



## Issue 09, Fall 2005

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### Editor's Note:

This issue of *The Virginia Culinary Thymes* celebrates autumn and the harvest and, in doing so, toasts the farmers of America and the world, the people who feed us. From huge mid-western farms to plots on terraced hillsides, the earth yields its bounty of colorful and tasty foods year after year.

In America, autumn and harvest time used to be almost synonymous. Today this association no longer holds true as much in the popular imagination, due to the year-round availability of nearly all foods. Thanks to streamlined international marketing and shipping, Americans and others eat strawberries in the dead of winter or fresh pineapple far from the tropical fields where they grow. The eager anticipation of the first sweet corn, ripped from the stalks in the field, shucked quickly and rushed to the boiling pot of water, well, that moment disappeared when the first refrigerated truck rumbled out of the field on its way to a packing plant.

But change is afoot, for nowadays people seek out local farmers' markets or natural foods stores. More and more farmers devote time to producing the foods our ancestors prized. And many communities set aside plots of communal land for urban farmers to grow food. Farmers' markets

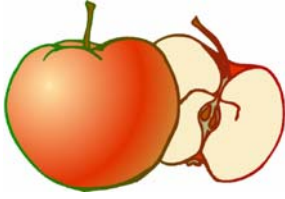
are nothing new. Market days were grand social events in the past both in rural America and in have always been so in Europe and other parts of the world. No doubt, many people remember their grandparents recounting stories about trips to the nearest town to attend markets and catch up with neighbors and friends.

In Virginia, blessed with a relatively mild climate, farmers produce vast quantities of different produce, ranging from wine grapes to apples and all types of vegetables. Several books mentioned in this newsletter stress nature's largess and paint a vibrant portrait of a Virginia that deserves more attention.

The goal of the Peacock-Harper Culinary History Collection is as follows:

"To keep alive knowledge pertaining to the culinary history of Virginia, the United States, and the world, for future generations by gathering together cookbooks and other food-related materials into an accessible collection designed for research, study, and just plain enjoyment."

~ Cindy Bertelsen, Editor



## What's in Season?

Look for the following during the harvest months:

- Apples
- Beets
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Fennel
- Figs
- Grapes
- Greens
- Mushrooms
- Pears
- Plums
- Potatoes
- Turnips
- Walnuts
- Winter squash, including pumpkin

## Books Recently Acquired by the Peacock-Harper Culinary Collection:

*Tyron's Pocket Companion*, by Thomas Tyron. London: George Conyers, 1693.

Includes recipes for culinary dishes appropriate for those suffering various ailments, especially consumption. A manual of "kitchen-physick."

*A New System of Domestic Cookery; Founded Upon Principles of Economy, and Adapted to the Use of Private Families*, by Mrs. Rundell. Philadelphia : Carey and Hart, 126 Chestnut Street, 1844.

From the sixty-seventh London edition augmented and improved by the addition of more than nine hundred new receipts suited to the present state of the art of cookery.

*The Experienced American Housekeeper or Domestic Cookery; Formed on Principles of Economy, and Adapted to the Use of Private Families*, by Maria Eliza Rundell. Hartford, Conn. : Andrus & Judd, 1835.

"The direction of a table is no inconsiderable branch of a lady's concern, as it involves judgement in expenditure, respectability of appearance, and the comfort of her husband and those who partake their hospitality."

Book for Receipts, 1731.

This has a dark brown paper cover. It's old and lovely, and the following quotes convey its essential points:

### Pickles & Preserves

"To pickle walnuts, onions, cucumbers, muskmelons, french beans, spanish mangos, turnips, peaches, elder busa, green codlings, ashen keys, pigeons, oysters....."

Preserves include "apricocks, cherys, red or white currants, goosberrys, orange & green plumbs...."

### Cakes & Biskets

"to make ye best cake...take 8 pound of flower, 8 pound of currants..."

"To make almond gumbals.....to make Lady Goes such biscuits...to make lemon cream...to make barley cream....to make a syllabub...to make mountain cream...to make syrup of orange....to make snail water... to make cinnamon water.... to make mead... to make elder wine...to make for the bite of a mad dog.... to make Mrs Catherine Sanderson's salve...to make lime water...."

*Submitted by Sandy Bosworth*



### **Recipes for the Harvest Months:**

Because of the abundance of the harvest, housewives scrambled to find creative ways to preserve the fruits of their labors. The following recipes aptly illustrate that creativity.

#### ***Sweet-Sour Pickled Pumpkin***

Nancy Cockerill (deceased), who worked as the Extension Home Economist in Loudoun County for many years, gave me this recipe for Sweet-Sour Pickled Pumpkin about 25 years ago. She said the recipe came from a homemaker in Loudoun County. Making the pumpkin pickles resembles the process similar to making Watermelon Rind Pickles. I have made them several times over the years and think the pickles are delicious and certainly different. They make a nice accompaniment for fall meals, especially with pork roast or ham. I have also served these pickles with turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. The pickles are not difficult to make; the time-consuming part is peeling the pumpkin. Be sure you

have a sharp knife because the pumpkin skin is tougher than peeling watermelon in making watermelon rind pickles.

#### **SWEET-SOUR PICKLED PUMPKIN**

4-5 pounds diced pumpkin, skin removed  
2 cups cider vinegar  
4 cups water  
1 cup wine vinegar  
4-5 pounds sugar (equal to amount of pumpkin)  
Juice and peel of one lemon  
Stick cinnamon  
Small piece of ginger

Peel pumpkin, remove soft insides and seeds. Dice into 1"-1 1/2" squares. Place in a crock or glass bowl and cover with vinegar and water. Next day remove pumpkin from liquid and drain in a sieve or colander. Heat wine vinegar, sugar, and spices to boiling. Add pumpkin all at once and cook until clear. Then remove with a slotted spoon and place in clean, hot pint jars. Continue to cook pickling liquid until thick and divide among jars covering the pumpkin pieces. Cover with canning lids and rings. Process in a boiling water bath as is done in preparing other pickles.

Submitted by Helen W. Smith

#### ***So You Thought Gatorade Was New!***

According to Mark Zanger in his book, *The American History Cookbook* (Greenwood Press, 2003) [TX715 .Z36 2003], most harvest drinks were either alcoholic or, for those who abstained, a slightly sweetened refresher was made. Generally, this beverage was for those working in the fields, but it also served as a medicine when the fever

struck. The ingredients included: water from raspberries, strawberries, cherries or other berries, boiled water, cloves, whole cinnamon, a pinch of salt and sugar. If berries were not available, then only water was used. The cook boiled the water/fruit water, then took the mixture off the heat, and added cloves and stick cinnamon. When cooled, stir in sugar and salt. Take to the fields for the workers.

### **Cooling Cinnamon Water** (1808)

Yield is 18 gallons: For 4 farm hands or workers:

1 quartt water or fruit water  
3 whole cloves  
4 3-inch stick cinnamon,  
2 cups sugar or 2.25 cups brown sugar

#### Directions:

Boil the water/fruit water, add cinnamon and cloves, remove from heat, cover and let stand. The liquid will look like weak tea or a light fruit color. To make enough for one person take 1 cup of the mixture (essence) add 2 quarts of cold water, dissolve 1/2 cup sugar plus 1/2 tbsp brown sugar in the liquid. Add a pinch of salt. Serve from a wooden pail with a tin dipper while working in the field.

Submitted by Anne Dumper



### ***Feeding Threshers and Harvest Crews in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

Carrie Young, in her book, *Prairie Cooks: Glorified Rice, Three-Day Buns, and Other Recipes and Reminiscences* (HarperPerennial, 1997), devotes an entire chapter to stories about how her mother cooked for threshers in North Dakota during the harvest. Cooking all day for three or four dozen men challenged cooks like Carrie's Norwegian-born mother, who cooked breakfast, forenoon or midmorning lunch, dinner at noon, afternoon lunch, and supper at the end of the work day. Pies, bread, stews, cookies, cakes, pancakes—the list of food seemed endless. Later, as more women came to the Dakotas, farmwives took over the job of cooking for the harvest crews.

And in Wisconsin, in the 1930s through the 1950s, farmwives also provided immense quantities of food for the neighbors who shared the tasks of harvesting each other's crops in the summer and fall. Girls stayed home from school during those days to help their mother prepare and serve the food. Apple pies disappeared like magic from the tables as the men wrapped extra pieces and pocketed them for later.

Fourteen farmers on the average came every summer to help on the Knute Bertelsen farm. Ethel and her daughter Kay cooked all day, baking bread, pies, cakes. Making sandwiches with cheese and meat for morning lunch took most of the morning after the breakfasts of oatmeal and pancakes. After morning lunch—with sandwiches, cake, and cookies—and a quick wash of the dishes, it was time to stir the stew or pop meatballs into the gravy or check the beef or pork roast and mash the potatoes for the noon dinner. Ethel pushed her relish tray toward each man, the gleaming glaze on the sweet pickles sparkling like diamonds. And to the hungry men, those pickles indeed looked like gems. Salads didn't show up very often, but always plenty of corn or green beans made up for the lack of fresh greens. Besides, not a man among them would eat that rabbit food anyway.

No, salad wouldn't last long in stomachs of men who ran the winnowing machines and loaded corn into the silos. Hot, dusty, backbreaking work called for food that used to be comfort food for most American children. Mashed potatoes, gravy, roast beef, bread and butter, strawberry jam, and pie. Good, solid food, food that built America.

After noon dinner, it was time to make more sandwiches and frost more cakes for the afternoon lunch. Only then would Ethel and Kay relax for a few hours, because all the men returned to their own farms for supper. In the morning, the cycle began again, and last for however many days it took to get the harvest in. Usually, it got done in one or two days, with all fourteen men working.

Once the crops were in one farm, it was time for each farmer to move on to the next farm. And it was then up to other farmwives and daughters to feed the hungry hordes. Everyone work together for the good of the whole. Evan Jones, in his book, *American Food: The Gastronomic Story* (The Overlook Press, 1990) [TX715 .J76 1981], says “Cooking for so many on a regular basis, cooking for even larger appetites when the harvest season brought in helpful neighbors and hired hands to be fed as part of the cost of bringing in the crops—these occasions were not only challenges in terms of logistics, but times of rivalry when good cooks showed how really good they were.” (p. 125-126)

***Ethel's Scalloped Corn, Farmer-Style***  
Serves 4-6

2 eggs  
1 cup milk  
1 16-ounce can cream-style corn  
½ cup saltine cracker crumbs  
½ teaspoon baking powder  
1/8 teaspoon salt  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Grease a 1-quart casserole and set aside. Beat eggs and milk in a large bowl. Add corn, crumbs, baking powder, and salt; stir to mix well. Pour into casserole. Bake 45 minutes to 1 hour until top is crusty and lightly browned.

Submitted by Cindy Bertelsen

**Cookbooks Celebrating the Harvest and Farmers Markets:**

All across the United States, farmers' markets spring up in response

to consumers' desire to connect more with the earth and with the people who produce food. Partly a response to the increasingly impersonal nature of corporate agriculture and big-chain supermarkets, the farmers' market renaissance also reflects farmers' desire to see their products in the hands of consumers. Throughout history, dating back to Mesopotamia, farmers traveled with their goods to local population centers and sold directly to the people who cooked ate their produce.

Today, the same story plays out. By selling directly to consumers, farmers assure their customers of freshness and quality. They also reap rewards in another way: they form a vital part of their communities and bring together people, just like in the old days and the markets that our ancestors frequented. Many communities build permanent quarters for their farmers' markets.

And even in cold winter weather, some cities boast huge numbers of farmer's markets. New York City, for example hosts 28 year-round farmers' markets. And the Union Square Farmers' Market sees 1 million passing through the market stalls each WEEK. Over 20,000 vendors sell their wares at Union Square. This success story repeats itself, albeit on a smaller scale, in city after city, town after town throughout the United States.

For more about what to do with the superb food found in farmers' markets, take a look at the following books:

*Fields of Plenty: A Farmer's Journey in Search of Real Food and the People*

*Who Grow It*, by Michael Ableman (Chronicle Books, 2005)

*Selu: Seeking the Corn-Mother's Wisdom*, by Marilou Awiakta. (Fulcrum, 1993) [E99.C5 A95 1993], a children's book about the Cherokee harvest, by a Cherokee author from the Appalachian region.

*The Magic Harvest: Food, Folklore, and Society*, by Piero Camporesi (Polity Press, 1999) [GT2853.I8 C3613 1993], about harvest culture in Italy. (Available at Newman Library, Virginia Tech.)

*Fresh from the Farmers' Market: Year-Round Recipes for the Pick of the Crop*, by Janet Kessel Fletcher (Chronicle, 1997)

*Field Guide to Produce: How to Identify, Select, and Prepare Virtually Every Fruit and Vegetable at the Market*, by Aliza Green (Quirk Books, 2004)

*Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets*, by Deborah Madison (Broadway Books, 2002) [TX715 .M1157 2002]

*Sori's Harvest Moon Day*, by Lee Uk-Bae (Soundprints, 1999), a children's book about the Korean harvest festival Chu Suk.

## Harvest Festivals Around the World:

*Chinese Moon Festival (Mid-Autumn Festival) or Chung Chu'ui*, celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the eighth lunar month, features mooncakes and tea. Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam celebrate similar festivals.

*Onam*, a harvest festival celebrated in India, takes place in August or September. Pongol is another Indian harvest festival.

*Chu Suk*, a Korean harvest festival, involves feasting on rice cakes and visiting ancestral sites, similar to Chung Chu'ui.

*Festival of Yams*, an African harvest festival, is celebrated mostly in West Africa, where yams and ancestor worship merge.

And of course, *Thanksgiving*, as Americans celebrate the end of the harvest season, involves copious amounts of foods associated with the founding of the nation.

## Book Reviews:

In autumn, Virginia glows with the almost iridescent colors of falling leaves and the intense yellow light of the fall sun. The following cookbooks showcase different aspects of Virginia's bounty and beauty.

Tailgating is another fall happening, as much a part of autumn as the falling of leaves. [Ed.]



©Audrey Lynn Publishing

With more than 100 recipes adapted for the football tailgating phenomenon, *Tech Tailgates* (Audrey Lynn Publishing, 2004) [TX823 .T58 2004], by Kirsten Titland and Melissa Moncrief Cobbler, is a valuable addition to anyone's cookbook shelf. The authors cleverly organized the book into four quarters corresponding to the game of football, along with game plan, kickoff, and halftime sections.

Be sure to check out the game plan in the front, chock full of safety tips, grilling pointers, and food storage and transporting advice. More than 30 items on the game-day checklist assure that you show up not only with paper towels, matches and a sharp kitchen knife, but also with your tickets, sunscreen, and corkscrew.

Feeding a crowd is easy with this fun cookbook. The "Quarterback Casserole" yields over a dozen servings, and, if you double the "Highly Tightly Hot Chocolate" recipe, a dozen thirsty fans end up satiated. The harried cook can also easily whip together more than four dozen Hokie Smokies, a sweet sausage treat made with only three ingredients. Tested for flavor and ease of preparation and serving, each recipe scores big with fans, especially when served off a tailgate!

Clear directions and information on recipe yields aid in planning stellar tailgate events. The convenient spiral binding allows the opened book to stay flat on any surface. And the sub-title sums it up perfectly: *Good Food to Gobble Up on Game Day*. In reality, game day could be any day of the year for these recipes. *Go Hokies!*

Note: *Tech Tailgates* is available at Tech Bookstore, University Bookstore, Volume II bookstore, and you can order from the website: [www.audreylynnpublishing.com](http://www.audreylynnpublishing.com).

**Submitted by Joanne M. Anderson**

In line with this issue's harvest theme, no discussion could be complete without mentioning the following books. All three celebrate Virginia agriculture and the copious agricultural riches of this beautiful state.

*The Best of Virginia Farms: Cookbook and Tour Book, Recipes, People, Places*, by CiCi Williamson (CI Publishing and Menasha Ridge Press, 2003) [TX715.2.S68 W547 2003].

Divided up into ten sections, each covering specific foods and crops grown in Virginia, this lavishly illustrated 308-page book invites you, the reader, in much the same way a hospitable hostess takes you by the hand and leads you to the most comfortable seat in the house. Plying you with the riches of her table, Virginia possesses an astonishing variety of food products and crops. And author CiCi Williamson provides recipes and commentary for each one. Famous and not-so-famous restaurateurs, farmers, and winery owners shared recipes, and information

about each contributor follows each recipe entry. Alongside many of the recipes lie informative text boxes, with information concerning famous historical figures, buying guides for different foods, and insightful mini-essays on various special points of interest through the state of Virginia. Interspaced throughout the book, numerous pull-out full-color photographs emphasize different regions, accompanied by in-depth essays explaining the high points of each. One of the more intriguing recipes, "The Inn at Little Washington's Sweet Red Bell Pepper Soup with Sambuca Cream," signals the way history collides with the present, since George Washington surveyed the area where the restaurant now stands. Chef Patrick O'Connell built his entire menu around the local food products of the Shenandoah region, even though his restaurant only stands 60 miles from Washington, DC.

*The Inn at Little Washington Cookbook: A Consuming Passion* (Random House, 1996) and *Patrick O'Connell's Refined American Cuisine: The Inn at Little Washington* (Time-Warner Book Group, 2004)

Speaking of The Inn at Little Washington brings to mind Chef O'Connell's two cookbooks, both of which feature stunning photographs of the Shenandoah Valley and the carefully prepared dishes served at his restaurant. Both resemble coffee table books that will never see the light of a kitchen window. But unlike many chef-authored cookbooks, these two urge you into the kitchen and encourage you to start dicing and chopping. One recipe, from *Patrick O'Connell's Refined American Cuisine*, "Watercress Soup," takes very little time

to prepare and tastes as if you worked for a whole day on perfecting the recipe. Other treats from the same book, especially pertinent for lovers of fresh produce, include an intriguing “Apple-Rutabaga Soup” and a highly unusual “Sweet Corn Ice Cream!” And when you finish cooking, you can gaze at the beautiful photographs of the peaceful place that inspired the early settlers to make Virginia “the birthplace of presidents.”

*Submitted by Cindy Bertelsen*

**Submitting Articles and Book Reviews  
to *The Virginia Culinary Thymes***

*The Virginia Culinary Thymes* accepts submissions on all manner of topics related to culinary history. Please send submissions to Cindy Bertelsen, editor, at [cbertel@usit.net](mailto:cbertel@usit.net).