

Chew on This: Presenting the History of Food in Massachusetts
Massachusetts History Workshop, June 1, 2015
College of the Holy Cross; Worcester, Massachusetts

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***Workshop: You Don't Know Beans 'til You Ask Someone:
Oral History and Community***

- There's an old saying that was popular and depicted on early- to mid-20th century postcards: "You Don't Know Beans 'til You Come to Boston." That's the inspiration for this workshop and beans comprise one way to discover the rich cultural—and culinary—diversity of Massachusetts. And it's easily adapted to any grade level or audience.
- Folklorists use oral history as a method to document the past—and present—by drawing on the knowledge of individuals and communities based on their personal experiences, cultural practices, or local lore. Through recorded interviews, as well as photographs, material objects, written documents, foodways, and even landscapes and the built environment, these ethnographies often create the first tangible record--where none existed except in memory--of people, places, everyday life, historical events, or customs and traditions. Classrooms and museum galleries are an ideal place in which to elicit these stories and exchanges.
- Food and music are the two easiest points of entry into cultures. It's said that we are what we eat, but folklorists believe that what we eat symbolizes who we are. Food is central to our identities, and its customs, beliefs, production, preparation techniques and materials, rituals, and traditions are cultural artifacts called foodways. Food and music come together in families, communities, and at festivals. When we eat other people's foods and experience their music, we discover how much we have in common, rather than what separates us.
- Communities can be long-settled or newly-arrived, place-based, ethnic, occupational, linguistic, etc. Students and museum visitors are tradition-bearers and sharing their folklife can teach larger lessons about culture--geography, history, chemistry, natural resources, economics, herbal lore and folk medicine, math, climatology, etc.--and about tradition and change.
- Ideally, this workshop will give you some skills and road-tested classroom exercises using the tools of folklorists to document and demonstrate how the family story, the community history, and the significant events of humanity are regularly expressed throughout the Commonwealth, the region, and the world through culture.

Suggested Readings in Oral History

(these texts are considered among the best resources in the field)

- Baum, Willa K. 1991. *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*. Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History.
- Ives, Edward. 1995. *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History*. 2nd edition. Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee P.
Edward 'Sandy' Ives was a long-time professor of anthropology at the University of Maine and started the Northeast Folklore Archives, now renamed the Maine Folklife Center.
- Ritchie, Donald A. 1995. *Doing Oral History*. New York: Twayne Publishers.
- Thompson, Paul. 1978. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford U Press.
From the British perspective with life history questions and the philosophy of oral history.

Suggested Websites for Oral History

Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage:

www.folklife.si.edu/explore/Resources/InterviewGuid/InterviewGuide_home.html

Folklife and Fieldwork: A Layman's Introduction to Field Techniques

classic guide online at:

www.loc.gov/folklife/fiedlwork/index.html

Vermont Folklife Center's guide for evaluating and selecting recording equipment:

www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/res_audioequip.htm

Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center/Library of Congress
guidelines, suggested questions, general how to do oral history projects:

www.loc.gov/vets

Oral History Association: www.oralhistory.org

(The New England Oral History Association is currently dormant)

American Folklore Society: www.afsnet.org

(Founded in Cambridge in 1888)

Free Regional Festivals with Traditional Foodways & On-stage Interviews

American Folk Festival, Bangor, Maine: www.americanfolkfestival.com

Lowell Folk Festival, Lowell, MA: www.lowellfolkfestival.org

Working Waterfront Festival, New Bedford, MA.: www.workingwaterfrontfestival.org

Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, Washington, DC: www.si.edu/folklife

Bibliography/Resources

- Baker, James W. *Thanksgiving: The Biography of an American Holiday*. Hanover, New Hampshire: UP of New England, 2009. [Baker is former historian at Plimoth Plantation.]
- Brody, Helen. *New Hampshire: From Farm to Kitchen*. NY: Hippocrene, 2004.
- Cole, Stephen and Lindy Gifford. *The Cranberry: Hard Work and Holiday Sauce*. Gardiner, ME: Tilbury House, 2009.
- Cocca-Leffler, Maryann. *Wednesday is Spaghetti Day*. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1990. [Children's book; play on old Prince Spaghetti ads and slogan, "Wednesday is Prince Spaghetti Day."]
- Dooley, Norah. *Everybody Cooks Rice*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1991. Additional titles include *Everybody Serves Soup*, *Everybody Brings Noodles*, *Everybody Bakes Bread*.
- Eff, Elaine. *You should have been here yesterday: A Guide to Cultural Documentation in Maryland*. Crownsville, MD: Maryland Historical Trust, 1995.
- Feintuch, Burt and David Watters, eds. *Encyclopedia of New England*. Yale UP, 2005. [Essays on foodways, agriculture, occupational histories.]
- Fleuriel, Janice Gadaire, and Tove Bendiksen; ed. Laura Orleans. *Working Waterfront Curriculum Resource Guide: A Resource Guide about New Bedford's Commercial Fishing Industry for Students and Teachers*. New Bedford, MA, 2005. Order from: www.workingwaterfrontfestival.org
- Forbush, Edward Howe & Herbert Keightley Job. *A History of the Game Birds, Wild-Fowl and Shore Birds of Massachusetts and Adjacent States: With Observations on Their ... Recent Decrease in Numbers; Also the Means for Conserving Those Still in Existence*. [Boston?]: Wright & Potter, state printers, 1912.
- Gutman, Richard J.S. *American Diner: Then and Now*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993. [Diners started in Providence, RI, and many were manufactured in Massachusetts. Diner exhibit at Johnson & Wales museum in Providence.]
- Holtzberg, Maggie. *Keepers of Tradition: Art and Folk Heritage in Massachusetts*. U of Massachusetts P, 2008. [Holtzberg is Massachusetts state folklorist & the book showcases many years' fieldwork throughout the Commonwealth by her and others; also basis for a museum exhibit.]
- Kurlansky, Mark. *World Without Fish*. New York: Workman, 2011.
- Lewis, George H. "The Maine Lobster as Regional Icon: Competing Images over Time and Social Class," in Shortridge, Barbara G. & James R. Shortridge, eds. *The Taste of American Place: A Reader on Regional and Ethnic Foods*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 1998.
- Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: The New Press, 1997.
- Miller, John. *Deer Camp: Last Light in the Northeast Kingdom*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.
- Neustadt, Kathy. *Clambake: A History and Celebration of an American Tradition*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts Press, 1992.

- Oliver, Sandy. *Saltwater Foodways: New Englanders and Their Food at Sea and Ashore In the 19th Century*. Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport Museum, 1996.
- Orleans, Laura, Kirsten Bendiksen & Markham Starr. *Voices from the Waterfront: Portrait of the New Bedford Fishing Industry*. North Stonington, CT: Fowler Road Press, 2010.
- Pleck, Elizabeth H. *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture and Family Rituals*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
- Rahn, Millie. "Laying a Place at the Table: Creating Public Foodways Models from Scratch." *Journal of American Folklore* 471 (Winter 2006).
- . "A Cornucopia of Traditional Foodways: The Lowell Folk Festival." *Radcliffe Culinary Time*, 1995.
- Ranco, Fred & Tara Marvel. *Muskrat Stew and Other Tales of a Penobscot Life: The Story of Fred Ranco*. Orono, Maine: Maine Folklife Center, U of Maine, 2007.
- Sammarco, Anthony Mitchell. *A History of Howard Johnson's: How a Massachusetts Soda Fountain Became an American Icon*. Charleston, SC: American Palate, 2013
- Stavely, Keith & Kathleen Fitzgerald. *Northern Hospitality: Cooking by the Book in New England*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2011.
- Sullivan, Regina Sibilila. *Who Has Nana's Recipe?: Recipes, Memories & Traditions of Our Italian Family*. Amherst, NH: Unified Business Technologies P, 2004.
[New Hampshire teacher researching her family history and recipes.]
- Tolstrup, Karen Dodge. *"If Maine Had a Queen": The Life of Brownie Schruppf*. Orono, ME: Maine Folklife Center, U of Maine, 2008 [For many years Brownie Schruppf was the food writer for the *Bangor Daily News*. Her collection of objects and papers is at the Page Farm & Home Museum at the U of Maine.]
- Weaver, William Woys. *America Eats: Forms of Edible Folk Art*. NY: Harper, 1989.
- Weitzman, David. *My Backyard History Book*. Boston: Little Brown, 1975.
- Wood, Esther E. *Country Fare: Reminiscences and Recipes from a Maine Childhood*. NP, 1976.
- Wood, Pamela, ed. *The Salt Book: Lobstering, sea moss pudding, stone walls, rum running, maple syrup, snowshoes, and other Yankee doings*. New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1977.
- Ziegelman, Jane. *97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement*. New York: Harper, 2010.
- Zeitlin, Steven J.; Amy J. Kotkin, & Holly Cutting Baker. *A Celebration of American Family Folklore: Tales and Traditions from the Smithsonian Collection*. NY: Pantheon, 1982.

Important Cookbooks

- De Monteiro, Longteine and Katherine Neustadt. *The Elephant Walk Cookbook: Cambodian Cuisine from the Nationally Acclaimed Restaurant*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1998. [First Cambodian cookbook; restaurant in Boston.]
- Farmer, Fannie Merritt. *The Original Boston Cooking School Cook Book*. [Facsimile] New York: Weathervane Books, 1973. [Originally published in 1896 as the *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*].
- International Institute of Lowell. 1989. *As the World Cooks: Recipes from Many Lands*.
- Kander, Mrs. Simon. *The Settlement House Cook Book*. Milwaukee: Settlement Cook Book Co., 1948. [Making Americans out of immigrants, through food.]
- Parloa, Maria. *Miss Parloa's Kitchen Companion: A Guide for All Who Would Be Good Housekeepers*. Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1887. [Boston]
- Roberts, Robert. *The House Servant's Directory: "A Monitor for Private Families"; 1827*. [Early publication by African American household servant/butler. See more at Gore Place, Waltham, MA; www.goreplace.org].

Important Research Collections in Massachusetts

- Arthur & Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, Cambridge.
www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/library
Collection includes historic cookbooks, culinary history, etiquette, papers of Julia Child; Judy Chicago's The Dinner Party; Boston settlement houses [teaching 'American' cooking to immigrants]; Elizabeth David & Avis DeVoto; Women's Educational & Industrial Union (Boston); and much, more.
- Sophia Smith Collection, Women's History Archives, Smith College. Northampton.
www.smith.edu
Collection includes papers of Lillian Moller Gilbreth, industrial and domestic engineer and pioneer of time/motion studies; and more.

Exhibitions/Brochures/Workbooks

- America's Kitchens*. New Hampshire Historical Society Museum. [winter 2010]
www.nhhistory.org/museumexhibits/kitchens/americaskitchens.html
- Food, Glorious Food: An Exhibit Celebrating the Amazing Things We Do With What We Eat*, by Kathy Neustadt & Millie Rahn, Brush History Gallery, Lowell, Mass. [July 22-September 19, 1993.] Funded by the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, U.S. Department of the Interior.
- FOOD: Transforming the American Table 1950-2000*. [Includes *Bon Appétit! Julia Child's Kitchen at the Smithsonian*. www.americanhistory.si.edu
- MacDowell, Marsha, ed. *Foodways: A 4-H Folkpatterns Project*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Museum/Cooperative Extension Service, [no date].
- Sensing Place: A Guide to Community Culture* by Kathleen Mundell and Hilary Anne Frost-Kumpf, Maine Arts Commission, 1995.
- Special Places* by Dolores Root and edited by Millie Rahn. A workbook for community cultural programming, produced for the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, 1993.

Websites [just a sampling]

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress: www.loc.gov/folklife
Association for the Study of Food and Society: www.food-culture.org
Christmas food traditions: www.foodtimeline.org/christmasfood.htm
Documentary Educational Resources. Ethnographic, documentary, and nonfictional films from around the world: <http://www.der.org>
Folkstreams: Documentary Films about American Roots Culture [videos produced out of primary fieldwork and interviews]: <http://www.folkstreams.net>
General: www.foodandculture.org [Produced by a folklorist].
General: www.foodhistory.com
Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association. Occupational culture & food: gfwa.org
Key Ingredients: America by Food: www.keyingredients.org
Kitchen Sisters. www.kitchensisters.org
Louisiana Voices/Louisiana's Many Food Traditions: www.louisianavoices.org
Maine Folklife Center online exhibits: bean-hole beans, women's work, Maine lumber woods: www.umaine.edu/folklife/exhibits
Maryland. *From Bridge to Boardwalk: An Audio Journey Across Maryland's Eastern Shore*. www.midatlanticarts.org/programs_traditionalarts_delmarva_audiotour.html
Maryland Traditions: decoy carving, Smith Island layer cake (official dessert of Maryland): www.marylandtraditions.org
Massachusetts Cultural Council's Folk Arts & Heritage website & blog: www.massfolkarts.org
Native Voices, Maine Indian History and Culture at the Hudson Museum, University of Maine: www.umaine.edu/hudsonmuseum/Video.html
New Hampshire State Council on the Arts' folklife website: www.nh.gov/folklife/
Northeast Historic Film. www.oldfilm.org [Superb collection of historic regional New England films, including foodways; Bucksport, Maine.]
Ship to Shore: Celebrating Families in the Industry [a digital exhibit] www.shiptoshore2014.wordpress.com/
Slow Food. www.slowfood.com
Southern Foodways Alliance. www.SouthernFoodways.com
StoryBank Maine: <http://www.storybankmaine.org>
Thanksgiving History. www.plimoth.org [Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth, MA]
Vermont Deer Stories: www.vermontfolklifecenter.org/multimedia/radio/deer-stories/
Vermont Folklife Center: vermontfolklifecenter.org
Voices from the Dust Bowl: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshtml/tshome.html>
Voices from the Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries & National Marine Fisheries Services. Oral histories documenting the human experience of the fisheries of the US: www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/voicesfromthefisheries/
Voices from the Port radio project, Working Waterfront Festival Oral History Project, New Bedford, Massachusetts: www.workingwaterfrontfestival.org. Seasons 1 & 2
YouTube: *Great Depression Cooking with Clara* and lots more

From interviews conducted at the Working Waterfront Festivals in New Bedford:

Most cooks were cranky, they were cranky old men. And if you went down in the icebox, 'cause there was no refrigeration, it was ice, at like quarter past seven to open it for whatever reason, I mean you never had any luncheon meat or anything like that so maybe you wanted a drink of milk or somethin', you went down there, he'd get right aggravated and they'd tell you, 'Get the hell out of here!' So you learnt to stay out of the foc'sle. But we did eat very well. Actually we ate better than our families did at home. And that used to run through my mind too... I'd sit there and think, 'God, we're throwin' away better food than I have home for my children. --Herman Bruce

Retired fisherman Herman Bruce has been involved in the New Bedford fishing industry for 55 years. His parents came from Newfoundland. From an oral history interview conducted at the 2010 Working Waterfront Festival.

I start cooking only five years ago....I never cooked before. I probably could not even fry an egg....I just became a cook for necessity. When the scallops became more abundant, which was about four or five years ago, I start cooking to free up the crew completely from that responsibility, and at the same time to make sure that everybody got a couple of good decent meals every day....If have a good, hearty meal, you take a little longer to eat it, you relax better, you go to bed happier, and a busy crew is a happy crew, but a good, fat crew is even happier. -- Armando Estudante

Armando Estudante is a New Bedford scallop captain and vessel owner who emigrated from Portugal in 1978.

Community Documentation Resources for Teachers:

City Lore Interviewing Guide:

www.locallearningnetwork.org/local-learning-tools/great-interview-guides/

Tenement House Museum Oral History Lesson Plans:

www.tenement.org/education_lessonplans.html

Madison Wisconsin Children's Museum's Kid's and Teacher's Guides to Local Culture:

www.artsboard.wisconsin.gov/docview.asp?docid=18876&locid=171

www.artsboard.wisconsin.gov/docview.asp?docid=18875&locid=171

Oral History in the Classroom:

Is interdisciplinary

- fosters critical inquiry skills
- enhances oral, written, and documentary communication skills
- develops research skills
- relates social studies to students' lives and communities
- integrates the use of technology into the study of history

Reaches all learners regardless of ability or learning style

- teaches auditory and visual modes of documentation and presentation
- provides opportunities for collaborative learning and active exploration
- succeeds not just with gifted students but also average students and students with learning disabilities

Enhances student self-esteem and identity

- enriches student understanding of who they are and how they are connected to others in their community
- enables students to explore their own family and community history and to become knowledgeable experts
- makes the past/history real

Helps reach “at-risk” students

- makes education/school relevant to students' everyday lives
- makes students' everyday lives relevant to education

Fosters community and family involvement in education

- encourages positive family communication and collaboration
- promotes intergenerational contact and respect
- promotes community-based learning

Adapted from an unpublished DRAFT of *Standards for Folklife Education*. Created by the Folklife Advisory Committee of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. (November, 23, 1994)