

The Rice Paper

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The Rice-Paper is the electronic newsletter of the CGRF. Published periodically, it collects the most recent findings in the botany, cultivation, material culture, culinary preparation, and history of Carolina Gold Rice and associated heritage grains. Contributions and editorial correspondence should be directed to Dr. David S. Shields at the University of South Carolina: dshields@gwm.sc.edu. The information published here appears as a public service. CGRF encourages republication of The Rice-Paper's contents provided there is no alteration of the substance of the material being reproduced, that the reproducer does not profit from the republication, and that a clear and full credit is given to author and source of the material.

A Message from the President

Our Local Food is Carolina Rice Bread

By Glenn Roberts

In this issue of The Rice Paper, Dr. David Shields presents a fascinating "Vanished Banquet" chronicle of those local foods now extinct in the American South. The complete list of these lost local foods is tragically long, but the item "assumed" present in all dining affairs of the Antebellum and Colonial era South (and for that matter, throughout the Colonial American North and South) is conspicuously absent from our modern "local" Southern table. What is missing today is our famous Carolina Rice Bread.

Interest in local bread traditions is exploding across America. In July this year, The Kneading Conference in Skowhegan, Maine, sold out with record attendees, both professional and hobbyist, clamoring to learn about wood hearth artisan breads and elite landrace wheat flours and unique heritage bread-making techniques. There were similar events in other regions of New England, Northern California and the Pacific Northwest. And there is a new local bread initiative in North Carolina, The North Carolina Organic Bread Flour Project, spearheaded by Jennifer Lapidus and the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. This group focuses on local bread production and artisan breads of the Carolinas.

The Carolina Gold Rice Foundation can now provide a new level of support for the repatriation of the Carolina Rice Kitchen, the cuisine of our local foods, by advocating for the return of Carolina Rice Bread, in all its glorious iterations, as our local daily bread. No other local food better represents the iconic uniqueness of the Southern Table. We would not be plowing new ground in our efforts. Two years ago, Poppy Tooker, famed chef and local foods advocate of New Orleans, brought international attention to New Orleans French Bread to support its survival in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Her efforts were quite successful and far reaching.

We should learn from Chef Tooker's success even though our challenge appears at first to be more daunting. Carolina Rice Bread isn't threatened, it is extinct for reasons no one understands except for the possibility that Carolina grown bread wheat is extinct as well. The availability of high quality local bread wheat will increase dramatically within the next year in both North and South Carolina. The North Carolina Organic Bread Flour Project will guarantee this with a network of professional wheat farmers and a European quality bread wheat mill located in Asheville.

Our mission should be to advocate for pairing the return of local bread wheat and its heritage with our mission to support the revival of robust Carolina Rice production. Our goal should be to focus upon one of the thousands of Carolina Rice Bread recipes from our antebellum era and select that recipe according to its appeal to Southern bakers and artisan bakers throughout America. I propose a call for historically accurate Carolina Rice Bread recipes based upon local bread wheat and Carolina Rice Flour with a submission deadline of March, 2010.decade.

Origins of Carolina Gold Long Grain

Letter from Co. Ward, on the Big Grain Rice Brook Green, Nov. 16, 1843

Dear Allston:

The following brief remarks, relative to the big grain Rice, I send you, in compliance with your request.

In 1838, my overseer, Mr. James C. Thompson, a very judicious planter, residing on my Brook Green Estate, accidentally discovered in the Barn yard, during the threshing season, a part of an ear of Rice, from the peculiarity of which, he was induced to preserve it, until he had an interview with me.

It was so very different from any other Rice I had attentively examined, in point of size, that I re-

quested him to take care of, and plant in the Spring on one of the Rice-field margins, which had not been cultivated for several years. This, however, proved to be an unfavorable spot for in long watering, the trash settled on and about the experiment Rice—and after the 'long water.' The rats injured it no little. The causes reduced the number of plants which matured to only six, the grain of which appeared the same as that which was planted.

Our want of success in procuring the quantity of grain expected, induced us in the Spring of 1839, to plant the rice in a large tub, filled with swamp mud, and placed in Mr. Thompson's garden, where it could be watered an attended to every day. But here another misfortune befell it. The careless servant who had it in charge, left the garden gate open, and a hog getting in, destroyed the greater part of the rice. The remaining shoots were carefully taken up and transplanted in a pond; from which we obtained three pecks of rotten light rice—the fact of its being light was attributed to the want of water at the critical time of its maturing.

In the year 1840, we planted with this seed not quite half an acre of new land, at 'Long Wood,' which yielded in the Autumn, forty-nine bushels and a half of clean winnowed rice.

In the year 1841, this product was sown in a twenty-one acre field, at Brook Green, which yielded in the Autumn, on thousand one hundred and seventy bushels of sheaf rice, clean winnowed. Of this quantity, from one hundred ad fifty to two hundred bushels were milled, and sent to market. My Factors disposed of it at a considerable advance beyond the highest market price.

In the year 1842, I planted four hundred acres with this seed, and being so perfectly satisfied with both the product and the improved quality of the same, I was induced in the succeeding year, (1843) to sow with it my entire crop. The first parcel when milled, consisted of eighty barrels, netted *fifty cents* per cwt. Over the primest new rice sold on the same day.

Such is a hurried account of the origin of the big grain Rice, which I have been solicited to furnish. I

earnestly trust that his improvement in the seed, will be of incalculable benefit to the entire Rice-growing region.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua John Ward

The Proceedings of the Agricultural Convention and the State Agricultural Society of South Carolina from 1839-1846 inclusive (Columbia: Summers & Carroll for the State Agricultural Society of South Carolina, 1846), pp. 56-57.

The Vanished Banquet: A Menu of Lost Southern Delicacies

In a comic character sketch by antebellum writer Johnson Jones Hooper, a quintessential southern bon vivant, "The Colonel," attempts to persuade members of the Alabama legislature to move the state capital to Montgomery and not Wetumpka by circulating two bills of fare. That from the 'Montgomery Hall' read:

Soup—Oyster.

Boiled—Turkey, with oyster sauce.

Roast—Pig. Entrees—Oyster-Pie, &c.

Desert—Plumb-Pudding, Tarts, Pies, and Jellies.

Fruit—Oranges, Apples, Pineapples, Raisins, Almonds, &c.

Wines—Champagne, Madeira, Sherry, &c., &c.

That from the 'Wetumpka Hotel' read:

Soup—Cowpea.

Boiled—Bacon and Greens.

Roast—'Possum. Entrees—Tripe and Cow-Heel.

Dessert—Fritters and Molasses.

Fruit—Persimmons, Chestnuts, Goobers.

Wines—Black Malaga.

Both the high style and common menus have their telling features. Montgomery Hall catered to southern gourmets' obsession with oysters, inserting the bivalve in every dish before the dessert course, except roast pig. The Wetumpka Hotel offers a remarkable array of country fare. Neither bill features the glory of southern home cooking, the elaborate baked goods upon which hostesses and cooks staked their reputations. The wine lists betray the same penchant for fortified wines (except for the taste for champagne), not the clarets and white wines esteemed by later generations. Both menus contain items that have endured as staples of the southern table: turkey with oyster dressing, roast pig, bacon and greens, chitterlings, peanuts. Both feature dishes that have vanished from southern cuisine: oyster pie, fritters & molasses, dried per-

simmons. Why do dishes disappear from a community's table? Why and how do pleasures vanish?

Sometimes the dishes cannot be made any longer because the ingredients have ceased to exist (the long grain version of Carolina Gold Rice), or are so endangered that they are protected by law (terrappins and rice birds). Other foods expire because of changes in the cost or availability of ingredients; rice bread, once a staple of Carolina tables ceased to be made when local rice was no longer commercially available, after 1912. Some dishes vanish because of changes of taste, as Black Malaga has done from the southern wine cellar, or pickled nasturtiums from the pantry. Other dishes no longer exist because they have transformed into something else. The benne and molasses candy treasured in the antebellum south became benne brittle, when cane sugar became cheaper toward the end of the 19th century. For whatever reason, a buffet table's worth of southern dishes have passed away. Here I would like to image a banquet featuring the most evocative of these lost treasures, presenting a menu, and then discussing the particular merits of each course and dish.

Menu

Soup

Benne Soup on Long Grain Carolina Gold or Terrapin Soup

Salad

Boiled Rice Pea Pods In Vinaigrette

Fish

Baked Sturgeon

Fowl

Broiled Rice Birds in Butter

Meat

Mutton Ham

Vegetables

Creole Fried Cucumbers and Stewed Salsify Virginia Style

Fritters

Cymling Fritters and Okra Fritters

Desert

American Chestnut Pudding

Soup

Benne Soup on Carolina Gold Long Grain Rice

Benne seed, or sesame seed, was one of the five most important foodstuffs brought be slaves from West Africa to North America. An entire African-American cuisine grew up around the plant of which only the benne wafer, a cookie associated with Charleston, and benne candy, a favorite confec-

tion of the West Indies, survive. White planters took up the plant in the early 18th century as a source for oil, when experiments in olive cultivation, proved unsuitable for most of the south. By the early 19th century it was widely planted from Virginia to Missouri. Of the favorite slave dishes—benne and hominy, benne and greens, and benne soup—only the last entered into southern cuisine generally. Robert M. Goodwin of Skidaway Island, George, observed in 1824, that for "negroes in this part of the country . . . [benne] is thought . . . to be much better in soup than okra, and it is used by them in the same manner." Sarah Rutledge, author of the *Carolina Housewife*, included a "Benne Soup" with oysters in her landmark cookbook. But the simpler, classic soup, was consumed more widely, often served over grits or rice, a new world approximation of the Mende treat, fou-fou.

Long grain Carolina Gold was the creation of Joshua John Ward of Brookgreen Plantation in South Carolina. The standard size of a grain of Gold Seed rice was 5/16ths of an inch. Ward, through careful cultivation of a sport of Carolina Gold, managed to grow grain nearly a half an inch long. Requiring extraordinary efforts of seedsmanship and cultivation, it existed on the market from 1840 to 1860, and commanded the highest prices of any world rice on the Paris market. The Civil War brought an end to its availability. The Carolina Gold Rice Foundation has an initiative to recreate the variety in the near future.

1 cup benne seed, Enough sesame oil to cover the bottom of a cooking vessel, A handful of wheat flour, Salt & Pepper, onions, A quart of water. Toast benne seed in a dry skillet stirring constantly 2 minutes until browned, but not burnt. Empty contents of the skillet into a mortar and mash the seed into powder. In the same skillet cover the bottom with sesame oil (the African-American way of making it is detailed below in the section on oil) and mix in flour. Stir and cook this until you form a brown roux. Fry one large roughly chopped onion. Add finely crushed benne, and then hot water, steadily, stirring constantly. Cook at a constant medium until it is rich and thick and salt to taste. This is a hearty and flavorful soup. Serve on top of steamed Carolina Gold Long Grain Rice.

Terrapin Soup

Terrapin Soup ranked among the premier American dishes of the 19th century, found on the bills of fare of the finest restaurants, and a fixture at the social dinners of blue book society. Prepared with Madeira or Sherry as a principal ingredient, the vogue for Terrapin soup died with Prohibition in 1919. Because the turtle had been harvested to near extinction in northern wetlands, the Volstead Act proved a boon to the species, enabling it to crawl back into healthy numbers in the 1960s. Then the boom in coastal real estate development began playing havoc with its nesting areas in the brackish waters off the Atlantic. While certain states, South

Carolina included, do not identify the Diamondback Terrapin an endangered species and maintain laws that permit commercial harvesting, no license for commercial exploitation of the Terrapin have been issued in the 21st century. The turtle is being protected by administrative policy, because there is a widespread conviction that the population is declining. Ongoing studies of terrapin populations are maintained by several groups, reflecting a strong public resolve to bring this most famous of turtles back into a flourishing condition. While it is not illegal to have terrapin soup, no public restaurant in the United States now serves it, sensitive to the sustainability issues, but it still may be had in at least two private clubs in Baltimore and one in Washington, D.C. I include two recipes, representing two schools of thought about the soup. The first reflects the tradition in the Chesapeake region to render it as a thick stew. The second, from one of the earliest cook-books by an African-American Chef and Housekeeper, *The Unrivalled Cook-book* (1886), treats in as a high-style soup with forcemeat balls of turtle.

#1

In buying terrapins, select those only that are large, fat, and thick-bodied. Put them whole into water that is boiling hard at the time, and (adding a little salt) boil them till thoroughly done throughout. Then, taking off the shell, extract the meat, and remove carefully the sand-bag and gall; also all the entrails. They are disgusting, unfit to eat, and are no longer served up in cooking terrapin for the best tables. Cut the meat into pieces, and put it into a stew-pan with its eggs, and sufficient fresh butter to stew it well. Let it stew till quite hot throughout, keeping the pan carefully covered that none of the flavor may escape; but shake it over the fire while stewing in another pan, make a sauce of beaten yolks of egg, highly flavored with Madeira or sherry, and powdered nutmeg and mace, and enriched with a large lump of fresh butter. Stir this sauce well over the fire, and when it has almost come to a boil, take it off. Send the terrapin to table hot in a covered dish, and the sauce separately in sauce-tureen, to be used by those who like it, and omitted by those who prefer the genuine flavor of the terrapin when simply stewed with butter.

This is now the usual mode of dressing terrapins in Maryland and Virginia, and will be found superior to any other.

No dish of terrapins can be good unless the terrapins themselves are of the best quality. It is mistaken economy to buy poor ones. Besides being insipid and tasteless, it takes more in number to fill a dish. The females are the best. *Saturday Evening Post* 29, 1505 (June 1, 1850), 0_004.

#2

Clean and cut up a large terrapin with the entrails and bones; remove the gall carefully; put your terrapin in a soup pot with four quarts of water, a soup bunch, a head of celery, onions, thyme, parsley, salt and pepper; let it simmer four hours do not let it cease one moment to cook; strain your soup, thicken it with browned flour, return it to the soup pot; tie up in a muslin bag half a tablespoonful of cloves, allspice, and a cracked nutmeg; let it simmer an hour in the soup, then remove. If the turtle has eggs, boil them and throw in the yolks; if there are no eggs, use forcemeat balls; add a glass of Madeira and thin slices of lemon before serving. The forcemeat balls are made by rubbing two hard-boiled yolks to a paste, with butter, and half a dozen spoonfuls of the turtle meat, chopped very fine, and seasoned with salt and pepper; bind with beaten eggs; make into balls; dip, first, into beaten egg, then into powdered cracker, and fry in butter. *Mrs. Washington, The Unrivalled Cook-Book and Housekeeper's Guide* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886), pp. 27-28.

Salad

Boiled Rice Pea Pods in Vinaigrette

Until the 1920s, the rice pea stood highest of all the field peas in the regard of southern gourmets. While the soul food cook might cherish the black-eyed pea, and the up country farmer love his red iron & clay peas, those pulses lacked the delicacy for fine cuisine. I. M., a writer for the *Boston Cooking School Magazine* in 1915, sang the rice pea's virtues: "[T]here is a field pea called the rice pea, grown extensively in southern states, which is white, eye and all, with a slightly creamy tinge, and it is even more delicate of flavor than black-eyed peas; these are as delicate as early June peas, and they retain their natural color when cooked, and do not change the color of meat cooked with them. Perhaps the reason rice peas are not grown more generally is that they are not as hardy as black-eyed peas and other field peas. These delicately flavored rice peas, cooked with tender young pork, are far and away more appetizing than pork and beans, and almost or quite as nutritious. They are good, either cooked after they have become dry in the autumn and winter, or when young and tender in the late spring and early summer. Southern ladies often cook the tender young peas, pods and all, as snap beans are cooked." While rice peas proved difficult to grow, and subject to insect attack, they appeared on the southern table at various points in the year, as the legumes were planted in rotation with corn and other crops. Supplanted by cow pea varieties easier to grow, the rice pea has become a rare variety available from three heirloom seed brokers. Its culinary qualities, however, promise that it will undergo a renovation in regard in the near future.

Pick the pea pods when they are now fully mature. Wash them thoroughly, for they tend to be buggy. Have a big pot of salted water on a rolling boil. Deposit as many pods as your diners may eat. Do not cook overlong. Ten minutes at most. Drain water and rinse beans with cold water. Try to get them to room temperature. Put in a dressing of oil, vinegar, mustard, and salt. Some add mint to freshen the taste. I prefer it without.

Fish

Baked Sturgeon

Once Atlantic sturgeon dominated the coastal rives of the south, the largest fish in the food chain. Long-lived and slow-moving, they grew to enormous size, up to fourteen feet in length, cruising in the depths of the main stem rivers in South Carolina. Both meat and roe found ready buyers in the urban markets, so commercial fisherman began the systematic harvest of sturgeon early in the 19th century. Their improvidence caused a drastic reduction of the population in American waters over the course of the 19th centuries and early 20th century. The collapse of the sturgeon population took place in northern rivers by the mid-20th century. South Carolina in the 1960s and 70s landed half of the nation's total catch, but this intensive fishing replicated the problems in the north. By the early 1980s the fishery was in dire straits. South Carolina's Department of Natural Resources prohibited sturgeon fishing in 1985 in a bid to rebuild the species. Unfortunately the damming of several of the sturgeon's breeding rivers has thwarted its restoration. Only in undammed estuaries, such as the Edisto, has an increase in spawn been detected. The riverine short-nosed sturgeon, which has never been pursued by commercial or recreational fisherman to any extent, is also an endangered species, primarily because of habitat degradation. Farm raised sturgeon is available in certain parts of the United States, and the University of Georgia produces excellent caviar from farmed White Sturgeon. Most early southern cookbooks included recipes for sturgeon steaks, cutlets, baked and pickled sturgeon. This classic version, drawn from *Mary Randolph's Virginia Housewife* was prepared in a Dutch Oven.

Get a piece of sturgeon with the skin on, the piece next to the tail, scrape it well, cut out the gristle, and boil it about twenty minutes to take out the oil take it up, pull off the large scales, and when cold, stuff it with forcemeat, made of bread crumbs, butter, chopped parsley, pepper and salt, put it in a Dutch oven just large enough to hold it, with a pint and half of water, a gill of red wine; one of mushroom catsup, some salt and pepper, stew it gently till the gravy is reduced to the quantity necessary to pour over it; take up your sturgeon carefully, thicken the gravy with a spoonful of butter rubbed into a large one of brown flour;--see that it is perfectly smooth when you put it in the dish. p. 57.

Fowl

Broiled Rice Birds

South Carolina rice planters looked upon the rice bird with mixed emotions. The cloud-like flocks of black song birds feasted upon the rice fields, fattening for their long migration to central South America. They could strip fields bare. But they also ranked among the tastiest birds—up with the canvasback duck—served on the American table. So the southern remedy to the Rice Bird was the shot gun. Hundreds of thousands were gunned from the sky over southern ricelands up until 1911. But the rice bird—or bobolink—did not suffer population decline until the hay fields of America, their ideal nesting sites, were converted to alfalfa, as the horse was supplanted by the tractor in agricultural America. Today the bobolink is protected in the United States. But in Jamaica, where they are called butter birds, they are still shot and consumed, and farmers in Argentina, where the rice birds winter, find them as much as a nuisance as rice planters did in the 19th century. With the return of rice planting to South Carolina, the rice bird has also reappeared. By some uncanny instinct they find the fields, and like their ancestors of old, gobble the grain. As an endangered species, South Carolinians are not supposed to shoot and consume them. Yet the bobolink population is on the rise, and there may come a day when we can once again savor the two dishes that graced the traditional southern table: broiled rice birds and rice bird pie. A southern gourmet provides an enthusiast commentary of both dishes in an 1858 contribution to the greatest of antebellum American sporting periodicals, *The Spirit of the Times*:

They put up at several *nom de plumes*—rice bird, bobolink, reed-bird, rice-bunting, and last, although not least conspicuous, in their European guise ortolan is much admired and sought after for the delicacy of the flesh. They are served in several styles, a la cuisine, in the most notable restaurants; however different may be the methods of treating their rich, fat bodies, in the cooking and dressing, they always please the exquisite taste and palate of the gastronomist. Yet I know no better mode of cooking and dressing them than to place them in rows strung above a moderate fire, and under them a dripping pan well supplied with pieces of toasted bread, to receive the rich and luscious drippings, that will exude from them. Allow them to cook thus gently, occasionally turning, so as not to have them over-roasted, as to one's taste determine the portion of salt and black pepper should be put into each bird. They also afford an excellent pie, by the addition of a half-pint of rice, boiled, half pint of milk, add the yolks of two eggs, then place the birds, seasoned with all the usual spices, into the pie-pan; let it bake slowly until perfectly done. Oh! Ye Gods! What a pie! What a dish! *The Spirit of the Times* 29, 36 (October 15, 1859), 425.

Meat

Mutton Ham

In 1837 the editor of the *Tennessee Farmer* declared that mutton ham was superior to pork. While his opinion seems not to have been sustained by southern culinary history, the pleasures of a cured ram or sheep's leg were widely known in 19th-century America. Mutton Ham was a traditional English meat, described in lauded in the most popular late 18th and early 19th-century English cookbooks. The first recipe published in an American periodical, an 1825 receipt published in the *New England Farmer*, opted decidedly in favor of smoking the leg for ten days with green hickory wood. Another school of preparation, eschewed smoking, but recommended that the ham be soaked and boiled before eating. In the south mutton ham came to be a feature of up-country, rather than coastal cookery, in large measure because the heat and humidity of the coastal south made sheep miserable and thwarted large-scale sheep-breeding. Once cured, a ham could be shipped anywhere, and hence came to the Low-country and Tidewater table. While numbers of recipes survive for the dish, the most extensive comes from Mrs. Washington of North Carolina. With the fall-off in demand for mutton on American meat markets in the twentieth century, the mutton ham languished, and has become a forgotten mainstay of the banquet table.

Leg of mutton weighing twelve pounds; one ounce of black pepper; a quarter of a pound of brown sugar; one ounce of saltpeter; one and a quarter pounds of salt.

The day after the sheep is killed, mix the sugar, pepper, and saltpeter, and rub thoroughly into the meat for fifteen minutes, until the outer part is thoroughly impregnated with the seasoning. Put the ham into a large earthenware vessel and cover it with the salt; let it remain thus for three weeks, turning it daily and basting it with the brine, adding to this, after the first week, a teacupful of vinegar. When the ham is removed from the pickle, wash with cold water, then with vinegar, and hang it up in a cool cellar for a week, at least, before it is used. Soak an hour in fair water before boiling.

Or, if you choose to smoke it for several days after it is corned, it can be chipped and eaten raw like dried beef. Mrs. Washington, *Unrivalled Cook-Book* (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1886), pp. 116-17.

Vegetables

Creole Fried Cucumbers

Cucumbers, like all vegetables, were invariably cooked until the end of the 18th century, in the belief that heating completed the process of digestion that was only imperfectly performed by the human

stomach. The fear of *Dyspepsia* only dissipated when Scottish physicians redrew human understanding of the digestive process during the Enlightenment. The 1790s saw the birth of raw vegetable salads as a major component of the table. Cucumbers during the entire 19th century were both cooked and consumed raw. Every American cookbook of any merit included one if not several recipes for fried or sautéed cucumbers for summer menus. The fanciest of these dishes emerged in the south, particularly in Louisiana. With the health fad for raw vegetables that began in the 1890s and culminated in the 1920s, the fried cucumber faded from American cookery, until the recent revival of stir-fried cucumbers prompted by the vegetarian movement. The oriental flavors now favored bear little relation to the rich taste profile of Creole Fried Cucumbers.

Slice 8 middle sized cucumbers, flour them slightly and fry a light brown in a little lard; pour off the lard and add to the cucumbers 4 tablespoonfuls of hot water, 2 of wine, 2 of walnut catsup, pepper, salt, and sliced onion, (if you like it) a lump of butter dipped in flour; stew about 15 minutes. A teaspoonful of mustard is better than the onion. *Christian Women's Exchange, The Creole Cookery Book* (New Orleans: T. H. Thomason, 1885), p. 76

Stewed Salsify Virginia Style

In America, the slender, pale salsify root became, curiously, a monument to the people's insatiable desire for oysters, earning the vegetable the nickname, oyster-plant. Even boiled, mashed, rolled in cracker crumbs and deep fried like fried oysters, Salsify does not possess the mouth feel, salinity, or unctuousness of a bivalve. So it suffers the fate of being a perpetual disappointment, a failed wish for those who take it up thinking it to be, somehow, the vegetable kingdoms phantom double for a blue point. (Repeatedly in cook books of the 19th century one finds suggestions on how to make salsify taste "more like an oyster," such as "having a little codfish stirred among it" while stewing.) Let us exorcise the phantom now. Only a 19th-century Midwesterner, haunted by elusive memory and residing far from the railroad depots where barrels of eastern oysters were dispatched, could possibly delude themselves into detecting the briny succulence of an oyster on his tongue when savoring salsify. The root has its own virtues, whether boiled, stewed, fried, or shaved into a salad. It has a clean, slightly saline toothsome, free of the mintyness and occasional fibrousness of a parsnip, the rough sugar of a carrot, or the mealy blandness of a potato. It is wholesome, delicately nutty, and visually appealing when peeled, white and firm. Salsify's propensity to dissolve into mush when over-boiled has prompted 21st century cooks to steam rather than boil the root. In traditional European cookery salsify's whiteness became a point of culinary elaboration. Care was taken to prevent the peeled roots from discoloring

by soaking them immediately in vinegar water. Dishes often married the cooked roots with milk or cream.

Scrape and throw into water at once to prevent from turning dark. Boil till tender in a closely covered vessel. Drain off the water and cut the salsify in pieces half an inch long. Throw in a saucepan with

1 teacup vinegar
1 teacup water
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon butter
salt and pepper to taste

Just before serving add the yolk of an egg beaten up and mixed with a little water. The seasoning above is give for one quart salsify. Mrs. S. T. Marion Cabell Tyree, *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* (Louisville: J. P. Morton & o., 1879) p. 250.

Fritters

The mid-19th century was the heyday of the fritter. A traditional dish of southern Europe and West Africa, the fritter was any ingredient incorporated into a batter of wheat, rice, or buckwheat flour, or corn meal, shaped into a roundish mass, and fried in lard or vegetable oil. A fritter could be savory or sweet, depending upon the chief ingredient incorporated into the batter. In Louisiana they were called beignets, in the Midwest, dodgers, in the south fritters. They were often dipped into a sauce, or melted butter, or gravy, or drizzled with syrup or molasses. Savory fritters were side dishes, sweet fritters, deserts. Both the cymling (pattipan squash) fritter and the okra fritter were standard dishes of the early southern table.

Cymling Fritters

Squashes came to the southern table from the native nations of the southeast. Of the various indigenous varieties of *C. pepo* grown in the eastern half of the continent, northerners gravitated to the crookneck 'winter' squashes, southerners to the scalloped summer squashes which they called cymlings. The exterior shell of the cymling hardens as it matures. A Virginian of the Reconstruction Era advised, "In selecting cymlings take none that the thumb-nail cannot easily penetrate, and the white ones are preferable. Cut them into pieces, and boil in just enough water to cover them for about three-quarters of an hour, or until soft enough to mash." Cymlings were invariably boiled or fried as the first step in any dish. One of the great debates of the latter 19th-century concerning cooking squashes concerned whether to add bacon to the pot. Some thought it too greasy, others a necessary flavor additive. Since it does not appear in any surviving cymling fritter recipe, we sidestep the controversy.

After boiling and running through a colander, mix with an egg, season with salt, pepper, and butter, make into cakes and fry a light brown. Marion Cabell Tyree, *Housekeeping in Old Virginia* (Louisville: John P. Morton, 1879), p. 241.

Okra Fritters

#1

Cut the okra in very thin slices, almost as thin as a wafer, make a batter of flour, egg, and water, or a little milk; put the okra in with a little salt, and fry them in hot lard. Mrs. Sarah A. Elliott, Mrs. Elliott's *Housewife* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1870), p. 106

#2

Strain a quart already boiled, mash it smooth, and season with salt and pepper; beat in one or two eggs and add flour enough to thicken into a paste; fried as fritters, and served upon a napkin hot, as fried. Sarah Annie Frost, *Godey's Lady's Book Receipts and Household Hints* (Philadelphia: Evans, Stoddard Co., 1870), p. 184.

Desert

American Chestnut Pudding

Native to the mountain south, the American Chestnut for centuries served as a major food source for forest wildlife until the introduction of the fungal blight that decimated the species after 1904. In the 19th-century the roasted nuts were a favorite Christmas treat. Chestnut stuffing filled Thanksgiving Turkeys and Christmas Geese. Chestnut soup adorned the winter table of many southern homes. But the most refined dish prepared from the American Chestnut by southern cooks was chestnut pudding. The recipe derived from the Old World, found in both English and French cuisines, employing the European Sweet Chestnut. Because it often included rose water as an ingredient, one of the elements of 18th-century confectionary, Chestnut puddings tasted antique . . . traditional, and so found favor in those families that revered heritage. The version I have provided does without the rose-water, but captures the old taste of home.

Boil two dozen chestnuts, remove the shells, and rub the pulp through a sieve. Mix pulp with one-half pint of cream, two ounces of butter, three of loaf sugar, salt, and a teaspoon of vanilla. Stir these ingredients over a moderate fire until they thicken. As it thickens, increase the intensity of your stirring to prevent sticking and burning. When the preparation strips away from the sides of the pan easily, remove the pan from the heat, and add the well-beaten yolks of four eggs and the whites of three eggs whipped firm. Butter a mould and fill it with the mixture, fastening the cover securely. Steam for an hour and a half. When cooked, invert it on a

dish, pour some warm fig or apricot ham over it and serve.

Birds in Rice Fields

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Impoundments for rice production along the Carolina and Georgia coastline, drastically changed the local landscape and brought about a diversity ecosystem that attracted myriad aquatic organisms, including frogs, worms, snakes, and crustaceans, that provided food and habitat for a large number of birds. The rice field undergoes succession and shifts in plant species composition over time (Kelly 2005). Interestingly, although several dozen species of birds inhabit the rice ecosystem, only two actually damage the crop. Dr. David Shields reported on the "rice bird", which is actually a bobolink (figure 1), the most serious of rice pests during the major rice production period in the Charleston area (Shields 2008). Early planters timed the planting of their crops so as to minimize the impact of these migra-



tory rice feeders. The other bird, the Canada goose (figure 2), is a more recent pest of rice. We cultivate Carolina Gold and soon to be released 'Charleston Gold' at Clemson University's Coastal Research and Education Center on Savannah Highway in Charleston, SC. The geese come in flocks of a dozen or



more and attack the crop shortly after the rice seed germinate, devouring the young seedlings. The geese have adapted to the local environments, because of holding ponds and lakes in subdivisions (and because of feeding by residents) and stay in the area all year round, not following their usual behavior of migrating south during winter. In 2008, Canada geese destroyed about a 20 square meter area in a field of Carolina Gold rice on the Clemson University Experimental farm.

Most other bird species that are attracted to rice fields, both old and new, are not pests but are part of the essential fabric of this ecosystem. They also provide endless opportunities for birdwatchers and naturalists to observe them. A good example of an old rice field is typified by the abandoned rice fields at the Caw Caw Interpretive Center on Savannah Highway near Ravenel, SC. Caw Caw is a 654 acre property, formerly a rice plantation that flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries. The earthen dikes and water control devices are still in place and the impoundments and adjacent areas provide habitat to at least 251 bird species. Some birds are seasonal, others are not so common but the list is an example of the amazing diversity and richness of species that occur in abandoned rice fields.

The unique element of the rice field (old or new) is water. This not only provides an ideal habitat for colonizing plants but also attracts a large number of aquatic animal species including insects. The abandoned rice plantations also produce communities of plants along the edges of impoundments that provide an ideal habitat for many bird species such as the common yellow-throat, king rail, least bittern, and many others. This article will provide a small photographic glimpse at a few of the more commonly encountered bird species in rice fields in current production and in abandoned rice fields. There are dozens of other species, not included here, that have adapted to the edge habitat that adjoins rice impoundments. As we admire the rich species diversity of the avifauna, we are still enjoying the fruits of the labor of early rice planters and people who supported the enterprise of rice production.

Birds found in rice paddies

Great Blue Heron
Little Blue Heron
Tri-colored Heron
Green Heron
Black-Crowned Night Heron
Yellow-Crowned Night Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Cattle Egret
Wood Stork
White Ibis
Greater Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper

Wood Duck
Mottled Duck

Hooded Merganser
Bufflehead
Blue-winged Teal
Pied-billed Grebe
Ring-necked Duck
Northern Pintail
Anhinga
Double-crested Cormorant

Birds that feed on rice

Bobolink
Canada Goose
House Finch

Pushing Back the Roots of America's Conservationist Writing: Agricultural Reform Literature of the Antebellum Era

Before the Civil War, specifically from 1820-1860, the number of agricultural journals published in the United States proliferated into the hundreds. Begun in 1819, the *American Farmer* printed in Baltimore, Maryland figured as the pioneer of these farm papers and forged what would become a transnational exchange of knowledge, ideas, observations, essays, public addresses, and editorials on all facets of agriculture, including the preparation and consumption of food. Though many of these journals circulated only for a few years, others would cultivate a substantial subscription base over a period of decades. What propelled the fomentation of these agricultural publications, and what message did they seek to convey to their readers—farmers?

Already at the birth of the American Republic did the nation's leaders (many of whom farmed) write and speak about the depleted soils rendering eastern farms (particularly in the mid-atlantic and southern regions) less and less productive. The long-held traditions of planting in monocultures of tobacco and cotton, fallowing instead of manuring and rotating crops, plowing vertically on hillsides, and planting the same crop on the same land year after year left much of the nation's farmland eroded or exhausted. The call to farmers to restore these "worn out lands" with what the agricultural improvers promoted variably as "the new husbandry," "scientific agriculture," and "book farming" served as the mantra of the new age of agricultural reform led by the editors and contributing writers whose experience, expertise, innovation, and vision would promulgate the economic, ecological, political, and moral imperatives of sustaining farms and farming far into the future. Given the primacy these conservationists assigned to practices of restoring and

sustaining the soil as the basis for sustainable agriculture, we might consider the corpus of these agricultural journals as America's first conservation writing in an era predating national programs and policies set forth decades later to conserve and protect wilderness lands. The most articulate of these agricultural writers were no less committed to (and eloquent at) conserving and restoring natural resources than were the likes of Henry Thoreau and John Muir, figures whom we more readily recognize as founders of American environmentalism. Even the poetry commonly featured in the farm papers conveyed moral lessons and practical instruction, and often exonerated the farmer as national hero. Some poets put recipes into verse, such as "Recipe for Making Sweet-Potato Pudding" and "Pudding and Beans" featured in the *New England Farmer* in 1833 and 1838 respectively.

Among the most strident and articulate of the editors of the farm press, Jesse Buel—also a judge and a farmer—wrote in 1838 that "we should consider our soil as we do our free institutions, a *patrimonial trust to be handed down, unimpaired, to posterity; to be used, but not abused.*" The health of the nation's soil and citizenry formed an interdependent relationship. To carry out the the mission to preserve farming as the nation's economic and cultural foundation, the agricultural "improvers" as they were often called enlisted farmers (and especially those with some facility with the pen) to experiment, observe, record, and report on field trials with the latest thinking and practices involving but not limited to crop rotations, manuring, new seed varieties, soil analysis, and plowing techniques and implements. These journals exhorted farmers to acquire knowledge of the various branches of the natural sciences and to subscribe and contribute to the agricultural journal published in their respective regions as a means to increasing the productivity of their farms and, by doing so, advancing the state and status of the nation's agriculture in general. Among the most important of the agricultural papers include *The Cultivator* published in Albany New York, the *New England Farmer* of Boston, the *Genesee Farmer* of Rochester, the *Southern Agriculturist* of Columbia, South Carolina, the *Farmer's Register* of Petersburg, Virginia, the *Southern Planter* of Richmond, Virginia, and the *Southern Cultivator* of Augusta, Georgia.

Despite the high moral grandeur and visionary zeal characteristic of the agricultural journals of the time given to sustaining the vitality of the soil and the farm, they were equally devoted to enlightening readers to the proliferation of new and novel varieties of grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes. Correspondents regularly shared their judgments of particular varieties for taste, resistance to pests and disease, productivity, and marketability—including rice. Among the major farm journals of the era, the *Southern Agriculturist* most prominently featured essays, reports, queries, and responses disputing or promoting all conceivable aspects of rice cultivation, including the merits and vagaries of particular seed varieties, harvesting methods, sowing and irrigation

regimes, manuring, rotations, marketing, international trade, and recipes. Featured in an 1828 issue of the *Southern Cultivator* is Thomas Pinckney's experiment to free his fields of what many rice planters at the time relentlessly struggled to eradicate: "volunteer rice." Pinckney reports variable success by having planted sections of a rice field in wheat, barley, oats, flax, slip potatoes, cowpeas, and the garden pea. Of these crops, barley, oats, and flax most effectively eradicated volunteer rice. The *Southern Agriculturist* the same year featured the recommendations of Charles E. Rowand to rice planters to alternate planting their rice fields in cotton, corn, barley, or oats. Possibly the most pioneering of rice planters and one of the few who rotated crops as a matter of course, James Hamilton Couper reports in an 1833 issue of the *Southern Agriculturist* increasing his plantation's productivity by following a rotation regime of sowing cowpeas followed by sugarcane, cotton, and rice over six successive years. He also intercropped cotton, peas, and corn on other fields. Other crops reported by southern farmers and planters as improvers of the soil include sweet potatoes, "pinders," or peanuts, "skinless oats," buckwheat, and rye.

Not only did certain of the more forward-thinking rice planters rotate crops and intercrop to increase the soil's fertility, they also did so as a means to staving off the "volunteer rice" or "red rice" that regularly plagued rice fields by assessing, changing, and managing soil chemistry—a central focus of the "scientific farming" promoted in the agricultural improvement literature. In 1828, Charles Munterly writes, "Rice land that possesses any ill quality, or much polluted with volunteer Rice, I think could be greatly improved, by planting it a year in dry culture." In the same year and journal (*Southern Agriculturist*), Roswell King claims that "A rotation of crops is necessary to make large crops of Rice [. . .] as well as to eradicate the water grass and volunteer Rice." Another correspondent in 1833 provides a detailed account of his success with keeping his fields clear of volunteer rice by sowing oats and slips (potatoes) alternately twice a year for two years, as Edward T. Heriot's written account of his experiment with this rotation eleven years later would confirm. Other methods of eradication included the use of various manures and irrigation regimes. The question arises, how did these planters know how to eradicate volunteer rice without destroying the commodity rice varieties intended for cultivation? Surprisingly, their accounts provide us little or no explanation.

In the bigger picture, how did the agricultural journals as a whole change American agriculture? While it may be impossible to ascertain their impact apart from the broader realm of the agricultural reform movement of the time that included not only the journals but the activities of agricultural societies and "fairs," farm manuals, and other non-print efforts, we can trace their influence upon the formation of agricultural colleges, the creation of the United States Department of Agriculture in 1862,

and the mechanization and industrialization of agriculture that have increased efficiency and productivity but, in retrospect, have compromised the ecological sustainability of modern agriculture. Yet given their reliance upon organic manures before the age of chemical fertilizers—and our own age in which their use has spawned a return to "organic" farming, we might learn from what the early nineteenth-century agriculturists had to say about farming and food. And too, we might incorporate their writing into America's canon of environmental literature and the knowledge and wisdom found there into our culture of growing and eating food.

(Special Note)

Last Spring, the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation awarded a grant to Stephen Spratt, a Ph.D. student of American Literature at the University of South Carolina, to research the major agricultural journals in circulation from 1819 to 1860 and extract articles on crop rotations and on varieties of grains, legumes, and peas. These findings will soon be accessible as PDF documents in the Foundation's archives.

Stephen's dissertation explores the mediating force which the agricultural press and the larger "print" world of agricultural writing exerted upon the imaginary and literal field of agriculture from the age of Thomas Jefferson and Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur to the eve of the Civil War.

Searching the Origins of Carolina Gold

Biologist and rice historian Richard Porcher, Professor emeritus of Biology at the Citadel, discovered in summer of 2009 the plats describing the Pineville Rice plantation of Col. Hezekiah Mayham. Mayham, the first planter to grow Gold Seed rice in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina, was one of the two planters whose name is linked by early rice historians with the introduction of Carolina Gold to the Lowcountry in the wake of the American Revolution. With the support of the Carolina Gold Rice Foundation, Porcher and University of Georgia graduate student Hayden Smith, plans to conduct a preliminary archaeological survey of the site to retrieve seeds and plant matter. Rice geneticist Anna McClung of the USDA has been able to extract DNA from single rice grains in the past and has indicated a willingness to perform similar analysis on whatever is extracted from Mayham's plantation.

Securing the primordial Gold seed from Mayham's upland rice fields would be greatly revealing for several reasons. Mayham's rice strains would eventually serve as the founding seed from which Joshua John Ward, the greatest and most experimental of the antebellum rice planters, developed his world famous long grain version of Carolina Gold. During the brief twenty year period from 1840 to 1861 when

that variety was cultivated, it commanded this highest price of any rice on the world market in Paris and London. It is an ambition of the CRG Foundation to genetically recreate the long Gold variety in the next decade.

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