Collins, Lindley Hoag, Robert L. Murray and George Wood purveyed rice, sugar, coffee, tea and molasses from Manhattan’s warehouses



Maritcha Lyons, who later wrote in her memoirs about her girlhood as a member of a free African American family in New York and their adherence to free produce principles.

and storefronts. Creating a regional network, these Manhattan dealers in turn supplied local stores throughout the United States, including smaller stores in New Jersey, Delaware and Ohio. For example, Collins – while based in New York City’s Franklin Square – provisioned customers in Providence, Rhode Island. His store sold free brown sugar, white sugar, molasses and wheat flour; for his efforts, Collins’ customers roundly endorsed him.<sup>12</sup>

Because proponents of free produce suspected the city’s markets might deceive them as to the origins of the goods, they insisted on establishing produce depots outside of the public markets. There were few ways to discern and even fewer incentives for ethical producers to self-identify or brand their goods as free. Advocates thought that, in welcome contrast to the public markets, private merchants “guarded with the greatest care” their suppliers and “bestowed much labour and expense” in prospecting for the goods, receiving only “scanty remuneration.”<sup>13</sup> Free produce societies and their newspapers played a crucial role in recommending reliable merchants from whom to purchase iden-

tifiably free-labor goods. Their papers also carried advertisements by the recommended New York City merchants. Distance, inability to monitor cultivation and processing and fear of impurities raised concerns about fraud. Buying from private merchants who specialized in importing free produce goods and would certify their authenticity allowed consumers to gain comfort about their food choices. The *Genius of Universal Emancipation* recommended in particular New York City’s Joseph Beale, with locations on both Pearl and Fulton Streets. Over the first nine months of 1829, Beale sold approximately \$2000 in sugar and molasses. Of Beale, the *Genius* said that “full confidence may be placed in his intelligence, integrity, and attention to business in which he is engaged” and described his inventory as the “most extensive of any kind in the United States.” Beale himself supplied smaller distribu-

tors by providing rice to Charles Collins in New York City and Zebulon Thomas of Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup>

For their part, New York City consumers welcomed the opportunity to abstain from slave-tainted produce. As an example, African-American families like the Lyonses kept a boarding house on Vandewater Street, where they promoted free produce culture through everyday eating habits and food service practices. They subscribed to a set of standards that suggests the existence of a free produce culture shared by many New Yorkers, not only African-Americans. In her memoirs, Maritcha Lyons, a girl during the times she wrote about, never identified her family and friends as belonging to any “free produce movement” per se.<sup>15</sup>

The dilemmas faced by the Lyons family as they attempted to live slavery-free demonstrates just how tightly the Southern plantation system was linked to northern consumer practices. The examples of family practices are instructive. Lyons’ memoirs recall how families designed their consumption patterns to prevent harm to the enslaved and enter-

continued on following page ►

tained local community meetings to consider how best to bring about social change. Her account explicitly discussed the difficult process of obtaining free produce. During the New York City Draft Riots, protestors destroyed the Lyons' house. The family's list of missing inventory included items necessary for their boarding house: "three dozen

also taught to distinguish without certificates, an important skill in an era of adulteration. A *Friends' Review* article declared that slave-produced sugar could not mimic "Bagel, Dhobah, [or] Cossipore" sugars from the Indian subcontinent. Vermont maple sugar could be identified because of its ready familiarity; "it has a peculiar taste, smell and appear-

ance, by which it is easily known." Similarly, Italian rice varieties could be picked out as different from those grown in the Carolinas. When all else failed, the urban housekeeper was advised to read the customs-house papers, which would indicate the country of origin of the goods. "[A] glance at the list of free and slave-produce, which has been widely circulated, will generally solve the question," the article explained.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, free produce advocates sought to end slavery; abolition was their ultimate goal. Yet the

development and expansion of free produce markets also challenged values inherent in the public markets. Not a traditional physical space like the public market, the free produce network developed by linking families, anti-slavery associations, free-labor farms and owners of private grocery stores who all shared the same values. Activists recognized that overhauling the urban food marketing system to incorporate anti-slavery and anti-discrimination principles would improve the economic and social condition of blacks and the moral health of Americans as a whole. In that way,

The antislavery paper *Friends' Review* argued "that one end of the negro's chain is in our own hands." It continued, "[w]e cannot sip our coffee, or sweeten our dinner, without either promoting or discouraging slavery and the slave trade. ... We cannot escape our responsibilities if we would: then surely this must be a 'home question.'"

free produce was about more than abolitionism. It was a response to a food culture – most prevalently on display in New York City – premised on elevating leisure above labor. Serving a critical function, New York City's merchants developed an alternative marketing infrastructure that not only circulated non-slave produce, but in so doing also rendered visible the troubling conditions of modern food production.

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#### notes

<sup>1</sup>Child, Lydia Maria, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1833), 80. The italics are Child's.

<sup>2</sup>De Voe, Thomas F., *The Market Assistant, Containing a Brief Description of Every Article of Human Food Sold in the Public Markets of the Cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn; Including the Various Domestic and Wild Animals, Poultry, Game, Fish, Vegetables, Fruits &C., &C. With Many Curious Incidents and Anecdotes* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 321-322.

<sup>3</sup>"Products of Slavery," *Liberator*, April 23 1831; De Voe, *The Market Book: Containing a Historical Account of the Public Markets of the Cities of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Brooklyn, with a Brief Description of Every Article of Human Food Sold Therein, the Introduction of Cattle in America, and Notices of Many Remarkable Specimens* (New York: Printed for the author, 1862), 242.

<sup>4</sup>Browne, Junius Henri, *The Great Metropolis: A Mirror of New York: A Complete History of Metropolitan Life and Society, with Sketches of Prominent Places, Persons, and Things in the City, as They Actually Exist* (Hartford: American Pub. Co., 1869), 406-407.

<sup>5</sup>De Voe, *Market Assistant*: 21.

<sup>6</sup>Browne, *Great Metropolis*: 408.

<sup>7</sup>Greene, Asa, *A Glance at New York: Embracing the City Government, Theatres, Hotels, Churches, Mobs,*



The New York Public Library, Schomburg General Research and Reference Division

L. MARIA CHILD.

Lydia Maria Child, an Abolitionist and proponent of free produce, in a photograph that appeared in Aaron M. Powell's *Personal Reminiscences of the Anti-Slavery and Other Reforms and Reformers*, published in 1899 by Anna Rice Powell.

breakfast plates, a dinner bell, frying pans, iron stew pans, copper kettles, pudding dishes, a barrel of brown sugar, coffee, tea, flour, rice, potatoes, hominy and cornmeal." This inventory list showing brown sugar, rather than refined white sugar, suggests that the Lyons' abstained from the most labor-intensive sugar.<sup>16</sup>

So that women could make informed marketing choices, the *Friends' Review* sought to instruct housekeepers on how to interact with and inquire of merchants. Women were taught to ask for certifications of origin, but they were

*Monopolies, Learned Professions, Newspapers, Rogues, Dandies, Fires and Firemen, Water and Other Liquids, & C., & C* (New-York: A. Greene, 1837), 192.

<sup>8</sup>"The Tariff of Conscience: Free Trade in Slave Produce Considered (Part 2)," *Friends' Review*, September 15, 1849.

<sup>9</sup>"Third Annual Report of the Managers of the Philadelphia Free Produce Association of Friends," *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer*, June 3 1848.

<sup>10</sup>S.B., "Free Produce," *Liberator*, May 12 1832. John Candler of the Ohio society reported his findings from a trip to the "West Indian Islands," which he circulated in the *Friends' Review*. "Annual Meeting of the Ohio Free Produce Association of Friends," *Friends' Review*, October 12 1850. For other reports, see also Samuel Rhoads, "Third Annual Report of the Managers of the Philadelphia Free Produce Association of Friends," *ibid.*, May 20 1848; "Third Annual Report of the Managers of the Philadelphia Free Produce Association of Friends."

<sup>11</sup>"Free Groceries," *Liberator*, August 6 1831; "Free Groceries (October)," *Liberator*, October 29 1831.

<sup>12</sup>"Liberator," May 1831; "Free Groceries." "Free Groceries, October 29, 1831." "Free Labor Goods," *Friends' Intelligencer*, February 25 1860.

<sup>13</sup>Silas Cornell, "Abstinence from the Products of Slavery," *Friends' Review*, July 27 1850.

<sup>14</sup>"Free Produce Society," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, October 30 1829; "Wholesale Free Produce Store," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, April 1833; "Wholesale Free Produce Store.," "Free Produce Stores," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, December 1832; "Free Produce Stores," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, July 1831; "Free Produce," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, January 1834. "Free Labour Goods," *Friends' Review*, November 13 1847;

"Free Produce Store in New York," *Friends' Review*, January 15 1848.

<sup>15</sup>"Inventory List," in Harry A. Williamson Papers (Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library), 1928, 31-32.

<sup>16</sup>Maritcha Remond Lyons, "Memories of Yesterdays: All of Which I Saw and Part of Which I Was," *ibid.* (Brooklyn, N.Y.1928), 59, 62.

<sup>17</sup>"The Tariff of Conscience: Free Trade in Slave Produce Considered (Part 1)," *Friends' Review*, September 1 1849.

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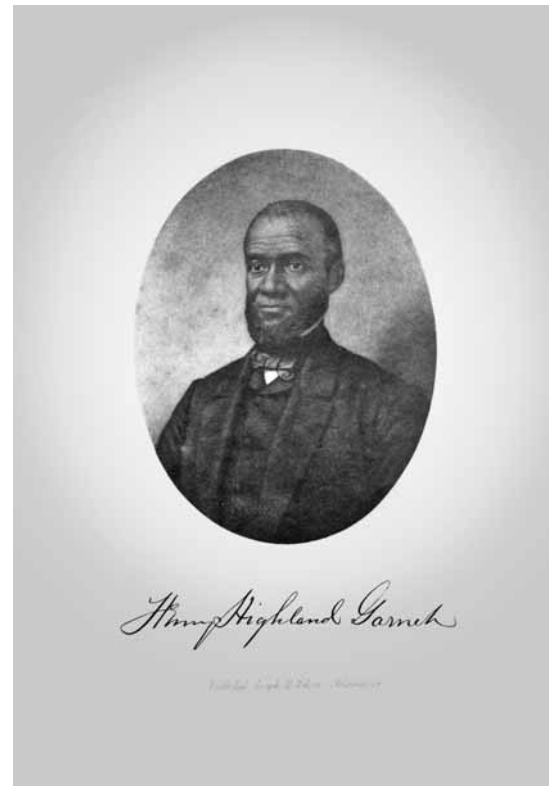
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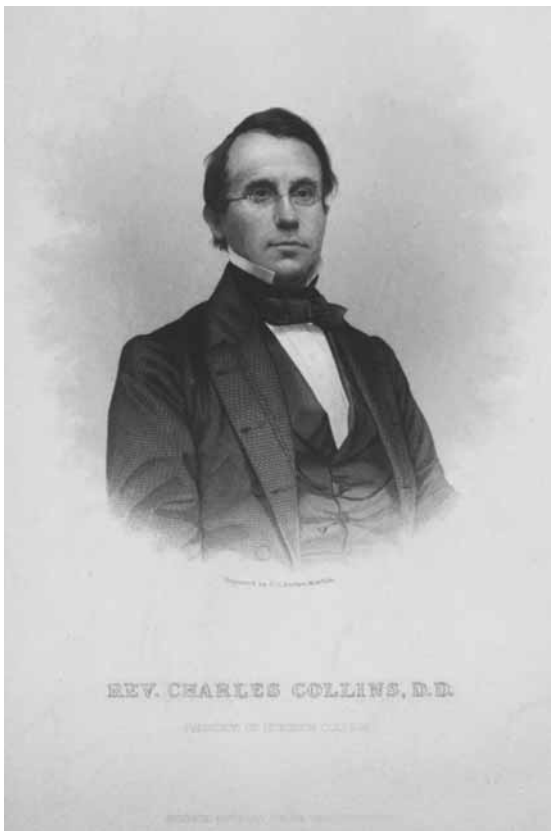
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Charles Collins, a purveyor of free produce.

New York Public Library, Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallace Division of Art, Prints and Photographs

The New York Public Library, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division



Photo by Dickson Sorensen

The author's cake board, with the New Year's cake she baked in it, the chisels she used to carve the board, and a glass of cherry bounce.

archives and the Rare Books Room at the New York Public Library. It also led me to my kitchen, where I dared to experiment with the wonderful historical recipes I found, with mixed results, but ultimately with insights that one can only gain through hands-on experimentation.

Recipes, museum records and literary sources show that bakers used the intricately carved boards for raising designs on "New Year's cake," to be served on New Year's Day. Following a tradition introduced by the Dutch settlers, on this holiday New Yorkers went door-to-door visiting friends, family and acquaintances. The lady of the house would set

out a lavish spread of pickled oysters and other refreshments, and disperse New Year's cookies and cherry bounce (a fermentation of brandy and cherry syrup) as sustenance for the wintry visiting. Children also took part in the festivities, according to an account by William H. Seward: "Immediately after sunrise children began to perambulate the streets, to ring or knock at each door, wish the inmates a 'Happy New-Year,' and receive in return a New-Year's cake stamped with 'pictures.'"<sup>1</sup> New Year's cake could range in size from small and portable (as above) to large and decorative, like the boards at the historical society, which is in keeping with another writer's account of New Year's Day visiting: "On a side table reposes in great state, a large New Year's cake," as well as some extant cake boards, which include a large design on one side and several smaller designs on the reverse.

The cake board also appeared in the cookbook author Eliza Leslie's 1857 recipe for "New-Year's Cake," where she wrote that "The bakers in New York ornament these cakes, with devices or pictures raised by a wooden stamp."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, two cake boards in the collection of the Albany Institute of History

iron also goes into the oven/over the fire, whereas the cake board stamps the dough, which is then placed into the oven without it. In this way, several cakes/cookies can be baked at once.

I eventually uncovered 144 extant cake boards in museum collections, auction records and other sources. In keeping with the firefighter and Lafayette boards at the New-York Historical Society, the majority of cake boards display themes of civic pride. Lafayette appears frequently, either to commemorate his farewell tour, which debuted in New York City in 1824, or to mourn his death in 1834. One board depicts the Swedish singer Jenny Lind (again, who debuted her tour of the U.S. in New York City in 1850), while another is inscribed "Tippecanoe Fort Meigs & Thames," a reference to the Harrison-Tyler presidential campaign of 1840. One board even shows the famous horse race between Eclipse and Sir Henry, an event that historians have interpreted as a foreshadowing of the Civil War, in which a Northern horse beat its Southern opponent. Many others eschew specific references for motifs of bounty, such as overflowing cornucopias and sheaves of wheat. These motifs, and the references to characters

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like Lafayette and Lind, served to celebrate the highpoints and proud moments of the past year, ringing in the New Year with hope and optimism.

Though descriptions of New Year's Day visiting abound in diaries, the writers never paused to explain how New Year's cake was made or went into much description about its appearance or taste. One author came tantalizingly close, writing of New Year's Day in 1839: "I would fain enlighten you upon the subject of New Year cookies, if it were not a very busy day, and I have scarcely time to eat one, much less tell you how they are made."<sup>5</sup> Luckily, several recipes for New Year's cake survive in historical cookbooks such as "Mrs. Lefferts' Book." A curator discovered this tiny, handwritten cookbook in the attic of the Lefferts house (now the Lefferts Historic House in Prospect Park, Brooklyn). Small enough to hold in one hand, or tuck into an apron, the book also includes recipes for confections like Sponge Cake, Ginger Cake and Rusk.<sup>6</sup> However, the quantities of the ingredients in Mrs. Lefferts' other recipes come nowhere near the amounts called for in her New Year's cake recipe, a staggering "28 lb of flour 10 lb of Sugar 5 lb of Butter caraway seed and Orange peel." These enormous proportions evoke the large crowds that must have visited the prominent Lefferts family on New Year's Day. This was not just a recipe for the family. This was a recipe for the masses. Mrs. Lefferts may have piled the cookies into a large basket at the door; as Seward wrote, "Many thrifty housewives had a basket of these [New Year's cakes] standing in the hall, to supply the juvenile demands."<sup>7</sup> At the governor's house, "Barrels of New-Year's cakes stood at the door, to be handed out to children."<sup>8</sup>

Recipes for New Year's cake also exist in published cookbooks. The earliest appears in Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery* (1796).<sup>9</sup> Though she made no mention of stamping with a print, she did call for caraway seed. Eliza Leslie (1787–1858), a cookbook writer from Philadelphia, published recipes for stamped cakes between 1827 and 1853. In the 1836 edition of *Seventy-five Receipts*, she gave a recipe for "New

Year's cake," whereas in 1840 and 1853 she titled a recipe, "New York Cake," yet explained, "they are similar to what are called New Year's cakes."<sup>10</sup> As noted above, in her 1857 recipe for New Year's

[A]ccording to an account by William H. Seward: "Immediately after sunrise children began to perambulate the streets, to ring or knock at each door, wish the inmates a 'Happy New-Year,' and receive in return a New-Year's cake stamped with 'pictures.'"

cake Leslie explained, "The bakers in New York ornament these cakes, with devices or pictures raised by a wooden stamp."<sup>11</sup> She also instructed her readers to cut the cakes into an oval or oblong shape with a jaggging iron, which corre-

today they are "folk art." One particularly large and elaborate board sold at Sotheby's for \$28,000 in 2008,<sup>12</sup> and they regularly sell for around \$5,000. I couldn't go to a cookware shop and buy a gingerbread mold, because they are different, as described above. My only option was to make a cake board from scratch.

I chose to carve my cake board out of mahogany, which is what the majority of extant cake boards were made from. An imported hardwood may seem like an extravagant choice for a mere kitchen tool, but mahogany was in fact an abundant wood in 19th-century New York City, used widely for veneers and carvings on furniture. The cake boards could have been carved from imperfect scraps, since it was the cake, and not the board, that was to be displayed. Most importantly, mahogany is a stable wood, meaning that it does not warp or shrink easily, and it is durable yet soft enough to easily carve – all ideal characteristics



Photo by Kimberly Sorensen

**Cake board carved with an image of General Lafayette, 1834. Mahogany, 18 by 30 by 1½ inches. From the collection of the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, New York.**

sponds to the shape of the design on many New York cake boards.

I yearned to know what these cakes would have tasted like, and though the historical recipes were terse, they baited my curiosity nevertheless. But in order to make New Year's cake I would need a cake board, which, since Leslie's and Mrs. Lefferts' time, have become highly sought-after collectibles of the "Americana" genre. Never mind that they were technically kitchen tools and were mostly made by professional carvers –

for cake boards, which needed to be intricately carved, yet durable enough to withstand repeated use and washings.

Having borrowed a set of chisels and laid out my design in pencil, I set to work on my board. For the border I imitated a sort of "egg and dart" motif that I had seen on many boards, which consisted of semicircles divided by arrows. It turned out to be quite easy to achieve through a combination of the gouge, skew and parting tools. Circles also

continued on following page ►

appear often on cake boards, and like the egg and dart motif, are easy to make. One simply positions a small gouge almost perpendicular to the plane of the wood, and taps the chisel around in a circle. Finally, I decided to try a little free-hand carving in the middle, that is, to carve something that is not necessarily conducive to the shapes a chisel naturally makes. I chose to carve a flower, but still kept it fairly simple. I also carved it deeper than the other motifs, to see how the dough would react with it. It was much more difficult to carve a naturalistic design than it was to make simple, recurring motifs with a single stroke of the chisel. Indeed, on the historical society's board, in contrast with the regular, clear carving of the border and the stars, the firemen seem naïve and rigid. To finish the board, I wiped on a coat of mineral oil, which is colorless, tasteless and safe for food.

My replica complete, I set about choosing a recipe. There are several modern adaptations of recipes for New

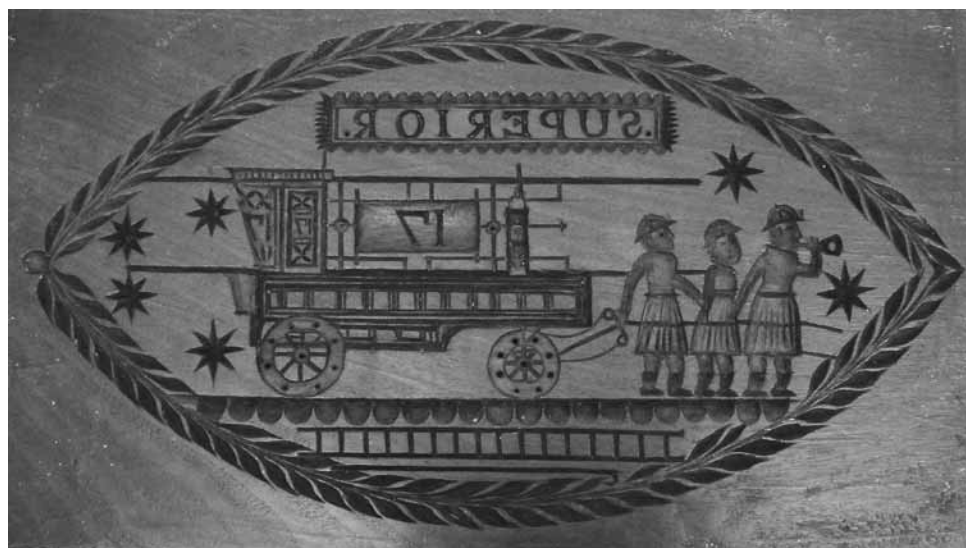


Photo by Kimberly Sorensen

A double-sided cake board carved with images of fire engines. Possibly mahogany, 8 by 14½ by 1 inch.  
From the collection of the New-York Historical Society.

York-based baker, but rather had learned cooking at Mrs. Goodfellow's Cooking School in Philadelphia, the first American cooking school.<sup>13</sup> Leslie's first cookbook, *Seventy-Five Receipts for Pastry, Cakes, and Sweetmeats*, came about as a result of copying Mrs. Goodfellow's recipes for friends, and it is unclear where Mrs. Goodfellow learned to make New Year's cake, whether she simply invented a recipe to resemble the New York delicacy, and whether New York bakers would have used a similar recipe.

Leslie's recipe calls for very large proportions of ingredients, including three pounds of flour, a pound of butter and half a pound of powdered sugar. I did not have the equipment to prepare this amount of dough, nor did I have a scale on hand, so I had to convert all of the measurements into cups and then divide it all by four. As anyone who has ever halved or doubled a recipe knows, this introduces a substantial margin of error.

The resulting dough was very thick, and when rolled out, had the tendency to retract, in the way that pizza dough does. Following Leslie's instructions, I tried to knead it "until quite light," but I had no idea what she meant by that. Being very stiff and rubbery, the dough resisted being incorporated into itself, so that if I folded it in half, and then tried to roll it out, the two pieces never really stuck together. With a considerable amount of effort and muscle, I managed to roll out the dough to a thickness of half an inch. At that point, I cut it into

a rectangle, laid it over my cake board and pushed in the design with the use of the rolling pin. I did not oil or flour the cake board, as Leslie did not instruct to do so.

To my astonishment and delight, the dough peeled off the cake board effortlessly and showed a perfect impression of my carving. However I barely had time to rest on my laurels before the image began to vanish before my eyes. The dough, which had been so resistant to shaping when I rolled it out, likewise relaxed after being stamped. I quickly put it into a 350-degree oven, where, unsurprisingly, the image continued to distort. I took it out when it was light brown on the bottom. I was left with an ugly whitish cake that retained very little of the original impression, and an equally poor impression of Eliza Leslie.

In Leslie's defense, there was a lot of room for error in my adaptation. My culinary expertise humbled, I turned to a modern adaptation for New Year's cake, published by William Woys Weaver in 1989.<sup>14</sup> The original recipe came from the manuscript receipt book of a Long Islander by the name of Phebe Underhill, and dates to between 1834 and 1850. In an email, Dr. Weaver told me that his adaptation is "pretty literal," adding that, "I am not sure which Eliza Leslie recipe you used, but I am fairly certain the end result should not be as you described." I also learned that 19th-century bakers would have known to use soft pastry flour for their cakes, as

I yearned to know what these cakes would have tasted like, and though the historical recipes were terse, they baited my curiosity nevertheless. But in order to make New Year's cake I would need a cake board, which, since Leslie's and Mrs. Lefferts' time, have become highly sought-after collectibles of the "Americana" genre.

Year's cake using cake boards or cookie molds, but I wanted to have the experience of using a 19th-century recipe. I chose to follow Leslie's 1840/1853 recipe for the New York Cookies, because it called for baking soda as a leavening agent, whereas the earlier version called for potash, which I did not have access to. While it is more authentic to use a 19th-century recipe, it is not entirely clear how authentic Leslie's recipes actually were. She was not a New

opposed to the all-purpose flour that we commonly use today. Indeed, Weaver's recipe turned out beautifully. The baked cookies preserved even the finest details in my cake board and most importantly, I *finally* had a taste of authentic New Year's cake: a sweet, crumbly confection flecked with little bursts of flavor from the caraway seeds. One can only imagine what the larger versions would have looked like, filled with figures, scrolling foliage, overflowing cornucopias and patriotic inscriptions.

Perhaps the most surprising piece of information that I gained from this experience is that an equal, if not greater amount of work goes into baking New Year's cake than goes into carving a

that Weaver's recipe preserved every detail in my cake board is important, because when I first saw the cake boards at the New-York Historical Society, I was skeptical as to how any baked good could pick up that much detail. It shows that these cakes really were like edible prints and broadsides, capable of transmitting messages of civic pride and optimism for the New Year.

This imagery also had a culturally charged dimension. A fast-growing, sophisticated city by the mid-19th century, New Year's cake was already an ancient tradition, and though delicious and beautifully ornamented, it was just one element on the New Year's Day table. Refreshments became increasingly

agrarian imagery of sheaves of wheat and overflowing cornucopia carved into the mahogany cake boards, as well as the stark recipes, flavored only by caraway seed, beckon to the idealized past of the Dutch colonists.

\* \* \*

#### notes

<sup>1</sup>This quotation is from an autobiography of William H. Seward that Frederick W. Seward completed on behalf of his father. As Seward Jr. explains in the preface, Seward Sr. had begun his autobiography in 1871, but had only managed to tell his story up to 1834 when he died in 1872. Therefore, it is more likely that this quotation draws on Seward Jr.'s childhood memories than on Seward Sr.'s observations. See: Seward and Seward, *William H. Seward: An Autobiography*, 458.

<sup>2</sup>Eliza Leslie, *Directions for Cookery in its Various Branches* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1840), 360; Eliza Leslie, *Miss Leslie's New Cookery Book* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1857), 605.

<sup>3</sup>Object files, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York.

<sup>4</sup>Peter Rose, "Dutch Foodways: An American Connection" in *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life* (Albany Institute of History and Art and Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 24–25.

<sup>5</sup>"New Year's Day in New-York" in William D. Gallagher, ed., *The Hesperian: A Monthly Miscellany of General Literature*, 2 vols. (Columbus, Ohio: John D. Nichols, 1838), 2: 224.

<sup>6</sup>A facsimile of Mrs. Lefferts' book can be viewed online at: <http://www.brooklynhistory.org/exhibitions/lefferts/mrs-lefferts-book/>.

<sup>7</sup>Seward and Seward, 458.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery by Amelia Simmons, A Facsimile of the Second Edition Printed in Albany 1796* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books), 45.

<sup>10</sup>Eliza Leslie, *Seventy-five Receipts for Pastry, Cake, and Sweetmeats* (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1836), 52; Eliza Leslie, *Miss Leslie's Complete Cookery: Directions for Cookery in its Various Branches* (Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1853), 360.

<sup>11</sup>Eliza Leslie, *Miss Leslie's New Cookery Book* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson and Brothers, 1857), 605.

<sup>12</sup>Sotheby's "Important Americana," lot 180, 1/19/2008.

<sup>13</sup>Anne-Marie Rachman, "Leslie, Eliza," on *Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project*, Michigan State University Library Digital Collections. [http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/authors/author\\_leslie.html#bio](http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/authors/author_leslie.html#bio).

<sup>14</sup>William Woys Weaver, *America Eats: Forms of Edible Folk Art* (New York: Museum of American Folk Art and Harper & Row, 1989), 124.

<sup>15</sup>*New York Times*, Classified Ad, December 23, 1856, 3.

<sup>16</sup>Washington Irving, "The New Year," in *The Complete Works of Washington Irving in One Volume, with a Memoir of the Author* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1843), 99. Originally published in *Salmagundi* no. 20, 23 January 1808. 🍌



Photo by Dickson Sørensen

The author's cakeboard.

simple cake board. There are many more variables and the mixing, kneading and rolling of the dough certainly required more muscle than carving a design into a piece of mahogany did. If women chose to bake their New Year's cake at home, they would have needed a strong pair of arms; I would have ordered mine from the baker. It's hard to even imagine how Mrs. Lefferts prepared her industrial-sized recipe – she would have needed a shovel and a vessel the size of a wheelbarrow to mix her dough, which summons images of mixing concrete more than holiday cookie baking! The fact

elaborate as the century progressed, and came to include "boned turkeys, game, oysters, pyramids, ice cream, Charlotte russe, jellies, blanc mange, meringues, ornamented plum, almond, citron, fruit, pound, sponge, New-Year and other cakes (1856)."<sup>15</sup> As early as 1808, Washington Irving satirized a Dutch New Yorker ("Knickerbocker") who lamented how "our respectable new-year-cookies have been elbowed aside by plum-cake and outlandish liqueurs in the same way that our worthy old Dutch families are out-dazzled by modern upstarts, and mushroom cockneys."<sup>16</sup> In this light, the

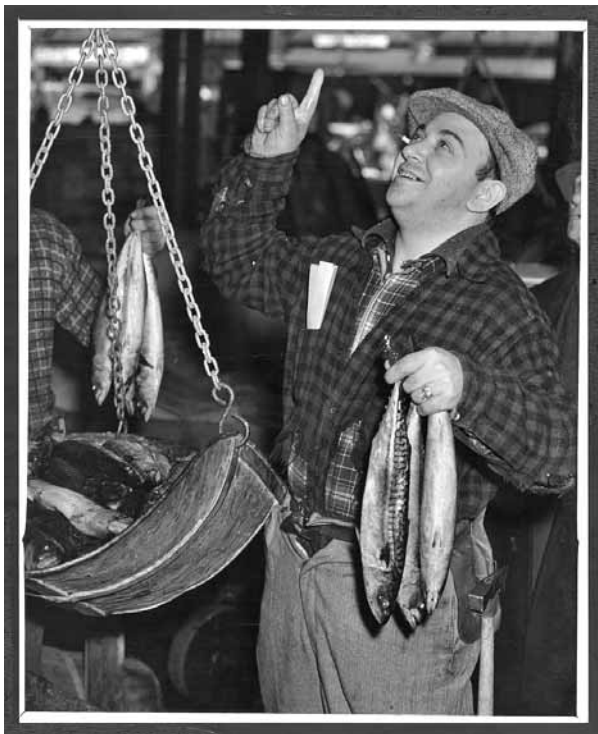
and Mexican. They also live in the Bronx, including Hunts Point, as well as elsewhere in New York City. In the 1950s and '60s, federal funds were used not only to build housing serving a diverse population, but also highways linking the Bronx with the rest of the city via the Major Deegan, the Cross Bronx and the Bruckner Expressways. Roadway access made the Hunts Point Market possible.

Meanwhile, Hunts Point underwent its own evolution. In 1900, the area, where the mansions of Leggetts and Tiffanys had prevailed, started to attract the European melting pot, as roads were paved and apartment buildings built. After World War I, the subway was extended along Southern Boulevard. During and after the Depression, infrastructure was not maintained and services diminished. The area went into decline. Efforts to improve the area provided short-term benefits, but another decline followed. Public funding started reversing this state of affairs, and some industrial facilities arose, including a Con Edison gasification plant, a prison for juveniles and a monastery. By the 1960s, the area was ready for something new.

At the same time, the Washington Street Market, still one of the city's major produce markets, was suffering from severe congestion, terrible traffic and problems with waste disposal. These problems might have been remedied, but in the end, the fate of the market was sealed by a real estate deal; the Twin Towers were to be built on the old market grid.

The groundbreaking ceremony that

initiated construction of Hunts Point took place on March 27, 1962 under the mayoralty of Robert Wagner. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman attended the ceremony, and the Department of Agriculture was



Fishmonger Buck Steo weighs a fresh load of mackerel at the old Fulton Fish Market in a photo taken by Fred Palumbo for the New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection.

involved in supporting the as yet non-existent market for meat, eggs, poultry, dairy and cheese and produce. Consolidation of wholesale suppliers would bring costs down through transportation efficiencies, waste reduction and pilferage controls. Annual savings were expected to be between \$10 million and \$15 million dollars. The new market would provide fresher and less expensive food provisions to the metropolitan population. The cost to build was estimated to be \$30.5 million dollars, and construction was expected to take two years. Produce markets from around the city signed up readily, such that the produce market was oversubscribed.

The Hunts Point Produce Market, the first of the three markets-within-a-market, opened on March 21, 1967, according to Myra Gordon, manager of the produce market for the last twenty-plus years. Some 122 produce and fruit purveyors moved from the Washington Street Market, relocating their bins of

cabbages, beans, leeks, sage, rosemary and mint, as well as apples, pears, berries, squash, potatoes and onions to the Bronx. By 1989, 75 percent of all produce and fruit entering the region was handled at the Hunts Point produce market.

The Meat Market moved to Hunts Point in 1974, although not every purveyor moved at once. Bruce Reingold, the genial manager of the meat market, said that the original motivation for locating the market at Hunts Point was because of its optimal distribution pathways in Manhattan, and over the bridges and into New Jersey.

The New Jersey connection was more than a century old. After stockyards were built in New Jersey, by 1850, New York had become the center of beef production in the country. By the time of refrigerated railroad cars, whether iced or electrical, the shipping of "dressed" beef, mainly from Chicago, became the norm. Areas that once housed butchers were repurposed; the United Nations is built on old butchering acreage. In 1906, New York City had 240 sites for slaughtering cattle and hogs. By 1960, slaughtering was banned in the city. The area we know as the Meat Market near Gansevoort became the last bastion of the remaining meat dealers, but the future was clear; rotting meat, flies and rats could still be found in profusion and cleaning up the city was a priority. It was time for something new.

The meat market at Hunts Point was specifically built for the industry. Back in the 1960s, hanging meat was still the norm, and the facilities were set up with this function in mind. However, in the last 30 years, the cutting has taken place out west, and the meat arrives in boxes.

Beef (and other meats and poultry) continue to be processed through Hunts Point, although in decreasing amounts. While whole animal (beef) production, including exports, has increased in the U.S., per capita consumption of beef within the nation has declined. A combination of high prices, aging of the older European-American consumer, contemporary health concerns and newer immigrant culinary traditions all play a part

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in what sells at Hunts Point. Consumption of beef and poultry in the U.S. has decreased from 190 pounds per person in 1999 to less than 150 pounds per person today. A one-pound rib eye steak with mashed potatoes and creamed spinach – a steakhouse menu icon usually served to one person – is a far cry from the same weight of ground beef chuck stuffed into empanadas, and intended to serve four to six people, or one pound of thinly sliced skirt steak served with sticky rice and pickled cabbage, which could easily serve six. The current revival of whole animal butchery, and the rise of the new butchers, may eventually have an impact on these numbers.

Goat meat consumption, while still a fraction of sales, is increasing rapidly: Muslim, Caribbean, Latin and non-Muslim Indian populations are the primary consumers – so far. If goat is not available, lamb may replace it, and when fresh goat is too expensive, frozen will do. Offal is also more desirable than in the past (although during the heyday of French restaurants in the post-war period, offal was very popular).

There is still a market for high-end prime beef, but it is declining. One or two purveyors still buy sides of beef, delivered on the hook. One such company is Master Purveyors. The company's founder, Marc Solasz, is a concentration camp survivor who started the business on 14th Street in 1957. Today, they have 45 employees, including 10 butchers. They specialize in dry-aged beef, and specialty cuts such as bone-in filet mignon, and specialty burger blends. Beef is aged in drying rooms, and cut to order for expensive steakhouses, such as Peter Luger in Brooklyn. These days, however, the more likely place to see beef carcasses swinging from meat hooks is in reruns of *Rocky*.

The meat market does not have enough room to store all the thousands of boxes of precut, vacuum-packed and boxed meat that arrive weekly. Hun-

dreds of refrigerated trucks are parked throughout the loading dock areas as extra storage space. Since the trucks are left running continuously, the resulting fumes have angered the neighborhood, and rates of asthma and allergies have increased, presumably due to the pollution from the fumes.

The original Fulton Street Fish Market opened in the early 1800s. It moved several times in the neighborhood of Peck Slip, just south of the Brooklyn Bridge. While it flourished until the 1970s, ships were no longer the primary means of transporting fish to the market. Trains, trucks and planes took over, but mostly trucks. One driver that spurred the move to Hunts Point was the successful effort by Rudolph Giuliani,



At the groundbreaking ceremony for Hunts Point Produce Market, Robert F. Wagner and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, third and fourth from left, were among the dignitaries manning shovels in this photo by Al Ravenna published in the *New York World-Telegram and the Sun* in 1962.

first as a federal prosecutor and later as the mayor, to take control from the Mafia, which had been a major presence at the fish market since the 1930s. Until Giuliani came along, corruption and racketeering were rampant. In 1995, a huge fire at the market destroyed all records and with that, potential lawsuits. Finally, after 9/11, the market moved temporarily to Hunts Point as the city was locked down below 14th street. It moved to Hunts Point in 2005. Today, it is second in size only to the Tsukiji market in Tokyo, the largest wholesale fish market in the world.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, purchasers would buy directly

from fishmongers on Fulton Street in lower Manhattan. Late night revelers would stop in for oysters and good cheer. Hookers, drinkers and taverns were abundant. Chefs would come in search of the best fish for their restaurants a little later in the “day” – by 3 or 4 a.m. Many vendors say they miss “the good old days” even though their seafood is now housed in a state-of-the-art refrigerated warehouse, with more space than ever before, much easier cleanup, and no odor of old fish. Telephone orders and ordering online have replaced the haggling and socializing of yore.

In 1924, the Fulton Street market sold 384 million pounds of seafood – 25 percent of all seafood sold in the U.S.

While most large fish markets use the auction system for selling fish wholesale, in New York City there are multiple pricing strategies that depend not only on what customers will pay, but how much they buy, the freshness and status of the fish and how close the timing of the purchase is to the market's week-end closing. In the old days, halibut was king. Today, it is so expensive, only Le Bernardin and equivalent restaurants can afford to buy it. Monkfish, once a trash fish, has become expensive. Hake – a fish once reserved for fish sticks – has become more popular because it is less expensive, and newcomers don't have old habits or preconceptions to overcome. Shellfish is similar; squid and shrimp are ever popular, and octopus is on the rise.

Today, 44 fish purveyors compete with wholesale markets in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, as well as with fish brokers who buy for hotels, institutions and large restaurant chains. Seafood brokers make deals with many different fish suppliers to get exactly what they want, at the price they want. With sophisticated refrigeration chains and rapid transport, freshness is no longer the first item of importance. One consequence of these trends is that the Fulton Fish Market processed only 5 percent of the seafood sold in the U.S. in recent years.

As competition from neighboring states that have their own wholesale markets has increased, not just for fish, but for meat and produce as well, verti-

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cally integrated companies like Whole Foods, which have their own suppliers and distribution centers, are presenting stiff competition, especially as they build more stores. The Greenmarkets, too, are taking a bite – more like a nibble – out of Hunts Point; there is even a Greenmarket at Hunts Point. One result of increased competition: by 2012, just 22 percent of all produce and fruit entering the region moved through Hunts Point, down from 75 percent in 1989.

Today there are 38 produce purveyors. This decline from the original 122 reflects changes that have taken place during the last 50 years, including absorption of smaller family-run companies into larger corporate-owned entities, as well as a shift in production and distribution systems for large retailers

possibilities and an ever-increasing desire to reconnect with the public, one person at a time. An online presence, and a possible TV program for the produce market, may help deflect its declining fortunes.

And while the desire to keep Hunts Point Market in the Bronx is keenly felt by all those who work there, and by New York politicians, challenges abound. Competition, changing consumer habits and modern shifts in the way the food industry does business – not to mention city politics – have all taken their toll.

For now, though, the trucks continue to check in at Hunts Point each day to load and unload the tons of food destined for tables in the greater New York area and beyond. If Thomas Hunt could see it all, he would be amazed.



A truck at a loading dock at the Hunts Point Market, photographed by Nat Fein for the *New York World-Telegram and the Sun* when the produce market opened in 1967.

Library of Congress, New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection

such as Costco and Whole Foods, which do not use Hunts Point. In addition, early immigrant families who started these produce businesses, and whose children then took over, can no longer assume that the next generation will carry on; the grandchildren of the first immigrants climb the educational ladder and seek employment that provides better hours, wages and status.

A creation of the mid-20th century, the Hunts Point Market is adapting to an age that is at once more technology-driven and more global and yet nostalgic for the days of an agrarian society. In an effort to keep up, each market at Hunts Point has its own website, with colorful videos and photos, subscriber

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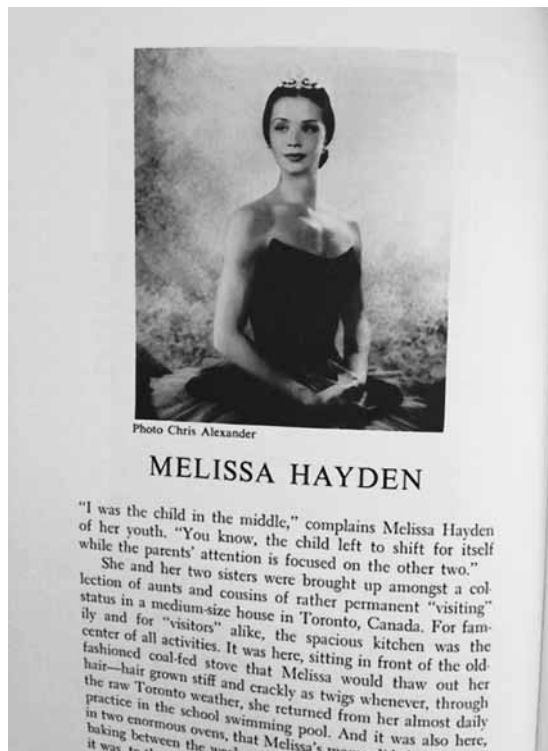
[www.thepauperedchef.com](http://www.thepauperedchef.com): the Fulton Fish Market. 🐟

"swim into the picture"<sup>19</sup> after an amusing paragraph about one of young Melissa's swim-meet mishaps. A limber Allegra Kent "can tie herself into a knot – half-hitch, bowline or figure-of-eight – turn completely inside out, or most easily of all roll herself up, like one of these Schnecken."<sup>20</sup> Jerome Robbins, whose cooking acquired "a faint whiff of the Orient" after he went to Japan to mount *West Side Story*, cautions us to use a small-grated grill when cooking shrimp lest we lose them – advice Le Clercq deadpans is "obviously based on sad personal experience."<sup>21</sup>

And after a droll story about a stage horse named Henry, she introduces us to "a horse of a different color – the horseradish. Ladies are advised to remove their mascara before trying the next recipe [for Horseradish Ice Cream]. Tears are unavoidable. Mr. B. [as her husband was known] fairly bawls while preparing this specialty of his."<sup>22</sup> Her own Great-Great-Grandmother Blackwell's Eggnog, which she has improved by doubling the rum and bourbon called for, "is one in which the spoon stands upright as it is supposed to, but which causes you to fall down as you are not supposed to."<sup>23</sup>

Practical tips make the book disarmingly intimate. Balanchine expounds on the proper technique for seasoning black iron blini pans, and we learn in his chapter that blini batter may be tucked in the snow to slow its rise if guests are running late – a trick picked up from Madame Molokhovetz, whom Tanny calls the "Fanny Farmer of Russia."<sup>24</sup> Allegra Kent's oven-baked "Class Chicken" is "a recipe that has been artfully worked out with a clock to enable Allegra to cook dinner and, at the same time, take an hour of ballet class."<sup>25</sup> Violette Verdy "divulge[s] seven succulent scullery secrets pertaining to the chemistry of cooking, or as she herself likes to phrase it 'secrets for the *chimie de la*

*Meryl Rosofsky is an adjunct professor of Food Studies at New York University and a food writer. Her ballet career peaked at age seven when she performed at Lincoln Center to music from a then-new show called Sesame Street.*



Ballerina Melissa Hayden, in a photo Chris Alexander, from the chapter on Hayden in *The Ballet Cook Book*.

*cuisine*,"<sup>26</sup> beginning with rules for cooking red meat (including horse).

Le Clercq includes a chapter of her own, infused with the wit and sparkle that marked her dancing. Swordfish Tarragon spotlights an herb from the family of wormwood plants that "sprang up in the tracks of the serpent as he slithered out of Paradise." The main ingredient in her Celery Root Soufflé "is an ugly-looking vegetable, gnarled and hairy: put legs on it and it could star in a science fiction movie."<sup>27</sup>

But the charm and humor in these pages belie one of dance's great tragedies. In 1956, her balletic powers in full force, 27-year-old Le Clercq contracted polio while on tour in Europe with the New York City Ballet. (Needle-phobic, she'd declined a vaccine before the trip.) The dancer who Jerry Robbins said "could do anything"<sup>28</sup> was paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. (In a harrowing portent, she had once performed,

at 15, with Balanchine in a piece he'd choreographed for a March of Dimes benefit. In it, Balanchine portrayed sinister Polio. He enveloped Le Clercq in his cape, and she dropped to the floor, paralyzed.<sup>29</sup>) The cheer, even gaiety, of Le Clercq's *The Ballet Cook Book* are all the more remarkable in light of her circumstances when she wrote it, and speak to the healing role food plays in our lives and relationships.

"The food you eat is the fuel for the instrument,"<sup>30</sup> Melissa Hayden reminds young dancers in her 1981 book *Dancer to Dancer*. And she, like Balanchine and Le Clercq, with whom she danced, knew that it was fuel, too, for beauty. Cooking and dancing are both creative endeavors, modes of expression, performances, sustenance and, at their best, transporting forms of art. It is logical then that one can inspire – feed on, if you will – the other. The recipes in this treasure of a cookbook may be dated, with their

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Tanaquil Le Clercq and Brooks Jackson in the New York City Ballet's 1952 production of *Jardin aux Lilas*, choreographed by Antony Tudor. The photograph is by Roger Wood.

cream sauces and bouillon cubes, but the tales they tell are timeless and illuminating. As Balanchine once told a reporter, he “likes to create a ballet by ‘opening the icebox door,’ and rummaging around inside and producing random combinations that look ‘appetizing.’”<sup>31</sup> In Le Clercq’s nearly half-century-old *Ballet Cook Book* there’s inspiration enough to keep the icebox stocked for years to come.

But the charm and humor in these pages belie one of dance’s great tragedies. In 1956, her balletic powers in full force, 27-year-old Le Clercq contracted polio while on tour in Europe with the New York City Ballet.

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notes

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Horowitz, *Artists in Exile: How Refugees from Twentieth-Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts* (HarperCollins, 2009), 60.

<sup>2</sup>Anna Kisselgoff, “George Balanchine, 79, Dies in New York,” *The New York Times*, May 1, 1983. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/05/01/obituaries/george-balanchine-79-dies-in-new-york.html>.

<sup>3</sup>According to Jared Angle, principal dancer with New York City Ballet (NYCB), based on first-hand accounts from Balanchine-era dancers. Personal communication, June 3, 2013.

<sup>4</sup>There’s a story of Balanchine visiting Stravinsky on his deathbed, “describing to him wonderful foods they’re going to have. Stravinsky, practically comatose, opens his eyes and says ‘When? When?!’” (Recounted by Amanda Vaill on April 29, 2013, in conversation with current NYCB Ballet Master in Chief Peter Martins and playwright Richard Nelson at the Lincoln Center Theater in New York.)

<sup>5</sup>As far as I can tell, food figures explicitly in only one of Balanchine’s ballets (save *The Nutcracker*, with its Land of Sweets): In *Pulcinella*, which Balanchine choreographed with Jerome Robbins to music by Stravinsky, there’s a scene in which the title character defeats the devil at a spaghetti feast. (I thank Nancy Goldner, author of *Balanchine Variations*, for pointing this out to me; personal communication, January 28, 2013.)

<sup>6</sup>Bernard Taper, *Balanchine: A Biography* (University of California Press, 1984), 243.

<sup>7</sup>Jennifer Homans, *Apollo’s Angels: A History of Ballet* (Random House, 2010), 505.

<sup>8</sup>Tanaquil Le Clercq, *The Ballet Cook Book* (Stein and Day, 1966), Preface.

<sup>9</sup>Twyla Tharp once joked that “Dancing is like bank robbery—it takes split second timing.” The same may be said for cooking, at least some of the time.

<sup>10</sup>There are linguistic affinities as well. Both ballet and cuisine utilize a French vocabulary even in the U.S., and specific words like *fouetté*, *frappé*, *sauté*, and *fondue* are specialized terms in both cooking and ballet.

<sup>11</sup>Le Clercq, 192.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 272; 278.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 267–268.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 45. Balanchine’s notion of an “ideal sandwich” is echoed in a story told by Peter Martins, current Ballet Master in Chief of NYCB. One year Balanchine invited Martins to his Russian Easter party, where Martins was the only non-Russian in attendance. Balanchine offered the Danish dancer a Russian hamburger.

“What’s that?” Martins asked. Balanchine gestured to the mound of buns and a big bowl of caviar and smiled. “He was in heaven!” Martins says. “It was a \$500 hamburger.” (As told in a moderated conversation at Lincoln Center, April 29, 2013.)

<sup>17</sup>Some consider Danilova to be Balanchine’s second wife (which would make Le Clercq the fifth); however, the two were never officially wed. Le Clercq includes chapters on three of the four important Balanchine wives/muses who preceded her – Danilova, Vera Zorina, and Maria Tallchief – and her treatment of them is gracious and discreet.

<sup>18</sup>Alexandra Danilova, Choura: *The Memoirs of Alexandra Danilova* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 47–48. This passage first came to my attention when I read an excerpt from it in a dissertation by Elizabeth Kattner-Ulrich, “The Early Life and Works of George Balanchine (1913–1928)”, Freie Universität Berlin, defended July 15, 2008. [http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/diss/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/FUDISS\\_derivate\\_000000007745/Early\\_Life\\_and\\_Works\\_of\\_George\\_Balanchine.pdf?hosts=](http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/diss/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/FUDISS_derivate_000000007745/Early_Life_and_Works_of_George_Balanchine.pdf?hosts=)

<sup>19</sup>Le Clercq, 170.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 209–210.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 234. Her great-great-grandmother, Le Clercq tells us, was from the family that owned Blackwell’s Island, later the New York City hospital center called Welfare Island. Today we know it as Roosevelt Island.



Ballerina Melissa Hayden in the New York City Ballet production of *The Duel* in 1952 in a photograph by Roger Wood.

<sup>24</sup>Le Clercq, 48. Yelena Molokhovetz wrote *The Gift to the Young Housewife*, first published in 1886. As an online East European bookseller says, her book became “a part of life [of] every educated Russian family and a noticeable phenomenon of Russian culture.” Soviet dissident writer Yevgeny Zamyatin reportedly brought two books with him to soothe his exile in 1931: “in the first place Elena Molokhovetz, the second, Pushkin.” <http://www.insellbooks.com/books/178560.html>.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 219; 225.

<sup>28</sup>Jerome Robbins, spoken during a tribute to Le Clercq at the start of NYCB’s 50th anniversary season in 1998, as quoted in Anna Kisselgoff, “Tanaquil Le Clercq, 71, Ballerina Who Dazzled the Dance World,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 2001. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/01/nyregion/tanaquil-le-clercq-71-ballerina-who-dazzled-dance-world.html>.

<sup>29</sup>Another eerie coincidence: Tanaquil was named for an Etruscan queen known for reading omens.

<sup>30</sup>Melissa Hayden, *Dancer to Dancer: Advice for Today’s Dancer* (Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981), 110.

<sup>31</sup>“The Rug in the Icebox” (review of *The Figure in the Carpet*), *Time*, April 25, 1960. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,826309,00.html#ixzz2VMEy6IhN>.

# Strange Brew

## How the early colonists made New York's first beers

By Jimmy Carbone and  
Clare Goggin Sivits

Before steam power, refrigeration and other modern amenities gave brewers the ability to make any style of beer they chose, brewing was much more limited. Seasons and weather often dictated fermentation. The early European colonists to the New World had a strong motivation for brewing beer, because at that time, water was thought to cause illness and beer was the drink of choice. In their new surroundings, however, they faced a major limitation beyond those imposed by climate and available technology, namely, the lack of access to the ingredients they had used at home. But they were resourceful; they adjusted to the natural resources they discovered, creating new styles and unique ways of brewing the beer they wanted to drink.

We reached out to brothers Joe and Dennis Fisher, farmers and home brewers who have written extensively about brewing beer with local ingredients, similar to how the colonists made beer. The Fishers, authors of *Homebrewing Made Easy* (Storey Publishing, 2013) and *The Homebrewer's Garden*, (Storey Publishing, 1998) helped us uncover some fascinating pieces of New York's brewing history.

Ship's Beer: As every schoolchild knows, the Dutch were first Europeans to settle in the area that would later become New York. Even before the

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*Clare Goggin Sivits is a content and social media marketing professional and manager of BeerGoggins, a blog about beer and culture.*



"Nieu Amsterdam, at. New Yorck," an engraving by Thomas Doesburgh, issued in 1700 by publisher Carolus Allard.

West Indies Company reached shore, the would-be settlers were introduced to a new style of brew aboard the ships they traveled on. Beer had been stored aboard ship to sate thirsty settlers.

But this beer would have been different from typical Dutch beers. It was relatively low in alcohol but infused with a high amount of hops to act as a preservative throughout the long journey. Since brewing aboard ships was not easy, the majority of the beer would have been brewed before departure.

**Corn Beer:** It took nine years for the West Indies Company to build its own brewery in the land they called New Amsterdam, but the colonists were brewing immedi-

ately – as early as 1624. The Dutch traveled with hops and barley malts to continue making the beer to which they were accustomed in their new home. Indeed, while the cultivation of hops proved relatively successful, barley malt

was harder to come by.

When brewers in New Amsterdam ran out of barley malts, they turned to local supplies, such as corn. Since it was readily available to them, they adjusted their brewing recipes and made corn beer.

Corn was best suited to sweeter, darker brews. The brewers also included molasses to add sugars for fermentation, injecting even more sweetness into their

When Washington visited his favorite New York watering hole, the newly renamed Fraunces Tavern, he would order a porter from Fraunces.

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product. Since it was a far cry from the beers the colonists likely preferred, it was seldom made for commercial use.

#### Small, Table and Strong Beers:

When Fort Amsterdam's first brewery opened for business in 1633, the brewers made beer on a larger scale for settlers throughout the area. They would likely have aimed to make early commercial beers that appealed to a variety of palates.

These included: small beer, a low-alcohol concoction that was even consumed by children; table beer, a porter style that was mild and easily paired with colonial fare; and strong beer, a golden-hued, high-alcohol beer that would have been similar to the beers the Dutch settlers drank back home.



A Dutch colonist enjoying his pipe and his beer in a detail from "Knickerbocker quadrilles" a lithograph of scenes illustrating Washington Irving's works, printed by Endicott's Lithy and published by J.L. Hewitt & Co. in 1843.

The New York Public Library, Ego Collection of New York City Views

out of his location on Pearl Street in lower Manhattan.

Spruce beer was dark and similar to porter, but the flavor of the spruce lent an earthy and grassy character to the beer. Even after the Revolutionary War was won, several brewers continued to make and consume the beloved brew.

**Porter:** Was there a high-end beer at the time? That would have been porter, a dark brew made with pale and dark malts and very little hops,

although it was also brewed in the colony and not much was imported once the Revolution began. Porter became popular with wealthy Americans, including President George Washington himself. When Washington visited his favorite New York watering hole, the newly renamed Fraunces Tavern, he would order a porter from Fraunces.

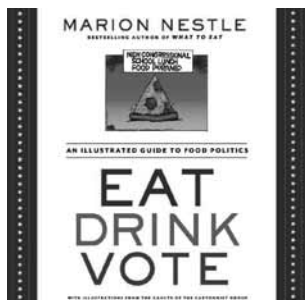
**And then, Lager:** In the early 1800s, brewing shifted with the changing culture of the young nation. German immigrants arrived, bringing recipes for traditional German lager. They found fresh water along the Brooklyn-Queens border and opened large-scale breweries.

By the mid-1800s, German-inspired breweries were the norm in Brooklyn. Lager grew in popularity and brewers were able to meet demand with help from steam power and refrigeration. By the end of the Civil War, lager was hands down the go-to brew for New Yorkers. The many styles of beer that had been born of necessity and ingenuity in the early days of the colonies fell to the wayside. ☺

The early European colonists to the New World had a strong motivation for brewing beer, because at that time, water was thought to cause illness and beer was the drink of choice. In their new surroundings, however, they faced a major limitation beyond those imposed by climate and available technology, namely, the lack of access to the ingredients they had used at home.

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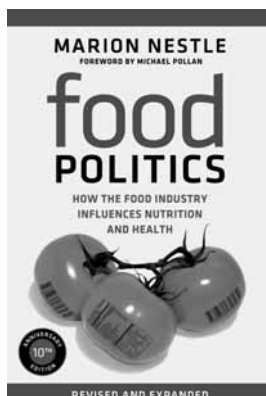
Books by CHNY members, published in 2013



*Eat Drink Vote: An Illustrated Guide to Food Politics* (Rodale Books) by Marion Nestle. Nestle has always used cartoons in her public presentations to communicate how politics – shaped by government, corporate marketing, economics, and geography – influences food choice. In this book, she teams up with the

Cartoonist Group syndicate to present more than 250 of her favorite cartoons on issues ranging from dietary advice to genetic engineering to childhood obesity. Using the cartoons as illustration and commentary, she engagingly summarizes some of today's most pressing issues in food politics. While encouraging readers to vote with their forks for healthier diets, this book insists that it's also necessary to vote with votes to make it easier for everyone to make healthier dietary choices.

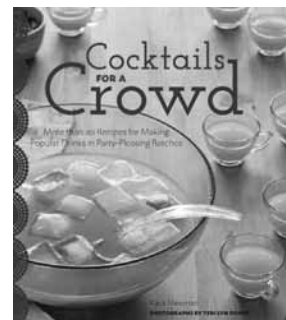
*Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health, 10th Anniversary Edition* (University of California Press) by Marion Nestle. In this revised and expanded 10th anniversary edition, Nestle goes behind the scenes to reveal how competition for our food dollars works and how it affects our health. The abundance of food in the United States – enough to meet the needs of every man, woman, and child twice over – has a downside; industry must do everything possible to persuade people to eat more – more food, more often, and in larger portions – no matter what it does to waistlines or well-being. Nestle examines the ways in which food companies lobby officials, co-opt experts and expand sales by marketing to children, members of minority groups, and people in developing countries, often outside the public view. She explores how strategic decisions on food policy are driven by economics.



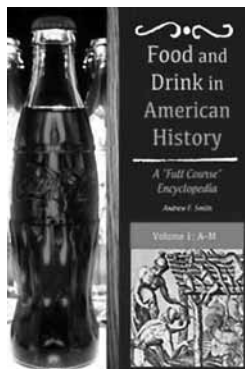
habits and food culture are tied to our society and history. The reference work comprises two volumes containing more than 600 alphabetically arranged historical entries on American foods and beverages, as well as dozens of historical recipes for traditional American fare; the third volume contains more than 120 primary source documents. The books covers a breadth of topics that includes all types of foods in the United States, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, historic foods, regional foods, processed and convenience foods, ethnic/immigrant foods and holiday foods, as well as biographies and corporate histories of food companies. It also provides a chronology that places food and drink into the broader context of American history, in a format that complements traditional high school and college courses on U.S. history.

*Cocktails for a Crowd* (Chronicle Books) by Kara Newman.

In this tasty little volume, wine and spirits expert Kara Newman offers 42 fail-safe recipes for making great cocktails in batches, proving that no host need ever spend the evening trapped behind the bar. With advice on measuring and conversion techniques, helpful hints on balancing flavors and plenty of tips for preparing ahead of time, the delights of drinks usually prepared individually are easily duplicated on a larger scale. Enriched with 24 color photographs, this useful book makes a winning gift for summer entertaining.

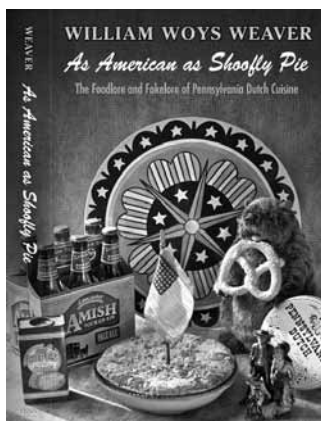


*New York City: A Food Biography* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, December) by Andrew F. Smith. New York City's first "food biography" showcases all the vibrancy, innovation, diversity, influence and taste of the city. Smith shows how, for almost 400 years, New York's culinary influence has been felt worldwide. Its restaurants created and sustained haute cuisine in this country; its grocery stores and supermarkets became models for national food distribution. Foreign and "fancy" foods, including hamburgers, pizza, hot dogs, Waldorf salad and baked Alaska, were introduced to Americans through New York's colorful street vendors, cooks and restaurateurs. In this "food biography," Smith tells the story of the city's ever-changing culinary life in all its fascinating, mouthwatering detail.



*Food and Drink in American History: A "Full Course" Encyclopedia* (ABC-CLIO) by Andrew F. Smith. This three-volume encyclopedia on the history of American food and beverages serves as a companion resource for social studies and American history courses, covering topics ranging from early American Indian foods to mandatory nutrition information at today's fast-food restaurants. Smith explores the myriad ways that taste preferences, eating

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*As American as Shoofly Pie: The Foodlore and Fakelore of Pennsylvania Dutch Cuisine* (University of Pennsylvania Press) by William Woys Weaver. When visitors travel to Pennsylvania Dutch Country, they often sample “regional specialties” such as cream-filled whoopie pies and deep-fried fritters of every variety. Yet many of the foods visitors have come to expect from the region

did not emerge from Pennsylvania Dutch culture, but from local-color novels or the tourist industry. At the same time, other less celebrated (and arguably more delicious) dishes, such as sauerkraut and stuffed pork stomach, have been enjoyed in Pennsylvania Dutch homes for decades. In this book, William Woys Weaver delves into the history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine to sort fact from fiction. Through interviews with contemporary Pennsylvania Dutch cooks and extensive research into cookbooks and archives, *As American as Shoofly Pie* offers a comprehensive and counterintuitive cultural history of Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine, its roots and regional characteristics, its communities and class divisions and its evolution into a uniquely American style of cookery. The book includes dozens of recipes, drawn from exacting research, kitchen-tested, and adapted to modern cooking conventions.

*One Soufflé at a Time* (St. Martin's Press) by Anne Willan. In this memoir, Willan offers up generous portions of life stories and recipes to delight foodies and Francophiles alike. Willan grew up in England and taught cooking in London and Paris before founding La Varenne Cooking School in 1975. She was an editor at *Gourmet* and food editor of the *Washington Star*. Under her cheerful, no-nonsense instruction, anyone could learn to truss a chicken, make a bernaïse, and loft a soufflé. Willan's more than 30 cookbooks, including *The Art of French Provincial Cooking* and the 17-volume *Look & Cook* series influenced countless readers. This book is full of warm, funny, never-told stories of the world's most well-known foodies, from Julia Child and her co-author Simone Beck, to James Beard, Richard Olney, Elizabeth David, Jane Grigson and others, as well as 50 recipes. 🍷



## FOODSTUFF

### The cronut: Thoughts on a New York City culinary happening

By Cathy Kaufman

The cronut is the latest luxury good to become the “it” item for the fashionable class. The speed with which this Soho creation spread throughout the world was breathtaking. The hullabaloo started on the Dominique Ansel Bakery's Facebook page on May 9, 2013, when Chef Ansel leaked a birth announcement, “Something beautiful is being unveiled tomorrow (Friday, May 10th). Half croissant, half donut ... all the crispy sugary goodness of the donut with the flaky layers of a croissant. Wait for it. ...” That he sensed the cult potential of this confection was obvious from his immediate trademarking (May 17) of the name Cronut to identify his lovechild, delivered after the short gestation of two months and ten recipe experiments.

The trademarking came none too soon. On May 15, the independent cronut.org, “a home for cronutophiles,” was launched; on May 19, Ansel appeared on *Fox & Friends*, where a twitter hashtag #cronutfever ran on the bottom ribbon. Soon a secondary market developed, with folks lining up at dawn to buy the \$5 treat for resale at a premium of up to \$40. By August 1, Thrillist Maps, available through Google, tracked places to get cronut facsimiles in locales as far-flung as Barcelona, Spain, and Seoul, South Korea. The frisson surrounding the authentic Soho cronut shows no sign of abating, as Chef Ansel so far produces only one flavor of cronut, which he changes monthly.

Frenzied guilt over this richly sinful treat, made especially pointed when juxtaposed against the “two cities” motif dominating the New York City mayoral race, led to philanthropic opportunities. Crolanthropy T-shirts entitled the wearer to buy extra cronuts, while thecronutproject.com raffled cronuts to donors. Proceeds benefitted the Food Bank for New York City, feeding hungry New Yorkers. 🍩

*CHNY Chair Cathy Kaufman is currently enjoying student life as a newly matriculated master's candidate at NYU's Steinhardt School, specializing in food and culture. In her undergraduate days, she survived, if poorly, on black coffee and jelly doughnuts, and vowed never again to taste a stuffed doughnut. Croissants, however, are another matter, and she is struggling with the dilemma of whether she will maintain her doughnut purity if she succumbs to a cronut.*

## Reviewing New York's ethnic restaurants: What I learned from eating on the cheap

By Irene Sax

I never wanted to review restaurants. I was afraid I'd get fat. Plus I knew, from filling in for reviewers, that arranging a dining group could be like arranging a dinner party: Will they get along? Does he eat meat? Doesn't she keep kosher? Most of all, like many people, I ate out for fun and I was afraid that once it became a job it would stop being fun.

I was so wrong.

After years of writing about New York food for *Newsday*, and stints at a glossy magazine and extravagantly funded website, I was asked to be the cheap-restaurant reviewer for the *Daily News*. The next ten years turned out to be the best of my professional life, not only because of what I ate – although that was splendid – but because of what I learned about the city.

This would not have been the case if I was the regular, or upscale, reviewer, the one who had to deconstruct the ponzu sauce at the Four Seasons or decide whether to give two or three stars to the new Le Cirque. And it definitely wouldn't have been true if I had to slog my way through copycat menus of tricolore salad, grilled salmon, and molten chocolate cake at the city's mid-range restaurants. (Where, being bored, I undoubtedly would have gotten fat.)

But on the cheap-restaurant beat I learned something new every week. I ate Malaysian food one day and Dominican food another. I ate paprikash and spaetzle on the balcony of a social club where elderly Hungarians played cards till midnight, and watermelon pickle on the boardwalk at Brighton Beach on a day when the temperature in Manhattan topped 100 degrees. I went to a Polish place in Greenpoint where men – just men – sat alone at tables drinking fruit

punch and devouring meals of cauliflower soup, pork, three vegetables and rye bread. I learned there was a surge of immigrants from China's Fujian province when I saw soups flavored with its characteristic sweet-and-sour red-wine sediment. And when I went back to the Queens neighborhood where I grew up on white bread and American cheese, I discovered that it looked the same, but that the streets now smelled of turmeric, cumin and garam masala.

How did I know where to go? Because the restaurants I reviewed couldn't afford to pay PR firms, they strung up colored flags and waited for the right people – the ones from their home province – to find them. I found them because, after years of covering food in the city, I had friends who tipped me off when something interesting opened in Bay Ridge or Elmhurst or the Lower East Side.

How did I know what I was eating? I had a library of ethnic cookbooks and a Rolodex of people who were experts in Chinese, Mexican, Middle Eastern and Thai cuisines. And if nobody could tell me about, say, Peruvian food, I would smile sweetly and throw myself on the mercy of the waiter. "I've never eaten Peruvian food before. What should I order?"

Did I get sick? Never. Well, almost never. (There was an incident with an improperly reheated pasta dish.) In fact, my stomach felt a lot better after a Mexican meal in Sunnyside than after a tasting menu with wines at a glitzy Manhattan restaurant.

Was I recognized? Absolutely not. First of all, women of my age are invisible in America. I could sit at a table with three or four women friends, passing plates around, asking questions and



A nighttime view of SriPraPhai Thai Restaurant in Woodside, Queens, one of the best ethnic restaurants in a city full of great food.

Courtesy of SriPraPhai Thai Restaurant

taking notes, without raising the slightest suspicion of the wait staff. Besides, most of the places I visited couldn't care less about the major newspapers; if they sought publicity it was in their own community. (And by the way, anyone who says newspapers are dead should count the foreign-language sheets in New York.)

I took subway lines I had never heard of to neighborhoods I had never visited, the neighborhoods where "ordinary people" (my readers) lived. I stood on bustling, commercial Mulberry Street in Chinatown knowing I was near the once-notorious Five Points, the city's worst, and first, slum. In Queens soon after 9/11 I overheard two men talking with an old-time, sort-of-Irish New York accent. It's not a cadence I hear much in Manhattan, where the hedge funder next door comes from Manchester or Minnesota, and I was surprised to find my eyes filled with tears, suddenly aware that the attack had been not just on my country, but on my city.

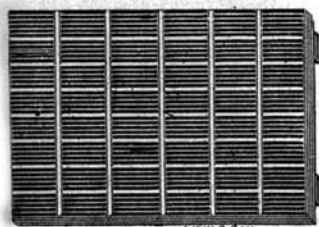
Doing this job made me very high on New York, and on the world full of people who have come here looking to better their lives and wind up enriching all of us.

And I never did get fat. 🍌

*After many years of writing about food in New York newspapers, Irene Sax now teaches "Food Writing" at New York University's graduate department of Food Studies.*

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An illustration of a variety of tools used for imprinting images on baked goods from the 1905 J.Y. Watkins & Son Trade Catalogue. The item labeled "New Year Prints," at left, was used to bake a now largely forgotten holiday favorite, which scholar Kimberly Sørensen investigates on page one.

Photo by Kimberly Sørensen

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