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**Coming soon... LA CRAFT BREW!**

By Joan Nielsen, Chairman



**October 8th:** The Los Angeles Brewers Guild will partner with the CHSC to host an exciting and informative panel discussion about the ever evolving craft brewing industry in Los Angeles! Expert brewers will explore LA's brewing roots and discuss how the craft beer renaissance has built a strong sense of hyper-local community, from neighborhood tasting rooms and brew pubs (with innovative new brew food) to state-of-the-art production facilities. Discover how LA's brew scene has come of age, bringing innovation, quality and a hand-crafted artisan approach as an answer to the watery, mass produced swill of yesteryear!

**October 9th:** Our annual members-only party will take place at a craft brew facility, further plans and info TBA... Join the CHSC to join the fun!



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



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at the  
**LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Culinary Historians of Southern California



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

**September 10, 2016**

Feride Buyuran  
"Food of Azerbaijan: From the Silk Road to Today"

**October 8, 2016**

The Los Angeles Brewers Guild panel discussion  
"L.A. Craft Beer"

**November 12, 2016**

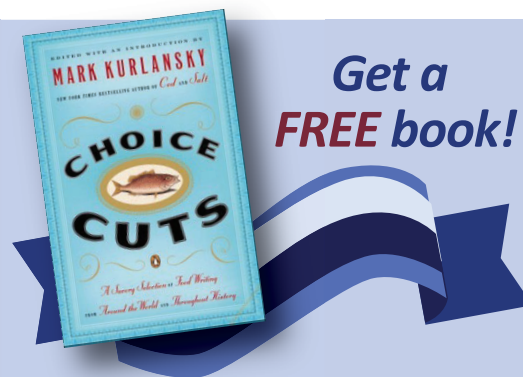
Jeremiah Tower  
"My Life as a Chef"

**December 10, 2016**

TBD  
History of Vietnamese Cuisine

**January 14, 2017**

Charles Perry  
"Middle Eastern Cuisine is 500 Years Old"



Spend \$10 or more at our CHSC book sale and get a free copy of the critically-acclaimed book, *Choice Cuts*, by Mark Kurlansky. Mention the phrase "spend10freebook" during checkout. Offer good while supplies last.

THE  
**FOOD JOURNAL**

Summer 2016  
Vol.15 No. 1

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



Charles Perry  
CHSC President

**George, for Example**

When I first developed a curiosity about food history, I bought a book with the promising title *Bull Cook and Authentic Historical Recipes*, by George Leonard Herter. I ended up getting all three books in the series, not because they were authentic history -- the information seemed to have been divulged by the flying saucers -- but because they were amazing.

Herter ran a mail order sporting goods store in Waseca, Minn., the kind of place where you could find any tent under the sun and send your rifle barrel to be re-blued. In his books, he comes across as a likable curmudgeon who felt the world was chockablock with phoniness and it was his humble duty to expose the truth.

In fact, he was a leading exemplar of two common delusions in pop food history:

- 1) If you think of a plausible explanation for the origin of a dish, it's as good as true because there's no way prove it wrong. It never occurred to him to seek evidence.
- 2) Famous dishes were always invented by famous people. This was Herter's particular obsession.

*Continued on page 7*



Nancy Zaslavsky  
CHSC Vice President,  
Programs

**Program Notes**

Charles Perry kick-started 2016 with his January president's talk on, "Dried, Frozen and Rotted: Food Preservation in Northern Eurasia." Needless to say, Charles's lecture was about as esoteric as any Perry lecture in years, a marvel of research and enthusiasm, his trademark. Another stunning talk followed in February when Bert Sonnenfeld reminded us in, "Global Warning: Macro-waves on Stormy Restaurant Seas" that "a waste is a terrible thing to mind" with world wide, cosmopolitan-globalization of fast food. Rabbi Deborah Prinz lectured on, "Chocolate's Religious Narratives and Rituals" in March, taken from her book, *On the Chocolate Trail: A Delicious Adventure Connecting Jews, Religions, History, Travel, Rituals and Recipes to the Magic of Cacao*. April brought a long-time friend of CHSC, Andy Smith, with our second thought-provoking fast food-themed talk of the year, "Fast Food: A Global Perspective" to introduce his latest culinary history book, *Fast Food: The Good, the Bad and the Hungry*. Liz Pollock, owner of, The Cook's Bookcase, in Santa Cruz, CA, spoke in May about Julia Child's books, and books and ephemera about her, strictly from a bookseller's point of view. Amelia Saltsman, author of, *The Seasonal Jewish Kitchen* delighted us in June with her knowledge of the history of worldwide Jewish food and how these traditional dishes are directly reflected in modern cuisine with, "This is Jewish Food? Who Knew." All of these wonderful programs were videotaped and can be viewed on the CHSC website, chscsite.org

As Program Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our terrific Hospitality Committee that works its magic at receptions following programs. Thank you, Sandeep and his team (including all new volunteers!) who provide delicious snacks and drinks related to each program's theme. Bravo!

**626 Night Market**  
 August 5-7 and September 2-4, 2016  
 Santa Anita Park, Arcadia  
[www.626nightmarket.com](http://www.626nightmarket.com)



The original and largest Asian-themed night market in the United States, 626 Night Market boasts hundreds of food, merchandise, crafts, arts, games, music, and entertainment attractions in one jam-packed weekend of festivities for the whole family. 626 Night Market aims to unite and empower the community by serving as a platform for showcasing local entrepreneurs, businesses, artists, and talent.

**L.A. Taco Festival**  
 August 20, 2016  
 Grand Park, Downtown Los Angeles  
[www.latacofestival.com](http://www.latacofestival.com)



The L.A. Taco Festival showcases some of East L.A.'s tastiest tacos, local bands and a day of fun! The L.A. Taco Festival benefits Jovenes, Inc., a non-profit organization located in Boyle Heights that helps youth ages 18-25 leave homelessness behind.

**Los Angeles Food & Wine Festival**  
 August 25-28, 2016  
 Multiple locations  
[www.lafw.com](http://www.lafw.com)



The Los Angeles Food & Wine Festival spotlights the finest in food and drink culture throughout Los Angeles in a four-day culinary event. The festival gathers culinary personalities from around the world to offers revelers the opportunity to sample dishes from prominent epicureans. Past celebrity chefs that have shown off their skills at the festival include Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto, Guy Fieri and Michael Ginor.

**San Diego Spirits Festival**  
 August 27-28, 2016  
 Port Pavilion Broadway Pier  
[www.sandiegospiritsfestival.com](http://www.sandiegospiritsfestival.com)



San Diego Spirits Festival is a destination event that targets industry insiders, consumer cocktail and food lovers alike. With bartender competitions, tastings, seminars and parties, the festival offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity for brands to be supported and gain recognition among the cocktail and culinary community. The festival has been ranked as one of the top cocktail events in America by Fodors.

**Los Angeles Chocolate Salon**  
 October 1, 2016  
 Pasadena Center  
[www.lachocolatesalon.com](http://www.lachocolatesalon.com)



Experience the finest in artisan, gourmet & premium chocolates. Participants include a curated selection of premium & award-winning chocolatiers, confectioners, and other culinary artisans. The salon features chocolate tastings, demonstrations, chef & author talks and ongoing interviews by TasteTV's Chocolate Television program.

A Letter from the Editor

I've been thinking lately about how our food culture today will be reflected in tomorrow's history. What will history say about our food on a personal level and also from the viewpoint of global distribution? Which ingredients, cuisines and recipes will characterize this era? Will the last few decades be represented by a series of fun food fads, complete with fondue, smoothie and food truck descriptions, for example?

Conversations about food will always endure and entertain, for sure, but recent commentaries about the American food scene have made a noteworthy blip on our timeline and a few broad, though perhaps disputable, ideas have become apparent:

- Cooking shows on TV and images on social media, along with the popularity of celebrity chefs, food festivals, quickserve restaurants, and even emerging debates about GMO have made all aspects of food more accessible and interesting to the masses. The value of food, in relation to our culture, has become elevated and better understood by Americans.
- The nature of these ubiquitous food-related activities have forever changed our expectations about the quality and source of our food as well as our perceptions about chefs and restaurants.
- American cuisine keeps getting better and is being recognized today for its potential. Rather than consisting of relatively bland meals of 20th century yesteryear, it's now being touted as a leader in ethnic cuisine, innovation and exciting flavors. As a result, consumers are more open to experiencing new food frontiers than ever before.

We may not know what will eventually be recorded, but I believe today is a great time to be part of the culinary community and to study our food from a historical perspective. Cheers to our future and our dining tables!

*Sharon Tani*  
 Sharon Tani



Martinelli's still sparkles in the 21st century

Stephen G. Martinelli from Ticino, the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland, started producing cider in the apple growing capital of Watsonville in California in 1968. At the time, he followed the European tradition of fermenting apple juice with yeast to produce alcohol and carbon dioxide in order to create this unique "sparkling" cider beverage, which won a gold medal at the California State Fair in 1890. As Prohibition loomed and threatened the liquor industry, his son Stephen Jr. had the foresight to develop a method of making non-alcoholic cider by artificially carbonating the juice. As a result, the business is still family-owned today and the beverage remains a bestselling product throughout America.

Source: Andrews, C. (2013). *The Taste of America*. New York: Phaidon Press Ltd.



The Culinary Historians of Southern California

<http://chscsite.org/>



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Hop on over: The first American archive of brewing is open to all researchers and beer lovers

Oregon is a special place, known for stunning natural beauty, a decent amount of rain, and a predilection for pushing the boundaries cultural norms. Most Oregonians are interested in knowing who grows their food -- and who brews their beer. We're lucky to have the climate and culture for the main beer ingredients of hops, barley, water, and yeast, but also to have breweries run by creative people and engaged consumers. I work at a world-renowned university with programs in brewing and fermentation sciences, wine and distillation research, and barley and hops breeding programs. And of course the nation's first brewing archive!



The Oregon Hops and Brewing Archives (OHBA), established in 2013, is the first in the U.S. dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing materials that tell the story of northwest brewing. We collect materials related the regional hops and barley farming, craft and home brewing, cider, mead, and the OSU research that dates to the 1890s.

We already had great research collections on plant disease, breeding and processing in the Special Collections and Archives, but since 2013 I've added some other wonderful materials. These include the papers



of world-renowned beer historian Fred Eckhardt; the records of the Oregon Hop Growers Association; extensive industry periodicals and book collections; oral histories with growers, brewers, and scientists; personal research papers from authors

regional homebrew association records and newsletters; and advertising materials and art from breweries throughout the region.

In the past I'd worked on food history projects with classes and helped run a historic cooking event at my library. More recently I've focused on brewing history through public talks on ingredients and projects with home or commercial brewers to recreate historic beer recipes for events. I've spent a lot of time talking with brewers and searching through home recipe books, technical brewing publications, and industry periodicals! But I've also ruminated on how the overlap between agricultural industries and local culture is visible in food law and policy, regional identity and local culture, gender dynamics, sustainable agriculture and farming practices, and local food movements. Food, farming, and recipes are personal and emotional, but when we dig into archives we find nuanced perspectives that allow us to explore what ingredients and process say about people and their relationships to each other or the places they live.



Because OHBA is a community-based archiving project at its core, I am passionate about keeping the stories accessible to our local communities and available to people everywhere. It's a great history and it's worth saving!

**Tiah Edmunson-Morton is the Archivist for Instruction & Outreach and Curator for the Oregon Hops and Brewing Archives at Oregon State University. To learn more about the archives and collection, please visit:**  
<http://bit.ly/ohbacollect>  
<http://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/brewingarchives>



Charles Perry: George, For Example Continued from Page 1

He did generally avoid the commonest food myth, that dishes are mostly invented by accident, rather than creativity, but that's because George was confident that famous people were all shrewd, dedicated kitchen putterers like himself.

In his books you discover that many religious figures were creative cooks. Mary, the mother of Jesus, loved spinach with fried garlic (it was served at the Nativity). Herter gave recipes for the meat course at the Last Supper and the fish Jesus distributed to the multitudes. In later ages, Saint Anthony of Padua liked turnip chips topped with Roquefort, wine and horseradish. Herter provided recipes for the favorite schnitzel of the 11th-century saint Hildegard of Bingen, better known today for her poetry and music, and also for fish eggs St. Patrick, poached eggs St. Francis and abalone Father Serra.

Another surprise is that the Old West was full of inventive gourmets. Herter had supposed recipes for steak Wild Bill Hickock, potato chips Jesse James, doves Wyatt Earp, prairie dogs Bat Masterson and potatoes Chief Joseph. As for the rest of the world's great recipes, they were mostly developed by aristocrats, such as cabbage Lady Godiva. Some examples:

- Alexander the Great invented a dish of bananas in milk and honey.
- To make Cleopatra's watermelon pickles, "which she served at every feast," salt the rind and boil with vinegar, honey, cinnamon and clove.
- Charlemagne invented sauerkraut. (At least this is slightly more plausible than the often-heard idea that it was invented in China. The recorded Chinese pickled cabbage was preserved with wine, not by fermentation.)
- Bouillon was invented by the Crusader Godefroy of Bouillon. So much for the idea that it has anything to do with the French verb "to boil."
- Lucrezia Borgia added anise to mustard. (Herter commented, "All great things are simple.")

As for Shakespeare (who, by the way, was not a great writer but a smart country boy who outsmarted the big city dudes, and also one of the best deer and rabbit hunters the world has ever known), he invented a meat sauce of grape jelly flavored with mustard. And finally, yes, Dom Perrier invented Champagne, but his real contribution was the idea of sprinkling celery salt on a cheese sandwich.

It was at this point that I decided I was going to have to do my own food history research.



**Upcoming CHSC Speakers Bureau Programs**  
by Richard Foss, CHSC Speakers Bureau Committee Chair

The CHSC has been sponsoring lectures in Pacific Palisades along with their active Friends of the Library group. The next scheduled events are as follows:

**August 23, 2016: Gordon Edgar**, author of *Cheddar: A Journey to the Heart of America's Most Iconic Cheese*, on the history of cheese in America. Mr. Edgar is a working cheesemaker as well as an author, and will bring a unique combination of hands-on experience and historic research.

**October 22, 2016: Sarah Lohman**, author of *Eight Flavors: The Untold Story of American Cuisine* on the history of Indian food in

California. Ms. Lohman traces this history back to Punjabi native Ranji Smile, whose arrival in San Francisco in 1899 led him to a career as America's first non-European celebrity chef.

**December 17, 2016: Richard Foss** on food and cooking in Victorian California. Food in that era was changing as railroads and steamships speeded the interchange with other regions and cultures, and Foss will cover how home cooking changed during this era.



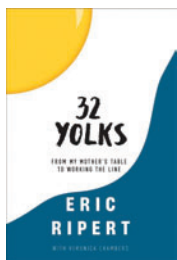
Come attend these lectures at: **Pacific Palisades Public Library, 861 Alma Real Drive, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272**



Memoirs are my bread and butter. I love reading tales straight from the author's mouth of how they grew to the person we know today. And when that memoir happens to be written by a well known chef, the writing gets even more delicious.

With so many chefs writing superb memoirs and so little time, I compiled a list of my recent favorites, all grouped on a theme: food as the road to recovery.

You won't always find recipes in these memoirs, but you will find heart, soul and tales of survival.



**32 Yolks: From My Mother's Table to Working the Line, by Eric Ripert, Veronica Chambers and Peter Ganim**

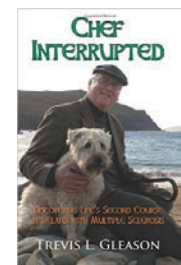
Chef and co-owner of New York's Le Bernardin, Eric Ripert's memoir might be my favorite of the group. Following the chef from his childhood through his present celebrity status, Ripert's is a tale of loss, love - and food. At age 6, his parents separated, his mother remarried and the new stepfather sent young Ripert away from his family to boarding school. But Ripert later found solace watching his mother and grandmother cooking (boys were strictly not allowed in the kitchen in their Andorran home); and at 11 his world changed when local, eccentric chef Jacques took him in as a protégée. Ripert spent his early 20s working his way through culinary school, learning the ropes in elite French restaurants, and finally, at the ripe old age of 24, came to the U.S., and a star was discovered.



**Love, Loss, and What We Ate, by Padma Lakshmi**

With *Love, Loss and What We Ate*, Padma Lakshmi, the model-actress-turned-chef-and-tv-host writes of her life so far, including how she attained celebrity status, baring her heart along the way. The words simply sing off the page with vivid images, testament to Lakshmi's writing prowess. Starting from the fantastic Gatsby-esque New York party when she met the love of her life, now ex husband, author Salman Rushdie, through the beginnings of her Top Chef career, through divorce, remarriage, children - all the while Lakshmi maintains strong connections with her family, the

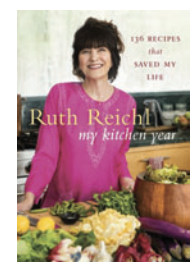
inspiration behind her cooking. This is an intimate, introspective, behind the scenes look at Lakshmi's journey between continents, professions and relationships, and particularly the life-saving, calming, loving art of preparing food as her one constant.



**Chef Interrupted: Discovering Life's Second Course in Ireland with Multiple Sclerosis, by Trevis L. Gleason**

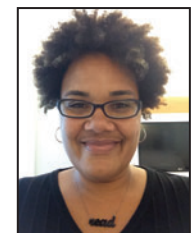
When he was diagnosed with Secondary-Progressive Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in 2001, award winning culinarian Trevis L. Gleason saw his outlook on life shattered, from partially losing his sense of taste to completely losing his wife and career. But the outlook is not all doom and gloom.

Gleason's story begins with a self-described amuse-bouche of a backstory, from his vocation as a U.S. Coast Guard to his true calling when he took the plunge, enrolled in The New England Culinary Institute, and began the chef phase of his life. But with the MS diagnosis, Gleason decided to return to his early dream of traveling to his ancestral land in Ireland, renting a rustic home and rediscovering the joys of life - cooking included. In the end, Gleason writes that "living with MS has a way of scraping away the glossy bits of our plans and dreams, leaving us to examine what remains—the real joys in life, not the fluff."



**My Kitchen Year: 136 Recipes That Saved My Life by Ruth Reichl**

Ruth Reichl thought life as she knew it was over when *Gourmet* magazine shut down, leaving the editor-chef without the work and family she'd grown to love. Not knowing what was next, Reichl went back to an old standby: cooking. Scouring the streets of New York for new recipes and ingredients like she had as a 20-something (with a bit more time and a lot more resources) Reichl reclaimed her love of cooking and it revitalized her life. "And I still believe," she writes, "to the core of my being, that when you pay attention, cooking becomes a kind of meditation." The memoir is recipe heavy, divided by season and peppered with gorgeous photos of the chef at home, the food she prepares, and little bits of poetic inspiration along the way.



**Alison Peters is a writer, librarian, dog mama, food aficionado and lifelong student. She has not yet met a cuisine she is not fond of, and delights in traveling the world seeking the perfect pan au chocolat and coffee pairing.**

**La Pitchoune: Julia Child's Summer Home Welcomes Guests**

by Carole Rosner



Photo credit: Sotheby's Real Estate

La Pitchoune (French for "The Little One") was once the summer home of iconic chef Julia Child, and her husband, Paul. In the 1960's, the house was built in Provence on land owned by their friend and cookbook collaborator, Simone Beck. Julia and Paul spent over 30 years here, entertaining many culinary icons including James Beard and M.F.K. Fisher.

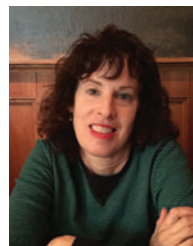
After Paul passed away, Julia sold La Peetch (the house's nickname) and it became a popular cooking school for many years. In 2015 Evie and Makenna Johnston purchased the home with the plan to recreate a place for guests to enjoy good food, culture, and community.

As of June 2016, La Pitchoune's doors are open once again to welcome guests. Room reservations are made through Airbnb (www.airbnb.com). The online listing describes La Pitchoune as a 1500 square foot, three bedroom, 3 1/2 bath cottage that can accommodate up to six guests. There's a pool, garden, and of course the infamous kitchen. Per various sources, apparently the only thing that has changed in the kitchen from Julia's days is the oven—there's the original pegboard walls, higher than average counter tops (Julia was tall!), and vintage utensils. Some guests have even read Paul and Julia's notebook (called "the black book"), which details the uniqueness of the house and recommendations for local handymen and food purveyors.

Incidentally, in June 2016, airbnb.com was sued by the Julia Child Foundation for the unauthorized use of her name and likeness in their rental promotions, which adds a layer of complexity for fans of this opportunity. According to news reports, the Foundation claims that the Childs rented this house, though never owned it, and that Child removed all of her belongings from La Pitchoune in 1992 which conflicts with the marketing claims for this rental.

There's no indication yet how this lawsuit may or may not effect the rental space and future plans. Other news accounts continue to state that in the spring of 2017, Evie and Makenna plan to open La Peetch École de Cuisine, a culinary/yoga school. The class schedule is April through June, and September through October. The six day retreat will be all-inclusive—breakfast and lunch daily, as well as cooking and yoga classes, and local excursions. Cost is expected to be \$3,250 per person and there is a maximum of six guests per week.

As Julia would say, "Bon Appétit!!"



**Carole Rosner is a native Angelino who enjoys cheesy comfort food, beautifully decorated desserts, secret neighborhood eateries, and easy to follow dinner recipes. Her lemon coconut squares are always a hit, the oldest cookbook she owns is from 1937, and she's a fan of competitive cooking shows.**

*Dear Members and Friends,*

Hey, we need a hand.

CHSC membership is down these past few years and to make it worse, our usual fundraising efforts (used cookbook sale, annual party) were crippled by last summer's blistering heat wave. To increase our coffers and continue to be a real Friends group of the Central Library's culinary collection, the board recently voted to allow sponsorships for particular costs we accrue each year.

As the perfect kick-off for this new plan, we thank Joan Nielsen, the first editor of *The Food Journal*, for sponsoring the printing of the latest newsletter issue in honor of her mother, Helzie Allen. Helzie is a long-time member and our original Publicity Chair who continues to support our work.

We are looking for people to generously help with CHSC's ongoing expenses, such as:

- Newsletter printing:**  
\$500 (2X per year)
- Program videotape for website:**  
\$350 (8X per year)
- Hospitality reception expenses:**  
\$200 (8X per year)
- Directory (yearly) printing:**  
\$800 (1)

To sponsor one or more of these items—or part of one, or something else—please contact **Madeleine Beaumont** who will gladly help with tax-deductible sponsorship questions, as we are a 501 C (3) organization. Contact Madeleine for payment with a credit card. Mail your check to Donna Chaney, CHSC's Treasurer.

CHSC will gratefully announce your sponsorship. Please help to make our new fundraising effort a success!

Thank you,

*Madeleine Beaumont, Donna Chaney, and Nancy Laslavsky*

# Why We Grew up on Velveeta

by Gordon Edgar

When I am in a gathering of cheese professionals – something that happens quite a bit in my life – unfailingly, someone announces that even though they “grew up on Velveeta” they are now committed to strengthening America’s burgeoning “artisan” cheese movement. Heads nod. Shouts of “Me too!” ring out. Sometimes people clap. This self-effacing announcement and chorus of agreement are such dependable occurrences it makes you wonder if anyone in the USA didn’t grow up on Velveeta or an equivalent from the 1950s-1990s.

## Cheddar is really a great way to study the American food system.

After almost twenty years of working professionally as a cheesemonger, I began to wonder about a lot of aspects of cheese that I had taken for granted. Why did most of us grow up on Velveeta? Why, until recently, has American-made cheese been the source of ridicule or dismissal? We are in the midst of this “artisan” cheese movement throughout the country, but why did we need one in the first place?

The United States, a nation of immigrants, long has had some degree of cheese diversity amongst ethnic enclaves in certain regions. You can get stinky smear-ripened cheese where there was a German community, Alpine-style cheese where Swiss folks settled, etc. These communities even helped create what are usually referred to as “American Originals” in the cheese community, altering recipes from tradition and creating new cheese like Brick in Wisconsin and Dry Jack in California.

However, I soon realized that to understand cheese in America, you have to understand

cheddar. Though it’s a cheese that has its roots in 12th Century England – and before that era, cheddar was originally a close relative of French Cantal that is mentioned in the writings of Pliny the Elder – something very American happened to cheddar in the mid 19th Century... cheddar became an industrialized food.

Cheddar is really a great way to study the American food system. In 1850, almost all cheese was made on the farm and by women, usually farm wives. While there were some previous attempts in the US to consolidate production of cheese to improve quality and increase production, in 1851 the Williams family in Rome, New York built the first cheese factory in the United States. That is, they built a separate facility where raw material (milk) was brought by local dairy farmers specifically to transform that raw material into finished product (cheese, mostly cheddar).

This highly successful model – along with a more standardized make procedure, new tools, and a better understanding of hygiene (it was discovered that, for some reason, making cheese in the same space as piles of cow poop could adversely affect the quality of cheese)



– spread relatively quickly and made cheddar the most popular cheese in the United States for the next 150 years. In fact, by the late 1800s, millions of pounds of U.S.-made cheddar were exported to England. Not only



Even if the cheese was sold under the name “Kraft” or “Borden” it was likely made in a small-scale, village creamery until the Cheddarpocalypse of the ‘70s and ‘80s.

that, the factory model wasn’t bound by borders, and soon cheddar the most popular (in terms of volume) cheese in the world.

When one uses the phrase “factory farm” in 2016, it usually conjures up horrible images of overcrowded animals and systemic cruelty. However, if we go back to the late 1800s, the political movements of the time encouraged farmers to move away from the myth/model of self sufficiency and think of their small family farms as factories as a way of utilizing resources and protecting their livelihoods. Dairy farmers were often leaders of the Progressive movement of the era and science -- both actual science and the more trendy “scientific management” techniques -- became a way of life. This concept of making better use of one’s resources, however, would have unintended affects on American farming and food production.

Set up to save the farmer, all traditional practices were on the table for discussion. As cheese became a professional occupation, men moved into the role of cheesemaker. While cheese at first increased in quality due to communication and generally accepted best practices, efficiency of the factory model became the main goal that eventually lead to a loss of regional and seasonal flavors. Not just taste was affected though. Once upon a time, the rule of thumb was that in dairy regions, a cheese factory would be set up every six miles, about as far as milk could be transported by wagon. Even if the cheese was sold under the name “Kraft” or “Borden” it was likely made in a small-scale, village creamery until the Cheddarpocalypse of the ‘70s and ‘80s. As infrastructure and refrigeration developed, however, farms and factories got larger and what was once a regional system became a centralized system dominated by a few major players. Thus the efficiency

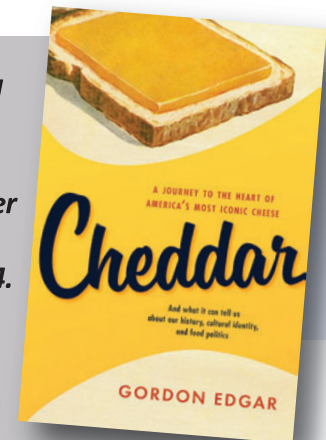
inherent in treating the farm as a factory eventually even made many farmers and cheesemakers obsolete as technology allowed for the advent of farms of 10,000 cows or more and lightly-staffed factories that make a million pounds of cheese a day.

Why did we mostly all grow up on Velveeta? Because Velveeta is the logical outcome of every-farm-a-factory as well. Historically, cheese is the process of taking a good but perishable source of protein and transforming it last longer, thus creating the possibility of a community no longer dependent on day-to-day struggle to survive. Makers of cheddar cheese – which, when made well, lasts for a long period of time – has always struggled to increase the yield because more cheese means more to eat or sell. Processed cheese, though originally developed in Switzerland, became a crowning achievement of American scientific technology by creating an off-shoot of cheddar that would never be lost to spoilage and which could be engineered to include vitamins lost in the production process.

Cheddar is a great way to look at the U.S. food system because it’s an everyday beloved food that spans the eras of farmstead to factory to the return to artisan production. Cheddar illuminates the history of food trends, science, greed, and authenticity (or lack thereof) that lurk in every grocery store and farmers’ market.

Gordon Edgar loves cheese and worker-owned co-ops, and has been combining both of these infatuations as the cheese buyer for San Francisco’s Rainbow Grocery Cooperative since 1994.

Edgar has been a judge at numerous national cheese competitions, a board member for the California Artisan Cheese Guild, and has had a blog since 2002, which can be found at [www.gordonzola.net](http://www.gordonzola.net).



His latest book, *Cheddar: A Journey to the Heart of America’s Most Iconic Cheese* investigates America’s relationship with cheddar, why we love it, and the effect that cheese has had on the American food system. Edgar’s cheese memoir, *Cheesemonger: A Life on the Wedge* was published in 2010.