Editor’s Note

This year the Friends of the Culinary History Collection celebrated its 10th Anniversary. The journey began with the donation of the books of Dora Greenlaw Peacock and Laura Jane Harper to Special Collections at Virginia Tech (http://spec.lib.vt.edu/culinary/PeacockHarper.html). The growth of the collection as well as numerous special programs has been supported by an enthusiastic group of donors and benefactors over the past ten years.

The publication of the Virginia Culinary Thymes lapsed in 2007 as the group developed a strategic plan for the future. The plan included strategies for continuing to develop the Culinary Collection through acquisition of books, manuscripts, and other research materials as well as offering programs on a variety of topics related to food and culinary history.

As the first editor of the Virginia Culinary Thymes, it is my pleasure to once again serve as editor of this electronic newsletter. The Digital Library and Archives at Virginia Tech’s University Libraries, hosts the newsletter. The newsletter will be an irregular publication with two to three issues per year. Articles for future issues of the newsletter may be submitted to Caryl Gray (cegray@vt.edu).

Caryl Gray

Graduate Student Receives Janet Cameron Scholarship

Margaret Anne “Margo” Duckson received the 2nd Janet Cameron Scholarship Award. This scholarship, established by the Friends of the Peacock Harper Culinary Collection, honors Janet Cameron (http://spec.lib.vt.edu/culinary/CulinaryThymes/2001_02/02Heroes.html), a Foods and Nutrition Specialist with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service from 1931 until her retirement in 1964.1

Margo is a doctoral student in the Department of Food Science and Technology, specializing in Food Microbiology. She graduated from

1 Image credit: http://www.fst.vt.edu/graduate/students/duckson/
Virginia Tech (2009) with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish. In addition to her two bachelor degrees, Margo also had three minors: Food Science and Technology; History; and Chemistry. In addition to beginning her doctoral studies, Margo is also completing classes to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. As an undergraduate, Margo studied abroad for two summers in Switzerland, Italy, and Spain.

Margo is a member of numerous Virginia Tech academic teams, clubs, and honor societies [Food Product Development Team, Food Science College Bowl Team, the Food Science Club, the Horticulture Club, the History Club, Alpha Chi Sigma (Professional Co-ed Chemistry Fraternity), Sigma Delta Pi (National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society), Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society), Phi Sigma (Biological Sciences Honor Society), and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars]. She is also a member of two professional organizations: the Institute of Food Technologists and the International Association for Food Protection.

What Do You Mean You Don’t Need Cookbooks?
(Or, What Good are All Those Cookbooks on Your Sagging Shelves?)

Cynthia D. Bertelsen

I’ll admit it: I collect cookbooks like some people collect plastic pigs or miniature silver tourist-spot spoons or wine corks from bottles they’ve downed.

My cookbook collection, like all collections, began small.

When I served with the Peace Corps in Paraguay, my landlady — the mechanical dentist’s wife — giggled when I threw my suitcase on the lumpy mattress in my hut and pulled out my old American standbys — Farm Journal’s Country Cookbook and Betty Crocker’s Cookbook, proudly showing her some of the flour-besmirched pages with my favorite recipes, like New Jersey Doughnuts. (See below for these lemon- and nutmeg-rich morsels.)

---

2 Cynthia D. Bertelsen -- an independent scholar and a member of the National Book Critics Circle and the National League of American Pen Women -- writes about cookbooks and food history on her blog, “Gherkins & Tomatoes” (http://gherkinstomatoes.com). She graduated from Virginia Tech with a Master’s in Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise.

3 Image credit: http://ecx.images-amazon.com/

4 My cookbook collection now numbers in the thousands. Like Erasmus, I buy books first, then food, and, lastly, clothes. You can tell by the grease spots on all my T-shirts.
“Only people who don’t know how to cook need cookbooks,” she said, somewhat dismissively. Assigned to her village as a home-economics extension agent, I could feel my credibility deflating like a mishandled soufflé.

In Haiti, Morocco, and Honduras the same thing happened: The local women laughed when they saw my cookbooks, which by then were beginning to co-opt considerable shelf space in whatever house I lived in. Some even asked me if my mother died when I was a baby. To them that could be the only explanation for my supposed lack of ability to twirl a wooden spoon, the reason I needed a book to cook with.

There’s a reason for thinking this way. If your pantry consists of only locally grown foods, as is the case in much of Africa and isolated villages in Latin America,\(^5\) then sure, you learn to cook a number of dishes using those foods. After all, if you’re never going to see bottles of green and peppery Tuscan olive oil in your local bodega (much less afford to buy them), why should you need cookbooks full of recipes telling you how to swirl it on top of toasted bread? And if you can’t read, what good is a cookbook or hundreds of them?

But even here in the U.S.A., in spite of the globalization of food surging all around them, yes, some people actually say the exact same words: “If you know how to cook, then you don’t need cookbooks.” Nor recipes. Not a single one.

Well, excuse me, but that’s a baloney-filled statement.

Now, before I get too much further into the hole I know some of you think I’m digging for myself, let me say this: It’s true that if you’re trained in classic French cuisine, for example, you might be able to get by fairly well in the kitchen without a cookbook. But in the end you’d be pretty limited, because chilies and cilantro and cocoyams aren’t exactly on the top of a classic French chef’s shopping list.\(^6\)

Certainly similarities between some ingredients allow for similar treatments in the sauté pan. But to eschew cookbooks could essentially mean closing your kitchen cupboards to the rest of the world.

Cookbooks today serve as aides-mémoires every bit as much as grease-splotted medieval manuscripts did in the houses of royalty. Guiding lights in the darkness, and all that sort of thing.

Cookbooks also encourage you to invent new tastes, to explore, to experience times and places that may never be seen in the flesh.

The written version of recipes allows you, now living in a formerly incomprehensibly

\(^5\) Image credit: globalvisions photostream

\(^6\) The appearance of exotic and obviously non-local ingredients testifies to trade and migration going on outside the kitchen. And perhaps as well to marriages and other cleavings inside.
far away future, to prepare food close to that cooked by the long-dead recorders of recipes. A stab at immortality within a *memento mori*.7

But another important phenomenon surfaces here.

Cookbooks, and lots of them, gift you, the cook, with the toothsome creativity of other cooks. The wheel stays invented, in other words. That frees you to dream up even more permutations, borrowing a little from there, a pinch over here.

John Donne said, “No Man is an island entire of itself …. .” Neither are cooks.

Especially if your shelves sag with TMC (too many cookbooks). For then, and only then, your oyster becomes the world.

---

7 Many of the first cookbooks served as *aides-mémoires* to the cooks in the great noble and royal households.

**New Jersey Doughnuts** (from *Farm Journal’s Country Cookbook*)

Makes 2 dozen

**image credit: Mrs. Minifig’s photostream**

1/2 c. butter  
1 c. sugar  
2 eggs  
1 t. grated lemon peel  
4 1/2 cups sifted flour  
2 t. baking powder  
2 t. salt  
2 t. freshly ground nutmeg  
1 cup whole milk  

Cream butter and sugar; add eggs and lemon peel; beat until light and fluffy.

Sift flour with baking powder, salt and nutmeg; add alternately with milk to creamed mixture. Mix well. Roll out on lightly floured, and board, and cut with doughnut cutter. Fry in hot fat (365º F) for 3 minutes. Drain on paper toweling.
**Bertelsen a Finalist**

Cynthia (Cindy) D. Bertelsen, former editor of the *Virginia Culinary Thymes* and past-chair of the Peacock Harper Culinary Committee, recently learned that she placed as a finalist (top 10 out of 75 entrants) for the M. F. K. Fisher Award for Excellence in Culinary Writing. According to the announcement, this is the largest number of entrants the organization has ever had since the bi-annual award began in 1992. The award is sponsored by Les Dames d'Escoffier International (LDEI) in honor of the esteemed food writer, M. F. K. Fisher. This year's winner, and two runners-up, will be announced on October 23, 2010 in Palm Springs, California, at the LDEI's annual meeting. Former winners include writers for *The Washington Post*, NPR, and *The Boston Globe*. Some of Cindy's writing is available on her blog, "Gherkins & Tomatoes" [http://gherkinstomatoes.com](http://gherkinstomatoes.com), as well in past issues of the *Virginia Culinary Thymes*, [http://spec.lib.vt.edu/culinary/CulinaryThymes/](http://spec.lib.vt.edu/culinary/CulinaryThymes/)

Image credit: Cindy Bertelsen

---

**Manuscript Cookbooks**

*Ann A. Hertzler, PhD, RD, LDN*  
VT Professor Emeritus

To the uninitiated, manuscript cookbooks are a source of receipts, alias recipes. Handwritten recipes bring back nostalgic memories of heritage – what great-grandmother cooked or what early forbears cooked.

“Receipts” have been shared in manuscripts since the 17th Century when women began writing household books (Theophano 6, 8). Most cooks knew how to cook everyday foods like meats and potatoes so few recipes were needed. About two-thirds of the manuscript recipes are items that require proportions such as desserts or pickles.

1700s - Probably one of the most famous manuscript cookbooks in the United States is *Martha Washington’s Booke of Cookery and Booke of Sweetmeats*. Martha Washington kept the manuscript at Mt. Vernon, Virginia, from 1749 until 1799. She gave the manuscript to her granddaughter. The beautifully hand written cookbook is in a museum in Philadelphia. Karen Hess transcribed it in 1981.

A second manuscript book about the same time was *The Receipt Book of Harriott Pinckney Horry, 1770 – A Colonial Plantation Cookbook*. Harriott Horry, a...
recently married woman in South Carolina, started her famous “receipt” book recording many recipes as she travel to Philadelphia.

1800s - “Receipts” were recorded at Civil War times.

Nancy Figgat’s manuscript cookbook (Oct. 1860) is from central Virginia. It is in the Peacock Harper Special Collections at Virginia Tech and has been scanned. The scanned images of the book are available at http://spec.lib.vt.edu/mss/pdf/NFRB.pdf.

In Fayetteville, NC, Sarah Stark Robinson started her notebook entitled “Household Book, 1888”. The 4 ½ x 12 “book has a waxed buckram cover with lined pages. 64 recipes were recorded; 60% were desserts (Hertzler and Chamberlain).

1900s - Manuscript cookbooks in the 1930s included recipes written in notebooks or torn from their source and stored in kitchen drawers, the backs of cookbooks, or organized in boxes or files purchased for such a purpose. Cooking Receipts – Mrs. C.B. Fry was the label of the journal in which Mrs. Fry filed print and picture recipes from magazines, newspapers, and food labels. She was living in Kure Beach, North Carolina in days before television (Hertzler 2009).

1930s - High School Home Economics Copy Books from the early 1900s also serve as a manuscript form of recording recipes. Look in Grandma’s chest of goodies to discover her copy books that were the origination of some of her favorite recipes.

Many children’s recipes began to appear in the United States in the early 1900s. Janet Theophano (p 61) states that De Knight started her cookbook in the 1900s to show the kind of cooking expected of 11 year old girls for breakfast and lunches and dinners of siblings. Ann Hertzler (2005) points out similar expectations in the early children’s cookbook entitled Mary Francis published in 1912. (The Ann Hertzler Children’s Cookbook and Nutrition Literature Archive housed in Special Collections at University Libraries, Virginia Tech, has several titles related to children.)

Summary
Recipes- recipes-recipes are collected in many forms. It is fun discovering what grandma cooked, recipes used by relatives further back in history, or soldiers fighting
for their country. Manuscript recipes provide nostalgic memories of our past. People enjoy discovering “receipts” and/or discussing the food fancies of history.

Selected references
Theophano, Janet. Eat My Words: Reading Women’s Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote, Palgrave, 2002.


Virginia Culinary Thymes: Fall 2010

Peacock History Collection Friends Gather for 10th Anniversary Celebration

Jean Robbins
Image credits: Cindy Bertelsen

On March 12, 2010, the Peacock-Harper Friends sponsored the special program celebrating the 10th anniversary of the group. Nancy Carter Crump was the guest speaker for the program, which was entitled “From the Hearth to the Cookstove”. Nancy is a culinary historian and author of several books including Hearthside Cooking: Early American Southern Cuisine Updated for Today's Hearth & Cookstove. A graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, Nancy has also completed graduate work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She is a descendant of the early settlers from Carter’s Grove Plantation, Virginia.

Nancy discussed the development of Virginia foods, from the 17th century English Colonists through the Civil War period and discussed how early settlers adopted Native American and African American food-ways. Her informative presentation included slides which illustrated the methods of hearth cooking, the equipment of the period, and the influence of the slaves. Nancy’s presentation reminded the audience of the long hours and hard work women spent to preserve, to process, and to prepare food for their families during the colonial period.

Chef Brian Mutaugh, Executive Chef of the Roanoke Country Club, prepared and served a luncheon buffet for the group. The menu included a selection of recipes from Nancy’s book, Hearthside Cooking (2nd ed.). The book provides the original recipes from historical sources with a modern adaptation for today’s cooking. Two of the recipes included in the menu:
**Asparagus Soup** (Mary Randolph, 1824)

Take four large bunches of asparagus, scrape it nicely, cut off one inch of the tops, and lay them in water, chop the stalks and put them on the fire with a piece of bacon, a large onion cut up, and pepper and salt; add two quarts water, boil them till the stalks are quite soft, then pulp them through a sieve, and strain the water to it, which must be put back in the pot; put into it a chicken cut up with the tops of asparagus which had been laid by. Boil it until these last articles are sufficiently done, thicken with flour, butter, and milk, and serve it up.

**Preparation (Hearth method)**

1. Wash asparagus. Break off tips and lay them aside in ice water while proceeding with rest of recipe.
2. Chop asparagus stalks coarsely and put them in an iron pot hung on crane. Add chicken broth, diced bacon, chopped onion and pepper. Cover and bring to a boil over flames. Adjust height of pot so that soup can simmer gently until asparagus stalks are very tender, about 45 minutes. Carefully remove pot from crane.
3. Strain soup, reserving broth. Discard bacon. Press the remaining ingredients through sieve, mashing with a spoon to extract as much pulp as possible.
4. Pour mixture back into pot and add reserved asparagus tips. Return pot to crane, cover, and simmer mixture until tips are just tender, 5-10 minutes.
5. Blend together butter and flour and stir into soup. Simmer gently, stirring until butter has melted and soup thickens slightly.
6. Stir in cream, add salt if needed, and heat slowly until the soup is steaming. Do not allow to boil. Pour into a tureen and serve immediately.

Participants at the PHCF 10th Anniversary.

**Asparagus Soup**

(Contemporary version)

1 1/2 pounds fresh asparagus
6 cups chicken broth
1/3 cup diced salt bacon
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/8 teaspoon pepper
3 tablespoon butter
3 tablespoon flour
1/2 cup cream
Salt to taste

**Preparation (contemporary version)**

Follow hearth instructions using stove top (gas or electric). Bring soup to boil over high heat then simmer over low heat during final preparations. Serves 4-6.
Mary Randolph’s Peas with Mint

To have them in perfection, they must be quite young, gathered early in the morning, kept in a cool place, and not shelled until they are to be dressed; put salt in the water, and when it boils, put in the peas; boil them quick twenty or thirty minutes, according to their age; just before they are taken up, add a little mint chopped very fine, drain all the water from the peas, put in a bit of butter and serve them up quite hot.

Preparation (Hearth method)
1. Shell peas just before they are to be cooked.
2. Fill an iron pot with water, add salt and sugar, and put pot on crane over fire.
3. Bring water to a boil and add peas. Keep them at a steady simmer until they are tender.
4. 20 – 30 minutes. During the last 5 minutes, add mint. Drain peas thoroughly, put peas in a serving dish and stir in butter. Correct seasonings, cover peas, and keep warm by the fire until ready to serve.

Peas with Mint (Contemporary version)
4 to 5 pounds young unshelled peas
Salt to taste
1 to 2 teaspoons sugar
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh mint
2 to 3 tablespoons butter, softened

Preparation (Contemporary method)
Follow heath instructions using stove top (gas or electric). Simmer peas over moderately low heat until tender.
Serves 4-6.

Following the delicious meal the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Peacock-Harper Culinary History Collection continued. Gail McMillan, Director of the Digital Library and Archives at Virginia Tech’s University Libraries and consultant to the group since its inception, gave a brief history of the collection including the late fall of 1999 delivery of the first books which had been donated by Dean Laura Jane Harper and Dr. Markham Peacock. The books donated by Dr. Peacock included the collection of his late wife, Dora Greenlaw Peacock. Gail’s presentation highlighted many of the significant milestones in the development of the Peacock-Harper Culinary History Collection. She announced that the collection that started with 561 titles, currently includes 3,599 titles. Titles included in the collection can be located by searching the library’s online catalog (Addison, http://addison.vt.edu/). The oldest publication in the collection is dated 1693. In an on-going effort to make the collection available to scholars worldwide, over 196 books in the collection have been scanned and are available in electronic format. She concluded by noting that about 800 images are also available in electronic format, largely documenting events relevant to the Culinary History Collection. For additional information go to the Digital Library and Archives website: http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ and to the Peacock-Harper website: spec.lib.vt.edu/culinary/PeacockHarper.html

Jean Robbins recognized several supporters of the collection and noted that 72 individuals have donated books to the collection and several had contributed to two scholarships established by the Peacock-Harper Friends. Jean presented a plaque in appreciation for the outstanding support of the University Libraries. Faculty members recognized were: Gail McMillan, Director of Digital Library and Archives; Caryl Gray, Science and Technology Librarian (retired); Aaron Purcell, Director of Special Collections; and Doug Seaman, Development Director.
JoAnn Emmel, member of the Virginia Tech faculty and treasurer of the Peacock-Harper Friends, concluded the program. In her remarks, JoAnn acknowledged the continued support of many individuals including the 70 friends who attended the anniversary celebration.

The Peacock-Harper 10th Anniversary Planning Committee included: Martha Akers, Sandy Bosworth, Jo Anne Barton, Cindy Bertelsen, Martha Cobble, JoAnn Emmel, Dorothy Herndon, Gail McMillan, Mary Rapoport, Jean Robbins, and Frances Trent.

---

**Calendar of events for 2010/2011**

**Peacock-Harper Culinary Friends**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event/Program Title</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 24, 2010</td>
<td>History of Pickling</td>
<td>Margo Duckson</td>
<td>Graduate Life Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 22, 2010</td>
<td>Steering Committee meeting and Trent Lecture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Location TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 19, 2010</td>
<td>Figgat-Godwin Papers – a Research Study</td>
<td>Gail McMillan and Jean Robbins</td>
<td>Roanoke Country Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 3, 2010</td>
<td>Colonial Christmas</td>
<td>Chef Billie Raper</td>
<td>Hotel Roanoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 14, 2011</td>
<td>Steering Committee meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>Location TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 18, 2011</td>
<td>Special Collections Tour and Exhibit</td>
<td>Aaron Purcell and Kira Dietz</td>
<td>University Libraries at Virginia Tech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 18, 2011</td>
<td>The Famous Southern Ham Story</td>
<td>Sam Edwards</td>
<td>Location TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15, 2011</td>
<td>A Story of American Cookbooks</td>
<td>Ann Hertzler</td>
<td>Location TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20, 2011</td>
<td>Civil War – Food Substitutions Used by Soldiers of the North and South</td>
<td>Dr. Bud Robertson</td>
<td>Location TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 17, 2011</td>
<td>Steering Committee meeting</td>
<td>Hosted by Jean Robbins</td>
<td>Location TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time TBA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>