

# Annual Members Party

by Carole Rosner, CHSC Member  
Photos by Carole Rosner and Don Corbett

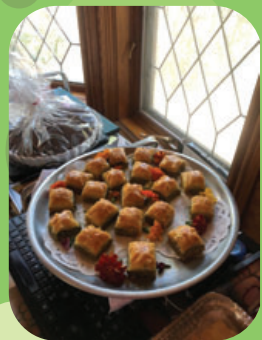
The Culinary Historians of Southern California held its annual potluck luncheon on October 13, 2019. Sonia Gottesman opened her lovely Sherman Oaks home to about 40 guests who were eager to share good food and delightful conversations.

The meal involved recreating French Archeologist and Anthropologist Louis Laurent Gabriel de Mortillet's recipes from his noteworthy dinners. Upon his death in 1898, family and friends began commemorating him with regular dinner events until 1946. These occasions included fanciful menus, archaeologically themed art, and Greek, French and Middle Eastern cuisines.

Recipes were provided in advance to guests and dishes included Avoglemono Soup (Greek Egg and Lemon Soup), Pois à la Français (French peas with butter, onion and lettuce), Rôti d'Agneau à la Grecque (Greek Roast Leg of Lamb served "bandit style"), Saumon Sauce Crevette (Salmon with Shrimp sauce), Baklava and French Tart au Chocolat.

Hand-made jewelry, box seats to the Hollywood Bowl, bottles of wine and tequila, and a dinner hosted by Charles Perry were just some of the items available at the Silent Auction.

Meeting new friends, catching up with old friends, and taking home lots of delicious leftovers make this event one of the standouts of the year.



# THE FOOD JOURNAL

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

## That Lovely, Repellent Scent



Charles Perry  
CHSC President

We Americans love roses as much as everybody but we find the rosewater flavor in baklava loathsome. I have always figured this is because we associate the rose aroma with soap.

In earlier times people didn't have this problem. There is an ancient Roman recipe for brains cooked with wine, eggs and rose petals (well, these days some people might be troubled by brains too), and they must have made other dishes of the sort. The main thing the Greeks and Romans did with roses was to mix the petals with wine, strain them out after a couple of days and sweeten the wine with honey. In antiquity sweet *rosatum* was sold all around the Mediterranean, even reaching Arabia -- 6th-century Bedouin poets mention it.

The Middle East was already the place most devoted to the rose flavor. Medieval Arab cookbooks give recipes for rose marzipan and rose taffy, and for candied pumpkin and even pickled raisins flavored with roses. As it still is, the universal filling for Middle Eastern pastries was sweetened ground nuts (usually almonds, but pistachios and hazelnuts were an option). Interestingly, rosewater also went with sesame, sesame being an oily seed you could call an honorary nut, I suppose. Chicken and lamb were regularly basted while roasting

Continued on page 7

## Upcoming Programs at the Central Library's Mark Taper Auditorium:

February 8, 2020  
Jim Chevallier  
"Dining Out in Paris Before Restaurants"

March 14, 2020  
Kevin West  
"More than a Market: L.A.'s Grand Central Market 1917-2020"

April 11, 2020  
Ken Albala  
"Japanese Luxury Ingredients and their Transmission to the West"

May 9, 2020  
Anne Willan  
"Twelve Women Cookbook Writers who Defined the Way We Eat from 1661 to Today"

June 13, 2020  
TBD

## Program Notes



Nancy Zaslavsky  
CHSC Vice President,  
Programs

With heartfelt thanks from all CHSC members we extend warm hugs to Sonia Gottesman for yet another smashing annual members party at her fabulous home. Through Sonia's generosity we enjoyed our third successful fundraising event at her abode built for fiestas! The successful October event's silent auction brought in over \$1500 in thanks to the work of Chair Sheila Anderzunas with Lance Ward, Silent Auction Chair Don Corbett, Sandeep Gupta, Susanna Erdos, Joanna Erdos, Doris Arima and the rest of Sheila's dedicated committee. Thank you to all who bid on and won auction items, and especially everyone who donated dishes relating to the theme, "Celebrating the Gabriel de Mortillet Dinners."

Richard Foss entertained us as we kicked off the fall season in September with his, "Food on the Westward Trail: More Than Bacon, Beans, and Biscuits?" about covered wagon travel and food during the early westward movement. October brought one of our favorite speakers, Andy Smith, who treated us to, "Pizza History: Fact and Fiction." ("Who has never eaten pizza?" —with Andy's arm over his head begging for someone— anyone to respond, and, alas, no one did. Duh!) Needless to say, reception snacks were a huge hit. Seta Ekmekji and son Alec's November talk, "Aleppo, Syria: Culture and Cuisine" introduced us to real Syrian home cooking and specific dishes that make the famous cuisine subtly different from others in the region. The year wound up with vivacious Sue Conley speaking in December on, "The California Cheese Trail: History and Future of Cheesemaking in Our State." Her tales of Marin County land ownership and trusts, organic farming, and the dairy business sure made for intriguing listening. Thanks to all our experts for another season of excellence. Also, thank you to our fantastic hospitality committee for always top-notch reception snacks and drinks following these programs.

## Feel like dining in a beautiful setting tonight?



Nobu Malibu Restaurant

There's no shortage of restaurants in LA, but some simply stand out because of their immersive environment. Here are "Los Angeles' 10 Most Gorgeous Restaurants," as rated by lifestyle guide, PureWow: <https://www.purewow.com/food/Los-Angeless-10-Most-Gorgeous-Restaurants>. As we embark upon a new year, here's another list of "The Prettiest LA Restaurants in 2019," with completely different but no less worthy selections from Eater LA: <https://la.eater.com/2019/12/18/21028580/10-prettiest-beautiful-restaurants-los-angeles-2019>. Enjoying a meal has never felt so transcendent.

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



630 West Fifth Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90071-2002  
Address Correction Requested

at the  
LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY  
The Culinary Historians of Southern California

We'd like to express gratitude (and a high five!) to CHSC Member Liz Pollock for her donation in support of this newsletter.



## Events Around Los Angeles

### Urban Foodie Black History Experience

February 29, 2020, 11 – 5 PM  
Southbay Pavilion, Carson  
[www.urbanfoodieexperience.com](http://www.urbanfoodieexperience.com)



Where culture meets food. This event was created to highlight amazing minority-owned businesses, especially those that sell delicious, unique food. Come join thousands of melanated foodies and have a great time. Food vendors (including vegan), free parking, family fun, music, games, free admission.

### UCLA Extension Restaurant Industry Conference

March 31, 2020, 8:30 – 5:30 PM  
UCLA, Los Angeles  
<http://business.uclaextension.edu/conferences/restaurant-industry-conference/>



A one-day conference for restaurant leaders – with opportunities to learn, network, and be inspired. Explore the characteristics behind recent successes, as well as key trends that will influence the future. A unique, non-competitive forum to share experiences and gain educational insights from industry experts.

### Masters of Taste 2020

April 5, 2020, 4 PM  
Pasadena Rose Bowl, Pasadena  
<https://mastersoftastela.com>



More than 3,000 food and beverage enthusiasts will stroll the 50 yard line of the Rose Bowl and enjoy a spectacular array of L.A.'s best culinary, beverage and sweet masters. 100% of ticket purchases benefit Union Station Homeless Services.

### RCA Annual Conference & Culinology Expo

April 15-17, 2020  
Hard Rock Hotel, San Diego  
[www.culinology.org](http://www.culinology.org)



Taste the vibe! The Research Chefs Association's conference is the only R&D conference focused on the fast growing discipline of Culinology – the blending of culinary arts and food science and product development.

### Friday Night Flights

April 17, 2020, starting at Noon  
Grand Central Market, Los Angeles  
<https://www.grandcentralmarket.com>



Hop on board every Friday night and enjoy a special flight of drinks or bites plus a round trip ticket on the historic Angels Flight Railway for \$15. Drop by participating restaurants (DTLA Cheese, Golden Road, Horse Thief BBQ, Oyster Gourmet).

### Riverside Tamale Festival

April 18, 2020, 11 – 7 PM  
White Park, Riverside  
<https://rivtamalefest.com>



Join us for our festival celebrating family heritage. Enter our best homemade tamale contest or our tamale eating contest. Bring your chairs or blankets and spend the day eating delicious food and listening to good music.

### Food Photography with Ann Elliott Cutting

May 9, 2020, 10 – 6 PM  
Los Angeles Center of Photography  
<https://lacphoto.org/events>



A one-day workshop introducing the joy and beauty of creating memorable food imagery. Whether an established photographer, emerging professional, instagrammer, food blogger, chef or culinary writer, this is for you! Lecture, hands-on shooting, group critique. A food stylist and prop stylist will be on-site.

### Los Angeles All You Can Eat Ice Cream Festival

July 18-19, 2020, 11 – 9 PM  
Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica  
<https://dola.com/events/2020/7/18/los-angeles-all-you-can-eat-ice-cream-festival-tickets>



Featuring over 60 different flavors from the finest ice cream companies in California, this family-friendly event will have live entertainment, food trucks, a bar, an ice cream contest, vegan and dairy-free options, and games. A benefit for LA Food Bank.  
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## A Letter from the Editor

Welcome to a new year! In fact, welcome to a new decade. It's always interesting to reflect back upon the past and remember funny food fads (as well as more serious food developments and influences). For example, if I mention "fondue parties," and "stuffed bell peppers," I'll bet you can name the era. If I said, "smoothies," you could probably name the years in which this drink type emerged. How about "melba toast" and "jello" and "marshmallow peeps"? What about "icebox," "freeze-dried" and "HACCP"?



And which trends are developing as I write this? How will these new concepts be seen in the future? Heard about "ghost kitchens"? Eating "alternative proteins" and "plant-based options" these days? Carrying around an "eco-friendly" reusable straw in your pocket? Will the Keto diet and Instagram continue or fade away? Only time will tell, but you're welcome to share your thoughts and predictions with us. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the food that nourishes and fulfills you today.

*Sharon*  
Sharon Tani



### What is Cock Ale?

The lusty nature of our forefathers is something that has been covered up to all but the most astute readers of history for far too long. But we can say it now, and with pride: On a scale from Grandma Moses on one end and the filthiest pirate on the other, our early American drinkers most often fell somewhere close to, say, Charlie Sheen in a three-cornered hat. They often drank all day, every day. But they did other things, too. Things like having sex and practicing DIY medicine. Cock Ale got both of these jobs done.

A mixture of ale and boozy, spiced chicken broth, essentially, Cock Ale stands as an example of the prevailing wisdom of the time, which said that booze was indeed for health and vigor, as well as a cure for what ails you. In this case, Cock Ale, also stands as perhaps America's first erectile dysfunction medication. Yes, really.

In the 1600s, as revolution began to permeate the air, so, too, did America's first coffee craze. Parallel to the colonies' rapid proliferation of taverns was a concurrent phenomenon of coffee houses. In those times, as now, the coffee houses were viewed as more intellectually stimulating places (Starbucks had not yet been invented, you see) where the hatching and exchange of ideas would flow more freely.

But there was one problem: All that coffee was taking a toll at home. In a pamphlet called "The Women's Petition Against Coffee," printed in 1674 and circulated in London and across the pond as well, a now forgotten author railed against coffee, citing it as the cause of declining male performance. After a heavy session at the coffee house, the men returning home were "not able to stand to it, and in the very first Charge fall down flat." Your humble author assumes you know what is meant by "it."

Here in the colonies, Cock Ale played to several strengths: To say nothing of its supposed aphrodisiac qualities, it also illustrates early America's debt to home brewing, which itself produced a shadow economy to the tavern scene. Nothing smells like home more than Cock Ale.

Source: Grasse, S. (2016). *Colonial Spirits: A Toast to Our Drunken History: Being: A Revolutionary Drinking Guide to Brewing and Batching, Mixing and Serving, Imbibing and Jibing, Fighting and Freedom in the Ruins of the Ancient Civilization Known as America*. New York: Abrams. Page 31.

## The Culinary Historians of Southern California

[www.chsocal.org](http://www.chsocal.org)



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Questions? Please contact: [membership@chsocal.org](mailto:membership@chsocal.org)

## Upcoming CHSC Speakers Bureau Programs

By Richard Foss,  
CHSC Speakers Bureau Committee Chair

February 15, 2020  
2:00 PM

John Lang  
"What's So Controversial about Genetically Modified Food?"



April 18, 2020  
2:00 PM

Tomm Carroll  
"The Early Days of Brewing in Los Angeles"

Come attend these lectures at:  
Palisades Branch Library  
861 Alma Real Drive  
Pacific Palisades, CA 90272



### Charles Perry, That Lovely, Repellent Scent Continued from Page 1

with a mixture of rosewater and sesame oil, and there's a recipe for cauliflower with tahini and rosewater.

The idea of flavoring ground nuts with roses entered Europe in the middle ages and hung around for centuries. There are 15th-century English recipes for chicken and fish scented with roses and ground almonds. Down to the 19th century, we Americans ourselves flavored many sweets with almonds and roses. As in the medieval Arabic books, the Western recipes cautioned that when you were grinding almonds you should add a little rosewater toward the end so that the almond oil wouldn't separate.

The attraction is easy to see. Rosewater was not an expensive import -- any farm wife could make her own from the rosebush in her front yard. So macaroons were usually flavored with rosewater, as were many puddings (particularly when they contained almonds). Martha Washington's family cookbook, which dated from the middle-1600s, had recipes for rose vinegar, rose honey and candied rose petals (a product still popular in the Middle East). *The Kentucky Housewife* (1839) gave recipes for almond cake and almond pound cake, almond icing, rose brandy, almond custard, and almond ice cream, all flavored with roses.

However, there was an ominous note -- ominous for rosewater -- in the latter book; it also gave a recipe for vanilla ice cream. That once-exotic flavoring was just becoming available, and it turned out that vanilla went much better than rosewater with the new generation of sweets based on chocolate and cream. In the 1860s, cookbooks started suggesting either rosewater or other flavorings as options and in the 1870s they often hedged by calling for unspecified "flavoring." By the 1890s, rosewater was all but forgotten.

As it continued to be, until baklava brought it back in the Sixties. Sort of. But it was like the comeback of an aged rock star, alas: kind of fun but kind of tiresome.

## Members Remember

Our CHSC members have a lot of great ideas, deep insights, fun memories and of course, a passion for food. Let's ask a probing question and see what they think.

### Best movie about food?

**Elisa Callow:** I love *City of Gold*, the recently made documentary on Jonathan Gold. I loved the depth of story about each of the food makers and Jonathan's authentic and insatiable love of the food that adds so much character and brio to our city. I love the beauty of his words when he speaks about Los Angeles.



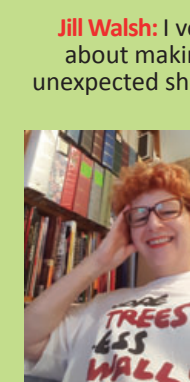
**Lin Cher:** By far, *Big Night*. This movie, to me, depicts everything in the food biz. I was in that profession for 38 years.



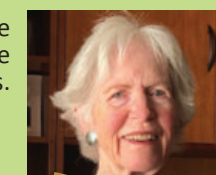
**Felice Miller:** My favorite food movies combine several of my passions: food, art, different cultures, family, people, relationships. *Eat Drink Man Woman*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, and *Waitress* are three of many wonderful films.



**Suzanne Dunaway:** I was moved to tears remembering the poignant scene in *A Special Day*, in which Mastroianni uses his very last egg (it is 1938 and Hitler is meeting on that day with Mussolini!) to make a perfect, lovely omelet to share with his sympathetic neighbor, Sofia Loren (her husband is a fascist and Mastroianni's character is a homosexual). See this film and remember that omelet forever...



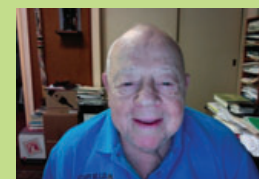
**Jill Walsh:** I vote for *Tampopo*, a Japanese movie about making the ideal ramen broth. There are unexpected shots and vignettes that are priceless.



**Marianne Davis:** The family favorite is *Ratatouille*, of course. All kids love the story line about a misunderstood rat who has a "special talent" and saves the day with it. Everyone also can identify with the strong associations of food cooked just the way our parents did it, and how comforting that can be. And we adults love the undercurrents of Thomas Keller running through it. Something for everybody!



**Don Corbett:** My favorite is *The Hundred-Foot Journey*. It has excellent acting, romance and great food shots.



## New Food History Books

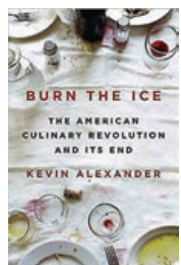
If you find yourself lacking good conversations around the dining table, here's some recent food history books that are sure to whet the appetite.



**The Truffle Underground: A Tale of Mystery, Mayhem, and Manipulation in the Shadowy Market of the World's Most Expensive Fungus** by Ryan Jacobs. What's the big deal about France's black winter truffles? Why do chefs and the fabulously wealthy endlessly explicate about the allure of these bumpy, veined dark fungi as the indescribably tastiest, scarcest and most valuable ingredient in fine dining? The author explains that when you are eating truffles, "You are eating

secrets, mystery, and danger, too," and that today's industry is rife with theft, sabotage, fraud and murder. With elegant and intriguing prose, this well-researched book debunks a few myths, yet reveals even more eye-opening truths and reads like a good mystery that's hard to put down, all the while describing the business, science, passion and complication that's behind this buttery, prized "black diamond."

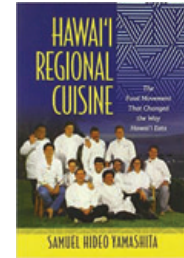
**Tastes Like Chicken: A History of America's Favorite Bird** by Emelyn Rude. Americans consume more than 160 million servings of chicken every 24 hours and we eat 5.9 million pounds every hour, every day. More astonishing than this is the fact that this eating habit is fairly new. For most of Western history, chicken wasn't even considered meat and beef was at the center of American dining. Families were lucky to eat chicken once per week for "Sunday Supper." There's no food so universal that everyone understands when we say something "tastes like chicken," and few other creatures are credited as a descendant of the T. Rex dinosaur. The author explores through history, illustrations and recipes, how chicken became such a versatile food and why this incredible bird is now the most abundant feathered species, thriving on all 6 continents, in deserts, forests, mountains and cities.



**Burn the Ice: The American Culinary Revolution and Its End** by Kevin Alexander. To "burn the ice" means to melt down whatever remains in a kitchen's ice machine at the end of the night. It signals both an end and a beginning. This is the author's approach towards chronicling how American dining underwent a seismic shift in 2006 as casual fine-dining in places like Portland that became a template for other cities morphing into hipster eatery towns. He also describes how online media outlets like Eater and Serious Eats transformed nascent star chefs into celebrities

and changed how we view the culinary world. Taking us through a decade of the travails and triumphs of chefs, restaurants and neighborhoods, and this "glorious bell époque of eating and drinking," the author unfolds the compelling story of how it all ended, amidst the #MeToo movement and the dark reality of chef life, drug addiction, and suicide. Despite the sonic boom of 2018, this book points to a glimmer of hope for the future and our next food revolution.

**Butter: A Rich History** by Elaine Khosrova. A simple yellow stick in everyone's refrigerator that's taken for granted? No longer for this author. After researching and tasting butter all over the world, she explores the variety of nuances, color, consistency, and purposes of this ingredient that is essentially made the same way, yet so distinguishable from each other, and tells the story of how this beloved invention plays a mighty role in the course of human events. From early butter practices through the Industrial Revolution technology to today's battles with margarine and fat-free substitutes, she portrays a history that is churned up with our human ambitions as much as our appetite. Providing a nice set of recipes and a fascinating chapter on butter sculptures and bog butter that are symbolic of its spiritual role in Buddhist and Celtic cultures, the author shows us why butter is still "a culinary catalyst, a agent of change and a gastronomic rock star."



**Hawai'i Regional Cuisine: The Food Movement That Changed the Way Hawai'i Eats** by Samuel Hideo Yamashita. Hawai'i's cuisine is distinctive and celebrated these days, as much for its emphasis on locavorism and aquaculture as it is for its delicious creations and colorful presentations. But that wasn't always the case: racialized, politicized and gendered regimes had ruled colonial Hawaii for nearly a century until a fateful symposium in August

1991 hosted by three chefs – Roger Dikon, Peter Merriman and Alan Wong – with 11 other chefs in attendance, including Roy Yamaguchi and Sam Choy, stimulated discussions about the dominance of European cuisine and fine dining restaurants' reliance on imported fish, meat and vegetables. Their agreement to buy local was revolutionary and inventive, a reimagining of the food landscape and emerging cultural fusions. This book, the first dedicated to Hawai'i Regional Cuisine, chronicles the way people in Hawaii have eaten over time, and how this pioneering movement has successfully broken through fierce historical and social barriers.

If you've ever tried the unlikely pairing of chicken and waffles, you understand the appeal. It's a delectable union of sweet and salty, soft and crunchy, maple and... chicken? I realize it might sound strange to the uninitiated. As somebody who has repeatedly enjoyed this improbable creation, I must insist– don't knock it until you've tried it. Chicken and waffles are a dynamic culinary duo.

To explore the history of this dish, we can start by breaking it down into its two basic elements – fried chicken and waffles. Let's start with fried chicken, which shows up in its earliest form as a fricassee—fried chicken pieces braised in sauce. Fricassee was popular in the Mediterranean basin during the medieval period. To make fricassee required an iron pot, meat, and fat, all of which were readily available during the time period. By the 1300's, *friquasée*, a combination of the French words for "fry" and "break," began appearing in French culinary writings. Early cookbooks like *Le Viandier* feature recipes for fricassee that can be made with any meat, not just chicken. By the 17th century, recipes more frequently called for chicken. In fact, first lady Martha Washington had two recipes for fricassee in her recipe collection, one of which requires a half pound of butter to fry two cut-up chickens. Another popular cookbook of the colonial time period, *The Art of Cookery* by Hannah Glasse, features a recipe for "Brown Fricasey," a dish of chicken pieces coated first with egg, then spiced breadcrumbs, then fried in butter. Starting to sound familiar? Once the chicken was done frying to a crispy brown, it was doused with a healthy serving of gravy, mushrooms and pickles. Glasse's preparation went on to influence many other recipes, included the breaded and fried chicken we are familiar with today.

From the colonial period through the early 1800's, African slaves were doing most of the cooking in Southern kitchens. At that time, chicken was considered a prestigious food within the African American community, and it was more expensive than some other meats. Enslaved cooks would make fricassee recipes from the popular cookbooks of the time period, or they'd take it upon themselves to fry the chicken in the way they knew best.

### So what is it about chicken and waffles that has caused such a stir over the years?

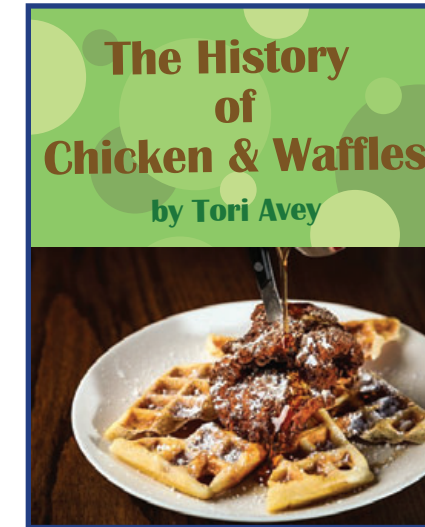
When the Civil War began and men left their homes to become soldiers, fried chicken took on a new significance. The frying process made chicken less prone to spoilage, allowing women to send it to soldiers fighting in the battlefield. In 1881, in her book *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking*, African American cook Abby Fisher shared a recipe for fried chicken. Her version involves flour, fat, and a finishing of thin gravy. By then, most fried chicken recipes had moved beyond the fricassee, and did not require an extra braise in sauce at the end of cooking.

With the advent of the automobile, roadside diners and restaurants began appearing in droves, and fried chicken was on most menus. In the 1940s, Harlan Sanders, better known as Colonel Sanders, developed his signature fried chicken recipe. By 1952, his popular Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise helped to make fried chicken a common treat in households across the country.

Waffles, believe it or not, are related to the wafer that is offered during communion. During the Middle Ages bakeries began to make communion wafers, attempting to compete with monasteries. The secular waffle was developed using the same method that was used to make wafers, by baking a thin cake between two metal plates. Waffles quickly became a popular street food, given they could easily be made with flour and water. More exclusive versions for the wealthy would add honey or eggs. Waffle irons were

engraved with various designs, from coats of arms to the plain honeycomb pattern we recognize today.

The Pilgrims are responsible for bringing waffles to America in 1620 after discovering them during their brief stop in Holland. Dutch immigrants popularized the dish in New Amsterdam, before it became New York. Thomas Jefferson reportedly started a mini American waffle craze during the 1790s when he returned from France with a goose-handled waffle iron. At the 1964 World's Fair, Americans were introduced to the Belgian waffle, made fluffy with the help of yeast and egg whites. Once electric waffle irons replaced those inconvenient metal plates, waffles officially became an American favorite.



The earliest American chicken and waffle combination appears in Pennsylvania Dutch country during the 1600's, when home cooks made waffles and topped them with pulled chicken and gravy. A different, decidedly soul food approach to the pairing worked its way into popular culture much later with the opening of Wells Supper Club in Harlem, New York. The restaurant, known simply as "Wells" to regulars, opened in 1938. Wells became a late night hotspot for jazz musicians, who would stop by late at night after their various gigs. The musicians, arriving too late for dinner but too early for breakfast, enjoyed the appetizing compromise of fried chicken and waffles. Before long, Wells was frequented by the likes of Sammy Davis Jr. and Nat King Cole (who held his wedding reception there).

Wells managed to inspire a nationwide trend. In 1976, a Harlem native named Herb Hudson opened a Los Angeles restaurant dedicated exclusively to the pairing: Roscoe's House of Chicken and Waffles. Hudson's Motown connections helped to launch the restaurant, making it a popular destination for music industry professionals and performers in the Los Angeles area. Over the years, the restaurant has become an established part of the Hollywood food landscape. Roscoe's is so well known, in fact, that President Obama took time out of his busy schedule in 2011 to make an unscheduled stop there. In case you're curious, he ordered the "Country Boy," Number 9— three wings with choice of waffle, potato salad or French fries. Here's hoping he chose the waffle.

So what is it about chicken and waffles that has caused such a stir over the years? Is it that crispy seasoned chicken skin? The fluffy waffles enveloped in melting pads of butter? That warm, sweet syrup drizzled over the top? Or is it that first bite, when all of the ingredients come together in perfect, soul-stirring harmony?

While you ponder that, I'm headed to the kitchen to whip up a homemade batch of chicken and waffles.

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*Tori Avey lives in L.A. and is the creator of the cooking and lifestyle blog ToriAvey.com. She penned a column for PBS Food called "The History Kitchen," and her food writing and photography have appeared in Parade, CNN, Bon Appetit, Zabar's, and Williams-Sonoma. Her cooking tips, advice, recipes and photography have also appeared on The Kitchn, Buzzfeed, Huffington Post, The San Diego Jewish Journal, Gluten-Free Living, and LA Weekly. Michael Ruhlman gave Tori a shout-out as a food blog he admires and she was featured in the New York Times' "What We're Reading" List.*

## California Brewers are Growing and Getting More Creative

A new rule allows California brewers to include fruit, honey and spices in beer production. Under a bill that was introduced by Assemblyman Tom Daly, out of Anaheim, and signed as Assembly Bill 205 by Governor Gavin Newsom, this new law also allows beer to be aged in barrels that once contained wine or distilled spirits and still be classified as beer. Under prior state law, using fruit in the fermentation process required a wine license. This law aligns California's definition of beer with the federal regulation that already allowed the use of additional ingredients to the base of traditional beer.

What this means for breweries is that they now have the ability to

expand their market and satisfy our consumers' desires for more varied and unique styles of beer. According to the California Craft Brewers Association, we have nearly a thousand licensed craft breweries, up from just a few hundred in 2012. Based on brewery licenses issued by California's Alcoholic Beverage Control, the Los Angeles area, including Orange and Ventura counties, saw the greatest expansion with a net gain of 24 new craft breweries. Overall, the industry contributed more than \$8 million to the state economy in 2019. Be on the lookout for more creative inventions from your favorite breweries.

If you are an average American, about forty years old, you're probably approaching banana ten thousand, just as I am. You've probably never given the fruit much thought, and until recently neither had I. Bananas had always just been here, waiting to be purchased, waiting to be enjoyed. Bananas were likely the first fruit you ate as an infant, and they may be the last fruit you eat in old age. To most of us, a banana is just a banana: yellow and sweet, universally sized, always seedless.

I first began thinking about bananas in 2003, after reading a small story in a magazine called *New Scientist*. I was fascinated by what the article revealed: that bananas are more loved, consumed, and needed than any other fruit on earth; that Americans eat more bananas per year than apples and oranges combined; and that in many other parts of the world, bananas – more than rice, more than potatoes – are what keep hundreds of millions of people alive. The story also talked about a disease spreading throughout the world's banana crop – a blight with no known cure.

The more I researched, the more it became clear that there's nothing we eat – that the world eats – more paradoxical than the banana. The humble treat we pack into our lunchboxes is among the most complex crops cultivated by humans. There is an epidemic underway, one far more ominous than I'd realized. In a matter of decades, it could essentially wipe out the fruit that so many of us love and rely on.

Almost everything I learned about the banana was surprising. For all its ubiquity, the banana is truly one of the most intriguing organisms on earth. A banana tree isn't a tree at all; it's the world's largest herb. The fruit itself is actually a giant berry. Most of us eat just a single kind of banana, a variety called the Cavendish, but over one thousand types of banana are found worldwide, including dozens of wild varieties, many no bigger than your pinky and filled with tooth-shattering seeds. Bananas were one of the earliest plants to be cultivated by humans – they were first farmed more than seven thousand years ago – and they remain one of the most important: They are the world's largest fruit crop and the fourth-largest product grown overall, after wheat, rice, and corn.

The banana's past is also rich with historical significance. At the end of the nineteenth century, a few rugged and ruthless entrepreneurs built a market for a product most Americans has never heard of. The fruit proved to be a commercial miracle. Within twenty years, bananas has surpassed apples to become America's best seller, despite the fact that the banana is a tropical product that rots easily and needs to be shipped up to thousands of miles, while apples grow within a few hours of most U.S. cities. The companies that are the direct ancestors of today's Chiquita and Dole – founded by those early banana barons – had to invent ways to bring bananas out of dense jungle and to control and delay ripening throughout the fruit's long distribution chain, all the way to local markets. The companies cleared rain forests, laid railroad track, and built entire cities. They invented not just radio networks but entire technologies – some still in use today – to allow communication between plantations and cargo vessels approaching port. Banana fleets were the first vessels with built-in refrigeration and banana companies the first to use controlled atmospheres and piped-in chemicals to delay ripening. None of these innovations, now in wide use, existed before bananas.

Everywhere bananas have appeared

they've changed the cultures that embraced them. In the most ancient translations of the Bible, the "apple"

consumed by Eve in the Garden of Eden is the more suggestive banana. In the African nations surrounding Lake Victoria, the word for food, translated from Swahili, is also the word for banana. In Central America, bananas built and toppled nations: a struggle to control the banana crop led to the overthrow of Guatemala's first



Banana plantation

democratically elected government in the 1950s, which in turn gave birth to the Mayan genocide of the 1980s. In the 1960s, banana companies – trying to regain plantations nationalized by Fidel Castro – allowed the CIA to use their freighters as part of the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Over and over again, the banana is linked with triumph and tragedy: Eli Black, the chairman of Chiquita, threw himself out the window of a Manhattan skyscraper in 1974 after his company's political machinations were exposed. The term banana republic reflects the excess of influence banana producers wielded throughout the twentieth century.

The banana that is dying, the Cavendish, is the most popular single variety of fruit in the world. It is the one that you and nearly everyone you know eats today. But it's not the fruit your grandparents enjoyed. That banana was called the Gros Michel, which translates as "Big Mike." By all accounts, Big Mike was a most spectacular banana than our Cavendish. It was larger, with a thicker skin, a creamier texture, and a more intense, fruity taste. It was the original banana that arrived at American tables, and from the late nineteenth century until after World War II, it was the only banana Americans bought, ate, or thought of.

But the Gros Michel disappeared. A disease began to ravage banana crops not long after the first banana trees were planted in Central America. The malady was discovered in Panama and named after that country. Panama disease – actually a

fungus – is particularly virulent. It is transmitted through soil and water. Once it hits a plantation, it quickly destroys, and then moves on.

The reason Panama disease is so devastating isn't just because the malady is strong. It is also because bananas, at their core, are weak. That's another contradiction, because everything we see or can intuitively conclude about the banana implies the opposite. Our banana's thick skin makes the fruit tough enough to survive not only being stacked in boxes on the way to the grocery but also being tossed over the back of a mule in Ecuador or strapped in bunches to a motor scooter bumping through a humid, dense plantation in the Philippines. Unlike peaches or plums, bananas all ripen at nearly

the same rate, arriving at the store green and cycling from yellow to flecked with brown in almost exactly seven days. There is no fruit more consistent or reliable, which is one of the reasons we eat so many of them. A banana's taste and visual appearance are as predictable as a Big Mac's.

There's a simple explanation for this, and you can find it – or, more accurately, can't find it – when you peel a banana: no seeds. You will never, ever find a seed in a supermarket banana. That is because the fruit is grown, basically, by cloning. One banana begets another in a process similar to taking a cutting from a rosebush – and multiplying it by a billion. Every banana we eat is a genetic twin of every other. Yet because every banana is the same, every banana is equally susceptible: Billions of identical twins means that what makes one banana sick makes every banana sick.

That's what happened to the Gros Michel. By 1960, fifty years after the malady was first discovered, the Gros Michel was effectively



The effect of Panama Disease

extinct. The banana industry was in crisis, itself threatened with disappearance. It was only at the last minute that a new banana was adopted. The change happened so quickly and smoothly that consumers barely noticed. The Gros Michel era ended not just with a new banana but with a new assumption: The old banana, now gone, was uniquely frail. Cavendish, convenient and delicious, was strong.

But it wasn't strength that kept the Cavendish healthy. It was simply a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Many of the world's non-Cavendish varieties of bananas are also susceptible to Panama disease. The difference is that these are local bananas. They may provide sustenance for an entire Pakistani state or a single village in Uganda, but because their growing area is limited, many outbreaks simply reach a dead end.

This was even true with the Gros Michel, though the biological cul-de-sac was a big one: an entire hemisphere.

Panama disease never moved across the Atlantic or Pacific because the commercial banana crop didn't mingle with the fruit people grew and ate closer to their homes. But the Cavendish was introduced into a different, faster-moving world. At first, it was grown in the same places as its predecessor. But by the end of the 1970s, the world's appetite for bananas began to change. Populations across the globe were moving to cities, and if they wanted the fruit, they needed one that could be transported great distances intact, ready to ripen, and with consistent enough taste to be a reliable performer on grocers' shelves.

One such place was Malaysia. Cavendish plantations were new to the country in the 1980s, but they quickly became big business. Within a few years of breaking ground, the newly planted fruit began to die. An unknown pathogen was working its way into the roots of the plant, discoloring leaves, and choking off water supplies. It took several years for scientists to identify the malady, and it came as a shock: Panama disease, hitting the banana variety that was supposed to be invulnerable. It took longer, still, to discover why. It turned out that the Cavendish had never actually been immune to the blight – only to the particular strain of the sickness that destroyed the Gros Michel.

Today, the blight is tearing through banana crops worldwide. It has spread to Pakistan, the Philippines, and Indonesia. It is on the rise in Africa. While it has yet to arrive in our hemisphere, in the dozens of interviews I have conducted since 2004, I couldn't find a single person studying the fruit who seriously believes that it won't.

For the past five years, banana scientists have been trying – in a race against time – to modify the fruit to make it resistant to Panama disease (as well as more than a dozen other serious banana afflictions, ranging from fungal, bacterial, and viral infections to burrowing worms and beetles). Researchers are combing remote jungles for new, wild bananas; they're melding one

banana with another and even adding genetic material from altogether different fruits and vegetables. The best hope for a more hardy banana is genetic engineering – work in the lab that adds DNA from one organism to another. But even if that succeeds, there's an excellent chance people won't want to eat and won't be allowed to eat (such products are currently banned in much of the world) bananas that gain newfound strength from the insertion of genes originally found in everything from radishes to (and this is real) fish.

A parallel and competing effort is underway to somehow cross the threatened banana with a variety that has resistance to the new blight. But that's tough, too: The resulting fruit needs to taste good, ripen in the correct amount of time, and be easy to grow in great quantities. Right now, nobody knows if the banana can – or will – be saved.



Dan Koeppel is a Portland, Maine-based science, nature, and outdoors writer, whose work appears in *The New York Times*, *Outside*, *Audubon*, *Wired*, and other national publications. His efforts on bananas won a James Beard Award in 2011. He offers this update on the banana's plight: "Since my book came out, the prediction of Panama Disease's spread has sadly come true. As of 2019, the malady is now present in 19 countries, and finally reached Latin America in 2018. Efforts to find a replacement banana or bananas for the Cavendish continue, but have so far yielded few practical results."

\* Excerpted from *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World* with permission by the author. This article has been edited from its original book publication due to space constraints.



# BANANA: THE FATE OF THE FRUIT THAT CHANGED THE WORLD BY DAN KOEPPEL