Corn-Pork-Beef-Wheat
Evening Presentation
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Americans celebrate with food, whether New Year's eve, the 4th of July, Thanksgiving, or a host of local or regional, secular and religious festivities. American food has evolved and diversified through the centuries, from the simple, sustaining dishes of Colonial times to the complex food combinations that characterize the new millennium. Behind each food lies a history of use at different times at different geographical regions of America. Today, my objective is to briefly explore four of these foods: corn and pork; beef and wheat. And I begin with corn.

Some call it maize, others call it corn. Regardless of name it is the same food, *Zea mais*. The word maize comes from the Taino language, spoken by the Arawaks, a Caribbean Native American nation, who greeted Columbus in 1492. The word maize subsequently transferred to Spanish, and entered other European languages as well. The alternative word, corn, originally spelled *corne*, is an Old English generic term for grain, whose meaning subsequently shifted to designate wheat. American-style English, however, continues to use the word corn in the sense of maize, usage that has continued into the 21st century.

Maize was domesticated and first cultivated in the central valley of Mexico, perhaps 6,000 years ago, and ultimately became the primary dietary staple throughout Mesoamerica. Cultural exchange and trade gradually brought maize and other Mesoamerican crops northward into the geographical region now defined by the United States, where the grain was adopted in the semi-arid lands of the American southwest about 1,000 years ago, and about 800 years ago in the eastern seaboard region of North America.

Corn/maize has a unique history in America from antiquity to modern times. It is said that American humor is "corny." Americans speak of a "corn belt" that stretches from Indiana westward through Illinois and Missouri into Kansas. Corn has more than 800 different culinary uses today and collectively, each American eats nearly 50 pounds of corn products yearly. From corn-on-the-cob, to popcorn, to corn chips, corn syrup, to corn flour used to dust the interior of paper cups, this American food has a rich, diversified history.

For many Native American nations, maize has remained central to diet, but also stands at the center of public and private religious beliefs. The Zuni Nation creation story, for example, not only identified the diversity of maize color, but related its geographical importance in Zuni culture:

> *After eight days where the plumes of a Tchu-e-ton stood, rose seven corn plants, and they were called the seven maidens. The eldest was called yellow corn, of the Northland, the color of the light of winter. Next was blue corn, of the West, the color of the great world of waters. Next was red corn, of the South, the land of everlasting summer. The fourth was white corn, of the East, white like the land*

> *whence the sun brings the daylight. Next youngest was speckled corn, of the Zenith, which many colors as are the clouds of dawn and sunset. The sixth was black corn, of the Nadir and the color of the caves of first humankind.*

Arrival of Europeans in the Americas in 1492 set the stage for biological, dietary, ecological, ethical, medical, nutritional, political interactions, and associated problems. Both explorers and Native Americans exchanged foods for the first time, sometimes with humor, sometimes with unexpected results. It is important to recognize, too, that the following African, Asian, or European foods were not present in North America before 1492: almond, apple, apricot, asparagus, barley, cabbage, cattle (beef, cheese, milk, and other dairy products), cucumber, eggplant, garlic, goat (meat, milk, and dairy products), grapes (subsequent European wines), lemon, lettuce, lime, mustard, oats (and oatmeal), olive, onion, orange, pickles (cucumber), pig (pork and lard), rice, rye, sesame seeds, sheep (lamb, milk, and dairy products), sugar cane, turnip, and wheat.

Conversely, the following North, Central, and South American, and Caribbean foods were not present in Europe before 1492: amaranth, artichoke, avocado, kidney bean, lima bean, blackberry, blueberry, cacao (chocolate), cassava, black cherry, chili peppers, cranberry, concord grape, guava, huckleberry, maize/corn, papaya, peanut, pecan, pineapple, popcorn, potato, pumpkin, raspberry, sassafras, sunflower, tomato, and turkey.

First contact between Native American and European cultures often reflected more curiosity than anger or conflict, can be seen through the prism of food-related exchanges:

> *The next morning very early [they came and] we easily enticed [them] into our ship, and vnder the decke: where we gaue them porke, fish, bread and pease, all which they did eat: and this I noted, they would eat nothing raw, either fish or flesh. James Rosier, 1605.*

The reverse, too, was common as Native Americans regularly shared their foods with European explorers:

> *I saw some Indians who were going to some huts near the water [i.e. river]. Wishing to learn what kind of food they had, I made signs indicating that I wanted to eat. They brought me some ears of maize and some mesquite bread. Others entered the [river] with ears of maize to give them to me in the boat. Hernando de Alarcón, Coronado Expedition, 1540.*

Early exploration accounts teem with descriptions of foods encountered by the Europeans. North America was filled with a diversified food base where many items were unknown and unrecognized by the Europeans:

> *The bread that is eaten all through Florida is made of maize, which is like coarse millet; and in all the islands and Indias belonging to Castilla, beginning with the*

Antillas, grows this grain. The maize is planted and picked. . . each person having his own field. Fidalgo de Elvas, De Soto Expedition, 1539.

Maize or Indian corn was commonly discussed in records of the American Continental Congress. One unusual document detailed an innovative plan, whereby selected colonies were to provide quantities of food to the Caribbean island of Bermuda, whose administration was sympathetic to the American cause. In return, the American revolutionaries would receive arms and ammunition. The Continental Congress collected the following foods (with quantities) under the Bermuda accord: Indian corn, 72,000 bushels; Bread or flour, 2,000 barrels; Beef or pork, 1,000 barrels; Peas or beans, 2,100 bushels.

Foods commonly provided to soldiers in the Continental Army were identified in a General Order issued by George Washington, dated Christmas eve, December 24th, 1775:

Corn'd beef and pork: 4 days per week;
Salt fish: one day per week;
Fresh beef: two days per week;
If milk cannot be procured during winter, the men are to have 1 1/2 pound of beef or 18 ounces of pork per day;
Rice: half a pint or 1 pint Indian meal [maize] per week;
Spruce beer: 1 quart per day or 9 gallons of molasses per every 100 men per week;
Candles: 6 pounds per 100 men per week;
Butter: 6 ounces or 9 ounces of hogs-lard per week;
Pease or beans: 3 pints per man per week, or vegetables equivalent, allowing six shillings per bushel for beans, or peas or two and eight pence per bushel for onions or one and four pence per bushel for potatoes and turnips;
Flour [wheat]: 1 pound per man per day; and
Hard bread: to be dealt out one day in a week, in lieu of flour.

On the eve of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin was sent as a diplomat to London, and had his favorite American foods shipped to his English residence. Among the items specifically requested were buckwheat and cornmeal. Franklin well appreciated maize as a component of his American-style breakfast pattern, and was agitated when a letter appeared in the *London Gazetteer,* dated January 2nd, 1776, that deprecated cornmeal as "not affording an agreeable or easy digestible breakfast." Franklin, ever the American diplomat, penned the following response:

Pray let me, an American, inform the gentlemen, who seems ignorant of the matter, that Indian corn, take it all in all, is one of the most agreeable and wholesome grains in the world; that it's green leaves roasted is a delicacy beyond expression; that samp, hominy, succotash, and nokehock [parched corn cooked in hot ashes, then pounded into meal], made of it, are so many pleasing varieties; that Johnny or hoecake, hot from the fire, is better than a Yorkshire muffin.

After the American Revolution, Amelia Simmons published the first cookbook in America based upon local foods. Her book, *American Cookery*, appeared in 1796, and provided recipes for popular 18th century corn-based colonial foods:

> ***Johny cake/Hoe cake****: Scald 1 pint of milk and put to 3 pints of Indian meal, and half pint of flower [sic.] -- bake before the fire. Or, scald with milk two thirds of the Indian meal, or wet two thirds with boiling water, add salt, molasses and shortening, work up with cold water pretty stiff, and bake as above.*
>
> ***Indian Slapjacks:*** *one quart of milk, 1 pint of Indian meal, 4 eggs, 4 spoons of flour, little salt, beat together, baked on griddles [sic.], or fry in a dry pan, or baked in a pan which has been rub'd with suet, lard or butter.*

The notable trek of Lewis and Clark began in 1804. At the beginning of the journey provisions were amassed for 46 participants (32 soldiers; 10 civilians; 3 interpreters; 1 slave; and a companion dog). Parched corn meal played a prominent role during the early months of the expedition as the following quantities reveal: Pork: 3705 pounds; Wheat flour: 3400 pounds; Parched cornmeal: 2000 pounds; Salt: 750 pounds; Grees [sic, lard] 600 pounds; Hardtack biscuits 560 pounds.

Hard times (and hard rations) characterized the era of the American Civil War. Although the nation was divided, civilians, soldiers, and prisoners on both sides were united, dietarily, by their common consumption of maize as this eye-witness description revealed:

> *Not far from the Mason and Dixon line, a train bearing exchanged Federal prisoners on the way North stopped by the side of a train bearing Confederate prisoners to the South. The former had been provided with rations in the shape of corn pones or crusts. These pones were very distasteful to Federal prisoners who were not used to such fare, especially as they were made from unbolted [i.e. unsifted] meal . . . The Yanks, therefore, were carrying some of these cornbread crusts North as souvenirs of Rebel hospitality.*

At the conclusion of the American Civil War, wagons rolled westward as pioneer families sought new lands for settlement. One common destination was Nebraska which achieved statehood in 1867. The American Memory Project, initiated during the Great Depression, hired thousands of interviewers to scan the nation and learn from elderly Americans. These interviews, available on-line through the Library of Congress, are a treasure for food-related information. Here is one example:

> *[I] came to Nebraska [Territory] in 1882. I went on a hunting trip and ran across the last herd of buffalo that was running wild. On hunting trips we used corn meal, salt and water when we didn't have any meat. Many times we had to drink water out of buffalo wallows. After [brushing] the skum [sic.] off the water, [it] tasted good as we were parched.*

But all was not well in Nebraska during the 19th century, and unpredictable weather and drought were constant companions to early settlers. Memories of poor crop yield, especially corn, are noted in the words from a period folk song, *Nebraska Land*:

> *We have reached the land of drouth [sic.] and heat*
> *Where nothing grows for us to eat*
> *For winds that blow with scorching heat*
> *Nebraska land is hard to beat.*
> *The farmer goes out in his corn*
> *He stands around and looks forlorn*
> *It gives him such a shock*
> *To see withered shoots but not a stalk.*
> *O Nebraska Land. Sweet Nebraska Land.*

Nebraska immigrants regularly experienced agricultural and nutritional difficulties as this account of hardship and pioneer diet attest:

> *[Our] diet consisted of biscuits and cornbread, and meat from game which abounded . . . [We] would catch game in traps, sell them frozen to the nearest store for shipment to eastern markets, and thus get a little cash.* [I] *ground corn for cornbread in [my] coffee mill, and used the siftings to make "coffee."*

Mark Twain, the noted 19th century adventurer, newspaperman, novelist, and international traveler, provided numerous references to food, even his personal recipes, often with a humorous twist, as this recipe for cornbread, first published in 1880:

> *Take a lot of water and add to it a lot of coarse Indian meal and about a quarter of a lot of salt. Mix well together, knead into the form of a pone, and let the pone stand a while, not on its edge, but the other way. Rake away a place among the embers, lay it there, and cover it an inch deep in hot ashes. When it is done, remove it; blow off all the ashes but one layer; butter that one and eat. No household should every be without this talisman. It has been noticed that tramps never return for another ash-cake.*

From seed, to stalk, to cob, to leaf: how many products are produced from the corn plant? Corn cob pipes strike familiar, homey memories to many Americans, while others dine on corn meal tamales wrapped tightly with husks that contain and preserve the wonderful, succulent flavors. From the breakfast foods of youthful years, whether Cornflakes® or Kix,® American consumers have dined on one of nature's most enjoyable foods. Imagine, too, the diversity of corn chip snack foods developed during the 20th and 21st centuries: from plain to those flavored with chili pepper, lime or tomato extract, even powdered cheese.

Popcorn, one of the many varieties of maize, has seen resurgence and common use in recent years. Popcorn represents an expanded market that has stretched, historically, from ancient

Mesoamerican cultures, to contemporary urban street vendors, to carnival and circus concessionaires, to American movie theater lobbies with bags and buckets that appear in ever increasing sizes (large; jumbo; gigantic; el-monstro). Whether plain or buttered with a hint of salt (or fat substitute with no salt), or sprayed with caramel, cinnamon, or cheddar cheese flavors, Americans purchase significant quantities of popcorn products. Americans consumed 17.3 billion quarts of popcorn, equal to 68 quarts per person each year.

In recent decades new commercial markets for maize have opened with the expansion and explosion of corn-products in restaurants and as snack items. Miniature cobs of corn are commonly served at cocktail parties, while blue or red corn chips are used as garnishes by "up-scale" restaurants. Despite the high sales appeal of canned and frozen corn, most Americans retain a visual-flavor memory of fresh corn-on-the-cob -- steaming, butter-dripping, lightly salted -- eaten, perhaps, at Grandmother's house, and the sensations of that first bite, the blending of textures and flavors as butter, corn, and salt, saturated the taste buds?

Corn ripening during Autumn: pumpkins and black cats blending pre-Christian, colonial, and modern traditions. On Halloween, who has not at least tried that curious tasting candy corn? Thus it is that from candy corn to Corn Nuts, to the ubiquitous corn dog first invented at the 1942 Texas State Fair in Dallas, Texas, America have continued their love-affair with corn and corn products.

But corn is more than food and has become entrenched as an American symbol, especially in slang, film, song, and poetry. In the early 19th century the word "corn" had numerous meanings, among them: small change; drunkard; insincere flattery; deception; to admit defeat or error; to make a full confession. Other corn-related words were descriptive: corn-fed once meant a Confederate soldier or sailor, alternatively the same term meant plump; cornstalk still refers to a lanky person; and corn-stealers was an term for human hands. By the early decades of the 20th century the word "corn" meant: trite, old-fashioned (i.e. corny), then moved into baseball jargon where can of corn meant an easily caught high, pop fly. Other corn-related terms included cornball, for an unsophisticated person; corncake to signify a silver dollar; corn-cutter was a military sword; cornpopper, slang for a cheap automobile; and cornflake meant an eccentric person, abbreviated later in the 20th century to merely "flake."

And then recall how two American symbols -- baseball and cornfields -- blended in the moving film, *Field of Dreams,* while the words of Burl Ives' signature song, *The Blue-Tail Fly,* contained the chorus *Jimmy crack corn and I don't care.* But perhaps Carl Sandberg said it best in his epic poem, *Cornhuskers,* that contains the following lines:

On the left- and right-hand side of the road,
Marching corn. . .
The wind and the corn talk things over together.
And the rain and the corn and the sun and the corn
Talk things over together. . .

What would America be without corn?

Let us now turn our attention to pork: pork and beans, fried bacon, and ribs certainly hearty foods for hungry Americans. Imagine a time without pigs in America. Spanish explorers brought swine to the North American mainland and herded them during exploratory marches into the American interior. From living high on the hog, to pork barrel politics, to Super Bowl pigskin, bacon-, ham-, and pork-related slang and terminology have long colorful histories, sometimes bawdy, sometimes respectable.

The phrase to save one's bacon, or to save one's life, dates to the early 16th century. During the same era the word, bacon, also designated a rural, rustic fellow. By the 19th century the idiom, to cook/fry [someone's] bacon, meant to cause ruin (i.e. in the sense to cook one's goose). Bacon, as a slang word, changed again and by the 1920s the word meant money, hence, to bring home the bacon. By the 1970s, the word bacon had become an extension of the word pig, and became a derogatory term for police.

Ham also has a rich history in idiom and slang. During the mid 19th century ham was a slang term for a person who thought himself an expert, but in reality, was incompetent. By the 1940s, ham had maintained its incompetent context, but shifted to also mean a melodramatic thespian who over-acted. Some etymologists trace the theatrical association between ham and over-acting to the word hamfatter, or actor who because of poverty or economic necessity could not afford expensive base creams and rubbed ham fat over his face prior to applying makeup powder. By the 1920s-1930s, the word ham took on a variety of other meanings: a run-of-the-mill boxer, an amateur radio operator, a telephone hand set, trombone, even navigational sextant. During the pre-World War II era, the term, ham-scram, meant a difficult period in life.

Pork slithered into a political context during the 19th century to mean Federal funds obtained through patronage, and from this use emerged the concept of pork barrel politics. Also during the 19th century the word, porkopolis, was applied to meat packing centers in America, with specific application to Cincinnati, Ohio, and Chicago, Illinois.

More than 60 million pigs are raised in the United States, and the average American ate 67 pounds of pork in 1999. Still, pigs and pork are not universally desired by Americans and pigs occupy their dual position in many cultures as either the best or the worst of meat, a duality extending back into antiquity to ancient Egypt. Raising pigs always has been relatively easy, whether in historical or modern times. Basically pigs are left alone and are slaughtered for meat when needed. Until recently, fresh pork was a seasonal food, and most pork consumption in colonial times was as bacon, ham, salt pork, sausages, or lesser cuts and organs. Some scholars have commented on the link between salt pork and the barrel or storage container in which salted pork is stored. A "filled barrel" reflected prosperity, whereas if one needed to "scrape the bottom of the barrel," this evidenced hard times and poverty. This association also appears in American literature, in a comment made famous by James Fennimore Cooper:

> *As for bread, I count that for nothin'. We always have bread and potatoes enough; but I hold a family to be in a desperate way when the mother can see the bottom of the pork barrel. Give me children that's raised on good sound pork afore all the game in the country. Game's good as a relish and so's bread; but*

pork is the staff of life. . . My children I calkerlate [sic.] to bring up on pork with just as much bread and butter as they want.

The American civil War era was characterized by three foods: pork, beans, and hardtack. The American Civil War began April 12th, 1861; General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9th, 1865, and hostilities ceased with the surrender of the Army of Tennessee, 17 days later on April 26th. Between the alpha and omega of this terrible war, previously unknown geographical localities became household names: Andersonville and Antietam; Chickamauga and Elmira; Gettysburg and Harper's Ferry; Port Royal, Shiloh, and Vicksburg.

Pork and beans as a canned product was developed by Gilbert C. Van Camp, and used to sustain Federal troops in the field. References to pork-related foods, whether bacon, hams, or sausages, permeate the diaries and eyewitness accounts of soldiers and civilians alike. Diaries written by Confederate and Union soldiers document the excitement-monotony, happiness-tragedy, the logic-absurdity, the waiting and terror of battle. Ask a soldier who has seen combat: combat is 99% waiting and monotony, and 1% sheer terror. Most diaries written during monotonous lulls, contain passages about food, its procurement, preparation, character, and longing for good home-cooked meals. The following food-related passages are from the diary of John S. Jackman, a Confederate Soldier. He may be considered typical since his comments are mirrored time and time again in other soldier's diaries, whether Confederate or Union:

June 11th, 1862*: Edibles are running low in camp. Bill of fare: corn-bread pickled beef, very bad, and molasses. Sometimes we get something from the country people. Prices current: spring chickens, 50 to 75 cents; tough hens, 80 cents to $1: old roosters, $1 to $1.25: turkeys: $1.50 to $2.00; old ganders, $1.50; goose, same; vegetables 50 cents for peeping over the fence into the garden.*

August 20th, 1862*: The brigade quartermaster came along having a lot of flour, and the boys cheered at the sight of the barrels. We were used to musty corn meal, ground on corn-crushers, baked without sifting, and poor blue beef.*

August [?], 1863*: [There was near by a] kind of market-place for the division, where soldiers would speculate in fruit, vegetables, etc. large watermelons would sell for $40.*

Jackman was wounded in battle, then transported to Atlanta where he received hospital treatment. During his convalescence he described and commented upon hospital food:

June 14th, 1864*: Slept on a bench at the distributing hospital in Atlanta, the remainder of the night. The breakfast was tough beef, old bakers' bread, and coffee that had flies in it, and I longed for the hardtack and corn bread, which I had left at the front.*

After recovery, Jackman was reassigned to the front:

> ***December 17th, 1864****: Pleasant day for winter. We are living well. Have good fresh beef, fresh pork, flour, sorghum, rice and so on, issued in abundance. We make the molasses into candy -- have "candy-pullings" among ourselves.*
>
> ***January 14th, 1865****: Clear and cold all day. Had beef and sweet-potatoes for breakfast. Had "nauthing" for dinner.*
>
> ***January 26th, 1865****: This evening [we] killed a bear and at night went out and foraged for a sack of sweet-potatoes. Fresh pork or bear and sweet potatoes will do very well to live on.*

When Confederate and Union soldiers ran out of food, they foraged or stole from civilian food stores as noted in this account of a Virginia family who suffered during a Federal field campaign:

> *After eight days. . . the army moved off, leaving not a quadruped, except two pigs, which had ensconced themselves under the ruins of a servant's house, and perhaps a dog to one plantation; to the other, by some miraculous oversight, two cows and a few pigs were left. Not a wheeled vehicle of any kind was to be found; all the grain, flour, meat, and other supplies were swept off, except the few things hid in those wonderful places which could not be fathomed even by the Grand Army.*

The worst excesses of military foraging were associated with Federal troops commanded by General William Tecumseh Sherman. Sherman occupied Atlanta, Georgia, September 1st, 1864, then after burning the city, began his March to the Sea on November 16th, and reached Savannah 35 days later on December 21st, just before Christmas. Military and civilian diaries reveal the ruin and desolation caused by this action. Union sources commonly provided details on food procurement and cooking, but scarcely document the civilian pain and suffering caused by "bummers" or "foragers" sent out to secure food for the troops. Little consideration was given to Georgia civilians in the path of Sherman's troops as homes were destroyed, and scarce food stores confiscated*:*

> *From Brier Creek to the Ogeechee is a scene. . . desolation. They [Federal troops] took every working animal. . . also my fattened hogs, about 18,000 pounds of pork were driven some 20 miles and slaughtered. . . they killed every turkey and chicken.*

Some families were lucky and protected their food supplies because of advance notice or intuition regarding Sherman's route and estimated arrival time:

> *Fearing that he [Sherman] might come our way, we began preparing for it by hiding our valuables. Our first thought was for our silver and jewels. . . then we hid most of the meat. . . we got a box and buried it in the garden. We picked out the choicest sides of meat and packed it full. We nailed up the box, covered up the*

hole, and planted the garden over it. When the Yankees came, our vegetables were several inches high. They dug in the ground everywhere else in their wild hunt for valuables, but they never suspected the garden. Besides the rescue of the sides of beef, I saved twenty-seven hams without any assistance. I hid them under the landing of the staircase leading to the garret.

During the late 1863 and early 1864, reports of suffering in Southern and Northern prisoner of war camps multiplied. Deprivations at Andersonville were terrible, but not unique. Less well known at the time, and even today in the year 2000, were deprivations suffered by Confederate prisoners at the notorious Union camp at Elmira, New York. The Elmira prison camp was situated on a river-bank and reported to be a healthy site with mess-halls and kitchens suitably furnished, and a bakery that turned out six or seven thousands rations per day. This "official position," however, did not reflect reality: prisoners had insufficient clothes and blankets and rations provided were undefined "desiccated vegetables" while fresh onions and potatoes were supplied only later. Federal inspectors claimed after the war that the prisoner's diet was generally good and well cooked --- but not according to survivor accounts:

The strong [at Elmira] sustained life on four ounces of sour light bread and three ounces of salt beef or pork for breakfast; for dinner, the same amount of bread was allowed, and, in lieu of the meat, a compound called soup, but in reality nothing more than hot salty water, in which bags of peas or beans had been boiled, but which were carefully removed and kept for other uses than to make animal heat for cold, starving prisoners of war. This salt-water diet [accounted] for the large number of cases of scurvy and dysentery which carried off so many.

Further, it is also not widely known that Confederate women also were incarcerated in prison camps in the northern states, where conditions were deplorable:

Inside [the] women's prison. . . The only food served to delicate women was spoiled bacon and hardtack, with coffee so wretched it could not be used even by prisoners.

The memories of hunger and starvation lingered well past the end of the American Civil War. Some memories carried on the words of songs reflected universal pain, and desire to return to normalcy. If you were born in the late 1930s or early 1940s and can trace your family roots to the American Civil War era, your great grandmother sang this song:

While we seek mirth and beauty and music light and gay,
There are frail forms fainting at the door;
Though their voices are silent, their pleading looks will say
Oh, hard times come again no more.

In America the family dining table remained the focal point of most 19th households. Families gathered to eat, converse, and celebrate seasonal festive joys. During the Civil War a vacant chair at the dining table drew attention to loved ones far away in battle, or evoked the sadness of a

loved one slain. In 1862, when the reality of the war had set in, George F. Root penned this poignant reminder of the interplay between family dining and human loss:

> *We shall meet, but we shall miss him,*
> *There will be one vacant chair;*
> *We shall linger to caress him,*
> *While we breath our evening prayer.*

Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, April 9th, 1865. For all intents and purposes the American Civil War was over. Five days later, April 14th, was Good Friday. President Lincoln ate breakfast with his family at the White House, dined with Mrs. Lincoln prior to departing for Ford's Theater to attend a performance of *My American Cousin*. No record exists identifying what the President and Mrs. Lincoln ate for dinner that fateful evening.

Pork has had a very long history in America. Seventeenth century European immigrants coming to the New World were advised to bring aboard food to be eaten during the voyage, and among the meats identified were tongue, leg of mutton, live poultry, gammons of bacon, and salt pork.

Later, Amelia Simmons, in her classic 1796 American Cookery, gave special attention to cooking meats, and wrote that pork was "known by its size, and whether properly fattened by its appearance." Her recipes how to prepare bacon and how to cook stuffed leg of pork, may bring smiles to 21st century readers:

> ***To make the best bacon:*** *To each ham put one ounce saltpeter, one pint bay salt, one pint molasses, shake together 6 or 8 weeks, or when a large quantity is together, bast them with the liquor every day; when taken out to dry, smoke three weeks with [corn] cobs or malt fumes. To every ham may be added a cheek, if you stow away a barrel and not alter the composition, some add a shoulder. For transportation or exportation, double the period of smoaking [sic.].*
>
> ***To stuff a leg of pork to bake or roast****: Corn the leg 48 hours and stuff with sausage meat and bake in a hot oven two hours and an half or roast.*

World War II saw the development of the K ration that included the lunch pack with canned ham spread. And more recently, who in America has not been amused by Jim Hennson's Muppet cry, "pigs in space"? Perhaps not an actual pig in space, but certainly pork, for among the various items packed aboard Sky Lab are pork with dressing, pork with gravy, and pork with scalloped potatoes.

In the time that remains, let me turn my attention to both beef and wheat. It may be that beef is the core, the essence of American food history. Oxen pulled covered wagons westward; cows produced milk for pioneer families; cowboys and cowgirls punched herds along the Chisholm Trail. The story of beef IS American history: a story of challenge, survival, invention, and hard work. From steaks to hamburgers; from classic beef stew to up-scale flavored jerky. Americans

have chewed on beef for nearly 400 years and today, average annual consumption by Americans is estimated at 112 pounds. And one characteristic beef item is the hamburger.

The word hamburger probably existed by the end of the Middle Ages. In 1802 the *Oxford English Dictionary* defined "Hamburg steak" as salt beef. Referring to ground beef as "hamburger" dates to the invention of the mechanical meat grinder during the 1860s. "Filet de boeuf a la Hambourgeoise," was sold in Boston in 1874, while Hamburger Beef Steak appeared on the Lookout House Restaurant menu in Cincinnati, Ohio, in the mid-1870s. During the last years of the 19th century ground round or hamburger became associated with a hot sandwich, and early 20th century illustrations depict hamburger served on sliced white bread or toast. "Hamburger Steak, Plain" and "Hamburger Steak, with Onions," was served at the Tyrolean Alps Restaurant at the 1904 Saint Louis World's Fair. The modern hamburger (on a bun) appears during World War I. The White Castle restaurant chain was established in 1916 at Wichita, Kansas and by the early 1920s sold hamburgers. Some scholars say the first hamburger served on a bun appeared in 1917 at Drexel's Pure Food Restaurant, Chicago. By 1920 hamburgers on buns were sold in San Francisco and Cincinnati, and by the mid-1920s, hamburgers were recognizable to most Americans. Hamburger popularity continued to grow, and became associated with mobility and the concept of “fast food.” The hamburger as an icon of American popular culture spread globally during the 1980s and 1990s with franchise restaurants opening around the world. American-style “burgers” can be purchased today from Moscow to Quito and from Tokyo to Cairo.

Beyond the hamburger there are hot dogs; especially hot dogs and apple pie, the personification of American food? Perhaps. While millions of hot dogs are cooked, steamed, and sold at American sporting events or grilled on backyard barbecues, the hot dog did not originate in America. According to some scholars the hot dog came to America from Frankfurt, Germany, hence the name frankfurter as a synonym for hot dog. It is said that Antoine Feuchtwanger introduced the “frankfurter” to consumers in St. Louis, Missouri, in the 1880s, and sold hot “franks” and cotton gloves to prospective customers to prevent them from burning their fingers. Others, among them H. L. Mencken, suggest that frankfurters made their appearance in America much earlier. Whoever may have introduced hot dogs/frankfurters to America, it is commonly told that Harry M. Stevens, a food concessionaire at the Polo Grounds baseball park in New York, was responsible for their rise in popularity as a snack food. According to some accounts Stevens told his Polo Ground vendors to go out and yell “Red hots! Red hots! Get your red hots!” This food, which has become an American Classic, however, was not known as the hot dog until the cartoonist, T. A. Dorgan, characterized Stevens’ red hot sausages as appearing in an elongated bun containing a dachshund, hence the term, hot dog.

Beef is associated in the minds of many Americans with cattle drives. The Chisholm trail route was taken by Texas cattle ranchers to markets at rail junction points in Kansas. It was hard, dangerous work, memorialized in many a Hollywood film such as *Red River* with John Wayne, Montgomery Clift; and Walter Brennan in 1948, and *The Cowboys* with John Wayne; Roscoe Lee Browne; and Bruce Dern in 1972. Real-life cowboy, James Mooney, recalled his trail days:

> *We lived a tough life, but a healthy one. We were in the open most of the time. The country was wild and full of wild game, such as buffalo, antelope, wild turkey and there were plenty of wolves and catamounts. Our chuck wagon was the usual kind that fed us those days. Beef, beans, canned vegetables and sourdough bread. When we hankered for wild game, which we did often, some one of us would put in a short spell of hunting.*

While the focus in film and literature has remained on cowboys driving cattle from Texas to market in Kansas, it is also important to remember that women also drove cattle and participated in such drives as noted in this memoir by Mrs. Jack Miles:

> *I could stay in my saddle from morning until night, eat out of the chuck wagon. At sundown the cook struck camp and pitched my tent as I always had my individual tent, then he prepared supper, which consisted of chili beans, flavored with garlic, fried calf meat, or broiled calf ribs, biscuit bread, baked in a big iron skillet (now called a Dutch Oven), black coffee, stewed dried apples, and molasses. When a meal was ready, the cook would holler, "Come and get it, or I am going to throw it out."*

Texas prairie grass was sufficient for cattle grazing until winter months, and the prairie was bountiful and filled with wild flowers. Some Texans called the prairie the "Grass of Uncle Sam" and were amused that "easterners" did not really know or understand where their food supply came from as documented in this 19th century cowboy song:

> *Now people of the eastern towns, its little that you know,*
> *About the western prairies, where the beef you eat does grow;*
> *Where the horses they run wild, with the mountain sheep and ram; And the cowboy sleeps contented, on the grass of Uncle Sam.*

I close this afternoon with a few words about wheat. Wheat fields in America, turning gold in the late afternoon sun --- amber waves of grain. Wheat has been transformed from hand cutting to mechanical harvesting. The American wheat belt beckons from Texas northward through Oklahoma, into Kansas, from eastern Washington state to central Montana. Wheat bread and wheat cakes, from pancakes and waffles to wedding cakes. . . wheat holds a special, prominent place in the American food pattern. The era from 1911 to the eve of World War II, might be called the "best of times, the worst of times."

It is seldom that one records or comments upon a "last meal." First-Class passengers on the R.M.S. Titanic, that fateful night of April 14th, 1912, would have rejoiced in an elegant bountiful meal, and even Second- and Third-Class passengers would have dined well. Kitchens aboard the Titanic had several cooking ranges, perhaps the largest commercial ranges made, each with 19 ovens for baking bread and other items. Other ship specifications document that there were grills, large roasters, steam ovens, and electrical slicing, peeling, mincing, whisking, and freezing machines. The First-Class menu for April 14th, 1912 was presented in 10 courses:

First Course: Hors d'oeuvres; oysters
Second Course: Consommé Olga; Cream of Barley
Third Course: Poached salmon with Mousseline sauce; Cucumbers
Fourth Course: Filet Mignons Lili; Sauté of chicken, Lyonnaise; Vegetable marrow Farci
Fifth Course: Lamb, mint sauce; Roast duckling, apple sauce; Sirloin of beef, chateau potatoes; green peas; creamed carrots; boiled rice; Parmentier and boiled new potatoes
Sixth Course: Punch Romaine
Seventh Course: Roast squab and cress
Eighth Course: Cold asparagus vinaigrette
Ninth course: Pate de foie gras; Celery
Tenth course: Waldorf pudding; Peaches in Chartreuse jelly; Chocolate and vanilla eclairs; French ice cream.

Key points of this era, however, were changes in American education, especially in the field of nutrition science after the discovery of vitamins, and recognition of the principle of food substitution. Here is a passage that reflects the interplay between science, feeding soldiers, and family rationing during World War I.

> *If Americans could be taught about the interchangeability of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, they could be persuaded to get their proteins from beans and pulses rather than meat, their carbohydrates from corn meal, oats, and grains other than wheat, and their fats from lard and vegetable oils. If they could learn to fill their bellies on fruits and vegetables too perishable to send to Europe, then soldiers and civilians overseas could be supplied, pressures on domestic prices could be eased, and there would be no need for rationing.*

The trans-Atlantic solo flight of Charles Lindbergh, May 20th-21st, 1927, was heroic and captured the imagination of world citizens. In his book *The Spirit of St. Louis*, Lindbergh documented his thoughts, feelings, doubts, and fears, yet his commentary is uplifting and filled with the electricity of the moment, especially his fear that he would fall asleep and crash into the dark foreboding sea. Several passages in his account contain references to food and document that Lindbergh packed several sandwiches, which he identified only as "containing meat" [probably beef]. Lindbergh drank sparingly during his flight and consumed only one of the sandwiches, and this only after he was safely over France. Lindbergh delayed eating because he was afraid to eat, lest the food cause him to fall asleep!

> ***Over Nova Scotia:*** *It's lunch time in New York. It's lunch time in St. Louis, too, though there's an hour's difference by the sun; people eat earlier in the Mississippi Valley. My friends are probably sitting at their midday meal, speculating about where I am at this moment. what amazing magic is carried in an airplane's wings -- New York at breakfast; Nova Scotia at lunch. Lunch time! I drop my hand to the bag of sandwiches, but I'm not hungry. Why eat simply because it's lunch time? A drink of water will be enough.*

> ***Over France:*** *Almost thirty-five hundred miles form New York. I've broken the world's distance record for a nonstop airplane flight. In one hour more I should see the lights of Paris. I cross the coast again exactly on course, over Deauville. People come running out as I skim low over their houses. Four-twenty on the clock. That's nine-twenty here. Why, it's past supper time! I hold the stick with my knees, untwist the neck of the paper big, and pull out a sandwich -- my first food since take-off.* The Spirit of St. Louis *noses up. I push the stick forward, clamp it between my knees again, and uncork the canteen. I can drink all the water I want, now -- plenty more below if I should be forced down between here and Paris. But how flat the sandwich tastes! Bread and meat never touched my tongue like this before. It's an effort even to swallow. I'm hungry, because I go on eating, but I have to wash each mouthful down with water. One sandwich is enough. I brush the crumbs off my lap. I start to throw the [sandwich] wrapping through the window -- no, these fields are so clean and fresh it's a shame to scatter them with paper. I crunch it up and stuff it back in the brown bag. I don't want the litter from a sandwich to symbolize my first contact with France.*

At the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, Germany, American Olympians consumed a wide variety of foods. Among the more prominent was beefsteak, usually cooked rare or medium. The American athletes had average daily intakes of 125 grams of butter or cotton-oil. American athletes also ate daily -- on average -- three eggs, custard for dessert, and drank l.5 liters of milk. The American food-intake pattern was characterized by white bread, usually toasted, dinner rolls, fresh vegetables especially spinach and salads. Foods also available to American athletes on a daily basis were: apples, bananas, and both fresh and stewed tomatoes, dried apricots and prunes, honey, and cheese. In contrast to other Olympic national teams competing at the 1936 Berlin games, Americans ate no citrus, and limited their intake of sugar.

Many Americans were poor, both during and after the Great Depression, but poverty did not correlate with insufficient food. Food prices were cheap, and families purchased quantities of foods that were filling. During and shortly after the Great Depression, efforts at nutrition education had begun to be effective, as noted in this interview, Lucille Keller, as part of the American Memory Project.

> *Our family is small, and it does not take so much for us to live on anyway. Three people can live comfortably on $15.00 a week and have plenty to eat and decent clothes. They can live well on $25.00 a week. We spent $25.00 a week most of the time, while we could live comfortably on much less. We are not extravagant in regard to our food supply, yet we have plenty of what I consider a balanced diet. For breakfast we generally have bacon and eggs, one cereal, toast, and coffee. I serve grapefruit or oranges with the morning meal also. For lunch we have vegetables, generally two, chicken or boiled ham. For dinner we have the left-over vegetables from lunch with hot biscuits and perhaps a fried steak. The bread served with each meal is as follows: breakfast. . . light bread, toasted; lunch. . . corn bread and light bread; dinner. . . biscuits and corn bread. In winter we serve*

coffee with all three meals. In summer we serve tea with lunch and dinner. We serve sweets such as sugar, molasses, and honey.

Someone had to do it, be the first to drive across the United States by automobile. That first person was Louis D. Round, and here are two selected passages from his trans-continental log written in 1914:

Breakfast consisted of flapjacks, molasses, fried potatoes, eggs, and black coffee. To us it was the equivalent of a banquet. Our lodging for the night cost one dollar per person, and this included the light lunch served us upon arrival. Our breakfast cost only forty cents per person including hot milk for the baby.

And. . .

Traces of the San Francisco earthquake could still be seen, although this tragedy had taken place eight years previous. . . whole city blocks that had been burned out, and cracks in the ground were many. . . We had dinner at Fisherman's Wharf, and a fine dinner it was. . . the fish we had came from one of the boats we could see from our window in the restaurant. With our fish, they served the most wonderful tartar sauce I have ever been privileged to taste, also the usual cold slaw, french fried potatoes, and for desert -- apple pie. The charge for a complete meal was sixty cents per person. Those were indeed happy days. . . I might add that gasoline, in the era of which I speak, was eight cents per gallon in California, compared to twelve cents in Cleveland, Ohio.

Finally, I would like to conclude with a reference to a lunch room conversation part of the American Memory Project. Because of the rapid rise of fast food outlets in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, many young Americans have never eaten at drug-store lunch counters. For those who have, remember the wonderful sights, smells, and sounds, but most of all, remember the low cost of food, as recalled by Betty Lowe in 1939:

You can get a plate lunch for twenty-five cents. This plate lunch includes meat and three vegetables. Dessert is extra, and you have your choice of pie for five cents. [We] bake all the pies: coconut, lemon, chocolate, and butter scotch are our favorites. We never have any left over and could sell more if we'd make them. We feed a lot of people. Noon is a busy hour, as people come from all over town for lunch. We get about all the people from the court house. After we get our lunch our over, we string our beans and prepare our vegetables for the next day. The pay is not so good for the long hours pit in, only ten dollars a week. We get our board, three meals a day, and that counts a lot. We have our room at the hotel [in town]. The proprietor is nice and lets us have a room together for a dollar a piece. By getting our meals at the lunch room, we're only out one dollar a week expenses.

The American melting pot simmers and stews with innumerable local, regional, and national dishes. Cooks in eastern America created Boston brown bread, chicken àl la King, Cole slaw, and succotash; southern and mountain states contributed burgoo, chitterlings, cracklin' bread, dirty rice, fried ham with red-eye gravy, grits, hoppin' john, jambalaya, and poke salad; the midwest and Great Lakes region developed brownie cookies, chicken pies with biscuit toppings, macaroni and cheese dishes, and wild rice casseroles; inventive western and southwestern cooks prepared barbecued beef and chili recipes by the thousands, while creative west coast cooks invented chop suey, cioppino, Hangtown fry, and a myriad of sourdough bread recipes.

Yes, we Americans celebrate with food, whether New Year's eve, the 4th of July, Thanksgiving, or a host of local or regional, secular and religious festivities; before and after basketball, football, and baseball games. American food has evolved and diversified through the centuries, from the simple, sustaining dishes of Colonial times to the complex food combinations that characterize the new millennium.

Regionalism characterized American food patterns in the late 16th through early 19th centuries. But in subsequent decades regional foods and food-customs became blurred because of technological advances, advertising, and marketing strategies. Cuisines and food patterns once characteristic of American regions lost their uniqueness because of improved transportation networks -- from Shank's mare, to horse or ox-drawn wagons, to technical innovations encompassed by steam, the internal combustion engine, to propeller then jet aircraft.

Corn and pork; beef and wheat. Four foods characteristic of the heartland of America; characteristic of all Americans.

Thank you.