

From Steaming Hearths: The Transition from English Colonial Fare to African Foodways in the Coastal Regions of the American Upper South

by

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Traditional southeastern American food evolved from a complex series of regional food elements emerging from cultural exchange between Native Americans, European settlers, and African slaves. A study of the regional foodways of the Coastal Upper South and surrounding areas, from the dawn of the colonial period through the Reconstruction era, examines this cultural exchange. Numerous journals and recipe collections from historical figures document food production, storage methods, and contemporary examples of culinary dishes common to the region. It is from the records of elite and educated English colonists that some historians based previous conclusions regarding southeastern American food creolization. These conclusions, skewed in favor of elite consumers, are deeply flawed. Setting themselves apart from common people, upper class English settlers clung tenaciously to the foodways to which they were accustomed. Lower class settlers, struggling to put *any* food on their tables, could ill afford the luxury of food selection their social betters enjoyed. Because the vast majority of the colonial population consisted of lower class working people and disenfranchised laborers, the upper class foodway record greatly favors a small minority. It is, therefore, not from the cloistered kitchens of the elite, but from the steaming hearths of the struggling poor, the yeoman farmer, the fisherman, the slave, the servant, the ordinary person whence the foodways of the Coastal Upper South evolved.

From Steaming Hearths: The Transition from English Colonial Fare to African Foodways in the
Coastal Regions of the American Upper South

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Chapter 1: Foundations

Over the last several decades, researchers have explored the relationship between food and social status. Food historians, anthropologists, and sociologists agree there is a solid correlation between food and social status in nearly all societies. Higher status individuals eat higher quality foods than individuals of lower status. These researchers embrace multiple theories regarding class disparities in food choice and quality, rationale behind food taboos, and factors influencing susceptibility to foodway influences from other cultures. Although their conclusions are generally skewed toward upper class ideals, they offer an excellent foundation for further research. The journey in search of the common man's dinner begins with a brief examination of conclusions from earlier research.

Sociologist Stephen Mennell suggests that groups prefer to eat foods to which they are accustomed rather than simply choosing foods because they are available. Mennell's work specifically targets the dietary structure of French and English foodways and how their distinctive standards of taste developed and changed from the Middle Ages to the present. Mennell describes three forces that shape a society's taste in food: religion, class, and nationality. According to Mennell, class exerts the strongest influence upon European food preference, religion holds the least sway, and nationality, a strong determiner of cultural identity, intertwines with the influence of class.¹

Trudy Eden's "The Early American Table" examines the socio-cultural and political pressures influencing English colonial food choices, providing rare insight into the minds of elite colonial diners. Eden offers a sensible explanation for the disparity of food

¹ Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 2-17.

quality between elite and lower classes. She argues that the relationship between food and social status in colonial America has foundations in widespread seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European beliefs that food was not only essential for physically sustaining the body, it also shaped an individual's moral character. If refined colonists allowed themselves to incorporate savage native food or crude slave food into their diets, they believed they themselves would morph into savage and crude creatures as unwelcome at genteel tables as serfs and servants. Eden concludes that fear of social and moral degradation explains elite European resistance to creolization.²

Rebecca Earle's research on sixteenth-century Spanish views of Amerindian food corresponds with Eden's conclusions. Although the Spanish colonists differed in religion, region of settlement, and nationality, their attitudes regarding food and identity were essentially the same as Eden's Protestant New England settlers. Spaniards believed that, in addition to detrimental effects upon an individual's character, health, and status, diet was also responsible for differences in physical appearance. Spaniards feared that consumption of Indian food would result in darkening of the skin and loss of facial hair, dramatic physical changes that would erase their visible appearance as Spaniards.³

Peter Farb and George Armelagos offer thought-provoking insight into foodway structure and food-related events within societies in their book, *Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating*. They agree with Eden that the diet of any culture is not simply a matter of survival, but an essential part of the very fabric of social structure within a

² Trudy Eden, *The Early American Table: Food and Society in the New World* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2008), 3-12.

³ Rebecca Earle, "If you Eat Their Food...': Diets and Bodies in Early Colonial Spanish America," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 115, No. 3 (June 2010), 688-713.

culture. They describe eating as “the primary way of initiating and maintaining human relationships.”⁴

Farb and Armelagos use famine, one of the most disruptive events in any society, to illustrate the solidity of the bond between food and culture. The authors define the stages of a famine (onset, resistance, and exhaustion), describe social behaviors that victims historically engage in during each stage of the famine, and discuss the general effects of famine on the social structure of a society. Trudy Eden’s description of the famine conditions that Jamestown settlers experienced during the winter of 1609-1610 echoes the parameters Farb and Armelagos describe. More important, however, is the conclusion that the long-term effect of famine neither permanently undermines the social fabric of a society, nor forces changes to the native food culture; most societies resume pre-famine behaviors once a famine is over.⁵

Farb and Armelagos do, however, differ from Eden on colonial acceptance of native foods. They argue that the abundance of foods available in America, the diversity of cultural exchange experienced during colonization, and the willingness of colonists to experiment with foods from other cultures strongly influenced the dietary choices of English settlers.⁶

American historian David Hackett Fischer also attributes the initial dietary preferences of English colonials to carry-overs from traditional English foodways, but he introduces the concept of region into the mix. He identifies particular dietary differences between New England and Virginia that include strong preferences for certain food

⁴ Peter Farb and George Armelagos, *Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), 4.

⁵ Farb and Armelagos, *Consuming Passions*, 190-196, 211-213; Eden, *Early American Table*, 3-12.

⁶ Farb and Armelagos, *Consuming Passions*, 190-200.

preparation methods, as well as differences in the types of food preferred in the two regions. Fischer researched regional food customs in England and argues that the food customs of concentrated colonial populations mirror those of their English regions of origin.⁷

He also addresses regional differences in food-related social behaviors, contrasting frequent feast days and celebrations in Virginia with the stark lack of such occasions in New England. In Virginia, almost any occasion was cause for feasting, from comfort food associated with funeral rituals to barbecues and picnics in celebration of trivial occasions. Virginia feasting customs, common to rich and poor, master and slave alike, were greeted with culinary enthusiasm and gustatory excess even by those who could little afford such luxuries. Staid, conservative New Englanders must surely have viewed this excess as vulgar and wasteful.⁸

Although W. K. Bode does not mention the American colonies in his book, *European Gastronomy*, his analysis of European foodway development establishes another theory for understanding the pre-existing culinary ideals of European colonists. Bode attributes human food selection simply to limitations of food availability within the regional confines of what he describes as gastro-geographical belts. Bode does, however, acknowledge differences in diet within geographical bounds according to social status, comparing elite Europe's classical multi-course menu to the simpler pottage diet of European peasants and laborers, a diet he defines as the "gastronomy of the poor."⁹

The collective viewpoints of these authors serve well to establish the deeply rooted

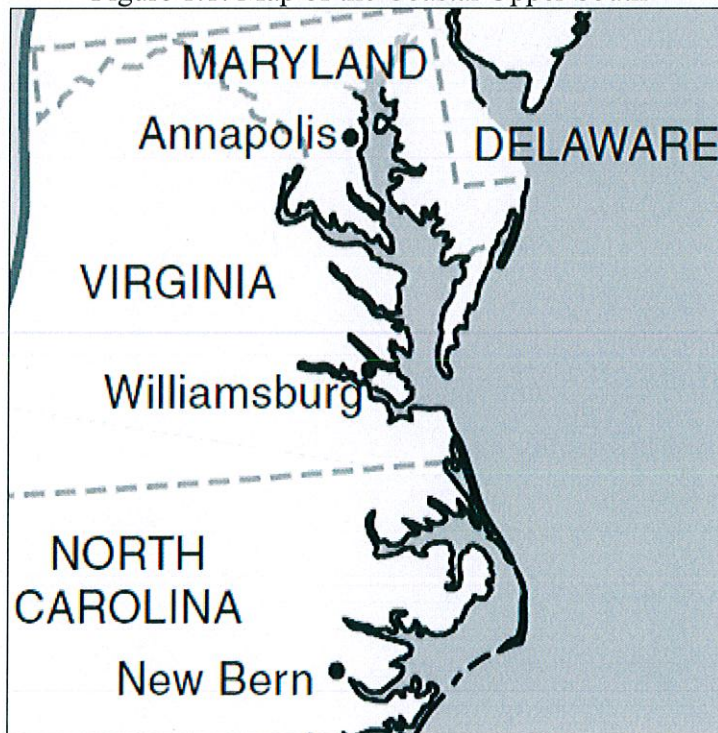
⁷ David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 349-354.

⁸ Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 49-354.

⁹ W.K.H. Bode, *European Gastronomy* (London: St. Edmundsbury Press, Ltd., 1994), 24-51.

European background of American food culture and its relationship to accompanying social boundaries. The geographical focus of this thesis is the coastal region of the Upper South extending from Annapolis southward to New Bern, North Carolina, and inland to the eastern piedmonts of Virginia and North Carolina. Hereafter referred to as the Upper South, this was essentially an English region of settlement under the profound influence of two starkly different cultures: Native American and African.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Coastal Upper South



The 13 British Colonies, Outline Maps, The Education Place Outline Maps, Houghton Mifflin Company.
<http://www.eduplace.com/ss/maps/historical.html>.

In *The Way We Lived in North Carolina*, Joe Mobley explains a settlement pattern that justifies the inclusion of Upper North Carolina into the food culture of Virginia and Maryland. From the middle of the seventeenth century through the early eighteenth century, North Carolina experienced two separate migrations that divided the colony into

different cultural regions. These cultural differences emerged because

the earliest settled section of the state was the region to the north of Albemarle Sound. Settlers from Virginia had spilled over into the region as early as 1650 and had spread out steadily in the succeeding decades. Signs of Virginia influence persisted in the homes, speech, and customs these settlers carried from the sound region up the Roanoke, Tar, and Neuse River Valleys. To the south, newcomers from South Carolina had penetrated the Cape Fear country in the first third of the eighteenth century. Members of the lowcountry gentry, these wealthy migrants established rice and indigo plantations like the ones they had left behind and also engaged in lumber and naval-stores production.¹⁰

The northern migration of the low-country gentry essentially stopped in the Cape Fear River Basin. As a result, their rice-based culture did not progress northward of this region. Likewise, the southward migrating Virginians and their tobacco culture did not progress much further south than New Bern. Although the crops produced in the two regions were distinctly different, the economy of both cultures relied on the labor of lower classes to produce their products. Both societies also held fast to the European belief that the upper classes should hold themselves socially apart from common laborers.

Elite English settlers tried to isolate themselves socially from commoners, servants, slaves, and natives. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, it was nearly impossible to keep English ways and English food culture isolated amid the chaos of rapid rural expansion, overlapping cultural contact, and fragmented social control. Cultural infiltration from outside influences was simply too powerful to control successfully.

One reason cultural isolation was so difficult to maintain was because the upper South was commercially agrarian. Since it was unthinkable for elites to work the fields, landowners relied upon common laborers to produce the crops. Because free common

¹⁰ Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Way We Lived in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 114.

laborers were in short supply in the colonies, landowners initially tried unsuccessfully to induce or enslave natives to work as field laborers.

After the native labor experiment proved a failure, the planters resorted to the indentured labor of English immigrants. Abbot Emerson Smith and Marcus Wilson Jernigan, historians of indentured servitude, agree that although the indentured population was primarily of English origin, and therefore, familiar with English customs and foods, they were generally as poorly suited to colonial life and agrarian labor as were the elites themselves. Thousands of the servants died of hardship and disease, many during the voyages on the filthy, overcrowded ships transporting them to the colonies, and many more after reaching their destinations and suffering exposure to indigenous disease.¹¹

The influx of indentured servants increased social problems in the colonies, particularly in incidences of theft, runaways, abuse of servants by owners, and the birth of illegitimate children. Although Smith and Jernigan both agree that there were a few skilled artisans among the indentured population, they generally describe the immigrants as unskilled, lazy, criminal, or servile members of England's lowest classes.¹²

Emerson Edward Proper, in his dissertation on colonial immigration laws, agrees with Smith and Jernigan's descriptions regarding the immigrants' social caliber. Proper concludes that because of clashes in class difference and often outrageous moral behavior on the part of the low-born immigrants, indentured servitude was severely restricted in New England from 1641 onward.¹³

¹¹ Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 304.

¹² Smith, *Colonists in Bondage* 300-304., and Marcus Wilson Jernigan, *Laboring and Dependiant Classes in Colonial America: Studies of the Economic, Educational, and Social Significance of Slaves, Servants, Apprentices, and Poor Folk* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 46.

The elite planters of the Upper South, however, were forced, out of desperation for laborers, to tolerate the institution of indentured labor for a longer period than New Englanders. Alan Kulikoff agrees with Smith and Jernigan that indentured servitude remained a significant source of labor in the Upper South until near the end of the seventeenth century. As the eighteenth century dawned, immigration rates declined rapidly. Kulikoff believes the decline resulted in part from horror stories of indentured life in the colonies filtering back to England, and in part to colonial outcry against England's practice of transporting convicts to the colonies.¹⁴

As the supply of indentured servants dwindled, the labor shortage was supplemented, and eventually entirely replaced, with enslaved African labor. The transitional time during these shifts in labor sources produced periods of overlapping cultural contact between Native American, English, and African laborers. Common English laborers, often working side-by-side with Natives or Africans in plantation fields, experienced a degree of cultural exchange to which the English elite were not privy.

Although not specifically referring to the Virginia region, Eden acknowledges the relationship between agricultural production and social status. She credits both agricultural production and selective acceptance of a few native foods into the traditional English diet for significant increases in available food supplies. Eden insists the amount and quality of available food was partially responsible for the changing power base in the colonies as the eighteenth century dawned. She believes the challenge to elite authority

¹³ Emberson Edward Proper, "Colonial Immigration Laws: A Study of the Regulation of Immigration by the English Colonies in America," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1900), Text-fiche, East Carolina Microfilm Collection.

¹⁴ Jernigan, *Laboring and Dependiant Classes* 46, and Alan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 50-51, 185.

came not from the multitude of struggling poor, but from a rapidly growing middle class of successful yeoman farmers who asserted themselves in the dining room as well as in the drawing room.¹⁵

In *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America*, James McWilliams attributes social and economic conditions surrounding tobacco production for strongly influencing the foodways of tobacco regions. Tobacco was a labor intensive but highly marketable cash crop. The early planters of tobacco producing regions, obsessed with earning profits, opted to expend their efforts in establishing stable tobacco operations rather than planting food crops or developing socially stratified communities. Because tobacco production took priority over food production, early colonists were more dependent on Native American food sources than the New Englanders, who wasted far less time in establishing self-reliant, religion-based communities with social and culinary orders modeled after England. McWilliams also argues that the loose social structure and the rural nature of settlement left tobacco producing colonists more vulnerable to influence from the foodway customs of other cultures. He believes the combination of these elements was responsible for the infiltration of Native American and African foodways into the English diets of the settlers as the colonial period progressed.¹⁶

Edmund S. Morgan presents a brutally honest (and perhaps the most accurate) argument as to why the tobacco regions were more receptive to prolonged native food use than was New England. Although it is generally recognized that three Native

¹⁵ Eden, *Early American Table*, 132, 157.

¹⁶ James E. McWilliams, *A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 129.

American food items, corn, squash, and beans, were incorporated into the colonial diet out of immediate and desperate necessity, Morgan suggests the initial European ignorance of maize cultivation was rapidly replaced with overriding laziness on the part of the colonists. Because the common labor required to grow corn and other food crops was an activity beneath the socially superior English gentleman and common labor was scarce, early colonists were content, during the early colonial period, to buy, trade, or steal food from the Indians.¹⁷

Whether or not corn, the staple food of the Native American diet, was an unwelcome dish on most English colonial tables, it was an essential dish. Without corn, colonial America would not have survived the starvation years of early settlement. Jack Weatherford expounds on the attributes of Indian corn and its overall superiority to European grain crops. Corn grew well throughout all the colonies, produced food for both humans and their domesticated animals, and, later in the century, was widely used as a cheap staple food for slaves and poor settlers. So great was colonial dependence on corn that Weatherford labels it as “the new staff of life for the colonists.”¹⁸

In addition to corn, squash, and beans, Weatherford lists other plant foods the Indians introduced to the colonial diet. Native Americans contributed numerous nuts and berries, peppers, sassafras, maple syrup, and sweet potatoes, a food that would later emerge as a staple food for Virginia slaves. Weatherford admits the foods he lists are but a partial list of the plants Native Americans used: “In the four hundred years since the European

¹⁷ Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton And Company, Inc., 1975), 75-90.

¹⁸ Jack Weatherford, *Native Roots: How The Indians Enriched America* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991), 113.

settlers began coming to North America, they have not found a single American plant suitable for domestication that the Indians had not already cultivated.”¹⁹

Food historians have used a vast supply European and colonial receipt collections as a foundation for examining New World influence upon the English diet. Cookery books (as they were called throughout the colonial period), and household guides contain a wealth of information about the types of foods selected, common methods of food preparation, seasonings used in cooking and preserving food, and dining etiquette, as well as information about the social status of both the authors and the users of the books.

In *The British Housewife*, Gilly Lehmann presents an excellent collective historiography of European household guides and cookery books from the medieval period through the nineteenth century. Lehmann explores the origins and evolution of European food preferences, food customs, dining etiquette, table setting, and other food-related behaviors. She also studies the gender, economic status, and social class of cookery book authors and their intended audiences. Lehmann’s work is particularly important because her analysis of cookery books and household guides intertwines food history with social stratification, tracing the chronology of social change during the emergence and growth of the English middle class.²⁰

Antique cookery books and household guides are usually edited before a modern-day reprinting. Two European editors in particular, Michael Best and Caroline Davidson, have edited works that recognize and address differences in diet and culinary habits according to social status.

¹⁹ Weatherford, *Native Roots*, 128.

²⁰ Gilly Lehmann, *The British Housewife: Cookery Books, Cooking and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Great Britain, Trowbridge, Wiltshire: Cromwell Press, 2003), 22-23.

In 1986, Michael R. Best edited an early seventeenth-century cookery book, *The English Housewife*, by Gervase Markham. Best sets Markham apart from the majority of cookery book authors of his time, identifying him as a professional author, rather than a professional cook. Best describes Markham's work as "valuable social documents, much quoted by scholars of early seventeenth century history and literature."²¹ Best's edition of *The English Housewife*, which include updates and edits of Markham's glossary, is "intended to bring Markham's record of the activities and responsibilities of the housewife to a wider audience."²²

Like Markham's *English Housewife*, Richard Bradley's 1736 publication, *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director*, was aimed at both modest country gentry and common individuals aspiring to lower gentry status. In her 1980 edition of *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director*, Caroline Davidson addresses Bradley's humanitarian interest in the relationship between diet, social status, and health. She believes Bradley's public health concerns are the underlying reason for the inclusion of an unusually large number of recipes for herbs, roots, and vegetable dishes in *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director*. Bradley insisted recent changes in the English diet, especially increased alcohol, sugar, and meat consumption, led to new physical ailments. In his observations, the poorer classes were prone to weakness and disease from too little food or food of poor quality, whereas the wealthy, because of excesses in consumption of alcohol and rich food were prone to an entirely different group of ailments.²³

²¹ Gervase Markham, *The English Housewife*, ed. Michael R. Best (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), ix.

²² Markham, *English Housewife*, ix.

A large part of the history of American food creolization is found within the pages of American cook books. Food historian and editor Karen Hess has transcribed and edited multiple works, including the handwritten manuscript of *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery*.²⁴ Another work, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking*, written by former slave Abby Fisher, reveals that Hess has also examined the infiltration of African influence into English-American diets. In her editorial commentary in Mrs. Fisher's book, Hess reminds readers that elite American women in the South spent far less time working in their own kitchens and more time supervising kitchen servants, and later, slaves, as the colonial years progressed into the antebellum period. Hess believes African dishes and food preparation methods gradually crept onto the tables of literate, upper class America because African hands daily stirred the pots.²⁵

In the Fisher editorial Hess continues to refer to African influence, citing Mary Randolph's 1824 *Virginia Housewife*. She believes Randolph's cookbook was the first published American source to offer recipes for distinctly African foods. She comments: "The book gives several recipes for okra, as well as one for 'Field Peas' (variously either black-eyed peas or the related cowpeas), the earliest recorded recipe for this African legume that I know of. This is in addition to recipes for sweet potato pie, catfish, and other dishes regarded as quintessentially African American."²⁶

While the Washington manuscript and similar recipe collections are excellent

²³ Richard Bradley, *The Country Housewife and Lady's Director*, ed. Caroline Davidson (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), preface.

²⁴ Karen Hess, *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), title page.

²⁵ Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking: Soups, Pickles, Preserves, Etc.; With Historical Notes by Karen Hess* (Bedford, MA.: Applewood Books, 1995), 78-80.

²⁶ Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows*, 81.

references for elitist eating habits, they exclude the subsistence history of the vast majority of the early colonists. Because literacy among America's lower classes, servants, and slaves was virtually nonexistent, early records of their subsistence practices rely on casual mention in the journals and diaries of elites. It is, therefore, essential to look deeply into public, as well as private records, often reading between the lines to fill in the gaps to piece together the fragments of a poor man's dinner.

Edward Riley and Paton Yoder have authored research on public records regarding colonial taverns, inns, ordinaries, and other types of public houses. Because tavern operations were regulated under colonial law, an extensive collection of public records exists concerning legislation, inventories, and court records of infractions related to taverns throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The research of Riley and Yoder focuses on an enormous amount of legislative records dealing with the day-to-day operations of taverns and the difficulties legislators experienced in policing these establishments. These records reveal licensure requirements, court records of violations and subsequent penalties, and edicts establishing mandatory services, including the availability of food for patrons.²⁷

Modern published sources of tavern research primarily target alcohol consumption with rare morsels of information regarding food scattered among the pages. Rarely does an author devote an entire section to food alone. One shining exception to this trend is found in *Early American Taverns*, a book compiled and published in conjunction with an exhibit for the Fraunces Tavern Museum in New York City. Author Kym Rice includes a

²⁷ Edward.M. Riley, Ensign, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Second Series, Vol. 3, no. 1 (January, 1943) 8-26; and Paton Yoder, "Tavern Regulation in Virginia: Rationale and Reality," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 87, no. 3 (July, 1979), 259-278.

small but significant section on tavern food common throughout the eighteenth century. Although northern regions were the primary focus of the project, Rice presents primary source items representative of tavern life from the Carolinas to New York. Among these items are excerpts from journals of patrons, extremely rare drawings of tavern kitchens from a traveling artist's perspective, sample menus, and a copy of a lodger's bill. These material objects are priceless examples representative of food history as well as day-to-day activities involving tavern operations. Rice's presentation of these objects opens the door for deeper exploration into the importance of material objects in the study of food history.²⁸

Because the foodways of the Chesapeake region eventually evolved from English to African in origin, material culture study plays an invaluable role in examining the regional food history. There are so few written records of the disenfranchised people of colonial America that the material objects they left behind are essential components to the study of their food history. Slave site research of particular importance to this thesis includes the findings of three archaeologists in particular. James Deetz identifies an excellent example of creolization in progress through his analysis of slave pottery types. Archaeologist Patricia Samford concentrates her research on domestic behaviors of slaves in Virginia and surrounding areas. The third archaeologist, Diana Crader, presents a comparative analysis of food remains from slave sites and an elite site at Monticello.²⁹

²⁸ Kym S. Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983).

²⁹ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, Exp. and Rev. ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 236-242; Diana C. Crader, "The Zooarchaeology of the Storehouse and the Dry Well at Monticello," *American Antiquity*, vol. 49, No. 3 (July, 1984), 542-558; and Patricia M. Samford, *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 9.

Examined in more detail later in Chapter 4, the findings and theories of these researchers use specific material elements to illustrate cultural exchange mechanisms involved during the foodway creolization process.

Since the later third of the twentieth century, creolization theory has gained popularity among archaeologists studying the interactions between two or more different cultures. Charles Ewen describes the creolization theory as “a useful tool for the study of culture contact and culture change.”³⁰ In his article, Ewen cites Edward Spicer, editor of *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change*, and George Foster, author of *Culture and Conquest*, regarding their theories on cultural interaction. Spicer identifies the acculturation processes involved in creolization, and Foster identifies and defines formal and informal selective processes involved in the development of any creolization.³¹

Agricultural creolization between the Indians and the English began to solidify as soon as English settlers began planting crops on American soil. In *Kitchen Gardening in America: A History*, author David Tucker examines the similarities and differences between European and Indian gardening methods and the incorporation of native plants into colonial gardens alongside European vegetables. He also introduces the ongoing argument among geneticists and biologists as to whether or not maize (modern day corn), is the result of centuries of selective botanical breeding of the South American grass,

³⁰ Charles Ewen, “From Colonists to Creole: Archaeological Patterns of Spanish Colonization in the New World,” *Historical Archaeology*, vol. 34, No. 3, 2000, 36.

³¹ Ewen, “From Colonists to Creole,” 37-38. Ewen applies Spicer and Foster’s analyses of the mechanisms involved in cultural exchange to his own research on the creolization between Spaniards and Haitians during the sixteenth-century Spanish conquest of Haiti. Although Spanish and English cultures differed somewhat in their New World experiences, many of their pre-existing European ideals were identical, and therefore, basic components of the general mechanisms involved in European and New World cultural exchange. Ewen’s article applies easily to the study of colonial creolization in general, including the creolization of the Upper South.

teosinte.³²

While Tucker focuses on English and Indian food production, Barbara Wells Sarudy examines variations in gardening practices between elite and working class colonists. She concentrates her research on the colonial and immediate post-colonial Chesapeake Region and supports her arguments with illustrations of maps from some of Virginia's finest estate gardens compared to the small, practical garden of an Annapolis innkeeper.³³

Judith Carney and Richard Rosomoff introduce the African element of the creolization process with their book, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*. Carney and Rosomoff argue that African foods were immediately shunned by elite English colonists. African food, with the exception of rice, was considered unworthy of English palates. The archaeological research of Deetz, Samford, and Crader, as well as multiple primary source documents, heavily support Carney and Rosomoff's theories regarding the incorporation of African foods into the English diet.³⁴

After researching the sources mentioned in this chapter it is apparent that three primary elements stand out as driving forces behind food culture development in the Upper South: elite English colonials rejected foods from other cultures as much as possible; economic necessity forced lower class colonials to incorporate Non-English foods into their meager diets; and the eventual establishment of African chattel slavery in America greatly contributed to the food culture we know today. This thesis builds upon the theories, conclusions, and findings of the authors introduced in this chapter, as well as

³² David M. Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening in America: A History* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University, 1993), 14-25.

³³ Barbara Wells Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3-7, 29-31.

³⁴ Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In The Shadow Of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 44-68, 139-150.

many others, to explore, through the examination of material objects and primary source documents, the social and economic mechanisms involved in food creolization in the American Upper South. Now it is time to listen to the hungry voices of the past as they sit down to their dinners.

Chapter 2: The Public Trencher

The vast majority of colonial food was prepared and served in private homes for household consumption. As the seventeenth century progressed and the number of permanent settlements grew, travel throughout the colonies increased. The resultant demand for travelers' lodging, coupled with local residents' desire for company, news, and alcoholic refreshment, led to the rapid establishment of taverns, inns, and ordinaries scattered throughout the colonies. Since travelers needed food to sustain them on their journeys, reputable establishments offered food for their patrons. The food served to patrons in these establishments was generally the same food (and the same quality, however meager), the proprietors' households consumed. Apart from the addition of Native American items, the ethnic nature of the food served varied from one region to the next. German, French, Dutch, and English influence flavored tavern food in the northern colonies, while French, English, and Spanish influences prevailed in the southernmost colonies. Tavern patrons in the Chesapeake region and surrounding areas were served English food in its purest form until African chattel slavery replaced European labor.

Rural overland travelers could usually cover at least fifteen to twenty miles per day. Public establishments were generally spaced along frequently traveled routes at these approximate distances. In colonial cities, the number of public houses increased proportionately to population growth and subsequent expansion of the urban areas. The quality of public services offered in these establishments varied greatly, depending on the proprietors' character and financial situation. Ale houses and dram shops, often operating without benefit of colonial licenses, were usually lower in quality than licensed taverns, inns, and ordinaries. For the sake of clarity, this chapter concentrates mainly on

licensed establishments for which there are public records, and other establishments as mentioned in travelers' journals. Because definitions vary as to the exact differences in taverns, inns, and ordinaries, these terms are used interchangeably throughout the chapter.

Journal and diary entries of travelers availing themselves of the rest and refreshment offered at inns and taverns provide insight into the quality of food served, as well as other services available at public houses. Because colonial journal-keepers tended to take rest and refreshment at the homes of friends and acquaintances whenever possible, entries regarding experiences at public establishments appeared more frequently as they journeyed farther from home. One such traveler was Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a physician of Annapolis, Maryland, who traveled extensively throughout the colonies during the middle of the eighteenth century. His journal entries included frequent comments on the quality of food served in both private homes and public houses. He was particularly descriptive about several meals he experienced during a 1744 trip from Annapolis to Maine.¹

His first complaint about tavern food, occurring early in his journal, concerns Tradaway's tavern, located along the northern edge of the Chesapeake Bay. Dr. Hamilton "supped upon fry'd chickens and bacon...but it was so very lumpish and heavy that it disposed me mightily to sleep.... I breakfasted on some dirty chocolate, but the best the house could afford."²

Dr. Hamilton did not comment on particular dishes or food quality during his travels through Pennsylvania, although he spent several days in Philadelphia, sleeping at

¹ Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992)

² Bridenbaugh, *Gentleman's Progress*, 6-7.

Mrs. Cume's private lodging house and taking his meals at several different taverns and coffee houses in the city. He did comment on the cost of food in the region, stating, "In this city one may live tolerably cheap as to the articles of drinking and eating....The staple of this province is bread, flower and pork."³

One area of the Upper South, the modern day Chesapeake region, is strongly associated with seafood. Dr. Hamilton and other regional journal authors did not comment excessively on local seafood dishes, although visitors to the region were more complimentary. Upon visiting Virginia during 1716, traveler John Fontaine stated: "They have the best oysters and fish of all sorts here of any place in all the colony."⁴ Interestingly, seafood dishes were noted in Dr. Hamilton's journal with increasing frequency as he traveled north, away from the Chesapeake region. In Brunswick, New Jersey, Dr. Hamilton lodged at Miller's tavern. There he "supped with some Dutchmen and a mixed company of others....retired to bed at eleven o'clock after having eaten some very fine pickled oysters for supper."⁵ Before crossing from Staten Island to Coney Island in New York, Dr. Hamilton experienced a new and unique seafood dining experience while having a midday meal at Corson's (the ferry keeper's house), at Narrows Ferry:

I dined upon what I never had eat in my life before—a dish of fried clams, of which shell fish there is abundance in these parts....we began to lay about us and stuff down the fried clams with rye-bread and butter. They took such a deal of chawing that we were long at dinner, and the dish began to cool before we had had enough. The landlady called for the bedpan. I could not guess what she intended to do with it unless to warm her bed to go to sleep after dinner, but I found that it was used by way of a chaffing dish to warm our clams. I stared att

³ Bridenbaugh, *Gentlemen's Progress*, 29.

⁴ Edward Porter Alexander, ed., *The Journal of John Fontaine: An Irish Huguenot Son in Spain and Virginia 1710-1719* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), 111.

⁵ Bridenbaugh, *Gentlemen's Progress*, 37.

the novelty for some time...⁶

As was the case in Philadelphia, Dr. Hamilton spent several days socializing in New York City's taverns and clubs. Todd's Tavern, obviously a favorite dining spot of Dr. Hamilton and his acquaintances, was mentioned more than seven times during his stay. The only menu example he recorded during this time does seem quite appetizing: "We dined at Todd's, with seven in company, upon veal, beef stakes, green pease, and rasp berries for a dessert."⁷

He made no mention of specific foods eaten in taverns during his northward journey through Connecticut. He did remark upon a local custom after dining in a private home in Massachusetts: "I was invited to dine with Captain Irving upon salt cod fish, which here is a common Saturday's dinner, being elegantly dressed with a sauce of butter and eggs."⁸ There was no reference to specific foods eaten in Maine, and little mention of foods eaten during the return journey southward to New York City. While in New York, Todd's was again the most frequently mentioned tavern. There were also several references to dining in private homes with friends previously made during the northward journey.⁹

The Marquis de Chastellux, a Frenchman traveling in America later in the eighteenth century, also kept a journal of his travels. Although most of his experience was in the northern colonies, he did visit Virginia for a period of time. His experience of the Upper South was limited to Williamsburg and most of his entries referring to Virginia tavern food were related to the piedmont and mountain regions. He avoided

⁶ Bridenbaugh, *Gentlemen's Progress*, 39-40.

⁷ Bridenbaugh, *Gentlemen's Progress*, 48.

⁸ Bridenbaugh, *Gentlemen's Progress*, 108.

⁹ Bridenbaugh, *Gentlemen's Progress*, 173-184.

taverns whenever possible during his travels, dining instead at the homes of prominent citizens, including those of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

After leaving Williamsburg for a westward trip to view the Natural Bridge, his first overnight stop was the tavern at New-Kent. At the tavern he was “served an excellent supper, composed chiefly of sturgeon, and ... had two kinds of fish, at least as good in Virginia as in Europe....”¹⁰ Upon continuing his travels, de Chastellux avoided lodging at Louisa Courthouse tavern because his friend, Mr. de Rochambeau, had warned him that this was “the worst lodging he had found in all America”¹¹ He traveled on to the tavern at the home of Colonel Boswell. At Boswell’s, de Chastellux complained that “supper was rather scanty, but our breakfast the next morning better; we had ham, butter, fresh eggs, and coffee by way of drink....”¹²

Like de Chastellux, another late eighteenth-century journalist, Benjamin H. Latrobe, also dined at Mount Vernon and other elite homes during his Virginia travels. Preferring to dine at private homes whenever possible, he nonetheless noted several incidences of dining at taverns or inns along his way. In April of 1796, he documented his visit to Kirby’s inn at Hampton, stating: “...the landlord is a good natured man. He has good beds, in bad rooms, bad attendance and bad victuals and drink. Butter is everywhere wretched. Fresh butter I have seldom seen in this country.”¹³ His complaints regarding butter continued during an insightful description of the menus he encountered:

Upon my journey to and from Amelia the dinners were the
same – *Hog*, i.e. Ham or Bacon and Greens at one end, and

¹⁰ Marquis de Chastellux, *Travels in North America: In the Years 1780-1781-1782*, trans. Unnamed English Gentleman, (1827; repr., New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1970), 214.

¹¹ de Chastellux, *Travels*, 224.

¹² de Chastellux, *Travels*, 224.

¹³ *The Virginia Journals of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, 1795-1798*, Edward C. Carter II, ed., Volume 1, 1795-1797 (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1977), 83.

roast Lamb at the other end of the Table; 4 dishes of salted Chads one at each corner, a dish of peas and one of Asparagus on each side, spoiled by wretched stinking butter, and Sallad in the middle. Eggs in plenty were brought for those who had too nice plates. The Wheat bread is bad at all the inns I have seen.¹⁴

His relief is apparent upon his return to Richmond when he arrived at Hopkins's inn "where a very decent dinner may be had for 4s. 6d. including Toddy or villainous Wine."¹⁵

Harriott Pinckney Horry, a well-to-do South Carolina widow, recorded her accounts of public accommodations during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although her accounts represent the early antebellum period, rather than the colonial period, her commentary offers valuable insight into the post-revolutionary technology surge in higher-end American kitchen products. Mrs. Horry kept written records most of her life, including a cookbook with instructions for everyday tasks and recipes, as well as journal accounts of travel experiences, including specific menu citations and quality ratings of foods served in particular taverns. Her travel routes differed from that of the previously mentioned gentlemen, and her overall experience was more refined, as befitting a lady traveling with her companions. Her eye-witness accounts of the things she experienced in public houses are historically significant, particularly her journal entries regarding tavern kitchens and the modern commercial kitchen equipment she encountered.¹⁶

Mrs. Horry's first trip to the Philadelphia area in 1793 describes a visit to Craig's Tavern, near Bethlehem, at which they were "given tough fowles and stewed veal."¹⁷

¹⁴ *The Virginia Journals*, 126.

¹⁵ *The Virginia Journals*, 126.

¹⁶ Richard J. Hooker, ed. *A Colonial Plantation Cookbook: The Receipt Book of Harriott Pinckney Horry, 1770* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984), 8-14.

¹⁷ Hooker, *Colonial Plantation Cookbook*, 8-9.

She did not comment on the food from a visit to Moore's Tavern in Philadelphia, but she did remark on the neatness and cleanliness of the tavern kitchen. She was particularly impressed with Mrs. Moore's recent acquisition of a remarkable piece of technology - an iron cooking stove.¹⁸

During a trip northward in 1815, Mrs. Horry continued to document tavern fare. She recorded a stop at an unnamed tavern along the Pee Dee River for "tough fowles and knives that would not cut," and at Ruffin's Tavern in Warrington, North Carolina, for ice and bottles of "Cyder."¹⁹ The revolutionary technology of refrigeration for cooling and preserving food was developing during this period. While lodging at the boardinghouse of Mary Randolph in Richmond, Mrs. Horry encountered her first refrigerator, which impressed her so much that she sketched it in her journal and described it in detail.²⁰

As Mrs. Horry's group progressed to Baltimore and lodged at Mr. Gadsby's Indian Queen Hotel, she was once again impressed with kitchen facilities. Gadsby's kitchen contained a large patent oven in addition to brick ovens. Smokejacks turned the roasting spits and also powered a large coffee roaster that she estimated "held twenty or thirty pounds of coffee."²¹

Mrs. Horry's accounts of kitchens are particularly valuable. Her descriptions of sanitation and equipment provide valuable insight into the culinary advances associated with early nineteenth-century kitchen management in finer establishments. Mention of kitchen activities in journal accounts of male travelers was usually limited to a ruckus

¹⁸ Hooker, *Colonial Plantation Cookbook*, 9.

¹⁹ Hooker, *Colonial Plantation Cookbook*, 10.

²⁰ Hooker, *Colonial Plantation Cookbook*, 11.

²¹ Hooker, *Colonial Plantation Cookbook*, 12-13.

of some sort between proprietors and staff. The absence of kitchen descriptions in male journals is probably indicative that male travelers, lacking curiosity in relation to servile details, seldom looked inside the kitchens of public establishments.

Tavern kitchens, like kitchens in private homes, were often housed in separate buildings from the main establishments. A 1748 probate inventory of the estate of Ishmael Moody, proprietor of Moody's Tavern in Yorktown, Virginia, verifies this practice. Moody's Tavern actually consisted of nine separate buildings besides "the ordinary." Although three of the buildings describe additional lodging space for travelers, six of them – "two meat houses, an old and a new dairy, a kitchen and a wash house" were related to food storage, preservation, or preparation.²²

The Swan, another Yorktown tavern, was in operation over a period of several decades. Although there are no descriptions or drawings of the Swan known to exist, 1772 probate records of its owner, James Mitchell, offer some idea of the magnitude of the establishment. In addition to several rooms with a variety of gaming tables obviously intended for private use, there was a separate room apparently intended for public use. "The Chamber," as the room was called, contained plates, bowls, teapots, coffee cups, wine and punch glasses, decanters, and silverware, in addition to several tables, two desks, and a "beaufet."²³

The probate record also describes an interesting spatial feature, referred to as "the Passage," that obviously served as a butler's pantry or some type of service area. Items listed in this area include plates and plate warmers, a tureen, a bed pan, five dozen

²² Edward.M. Riley, Ensign, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Second Series, Vol. 3, no. 1 (January, 1943), 15.

²³ Riley, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," 22-23.

knives and forks, several dishes, and one carving knife. The Swan's kitchen was also well-equipped with pots and pans, kettles, coffee pots and a coffee mill, chocolate pots, and "other utensils such as 'chafin dishes,' dripping pans, 'trevits,' and a "salamander.'"²⁴

The Swan and Moody's Tavern were exceptionally well-furnished establishments for their period, as probate records attest. Most taverns were not nearly so well-furnished or well-patronized, particularly taverns located in rural areas and those in less prosperous areas of towns. From 1689 until 1780, Yorktown records list ordinary licenses granted to sixty-eight individuals, allowing them to operate taverns. The record of licensed establishments covered a time span of nearly a century, and many were only in (licensed) operation for one year.²⁵

Fourteen of the individuals included in the Yorktown list were women, presumably widows. It was a common practice for widows of tavern keepers to assume operation of their deceased husbands' taverns, since there were so few acceptable occupations available to women forced to earn their own livelihood.²⁶ An advertisement by Sarah Coke in the October 1767 *Virginia Gazette* stated: "Sarah Coke, Begs leave to inform those Gentlemen who were so kind as to favor her deceased husband with their custom that they may depend on receiving the same entertainment as formerly."²⁷

The incidence of widows operating taverns was certainly not limited to Virginia. In Newport, Rhode Island, a popular ordinary reputed for good service was The Widow Babcock's, operated by a widow who applied for and received a liquor license in 1741.

²⁴ Riley, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," 23.

²⁵ Riley, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," 24-26.

²⁶ Riley, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," 24-26.

²⁷ *Virginia Gazette*, October 22, 1767. East Carolina University Microfilms Collection.

Two other Newport widows, the Widow Moon and Sarah Rosen, operated licensed grog shops.²⁸ In Edenton, North Carolina, Chowan County Court records from 1762 document an application “in behalf of Mrs. Mary Wallace for an ordinary License Granted on giving Security.”²⁹ Mrs. Wallace, obviously widowed, was also the executor of her husband’s estate, as indicated from a later entry in the same court record for “The Petition of Mary Wallace praying for Sale of the Perishable Estate of Robert Wallace deceased. granted and ordered that she make such sale and make return thereof to next Court.”³⁰

Documented legal taverns represent only a fraction of the existing locations from which alcoholic beverages could be purchased. Numerous illegal ordinaries, often referred to as tippling houses, sold alcohol by the drink. These establishments were usually operated from private homes, many of which were filthy hovels. The existence of illegal taverns was a disturbing problem throughout the colonies. Complaints regarding filth, drunkenness, and price-gouging were rampant during the early seventeenth century. Tavern licensing laws, enacted during the early seventeenth century, were continually amended throughout the colonial period in an effort to control alcohol sales and limit drunkenness, loose morals, and other undesirable social behaviors.³¹

Licensing laws varied from one colony to another. Virginia legislators enacted laws regarding tavern regulation in 1638, fixing rates proprietors charged and regulating the

²⁸ Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: the First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742* (New York: Ronald Press, 1938), 432.

²⁹ Chowan County Minutes, Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, 1755-1772, Vol. 3, January, 1762, 17, as Microfilmed by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

³⁰ Chowan County Minutes, 23.

³¹ Riley, “The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown,” 10-11.

licensing process. In 1668, the law was amended to allow only two taverns per county, regulating their locations to the proximity of courthouses and ferry crossings. New laws enacted in 1677 eased the two taverns per county restriction for counties where general courts were held and additionally required taverns to offer food and lodging to travelers and provide accommodations for travelers' horses.³²

Licensed establishments in North Carolina were also required to offer food, lodging, and other accommodations, in addition to alcohol. In 1775, Chowan County's court records of Tavern Bonds document at least six licensed taverns in the Edenton area. As shown in the example Figure 2.1 below, each individual listing stated the requirements

Figure 2.1: Chowan County, N.C. Tavern Bond Conditions

THE Condition of the above Obligation is such, That whereas the
 above bounden *Mary Bateman*
 hath obtained a license to keep and ordinary, or victualling-house, at
her dwelling House in Edenton Now; if therefore the said
Mary Bateman doth find and provide
 in his said ordinary, good and wholesome lodging and diet for travellers, and
 thableage, fodder, and corn or pasturage, as the season shall require, for their
 horses, for and during the term of one year from the date hereof, and shall not
 suffer any unlawful gaming in his house, nor on the Sabbath day suffer any
 person to tittle or drink more than is necessary: That then this obligation to
 be void and of none effect; otherwise to remain in full force, power and virtue.

*Read and Delivered }
 in the Presence of }*

Mary Bateman
George Brinkley

Chowan County Tavern Bonds, 1785-1787, 1 Vol., March 26, 1785, as Microfilmed by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

³² Paton Yoder, "Tavern Regulation in Virginia: Rationale and Reality," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 87, no. 3 (July, 1979), 260-262.

and expectations of the court for license holders to remain in good standing. The licensure was contingent upon the tavern operating within the bounds of conditions set forth and violations would result in revocation of the license.³³

In 1705, Virginia tavern laws assessed penalties of fines and loss of licensure to establishment proprietors for failure to comply with regulations. Local commissioners responsible for overseeing tavern compliance could be fined for neglecting to enforce regulations. In a legislative effort to control price-gouging, tavern proprietors were also required to post the prices for services in their establishments.³⁴

In North Carolina, the county courts regulated tavern rates for food, drink, and lodging during the late eighteenth century. The rates were reviewed and adjusted yearly, as noted in the excerpt from Currituck County court records:

State of North Carolina Currituck for November term 1802.
The Court proceed again to alter the Tavern Rates and to Establish them in hard money Viz. One Gill of East India Rum 8/. if Mixed With Water 8/. if Sweetened With loaf Sugar 4/. One Gill of American or French Run or Country Made brandy 6/. if Mixed With Water 6/. if Sweetened 6/. One Gill of East India Rum Made Into Punch 1/6. One Quart of good Wine 4/. Ditto inferior 3/. One quart of Cyder 6/. For a Warm Breakfast 2/with Relish 1/. Warm dinner 3/. Warm Supper 2/. Lodging each Night 6/. Each pattle of Oats or Corn 6/. and each bundle of blade fodder 3/. pasturage or Stabling a horse 24 hours 6/. And that the Respective tavern keeper keep and observe the same under penalty of the Law.³⁵

Tavern regulation laws did much to improve overall conditions in most public houses. The transformation of many eighteenth-century Chesapeake taverns and other public houses from primitive, vice-ridden hovels to respectable establishments is well-documented through colonial court records and travelers' journals, although illegal

³³ Chowan County Tavern Bonds, 1785-1837.

³⁴ Riley, "The Ordinaries of Colonial Yorktown," 26.

³⁵ Currituck County, County Court Minutes, 1799-1807, 2 vols. November, 1802, 145, as Microfilmed by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

establishments continued to be a problem. Most tavern keepers were not wealthy people. Many were actually considered poor by the standards of the day, so food served in early eighteenth-century taverns was usually simple. Travelers patronizing rural public houses could expect, at best, food often referred to as “yeoman’s fare,” consisting of “boiled meat, beans or porridge, plus bread, cheese, and beer or milk.”³⁶

Although tavern rates for many services were regulated by law, innovative tavern operators offered other, less restricted services as a sideline. John Ogden, proprietor of the One Turn Tavern in Philadelphia, “was wealthier than most licensees but a little poorer than the average shopkeeper.”³⁷ Ogden charged a standard fee of one shilling for a guest’s meal and three pence for a servant’s meal. A study of his records for a five month period reveals his greatest profit came from stabling horses. Because the prices Philadelphia tavernkeepers charged for hay and oats were not regulated, as in the case of human services, tavernkeepers could charge whatever they pleased for this service. Ogden also made money from letting out a backroom of his tavern for private meetings, charging extra for food and drink.³⁸

Tavern bills, often works of art in themselves, not only listed customer charges, they served as a public advertising mechanism. Figure 2.2 presents examples of tavern bills from early America. One of the tavern bills displays an elaborately printed billhead with the street address of the establishment and the owner’s name. Since the name of the establishment is Cromwell’s Head it is a reasonable assumption that the portrait of the

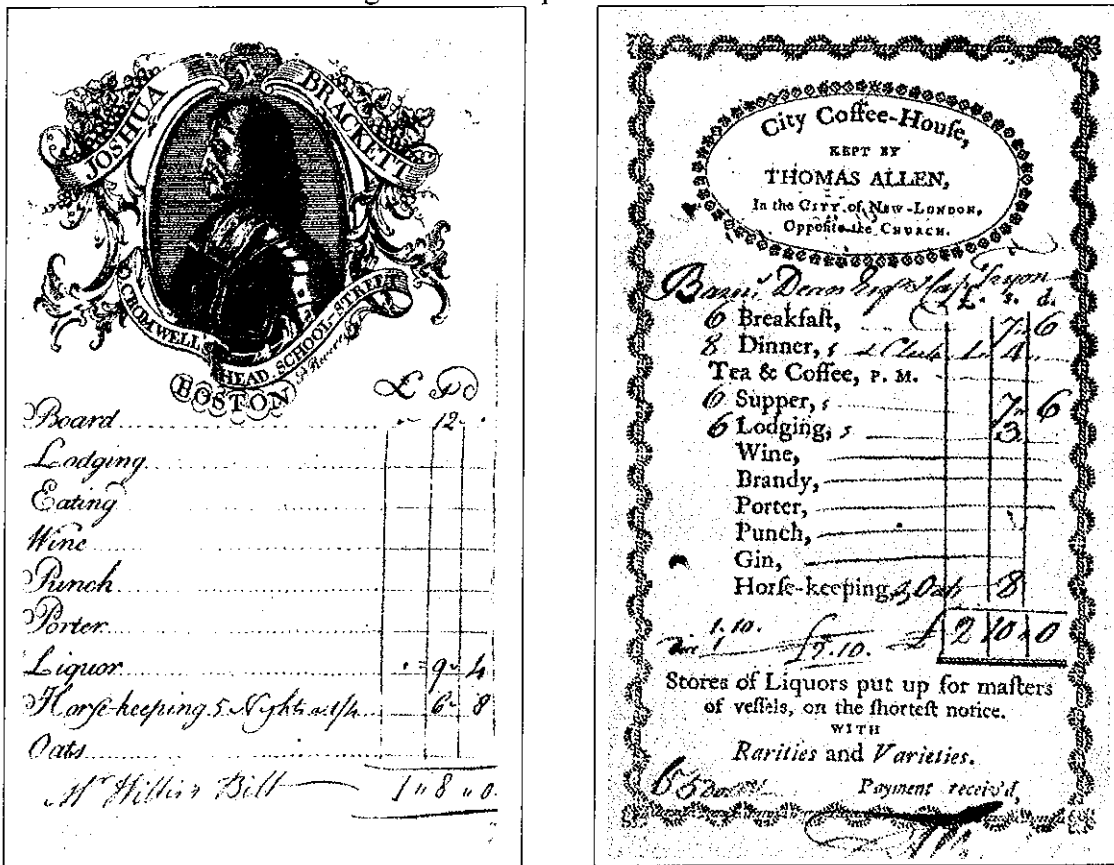
³⁶ Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), ***

³⁷ Peter Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 68.

³⁸ Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*, 69-70.

gentleman embellishing the bill represents the English Lord Protector, Cromwell.³⁹

Figure 2.2: Samples of Guests' Bills



Kym S. Rice, *Early American Tavern: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 82.

The second tavern bill, from the City Coffee-House in New London, although less artistic, lists a more detailed inventory of services. In addition, owner Thomas Allen offers “Stores of Liquors put up for masters of vessels, on the shortest notice. WITH Rarities and Varieties.”⁴⁰

Although lower and middle class citizens were generally the operators of public houses in rural areas, there was a wider distribution of wealth in urban areas.

³⁹ Kym S. Rice, *Early American Tavern: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 63.

⁴⁰ Rice, *Early American Taverns*, 71.

Accompanying the urban wealth distribution was a greater profusion of finer public establishments, an amenity almost unheard of in the agrarian Upper South. Class distinction among patrons of these establishments was commonplace in large cities: Charleston, in the South, and Philadelphia, Boston, and New York in the North.

Because of the lack of large urban areas in the Upper South, the development of upper class establishments occurred much later there than in the Northern urban areas. It is important, however, to address the socioeconomic development in urban areas because it exemplifies the comparative social isolation of the upper South's English society.

In addition to taverns, the large cities were dotted with boarding houses, private clubs, and cook-shops. Cook-shops, also called victualing houses or cook houses, were essentially early restaurants that sprang up in urban areas to service travelers and other patrons who were put off by the tavern atmosphere. Like taverns, cook-shops were institutions brought over from England. In 1697, Gabriel Thomas commented on Philadelphia cook-shops: "...have also several Cook-shops, both Roasting and Boyling, as in the City of London; Bread, Beer, Beef, and Pork are sold at any time much cheaper than in England."⁴¹

Boston's commercial growth during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries demanded more facilities to accommodate travelers. The number of victualing houses, as they were called in Boston, increased significantly to meet the demands of increasing population and increasing wealth. As in the case of taverns, victualing houses served customers according to status. Some establishments catered only to wealthy clientele, while others served middle and lower classes.⁴²

⁴¹ Bridenbaugh, *Cities*, 269.

⁴² Bridenbaugh, *Cities*, 266.

New York, experiencing much the same population and commercial growth as Boston, also experienced socially divisive class distinction among the city's public houses. Upper class taverns and inns advertising to attract "Gentlemen" patrons commonly evolved into private clubs. One popular establishment, the White Lion, owned by Gabriel Thompson, was strategically located at the corner of William and Wall streets. This establishment was a favorite gathering place for members of the Assembly to meet and confer. Some New York victualing houses followed the example of upper class inns and taverns, enticing customers with the offer of "good French cooking."⁴³

Although there are fewer early records of public establishments at Charles Town (Charleston), a small number of sources do exist. These sources infer that class distinction was acknowledged among the Charles Town establishments, as well. Brief mention is made of the options available to different classes: "that of Peter Poinsett where good French cooking and choice Madeira wines await the guest. The establishment of Friend Isaac Redwood served good English fare, and many a fur trader... 'tyed by the lips to a pewter engine at the house of George Chicken, vintner."⁴⁴ After 1730, Charles Town experienced similar population growth to that enjoyed by the northern cities, and the number of taverns, coffee houses, and victualing houses increased. Finer establishments advertised their services:

Henry Gignillant's tavern on Broad Street was the town's most elegant hostelry, often serving banquets of 'about 40 Dishes'.... Victualing houses and food shops enjoyed large patronage. In 1736, John Herbert, 'Pastry-Cook from London,' announced his shop for making all kinds of pastries, dressing meats for dinners, and preparing pickles,..."⁴⁵

⁴³ Bridenbaugh, *Cities*, 268.

⁴⁴ Bridenbaugh, *Cities*, 270.

⁴⁵ Bridenbaugh, *Cities*, 432.

Class distinction, although present to a far lesser degree than in urban taverns, did exist in more populous Chesapeake areas. In his 1732 account of travels, Virginia settler William Byrd commented on class differences in some of the ordinaries he encountered. He referred to an establishment for patrons of lower quality upon reaching the "...Carolina courthouse, where Col. Armstead and Col. Will. Beverly, have each of them erected an ordinary, well supplied with wine and polite liquors, for the worshipful bench. Besides these, there is a rum ordinary for persons of a more vulgar taste."⁴⁶

In the late eighteenth century, travelers' accounts indicate that the Upper South had begun to catch up with urban centers to some degree. Food and drink prices, although still regulated by legislation, were sometimes quite expensive in higher quality establishments. In 1778, James Iredell wrote to his wife while traveling through North Carolina's piedmont region. He described a stop in Hillsborough at "...a most elegant tavern..." where he "... dined with great satisfaction..."⁴⁷ We know Iredell paid well for his meal, based on county records, because "August 1774, the Chatham County Court set the rate for "A Hott Dinner with beer or Cyder" at one pound four pence and a "Cold Dinner" at eight pence. The court authorized tavernkeepers to charge four pence for "Lodging in a good feather bed per night."⁴⁸

Tavern advertisements in colonial newspapers were common, particularly by the middle of the eighteenth century. Aware that quality travelers were disgusted with poor service, keepers of higher quality establishments advertised their finer services to attract business. John Waller, ferryman and proprietor of Grave's Ferry, advertised his services

⁴⁶ William Byrd, *A Journey to the Land of Eden and Other Papers by William Byrd*, ed. Mark Van Doren, (New York: Vanguard Press, 1928), 361-362.

⁴⁷ Joe A. Mobley, ed., *The Way We Lived in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 164.

⁴⁸ Mobley, ed., *The Way We Lived In North Carolina*, 164.

in the *Virginia Gazette* to assure prospective customers of satisfaction:

The Ferry, commonly called Grave's Ferry, over York River, near West-Point, formerly kept by Robert Willis, is now kept by the Subscriber: Any Gentlemen that have Occasion to cross the same, may depend on a speedy Passage, with 4 able hands and a good Boat: Where likewise may be had good Entertainment for Man and Horse.

John Waller. February 25, 1738.⁴⁹

Another advertisement offers the services of both husband and wife:

Christopher Ayscough Begs leave to acquaint the publick that he has opened TAVERN fronting the south side of the capitol, WILLIAMSBURG. As he is provided with the best LIQUORS, and Mrs. Ayscough very well understands the COOKERY part, he flatters himself that those Gentlemen who may please to favor him with their custom will find every thing to their satisfaction, he being determined to do all in his power to oblige. The greatest care will be taken of Gentlemens SERVANTS and HORSES.⁵⁰

Because proprietors and their families usually lived in the tavern buildings themselves, it is reasonable to assume that the women of the household generally either prepared or supervised the preparation of the food served in these establishments. It is also reasonable to assume that the recipes used for cooking food for the family table were the same recipes used to prepare tavern meals. Ayscough's advertisement of his wife's culinary talents as a draw to attract customers offers evidence that quality food was becoming an increasingly important part of expected tavern services. Additionally, women were taking on a more visible role in public food service.

Another *Virginia Gazette* advertisement involves a lease offer for a

noted and well accustomed Ordinary...on the main Road from *Williamsburg to Claiborne's Ferry*...There will also be a Cook Wench, and several House Servants, them, hired out...Security is to be given by the person or persons that rents the Ordinary and hires the Slaves, for the payment of Rent and Hire...⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Virginia Gazette*, February 25, 1738.

⁵⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, October 23, 1768.

⁵¹ *Virginia Gazette*, November 20, 1766.

The owner of the ordinary and the accompanying plantation (which was to be sold instead of leased) was deceased. The advertisement instructed interested parties to direct inquiries to the estate's Administrator. The mention of the cook wench and house servants made the offer of the ordinary more attractive, even though the contents of the ordinary, including the kitchen equipment, were to be sold at auction instead of remaining with the building. The offer of the cook wench suggests that there is already an established and experienced female present for the kitchen hearth.⁵²

Colonial and early American art is another primary source suggesting the importance of women in the public food arena. While drawings and paintings are informative sources for tavern activities, they usually do not depict the foods prepared in these establishments. They generally focus instead on scenes of drunken patrons and taproom revelries.

For this reason, the works of early nineteenth-century Pennsylvania folk artist Lewis Miller are especially valuable to tavern food history. Miller's portrayal of common and ordinary events, including the goings-on in tavern kitchens, offers a unique perspective on daily life at kitchen hearths. Miller traveled throughout the colonies and Europe, recording his travels through drawings as he went. His accounts of ordinary people going about their day-to-day tasks is all the more valuable to historians because he wrote notes about his subjects along the borders of the drawings. His notes generally identified individuals, places, dates, and the particular activities taking place in the scenes. Two early nineteenth-century drawings by Miller depict scenes of women preparing food in York, Pennsylvania taverns.

⁵² *Virginia Gazette*, November 20, 1766.

Figure 2.3, the first drawing, entitled “The York Hotels, Kept in 1800,” depicts a woman putting bread into a bake oven. Two large pots are boiling on the hearth at one end of the kitchen and sausage and ballone are smoking over an open fire at the other end. A coffee grinder sits on the hearth mantle. Miller’s scribbled text on the drawing reads:

No Better and good Cooks can be found no where to prepare victuals for the table, As these Taverns. See the names-- Mrs. Abraham Miller, Mrs. Polly Waltemyer, Mrs. Gosfer, Mrs. Lamb, Mrs. Upp, Mrs. Rumel, Mrs. Baltzer Spangler, Mrs. George Hay, Mrs. Beard, and Mrs. Eichlberger, not far from town, the two last names, old Style cooking.⁵³

Figure 2.3: “The York Hotels, Kept in 1800,” by Lewis Miller



Kym S. Rice, *Early American Tavern: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 82

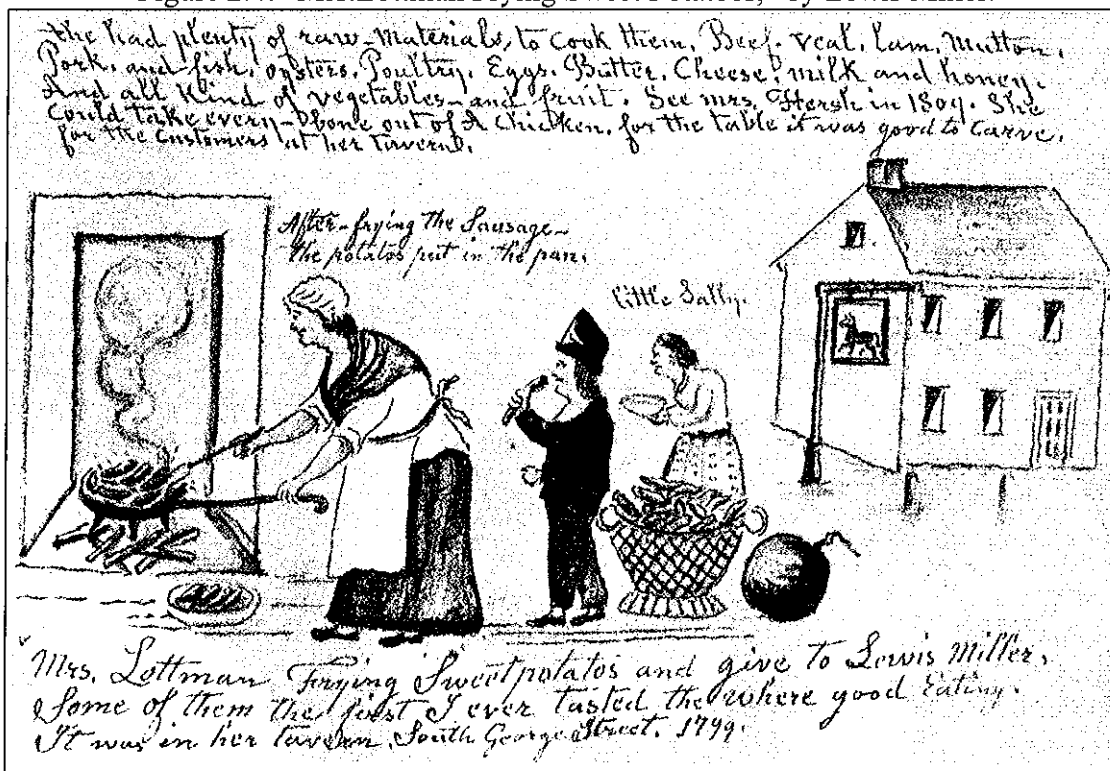
Most of the names listed for the cooks suggest German ancestry. Tavern cooks of German ancestry would certainly not be uncommon for York, since there was a large

⁵³ Rice, *Early American Taverns*, 82.

concentration of German settlers in this region. The ballone smoking on the open fire alongside the sausages is probably an eighteenth-century German version of the bologna familiar to modern-day Americans. Bologna and sausages, foods traditionally associated with German origins, are additional suggestions of regional ethnic food preferences.

Miller's second drawing, Figure 2.4, entitled "Mrs. Lottman Frying Sweet Potatoes," depicts a woman cooking on a footed, long-handled skillet (often called a spyder), over

Figure 2.4: "Mrs. Lottman Frying Sweet Potatoes," by Lewis Miller.



Kym S. Rice, *Early American Tavern: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 82

an open fire. A man is standing behind her holding an object in his hand as if he was about to take a bite of it. A third person in the drawing, labeled "Little Sally," is carrying

a bowl. In the drawing right background is a building that is obviously a tavern. A sign picturing an animal that appears to be a horse is hanging in front of the building.

Labeling over the cook describes the progress of the cooking: “After frying the Sausage – the potatos put in the pan.” Text at the bottom of the drawing describes the scene: “Mrs. Lottman Frying Sweet potatos and give to Lewis Miller, some of them the first I ever tasted the where good Eating. It was in her tavern. South George Street, 1799.”⁵⁴

At the top of the drawing is more text:

the had plenty of raw-materials to cook them. Beef, veal, Lam. Mutton, Pork, and fish, oysters, Poultry, Eggs, Butter, Cheese, milk and honey. And all kind of vegetables - and fruit. See Mrs. Hersh in 1809. She could take every – bone out of a chicken, for the table it was good to carve, for the customers at her tavern.⁵⁵

Miller was obviously impressed with Mrs. Hersh and her ability to bone a chicken.

Boning a chicken is a complex task that requires more than ordinary cooking skills. This implies that Mrs. Hersh was more than a casual cook. The text entry also provides an excellent partial inventory of food items available in southeastern Pennsylvania taverns during the period the drawings were made.

An interesting feature of the second drawing is the conflicting dates of the text entries. The handwriting in the two entries exhibits a slightly different slant but sentence structure and word formation style (a mixture of script letters and printed letters), are the same in both entries, suggesting that Miller was the author of both notations. This was apparently a common behavior for Miller because this feature appears in most of his drawings on other topics.⁵⁶

As depicted in Miller’s drawings, tavern cooks were usually women. Although some

⁵⁴ Rice, *Early American Taverns*, 82.

⁵⁵ Rice, *Early American Taverns*, 82.

⁵⁶ Rumford, Beatrix T. *American Folk Paintings: Paintings and Drawings Other than Portraits from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 134-151.

cooks in southern taverns were slaves (a significant fact addressed later), many others were household members of the proprietors, or, in the case of widows, were the actual proprietors themselves. The recipes used by these working women were handed down for generations among families and friends or learned at the side of experienced cooks. Because most of the Coastal Upper South's settlers were of English origin, so was the fare served in their taverns. Although tavern recipes certainly varied according to ingredient availability and individual skill of the preparer, they were essentially recipes gleaned from English cookbooks or carefully handwritten by colonial housewives. Northern taverns served many of the same English-based dishes as Southern establishments but they also incorporated more dishes of Dutch or German origin, reflecting the ethnic influence of local populations.

One colonial cookbook, compiled from Martha Washington's recipes, contains two manuscript volumes: *A Booke of Cookery*, and *A Booke of Sweetmeats*. Although she was a "lady of quality" rather than a working woman, her recipe collection represents a significant number and variety of contemporary colonial recipes. Twentieth-century food historian Karen Hess believes that the oldest recipes, English in origin, were written in the late seventeenth century. In addition to recipes for food, Martha's books include recipes for medicinal remedies made from herbs, bark, and spices. Of the greatest interest concerning taverns, however, are dozens of recipes for making such beverages as wines, mead, samp, syllabub, and possets.⁵⁷ These recipes indicate that, in addition to food, women may have prepared the drinks in all but the most crude taverns. It is highly

⁵⁷ Karen Hess, ed., *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 7.

doubtful that many male tavern proprietors would have spent their time whisking egg whites and cream to make the more elaborate drinks. Additionally, taproom scenes by colonial artists depicting women serving alcohol to a room full of drunken men supports the likelihood that women prepared specialty drinks.

The availability of recipe ingredients varied according to region. Some items were more readily available in the warmer climate of the southern colonies than the colder northern colonies. Northern colonies, because of a higher volume of shipping, received more imported goods than southern colonies and, therefore, had greater access to common European ingredients. The 1742 edition of *The Compleat Housewife, or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion*, the first English cookbook reprinted in the American colonies, notes that ingredients for which there were no available substitutes were simply omitted.⁵⁸

A large majority of the traveling colonial population ate, drank, and lodged in public houses. These same establishments served as a primary hub for community interaction as local residents to shared news and directed community activities. As the extensive amount of existing colonial legislation attests, lawmakers considered these establishments important enough to regulate. In reflecting the owner's ethnicity, tavern food exposed travelers to new food customs and preparation variations as movement throughout the colonies progressed. Because the food and drink served in taverns was a public mechanism for cultural exchange, these institutions were important instruments in food creolization. Whether elegant, vile, or somewhere in between, taverns were an integral

⁵⁸ Helen Bullock, "The Williamsburg Art of Cookery, or, Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion: Being a Collection of Upwards of Five Hundred of the most Ancient and Approved Recipes in Virginia Cookery," from *The Compleat Housewife, or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion*, ed. William Parks, 1742, preface (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1966). Citations are to the 1966 edition.

part of the American social structure, and the public trenchers of tavern tables were significant contributors to American food culture.

Chapter 3: Of Gardens and Orchards

This chapter briefly examines the gardening practices of Native Americans, early colonial settlers, later estate and plantation owners, a middle class urbanite, and slaves. The comparison of these practices not only exemplifies the class and cultural differences of American gardeners over the passage of time, it reveals the cultural exchange of agricultural methodology and produce between three societies worlds apart.

While early colonial settlers were astounded with the abundant wildlife of the region, they were equally impressed with the profusion of edible plants growing wild in the fields and woods, as well as those cultivated in Indian gardens. Colonists were also pleasantly surprised, after successfully establishing their own gardens, with the large variety of European plant species amenable to New World transplantation. This botanical compatibility was a significant boon to the success of colonization because the produce from vegetable gardens and orchards was an essential contributor to survival and self-reliance in the New World. From the manicured vegetable plantings along the garden paths of wealthy planters to the hardscrabble vegetable patches of yeoman farmers, everyone relied heavily on garden produce for subsistence.

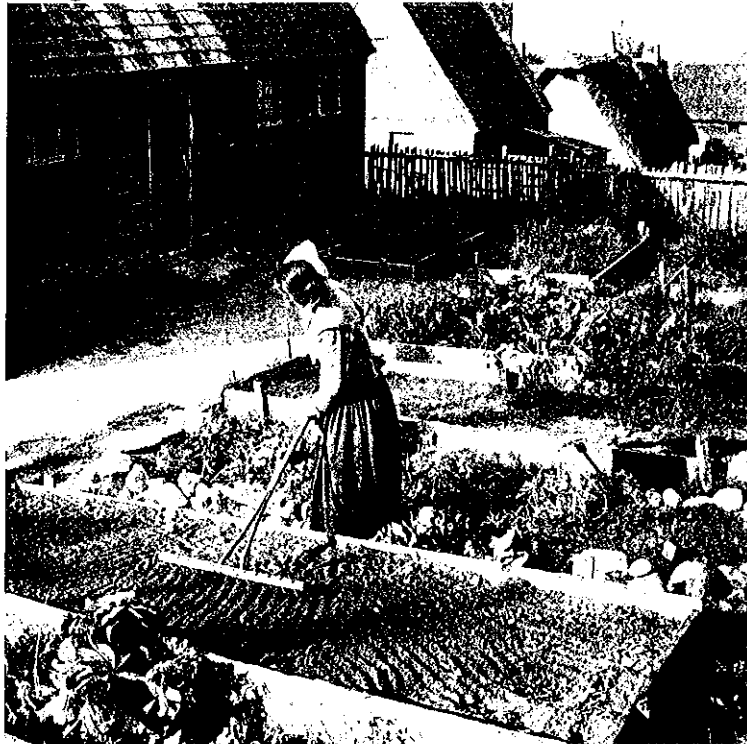
The colonial practice of growing vegetables and herbs intended for their household tables was referred to as kitchen gardening. Corn, potatoes, and grains, grown in large quantities away from the house, were considered agricultural, or field crops. The kitchen gardens consisted of small patches of diverse varieties of vegetables and herbs, often enclosed by walls or fences and located conveniently near residence kitchens.¹

Comparisons between Native American and English Colonial gardening styles reveal

¹ Interview of Lisa Wimpfeimer, Horticulturalist (Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens: New Bern, North Carolina), August, 2009.

similarities in the farming practices of the two cultures. Astrological signs, prayers, and religious ritual accompanied seasonality in planting and harvesting crops among both cultures. As shown in the photograph of a recreated kitchen garden at Plymouth Plantation, Figure 3.1, English settlers planted garden crops in beds and patches.² These small plots were easily managed, as were the Native American's small hill and mound fields. Women of both cultures controlled all but the heaviest work in the planting,

Figure 3.1: Raised Bed Garden at Plymouth Plantation



David M. Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening in America: A History* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1993), 19.

tending, harvesting, and preserving of some of the field crops and nearly all of the garden crops. Native American and working-class colonial women alike planted small, simple gardens for the purpose of supplying their households with food for the table and herbs for health and healing. Indian gardens, like those of English settlers, were planted near

² David M. Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening in America: A History* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1993), 19.

their dwellings and included a variety of plants.³

Numerous journals of explorers and landowners describe native plants the Indians used as food. Early eighteenth-century Virginia plantation owner William Byrd II kept detailed journals of agricultural experiences and products, including those of the local Indians. He described several types of native beans: “broad beans, just as in Europe...small beans...white, sprinkled with color, with a dark red figure on each side, and very good to taste.”⁴ He also described herbs, squash, melons, pumpkins as “also very good, raw or cooked. All these are Indian vegetables or pot-herbs; therefore [they are] not all or imperfectly known. In addition there are still many other garden stuffs, which [it] would take too long to mention here.”⁵

Robert Beverly also devoted time and space to native foods in *The History and Present State of Virginia*. Originally written in 1705 and revised in 1722, Beverly’s *History* focuses more on native food sources than do Byrd’s journals. His entries pertaining to native foods not only describe the food items the Indians ate, they disclose examples of native hunter-gathering and agriculturalist behaviors as well:

Several Kinds of the Creeping Vines bearing Fruit, the *Indians* planted in their Gardens and Fields, because they wou’d have Plenty of them always at hand; such as, Musk-melons, Water-melons, Pompions, Cushaws, Macocks, and Gourds... Their *Maracock*, which is the Fruit of what we call the Passion Flower, our Natives did not take Pains to plant, having enough of it growing everywhere; tho’ thy eat it with a great deal of pleasure; this Fruit is about the size of a Pullet’s Egg.⁶

Beverly’s assessment regarding the importance of corn to native society includes an account of the types of corn grown and the native methods of cultivation employed in its

³ Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening*, 14-25.

⁴ *William Byrd’s Natural History of Virginia: or, The Newly Discovered Eden*, trans. and ed. Richmond Croom Betty and William J. Mulloy (Virginia: Dietz Press, 1940), 21-22.

⁵ *William Byrd’s Natural History*, 23.

⁶ Robert Beverly, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed. and Introduction by Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 141-143.

production:

... Our Natives had originally amongst them, *Indian Corn*, Peas, Beans, Potatoes, and Tobacco. This *Indian Corn* was the Staff of Food, upon which the Indians did ever depend; or when Sickness, bad Weather, War, or any other ill Accident kept them from Hunting, Fishing, and Fowling; this, with the addition of some Peas, Beans, and such other Fruits of the earth, as were then in Season, was the Families Dependance, and the Support of their Women and Children. There are Four Sorts of Indian Corn, Two of which are early ripe, and Two, late ripe; all growing in the same manner;... All these Sorts are planted alike, in Rows, Three, four, or Five Grains in a Hill, the larger Sort at Four or Five Foot Distance, the lesser Sort nearer. The Indians used to give it One or Two Weedings, and make a Hill about it, and so the Labour was done. They likewise plant a Bean in the same Hill with the Corn, upon whose Stalk it sustains it self.⁷

While Beverly was satisfied that the beans and peas he observed in Indian gardens were native plants because he had seen them growing wild in the region, he questioned that the corn the Indians relied upon so heavily was truly indigenous to Virginia. His journal entry on indigenous peas concludes with his doubts concerning the origin of corn: “but whence they had their *Indian Corn*, I can give no Account; for I don’t believe that it was spontaneous in those Parts.”⁸

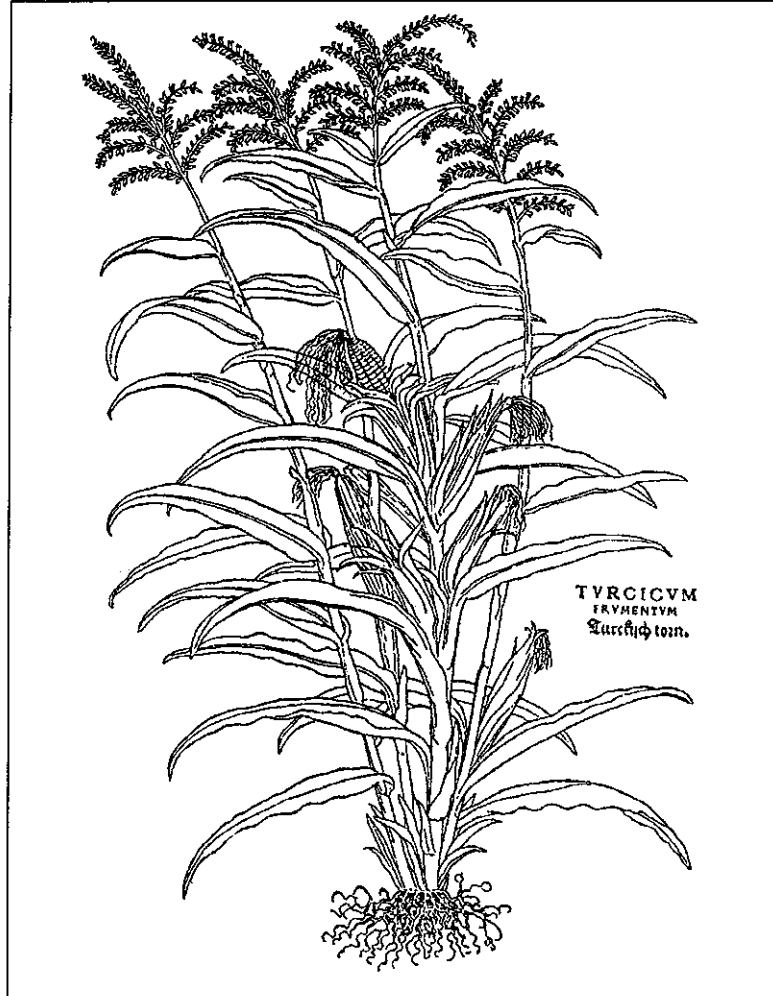
Beverly was correct in his assumption that corn was not native. The corn that European explorers discovered in Native American gardens was the product of centuries of hybridization far from colonial American shores. Although a few plant geneticists question this theory, most believe that teosinte, an ancient wild grass from Central and South America, is the ancestor of modern-day corn. Studies of ancient corn cob remains recovered from multiple sites strongly suggest selective planting of teosinte seeds. Based on findings of progressive increases in cob sizes (and other more complicated genetic based conclusions), most botanical researchers are certain that centuries of intentional selective cultivation of teosinte grass resulted in domesticated,

⁷ Beverly, *History*, 144.

⁸ Beverly, *History*, 144.

modern-day maize. The maize plant depicted in a 1542 botanical drawing (Figure 3.1), while presenting as more grass-like than modern plants, clearly possesses ears of corn characteristic of modern-day maize.⁹

Figure 3.2: Leonhard Fuchs' 1542 Botanical Depiction of Maize



Paul Weatherwax, *Indian Corn in Old America* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1954), 35.

Although not as important to survival as maize, squash, a descendant of wild gourds, was also a staple Native American food. Modern historians often use the word squash to generalize the varieties of cucurbits the Indians produced. These included several varieties of pumpkins, summer and winter squash, and gourds. Gourds were primarily

⁹ Paul Weatherwax, *Indian Corn in Old America* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1954), 35.

dried and used as dippers, cooking implements, and other containers. Squash and pumpkins were eaten fresh or dried and stored for winter consumption.¹⁰

These and other products of the Native American gardener, including potatoes and beans, spread throughout the agricultural nations of the New World. At the time of European contact, these foods were widely distributed among the native population. Early European explorers, impressed with the novelty of New World produce, returned home with samples of the new foods. Many of these items grew well in European soil and were rapidly adopted into the food supply.¹¹

At the same time that Europeans were planting New World crops in their gardens, colonial gardeners were incorporating European food crops into American gardens amid the native plants. Thomas Glover's account of mid-seventeenth century Virginia gardens and orchards states: "Their Gardens have all sorts of *English* Potherbs, and sallets; they have *Cabbages, Colworts, Colly flowers, Parsnips, Turnips, Carrets, Potatoes, and Yams....*"¹²

Glover is primarily referring to plants from seeds or rootstock imported from Europe. Colonial newspapers commonly advertised imported seeds, plants, and roots for sale. A March 10, 1768, advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* offers: "*Fresh imported, in the ship Lord Cambden, from LONDON, An Assortment of PEASE, BEANS, and seeds, Ec. sold by WILLIAM WILLS, CHIRURGEON, in Richmond Town, and JOHN DONLEVY, in Petersburg.*"¹³ The seed list consists of eleven varieties of "pease," nine varieties of

¹⁰ R. Douglas Hunt, *Indian Agriculture in America: Prehistory to the Present* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987), 27, 29-32.

¹¹ Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening*, 4-5.

¹² Thomas Glover, *An Account of Virginia, its Scituation, Temperature, Productions, Inhabitants and their manner of planting and ordering Tobacco* (Oxford: Horace Hart, 1676; repr. Oxford: 1956), 16.

¹³ *Virginia Gazette*, March 10, 1768.

beans, eight varieties of cabbage, “colliflower,” broccoli, two varieties of carrots, several varieties of cucumbers, turnips, parsnips, beets, onions, radishes, spinach, celery, endive, and lettuce.¹⁴ A January 1776 ad offers an extensive inventory of seeds: “TO BE Sold, *At Mr. MYLES TAYLOR’s, in the Town of RICHMOND, THE FOLLOWING GARDEN and other SEEDS, Lately imported from ITALY.*”¹⁵ The Italian seed inventory is somewhat similar to that of the above London seed advertisement, but some vegetables are specifically identified as Roman or French varieties.

Because money was scarce in the colonies, the price of imported seeds was dear to all but the wealthier settlers. Whenever possible, ordinary colonial gardeners saved some of their precious seeds produced in a present year’s garden to plant the next year’s crop. Successful seed saving was dependant on circumstances often beyond the gardener’s control. Weather conditions, destruction from pests, crop failure, or disease affected the amount and quality of seeds available for saving. Exposure to moisture and heat during storage also affected the quality of the seed.¹⁶

The challenge of gardening in America strengthened community bonds among many colonial gardeners. Farmers, housewives, and planters interchanged seeds, cuttings, herbs, and bulbs with their neighbors. They also shared gardening knowledge and tips and constructed European-styled gardens with raised beds and herb patches like English gardens in an attempt to cling to Old World tradition. Many colonials viewed their gardens with great pride and showed them off at every opportunity, as in the case of William Byrd of Virginia. Byrd made numerous entries in his diaries regarding his gardens at Westover, often remarking on guests who toured the garden during their visits

¹⁴ *Virginia Gazette*, March 10, 1768.

¹⁵ *Virginia Gazette*, January 31, 1776.

¹⁶ Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening*, 39- 40, 72-73.

to his home.¹⁷

Byrd was also descriptive in his notations on another important colonial food source - fruit. Although many of the varieties of berries, grapes, and fruits he identified were native, others were not. He described imported fruit trees as: "TREES WHICH ARE CULTIVATED, AND GROW IN THE ORCHARDS, WHICH ONE HAS BROUGHT THERE FROM ENGLAND AND OTHER PLACES IN EUROPE."¹⁸

These trees included European cultivars of apple, pear, quince, peach, cherry, fig, apricot, and currant. In addition, Byrd listed native and European nut trees, grains, and grasses that produced well in the colonies.¹⁹

Orchards were planted on plantations and farms almost as soon as land was cleared and cuttings were available. In 1748, Swedish traveler Peter Kalm noted in his diary that "all the inhabitants of this place, from the highest to the lowest, have their own orchards, which are larger or smaller, according to their wealth. The trees in them are chiefly peach, apple and cherry."²⁰

Apples, versatile and easily preserved, were a particularly important orchard crop for colonials. Apple trees, cold hardy and heat tolerant compared to other types of fruit trees, also produced a comparatively larger volume of fruit. Apple juice was pressed to make cider for drinking or vinegar for use as a seasoning. Vinegar was also used as a preservative for pickling other foods. Although vinegar was made from almost any fruit,

¹⁷ Tucker, *Kitchen Gardening*, 39-40, 72-73, and William Byrd, *The Great American Gentleman William Byrd of Westover in Virginia: His Secret Diary for the Years 1709-1712*, Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), 230, 232, 216.

¹⁸ *William Byrd's Natural History*, 43.

¹⁹ *William Byrd's Natural History*, 19-50.

²⁰ *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770*, Adolph B. Benson, ed. (New York: Wilson-Erickson Inc., 1937), 1:185.

apple cider vinegar was the most common. Both English and Colonial American cookbooks list hundreds of recipes calling for either apples or vinegar as key ingredients.

Because the produce from orchards was capable of providing both food and drink, orchards were also important appurtenances to ordinaries and inns. Orchards, like gardens, were listed as important assets of ordinaries advertised for sale or lease. One advertisement for the sale or lease of an ordinary was listed “at the Isle of Wight Court house, with or without the Furniture, with good convenient Houses, Plantation, Orchard and a Garden well paled in; and is reckon’d one of the best Court-houses in Virginia, for an Ordinary to be kept at....”²¹ Another example of an ordinary for sale lists “the Ordinary at *Prince Edward* court-house, with a large garden in good order, a valuable apple orchard of fine fruit, and land sufficient for working five hands.”²² A third advertisement was more specific about the apple orchard: “a well accustomed Ordinary, a Malt-house, Store-house and several convenient Out-houses; also good Orchards, of the best fruits, one of which is entirely of *White Apples*.”²³ The white apple variety was an apparent favorite for cider-making. William Byrd commented on cider made from white apples during his travels in Virginia: “We drank exceeding good cider here, the juice of the white apple, which made us talkative until ten o’clock...”²⁴

Although it is generally understood that Indian foods infiltrated colonial gardens, fields, and orchards well before the arrival of African food, several historical examples of colonial and early American gardens present visual evidence of Native American food

²¹ *Virginia Gazette*, February, 1738.

²² *Virginia Gazette*, November, 1767.

²³ *Virginia Gazette*, October, 1736.

²⁴ William Byrd, *A Journey to the Land of Eden*, 361.

plants, while African ones are starkly absent. As the seventeenth century progressed, the kitchen gardens of colonial women and the simple garden fields of Native Americans were soon dwarfed next to the development of the large fields and accompanying estates of gentlemen planters. In keeping with their inclination to remind others of their wealth and status, elite gardeners planned their garden layouts after the European fashion. Great pains and expense were taken in planning and designing the gardens of larger estates, including the hiring of prestigious professional designers to plan the garden layouts. These impressive layouts were influenced by the sixteenth-century designs of Andrea Palladio and his students, and later in the eighteenth century, according to estate plan examples of Claude Sauthier and Benjamin Latrobe. After the initial garden construction, landowners employed permanent gardeners to maintain their prized gardens to exquisite perfection.²⁵

Orchards and vegetable gardens commonly appear on maps of these elite colonial and, later, early republican estates. Vegetable and herb patches in these expensive gardens were either tastefully interspersed among the ornamental plantings of flowers and shrubbery or segregated entirely from the ornamental sections of the garden. While an occasional fruit tree was inserted into formal areas as a decorative accent, orchards were generally planted in separate areas from the rest of the garden.

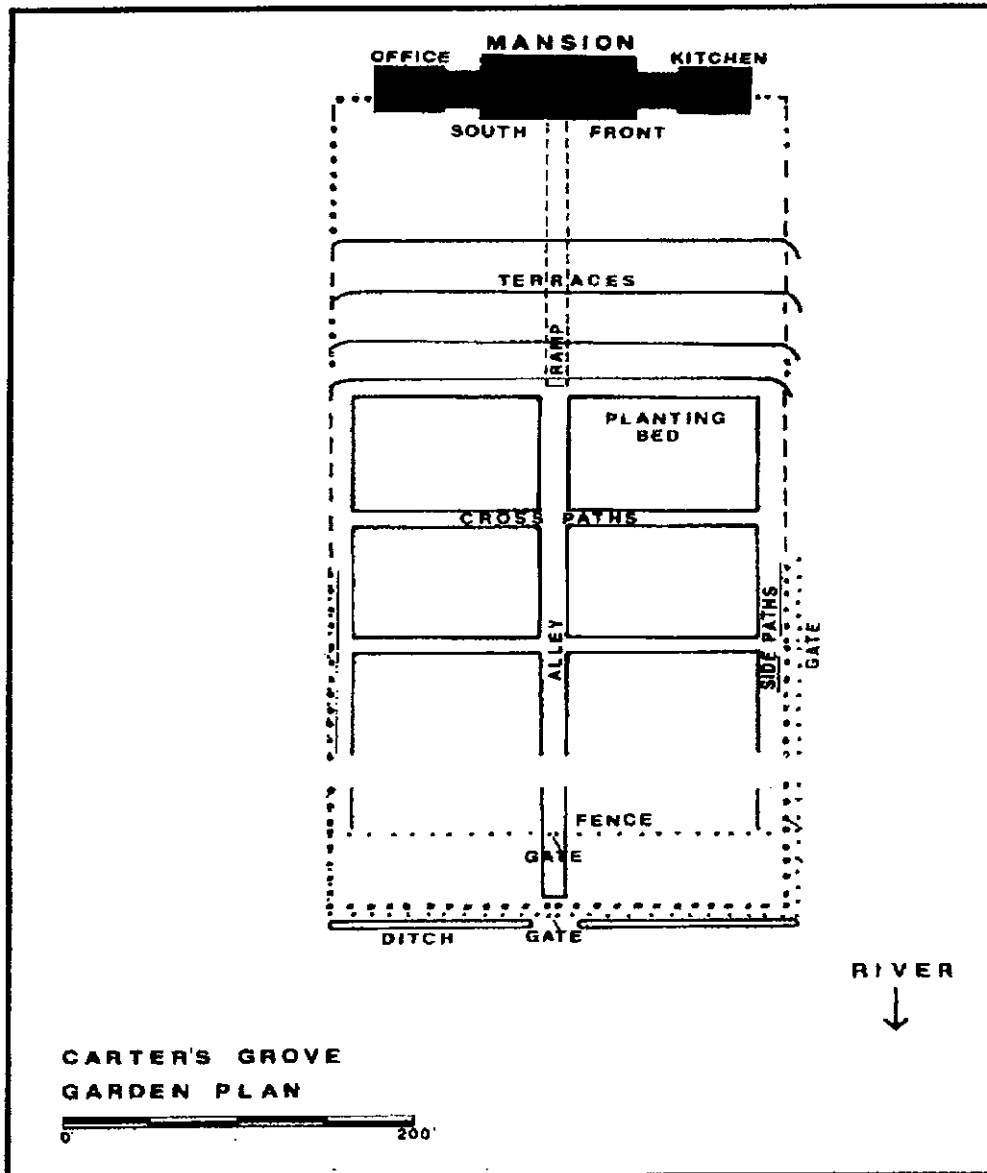
During the first half of the eighteenth century, terraced gardens were extremely popular among elite planters. Terraced gardens, also called falling gardens, sloped away from houses built on higher elevations, often leading downward to the shore of a river.

This was the case in Carter Burwell's garden at Carter's Grove plantation, near

²⁵ Robert P. Maccubbin and Peter Martin, eds., *British and American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: Eighteen Illustrated Essays on Garden History* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1985), 26-28, 98, 112-114; and Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening*, 29.

Williamsburg. As shown in Figure 3.3, the gardens fell away from the house towards the river in three terraces sloping downward to an enclosed kitchen plot.²⁶

Figure 3.3: Carter's Grove Site Plan, Courtesy of Historic Williamsburg Foundation



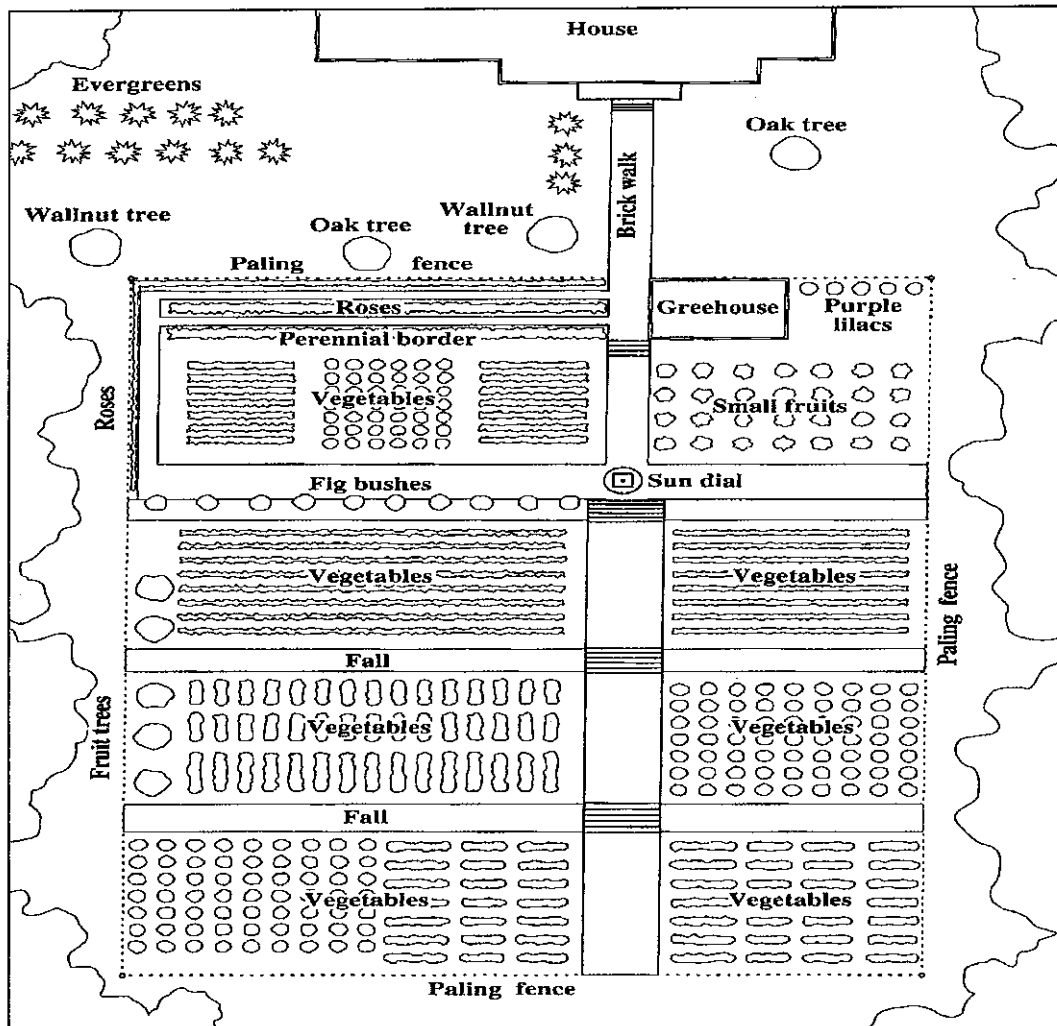
Barbara Wells Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 29.

A more detailed example of an eighteenth-century terraced or falling garden is presented in the map of Woodberry Forest, a Madison County, Virginia, estate. As

²⁶ Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening*, 29.

shown in Figure 3.4., Woodberry Forest's vegetables, fruits, and flowering plants are clearly separated into groupings of similar types. Fruit trees are identified in a separate area from oaks, walnut trees, and evergreens.

Figure 3.4: Woodberry Forest, Madison County, Virginia

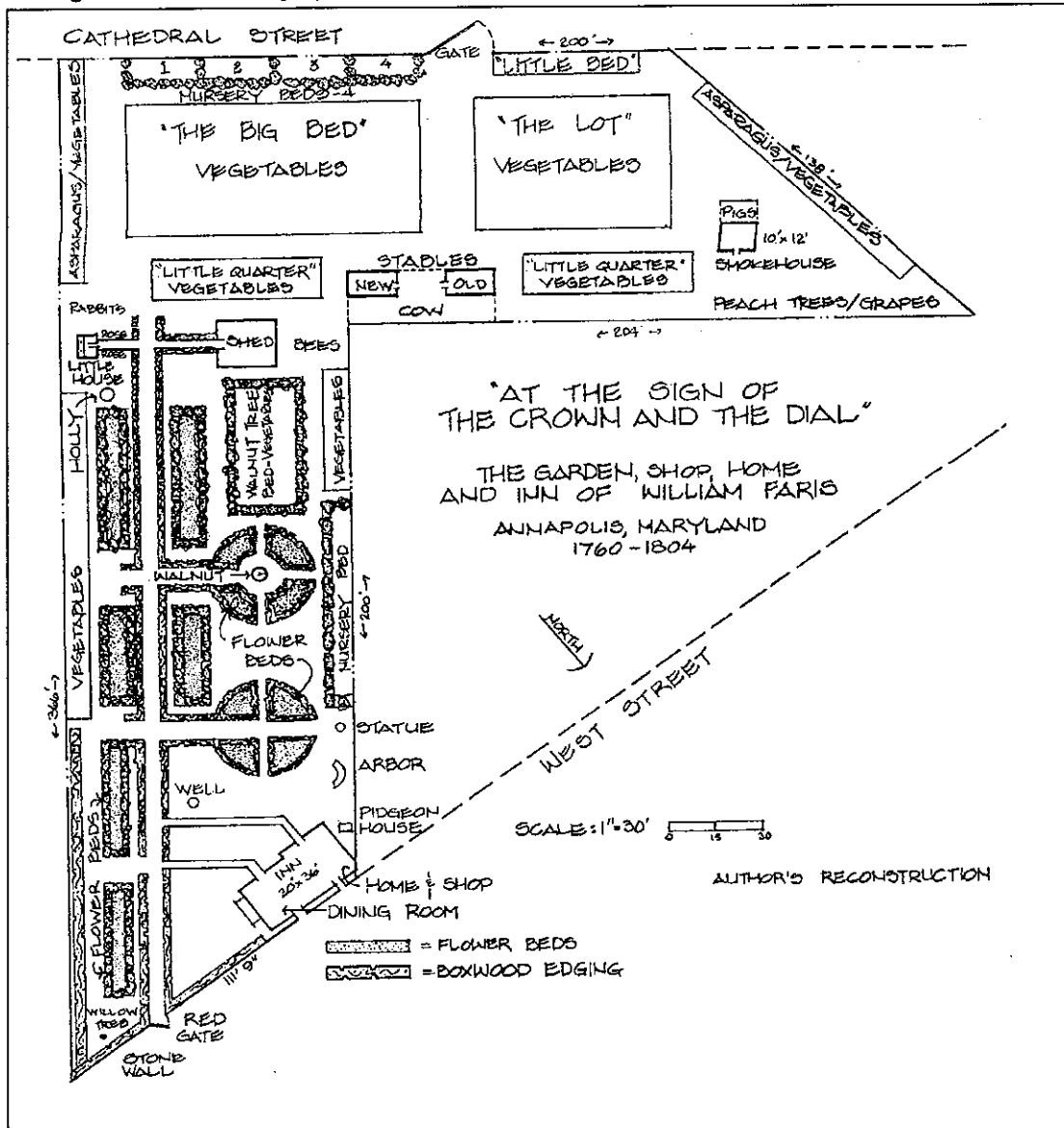


Barbara Wells Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening In the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 31, as Adapted from *Historical Gardens of Virginia* (Richmond: Garden Clubs of Virginia, 1930).

While exceptional examples of elite gardens, these professionally planned and tended gardens are not representative of the practical gardens of the ordinary eighteenth-century colonial citizen. Ordinary gardens, beneath the notice of prominent artists, architects, and

garden planners of the day, remained generally undocumented. For this reason, the diaries of William Faris of Annapolis are a treasured resource for garden historians. Faris, a silversmith, clockmaker, and innkeeper, was also a diarist and an avid gardener. Figure 3.5, a map of Faris' garden reconstructed from his diary, offers a rare look into a

Figure 3.5: Drawing by Susan Wirth reconstructed from Faris' diary, 1792-1804



Barbara Wells Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening In the Chesapeake, 1700-1805* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3-7, taken from Faris's diary, 1792-1804.

middle to late eighteenth-century working class urban garden. In spite of limited space,

Faris planned his garden himself and laid it out with the help of a hired English indentured servant in 1762. His side yard and immediate back yard, visible to patrons of his inn “At the Sign of the Crown and Dial” contained flowers and ornamentals planted in a formal style. Hidden from the sight of inn customers was an extensive vegetable garden conveniently located behind the stables. The stables screened this utilitarian section of the garden from public view and provided a ready supply of fertilizer from the horses of inn patrons, as well.²⁷

Far removed from the grandeur of large estate gardens, the Faris plot represented a sampling of middle class gardens of the early antebellum era. As represented in Figure 3.6, even this basic ornamentation and organization was unheard of in the small, stark, subsistence garden patches of poor white yeoman farmers and slaves. The fenced area

Figure 3.6: Reconstructed Slave Quarter



Patricia Gibbs, ““Little Spots allow’d them””: Slave Garden Plots and Poultry Yards,’ *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, vol.20, no.4 (1999), Colonial Williamsburg Research Division Web Site 2013.

²⁷ Sarudy, *Gardens and Gardening*, 3-7, taken from Faris’s diary, 1792-1804.

at the picture's base is an enclosed poultry yard. The garden area, enclosed within a stick fence, is in the center of the picture.²⁸

Slaves relied heavily on vegetables from their garden patches to supplement the meager ration distributions they received from their owners. The vegetables produced in slave gardens, dependent on the types of seeds the slaves could obtain, consisted of a varying mixture of Native American, European, and African produce. It was through this hodge-podge of produce from slave gardens that African food transferred into the English diet. A closer examination of the food crops transferred from Africa and the accompanying social stigma attached to African food culture is presented in Chapter 4.

²⁸ Patricia Gibbs, "‘Little Spots allow’d them’: Slave Garden Plots and Poultry Yards," *Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, vol.20, no.4 (1999), Colonial Williamsburg Research Division Web Site 2013.

Chapter 4: Out of Africa

While Native American foods were adopted into English diets from deliberate necessity, the adoption of African foods was a much slower, covert process. As the immigration of English indentured servants declined and the population of imported African slaves increased during the late seventeenth century, new foods appeared in slaveholding colonial regions. All but the poorest English colonists rejected these often strange and exotic “slave foods.”¹ It was not until African slave women emerged as household cooks for their owners that the flavors of Africa appeared on colonial tables. African-English food creolization did not come actively from the fields and gardens as did Indian food. Instead, it crept onto English tables gradually, almost unnoticed until solidly established in the diets of both rich and poor southerners.

From the moment of the first European contact through the post-revolutionary period, America experienced unprecedented cultural change. English, Native American, and African cultures contributed their own elements into a final cultural product that social scientist George Foster describes as a “conquest culture,” which he defines as “a stripping-down process in which elements of the dominant culture are modified or eliminated.”² He explains that conquest culture is not solely limited to the influence of dominant cultures upon subordinate groups. Subordinate groups usually contribute significant cultural elements during a creolization process. Such is the case with African foodways, components of which are found in all regions of America where there was a concentration of African people. Unsurprisingly, features of African foods are most

¹ Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In The Shadow Of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 139-150.

² Charles Ewen, “From Colonists to Creole: Archaeological Patterns of Spanish Colonization in the New World,” *Historical Archaeology*, vol. 34, No. 3, 2000,” 37.

profoundly evident in the plantation regions of Chesapeake and Piedmont Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and the Deep South.³

To understand the distribution of African food in America, it is necessary to examine the context of individual staple food origins. Food transfer was directly related to the staple crops of the West African regions where the slaves were captured, or from regions surrounding shipping ports that supplied provisions for slave traders.

Staple crops included rice, millet, and sorghum from the western savannah regions; yams and cowpeas from the woodland savannahs of Nigeria and the Ivory Coast; yams, okra, plantain, and pigeon peas from the coastal forestlands of Lower Guinea. Other crops, indigenous to these regions included watermelons, peanuts, benne (sesame), eggplant, taro, and kola nut.⁴

Most African foods arrived in the colonies as scant remnants of the provisions that ship captains fed their human cargo during transport. Captains supplemented maize and other grains commonly used for their own standard provisions with locally obtained native foods including yams, sorghum, millet, rice, peanuts, and cowpeas.

Cultivated and grown in West Africa since their introduction in the fifteenth century, two Amerindian foods, maize and manioc, were the staple foods for many trans-Atlantic voyages. Maize, which elite colonials already associated with low status and disenfranchised individuals, declined even further in status as a result of its role as provender in the slave trade. Carney and Rosomoff present an apt description of the declining status of maize.

It was planted to expedite and ensure delivery of slaves to New World plantation societies. In this sense, maize can be seen as a symbol of the

³ Ewen, "From Colonists to Creole," 37-38.

⁴ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 44.

dehumanizing condition of chattel slaves, who were no longer able to exercise dietary preferences or choose the type and amount of food they consumed. A serving of maize was a daily reminder that one no longer held the fundamental right to eat the food that traditionally defined membership in a culture. ...Maize emphasized a person's demotion from human being to commodity, the loss of social status and cultural identity, of being made a kinless and orphaned servant in the Atlantic world.⁵

Not all captains provisioned with maize and manioc. Some elected to provender entirely with yams, cowpeas, and other native foods. One captain remarked that maize was known for "disagreeing with their stomachs."⁶ Another captain, provisioning a slave ship along Africa's Slave Coast, blamed manioc and fava beans as culprits for African gastric distress.

A ship that takes in five hundred slaves, must provide above a hundred thousand yams; which is very difficult, because it is hard to stow them, by reason they take up so much room; and yet no less ought to be provided, the slaves there being of such a constitution, that no other food will keep them; Indian corn, [fava] beans, and Mandioca [manioc] disagreeing with their stomach; so that they sicken and die apace.⁷

According to eighteenth-century shipping records, the predominant slave population arriving in the Chesapeake region originated from the West African Igbo culture. A kinship-based society of agriculturalists, the Igbo produced yams as their staple crop.⁸ Successful yam production required a long growing season, highly fertile soil, and prolonged periods of both rainy and dry seasons.⁹ Because of these requirements, African yams did not thrive in Virginia. In 1754, Mark Catesby commented on yam production in America:

the Culture of this useful Root seems confined within the Torrid Zone, it not affecting any Country, North or South, of either Tropick; Carolina is the farthest North I have known them to grow, and there more for

⁵ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 55.

⁶ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 57.

⁷ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 68.

⁸ Patricia M. Samford, *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 32.

⁹ I. C. Onwueme, *The Tropical Tuber Crops: Yams, Cassavs, Sweet Potato, and Cocoyams* (Chichester, Eng.: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), 12-13.

Curiosity than Advantage, they increasing so little that few People think them worth propagating.¹⁰

African slaves, forced to redefine their personal and cultural identity in a strange new world, struggled to hold on to as many elements of their native culture as possible. Generally left to their own devices to supplement the meager food distributions from their masters, slaves recreated some elements of African food culture. This involved creatively intertwining available foods from their native culture with foods from the new land. Because Virginia's soil and climate was amenable to all but the most tropical of crops (as in the case of yams), the transition to American food was not as sharp for many slaves relocated to this region. Upon realizing that sweet potatoes were a comparable substitute that produced well in Virginia and adapted well to African cooking methods, the slaves adopted them as a substitute for yams. Sweet potatoes, combined with okra, watermelon, black-eyed peas, peanuts, and sesame, allowed Virginia slaves to reconstruct a diet similar to that of their native land.¹¹

Although cornmeal was often used for the same purpose, one example of sweet potatoes as a successful substitute for yams is represented in *foofoo* (or *fufu*), a West African dish originally made from yams, cassava, or plantains. To make foofoo in America, sweet potatoes were "boiled, pounded into a stiff, doughy consistency, and rolled into small balls...which were eaten with vegetables and meat...In the American

¹⁰ Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands: Containing the Figures of Birds, Beasts, Fishes, Serpents, Insects and Plants: Particularly the forest-Trees, Shrubs, and other Plants, not hitherto described, or very incorrectly figured by Authors. Together with their Descriptions in English and French. To which are added, Observations on the Air, Soil, and Waters: With Remarks upon Agriculture, Grain, Pulse, Roots, &c. To the whole is prefixed a new and correct Map of the Countries treated of. By the late Mark Catesby, F.R.S. Revised by Mr. Edwards, of the royal College of Physicians, London.* (London: printed for Charles Marsh, in Round Court in the Strand; Thomas Wilcox, over against the New Church, in the Strand; and Benjamin Stichall in Clare-Court, MDCCLIV.[1754]), vol. 1, 139.

¹¹ Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 127.

South, *foofoo* evolved in a number of ways, most recognizably as hoecakes made of cornmeal and water.”¹²

Archaeologist Patricia Samford argues that there is a strong correlation between African adoption of sweet potatoes and the use of sub-floor pits in slave dwellings. It was a common practice for African slaves in Virginia to dig storage pits in the earthen floors of their quarters. In addition to using the pits for storage of personal items, religious objects, tools, or contraband items, the pits were also widely used for food storage. Use of these pits seems to be a cultural practice limited to slaves in Virginia and the areas of later expansion from Virginia – North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. According to Samford, these pits “have not been found on slave quarters in South Carolina, Georgia, or Florida, areas whose slave trade drew upon different parts of Africa than Virginia’s trade.”¹³

Physical evidence supports Samford’s theory that subfloor pits are cultural features indigenous to slave populations from yam-producing regions of Africa. Analysis of soil samples from subfloor pits on the Virginia plantation, Utopia, reveals significantly high levels of starch and grass pollen. Starch suggests previous storage of sweet potatoes and the presence of grass pollen supports historical documentation that sweet potatoes were often wrapped in dry grasses to facilitate aeration during storage. After transport to Virginia, slaves transferred this native storage method for use in storing food and other items.¹⁴ Ethnobotanical analysis of seed remains from Virginia subfloor pits also verifies that Virginia slaves were eating essentially the same types of vegetables that they ate in Africa. These foods included beans, peas, melons, sesame, and okra (all native

¹² Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 131.

¹³ Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 9.

¹⁴ Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 130-137.

African species), and squash, corn, peanuts, and pumpkin (foods introduced to Africa during earlier European-American contact).¹⁵

Another important African staple crop transferred to the New World was rice. A different variety from the Asian rice, with which English colonials were already familiar, African rice grew well in the Carolina low country and Georgia seacoast regions. Although small quantities were documented in Virginia slave gardens as early as 1648, rice was never a primary food crop for the tobacco-producing upper south. The hub of rice production was centered around the Carolina low country and Georgia seacoast regions. Commercially produced within a few years of lower Carolina settlement, rice emerged as a supremely significant element in Colonial American food creolization, and therefore, worthy of detailed mention.¹⁶

Three primary elements regarding rice stand out. Rice was the only African food to rapidly emerge as a commercial export crop. Rice did not seem to carry the same degree of social stigma English colonials associated with other African foods. The third, and final element is the remarkable oral history, steeped in legend, of the transfer of rice to the New World.

Although later replaced by a higher-producing Asian seed rice, the original rice variety introduced to Carolina soil was African. Carolina rice cultivation began during the earliest years of colonization, when colonial settlers still relied heavily on imported food sources. Because of food scarcities, many plantation owners allowed slaves to have garden plots near their quarters to supplement ration distributions. Upon noticing rice in

¹⁵ Onwueme, *Tropical Tuber Crops*, 183; Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 127-129.

¹⁶ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 150.

slave gardens and observing African rice cultivation methods, slave owners realized the potential for rice as an export crop to West Indian sugar producing regions.¹⁷

According to the journal of Mark Catesby, the earliest known attempt at colonial rice production was made around 1688, when South Carolina governor Nathaniel Johnson planted a bushel of rice seed left over from slave ship's provisions. The time period Catesby offers is in line with an account from the colonial narrative of James Glen, an eighteenth-century governor of South Carolina. Glen writes "that Rice was generally planted in that Colony in the Year 1710, and therefore the first Planting of it must have been about the Year 1700, if not sooner."¹⁸

Although there is existing documentation that colonial planters obtained their rice seed from the leftover provisions of slave ships, there is only legend to explain how the slaves obtained rice seed for their own gardens. Several versions of the story of rice seed transference exist in slave lore. Most versions share a common thread: African rice seed was smuggled into the New World concealed in the hair of women or children. Judith Carney cites one poignant example.

An enslaved African woman, unable to prevent her children's sale into slavery, placed some rice seeds in their hair so they would be able to eat after the ship reached its destination. As their hair was very thick, she thought the grains would go undiscovered. However, the planter who bought them found the grains. In running his hands through the child's hair, he pulled out the seeds and demanded to know what they were. The child replied, "This is food from Africa." So this is the way rice came to Brazil, through the Africans, who smuggled the seeds in their hair.¹⁹

Perhaps the reason that rice does not share the same stigma that English colonials

¹⁷ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 150-153.

¹⁸ James Glen, *A Description of South Carolina, Containing Many Curious and Interesting Particulars Relating to the Civil, Natural, and Commercial History of that Colony, viz.* (London, England: R. & J. Dodsley, 1761), 104. <http://solomon.eena.alexanderstreet.com/cgi-bin/asp/philo/eena/getpart.pl?S2654-D020>. Accessed June 2, 2012; Catesby, vol.2, 254.

¹⁹ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 76.

attribute to other Native American or African crops is purely capitalist. Unlike corn, yams, cowpeas, and peanuts, rice rapidly emerged as the mainstay of the Carolina economy. In a narrative arguing that South Carolina be allowed to continue free export of rice, Governor James Glen argued: “The only Commodity of Consequence produced in South Carolina is Rice, and they reckon it as much their staple Commodity, as Sugar is to Barbadoes and Jamaica, or Tobacco to Virginia and Maryland....”²⁰ Because it was the primary source of income for Carolina planters, and thus the foundation upon which their very society was built, Carolina rice took on a respectability that other ethnic foods would not attain for generations.

Rice was also an integral part of the slave diet in rice-producing regions. Although corn was still a staple food in the diets of slaves in the Carolinas and Georgia, rice was also issued to slave populations in these regions. Records from the Cannon’s Point plantation in the Georgia Sea Islands document rice and flour distributions in addition to the weekly corn ration.²¹

On most Virginia plantations, rice, which did not grow as well in Virginia as in lower Carolina, was not a part of the usual ration distribution for slaves. In Virginia, an adult slave’s usual weekly provision consisted of a peck of cornmeal and a pound of pork. Children and slaves too old to work received smaller portions, if anything at all. On special occasions and holidays small quantities of extra items, such as coffee and molasses, were distributed. To supplement their ration distributions, most Virginia slaves were encouraged to keep their own vegetable gardens. The size and quality of slave gardens varied greatly from one region to another, according to available space and the

²⁰ James Glen, *Description of South Carolina*, 87.

²¹ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, Exp. and Rev. ed. (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 231-233.

generosity of slave owners. Some gardens were hardly more than a few straggling plants behind slave cabins, while others were as large as an acre.²² Figure 4.1. presents a recreated slave garden that displays corn, squash, beans, and cabbage, all vegetables commonly found in slave gardens as well as in upper and middle class colonial gardens.²³

Figure 4.1: African American Life/Foodways Interpreter Harold Caldwell tending Garden at Great Hopes Plantation



Harold Caldwell, "Interpreting African American Foodways (17th-18th Century)," *Afroculinaria: Exploring Culinary Traditions of Africa, African America, and the African Diaspora*, <http://aforculinaria.com/2012/08/28/from-mr-harold-caldwell-an-introduction-to-early-african-american-foodways>

Although vegetable production was generally an acceptable means of supplementing slave diets, meat production was more limited. Unlike Native Americans, who domesticated no animals other than dogs, Africans domesticated a number of animals, including poultry, sheep, and cattle. Along with slaves for sale in New World markets,

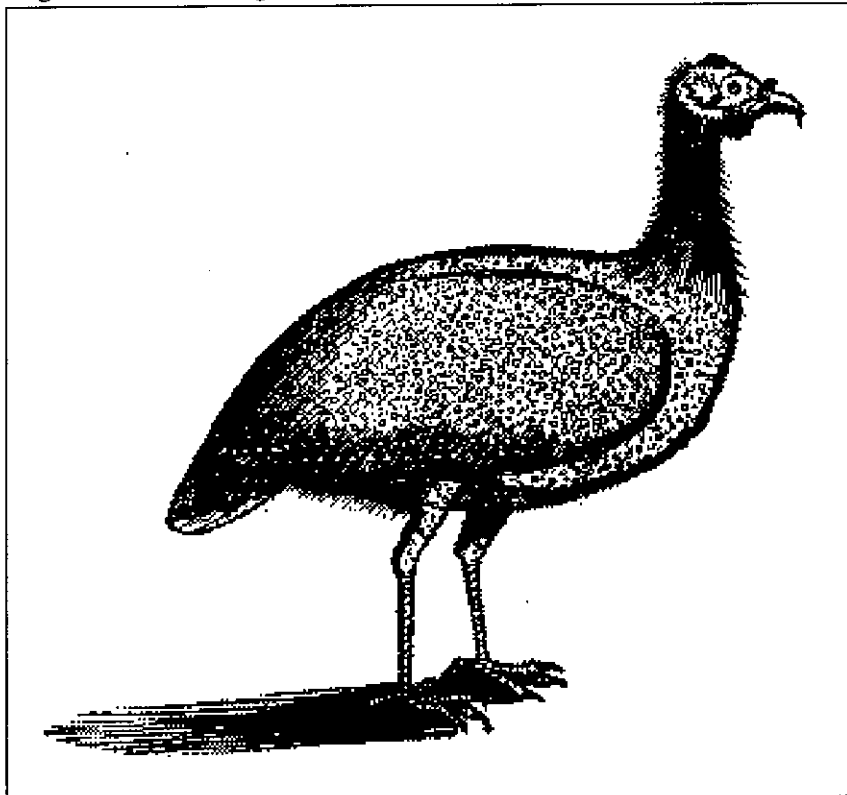
²² Jack McLaughlin, *Jefferson and Monticello: The Biography of a Builder* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988), 105.

²³ Harold Caldwell, "Interpreting African American Foodways (17th-18th Century)," *Afroculinaria: Exploring Culinary Traditions of Africa, African America, and the African Diaspora*, <http://aforculinaria.com/2012/08/28/from-mr-harold-caldwell-an-introduction-to-early-african-american-foodways> 10/20/13.

African livestock species were transported to the New World for use as food during voyages and as breeding stock for colonial farms. Meat from these animals, once a significant component of the African diet, became a rare delicacy for slaves. Even on large plantations with benevolent masters, instances of slaves allowed to keep livestock of their own was rare.

Although restricted from keeping livestock on most plantations, slaves were generally permitted to raise their own poultry. Slave quarter flocks, kept in small enclosures next to their cabins, often consisted of both domestic European chickens and African guinea fowl. Guinea fowl, as noted in Figure 4.2., are remarkably different in appearance from European chickens. Mentioned in the journals of European travelers as early as the

Figure 4.2: Drawing of an African Helmeted Guinea Fowl, ca. 1640



Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In The Shadow Of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 159.

middle sixteenth century, domestic African guinea fowl were raised and kept in large flocks throughout Western Africa. These hardy fowl, transported as slave provisions, usually traveled to the New World housed in cages lashed over the sides of the ships.²⁴

After their introduction to the New World, many plantation owners allowed slaves to raise guinea fowl for their own use. As was the case with most African foods, guinea fowl was disdained as a slave food. One source does, however, suggest that Monticello slaves prepared guinea fowl dishes for the Jefferson family table.²⁵

Other than guinea fowl and such small wild animals as they could capture or kill, slaves depended on their masters for meat distribution. The type and amount of meat rations the planters distributed varied greatly from one plantation to the next. The success of a plantation's harvest, the socioeconomic status of the planter, and the occupational hierarchy of individual slaves affected food distribution.²⁶

Thomas Jefferson's records contain a memorandum instructing his overseer on pork distribution to the slaves, ordering him to "give them half a pound a-piece once a week."²⁷ Philip Vickers Fithian, tutor to the Carter children of Virginia's Nomini Hall plantation from 1773-1774, was appalled that "excepting some favorites about the table, their weekly allowance is a peck of Corn & a pound of Meat a Head!"²⁸ Another record, from Cannon's Point plantation in the Georgia Sea Islands, documents more generous

²⁴ Carney and Rosomoff, *In The Shadow*, 157-160.

²⁵ Karen Hess, "Mr. Jefferson's Table: The Culinary Legacy of Monticello." Unpublished ms. as cited in Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 159.

²⁶ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 158-160; Frederick W. Lange and Jerome S. Handler, "The Ethnohistorical Approach to Slavery," in *The Archaeology of Slavery and Plantation Life*, ed. Theresa A. Singleton (Orlando, Fla.: Academic Press, 1985), 20.

²⁷ Diana C. Crader, "The Zooarchaeology of the Storehouse and the Dry Well at Monticello," *American Antiquity*, vol. 49, No. 3 (July, 1984), 546.

²⁸ Philip Vickers Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed. (Williamsburg, Va.: Colonial Williamsburg Incorporated, 1957), 38.

individual meat rations, averaging “slightly less than a half pound of protein-rich meat each day....”²⁹

Because distributions from their masters were meager, slaves stretched their meat rations using common food preparation methods characteristic of native West Africa. They combined the meats with starches and vegetables or simply used the meats as a flavoring in soups and stews. Analysis of material remains from slave sites substantiates these accounts of limited meat distribution and the adaptive methods slaves employed to supplement this deficiency.

The typology of ceramic remains recovered from slave sites not only supports the theory that slaves subsisted on pottage-type diets, it also reveals regional variations in cultural exchange between slaves and their masters. Archaeologist James Deetz has extensively studied the typology and distribution of colono ware, a primitive but distinctive African pottery type largely produced in the late eighteenth century. Colono ware is “found in every state along the eastern seaboard from Maryland to Georgia, precisely... where plantation slavery had been established.”³⁰ Colono ware container fragments found in Virginia consist of pipkins, bowls, teapots, and pans styled similar to the English-made ceramics used in slaveowner households, while South Carolina colono ware recovery consists of simpler jars and bowls very similar to the native pottery produced in the Ghana region of Africa.³¹ Deetz suggests the regional style differences resulted from the amount of day-to-day household contact slaves experienced. Because South Carolina slaves had less contact with their English slave owner’s household than

²⁹ Deetz, *Small Things*, 233.

³⁰ Deetz, *Small Things*, 236-238.

³¹ Deetz, *Small Things*, 236-238, 242.

did the Virginia slaves, they did not attempt to create European styled pottery. Based on his research findings, Deetz argues that that South Carolina slave foodways were more ethnically pure than those of Virginia slaves.

Basic to West African foodways, both now and in the past, was a meal consisting of two parts. Large jars are used to cook one of a number of starchy carbohydrates, such as rice, manioc, or corn. Smaller jars serve as containers in which to stew a mix of vegetables, meats, and various spices. The meal is served by placing the carbohydrate in a shallow bowl, ladling the vegetable and meat mixture over it, and consuming it with the fingers. We need only to think of gumbo, an American dish with clear African roots, including its name, to visualize better what such a meal would be like.... Even okra, the thickening agent for gumbo, is of African origin. In eighteenth-century South Carolina, this foodways pattern survived almost unchanged from what it had been in the African homeland, largely free of the external influences that were present in earlier Virginia.³²

Another element of material evidence suggesting the dietary practices of slaves comes from faunal analysis, the examination and comparison of bone remnants recovered from slave and non-slave sites. One example of faunal analysis of an eighteenth-century site is that of Archaeologist William Kelso's 1981 excavations at Monticello. Kelso's team excavated two sites on the grounds of Monticello, a storehouse and a dry well. Analysis of the faunal remains from the two sites reveals that the storehouse had at one time been used to house slaves. The dry well, a food storage area for the white inhabitants of the main house, and later, a disposal area for food remains, contained markedly different faunal remains from the slave habitation. Most larger bones excavated from slave sites were chopped into pieces, a practice consistent with use of meats in soups and stews. This cooking method allowed the cook to engage in other domestic activities while food slowly simmered, "requiring less work than roasted meat dishes."³³ The

³² Deetz, *Small Things*, 243-243.

³³ Patricia Samford, "The Archaeology of African-American Slavery and Material Culture," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, from *Material Culture in Early America*, Third Series vol. 53, No. 1, (Jan., 1996), 96; Samford, *Subfloor Pits*, 101; Crader, "The Zooarchaeology," 548; Deetz, *Small Things*, 234.

absence of charred bone at known slave sites further supports the idea that slaves consumed meat primarily as an ingredient in soups and stews. Charring results when bone is in direct contact with fire, most often as a result of roasting. Charred bone is seldom recovered from slave sites because slaves rarely received cuts of domestic meat large enough to roast. Charred bone fragments recovered from the dry well were accompanied by sheep bones. The sheep bones further suggest that the dry well is a non-slave site because slaves rarely ate mutton.³⁴

The presence of more unidentifiable bones at the storehouse than the dry well are indicative that the slaves were hunting, trapping wild animals, and fishing to supplement their meat rations. Fish hooks, gun flints, metal gun parts, lead shot, and other artifacts associated with hunting, trapping, and fishing are commonly recovered from most known slave sites. Historical records have also recorded that such activities were allowed and, perhaps, even encouraged to supplement plantation ration distributions.³⁵

Slave fondness for soups and stews is also reflected in recipes and dishes that appeared in historical records and cookbooks as slave cooks moved into plantation kitchens to cook for their white masters. Besides the familiar gumbos and jambalayas associated with the Lower South, there is a well-known African dish that many people mistakenly believe to be of English origin. Virginia stew, more commonly known as Brunswick stew because of claims the dish originated in Brunswick County, Virginia, is a slave creation. Although there is an ongoing argument from Georgians that the stew originated there, Virginians insist that the stew was the creation of a local slave. According to Virginia legend, Jimmy Matthews, a slave cook, created the dish in 1828

³⁴ Crader, "*The Zooarchaeology*," 548.

³⁵ Samford, "*The Archaeology of African-American Slavery*," 96.

while cooking for a hunting expedition.³⁶

Regardless of whether the stew originated in Virginia or Georgia, multiple variations for the dish are listed in nineteenth-century cookbooks. The list of ingredients for many of these recipes offers squirrels as a suitable substitute for chicken. This substitution suggests slavery origins for the dish, as nineteenth-century slaves were known for eating squirrels whenever they could catch one. Squirrels, somewhat tough unless stewed for long periods, were one of the wild foods that whites ate less frequently as domestic animal production in the colonies increased.³⁷

Brunswick stew, gumbo, jambalaya, rice, okra, sesame, black-eyed peas, and watermelon are not the only foods Americans enjoy today that are African in origin. Peanuts, transported to Africa from Brazil on Portuguese ships in the sixteenth century, are another food that African slaves introduced into the southern colonies. Considered another “slave food” by early planters, peanuts, also called pindars, goobers, or goober peas, were used to feed both slaves and livestock. It was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that whites realized that the peanuts growing in slave gardens had potential as a marketable food crop.³⁸

Whites initially shunned African foods, thinking them inferior to English foods, while they grudgingly accepted the corn, squash, and beans of Native America. This culinary

³⁶ Herbert Covey and Dwight Eisenach, *What the Slaves Ate: Recollections of African American Foods and Foodways from the Slave Narratives* (Santa Barbara, Ca.: Greenwood Press, 2009), 103; Mark H. Zanger, *The American History Cookbook: Cookbooks for Students* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003); and Home Cookin’: They’ve Gotten Themselves Into A Fine Stew In Brunswick” *Richmond Times Dispatch* (Virginia) November 7, 2004.

³⁷ Marion Cabell Tyree, ed., *Housekeeping In Old Virginia: Containing Contributions From Two Hundred And Fifty Ladies In Virginia And Her Sister States, Distinguished For Their Skill In the Art And Other Branches Of Domestic Economy* (Louisville, KY.: John P. Morton & Co., 1878), 211-214; Sarah Elliott, *Mrs. Elliott’s Housewife: Containing Practical Receipts in Cookery: By Mrs. Sarah A. Elliott, Oxford, N.C.* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1870), 76.

³⁸ Carney and Rosomoff, *In the Shadow*, 140-144.

segregation existed for generations as whites continued to hold themselves apart from their slaves. This racially misguided mindset changed slowly and silently as African cooks infiltrated the kitchens of elite southern colonists. While setting the master's table, the cooks of Africa set the very cornerstones for southern culinary heritage. How ironic that African foods, scorned above all others, eventually emerged as the food culture internationally synonymous with the American South.

Chapter 5: Pork and Pone

The strong sense of social superiority that elite-minded English colonists held on to during the first two centuries of New World settlement fostered an avoidance of certain foods associated with lower classes. Because they also controlled the profit-driven economy of the Upper South, elites subjected lower class members to varying degrees of economic dependency for goods and services, thus limiting lower class access to both food choice and food availability. Holding sway over the lower classes, the elites used this socio-economic control to determine which foods were appropriate for themselves and which foods were handed down to their “social inferiors.”

The growing middle class, particularly the most avid social-climbers, were even more class-conscious of the social implications of food than were the elites. Upwardly motivated middle class members embraced rich and luxurious foods as visible symbols of their rising social status. Many middle class families, afraid of any type of public scrutiny that would impede their social progress, continued to avoid common dishes long after they were served on upper class tables.¹

One of the most commonly documented examples of food-related social stigma is that of the status of wheat versus corn. Although everyone in Virginia ate corn, wheat was the widely-recognized symbolic grain of upper class dining. Wheat bread was so strong an indicator of status that two wealthy colonials, William Byrd and Robert Beverly, both felt it worthy of mention in their journals. Byrd recalls the indignation of a traveling journeyman who expected better refreshment than he was offered during a stop at Byrd’s Westover plantation. Byrd’s journal entry noted “the Boatwright was affronted that I

¹ Karen Hess, *The Carolina Rice Kitchen: The African Connection* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 103.

gave him pone instead of English bread for breakfast and took his horse and rode away without saying anything....”² Although Byrd did not elaborate further on the incident, Beverly was more descriptive in his 1705 reference to the class distinctions related to wheat bread and corn.

The Bread in Gentlemen’s Houses is generally made of Wheat, but Some rather choose the Pone, which is the Bread made of *Indian* Meal. Many of the poorer sort of People so little regard the *English* Grain, that...their constant Bread is Pone, not so called from the Latine, *Panis*, but from the *Indian* Name *Oppone*.³

Beverly’s clarification as to the origin of the word “pone” directs readers to understand that the pone eaten from poorer hearths is of a common sort, of Indian origin, not to be confused with traditional European wheat bread.

Another example of the colonial class delineation between corn and wheat comes from the journals of an Annapolis physician, Dr. Alexander Hamilton. Dr. Hamilton was a member of the Tuesday Club, an eighteenth-century elite to upper middle class men’s club centered primarily around discussion of political and philosophical topics. The club members established strict rules regarding the refreshments served during club meetings. Each member, hosting the meeting in turn, was expected to provide one (and only one), appropriate food for refreshment of the others (in addition to the unlimited alcohol served). The food served was expected to represent a middling status in order to avoid ostentatious competition. This expectation was important enough that controversy over the status of food items served at the meetings was common. The members argued that a dish of hominy (a simple corn preparation), was too simple, while a lavishly iced cake

² William Byrd, *The Great American Gentleman William Byrd Of Westover In Virginia: His Secret Diary For The Years 1709-1712*, Louis B Wright and Marion Tinling, eds. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963), 132; William Byrd, *A Journey to the Land of Eden*, 19-20.

³ Robert Beverly, *The History And Present State of Virginia*, Louis B. Wright, ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947), 292. Book IV, Part II.

(of wheat flour) was too rich. Their insistence that corn was too simple and cake was too rich for the middling requirement reinforces the influence of food as a social instrument during the colonial period.⁴

Although elites generally kept hams and finer cuts for themselves, pork represents another example of a food that colonials associated with lower classes. As the most common domestic meat available during the colonial period, pork was the dietary mainstay of the poor white southern diet. While elite and middle class Virginians enjoyed the finest cuts of pork, they usually discarded the lesser cuts. Virginians called these inferior cuts “pluck,” and considered them only suitable for slaves. Poor whites, economically hardly better off than slaves, also relied on pluck as a primary meat source. Most often coming from the slaughter of adult hogs, pluck consisted primarily of hearts, livers, lungs, intestines, feet, snouts, and the excessively fatty cuts rejected by elite Virginians.⁵

For wealthy and poor alike, pork was advantageous as a staple food because it was easily preserved for use at a later date. Hams, sausages, bacon, and pluck were cured through a combination of salting and smoking in processes that varied but little from the colonial period to the mid-twentieth century. Pork prepared for smoking was first rubbed in salt and then stacked in a cool building, packed in crocks of salt, or submerged in barrels of salty water where it remained for a period of several days to several weeks. The salt caused the excess moisture in the meat to seep out, thereby reducing the rate of spoilage through dehydration of the meat. After the salting period, the meat was removed from its packing and hung to cure over a smoke source where it was generally left

⁴ Eden, *The Early American Table*, 133-143.

⁵ Covey and Eisanach, *What The Slaves Ate*, 97

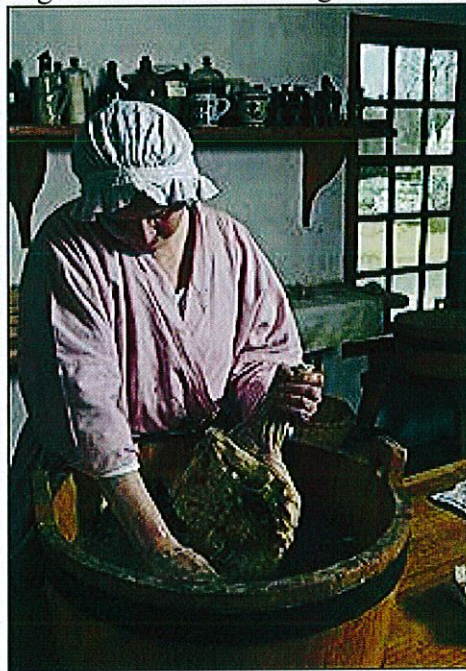
indefinitely for convenient storage.⁶

A mid-eighteenth-century slave account of the salting and smoking process for pork describes the methods used on a Louisiana plantation.

On a cold morning, generally about New Year's day, they are slaughtered. Each carcass is cut into six parts, and piled one above the other in salt, upon large tables in the smoke-house. In this condition it remains a fortnight, when it is hung up, and a fire built, and continued more than half the time during the remainder of the year. This thorough smoking is necessary to prevent the bacon from becoming infested with worms.⁷

Variations in the non-commercial home processes involved in salting and smoking pork have changed but little over the centuries. Parts of these processes are demonstrated in Figures 5.1 and 5.2, photos from Colonial Williamsburg's living history programs.

Figure 5.1: Salting hams before smoking at Colonial Williamsburg



Michael Olmert, "Smokehouses," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Winter 2004-2005,4, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter04-05/smoke.cfm> accessed 10-19-12.

Although the smoking of large quantities of meat was almost exclusively done in

⁶ Michael Olmert, "Smokehouses," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Winter 2004-2005,4, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter04-05/smoke.cfm> accessed 10-19-12.

⁷ Yuval Taylor, ed., *I Was Born A Slave: An Anthology of Classic Slave Narratives* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999) vol. 2, 1849-1866, 240.

Figure 5.2: Hams hanging in a smokehouse, Colonial Williamsburg



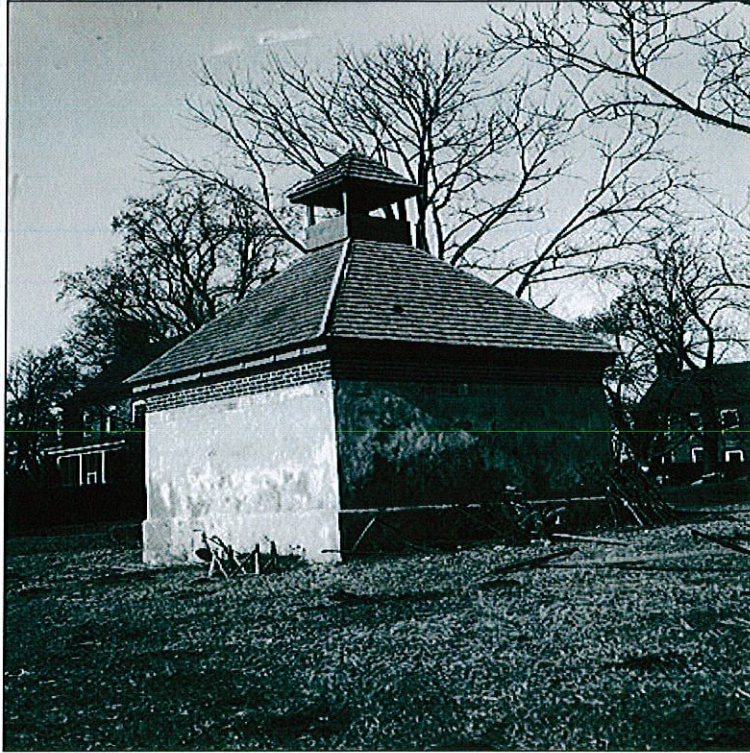
Michael Olmert, "Smokehouses," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Winter 2004-2005,6, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter04-05/smoke.cfm> accessed 10-19-12.

specially built structures called smokehouses, colonials often smoked small quantities of meat simply by hanging it in or near the hearth space of a chimney, as illustrated in Lewis Miller's drawing of the sausages and bologna in the Pennsylvania inn's kitchen (Chapter 2, Figure 2.3). Essential elements in the struggle for survival from the Medieval European period onward, smokehouses were part of the collection of outbuildings accompanying most colonial homes and settlements. Although no known smokehouse site has been discovered in Jamestown, archaeological discoveries in Colonial Williamsburg have identified the foundation remnants of fifty outbuildings believed to be smokehouses in addition to twelve original smokehouses still in existence.⁸

Smokehouses were constructed of a variety of materials, including stone, log, brick, stucco, clapboard, or any combination of these materials, as shown in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

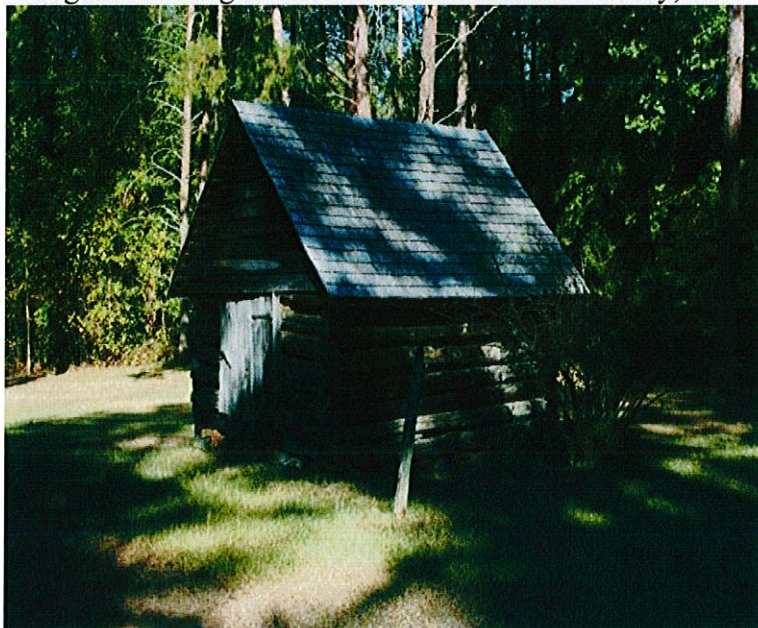
⁸ Olmert, "Smokehouses," 2-3.

Figure 5.3: Stucco over brick smokehouse at Shirley Plantation



Michael Olmert, "Smokehouses," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Winter 2004-2005, 7, <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter04-05/smoke.cfm> accessed 10-19-12.

Figure 5.4: Log Smokehouse in Alamance County, NC



Learn NC, Smokehouse at Allen House, Alamance County (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press), <http://www.learnnc.org>, accessed 10/21/12.

Smokehouses belonging to wealthier households were usually framed and covered with

sawn weatherboards or stucco, or built of brick, as in the example from Shirley Plantation. The smokehouses of poorer homesteads were made of logs or rough-hewn clapboards, as shown in the reconstructed example from an Alamance County, North Carolina farmstead.

In addition to hams, other parts of the hog that elite colonials valued were bacon (also called gammon), and smaller lean cuts for grinding into sausage. Bacon, during the early colonial era was a term describing a chunk of pork in general, not the thin sliced, smoked strips of pork packaged in the twentieth century. Link sausage was generally air dried or smoked, while loose sausage was eaten immediately. Elite colonial recipe variations often call for the addition of beef suet or butter to the lean pork ground into sausage instead of pork fat, although pork fat is listed in other sausage recipe variations from the same period.⁹

Souse, a spicy pickled dish prepared from the gristly parts of domestic animals, is still considered a delicacy in many regions of the world. Although modern-day souse is primarily a pork product, colonial cookbooks included recipes for souse made from beef, veal, and pike in addition to pork. A pork souse recipe from *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* instructs cooks to: scald and debone an entire small pig, cut it in two or three pieces and collar it (roll it into rolls), boil until tender, place into a clean pot, and cover with a spiced wine and vinegar brine. If kept cool, this method of sousing would keep the meat up to ten days.¹⁰

Preparation methods vary regionally and change over time, but the end product of the dish is essentially the same. One modern-day version of pork souse (handed down

⁹ Karen Hess, *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery*, 62-65.

¹⁰ Karen Hess, ed., *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery*, 72-73.

through this author's family), does not use an entire pig, as did Martha's recipe. The primary ingredient in this recipe comes from the heads of adult hogs. The hog heads are washed and then boiled to remove the meat and gristle from the bones. The meat and gristle are chopped, brined with vinegar and spices, and then pressed into loaves to pickle. After a few days the souse loaves are turned out of the pans, wrapped, refrigerated, and sliced as needed (see Figure 5.5). A slice from one of these loaves, often called headcheese, is especially tasty when sprinkled with vinegar (this author prefers it accompanied with saltine crackers).

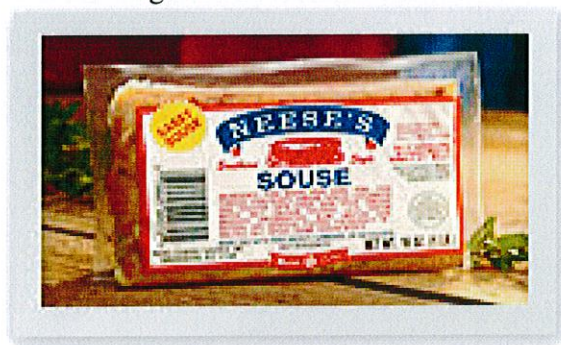
Figure 5.5: Sections of a pressed souse loaf



“Don't Be Woeful About Offal” <http://woefuloffal.wordpress.com/> accessed October 28, 2012.

Like the author's family recipe, commercially marketed souse (Figure 5.6) is often prepared from recipes handed down through generations of family-owned companies.

Figure 5.6: Neese's Souse



SOUSE

<http://www.neesesausage.com/about/companyhistory>, accessed October 28, 2012

The Neese Company prepares, markets, and distributes sausage, souse, and other pork Products throughout Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina using recipes handed down through generations of the Neese family.¹¹

In addition to souse, poorer classes relied on the fatty cuts of pork the elite Virginians rejected. Large fatty cuts with thin ribbons of lean meat throughout were packed in salt or smoked to preserve them. Small blocks of these cuts, called middling meat, were boiled with greens or beans, or sliced into thin strips, fried, and eaten alone or with eggs, biscuits (when available), or cornbread. These fatty meats were called fatback, rib side, sowbelly, bacon, or gammon in accordance with which part of the hog they were taken from.

The fattiest chunks were melted down until the grease, called lard, separated from the meat and skin. The lard was poured away, strained, and saved in crocks or barrels for use as cooking oil and lubricants. Antique lard containers, such as the examples shown in Figures 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9., are popular items in modern collectible markets. After the

Figure 5.7: Early Nineteenth-Century redware lard crock



http://www.osv.org/collestions/collection_viewer.php?N=87.1.2, accessed October 19, 2012

¹¹ <http://www.neesesausage.com/about/companyhistory>, accessed October 28, 2012

Figure 5. 8: Nineteenth-Century stoneware lard crock



<http://www.ebay.com/itm/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=310455429897&item=310...> Offered by De Young Depot Antiques, Greencastle, PA, accessed October 25, 2012

Figure 5. 9: Late Nineteenth-Century cedar lard barrel



<http://www.archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/cookbooks/museum%20images%20for%20cookbooks/> accessed October 28, 2012.

free-flowing liquid lard was strained away, the remaining membranous material and skin were either pressed to express any leftover grease or simply turned out onto cloths to drain and dry. These crispy remnants, known as cracklings, are flavorful delicacies when eaten alone, accompanied by a hot baked sweet potato, or crumbled and added to gravies

or baked cornbread.

As was the case with corn, pork dishes were such a common food on early southeastern frontier tables that elite travelers often complained about its persistent presence. William Byrd II, while on a surveying expedition to define the line between Virginia and the North Carolina frontier, complained:

...Pork, which is the Staple Commodity of North Carolina, & which with Pitch & Tar makes up the whole of their Traffick. The Truth of it is, these People live so upon Swine's flesh, that it don't only encline them to the Yaws, & consequently to the downfall of their Noses, but makes them likewise extremely hoggish in their Temper, & many of them seem to Grunt rather than Speak in their ordinary conversation.¹²

The extreme pork consumption Byrd complained of in the eighteenth-century South changed very little over the next hundred years. Frederick Law Olmstead's detailed descriptions of mid-nineteenth century slave rations and the fare he himself ate in poor white homes presents stark similarities between the food of poor whites and that of slaves.

In a journal entry entitled "A Night with a Poor White," Olmstead stopped for overnight accommodations at "one of the commonest sort of cabins" but because he noticed the household possessed a horse and wagon he was reassured "that the family were by no means of the lowest class."¹³ Upon entering the one-roomed, windowless cabin after receiving permission for an overnight stay from the man of the house, Olmstead observed the preparation of his meager supper.

A little girl immediately, without having had any directions to do so,

¹² William Byrd, *William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina, 1674-1744*, with Introduction and Notes By William K. Boyd, PH.D., Professor of History, Duke University (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Company, 1929), 54-56.

¹³ Frederick Law Olmstead, *A Journey in the Back Country In the Winter of 1853-4* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1907), vol.1, 219.

got a frying-pan and a chunk of bacon from the cupboard, and cutting slices from the latter, set it frying for my supper. The woman of the house sat sulkily in a chair tilted back and leaning against the logs, spitting occasionally at the fire, but took no notice of me, barely nodding when I saluted her. A baby lay crying on the floor. I quieted it, and amused it with my watch till the little girl, having made "coffee" and put a piece of corn-bread on the table with the bacon, took charge of it.¹⁴

During a conversation with the farmer over a breakfast Olmstead described as "of exactly the same materials as my supper," he inquired as to the demography of the labor force of the region.¹⁵ The farmer reported that the region's plantations used a slave workforce, but the recent railroad construction project had relied on imported Irish workers for labor. The workers were provided with tents to sleep in and given bacon and meal for rations. Olmstead noted the remarkable similarity in the diets of white laborers and slaves in the region when his host reported that local slave rations were "'A peck of meal and three pound of bacon is what they call 'lowance, in general, I believe.'"¹⁶

Like slaves, subsistence patterns for most poor whites necessitated foraging, hunting, fishing, and often, stealing to supplement their ever-present diet of meal and bacon. These activities usually placed them in competition with local slaves struggling to supplement their own food supplies. This competition fostered resentment on the part of the slaves, many of whom considered poor whites beneath themselves in status. Former slave Henry Bibb expressed his disdain for the behavior of the poor whites near his Kentucky master's plantation.

The poor and loafing class of whites, are about on a par in point of morals with the slaves at the South. They are generally ignorant, intemperate, licentious, and profane. They associate much with the slaves; are often found gambling together on the Sabbath; encouraging

¹⁴ Olmstead, *A Journey in the Back Country*, 219.

¹⁵ Olmstead, *A Journey in the Back Country*, 223-227.

¹⁶ Olmstead, *A Journey to the Back Country*, 224. Note: When Olmstead left the farmer's house to continue his travels he was given a lunch of bacon and corn-bread to carry with him.

slaves to steal from their owners, and sell to them, corn, wheat, sheep, chickens, or anything of the kind which they can well conceal.¹⁷

Slaves from wealthier plantations, in particular, looked down on and often would openly belittle poor whites. A WPA narrative from former slave Georgia Smith describes an experience with poor whites while picking peas on her master's plantation. Although her commentary is recorded in the twentieth century, her memory reveals a slave's pre-war perceptions and subsequent treatment of local poor whites.

Us chillums had to pick peas; two baskets full 'fo dinner an' two 'fo' night, an' dey was big baskets too. I member dere was a white widow 'oman what lived near our place, an' she had two boys. Mistus let dem boys pick 'em some peas w'en us would be pickin', an' us would run 'em off, cause us didn' lak' po' white trash. But Mistus made us let 'em pick all dey wannid.¹⁸

Another account of a slave expressing disgust at the behaviors of poor whites comes from the record of a conversation between northern traveler Edmund Kirke and his hired slave guide, Seip. Appalled at the living conditions of poor whites he observed in South Carolina, Kirke was further horrified at Seip's revelations regarding the poor white habit of eating clay.

Dey'm all 'like—pore and no account; none ob 'em kin read, and dey all eat clay....Didn't you see, massa, how yaller all dem wimmin war? Dat's cause dey eat clay. De little children begin 'fore dey kin walk, and dey eat till dey die; dey chew it like'backer....dey'm pore trash. Dat's what de big folks call 'em, and it amtrue; dey'm long way lower down dan de darkies.¹⁹

European visitors to the Chesapeake region also remarked upon the social and behavioral differences of poor whites. During a trip in the South after the Revolutionary War, European architect Benjamin Latrobe noted the appearance and activities of poor whites. In contrast to Seip, however, Latrobe attributed their homeliness to the hot

¹⁷ Yuval Taylor, ed., *I Was Born A Slave*, 17.

¹⁸ Covey and Eisnach, *What The Slaves Ate*, 86.

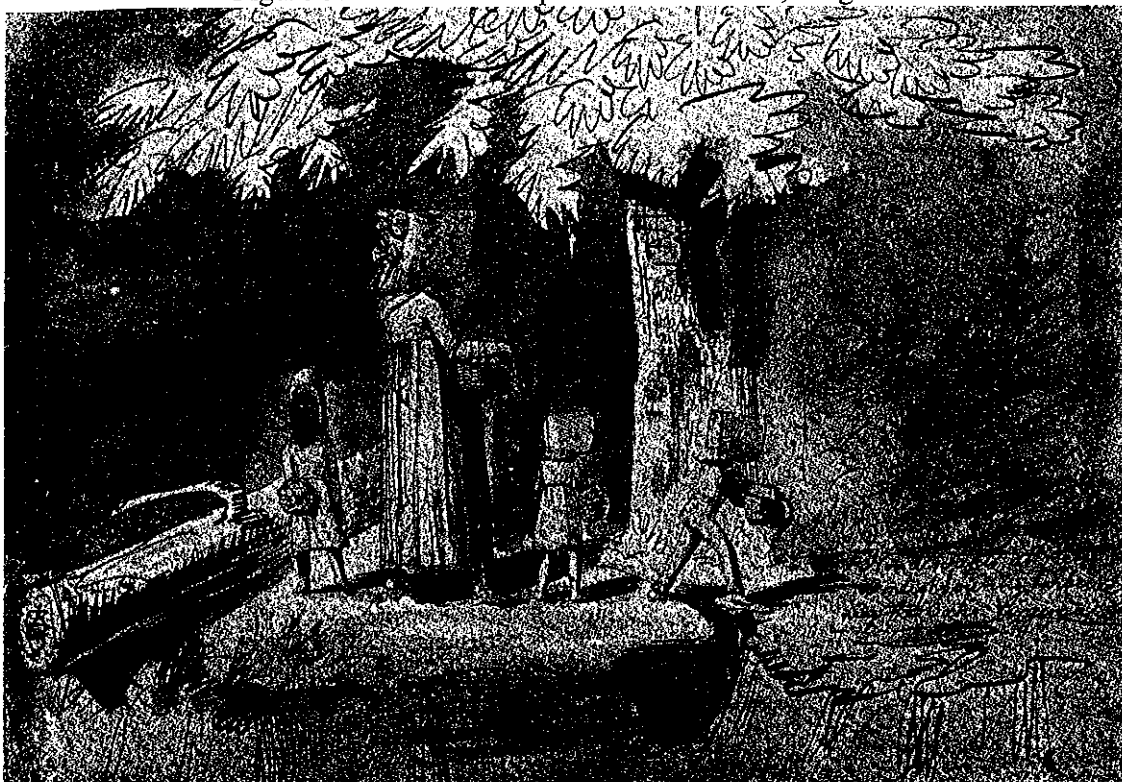
¹⁹ Edmund Kirke, *Among the Pines, or, South in Secession-Time* (New York: J. R. Gilmore, 1802), 82-83.

Virginia sun and their general state of health rather than to their dietary habits.

The common people in the lower parts of Virginia have very sallow complexions, owing to the burning rays of the sun in summer, and the bilious complaints to which they are subject to in the fall of the year. The women are far from being comely, and the dresses, which they wear out of doors to guard them from the sun, make them appear still more ugly than nature has formed them.²⁰

His comments accompany his undated pen and ink sketch (Figure 5.10), entitled “A family of poor White children observed from the Stage carrying peaches to a neighboring Barbecue for Sale.”²¹

Figure 5.10: “Nondescripts...near the Oaks, Virginia”



Benjamin H. Latrobe, “Nondescripts...near the Oaks, Virginia”, from sketchbook II, Edward C. Carter, et.al. *Latrobe's View of America, 1795-1820: Selections from the Watercolors and Sketches* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 78.

In the sketch, the entire family, including the adult female, is barefooted and wearing

²⁰ Edward C. Carter II, John C. Van Horne, and Charles E. Brownell, eds., *Latrobe's View of America, 1795-1820: Selections from the Watercolors and Sketches* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 78-79.

²¹ Benjamin H. Latrobe, “Nondescripts...near the Oaks, Virginia”, from sketchbook II, Edward C. Carter, et.al. *Latrobe's View of America, 1795-1820: Selections from the Watercolors and Sketches* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 78.

ragged, poor quality, homemade clothing. They are all wearing bonnets, including one figure that is obviously a male child. All of them are also carrying baskets, presumably holding the peaches that Latrobe has informed viewers that the family intends to sell at a barbecue.

Latrobe's sketch offers a valuable first-hand look into subsistence behaviors of lower class eighteenth-century citizens. Latrobe's referral to the family as "nondescripts" represents a contemporary elitist perspective regarding the economically less fortunate. To this modern observer, however, the overall picture poignantly portrays a family of poor, insignificant commoners, peddling food they could probably ill afford to part with.

Members of the Virginia upper class, so comfortable with the social and economic divide between themselves and lower class whites, were unwitting contributors to the slow demise of their own food culture. The cherished exclusivity of upper class foodways served as an instrument to push the subsistence patterns of lower classes ever closer to African hearths. As time progressed, the food cultures of African and lower class whites actively merged until the differences between the two foodways were almost indistinguishable.

The dietary exclusivity upper class members enjoyed did not protect English food culture from the eventual infiltration of African elements. This infiltration occurred covertly via the installation of African cooks in upper class kitchens. Although African foods surely appeared on elite southern tables for decades before they appeared in print, these appearances are not only unnoted in early published sources, they are outright denied well into the nineteenth century.

The earliest published mention of African foods appears in 1824.²² *The Virginia House-Wife* (as the first edition was titled), denies credit to the African origin of okra when it is referred to as a “West India dish” rather than an African one.²³ The omission of credit, whether by the author herself or at the insistence of her publisher, is representative of continued elite disdain for anything associated with lower classes. This nineteenth-century refusal of educated, elite whites to properly credit the known origins of certain foods represents lingering traces of the humoral ideas that seventeenth-century English colonists clung to after the passage to America. The obvious disdain for common food and the people who ate these foods, whether out of economic necessity or personal preference, was an ongoing elitist social prejudice that hyprocrisized elite southern dining, and stigmatized the very core of southern culture.

²² Janice Bluestein Longone, in *The Virginia Housewife, Or, Methodical Cook: A Facsimile of an Authentic Early American Cookbook*, by Mary Randolph (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.1993), reprint of Philadelphia: E. H. Butler and Co., 1860, introduction.

²³ Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife*, 4, 81.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Although the European concept of humoral theories dissolved over time, the correlation between food and social status rode the social undercurrent of American culture from its lonely beginnings on cold Virginia sands to the chaos of the Reconstruction era. Two elite social ideals profoundly affected interactions between the English settlers and the other cultures they encountered in the New World. These ideals, the strong sense of English social exclusivity and the accompanying English expectations regarding the division of labor, isolated the elite settlers from the formative structure of foodway creolization in the New World.

As both the geography and demography of the colonies expanded, the establishment of rudimentary taverns, inns, and ordinaries and later, urban restaurants and European-styled cookhouses drew people together in the public sphere. Owners, employees, and patrons of these public houses and shops experienced intercultural exchanges that included mingling foods and food preparation methods from multiple cultures. These cultural exchanges permanently altered the foundations of English foodways in America, especially for the laboring classes.

Agricultural practices strongly affected food culture in America, particularly in the coastal regions of the Upper South. Although they rejected nearly all other aspects of Native American culture, early English colonial subsistence gardeners readily intermingled Native American food crops with their transplanted European vegetables and fruits. As commercial production in tobacco and rice producing regions increased and fortunate landowners evolved into wealthy plantation owners, their vegetable gardens were pushed to less prominent locations in favor of European-styled formal gardens with

lawns, hedges and flowers. The fancy gardens were not, however, the most profound agricultural change the new-found prosperity brought about. Spurred on by the increased demand for expansion of commercial farm production, labor sources shifted from indentured servitude to chattel slavery. As African slaves were imported to work the fields, African foods were introduced to the Upper South and surrounding areas.

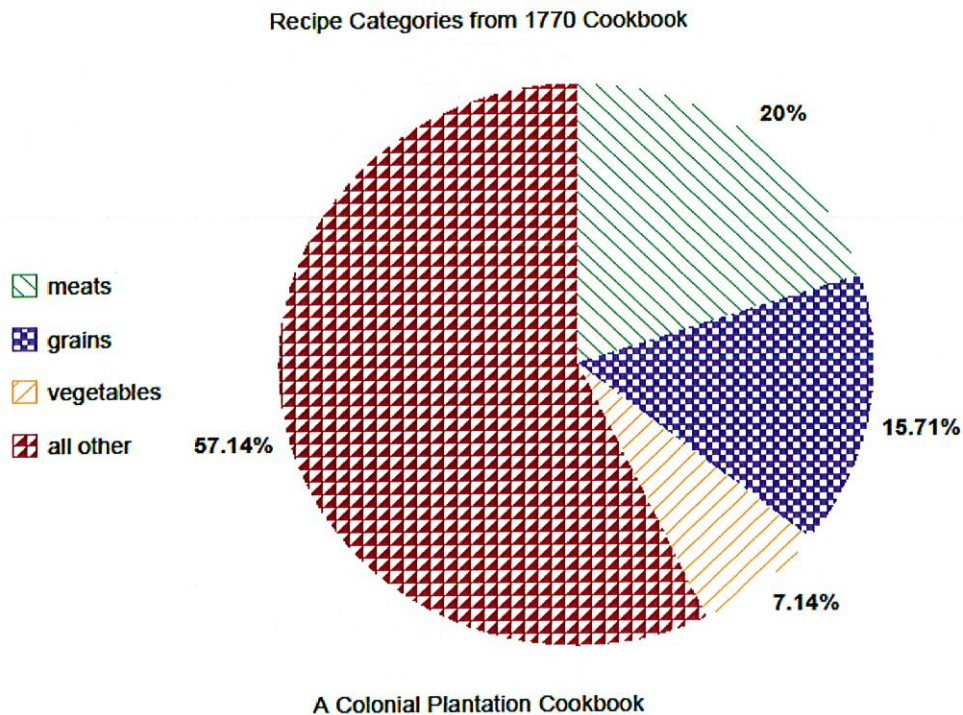
Elite colonists immediately rejected African foods as inferior; refusing to incorporate slave foods into their diets. Two primary mechanisms were involved in the transference of African food elements into the American diet. Lower class whites, particularly poor farmers and laborers, existing on similar pottage-type diets themselves, were less resistant to openly adopting African foods. The second, far more subtle mechanism, was a gradual change over decades as slave women introduced African flavors while preparing food for their master's tables.

Certain food elements, corn and pork, in particular, stand out as representatives in the correlation between food and social status. As the decades passed, this disdain for 'slave food' and "poor white food" expressed in the journals of elite individuals of past eras no longer held true. As cultural food prejudices faded, Southern American food moved away from its English roots, evolving into a predominately African food pattern.

Although the sample size is small, examination of receipts from four eighteenth and nineteenth-century cookbooks exhibit the changes in food origins from the Pre-Revolutionary period to the Reconstruction years. As the cookbook publication dates progress from late eighteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, vegetable recipes represent the most notable change food preference. Charts 1 and 2 on the following pages present the results of the examination of the cookbooks.

The four diagrams in Chart 1 represent a count of the total number of food recipes in each book. Foods are divided into four categories: meats, grains, vegetables, and all other. Each category is displayed as a percentage of the total number of recipes. The all other category, which includes sweets, condiments, and sauces, comprises the largest percentage in all of the cookbooks. Meats are the second largest category and grains are third. Vegetables recipes represent the smallest percentages in all of the cookbooks.

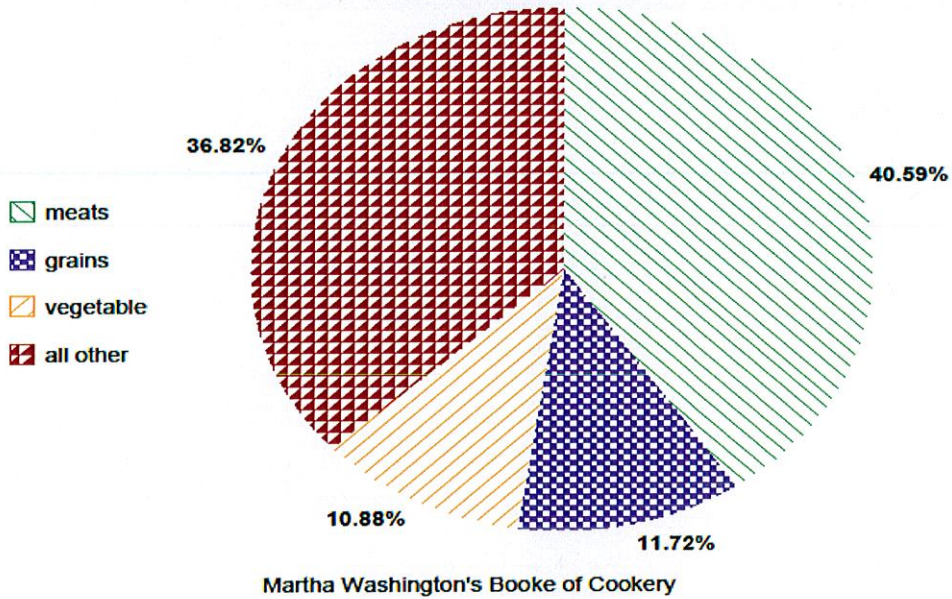
Chart 1.p.1: Recipe Categories from Four Cookbooks, 1770-1881



Richard J Hooker, ed. *A Colonial Plantation Cookbook: The Receipt Book of Harriott Pinckney Horry, 1770* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1984).

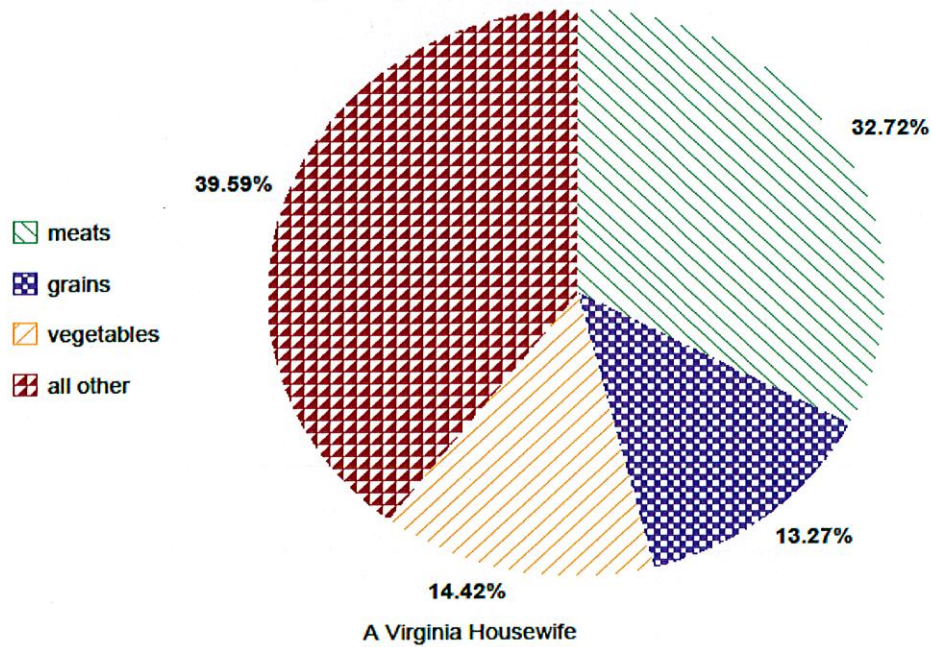
Chart 1. p. 2:

Recipe Categories from 1779 Cookbook



Karen Hess, ed. *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

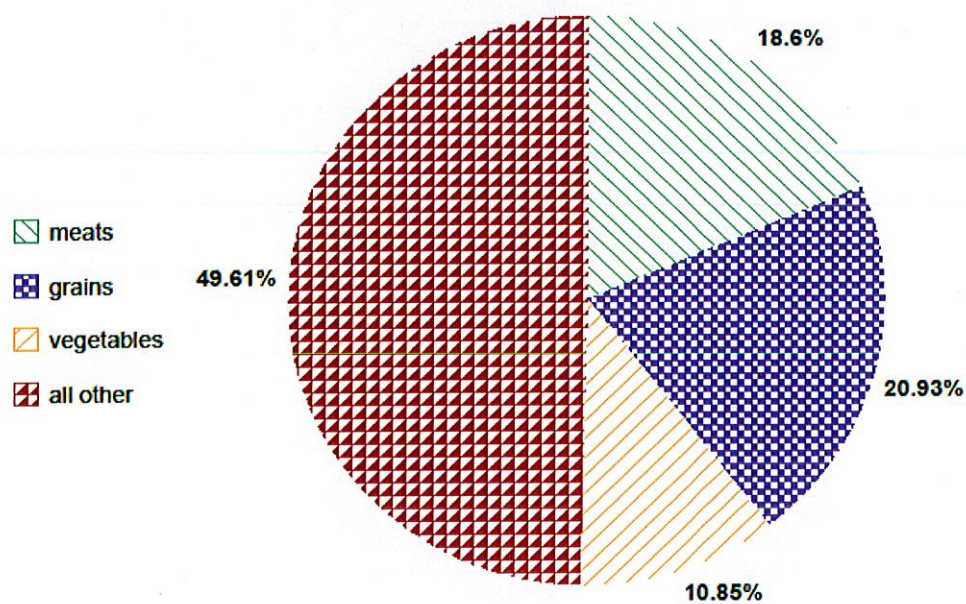
Recipe Categories from 1830 Cookbook



Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife Or, Methodical Cook: A Facsimile of an Authentic Early American Cookbook* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993).

Chart 1. p. 3:

Recipe Categories from 1881 Cookbook



What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking

Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking: Soups Pickles, Preserves, etc.* ed. Karen Hess (Bedford, MA.: Applewood Books, 1995).

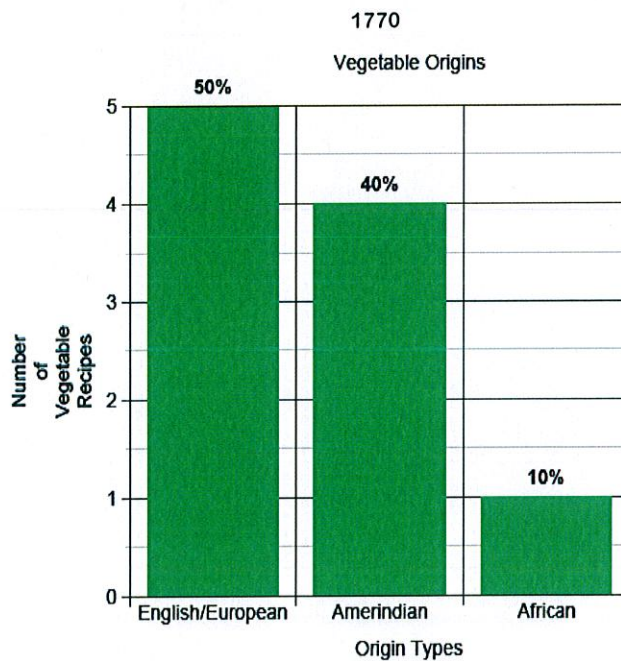
Chart 1 demonstrates an increase in the percentage of vegetable recipes from 1770 to 1881. Because the increase is relatively small, these findings alone do not suggest a cultural foodway shift. When paired with the information from Chart 2, however, a more significant trend is apparent.

Chart 2 uses the same vegetable recipes from each cookbook, this time categorizing them according to their cultures of origin: Native American, European, or African. As the cookbook dates progress forward, Chart 2 plainly shows a significant shift away from English/European vegetables. The exception to this is *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery*, which, as noted in Chapter 2, is primarily a collection of heirloom English recipes believed to have been written in the late seventeenth century. Both Amerindian

and African recipes are notably absent in this work.

In former slave Abby Fisher's book, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking*, corn recipes (counted as Amerindian) outnumbered the recipes for native African vegetables. Well documented as an Amerindian food, corn was also the most widely used staple food that plantation owners supplied to African slaves. It is important to note that in one third of Fisher's recipes, corn was used as a staple grain rather than as a fresh vegetable.

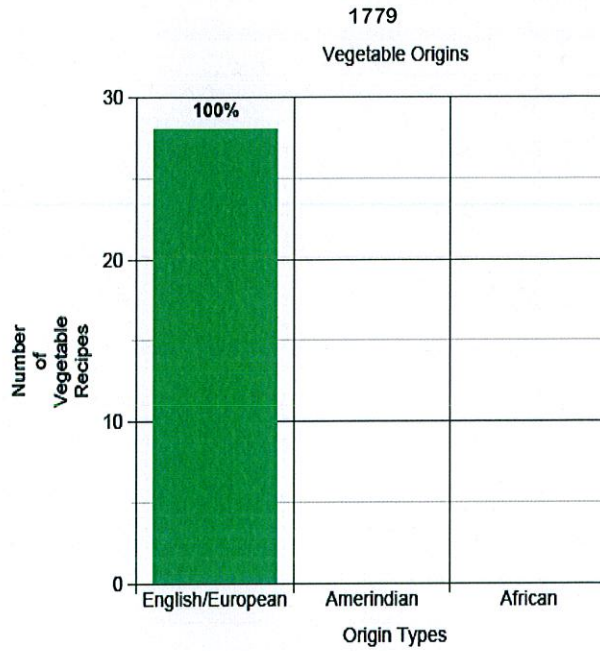
Chart 2.p.1: Origin of Vegetable Recipes.



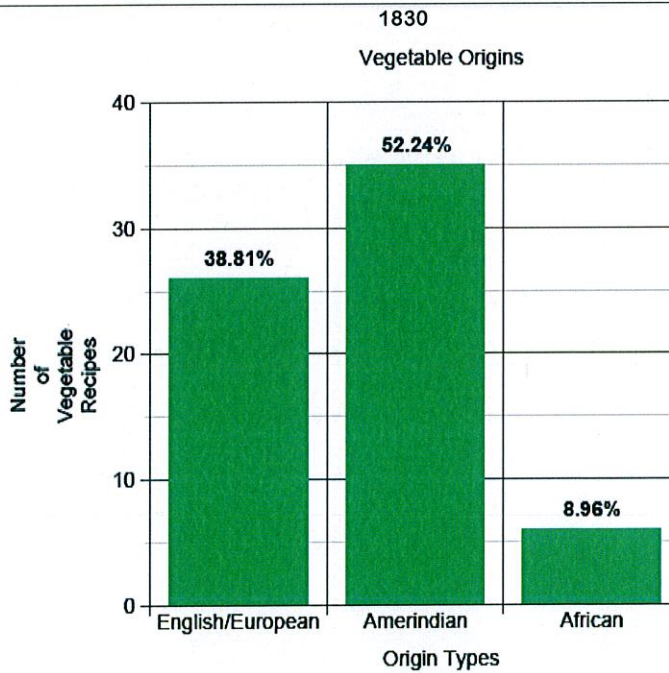
A Colonial Plantation Cookbook

Richard J Hooker, ed. *A Colonial Plantation Cookbook: The Receipt Book of Harriott Pinckney Horry, 1770* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1984).

Chart 2. p. 2

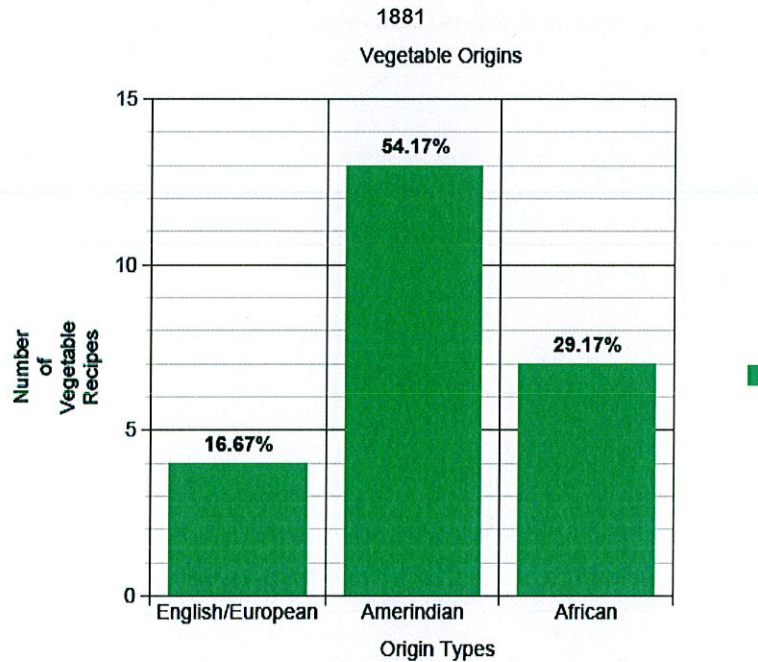


Martha Washington's *Booke of Cookery*
Karen Hess, ed. *Martha Washington's Booke of Cookery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).



The Virginia Housewife
Mary Randolph, *The Virginia Housewife Or, Methodical Cook: A Facsimile of an Authentic Early American Cookbook* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993).

Chart 2. p. 3



What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking

Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking: Soups Pickles, Preserves, etc.* ed. Karen Hess (Bedford, MA.: Applewood Books, 1995).

Before coming to America, traditional English meals consisted primarily of foods from meat, sweets, and bread categories, with few vegetable items. The bulk of their non-seasonal vegetable consumption consisted of cold-hardy leafy greens (coleworts and kale), and easily stored root vegetables (turnips, parsnips, onions, and carrots). These vegetables adapted well to American soils as English settlers brought them to established settlements for cultivation. In contrast, foodway systems from both African and Native American societies relied heavily on vegetables as a major component of their diets. Together, these two societies introduced a barrage of new agricultural products that forever changed English culture in the coastal Upper South. Over the passing of generations, as suggested in Chart 2, English palates gave way to the potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, okra, and cowpeas of America's disenfranchised cultures.

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