

Master List - Lectures available from Culinary Historians

The Culinary Historians of Southern California offer lectures on food and cultures from ancient to contemporary. Lectures that are well suited for young audiences are prefaced by a "Y" in parentheses, illustrated lectures with an "I". Most lectures can be combined with a tasting of foods relevant to the topic.

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Feride Buyuran is a chef and historian, as well as the author of the award-winning "Pomegranates & Saffron: A Culinary Journey to Azerbaijan."

A Culinary Journey to Azerbaijan - The cooking of the largest country in the Caucasus region is influenced by Middle Eastern and Eastern European cuisines. This lecture explores the food of Azerbaijan within its historical, social, and cultural context. Feride Buyuran will highlight the importance of the Silk Road in the formation of the traditional cuisine and the dramatic impact of the Soviet era on the food scene in the country. (I)

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Jim Chevallier began his food history career with a paper on the shift in breakfast in eighteenth century France. As a bread historian, he has contributed to the Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America, and his work on the baguette and the croissant has been cited in both books and periodicals. His most recent book is "A History of the Food of Paris: From Roast Mammoth to Steak Frites." Aside from continuing research into Parisian food history, he is also studying French bread history and early medieval food.

Dining Out Before Restaurants Existed - Starting as early as the thirteenth century, inns, taverns and cabarets sold food that was varied and sometimes even sophisticated. By 1767, when Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau opened his "restorer" on the rue des Poulies, Parisians had already long been used to dining out at what modern people would call trendy places. This talk is an informed and loving look at French food history.

The History of French Bread - When the leavened breads of the Romans replaced flat breads of the Gauls and wheat replaced barley, the march towards the baguette began. Bread has held a central place in the French diet even as it evolved from a ball to a long crusty "flute" as bakers began to make a dizzying array of "fancy breads". In the 19th century an Austrian baker introduced the crescent-shaped roll which became the croissant, along with other innovations. This talk traces the evolution from the first Neolithic breads to the first mention of the baguette. (Y,I)

(Y) Early Medieval French Food – What did the first Franks eat? And Charlemagne? Typically, the term “medieval food” refers to food that followed the Crusades, and bore a strong Eastern influence. But what of the food of France’s first centuries, when Roman cuisine held sway for those who could afford it, and pepper was the most prized spice? When no one ate off trenchers or made pies and tarts? When the Franks still loved raw bacon? This talk presents a different idea of medieval food.

(Y, I) The Food of Paris’ First Inhabitants: From the Neanderthals to the Franks – Roast mammoth, the wild ox, arctic squirrels... some game from the Paris region is gone forever. Other animals – stags, deer, hares, boars – can still be found in France, if not near Paris. With the Neolithic Revolution, beef, pork, and lamb along with wheat and barley were raised, not hunted or gathered. Rome expanded the local diet with innovations and imports, the first flowering of sophisticated Parisian cuisine. Frankish kings followed with dishes that were simpler, and not too far from what we know today. This talk traces these changes in the region around Paris.

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Hae Jung Cho A chef who has been certified as a master food preserver, Hae Jung has been teaching people how to make kimchi and other ferments since 2011. Hae Jung is a founding member and executive committee member of Slow Food Preservers Los Angeles and a gardener at the Crenshaw Community Garden.

The Natural History of Kimchi - The average Korean eats about 40 pounds of kimchi a year, with several types served at each meal. Kimchi is spicy, tangy, crunchy and filled with umami. But why do Koreans bury their kimchi in the ground? And are all types of kimchi spicy? Can vegans eat kimchi? These and other kimchi mysteries will be explained by chef and culinary historian, Hae Jung Cho, who will discuss the history of kimchi and the science of fermentation and then demonstrate how to make the most popular type of kimchi, napa cabbage kimchi. (Y,I)

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Linda Civitello has been on the culinary faculty at the Art Institute of California and the California School of Culinary Arts, and has taught classes in food history and traditions. She is the award-winning author of *Baking Powder Wars: The Cutthroat Food Fight That Revolutionized Cooking and Cuisine* & *Culture: A History of Food and People*.

Let Them Eat Cupcakes: a History of Breakfast in America – The United States has breakfast traditions that seem bizarre or disgusting to people from other cultures – items like breakfast muffins have no parallel anywhere else. A prominent historian

gives a funny look at how Americans start their days. (Y,I)

Authentic Aztec versus Conquistador Cuisine - Mexican food as we know it today bears little resemblance to the foods the Aztecs ate at the time the Conquistadors arrived. Corn, chilis, chocolate, and beans are native foods. Meat, cheese, sugar, and dairy were brought by the Spanish. What is authentic Aztec cuisine? What were their unique ways of growing and preparing food and using it in rituals? How much of it survives in modern Mexican cuisine, and in what forms? (Y,I)

St. Patrick and St. Urho: Real and Fake Holidays and Their Foods – Religious celebrations around the world are often associated with special feasts, sometimes involving elaborately decorated food. Linda Civitello spotlights some of the most unusual ways that religious observances around the world use food in their festivals.

Sugar and Vice: From Columbus to Vassar Fudge – Sugar used to a symbol of wealth on the tables of kings. Plantations in the Caribbean and in Asia brought down the price and made it accessible to everyone, and it became a worldwide commodity in both desserts and main courses. Linda Civitello explains the milestones and technological advances that led to sweetness becoming an inexpensive part of everyone's meals. (Y,I)

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Richard Foss has been a food writer for both Los Angeles and national markets for over 30 years, and has taught classes in culinary history and Elizabethan theater at UCLA Extension. He has authored articles for a culinary encyclopedia, as well as histories of rum and of food in flight from the zeppelin era to the space age. His website is at richardfoss.com.

The Colonial American Diet - Though our cultural heritage in America is largely based on English traditions, our diet quickly diverged from theirs. This was due to both other European and native influences and the fact that many English crops did not do well in our environment. This talk traces the ways in which the English, Spanish, German, and Dutch colonists of North America each brought their own ideas that merged to become an American cuisine. (I, H)

How Prohibition Changed America – There are many misunderstandings about Prohibition, starting with why and when it was enacted. The movement against alcohol had as much to do with nativist anti-immigrant sentiment as it did with demon rum. The thirteen years that followed changed American dining and dating habits in ways that may seem surprising. This lecture gives a better look at what America was like before and after Prohibition, and how that era still affects us today.

(I)

Cooking and Dining in 19th Century California – In the early 1800's California had the strangest diet on Earth; things that were expensive elsewhere were cheap here and vice versa. People of the ranchos, pueblos, and missions interacted with foreigners and each other in unlikely ways. The conquest by America changed everything, as newcomers brought new crops, technologies, and tastes. This talk explores a rarely examined era in our state's history. (I)

Cuisine in the Ancient World, from Sumeria to the Fall of Rome – It takes a lot of energy and a good food distribution system to build the Pyramids, Babylon, and the Acropolis. Richard Foss covers over a thousand years of food history, explaining how the first societies managed their food supply and eventually developed sophisticated cuisines. (Y,I)

Food, Drink, and Manners at Shakespeare's Table – The Elizabethans enjoyed a varied diet that included spices from Asia, vegetables from the Middle East and New World, and pickling techniques that made vivid flavors available all year. Meals were served according to the class of the diners – common folk ate simply, while nobles appreciated edible sculptures designed to mystify guests about what they were eating. This lecture covers food, drink, and manners at tables low and high. (Y,I, H)

Tasting The Past: Challenges of Culinary History - The food culture of a society tells us much about peoples that may have left no written record. When we recreate historic recipes or tease out the chain that led from farm, pasture, or forest to the table, we uncover the dynamics of that society in a way that nothing else can. This is difficult even in literate societies, as old recipes sometimes tell you to keep stirring until it "looks right," or have measurements in handfulls. A historian who has spent time in the kitchen explains the challenges of examining the way our ancestors ate.

Myths, Mysteries, and Misconceptions about Rum - What most people know about rum is wrong: it wasn't invented where or when popular histories claim, and the most famous sea chantey about it was invented by an author rather than a pirate. The truth is more interesting: rum helped spark the American Revolution, entered 18th Century medical cabinets, is still a sacred offering among voodoo worshippers, and once fueled the economy of half the world. This lecture introduces the secret history of a beverage that has been reviled by temperance groups and celebrated by the rich and powerful.

Seven Gifts From LA Kitchens to the World - There have been many waves of immigrants to Los Angeles, some of whom have left an indelible mark on the things

we eat and drink. This lecture details seven waves of immigration to Los Angeles and gives examples of once exotic dishes they invented here that are now part of our shared culinary culture. (I, Y)

When Luxury Floated Through The Skies - The first aerial transportation was arguably the most glamorous - zeppelins competed with ocean liners for comfort, and outpaced them for speed. Passengers could travel from Germany to Brazil in just four days, enjoying unparalleled views by day, gourmet meals and music from the world's only aluminum piano by night. This illustrated talk will transport you to the brief era of giant airships. (I)

Drinking With Jane Austen - The world of Jane Austen was one of elaborate banquets and sumptuous parties, but the author provided very few details on just what was consumed at those events, and some of the items she did describe are unfamiliar to the modern reader. This lecture will supply some of the details Ms. Austen left out - what refreshments both alcoholic and non-intoxicating were imbibed by the various social classes in England of 1800, and how Ms. Austen indicated the character of her characters from the things they chose to drink, or to serve.

Festive Libations of Dickens' Era - The works of Charles Dickens are filled with references to food and drink, some of which are bewildering to a modern reader - what did Scrooge mean when he offered Bob Cratchit a bowl of Smoking Bishop? Richard Foss explains the popular soft and alcoholic drinks of Dickens era, with a focus on the ones that have become seasonal favorites.

American Fermented - Alcohol in Early America - While many people have written about how America developed a cuisine, beverages have received less notice. Colonial Americans enjoyed beer, rum, and applejack, and brewers and distillers were among our nation's founders. Sophisticated mixed drinks started early, and Martha Washington was known for her lethal rum punch. This talk explains how American attitudes toward alcohol developed and changed from the earliest colonists to the year 1800. (I)

The Victorian English Diet - The food of the Victorian era has been celebrated in the works of Dickens and vilified by modern critics - a famous food writer referred to it as "large table settings and cool gray meat." What did the English eat during the 1800's, and how was it changed by technologies like canning and bottling, the introduction of railroads, and other factors? This talk will explore the joys and horrors of dining in an age in which desperation existed alongside unparalleled splendor. (I,Y)

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Jeff Keasberry grew up in Amsterdam in a family with deep culinary roots. His grandmother wrote a popular cookbook and ran the renowned restaurant Djokja, where Jeff learned about Indo-Dutch Cuisine. Jeff came to the USA in 2005 and has written three cookbooks, the most recent of which, "Indo-Dutch Kitchen Secrets," is the first English language book on this topic.

The First Asian Fusion Cuisine - In the 17th Century the world's spice trade was focussed on Indonesia, the only source for cloves, mace, and other seasonings that were worth their weight in gold in Europe. The Dutch colonized those islands for over 300 years, and over that time a fusion cuisine developed with its own food culture and traditions. Historian Jeff Keasberry will explain how it all happened and why Indonesian food is still the most popular restaurant meal in Holland.

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Faye Levy is a food columnist for the Jerusalem Post and the author of cookbooks in three languages, including five books on Jewish cooking. Her latest are "Feast from the Mideast," "1,000 Jewish Recipes" and "Healthy Cooking for the Jewish Home."

The Jewish Culinary Tapestry - Why do some Jews crave kugel and others hunger for bourekas? For Shabbat morning, some Jews eat a yeast cake called babka, and others enjoy kubaneh, a Yemenite bread that bakes overnight. Some enjoy gefilte fish and matzo ball soup; others indulge in spicy fish called hraymeh with North African chickpea and lentil soup. Join cookbook author and cooking columnist Faye Levy to discuss the culinary roots of the two main branches of Jewish culture—the Ashkenazi and the Sephardi. This will include the main differences between these cuisines, signature dishes, and how they have been evolving. (Y)

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Charles Perry is an author and food scholar who has presented papers at the annual Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery since 1981 and was a major contributor to *The Oxford Companion to Food*. His specialty is the cuisine of the Islamic world; he has translated several medieval Arabic cookbooks, most recently *Scents and Savors* (NYU Press, 2017), the "best seller" of the 13th century. He is also an expert on California's culinary history, having been a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times food section for 18 years and a veteran of numerous TV and radio appearances. His lectures include:

A Thousand and One Dinners – Who knew that that famous collection of Arabic tales opened a window on the cuisine of the Middle Ages? In fact, *The Thousand and One Nights* mentions dishes of meat, poultry and fish, lots of pastries, even wine. The book's first translators, alas, had little idea of what these dishes were. Now that medieval Arab cookbooks are available to us, we can at last know what "The Lad Who Ate *Zirbaja*" actually ate, why the cook shop owner in "The Tale of the Two Wazirs" was threatened with crucifixion for leaving out the pepper in the dish of pomegranate seeds, and what on earth all those fritters were that the translators keep mentioning. (Y)

Dining Across the Arab World - The Arab world stretches from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, and has influences as various as Turkey, Persia, medieval Spain and ancient Egypt. The result is a panorama of local cuisines; in Morocco, lamb and couscous are staples, in Egypt squab and fava beans, in southern Iraq fish and rice, and in Yemen a crunchy crepe-like sorghum bread. Beneath this diversity there are unifying features from the era when one great empire stretched from the Tigris to the North African deserts. Charles Perry presents a tour of this huge gastronomical region, with historical insights.

How L.A. Invented the Backyard Barbecue – From the days of the Spanish ranchos well into the 20th century, for Angelenos a barbecue was a gathering of hundreds or thousands of people to eat whole shoulders and rounds of beef, even bulls' heads, that had been cooked overnight in a sealed underground pit. Backyard grilling developed fitfully in the 1920s, from a context that involved horses and movie stars, but by 1940 it was triumphant.

When L.A. Was America's Wine Country – Winemaking in California began in Los Angeles County, not Napa, and for a brief time Southern California was the center of it all. Charles Perry addresses the sudden rise and precipitous fall of Los Angeles as a winemaking region.

When Cafeterias Ruled the Earth – The first cafeteria opened in Los Angeles in 1905 and within 15 years the idea had spread around the country and even abroad. It was considered the self-evident future of dining: brisk, modern, hygienic ... and blessedly free of the much-resented waiter. Today we may associate cafeterias with perfunctory institutional food, but in their day they were known for quality, and quite a few even had dance floors and live music.

Tiki Cuisine – The fad for Polynesian cuisine and drinks with little umbrellas in them took America by storm in the 1930's, and though popularity faded in the 1960's

there has been a resurgence in interest. Charles explains why Americans were ready for this taste of a tropical paradise and tells stories of the people who created the foods, drinks, and settings. (I)

The Glorious American Soda Fountain – That gleaming 20th-century cathedral of sodas, milkshakes and baroque ice cream sundaes originated from an 18th-century quest to create artificial mineral water. It was a long, strange, very American trip, often threatened by suspicious prohibitionists.

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The Rev. Sharon Sheffield is associate priest and school chaplain at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and School in Downey. Sharon holds degrees in divinity, linguistics, and anthropology, with an emphasis on how myth and folktale shape society and vice versa. Sharon uses music, drama, and historical reenactment to help people learn about odd bits of religious and social history.

Our Daily Bread: Food and Western Christianity - What one eats or doesn't eat, how food is eaten and with whom, feasting and fasting... all are or have been markers of religious community. But what specifically has it meant when Christians ask for "our daily bread"? Rev. Sharon Sheffield will lead a tour of Western Christianity's impact on food, with excursions into food customs, folklore, and fasting as an expression of faith. Come hear how beer fasts, soul cakes, sin eaters and the Great Leavened/Unleavened Bread Debate shaped the way some people look at food - and how they still have currency today. (I,Y)

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Christina Sleeper is a Master Food Preserver and the founder and COO of Sleepers, a gourmet food business that creates jams, seasonings, salts and gift baskets with fresh California ingredients. Her cookbook, "Sleepers California Kitchen," was released in 2017.

Jamming Through The Ages - For as long as humans have been farming and tending the fields, they have shared a common problem: how to preserve fruits and vegetables that are so delicious but perishable. Making jam is one solution. Over the centuries what began as a preservation method has evolved into a mealtime staple, enjoyed for its many unique and delicious flavors, even when fresh fruits are available. How long have people been making jams? How does the jam making process work? And, how difficult is it for home cooks to make their own jams?

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These are only some of the subjects and presenters that are available; if you are

looking for a lecture on a specific subject, please let us know and we will do our best to find a qualified speaker.

For bookings or further information, please contact Richard Foss at Richard@richardfoss.com