CULINARY HISTORIANS OF ANN ARBOR

Winter Participatory Meal

A Washtenaw County Bicentennial Feast

SUNDAY, December 6, 2026 – 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club of Ypsilanti
218 North Washington Street
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

Dutch immigrant Clara Bakker in the 1970s in her uniform as cook for University of Michigan President Robben Fleming. Her cookies were a favorite at The President's House.

The year 2026 marks the bicentennial of the founding of Washtenaw County— the county that includes the cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Dexter, Saline, Chelsea, and Manchester. From cookbooks by the learned Dr. Chase to plates piled high with food at The Bomber Restaurant or Zingerman's Deli, there's a lot to chew on around here!

Let's do this anniversary right by coming together with dishes that we've prepared to celebrate the occasion, dishes enjoyed at various stages of local history. By the way, this year is also the 325th anniversary, or "quasquitricentennial", of the founding of the city of Detroit— so if some folks bring dishes celebrating that multicultural mecca of cuisine, far be it from us to frown!

In downtown A2, the Museum on Main Street is hosting an exhibit this Fall exploring the Washtenaw bicentennial. The county's rich history and its foodways were shaped by its earliest farm families and college campuses, and later by migrants from the South, immigrants from overseas, and the work of upscale restaurants and chefs.

See page 3 for more information and resources to help you select and prepare your dishes. .

Please bring a copy of your recipe and any other information

to help with Randy's article for REPAST.

$5.00 per member, $10 non-member guest

Table service and non-alcoholic beverages provided.

RESERVATION PROCEDURE for
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>>> Email all relevant information to Phil Zaret at:
pmzaret@comcast.net

- I will enter your information into a spreadsheet, which you can access **with this link** or this QR code. You will be able to see what dishes others are bringing, so we can coordinate the meal.
- Fee for members is $5 per person; fee for guests is $10 per person.
- Please **bring a check or cash to the meal**. Make the check out to "CHAA". If cash, put in an envelope with your name on it.
- Give check or cash to Phil or Barbara Zaret.
- Direct questions at any time to Phil Zaret, 734-665-2141 or email (or call Jenny Taylor, caretaker, at 734-482-7615).

Please email this information:

1. Members' Names
2. Guests' Names
3. E-mail address(es)
4. Phone number(s)
5. Name of Dish(es)
6. Type of Dish or Dishes. For example: Appetizer, Entrée, Dessert, etc.
7. Source of recipe: Book title & publication info, website with URL, etc.
8. Please include recipes and any other information you have about your dish and/or bring it to the meal to help with Randy's article for REPAST.
9. Let us know if you would like to help out with decorations or a centerpiece. We will contact you as the date approaches.

. Background on the County's History

With the arrival of the first Euro-American settlers via the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, the fields and streams of Washtenaw County proved to be prime areas for the growing and milling of grain and the raising of livestock. The siting of the University of Michigan in 1837 and of Michigan State Normal School (now EMU) in 1849 created college towns flush with professional people and sophisticated tastes, surrounded by bountiful crops and orchards.

The county played an important role as a spot along the Underground Railroad and the subsequent settlement of African American freedmen. During World War 2, Ford's Willow Run Bomber Plant and other factories in the Ypsilanti area attracted new waves of Southerners and transformed them into families of industrial laborers.

Immigration from overseas brought people of German, Greek, Italian, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Hispanic heritage, many of whom founded eateries and popularized "foreign" dishes. More recently, upscale restaurants like L'Escoffier and Zingerman's, and leading chefs such as Rick Bayless and Eve Aronoff, fostered the growth of a whole new way of looking at the world of food.

Resources to Help You Select and Prepare Your Dishes

1. The Ann Arbor District Library (AADL) has an open-access digital archive of 14 historical cookbooks that were locally published between 1899 and 1980, or in some cases just cookbooks that were frequently used locally. At https://aadl.org/cooks you can browse the whole collection via an index of recipes, while at https://aadl.org/taxonomy/term/439 you can browse any one of the cookbooks.

2. The AADL also maintains a list of 22 "Ann Arbor Related Cookbooks" at https://aadl.org/user/lists/7803. Many can be checked out from its collection, such as Simon Pesusich's *Mainstreet Ventures: Distinctive Recipes from Distinctive Eateries* (2005).

3. Fundraising cookbooks were published by ladies' auxiliaries of local churches, service organizations, and labor unions, such as:

   - Ladies' Aid Society of the [First] Congregational Church, *The Ann Arbor Cook Book* includes corn salad, marguerites, hollandaise chicken, beef ragout, etc.
     https://aadl.org/cooks/1899AACookbook first edition, 1899
     https://aadl.org/cooks/AACookbook second edition, 1904

   - Ypsilanti Chapter No. 119, Order of the Eastern Star, *Eastern Star Cook Book* (1923) includes Glazed Sweet Potatoes, an oven-baked Breaded Cheese Dish, Pigs in Blanket, etc.
     https://aadl.org/cooks/easternstar

   - Ann Arbor Ladies Auxiliary No. 195, National Association of Letter Carriers, *The Domestic Guide* (1937) includes dishes like Pistachio Mousse and Spiced Red Salmon.
     https://aadl.org/cooks/domestic

4. Dr. A. W. Chase (1817 – 1885) of Ann Arbor published a series of very popular recipe and household books. They include dishes such as German Style Toast, Mock Oysters, Indian Pudding, Currant Catchup, and Molasses Cake. Two volumes are available online:

   - *Dr. Chase's Recipes, or, Information for Everybody* (1864)
     https://d.lib.msu.edu/fa/12?q=chase

continued

- *Dr. Chase's Family Physician, Farrier, Bee-keeper, and Second Receipt Book* (1873) https://www.google.com/books/edition/Dr_Chase_s_Family_Physician_Farrier_Bee/Yo1BAQAAMAAJ

5. Ella E. Hall, *The Ella E. Hall Recipe Book* (2026), is the edited manuscript of a journal of favorite recipes collected during 1920-39 by Mrs. Hall, a Black cook and landlord in Ann Arbor. It is freely downloadable in PDF format: https://www.fulcrum.org/concern/monographs/tq57nv37v.

6. Saline Area Historical Society, *The Herman & Elsa Rentschler Family Cookbook*, Third Printing (2006), has 132 pages of indexed family recipes reflecting local German-American cooking and baking during the Great Depression era.

7. Grace Kikuchi's *Tofu Recipes* (1974), self-published and printed in Ann Arbor, has 28 recipes and was the first book in the U.S. devoted strictly to tofu.

8. Cookbooks have been issued by local food purveyors, such as:

   - Chelsea Milling Co., *"JIFFY" Mixes Recipe Book* which has gone through many editions. The latest is available free, in print, via postal mail (https://www.jiffymix.com/recipes/recipe-book/), and a version is viewable online (https://www.jiffymix.com/recipes/online-recipe-book/).

   - Katherine Merkel Koziski, *The Dexter Cider Mill Apple Cookbook* (1995)

   - Amy Emberling and Frank Carollo, *Zingerman's Bakehouse Cookbook* (2017) includes Jewish rye, challah, their famous sour cream coffee cake, rugelach, brownies, and 60 more.

9. Other categories of food that fit into the theme:

   - favorite dishes of local celebrity foodies, such as Sara Moulton, Ruth Reichl, Joan Nathan, Rick Bayless, Ari Weinzweig, and Jan Longone

   - favorite dishes of other local notables such as mayors and university presidents and professors

   - dishes served at celebrated restaurants in Ypsilanti (such as Haab's, The Bomber, Chick Inn, The Sidetrack), in Ann Arbor (such as Lord Fox, Pretzel Bell, The Rubaiyat, DeLong's Barbecue Pit, Real Seafood Co., The Moveable Feast, L'Escoffier), in Chelsea (The Common Grill), etc.

   - dishes popular at meeting halls and social places such as fraternities and sororities, Elks Lodge, Moose Lodge, Masonic Hall, Schwaben Verein, and German Park

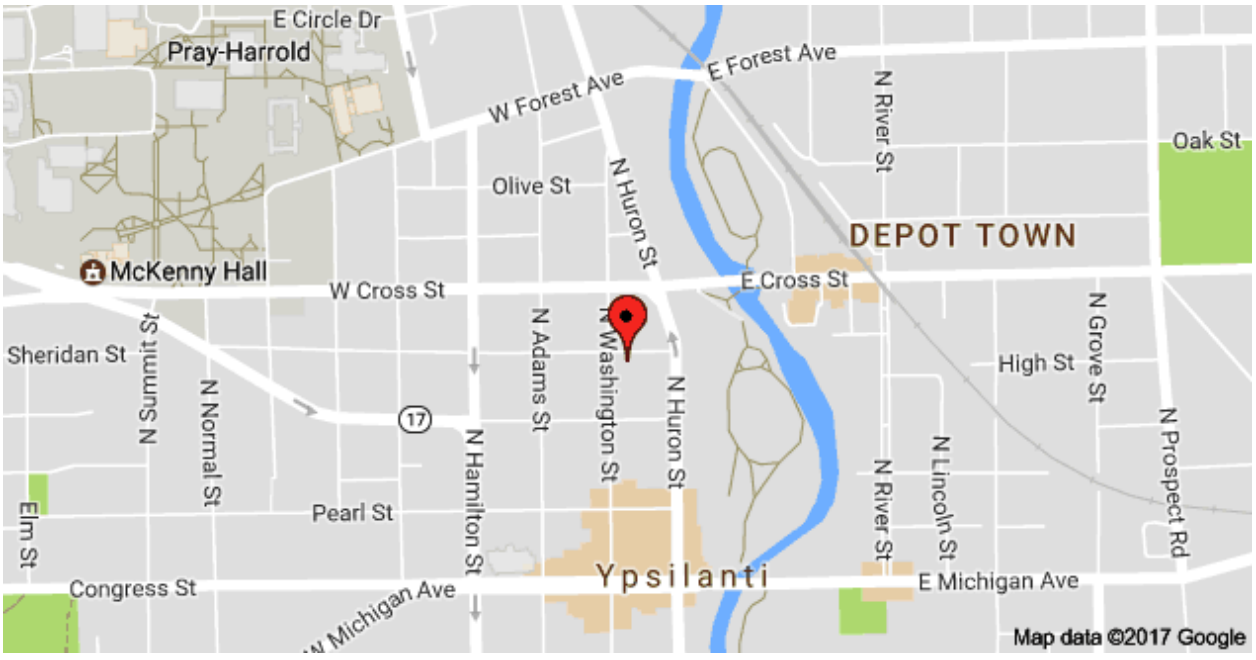
   - food in student dorms, in student housing co-ops, or sold at local food co-ops such as the People's Food Co-op (Ann Arbor) and the Ypsilanti Food Cooperative.

Directions to the Ladies' Literary Club
218 N Washington St
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

From I-94:

1. Take Exit 183 for Huron Street. Turn North toward Ypsilanti on Huron Street.
2. Drive about 1 mile on Huron Street. Turn left onto Pearl Street (the first left after crossing Michigan Avenue)
3. Take the first right onto N. Washington Street. The Ladies' Literary Club is on the right, at the SE corner of the second intersection.

From Washtenaw Avenue and US-23:

1. Go east on Washtenaw Avenue about 4 miles, to the Ypsilanti Water Tower.
4. Continue three blocks on Washtenaw Avenue. There is a stop sign at Hamilton Street (where M-17 south toward Michigan Avenue); continue STRAIGHT on Washtenaw, which becomes a two-way street. Take the second left, onto N. Washington Street. The Ladies' Literary Club is on the right, at the SE corner of the first intersection.

Parking: There are about 15 spaces adjoining the Ladies' Literary Club. Turn right onto Emmet Street. Park either on Emmet Street, or continue on and turn right into the parking lot behind the Club. There are also spaces available at the First Presbyterian Church Parking Lot (the Presbyterian Church is just across Emmet Street from the LLC; the parking lot is just north of the church off Washington Street).