Setting the Table for Julia Child

Strauss, David, Strauss, David

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press


For additional information about this book https://muse.jhu.edu/book/60324
The student of gourmet dining in America faces a number of challenges in locating materials on the topic. Among the most serious is the absence of a *Gourmet* magazine archive, which, according to *Gourmet* author and historian Anne Mendelson (letter to the author, Dec. 2, 2001), was “variously misplaced, burned, or deep-sixed” years ago. To compound the problem, the researcher must also overcome the haphazard documentation of gourmet dining society activities and the spotty treatment of gourmet restaurants and their chefs. Moreover, of the three international gourmet societies that emerged in the 1930s, only the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin actually maintained an archive, and that for only a five-year period. Despite these problems, there is happily no dearth of primary material, located in manuscript and menu collections, as well as in various periodicals and the heads of gourmet practitioners, on which to base a history of the subject.

**Manuscript Collections**

The Julian Street papers at Princeton University are particularly valuable. They include letters to and from Julian Street that document the activities of his correspondents, including André Simon, Frederick Wildman, and Roy Alciatore, all key leaders of the gourmet dining movement in the 1930s. The Alfred Knopf papers at the University of Texas clarify his role in persuading knowledgeable food writers to publish their books in the series “For Wine Lovers and Gourmets” that Knopf launched during Prohibition and sustained for many years. Invaluable as well are the Julia Child, Simone Beck, and Avis DeVoto papers at the Schlesinger Library, particularly for understanding the interactions between those three women during their work on *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. I have also used the M. F. K. Fisher and Samuel and Narcissa Chamberlain papers at the Schlesinger.

Somewhat more narrowly focused are the collections devoted to three California leaders of gourmet dining. The Phil T. Hanna papers at UCLA shed light on the activities of the Los Angeles chapter of the Wine and Food Society during its first two decades, while the Maynard Amerine and Roy Brady collections at the University of California, Davis, treat the wine industry of California and the activities of the Los Angeles and San
Francisco chapters of the WFS. As for the private archives of the Tastevin, they contain correspondence, menus, and photographs, which document conflicts between the parent organization and the American branches, as well as the latter’s dinner committees during the society’s formative years from 1945 to 1950.

**Menus**

A valuable record detailing gourmet activity in the quarter century after repeal, menus both for gourmet society events and for restaurants serving French food comprise an essential component of this study. However, these items have been preserved somewhat randomly. The nearly complete set of the San Francisco Wine and Food Society menus presents a relatively full history of its gastronomic activity. While the Boston chapter of the WFS has preserved few of its own menus, it has been the custodian of a virtually complete collection of those of its predecessor, Le Club des Arts Gastronomiques. As for the New Orleans and Washington, D.C., branches of the Tastevin, members of both societies have maintained helpful archives of their menus. Moreover, accounts of gourmet events in various periodicals, most of which contain at least lists of dishes and wines served on these occasions, provide a useful supplement to the menu collections (see “Periodicals Devoted to Gourmet Dining” under “Printed Sources”).

To compare the cuisine of the gourmet societies to that of the best French restaurants in large American cities, I have also used the menu collections from the Culinary Institute of America, the Los Angeles Public Library (online collection), the New-York Historical Society, the New York Public Library, and the San Francisco Center for History.

**Interviews**

While very few gourmet activists from the 1930s are still alive, dozens of individuals who knew them shared their memories by telephone on the subjects identified below. These recollections I have used to supplement documentation from the archives and from secondary sources. In addition, I have found helpful material in the Bancroft Library’s oral history collection.

**Julia Child**

Susy Davidson, Julia Child Foundation Coordinator, Apr. 29, 2005
Judith Jones, Julia’s Knopf editor, May 15, 2005
Henry Morgenthau, friend of Julia’s, Apr. 13, 2005
Patricia Pratt, friend of Julia’s, Apr. 13, 2005
Marian Schlesinger, friend of Julia’s, Mar. 14, 2005

**Gourmet Magazine**

Jon Carson, son of former editor, *Gourmet*, Oct. 21, 2005
Russell MacAusland, former business manager and grandnephew of *Gourmet’s* founder, Earle, Oct. 18, 2005
La Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin

Marion Baumann, Tastevin National Office, Feb. 15, 2005
Harold Block, New Orleans chapter, Dec. 6, 2004
Millard Cohen, St. Louis chapter, Feb. 9, 2005
Paul C. P. McIlhenny, New Orleans chapter, Feb. 9, 2005
James H. Pipkin, Washington, D.C., chapter, Feb. 8, 2005
Henry Ravenel, Washington, D.C., chapter, Feb. 8, 2005
Jules Stiffel, Chicago chapter, Feb. 3, 2005
Edward Weihman, Fairfield, CT, chapter, Feb. 17, 2005

Les Amis d’Escoffier

John Dorman, New York chapter, Feb. 2004
Charles Doulos, Boston chapter, Feb. 8, 2005
Harry Heinz Hoffstadt, Chicago chapter, Nov. 2004
John Kauffmann, Chicago chapter, Nov. 2004
Gus Saunders, Boston chapter, Feb. 14, 2005

Les Dames des Amis d’Escoffier

Ann Costa, Boston chapter, Feb. 7, 2005
Lucille Giovino, Boston chapter, Feb. 3, 2005

California Wine Industry

Dan Turrentine, former manager, Wine Advisory Board, June 9, 2003
Robert Zerkowitz, librarian, Wine Institute, June 9, 2003

Oral History Collection, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley—
Maynard Amerine Interview, “Wine Bibliography and Taste Perception Studies,”
pp. 38–41.
William Dieppe Interview, “Almaden is My Life” (on Frank Schoonmaker), pp. 19–37

Printed Sources

Periodicals Devoted to Gourmet Dining

Essential to this project are the complete runs of two serials through 1961: Wine and Food: A Gastronomical Quarterly (1934–1961) and Gourmet: The Magazine of Good Living (1941–1961). The former, addressed to members of the Wine and Food Society, published “Proceedings” for each chapter that chose to report them to the editor. Through their regular accounts, the San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York chapters left a reasonably complete record of their dinners for this period; entries for the Chicago chapter are complete for the postwar period, while the WFS of Boston recorded relatively few events. The Quarterly also published detailed descriptions of “Memorable Meals,” which included both private dinner parties and regularly scheduled chapter events. Moreover, in each issue, editor André Simon addressed both society concerns and current food issues in Europe, America, and Australia, where WFS chapters were located.

Several wine dealers published and distributed free of charge to their customers monthly newsletters that were informative about gourmet dining. Among them were Phil T. Hanna’s *Bohemian Life* (1939–1957) and Julian Street’s *Table Topics* (1943–1947), both of which reviewed books on gastronomy, published recipes for gourmet dishes, and discussed notable activities of gourmet diners, past and present.

The *Culinary Review* (1930–1945), the monthly publication of the American Culinary Federation, followed the activities of professional chefs and of Les Amis d’Escoffier, the dining society they helped to create.

The *Bulletin of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine* (1956, 1960–2007), a biannual publication of a San Francisco–based wine and food society, included news of society events, a print version of the talks delivered after the society dinners, and biographical sketches of the society’s founders.

The *Hotel Monthly* (1934–1935) offered advice to food professionals, especially in the Chicago area, on menus and wine pairings.

**Other Newspapers and Magazines**

Reports on gourmet dining events in widely circulated periodicals were essential to achieving the societies’ goal of informing the larger public about its activities. To check the frequency and content of these communications in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, I have used the ProQuest Historical Newspapers program. In addition, all of Lucius Beebe’s weekly “This New York” columns, published in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and many of the republished columns from Selmer Fougner’s daily “Along the Wine Trail,” collected from the *New York Sun*, are available. Newspaper clippings in the Tastevin papers, the Hanna papers, the *Boston Globe* Library, and the San Francisco History Center also clarify the reaction to gourmet events in the following dailies: the *A.M. and P.M. Boston Globe*, *Boston Evening Transcript*, *Boston Evening American*, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Washington Times-Herald*, *Washington Star*. In addition,
The Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature provided citations to a number of articles that appeared in Saturday Evening Post, Town and Country, Colliers, and other magazines.

Central Themes: Primary and Secondary Sources

Gourmets versus Nutritionists

Treatment of the controversy between gourmets and nutritionists in the twentieth century must begin with the texts on gastronomy from the seminal work of Brillat-Savarin to the writings of his successors in England and the United States; rarely mentioned by scholars, the latter updated Brillat-Savarin’s work for twentieth-century audiences, while maintaining his emphasis on satisfying the sense of taste. The contrasting stance of women journalists, who focused on maintaining the health of their readers, emerges clearly in their monthly recipes in Better Homes and Gardens, Good Housekeeping, and Ladies’ Home Journal.

The new food columns in luxury lifestyle magazines following the end of Prohibition also challenged the approach of food writers in the women’s magazines, as is evident in House and Garden, House Beautiful, New Yorker, Town and Country, and Vogue. The authors of these columns, often familiar with the tradition of gastronomy, enthusiastically promoted the gourmet ethos rather than nutritionism. Collections of their recipes, originally published in magazine articles, later appeared as cookbooks.


Meanwhile, scholarship on the rise of a nutritionist ethos in dietary matters as promoted in the women’s magazines has demonstrated the centrality of this issue in shaping Americans’ approach to foodways. The origins of this ethos, as Laura Shapiro has shown in her Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), lie in the work of the Boston Cooking School; meanwhile, Harvey A. Levenstein’s two volumes, Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) and Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), focus on the later development of a food establishment based in part on the nutritionist approach. For the application of nutritional ideas in wartime, see Amy Bentley, Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998). On the role of women’s magazines, so central to the formation of a food establishment, I have drawn on Mary Ellen Zuckerman, A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).
Social Class, Luxury Consumption, and Men’s Clubs


From evidence secured in a series of interviews, Michele Lamont concludes that culture is only one factor in enabling the middle class to climb the social ladder; see *Money, Morals and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). In an earlier work, T. J. Jackson Lears regards the cultural transformation of the upper-class establishment as a desperate response to the ravages of the industrial revolution that required a regeneration of class values; see *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).


Among earlier studies of urban elites, all of which treat their subjects’ approach to business, educational, charitable, and social activities, I have examined Frederic Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago and Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1982); E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Boston: Bea-
Members of gourmet dining societies and men’s clubs have written most of the accounts of their group’s activities. One exception is “New York’s Dining Clubs,” New York Sun, Feb. 18, 1893, no page numbers, as reprinted in Records of the Zodiac as They Appear in the Minute Books, 1868–1915 (New York: privately printed, 1916); for an account of dinners arranged by knowledgeable oenophiles, see Russell Codman, Vintage Dinners (Boston: Anchor Linotype Printing, 1937) and “By-Laws of Le Club des Arts Gastronomiques, 1941” (copy from the Boston Wine and Food Society archive).


André Simon has devoted parts of his two autobiographies to the Wine and Food Society: By Request: An Autobiography (London: Wine and Food Society, 1957) and In the Twilight (London: Michael Joseph, 1969); his biographer, Patrick Morrah, also comments on Simon’s role in the WFS in André Simon: Gourmet and Wine Lover (London: Constable, 1987); on the first two decades of the Los Angeles chapter of the WFS, see Marcus Cranham, The Wine and Food Society of Southern California: A History with a Bibliography of André L. Simon (Los Angeles: Wine and Food Society of Southern California, 1957).

Aside from the following rosters, menu credits to members who served on dining committees provide the best evidence of membership in a dining society. See also Membership Roster, Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, July 1, 1965; Roster of Membership (WFSSF, Nov. 29, 1944); Membership Roster, WFSSF (1963).

Travel and Gourmet Dining

Samuel Chamberlain often treated gourmet dining as an integral part of a vacation tour in Europe, although his first Gourmet articles, depicting “Clementine in the Kitchen,” portrayed a Burgundian cook’s experience in America. The book-length collection of these articles, first published in 1943, appeared in a Penguin edition (2001) edited by Ruth Reichl and was the subject of Nathalie Jordi’s “Samuel Chamberlain’s Clementine in the Kitchen,” Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture, Fall 2007, pp. 42–52. By contrast, Chamberlain’s Bouquet de France (1952), Italian Bouquet (1958), and British Bouquet (1963) have been ignored in recent years but were popular among Gourmet readers from 1949 through the 1960s. They offer helpful insights into the central role of travel and gourmet dining in shaping the upper-middle-class lifestyle. To assess Chamberlain’s guidebooks in relation to his competitors, I have also examined Fielding’s Travel Guide to Europe (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1952) and Arthur Frommer, Europe on 5 Dollars a Day (1957).

Food, Wine, and Restaurants

In the absence of published accounts of resources available in the mid-1930s to support gourmet dining, I have attempted to identify these resources and assess their adequacy to the movement. There are useful studies of wine production in America, but no comprehensive account of the resumption of wine imports, the establishment of wine dealerships, and the adequacy of imported foodstuffs. To document the availability of wine and foodstuffs, I have used food and wine catalogues and periodical advertisements. As for restaurants, the only comprehensive accounts for this period are restaurant guides by Duncan Hines: *Adventures in Good Eating* (New York: Duncan Hines, 1936) and *Gourmet's Guide to Good Eating* (New York: Gourmet, 1948). Among the most useful local guides are Natalie Scott and Caroline Merrick Jones, *Gourmet's Guide to New Orleans* (New Orleans: Peerless Printing, 1933); Ruth Thompson and Chef Louis Hanges, *Eating around San Francisco* (San Francisco: Suttonhouse, 1937); John Drury, *Dining in Chicago* (New York: John Day, 1931); and George Rector, *Dining in New York with Rector: A Personal Guide to Good Eating* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1939).


Gourmet Cooking

Between 1941 and 1961, Gourmet chefs Louis De Gouy and Louis Diat published many of the French recipes that were reliable for and accessible to novice American home cooks. Their articles and cookbooks thus provide evidence of the state of the art, as well as social and cultural messages to readers, whether or not they cooked the recipes. Most useful among the cookbooks are De Gouy's *The Gold Cook Book* (New York: Greenberg, 1947) and Diat's *Gourmet's Basic French Cookbook: Techniques of French Cuisine* (New York: Gourmet Books, 1961). Scholars who have interpreted the class, ethnic, and gender implications of these messages include Sherrie Inness, *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001); Jessamyn Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom's Home Cooking: Cookbooks and Gender in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and Erika Anne Endrijonas, “No Experience Required: American Middle-Class Families and Their Cookbooks, 1945–1960,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1996.

This page intentionally left blank