FOODS IN COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA: 1742-1775

By

MARY E. BEARD DEWHITT

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Oklahoma State University

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Thesis Approved:

Theodore L. Agnew
Thesis Adviser

Homer L. Knight

D. Durham
Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

This thesis was an examination of the printed personal papers of individuals who resided in the North American colonies. It was necessary to leaf through thousands of pages of these materials to find the information about foods that is contained in this study. These findings were compared and examined to see what was the writers' collective opinion of the diet and the quality of foods in North America.

I would like to express my appreciation to the people who were most helpful in the process of the research and writing of this study. Foremost is my mother, Mrs. Mary E. Beard, without whose example and constant support this study would have never been attempted. The unfailing patience of my thesis adviser, Dr. Theodore Agnew, and my committee member, Dr. Homer Knight, has been unmatched. I also would like to thank the librarians at Oklahoma State University and Emory University for their cooperation. Mrs. Creasia Stone typed the final copy. Finally, I express my appreciation to my husband, Ben, without whose confidence and sacrificed vacations this thesis would never have been finished.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Food has usually been ignored by historians of colonial "culture." Professor Max Savelle was once asked about including a chapter on food in his book, Seeds of Liberty. He emphatically refused, stating that he was writing about the colonial mind, and not the colonial stomach.[1] Louis B. Wright's The Cultural Life of the American Colonies, 1607-1763,[2] and Russel B. Nye's The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830,[3] do not include food as topics, although Wright does note that the first colonists' adaptation included learning to eat Chesapeake Bay oysters.[4] These authors' definition of culture was evidently "the enlightenment and refinement of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training," rather than "a particular stage of advancement in civilization or the characteristic features of such a stage or

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[1] Cyclone Covey, Stillwater, Oklahoma; personal interview at Oklahoma State University Library, April, 1966. Professor Covey wrote the chapter on music that was included in the book Seeds of Liberty: The Genesis of the American Mind (New York, 1948), by Max Savelle.

[2] Louis B. Wright, The Cultural Life of the American Colonies, 1607-1763 (New York, 1962). Hereafter cited Wright, Cultural Life.

[3] Russel Blaine Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York, 1963).

[4] Wright, Cultural Life, p. 2.

state."[5] Choice of foods and modes of preparation are a "characteristic feature of ...a stage." Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, then Professor of American History at Princeton, believed that colonial culture was "shaped by four great factors ...foreign inheritance, local conditions, continued contact with Europe, and the melting pot," and that it "was profoundly affected by the soil, the climate, [and] the harbors of the region."[6] It may be said that these factors directly affected the food of the colonial inhabitant at least as much as they did the furniture, silverware, architecture, and bookstores that were discussed in Wertenbaker's book, The Golden Age of Colonial Culture.[7]

Food was of paramount importance to the first colonists in North America, a fact pointed out by some historians. The comments in two college textbooks, Colonial America by Oscar T. Barck, Jr., and Hugh T. Lefler,[8] and A History of Colonial America by Oliver Perry Chitwood[9] are typical. Barck and Lefler stated, for example, that the Kennebec Colony, which was on the New England coast near the mouth of the Sagadahoc River, failed for several reasons, with "constant scarcity of food" being first on the list.[10]

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[5] Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (2d ed.; Cambridge, 1960), p. 202.

[6] Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, The Golden Age of Colonial Culture (New York, 1942), pp. 5, 8.

[7] Ibid., passim.

[8] Oscar Theodore Barck, Jr. and Hugh Talmage Lefler, Colonial America (New York, 1965).

[9] Oliver Perry Chitwood, A History of Colonial America, (2nd ed.; New York, 1948).

[10] Barck and Lefler, pp. 37-38.

In their evaluation of the problems of early Jamestown settlement they described the initial three years as a period of "weakness, confusion, controversy, disease, starvation, and death."[11] Some of the fault they attributed to the planners, for most of the supplies were provided by the company, including foods not raised in Virginia.[12] Chitwood dwelt on the subject of foods in much greater detail. He thought the only "substantial contribution to civilization" that the Indians made was to teach the "newcomers" to grow corn and tobacco.[13] The problems of the early Jamestown settlement were magnified by the threat of Indians, who "restrained" the colonists from "the activities that were necessary to procure an adequate food supply." The forest and streams were teeming with game and fish, but fear of Indian attack "prevented their taking full advantage of the sources of food."[14] Chitwood continued his discussion of the role of food in the colony until after the "Starving Time" during the winter of 1609-1610.[15] Thereafter he included no further detailed discussion of food until his summary chapter on culture in the colonies before the American Revolution.[16] As the colonists' existence became less precarious and the problems of food supply were joined by other challenges, historians' interest in the

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[11] Ibid., p. 38.

[12] Ibid., p. 40.

[13] Chitwood, p. 19.

[14] Ibid., p. 68.

[15] Ibid., pp. 68-76.

[16] Ibid., pp. 588-589.

topic of food appears to decline.

Later colonists benefited by experience until food was no longer in short and erratic supply for most of the population. Trade routes and agricultural practices had been developed to provide a great variety of foods to those who could afford them. Residents of port cities found it easier to procure this variety than those in the interior like the Indian trader and later Indian Commissioner of New York, Sir William Johnson, who had to arrange for transportation of many foods, or pay for the efforts of others who undertook the task. A British fusilier, Lieutenant Frederick MacKenzie, included in his list of foods available in the New York City market of June, 1773, pineapples, limes, and turtles, brought "constantly" from the West Indies, and many vegetables including lettuce, peas, beans, cabbages, kidney beans, asparagus, and cucumbers. He was amazed at the variety of fish, including several kinds new to him, and noted that beef, mutton, veal, lamb, chickens, and ducks were killed for market each morning. He and a friend bought a variety of foods, including lobsters, cherries, and strawberries.[17] Johnson's agents sent him "Glocester" cheese, oranges, limes, and dried English Black Heart Cherries.[18] The Swedish naturalist, Peter Kalm, visited a Quebec convent of "considerable" revenues, where he was served "small sugared lemons

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[17] Allen French, ed., A British Fusilier in Revolutionary Boston (Cambridge, 1926), pp. 9, 17-18.

[18] Alexander C. Flick, ed., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, Vol. VI, VII (Albany, 1928-1931). For a discussion of Gloucester cheese see Vivienne Marquiz and Patricia Haskell, The Cheese Book (New York, 1965), pp. 102-105.

from the West Indies," among other dainties.[19] Two Virginia residents, Philip Vickers Fithian and John Harrower, described varied diets in their writings.[20] These examples show clearly that a great diversity of food was available in colonial North America. While some foods were seasonal, others were preserved or imported for year-round consumption. Mere subsistence was no longer the principal consideration in the choice of foods, for most colonial residents.

The maturity of American colonial culture, according to Professor Savelle, "crystallized in the self-conscious, national self-realization that flowered...at the mid-century."[21] Judgments as to this maturity were made by colonial visitors and citizens on all cultural topics, including architecture, town planning, music, art, styles of dress, religious and political knowledge, transportation, and foods. This study attempts to isolate the contemporary descriptions of and judgments about food by examining the letters, diaries, and journals of persons in North America between 1742 and 1775. The first date was chosen because it was the year of the first recorded publication of

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[19]Adolph B. Benson, ed. and trans., Peter Kalm's Travels in North America, Vol. II (New York, 1937), p. 455.

[20]Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773-1774 (Williamsburg, 1957), pp. 2, 35, 39, 141, 171, 178. Edward Miles Riley, ed., The Journal of John Harrower; An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773-1776 (Williamsburg, 1963), p. 56.

[21]Savelle, p. xi.

a cookbook in English in the colonies, The Compleat Housewife by E. Smith.[22] It was a popular English cookbook, for the eleventh edition was printed in London in 1742.[23] Printed in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1742 and 1752, and in New York in 1761 and 1764, it was the most frequently published colonial cookbook.[24] Several others were published during this period of "self-realization." Susannah Carter's The Frugal Housewife was printed in Boston in 1772 and 1774.[25] A Present for A Serving Maid, by Eliza (Fowler) Haywood, and The Servants Directory by Hannah Glasse, were published in 1747 and 1760, respectively, for a total of eight printings of the four books.[26] The market for these books reflected an increased awareness of social standards in the cooking and serving of foods, and desire for the medicinal information included in them. The year 1775 closes this study, as the last full year under colonial rule.

Food was not of great concern to many colonial people. Benjamin Franklin wrote in his Autobiography that in his boyhood home,

> Little or no Notice was ever takin of what related to the Victuals on the Table, whether it was well or ill drest, in or out of season, of good or bad flavour, preferable or inferior to this or that other thing of

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[22]Charles Evans, American Bibliography: A Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States of America: From the Genesis of Printing in 1639 Down to and Including the Year 1820; With Bibliographical and Biographical Notes, (2d printing, New York, 1941).

[23]Great Britian, British Museum, British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books (London, 1964), col. 180.

[24]Evans, II, no. 5061; III, nos. 6934, 9010, 9840.

[25]Ibid., IV, no. 12348; V, no. 13186.

[26]Ibid., II, no. 5964; III, no. 8607.

> the kind; so that I was bro't up in such a perfect Inattention of these Matters as to be quite Indifferent what kind of Food was set before me; and so unobservant of it, that to this Day, if I am ask'd I can scarce tell, a few Hours after Dinner, what I din'd upon.[27]

While he did not quite live up to his description of "inattention," Franklin was among the majority of persons who did not write of food often or at great length. There were people whose interest in food went to the opposite extreme. John Adams, for example, wrote from New York in August, 1774:

> The way we have been in, of breakfasting, dining drinking Coffee &c. about the City is very disagreeable on some Accounts. Although it introduces us to the Acquaintance of many respectable People here, yet it hinders us from seeing the colledge, the Churches, the Printers offices and Booksellers Shops and many other Things which we should choose to see.[28]

Most of the other writers fell between the extremes of Franklin and Adams in their attention to foods. A composite picture of these writers would show a male adult of European origin or extraction. He was educated, active, traveled, and lived in an area different from the place of his birth. He was interested in the world and the people around him, and kept a journal to chronicle the events of his daily life. Of course not all the authors of the sources fit into this picture, but all had some of these traits. Grouped, they can be separated into three categories:

1. Travelers or newly arrived residents who wrote to tell their families or friends about the food in unfamiliar

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[27] Leonard W. Labaree, ed., The Autiobiography of Benjamin Franklin (New Haven, 1964), p. 55. Hereafter cited Labaree, Franklin.

[28] L. H. Butterfield, ed., Diary and Autiobiography of John Adams, Vol. II (Cambridge, 1961), p. 109.

places.
2. People writing for publication.
3. Persons to whom getting food was a problem.

The first included the largest number of references, but many contained little information. Many of these sources were isolated letters that had survived the years. Kalm was the most important person in the second group, although Adams also published a few notes on foods. The third category included Johnson, who had to rely on agents to purchase and transport foods for him, and several wilderness travelers who depended to varying degrees on foraging or hunting for sustenance.

The most complete secondary-source discussion of the foods of the colonists was in Alice Morse Earle's Home Life in Colonial Days.[29] The book was not principally concerned with food, but examined many topics related to the home, including lighting, dress, travel, transportation, taverns, flower gardens, and the observance of Sunday. There were three chapters about foods, "Foods from Forest and Sea," "Indian Corn," and "Meat and Drink." Two other chapters concern related matters, "The Kitchen Fireside," and "The Serving of Meals."

Mrs. Earle's broad interests in the field of colonial social and cultural life resulted in the publication of several books which have been cited by later historians. In his Everyday Things in American Life, 1602 to 1776, William Chauncy Langdon relied on Mrs. Earle's Home Life in Colonial Days for his scattered casual references

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[29]Alice Morse Earle, Home Life in Colonial Days (New York, 1909). Hereafter cited Earle, Home Life.

to food.[30] Curtis P. Nettels' textbook The Roots of American Civilization referred to her writings on family life and customs, but dealt with foods only as items of trade.[31] In the select bibliography to his Society and Thought in Early America Harvey Wish wrote, "Considerable social history in a simple narrative form appears in Alice M. Earle, Colonial Days in Old New York... and her Home Life in Colonial Days... ."[32] More recently a study of women's roles in Colonial America, The Dear-Bought Heritage by Eugenie Leonard, included ten of Mrs. Earle's books in the bibliography, among them Home Life in Colonial Days.[33]

When compared with other studies of colonial life, Mrs. Earle's three chapters on food contain a wealth of information. Michael Kraus' Intercolonial Aspects of American Culture on the Eve of the Revolution contained but one reference to food.[34] Harry J. Carman, in his Social and Economic History of the United States, merely stated that food was abundant in the south, and that the northerners produced

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[30]William Chauncy Langdon, Everyday Things in American Life, Vol. I (New York, 1937), p. 335.

[31]Curtis P. Nettels, The Roots of American Civilization (New York, 1938). Mrs. Earle's works are not discussed in the bibliographies, but footnotes on pages 445, 447, 463, 464, and 500 refer to five of her works, including Home Life in Colonial Days.

[32]Harvey Wish, Society and Thought in Early America: Vol. I; A Social and Intellectual History of the American People Through 1865 (1962 ed., New York, 1962), p. 580.

[33]Eugenie Andruss Leonard, The Dear-Bought Heritage (Philadelphia, 1965).

[34]Michael Kraus, Intercolonial Aspects of American Culture on the Eve of the Revolution: With Special Reference to the Northern Towns (New York, 1928), p. 49.

almost all of their "plain" foods.[35] In a two volume work, Men, Women & Manners in Colonial Times, Sydney George Fisher glorified the "greatness and beauty" of colonial life, but gave little attenion to foods.[36] These and earlier mentioned works were representative of the treatment, or lack of study, of foods. The only historical work found that was devoted largely to this subject was The American and His Food, by Richard Osborn Cummings.[37] Mr. Cummings' book was concerned with diet as it affected the health and physical development of citizens of the United States, and did not deal with the colonial years.

The chapters on foods within Earle's Home Life in Colonial Days were not intended to be a thorough discussion of the components of colonial diet. They contained only passing references to imported foods, and the dishes served at mealtimes were not described in detail, except for the Indian foods adopted by colonials. Much of the information was concerned with supply, gathering procedures, and the preservation of staples such as pork, corn, and fish. Mrs. Earle made passing mention of green vegetables or fruits other than apples. Because of this mixture of materials no comprehensive picture of colonial meals or diet emerged from her writings. While, as a contemporary reviewer noted, Mrs. Earle's writings "all deal with facts, wholly apart from the creations of fancy," she did treat the years

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[35]Harry J. Carman, Social and Economic History of the United States: Vol. I; From Handicraft to Factory, 1500-1820 (Boston, 1930).

[36]Sydney George Fisher, Men, Women & Manners in Colonial Times, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1898).

[37]Richard Osborn Cummings, The American and His Food: A History of Food Habits in the United States (Chicago, 1941).

from 1615 to 1787 as a single unit. Her books were written for the general reading public about the turn of the century, and contained neither footnotes nor bibliography. She sometimes included dates and scources in her text, but usually one or both were missing. General acceptance of her books as basic references, despite these flaws and their general nature, points to the need for further scholarly historical research into the role of foods in colonial life.

CHAPTER II

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON FOODS

Food, as one of the many cultural expressions of the colonists, was viewed with interest by visitors and others who were trying to picture life in North America. The manner of food preparation and the style in which foods were presented were both of great importance in the judgments of colonial life. Princess Augusta of England, for example, expressed her interest in questions about styles of houses, serving of wines, and the "manner of eating and dressing turtle..." when South Carolina native Eliza Pinckney had an audience with her.[1] John Adams was sure that Boston was culturally superior to Philadelphia in morality, racial purity, education, language, law, and religion, but he wrote of the Philadelphians' foods with great admiration.[2] While many variables affected the choices of foods and styles of preparation, social and ethnic backgrounds, affluence, and proximity to markets or supplies were among the most important. These cultural factors, as mentioned by the available sources, will be discussed in this chapter.

The people whose writings provided source materials for this

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[1] Harriott Horry Ravenel, Eliza Pinckney (New York, 1896), p. 152.

[2] Butterfield, II, p. 150.

study were a varied group. They included a physician, two tutors of greatly differing backgrounds, a school girl, an English adventurer, a Moravian journeying to settle in the interior, an army recruiter, a Lieutenant in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, a Swedish botanist, and three men who were later to become Presidents of the United States of America. Short sketches about those writers who were most concerned with foods are included as background for the information their writings provide.

Persons who were traveling in areas new to them wrote most frequently about food. Nicholas Cresswell and Dr. Alexander Hamilton both wrote of many aspects of life as they saw it. Cresswell was a Derbyshire native who immigrated to the colonies. His journal for the years 1774-1775 contained detailed descriptions of foods eaten while he was in the wilderness of Virginia and Maryland.[3] Hamilton's journal covered the summer of 1744, when he traveled from Maryland to Maine and returned. A university-trained physician from Scotland, Hamilton had lived in Annapolis, Maryland, since 1739. Almost all aspects of colonial life were noted in his "Itinerarium," including politics, town planning, religion, clubs, fashions in dress, the beauty and charm (or lack thereof) of the ladies, as well as the foods he ate as he traveled.[4] Three others who were all newly arrived in temporary residences also wrote extensively about the foods they ate,

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[3]Samuel Thornely, ed., The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-1778 (New York, 1924).

[4]Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744 (Williamsburg, 1948), pp. xii-xiii. Hereafter cited Bridenbaugh, Progress.

Philip Vickers Fithian, John Harrower, and Anna Green Winslow. Fithian was a Princeton graduate who was employed as a tutor by the Carter family of Nomini Hall, Virginia, in 1773-1774. He recorded information about social activities, planting, politics, and religion.[5] Harrower was also a tutor in Virginia, but he was serving a term as an indentured servant. Like Hamilton, an educated Scot, he let his letters and journal reflect his sojourn in England and aboard ship, detailing how he came to America, as well as his daily activities, planting practices, and social occasions in Virginia.[6] The only feminine writer and traveler was Anna Green Winslow, a school girl who lived with relatives in Boston for one year. Her gossipy writings were intended for her family, and daily activities were recounted in great detail.[7]

Published accounts of foods were infrequently found. Peter Kalm, a Swedish botanist who visited the colonies from 1748 to 1750, wrote and edited an account of his travels for publication in Europe. He visited Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada, gathering botanical specimens. All aspects of colonial life and the European heritage of the colonists were of great interest to Kalm. His botanical references extended to notations about the growing of foodstuffs and and preparation of foods not commonly found or eaten in his native

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[5]Farish, pp. xxiv-xxv.

[6]Riley, pp. xiii-xvi.

[7]Alice Morse Earle, ed., Diary of Anna Green Winslow, A Boston School Girl of 1771 (Boston, 1894), p. iii. Hereafter cited, Earle, Winslow.

land.[8] John Adams also mentioned foods, in letters subsequently printed and the papers of Sir William Johnson, Indian trader and later Indian Commissioner for New York, included some official documents with passing mention of foods.[10]

Several of the sources indicate that their authors had problems with food supply. The published Collection of Johnson's papers contained letters to him, many of which were from purchasing agents who wrote concerning supplies, including foods. Cresswell had to forage for sustenance in the wilderness, and wrote about this problem to the exclusion of other topics until his situation was bettered. No other long collection of letters or journals revealed so continuing a problem of food supply.

The meal patterns of the colonial observers varied according to personal preference and the customs of the persons with whom they were in daily contact. Two Virginia residents, Fithian and Harrower, were superficially in similar positions, both being tutors who dined with the plantation owners and their families.[11] Harrower was usually served meals twice a day, and the "victualls" were "Dressed in the English taste." The morning meal was usually coffee or chocolate, bread, and sometimes cold meat. At twelve noon he had "good rum

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[8]Benson, pp. x-xiii.

[9]Charles Francis Adams, ed., Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution (Boston, 1875), pp. 40-41.

[10]Flick, VIII, pp. 9, 967-969, 898.

[11]Farish, pp. 31, 194. Riley, pp. 42, 56.

toddie," and dinner was commonly "pork ham" supplemented by "warm roast pigg, Lamb, Ducks or chickens, green pease or any thing else they fancy." Supper was seldom eaten, and no tea was served, "which is owning to the difference at present betwixt the Parliment of great Brittan and the North Americans about laying a tax on the tea."[12] Fithian's meal schedule was very different. Breakfast at Nomini Hall was served at 9:30, after the children's first lesson had been heard. Lunch was at 2:00 or 2:30, and supper was served at 8:30 or 9:00. In the summer, milk and hominy were eaten for breakfast, and dinner included peaches and other fruits. In colder weather, coffee and sage tea replaced milk and hominy at breakfast, soup or broth was served at dinner, and suppers were bread, butter, and coffee. Fithian admired Mrs. Carter's management, noting that "Neatness variety & Plenty are reigning Characters in our worthy economist... ."[13] The routine serving of broth contrasts sharply with Harrower's experience, for he noted its absence. He did not feel, however, that his diet was inadequate, and wrote that he was "only affrid of getting fatt, tho we soldom eat here but twice a day."[14]

Social events greatly interested colonial writers, several of whom described the foods that made a part of some of these occasions. Four types of gatherings were mentioned; meals where the writers were

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[12]Ibid., pp. 56, 42, 73.

[13]Farish, pp. 31, 194.

[14]Riley, p. 73.

guests or hosts, snacks served to guests usually during informal conversational gatherings, formal ceremonial occasions, and outdoor festivities. Meals with guests present were the most frequently noted type of social event, and Fithian observed that it was the custom for "Gentlemen to invite one another home to dine, after Church."[15] No other source indicated this custom to have been related to a specific day of the week. Adams made much of the usually elaborate meals he shared as a guest in the homes of Philadelphians. Turtle was twice mentioned, as well as an extravagant array of "Ducks, Hams, Chickens, Beef, Pigg." The foods he dwelt upon in his letters were the sweets and desserts. Adams mentioned pears, peaches, melons, and raisins, and repeatedly included in his descriptions sweets such as creams, custards, jellies, floating islands, fools, and trifles.[16] Many of the meals mentioned by Adams and others were far simpler than the ones he described in Philadelphia; for example, when Adams dined with friends at Braintree he mentioned only fresh fish being served.[17] Hamilton ate salt cod fish with a sauce of butter and eggs when he was a guest in Boston, and "cold gammon" was the main dish at meals in Trenton and Albany.[18] Mrs. Carter served fish, including perch and fresh mackerel, as well as crabs, when she had guests. At one evidently elaborate meal bass, perch, crab, ham, and mutton were offered

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[15]Farish, p. 29.

[16]Butterfield, II, pp. 126-127, 131, 132, 134, 136, 155.

[17]Ibid., I, p. 20.

[18]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 108, 31, 66.

the guests. Sweets and fruits were not served, or else they impressed Fithian less than did the meat and fish dishes, for they were not included in his accounts of the meals.[19]

Snacks were commonly offered whenever a guest came into a home. If it was time for tea, the service was sometimes rather formal, but on other occasions light refreshments were provided in an informal manner. Kalm wrote that apples, grapes, and cracked nuts were offered to guests "when they come to pay a visit" in the English colonies. Such fare was after tea and in the evenings "when we sat warming ourselves before the fire."[20] Harrower spent a pleasant afternoon eating ripe cherries as a guest "to a Gentlemans house," and when the capture of a "Beehive in a tree in the woods" resulted in another invitation he ate "plenty of honey out of the Comb."[21] Cracking and eating nuts with the plantation steward was the only snack which Fithian mentioned.[22]

Few of the formal ceremonial occasions mentioned by our colonial observers included foods. Kalm described two in some detail, the call paid to a newly married couple, and the ceremonies surrounding an infant's baptism. The initial call on a bride and bridegroom was to be made within the first month of their marriage. Wine and tea were offered as refreshments for the visitors, and a piece of wedding cake

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[19]Farish, pp. 90, 186, 141.

[20]Benson, I, pp. 80, 604, 611.

[21]Riley, pp. 97, 48.

[22]Farish, p. 38.

wrapped in paper was given the guests as they left. The cake was made of "eggs, flour, butter and sugar mixed and thoroughly beaten, with some sweetmeats added." The same type of cake was served at the wedding and at the infant's baptism. Custom demanded that the guest provide the infant a "gratuity of four or five shillings or even a dollar."[23] Miss Winslow was given a piece of wedding cake while in Boston, but did not describe it further.[24] From the length of time the cake was expected to remain edible, it was probably a fruit cake, possibly the black fruit cake which one twentieth century authority still prefers as "Wedding Cake."[25]

The most formal of other social occasions mentioned was a ball in Alexandria, Virginia, which Cresswell attended. The guests were served "a cold supper, Punch, Wines, Coffee and Chocolate, but no Tea."[26] On all aforementioned occasions food was a supplement to a ceremony, and not truly necessary for the occasions to be noteworthy. At Nomini Hall, however, Fithian described a ceremony that took place on December 29, 1773, with food an intergral part. They had "a Pye cut to...signify the Conclusion of the Holidays," and this in itself constituted the ceremony.[27] The initial scarcity of foods in the

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[23]Benson, II, p. 677.

[24]Earle, Winslow, p. 1.

[25]Amy Vanderbilt, Amy Vanderbilt's Complete Book of Etiquette: A Guide to Gracious Living (Garden City, 1958), pp. 84-85.

[26]Thornely, pp. 52-53.

[27]Farish, p. 43.

colonies had seemingly ended many common European couplings of food and ceremony. Kalm noted this lack, and he commented with disfavor that "there was no more baking of bread for the Christmas festival than for other days," and no Christmas porridge was served on Christmas Eve.[28]

Although much of the cultural life of the colonies was dominated by those of English heritage, non-English groups played a major role in the development of a distinctively American culture. Architectural styles, language, dress, religion, politics, and education were influenced by the thoughts and actions of these citizens.[29] The diet of colonial Americans was also influenced by their culinary styles and choices of foods. Some ethnic groups were already established residents by 1742, including the Germans and the Dutch in Pennsylvania and New York, the French in South Carolina and New York, and the Swedes in Delaware and Pennsylvania. Other groups arrived and settled in the colonies during the years of this study. Individuals of all nationalities were thus found in nearly all colonies, as the growth of population and the occupation of the best land caused movement into

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[28]Benson, II, p. 676.

[29]For a discussion of non-English elements in urban life see Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776 (New York, 1955). For general information see Louis B. Wright, The Atlantic Frontier, Colonial American Civilization, 1607-1763 (New York, 1947); Nettets for his excellent if now dated bibliography; Savelle for influences on the many cultural aspects he discussed; and James Truslow Adams, Provincial Society, 1690-1763 (New York, 1927).

areas of seemingly greater opportunity.[30] The customs and ideas of these minority groups intermingled with those of the English majority, and together created a kaleidoscopic picture of colonial life.

The Dutch were the largest ethnic minority group, and were a majority in some areas within the colonies.[31] Kalm, after observing the customs of the Dutch in Albany and those in Saratoga, concluded that culinary practices among them varied with the areas. In Albany breakfast tea was served without milk, instead sugar being first placed in their mouths, after which they drank. They ate bread and butter with slices of dried beef along with their tea. Kalm also described the dinner of the Albany Dutch. It was commonly buttermilk and bread, with boiled or roasted meat. A large salad prepared with a lot of vinegar and "little or no oil" accompanied these dishes. Supper was usually bread and butter, or milk with pieces of bread in it. Occasionally they had chocolate, and sometimes they ate cheese rasped or scraped, rather than sliced, at breakfast or dinner.[32] The Dutch at Saratoga had some strikingly different dietary patterns. Their tea was drunk after mixing the sugar with it in the cup, and bread, butter and radishes were eaten along with it. They cut small round cheeses into thin slices and spread the slices on buttered bread. Kalm described the Saratoga noon meal as "regular...nothing

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[30] J. T. Adams, pp. 167-193, 320. See also Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, pp. 134-136.

[31] J. T. Adams, pp. 169-170.

[32] Benson, I, pp. 346-347.

unusual about it."[33] For supper they prepared a porridge of corn called sappaan and poured either fresh milk, or more commonly buttermilk, into a hole in the center. Meat left from the noon meal, or bread, butter and cheese followed the porridge. Any porridge remaining was mixed with buttermilk and boiled until it became like a gruel, then eaten for breakfast, sweetened with either syrup or sugar. Neither group of Dutch prepared pudding or pie, "the Englishman's perpetual dish," but they were "indeed fond of meat." In New York Kalm stayed with a Dutch family who prepared the Saratoga type of porridge, which they usually ate with one or two other dishes, commonly meat and turnips or cabbage.[34] Neither climatic differences nor difficulty of trade would explain these variations in diet. For a time Hamilton had a Dutch landlady at Narrows Ferry, Staten Island, who served him fried clams, a dish he had not seen before.[35] Kalm had noted that the Albany Dutch ate clams, but mentioned no method of preparation. He thought their use of clams to be inconsistent with their refusal to eat crawfish.[36]

Both Kalm and Hamilton came into contact with colonial Frenchmen. Hamilton's contacts were limited to the meals he had with two men he met in Boston. Kalm made his observations while touring Canada in his search for botanical specimens. None of the writers noted eating with

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[33]Ibid., II, p. 602.

[34]Ibid., pp. 602-603, 629.

[35]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 39-40.

[36]Benson, I, p. 355.

the French people who lived in New York or in the Carolinas.[37]

Hamilton met Messieurs La Moinnerie and Bodinear under difficult circumstances, for both gentlemen were under suspicion for political intrigue. Only once did Hamilton mention eating with Bodinear, when he followed his usual habit and "breakfasted upon chocolate."[38] La Moinnerie was a fellow lodger for some time, and repeatedly asked Hamilton to dine with him. It was his manner of preparation of foods, rather than what he ate, that astounded Hamilton:

> His chamber was strangely set out: here a bason with the relicts of some soup, there a fragment of bread, here a paper of salt, there a bundle of garlick, here a spoon with some pepper in it, and upon a chair a saucer of butter. The same individual bason served him to eat his soup out of and to shave in, and in the water, where a little before he had washed his hands and face, he washed likewise his cabbages. This, too, served him for a punch-bowl.[39]

Hamilton ate with the gentleman only once, and then partook only of some soup but declined the roast mutton.[40]

Kalm's contacts with the French people were more extensive than those of Hamilton, and he frequently commented on their foods and modes of preparation. Frenchmen, Kalm found, ate three meals a day, breakfast between seven and eight o'clock, dinner exactly at noon, and supper about seven o'clock. Kalm noted the differences between the meals of the "people of quality" and the common people,

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[37] J. T. Adams, pp. 7-8.

[38] Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 138.

[39] Ibid., p. 130.

[40] Ibid., pp. 133-135.

and found that the latter tried to imitate the well-to-do when visitors arrived, so that their usual mode of eating may have depended more on poverty than choice. People of quality ate breakfast early, although some omitted that meal.[41] Men often ate bread dipped into brandy, or bread alone after drinking the brandy, while the women drank chocolate or coffee. Kalm commented that he never saw tea used in Canada, nor did he see bread and butter eaten for breakfast. Dinner was a meal with many dishes, beginning with a clear soup with "a good deal" of wheat bread in it, and "various kinds of relishes." The next course was fresh meat, boiled, roasted or fried "after being cooked," beef, mutton, squabs, and fowl being sometimes prepared in the latter manner. Green peas, fried fish, "fricassees, ragouts, etc of several sorts, together with different kinds of salads" were served for the third course. Their bread was made with wheat flour in oval loaves, and described as good, but "too salt." Milk the French seldom used, but occasionally they ate boiled milk with wheat bread in it, or served fresh milk with a berry much like a blackberry. Supper was much like dinner according to Kalm, with two dishes of fried meat, sometimes pigeons or fish, or a fricassee, and occasionally milk with berries. The third course was "almost always" a salad, and fruit and sweetmeats usually concluded both meals.[42] Kalm mentioned ripe or pickled walnuts from both France and Canada, almonds, raisins, hazlenuts, red and black currants, cranberries preserved in treacle, and many preserves in sugar, including strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, mossberries,

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[41]Benson, II, pp. 473-474.

[42]Ibid., pp. 383, 474.

and lemons, as well as pears and apples with syrup and apples preserved in wine. Cheese, and milk with sugar, were sometimes a part of the dessert.[43]

The diet of the poorer French and of the farmers provided a great contrast with that of the wealthy. Kalm found the poorest people "content with meals of dry bread and water," while they sold all other foods including butter, cheese, meat, poultry and eggs to buy brandy and "finery."[44] The farmers prepared "most of their foods from milk," in contrast with those of "quality," who used little milk. Butter, while seldom used, was made of sour cream, while congealed sour milk was "found everywhere." The French ate milk products frequently on fast days, but Kalm thought they were deficient in the ways of preparation, boiled milk and wheat bread being most commonly served. Kitchen gardens were found on all farms, with pumpkins and onions the most common vegetables. The onions were eaten "with bread on Fridays and Saturdays, or fasting days," while the pumpkins were prepared in many ways, but usually roasted. Kalm's list of vegetables grown in "every farmer's little kitchen garden" included carrots, lettuce, Turkish beans, and cucumbers, but he noted no methods of preparation for these.[45]

Despite his comments on the quality of the diet of the poor and the farmers, Kalm characterized the Frenchman as eating almost as much meat as the Englishman, for excepting his soup and salad

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[43]Ibid., pp. 383, 455, 474.

[44]Ibid., p. 479.

[45]Ibid., pp. 510-511.

all dishes were of meat.[46] This is scarcely consistent with his describing the available vegetables. Kalm also noted some foods that the French ate which he had not found elsewhere. Crawfish, which the Dutch would not eat, were popular with the French, but were decreasing in numbers.[47] Variety in the diet of religious holidays was provided by beaver, which had been declared a fish by the Pope, according to Kalm.[48] Kalm felt the most ingenious source of food that he found was the Frenchman's use of young burdock shoots, which were peeled and served to be eaten like radishes.[49]

Kalm spent a great portion of his visit to America with Swedish colonists. When he published his accounts of his travels he did tell of the dietary habits of his Swedish hosts, but he did so only when they varied from the European diet or methods of cookery. Since he assumed a familiarity with the daily life of contemporary Sweden, his comments do not provide as complete a picture of their foods and customs as do the descriptions of non-Swedish colonists. None of the other writers mentioned contacts with foods prepared by Swedish colonists.

Kalm described the changes in the diet of the Swedish colonists in faintly disapproving language, and correctly predicted that they would soon lose their identity, for they were rapidly becoming

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[46] Ibid., p. 511.

[47] Ibid., p. 479.

[48] Ibid., p. 534.

[49] Ibid., p. 387.

acculturized.[50] The settlers had replaced the "hard, crackerhole bread" with "great loaves," although the clergy from Sweden had some of the baked "knackbrod." Breakfasts had changed from the European "substantial foods" to tea, coffee, and chocolate, according to Kalm. Sugar and molasses were available in abundance, and had been as long as the settlers could remember, which was another change.[51] They did retain the European method of preparing spinach, but the colonists also cooked pokeweed and a green leafed sorrel in the same manner, or any of the three greens might be boiled in water in which meat had been cooked. They were then served on a platter and eaten with a knife, a custom Kalm seemed to feel was little short of barbarous.[52]

Despite the many different foods and manners of preparation, no American wrote and published a cookbook until after the period of this study, the first being in 1796. Four English cookbooks were reprinted in Colonial North America during the years of this study, and two of them were examined for information about colonial foods.[53]

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[50]J. T. Adams, p. 170.

[51]Benson, I, pp. 272-273.

[52]Ibid., pp. 104, 285.

[53]The four cookbooks were Eliza Fowler Haywood, A Present for A Servant-Maid (Boston, 1747); E. Smith, The Compleat Housewife or Accomplish'd Gentlewoman's Companion: Being a Collection of Several Hundred of the Most Approved Receipts (Williamsburg, 1742; another printing, New York, 1761); Hannah Glasse, The Servant's Directory (New York, 1760); and Susannah Carter, The Frugal Housewife or Complete Woman Cook Wherein the Art of Dressing all Sorts of Viands, with Cleanliness, Decency, and Elegance, Is Explained in Five Hundred Approved Receipts, etc. Together with the Best Methods of etc. and Making of English Wines (Boston, 1772). The books by Misses Smith and Carter were examined.

If Richard Cummings' theory is correct, that cookbooks provided information about "changes in food fashions" to a wide audience, these changes were slow to come to English-speaking North Americans.[54] The first colonial printing of The Compleat Housewife, in 1742, was a copy of the fifth edition which had been published about ten years earlier in London, between 1729 and 1734.[55] A comparison of the 1742 Williamsburg edition of E. Smith's book and an edition published in London in 1766 gives no evidence that the Williamsburg printing was anything but an exact copy of the fifth London edition. There was no information about American vegetables, for example corn, squash or pumpkins, in either edition, and there were no recipes designated "American" or "Virginian," or "in the American way," as other recipes acknowledged their Continental origins, such as "Dutch beef," or "Mutton...in the Turkish way." Two pages of the 1766 London edition were devoted to the "Negro Caesar's Cure of Poison," reprinted from the Carolina Gazette of May 9, 1750, and were the only acknowledgment of the existence of the American colonies.[56] Susannah Carter's The Frugal Housewife was also devoid of information that would indicate the colonial printing was in any manner adapted for use in America.

Cummings theorized that the small size of the first cookbook by an American author, Amelia Simmons' American Cookery, was a reflection of the lack of diversity of the diet of the era, for it contained only

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[54]Cummings, pp. 41-42.

[55]British Museum, General Catalogue, col. 180.

[56]Smith, The Complete Housewife (1766), pp. 317-318.

46 "vest pocket" sized pages.[57] In this assumption Cummings seems to have been in error, for information included in this chapter shows clearly that there was great diversity in diets throughout the colonies. If size of the cookbook is the only criterion for judging, four had been published earlier, all of much greater size.

The examination of foods as a "particular stage of advancement in civilization or the characteristic features of such a stage of state," reveals a multi-cultured society present in the American colonies.[58] The foods of the Dutch, English, and French colonists differed in styles of preparation, and while there were some foods basic to all of these groups, there are others, like the crawfish, that were popular with one ethnic group and considered inedible by another. Urban dwellers' menus were far removed from the salt pork and bread that were indispensable to the soldier or the traveler in the wilderness.

The diet of the colonists reflected their economic status, proximity to markets, ethnic and sometimes religious allegiance. To the historian, as well as to contemporary visitors, knowledge of the foods of the colonial citizenry is important in forming an accurate picture of the many groups of people who made up the North American colonies.

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[57] Cummings, pp. 41-42.

[58] Webster, p. 202.

CHAPTER III

FOUR FOOD GROUPS IN THE COLONIES

Foods have been divided into four groups by nutritionists: the milk group, meats, breads and cereals, and fruits and vegetables.[1] Of these, the meat group, which includes fish and poultry, was discussed with the greatest frequency by colonial inhabitants. The many references to meats were probably the result of the seasonal nature of fresh vegetables and fruits, and the difficulty in preserving them for year-round consumption. Foods in the milk group were preserved only as cheese, and poor food supplies for animals made it difficult to keep a milch cow or lactating goat in production during the winter months. Breads were a staple, and were made from a variety of grains. They were often mentioned, but rarely described, by the colonists whose writings form the background of this study.

The meat that was most common in the colonies was pork. It was eaten fresh, or salted and cured. Hogs were large, hardy animals, when compared with poultry, and could scavenge their own food in city or in country. Their gestation period was shorter than that of any other domestic animal of their matured size, and multiple births

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[1]Ercel Eppright, Mattie Pattison, and Helen Barbour, Teaching Nutrition (Ames, 1963), p. 107; Ethel Austin Martin, Nutrition Education in Action (New York, 1963), p. 6; Corinne H. Robinson, Basic Nutrition and Diet Therapy (New York, 1965), p. 3.

increased the chances of the survival of some of each litter. Hogs were not commonly trained for any domestic duties, as were cattle, horses and dogs. All of these factors contributed to their importance as animals for slaughter. Pork was so common in the colonial diet that a landlady assumed Dr. Alexander Hamilton and his traveling companion to be Jewish, solely because they refused bacon with their eggs.[2]

Salt pork was a standard part of supplies for trips west of the settlements. Nicholas Cresswell, an adventuresome British traveler, recorded that his party started their journey with rum, bacon ham, and bread. Their preference for the rum led them to leave their other supplies, and they had a very difficult journey. Before they reached a settlement they were forced to forage for food, eating chiefly wild fruit, and accepting what the Indians they encountered would share with them.[3] Benjamin Franklin also counted salt pork as a large portion of his diet while at "Gnadenhathen." Despite his avowed inattention to food he wrote to his wife at length about her tasty supplements to the salt pork diet. According to Franklin, food was most appreciated "when the kitchen is four score miles from the dining room."[4] Franklin did not dislike pork, however, for when faced with the prospect of remaining in London longer than he had anticipated he asked his wife to send him some small hams to "make me as happy as you can."[5]

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[2]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 95-96.

[3]Thornely, p. 103, passim.

[4]Leonard W. Labaree, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Vol. VI (New Haven, 1963), pp. 364-365. Hereafter cited Labaree, Papers.

[5]Ibid., IV, p. 93.

In addition to its place in his diet, Franklin saw cured ham as a profitable export item for the colonists, and included a recipe for proper curing in Poor Richard.[6]

Since salt pork could be kept for long periods of time under conditions that would ruin other meats, it was a staple for armies as well as for travelers. It did prove to be monotonous, and prolonged dependence almost exclusively on salt pork resulted in severe nutritional problems. In 1754 George Washington complained that annexed to the most trifling pay that was ever given to an English officer was "the glorious allowance of soldiers diet...a pound of pork, with bread in proportion, per day."[7] This same diet was blamed for the exceptionally high mortality rate among regular soldiers at the Battle of Charlestown. They were said to have had no vegetables or milk for "a long time."[8] Soldiers were not the only colonists who received partial payment for their services in salt pork. "Battoemen" or boatmen in colonial New York were paid pork, biscuit, tea, and sugar for their services by Sir William Johnson's agent.[9]

The slaughter of hogs was an important occasion in the colonies. John Harrower described the butchering that took place on the plantation below Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December, 1774.[10] Thirty-five hogs, weighing about 150 pounds each, were killed, and the hams and

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[6]Ibid., V, p. 183.

[7]Jared Spark, ed., The Writings of George Washington, Vol. II (Boston, 1839), p. 19.

[8]Boyd, I, p. 186.

[9]Flick, VII, p. 912.

[10]Riley, p. 98.

shoulders were cured with saltpeter. This quantity of meat was expected to provide all the salt pork needed by the family of Harrower's employers until the following December. Fresh pork would occasionally be provided to supplement this supply during the year. The slaughtering and roasting of a whole pig was a favorite social occasion, and was mentioned by writers from Connecticut to South Carolina.[11] These events were referred to as barbecues, but there was no mention of any special sauces involved in the roasting. A Virginia tutor described the occasions as similar to the more common fish feast.[12] Hogs were usually butchered in the early fall, after they had fattened and when cooler weather would delay spoilage, but barbecues were summer events, taking place from late June or early July to September.

Swine were brought to North America by Europeans, but they had gained a place in the diet of some Indians at the time of this study. Johnson noted among the supplies he had given the Indians on the orders of "Mr. [Daniel] Claus, commander of the Indians, . . . Six pounds of bacon a day for six days ...."[13] Hogs were raised by some Indians, including a Delaware, Jacob January. When he and his family decided to move their residence they killed a hog and baked

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[11]Barbecues were mentioned in the journals of Philip Vickers Fithian, Dr. Alexander Hamilton, Nicholas Cresswell, and Richard Elliott. See Farish, p. 183; Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 169; Thornely, p. 30; Richard Elliott, "Recruiting Journal of Richard Elliott, 1775," in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, ed., Plantation and Frontier Documents: 1649-1863, Vol. II (Cleveland, 1909), p. 280.

[12]Farish, p. 183.

[13]Flick, VII, p. 9.

a quantity of bread in preparation for the trip.[14] No other mention of Indians eating or serving pork was found.

Although much of the salt pork that was mentioned was considered a crude but necessary part of the colonists' diet, pork was served in elaborate meals. John Adams recorded a description of the dinner celebrating the installation of the Reverend Alexander Cumming as co-pastor of Old South Church in Boston. The meal was described in detail because some protested its extravagance while others claimed it was only a "moderate dinner."[15] Three of the seven meat dishes were pork, two were definitely cured: a corned leg of pork with a sauce, a leg of bacon, and boiled pork with fowls. Adams also expressed his dissatisfaction with the people of Boston for their grumbling about taxes, comparing them unfavorably with the country folk, who, he declared, paid cheerfully despite being "obliged to wear Homespun, threadbare, eat salt Pork and Beef...."[16] To Adams this seemed extreme hardship. These diverse opinions concerning pork are examples of attitudes of the colonists toward that staple. But whether pork was served as "fat pork and green pease" by the poor man, with "greens and tough bread" at the tavern, or at the home of the affluent citizen who provided "Ducks, Hams, Chickens, Beef, Tarts, Cream, Custards,

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[14]John Woolman, "The Journal of John Woolman, 1720-1772," in Charles W. Eliot, ed., The Harvard Classics, Vol. I (New York, 1909), p. 274.

[15]Butterfield, I, p. 216.

[16]Ibid., p. 213. This was draft of a letter to the Boston Gazette.

Gellies, fools, Trifles, floating Islands, Beer, Porter, Punch, wine and a long &c," its place in the diet of colonial inhabitants was unchallenged.[17] Cresswell surely spoke for many when he complained that he had eaten so much pork in America that he would soon "be grown over with Bristles."[18]

Another popular and frequently preserved group of foods in the meat family were the sea foods. Oysters, clams and lobsters were mentioned both as fresh and pickled, but crabs were always served fresh. Oysters were the most common of the shellfish, with New York, Philadelphia, the Eastern shore of Maryland and Charlestown harbor all having oyster beds.[19] At Charlestown the molluscs could be gathered at low tide without a boat.[20] Although oysters were common, both custom and law attempted to limit the gathering season. A Philadelphia law decreed that oysters brought to market between May and September had to be forfeited to be given to the poor, for they were "found to be unwholesome food" during these months.[21] In New York, oysters were thought to be best in months with an "r" in their names, although poor people ate them all year.[22] This is of course a general food belief,

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[17]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 96; Elliott, pp. 279-280; Butterfield, II, pp. 126-127.

[18]Thornely, p. 20.

[19]Benson, I, p. 125; Butterfield II, p. 132; Farish, p. 29; Ravenel, p. 245.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Butterfield, II, p. 132.

[22]Benson, I, pp. 125-126.

even today. The inconsistency of approved months in these laws and folk tales, and lack of mention of any ill effects among the poor who consumed the oysters in unfavored months, does not support belief in the negative effects. Either Hamilton did not know of these rules, or disregarded them, for he described the oysters he ate in Perth Amboy on June 15, 1744, as "the best oysters I have eat in America."[23]

Oysters, lobsters and clams were all preserved in North America, but oysters were by far the most common of the three. Two different methods of preservation were described by writers. In the first, the oysters were washed, boiled in water, then cooled and boiled again with spices added. Thus pickled, the molluscs were put into glass or earthenware containers, and when "well stopped to keep out the air" they would "keep for years, and may be sent to the most distant parts of the world." These oysters could not be fried, but had "a very fine flavor...." The second method was simpler, for the oysters were removed from their shells, fried in butter, and packed into glass or earthenware containers. Melted butter was poured over the oysters to seal them from the air, and they were exported to the West Indies, but the flavor was described merely as "agreeable." Both of these methods were used by commercial processors in New York.[24] Eliza Pinckney of Charlestown wrote her daughter that her cook had "pickled me some oysters very good," but did not describe the process.[25]

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[23]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 39.

[24]Benson, I, pp. 125-126.

[25]Ravenel, p. 245.

Clams were also preserved as commercial ventures by some Dutch and English colonists in the New York area. They were "prepared like oysters" and taken to Albany to sell to the Indians. Kalm was the only writer to mention that lobsters were pickled for trade, and he was vague about their destination.[26] Some were sent to Johnson, in upper New York, but the lack of other information supports the supposition that pickled lobsters played a small part in New York sea food trade.[27]

Oysters were prepared in many ways. Kalm thought the oysters of New York superior to those in Philadelphia, perhaps because of the difficulty in eating the latter. In Philadelphia the common method of preparation was to fry them on a bed of live coals, then eat them with a sandwich made of soft wheat bread and butter. They were sooty when cooked this way, and were held with a rag or napkin as they were eaten.[28] Hamilton ate oysters several times on his journey. In Kingsbridge, New York, they were roasted; in Brunswick he was served pickled oysters; but in Perth Amboy, where he felt the oysters to be superior, he did not mention how they were prepared.[29] The fall months were the times when both Philip Vickers Fithian and Johnson wrote about oysters. Fithian ate them several times in November and December of 1773, and Johnson was commonly shipped his supply in November.[30] Johnson's family and dependents evidently

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[26]Benson, I, p. 127.

[27]Flick, VI, p. 188.

[28]Benson, I, p. 91.

[29]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 17, 37, 39.

[30]Farish, pp. 23-35, passim.

consumed oysters frequently, for in November, 1768, he was sent "a Barrell of Oysters" on the eigth, and unspecified quantity on the eighteenth, and two hogsheads on the twenty-fourth.[31]

Clams were eaten in the colony of New York, but there was no mention of them in other colonies. Kalm described the preservation and commercial activities connected with them, and ate them several times. He thought they were "palatable" no matter how prepared, whether boiled and put into "meat-soups," or served "with steaks or other meat."[32] Hamilton did not agree with Kalm's idea of palatable foods, and described his meal of clams with some dismay. He "dined upon what I never had eat in my life before—a dish of fryed clams, of which shell fish there is abundance in these parts." At the public house in Narrows Ferry, Staten Island, after grace was said

> we began to lay about us and stuff down the fryed clams with rye-bread and butter. They took such a deal of chawing that we were long at dinner, and the dish began to cool before we had enough.

The use of a [warming] "bedpan" as a chafing dish did not add to Hamilton's delight.[33] Style of preparation did indeed make an impression, and resulted in Hamilton's rather negative judgment of the state of culture in Narrows Ferry.

The two other crustaceans, crabs and lobsters, were not widely

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[31]Flick, VII, pp. 997, 451, 474, 487, 510.

[32]Benson, I, pp. 128-129.

[33]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 39-40.

eaten in the colonies. The crabs that were available in New York were small and "different from those in England" according to Lieutenant Frederick McKenzie, and he thought them "very cheap."[34] They were a favorite with the Carter family, and were eaten on Wednesdays and Saturdays during the summer months.[35] Lobsters also were found in New York, and both McKenzie and Kalm were surprised at the large numbers available.[36] Live ones "crawling in the boiling Pot," were the principal treat at a "frolick" in Harrisons Purchase, New York, and some were sent to Johnson, but they were not mentioned by writers in any other colony.[37]

While shell fish were available in many coastal areas, other fresh fish were available throughout the colonies. The use of water routes for travel and the agricultural excellence of many alluvial plains resulted in many homes being established near rivers and streams, where fish were to be found. Because fish could be salted, pickled, or smoked to delay spoilage, they could be transported to other regions. Preserved fish, like salt pork, was common, and when properly prepared it was not unpopular. Salt cod fish "elegantly dressed with a sauce of butter and eggs" was a common Saturday's

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[34]French, p. 17

[35]Farish, pp. 132, 141, 171, 186.

[36]Flick, VI., p. 188; French, p. 17.

[37]Mrs. William Willett, Harisons Purchase, New York, letter of June 25, 1754, to Katharine Colden. The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Vol. IX (New York, 1937), pp. 137-138; Flick, VI, p. 188.

dinner in Boston, according to Hamilton.[38] The epicure Adams was favorably impressed by "a very genteel dinner" he ate at Falmouth, and led his description of it with "Salt fish and all the apparatus."[39] Many different kinds of fish were available, although to include the beaver in this group, as did the French Canadians, stretched the credulity of Kalm. He ate some beaver, and described the flesh as being black and the taste "peculiar." The tail, which was first boiled, then roasted, was all fat, and "cannot be swallowed by one who is not used to eating it." Kalm thought it edible otherwise, but not as good as others had led him to believe.[40]

Since fish were free to those with the skill or equipment necessary to catch them, they provided variety in the diet of many differently situated persons. Hamilton described a meal of fish served by a poor family as "a homely dish of fish without any kind of sauce...skin, scales, and all."[41] Sailors on ocean-going vessels tired of the salt provisions that were the basis of their diet and caught fresh fish for variety. When an unfamiliar fish was caught they boiled it with a piece of silver, believing that if the fish were poisonous the silver would become black, but if the silver was unchanged the fish was safe to eat.[42] No evidence of either proof or disproof

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[38]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 108.

[39]C. F. Adams, p. 22.

[40]Benson, II, p. 534.

[41]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 8.

[42]Benson, I, p. 203.

of their theory could be obtained. Fish also were served at outdoor social gatherings, designated as frolics when fish provided the main dish but barbecues when it was pork. It was the music and the dancing, not the food, that was of greatest interest to most participants in these activities.[43] Fish were such an important part of the diet of those near water sources that the goal of the British during the Siege of Boston was to cripple shipping so that "none of the Americans can Export or Import nor get as much as one fish or oyster to eat."[44] At least a portion of this goal was reached, for Adams wrote his wife that the people of Boston "have no fresh provisions; their beef, we hear, is all gone, and their wounded men die very fast, so that they have a report that the bullets were poisoned. Fish they cannot have, they have rendered it so difficult to procure."[45] The deprivation of the diet must have indeed been severe if fresh fish were not available in a port city.

Many different varieties of fish were served by colonial homemakers, sometimes singly, and other times several fish or meats and fish provided for an elaborate array. The Carters' custom of eating fish bi-weekly during the summer did not result in repetitious meals, for boiled rock fish, sheepshead with crabs, bass, perch, crab alone, sheepshead alone, trout, and mackerel were all offered, sometimes

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[43]Farish, p. 183.

[44]Alexander McDonald, "Letter-book of Captain Alexander McDonald, of the Royal Highland Emigrants, 1775-1779," Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1882 (Publication Fund Series) (New York, 1883), pp. 205-206.

[45]C. F. Adams, p. 74.

several of these at the same meal.[46] Johnson's agent, John Wetherhead, sent him pickled cod, and offered to send black fish and sea bass, both caught at "Shrewsberry."[47] MaKenzie wrote of the great variety of fish available in the New York Port market, including black fish, sea bass, sea trout, and sheepshead.[48] Other fish mentioned were "dryed smoaked Spratts" eaten as a snack while Adams and his friends drank punch, "2 Sturgeons" that Indians presented two travelers enroute from New York to Canada, a "Buffalo fish an Eagle had killed" that helped save Cresswell from starvation in the wilderness, and catfish which was mentioned as the most important ingredient in "a most delicious pot of Soup."[49] Other writers mentioned fish without naming the kinds served, but the source materials for this study did reveal the widespread use of many kinds of fish in the meals of the colonists.

Although Cresswell complained that he had eaten chicken or pork for every meal since his arrival in the colonies, the sources for this study revealed very few notes about poultry.[50] This seems odd, for there were many wild fowls in North America, in addition to domestic poultry. Three writers documented their consumption of chickens; Adams ate both ducks and geese; there was one mention of

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[46]Farish, pp. 90, 132, 141, 171, 186.

[47]Flick, VI, p. 786.

[48]Thornely, pp. 17-18.

[49]C. F. Adams, p. 3; Butterfield, II, p. 121; Flick, VII, pp. 727, 1018; Thornely, pp. 72, 94.

[50]Ibid., p. 20.

swan, and one of pigeons.[51] Both wild and domestic turkeys provided moments of delight that were worthy of penning; however, with the exception of turkey and chicken, each fowl was mentioned only once.[52] None of the writers seemed to consider the consumption of poultry unusual, but it escaped documentation if it occurred frequently.

The second most mentioned of the four dietary groupings was the vegetable and fruit group. The limited means of preservation made many of these very seasonal, and there was more mention of their being grown than of being eaten. This was particularly true in Kalm's writings, for recording botanical information was his primary purpose in visiting the North American continent.

The most frequently mentioned vegetables were undoubtedly personal favorites; for example, Harrower repeatedly included eating "green pease" in his writings, but never noted eating another vegetable.[53] Adams evidently did not care for vegetables or felt their inclusion in a meal did not convey any impression of its stature, for he described many meals, particularly the elaborate ones he ate while away from home, but noted a vegetable only once. Again the favored vegetable was "pease."[54] Peas were not universally beloved,

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[51]C. F. Adams, p. 22; Butterfield, II, p. 126-127; Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 7, 87, 94; Farish, p. 208; Thornely, pp. 20, 55, 69, 75, 132; Butterfield, I, p. 334; Ibid., II, pp. 126-127.

[52]Ravenel, pp. 258-260; Thornely, pp. 69, 75, 132.

[53]Riley, pp. 44, 67, 68.

[54]C. F. Adams, p. 22.

however, for Hamilton met a Dr. Ascough in New York who had an aversion to them. Ascough agreed to dine with Hamilton and his friend, Mr. Bayard, with the understanding that peas would not be served. After the meal began,

> The stupid negroe wench, forgetting her orders to the contrary, produced the pease, at which the doctor began to stare and change color in such a manner that I thought he would have been convulsed, but he started up and ran out of doors so fast that we could never throw salt on his tail again.

Hamilton remained unruffled, noting "we had a good dish of pease which otherwise we should not have tasted." He also ate and enjoyed green peas on other occasions.[55]

Several different green vegetables, other than "pease," were mentioned by the writers. The most common designation was "greens," usually eaten with pork. The only plants named were young poke and some types of sorrel.[56] Green cabbage was served, both raw and cooked. The Dutch cooked cabbage with meat for dinner, and Cresswell boiled young cabbages, squash, and "cimbalines" with salt and pepper for an "elegant repast" while in the wilderness.[57] A cabbage dish for which no recipe could be found in the available cookbooks of the period was prepared by a lady in Albany, New York. Mrs. Vishner served a salad of shredded cabbage with a dressing of oil or melted butter, vinegar, salt and pepper poured over it. She told Kalm that "many strangers... had liked this so much that they not only had informed themselves of

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[55]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 87, 175.

[56]Benson, I, p. 285.

[57]Ibid., II, p. 629; Thornely, p. 95.

how to prepare it, but said that they were going to have it prepared for them when they reached their homes."[58] The ingredients and style of preparation agree with the dish now called cole slaw. Another vegetable frequently served as a relish or in salads today, the cucumber, was also served. In Canada they were sliced and eaten with cream, or peeled, sliced, and dipped in salt.[59] MacKenzie saw them in New York, but made no mention of eating them or seeing them prepared.[60]

The artichoke, still considered a rather exotic vegetable, was mentioned by Fithian, who combined artichokes with huckleberries and milk in what may be termed an unusual supper.[61] There was little mention of spinach, unless it was included in the term "greens," nor of asparagus. Beans, which could have been either dried or green, from the context, were eaten by some Indians. There was no mention of beans being prepared by European colonists. Okra was popular with the Negroes around Philadelphia, according to Kalm, but that was the only note about it. Since okra is currently popular principally in the southern states, and few writers from that area are included in the sources for this study, no conclusions can be reached about its general popularity.[62]

Several of the yellow and starchy vegetables were easily stored

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[58]Benson, II, p. 609.

[59]Ibid., I, II, passim.

[60]French, p. 18.

[61]Farish, p. 128.

[62]Benson, I, p. 42; Ibid., II, 563.

or preserved for year-round use, and escaped the short season that was common to the green vegetables. Potatoes, turnips, pumpkins and squash could all be stored for several months. Squash and pumpkins were also dried, and corn could be dried or ground into meal for preservation. Because of the longer periods of availability, these vegetables were mentioned by greater numbers of writers than the green vegetables.

As a botanist, Kalm was very interested in plants native to North America. He was fascinated by the two native vegetables, squash and pumpkins, and the many ways in which they were prepared and preserved. He wrote of pumpkins being boiled and made into gruel, mashed and shaped into pancakes, and served roasted in halves with butter. He saw squash eaten alone or with meat, but only Cresswell mentioned it being boiled with cabbages. Kalm also ate potatoes in America, but his descriptions and names for the potatoes and the names mentioned by other colonial residents are not consistent with each other, nor with current usage. While in Philadelphia Kalm ate "Bermudian potatoes" or sweet potatoes. These were "prepared in the same manner as common potatoes and are either mixed and served with them or eaten separately." Yams were described as being "white potatoes" and were somewhat of a rarity, being brought from the West Indies.[63] Presumably these were the same as the "West India potatoes" that were sent to Johnson.[64] Today yam refers to the sweet potato, but whether Kalm was in error, usage has changed, or errors in translation have

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[63]Ibid., I, pp. 96, 183; Ibid., II, pp. 607-608.

[64]Flick, p. 731.

occurred, is not clear. The "common" potato Kalm mentioned was not described by any writer, but presumably it was the one Adams referred to when in 1774 he pleaded, "Let us eat potatoes and drink water; let us wear canvas and undressed sheepskins, rather than to submit to the unrighteous and ignominious domination that is prepared for us."[65] Mrs. Pinckney mentioned another potato or a more specific designation for one of those already named, when she sent "a little barrel of Irish potatoes (Hartford's English Potatoes I mean)" to her son at school.[66] Whether this was the common potato is not known.

Corn was the most versatile vegetable in the colonial diet. It could be preserved by boiling and drying in the sun, then being easily added to soups or cooked with meat.[67] Ground into meal, it could then be made into bread, and both styles of preservation were staples in the slaves' diet.[68] Roasting ears of corn were served to Fithian, and Hamilton observed one of his landlords eating them, although he ate roasted oysters instead.[69] Another method of preserving corn was to make hominy. This form of corn was eaten with milk for breakfast during the summer months on the Carter plantation.[70] The Dutch ate a corn porridge they called Sappan for their evening meal, then mixed

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[65] C. F. Adams, pp. 40-41.

[66] Ravenel, p. 256.

[67] Benson, II, p. 615.

[68] French, p. 129; Woolman, p. 215.

[69] French, p. 169; Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 171.

[70] French, p. 194.

any that was left with buttermilk and boiled it until it was the consistency of gruel. This was sweetened and eaten for breakfast.[71] These many ways of preparation and the ease of preservation helped make corn the most common vegetable in the colonial diet.

Vegetables were neither mentioned as often nor given the same stature accorded to meats. Hamilton mentioned vegetables as much as any other writer, but he wrote in a very disparaging manner of dining with a family "the provision for which chiefly consisted in garden stuff."[72] This attitude of disinterest or disparagement of the "garden stuff" was typical of the writers of this period. Botanist Kalm wrote of the growing of vegetables far oftener than he wrote of eating them, and his impression of the French was that they ate as much meat as the English, despite the religious days when meat was forbidden, and despite the extensive "kitchen gardens" that he described as present at every French farmer's house.[73] Meats were the heart of the meal, according to the opinions of the sources for this study.

The healthfulness of fruits was the subject of some discussion by two writers. Adams decided "one could conclude it very wholesome," based upon the "extravagant" fondness for fruits shown by two of his acquaintances. One gentleman ate six quarts of strawberries a day when he could get no other fruits, breakfasted upon watermelons when available, daily ate half a peck of peaches during their season, and consumed very little other food. He and the other gentleman Adams

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[71]Benson, II, p. 629.

[72]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 96.

[73]Benson, II, pp. 510-511, 474-475.

mentioned enjoyed excellent health.[74] Kalm, however, thought that fruit would undermine health. He attributed the attacks of ague to the practice of planting watermelon by "every countryman" and of eating them, plus other melons, mulberries, apples, peaches, cherries, "and such fruit" on an empty stomach.[75]

Despite this divergence of opinion, fruits were of far more interest than vegetables. Most of the fruits were locally grown. Grapes, several types of berries, plums, strawberries, and mulberries grew both wild and cultivated. Peaches, apples, melons, currants and pears were grown for home use. Limes, oranges, lemons, and pineapples were imported from the West Indies, but they were not always available and their quality varied greatly.[76] All of these fruits were mentioned by several writers, but they were not the only fruits mentioned. The great variety of fruits and the many notations concerning them reflects both their importance in the colonists' diet and the writers' personal preferences for them. Fruits were offered as treats at many social occasions. One of the most common of these was "chatting" with friends and acquaintances. This casual pleasure was usually enhanced by serving nuts, apples, or grapes with the tea, punch, or other liquid refreshments. Two of these occasions were recorded by Adams, one an afternoon at Braintree which he spent

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[74]Butterfield, II, pp. 26-27.

[75]Benson, I, p. 194.

[76]The comments of Sir William Johnson's agents about the availability and quality of citrus fruits were most revealing. See Flick, VI, VII, passim. See also Ravenel, pp. 255-256; French, pp. 17-18.

"unloading a Cart, in cutting oven Wood, in making and recruiting my own fire, in eating nuts and apples, in drinking Tea, cutting and smoaking Tobacco and in chatting with the Doctor's Wife at their House and at this."[77] On a second, more formal occasion, an evening at Mr. Phychons, "Punch, Wine, bread and Cheese, Apples, pipes and Tobacco" were offered.[77] Kalm characterized the English colonists as serving large dishes of apples to their guests, but noted that some persons served grapes or nuts in the same manner.[78] The commonness of apples perhaps is the reason for its absence from the lists of fruits served by the more wealthy urban dwellers. Anna Winslow told of a "Constitation" where the girls of her age danced and played games while the older people watched. They were treated to "nuts, raisins, Cakes, Wine, punch, hot & cold, all in great plenty," and one of the extravagant meals that Adams described ended with "a Desert of Fruits, Raisins, Almonds, Pears, Peaches...."[79] Either apples were not served on these occasions, or they were so common as to escape mention, for the fruits served were undoubtedly special treats.

Another group of fruits that were very seasonal, since they could not be stored or preserved to delay spoilage, consisted of melons. They were very popular with some of the writers, and Kalm described watermelons in great detail. Two kinds, one with red and one with

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[77]Butterfield, I, pp. 45, 321.

[78]Benson, II, pp. 604, 611; Ibid., I, p. 80.

[79]Earle, Winslow, p. 17; Butterfield, II, p. 136.

"white" meat were grown, and when cut into slices they were eaten raw, fresh. Kalm thought the English watermelons better than those he ate in Canada, and hypothesized that it was the heat that made them sweeter.[80] Another writer who was fond of melons was Harrower. He ate fruits as snacks rather than at meals, and planted his own watermelon and "Mush Mellon" seeds. While he did not mention any harvest of the "Mush Mellons" he duly recorded eating the first watermelon, and proudly described a later melon which he said was "2 feet 4 inches round one way & 1 foot 9 Ins. round the other way."[81] Fithian also ate melons, receiving a "half a Water-Melon" from one of his pupils, and sending her a large "Musk Melon" which he bought for her when she was confined to her room with an illness.[82] Evidently Fithian had no qualms about the healthfulness of this fruit, or he would not have sent it to a child who suffered from "sores."

Four berries were included in the colonists' diet: strawberries, blackberries, huckleberries and raspberries. Strawberries were eaten by both Virginia residents, Harrower and Fithian. Fithian returned to the Carter plantation to dine upon "Crabs & an elegant dish of Strawberries & cream," and he exulted, "How natural, how agreeable, how majestic this place seems! "[83] His fellow tutor simply noted

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[80]Benson, II, p. 515.

[81]Riley, pp. 95, 104, 105.

[82]Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 152, 169.

[83]Farish, p. 110.

having strawberries, but did not include any details.[84] Perhaps he ate them with milk, or "with a small amount of wine with sugar," or as candy, all styles of serving recorded by Kalm.[85] Huckleberries, also called bilberries, were eaten with milk, according to both Kalm and Fithian.[86] Kalm alone reported the consumption of raspberries, which he saw eaten in Quebec in the month of August. There they were eaten "as a desert after dinner," in the same manners as strawberries, or they were served with powdered sugar.[87] The only berry eaten that was identified as a wild berry was the blackberry. Hamilton and his companions stopped at a log cabin close to the Hudson River in June, 1744, and the family's seven "wild and rustick" children brought the visitors wild blackberries, "which was the greatest present they could make us."[88] There was no evidence to tell whether strawberries and huckleberries were wild or cultivated.

There were several other fruits mentioned only once, or by only one writer. Kalm reported that persimmons were eaten raw around Philadelphia, "but in a certain book, which contains a description of Virginia, you find different ways of preparing the persimmon under the article of that name." Neither Kalm nor the editor of his writings identified this book.[89] A second fruit that was infrequently

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[84]Riley, pp. 45, 95, 97.

[85]Benson, I, pp. 262, 324.

[86]Ibid.; Farish, p. 128.

[87]Benson, II, p. 455.

[88]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 55.

[89]Benson, I, p. 69.

noted was the cranberry. Benjamin Franklin had some sent to him while he was in England, and they were served with wild goose, not at Thanksgiving but in April.[90] The third fruit to gain fleeting attention was the fig. They were picked in the Carters' garden in Virginia, and were a part of the ingredients in a medicinal preparation that was included in the papers of Francis Asbury, future bishop of the Methodist Church.[91]

There are three remaining fruits that were raised in the colonies and enjoyed widespread use. They were peaches, grapes and the commest of all fruits mentioned, the apple. Peaches were one of the fruits that Kalm felt were responsible for the ague, but they were also one of the fruits that a friend of Adams consumed to excess, and no ill effects were ever mentioned by him or by others.[92] Peaches were listed with other fruits and nuts as the dessert to one of the very elaborate meals Adams described.[93] Kalm included a recipe for drying peaches, but no mention of them was found elsewhere.[94] Grapes were probably more common than peaches, for they grew wild, and were also cultivated in some areas. The wild grapes had "a very good flavor, being a mixture of sweet and acid," according to Kalm. In Montreal two different types of grapes were cultivated, one "white and one reddish

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[90]Butterfield, I, p. 334; Labaree, Papers, VII, p. 93.

[91]Farish, p. 178; Elmer T. Clark, ed., The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, Vol. I (Nashville, 1958), p. 147.

[92]Benson, I, p. 194; Butterfield, II, pp. 26-27.

[93]Ibid., p. 136.

[94]Benson, I, p. 41.

brown." Both were commonly served as dessert, although some were dried and made into tarts or used as "sweet-meats."[95] The last of these fruits, apples, was undoubtedly the most common. Kalm did not pay them the attention that he gave to native or wild fruits, but he did record a recipe for apple-dumplings that the English colonists ate, and noted the use of apples in the preparation of cider and for "pies, tarts and the like."[96] Adams seemed fond of them, and his discussions of snacks usually included apples among the treats offered. Apple trees were noted in the gardens or orchards of many farmers, in the journals and letters used for background for this study. Easily grown in widely different climatic conditions, with small seeds that could be carried to new areas, apples were the most popularly cultivated fruit. They did not spoil as easily as did most fruits, and could be used in cooking or eaten raw. It was probably because apples were so common that they were mentioned so often, yet they were not described in detail nor were the methods of preparation discussed as frequently as were those of some other fruits.

The third of the four divisions of foods, breads and cereal grains, were a basic part of the diet of the colonial people. Breads were so common that it was their absence, rather than their presence, that was worthy of note.[97] Good bread was a fine treat to the colonial inhabitants. While in Connecticut Adam was offered "the finest and sweetest

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[95]Ibid., II, pp. 199-200, 515.

[96]Ibid., I, pp. 97, 173-177, Ibid., II, p. 604.

[97]Butterfield, I, pp. 45, 321; Benson, II, pp. 604, 611; Ibid., I, p. 80.

of Wheat Bread, and Butter, as yellow and Gold, and fine Raddishes, very good Tea and sugar. I regaled without Reserve."[98] Finding bread worthy of this type of enthusiasm while away from home was not often possible, and Hamilton met a fellow traveler who was prepared for this difficulty. This Mr. Lightfoot,

> a gentleman of regular education, having been brought up at Oxford in England, a man of good humour and excellent sense...pulled about two pounds of black rye-bread out of his pocket and told us that he thought perhaps he might come to some places upon the road where there might be a scarcity of fine bread, and therefor had provided himself.[99]

Bread was such an indispensible part of the colonial diet that it was a staple on trips of long or short duration. Hamilton and Parker took on an eighteen mile journey "a store of bread and cheese and some rum and sugar in case of being detained upon the water;"[100] The supplies were almost identical to those Cresswell took on his ill-fated trip into the wilderness: rum, bread, and a ham, his group having "stopped at a farmer's house to bake bread" earlier.[101] A Moravian group starting lengthy travels into the wilderness was "supplied bountifully with bread and meat," while January, moving his family three miles up the Susquehanna River, thought it necessary to have prepared "a store of bread" to sustain them during the move.[102] The similarity of supply for these trips makes reasonable the practice

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[98]Butterfield, II, p. 30.

[99]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 105.

[100]Ibid., p. 96.

[101]Thornely, pp. 70, 103.

[102]Newton D. Mereness, ed., Travels in the American Colonies (New York, 1916), p. 329; Woolman, p. 274.

of partial payment to soldiers and others in the wilderness in bread, or the more usual term "biscuit." This biscuit did not conform to the British term, which was a sweet, but no recipe for it was found. Biscuit was part payment for boatmen in New York, and bread and pork were part of a soldier's allowance, according to Washington.[103] Biscuit was also important in the barter between wilderness travelers and Indians. Woolman exchanged biscuit for venison; Wade and Keiser gave "a little rum, a Biscuit apiece" for "a bowl of sugar, a bear Skin, a pr. of Shoes;" and on another occasion "a Dozen of Biscut, & three Quarts of rum," were payment for "a Dear, a Bowl of Corn, 2 Sturgeons."[104]

Bread was an integral part of most meals and snacks, but it was sometimes the main dish. Both Hamilton and Fithian had bread suppers, Hamilton eating it with milk, while Fithian had bread, butter and coffee.[105] Harrower duplicated Fithian's meal, but for him it was breakfast.[106] Fithian also recorded having a supper of "chocolate, & hoe-Cake, so called because baked on a Hoe before the fire."[107] He did not dwell further on this meal, so there is no assurance that what he ate was a bread made of corn meal, the current practice. These menus were surely the choice of the gentlemen who mentioned them,

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[103]Flick, VII, p. 912; Sparks, II, p. 19.

[104]Woolman, p. 269; Flick, VII, pp. 727, 728.

[105]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 100; Farish, p. 194.

[106]Riley, p. 73.

[107]Farish, p. 55.

but an even more welcome meal of bread was reported by one of Johnson's correspondents, eaten by a man who "must have starved were it not that he met a frch. Trader who gave him a few Biscuits."[108] Other forms of bread were also used as main dishes, including muffins and buckwheat cakes. Kalm was so fascinated with the latter that he described their preparation, and he mentioned that they were eaten instead of the Englishman's usual toasted bread.[109] Adams ate buckwheat cakes, but he enjoyed them with muffins and "common Toast."[110] Although buckwheat was not uncommon in the northern English colonies, the Canadian French did not use it.

Kalm found changes in the types and uses of bread a sign of acculturation. He commented that the Swedes in America "never had any hard, crackerhole-bread or knackelbrod though the clergymen who came from Sweden commonly had some baked." The colonists did "no more baking of bread for the Christmas festival than for other days." The "superfluities...tea, coffee, and chocolate," had replaced bread and butter as breakfast foods. The Dutch had also changed their breakfast menu of "bread and butter, or bread and milk" to tea, bread and butter and slices of dried beef.[111]

Several writers recorded the use of substitutes for breads, or had great difficulty getting the supplies necessary for making it.

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[108] Flick, VII, p. 898.

[109] Benson, I, p. 184.

[110] Butterfield, II, p. 136.

[111] Benson, I, pp. 272-273, 346-347; Ibid. II, p. 676.

Two of the substitutes were Indian foods, "Hopness or Hapness" and "Taw-kee." Hopness was a root much like a potato that the Swedes and Indians boiled and ate instead of bread. Taw-kee tasted "like peas" according to Kalm, and it, too, was eaten in place of bread.[112] From Kalm's discussion of these foods, they were added to the Europeans' diet because of the shortage of bread. Mrs. Pinckney's sons ate rice instead of bread, with meat, by choice.[113] Another group of people who had problems with bread supply were the residents of Boston during the siege. The British were attracted to that area because of the "Vast Suply of wheat and flower on both sides of that river," but a shortage of wood forced the "biscuit" to be "not above one half the former size," according to information received by Abigail Adams.[114]

The last of the four food divisions, the milk group, including sweet milk, buttermilk, cream, butter and cheese, was present at many of the meals and snacks. In New York milk was sold in the market place, and in Boston it was sold by "Peasants round about the Town." Adams described the latter as having land divided into small strips, where they carried on a year-round dairy business, "carrying their Milk in Bottles over the ferry and Wheeling it about the Town of Boston."[115] No other descriptions of businesses of this nature were found for other areas, but since many of the writers were men who

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[112] Ibid., I, pp. 25, 261-262.

[113] Ravenel, p. 172.

[114] C. F. Adams, p. 112; McDonald, pp. 205-206.

[115] French, p. 18; Butterfield, II, p. 18.

ate at inns, their lack of attention to this matter is not surprising.

Milch cows were important both for their milk and for the meat they provided when age rendered them unproductive. Occasionally even good milk producers were sacrificed when food shortages made it necessary. Jehu Eyre was in a frontier garrison when Colonel Cockerell's milch cow was killed to provide much-needed meat.[116] During the siege of Boston the shortage of foods resulted in the killing of "a poor mulch cow" which was "sold for a shilling sterling per pound." At this time the Bostonians were in very dire straights, and all of the "fresh provisions" were necessarily given to help the sick and wounded.[117] The sacrifice of the cows led to another problem, the inadequate supply of milk. Thomas Jefferson attributed the high death rate among the wounded regular soldiers at the Battle of Charlestown, South Carolina, to "having not so much as a vegetable, a drop of milk, or even any fresh milk."[118]

Milk or milk with bread or berries was the totality of many meals and snacks mentioned in the colonial journals and letters. Fithian enjoyed berries with milk, mentioning strawberries, huckleberries and "hurtleberries" by name.[119] Kalm also liked berries and milk, and ate them in New York and in Quebec. This was the way that

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[116]Jehu Eyre, "Memorials of Col. Jehu Eyre," Peter D. Keyser, ed., in The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, Vol. III no. 3 (1879), p. 306.

[117]C. F. Adams, pp. 79, 80.

[118]Julian P. Boyd, ed., The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. I (Princeton, 1950), p. 186.

[119]Farish, pp. 110, 128, 132.

berries were eaten in Sweden, he said, and he approved of the dish.[120] Milk was commonly served at breakfasts, but in a variety of ways. Adams sometimes drank "new Milk" and at other times "eat Milk for Breakfast." The latter dish was probably clabbered milk, which was truly eaten rather than drunk.[121] The Carter family's summer breakfast menu consisted of milk and hominy, a meal not mentioned elsewhere.[122] The combination of bread and milk made a "light supper" for Hamilton during his travels, but with his usual ill luck Cresswell had no bread, and sour milk alone made his meal.[123]

While to some milk was accepted without comment, to others it was a treat. When Harrower got off the ship from England, the first food he consumed was a "breakfast" of "one Chappin sweet milk."[124] Richard Cummings expounded the theory that before refrigeration milk was scarce in the South because it could not be kept fresh in hot weather.[125] Mrs. Pinckney, the only source from the deep South, did not mention this problem, but her favorite drink was punch and she did not refer to milk.[126] Both Harrower and Fithian recorded drinking milk

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[120]Benson, I, p. 324; Ibid., II, p. 455.

[121]Butterfield, pp. 134, 354.

[122]Farish, p. 194

[123]Thornely, p. 95; Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 100.

[124]Riley, p. 40. Chapin is a Scottish measure holding about one English quart.

[125]Cummings, p. 20.

[126]Ravenel, p. 245.

during the summer in Virginia, and at Nomini Hall the serving of milk for breakfast was discontinued in September and coffee and sage tea replaced it.[127] This does not agree with two theories advanced by Cummings, that milk was available only when the pastures were green, and that hot weather curtailed its use.[128] The contention that the available milk was of poor quality was given no support by any source. Sour milk was used widely, but it was a different, but not inherently inferior, form of milk. Alexander Hamilton held forth at length on the charges of A. W. Farmer, "that the Congress will not allow you...a spoonful of molasses, to sweeten your buttermilk with."[129] No one had as yet charged any political fiend with denying the right to buttermilk!

Several of the rich foods that were described by the colonial writers were prepared with milk or milk derivatives. "Whipped Syllabubs" were made of cream with flavorings added. Creams, custards, and curds, as well as cheeses, used large quantities of milk.[130] Even when milk was not offered as a beverage it was present in the foods that colonists ate. Butter was used in the preservation of sea foods,

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[127] Farish, p. 194.

[128] Cummings, pp. 20, 25-26.

[129] Harold C. Syrett, ed., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, Vol. I; 1768-1778 (New York, 1961), p. 76. This was his "Reply" to "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress, Held at Philadelphia, Sept. 5, 1774;" Signed A. W. Farmer, dated Nov. 16, 1774.

[130] Butterfield, II, pp. 126, 127, 137, passim. Recipes for these dishes are in both the 1766 London edition and the 1742 Williamsburg printing of E. Smith's cookbook. See also: Carter, The Frugal Housewife.

preparation of cakes, of apple dumplings, and the sauces that garnished salt cod fish.[131] Butter was the form of dairy product most easily preserved by the colonists. The manner of butter-making varied, but Kalm attributed the butter that kept best to a Swedish woman in Philadelphia, Mrs. Robeson. Instead of washing the milk from the butter she forced it out "through kneading," a longer process but one he thought to be well worth the time.[132]

Cheese was the form in which milk could be preserved for longer periods even than butter, but the quality of cheese available varied greatly and good ones were difficult to find, despite its popularity with both the English and the French colonists, who offered it with dessert, or served it with snacks in the evenings.[133] Mouldy cheese that was served in an inn on Long Island upset Hamilton, and he became unhappy about that offered near Philadelphia, not because of its quality but because of its "dear" price.[134] Mrs. Pinckney received a "Pineapple Cheese" from Suffolk, England, and she offered to share this treat with her daughter.[135] Johnson's agents had much difficulty in finding good cheese to send to him; Richard Cartwright could not find good cheese either in Albany or New York.[136] Wetherhead sent

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[131] Benson, I, pp. 126, 174-175; Ibid., II, p. 677; Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 108.

[132] Benson, I, p. 203.

[133] Ibid., II, p. 474; Butterfield, I, pp. 216, 294, 321; Farish, p. 90.

[134] Bridenbaugh, Progress, pp. 90, 188.

[135] Ravenel, p. 253.

[136] Flick, VII, p. 301.

parts of two cheeses from New York to Johnson, "which are very extraordinary, but they are the best I can meet [with]." He knew that when the "Good Glocester Cheese" were available in the fall he could send them.[137] An agent in Schenectady, James Phyn, reported that no cheese was "to be got" in that town, and both he and Daniel Campbell offered to send cheese to Johnson that they had ordered for their own use.[138] Again, the quality, not the availability of cheese, seemed to be the problem.

As was usually the case, Kalm made notes on the manner in which each ethnic group included milk and the milk derivatives in their diets. He was rather contradictory in his discussions of the role of milk in the diet of the French Canadians. He was consistent in saying that butter was infrequently used by the French, and that it was offered only when they knew that they had a guest who liked it. The butter that was served was "so fresh that one has to salt it at the table."[139] The French did eat cheese, usually including it in the dessert, he reported, and they drank milk "last of all, with sugar" after the dessert course at the end of the meal. On another occasion, when summing up the dietary practices of the French he wrote:

> No cheese was served and very little butter, which had little salt in it. Milk was seldom used and generally it was boiled milk with slices of wheat bread in it, or fresh milk with berries.[140]

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[137] Ibid., VI, p. 235.

[138] Ibid., pp. 413, 443.

[139] Benson, II, pp. 473-474.

[140] Ibid., p. 383.

But when he described the diet of the farmers he noted:

> The farmers prepare most of their food from milk. Butter is seldom seen, and what they have is made of sour cream... Congealed sour milk is found everywhere in stone vessels. Many of the French are very fond of milk, which they eat chiefly on fast days. However, they have not so many ways of preparing it as we have in Sweden. The common way is to boil it, and put bits of wheat bread and a good deal of sugar into it.[141]

The poor French were satisfied eating dry bread and water, and sold their "other provisions, such as butter cheese," according to Kalm.[142] Perhaps the seeming contradictions result from his attempting to consider different socio-economic groups separately, then generalizing by throwing all the French together in one group.

Kalm also mentioned that the English, Swedish and Dutch colonists all ate bread and butter, toasted bread with butter, and pancakes "covered with butter which is allowed to soak into them."[143] The Dutch also ate a corn porridge which was eaten with "more milk than porridge." Any left-over porridge was boiled with buttermilk until it was the consistency of gruel, and eaten with syrup or sugar for breakfast.[144] This combination was not eaten by either English or Swedes.

While storage and preservation of foods was more difficult before refrigeration, the colonial writers noted some foods from each

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[141] Ibid., p. 511.

[142] Ibid., p. 479.

[143] Ibid., I, pp. 174, 272-273; Ibid., II, pp. 605, 634; Thornely, pp. 42, 73.

[144] Benson, II, pp. 602-603.

of the four food groups, that could be preserved to allow consumption year-round. While it is possible that some persons, especially the poorer people, found diet during the winter months dull and unchanging, none of the sources for this study recorded such an opinion. Kalm's comments about the poorer French was the only one which attributed an unvaried diet to any group or person. A great number of different cooking styles and combination of foods was mentioned, and a diet with a limited number of foods should have been so varied that dullness would not be a complaint. A well balanced diet with sufficient variety to tempt most colonists was apparently commonplace to the writers of this era.

CHAPTER IV

FOODS IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The materials within this chapter include comments on foods used under circumstances not present in the usual routine of daily colonial life. There are four such topics: foods in the wilderness, foods as part of outdoor social diversions, the food supply of slaves, and medicinal uses of foods.

By 1742 a continuous band of settled land lay along the Atlantic coastline "from the watershed of the St. Lawrence to the highlands of Carolina."[1] Between this settled strip and the largely unexplored central expanse of the continent was an area that may be termed wilderness. This territory had been explored, and the Indians living within it often had encounters with the colonial inhabitants. Scattered throughout the wilderness were forts and small isolated settlements. Many people had contacts with this area, either as they traveled or through letters from family members, friends, or business associates. The traveler in the wilderness had unique problems concerning foods. He had to transport his supplies, he usually found it necessary to supplement what he transported, and he had a minimum of equipment with which to prepare the foods.

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[1] J. T. Adams, p. 168.

Travel conditions in the wilderness were poor, postal communication was uncertain, and few people lived in the area. These factors compound the difficulty of finding written descriptions of food in the wilderness. The information available was written by travelers who spent only a short period of time there, or by persons who served as agents for others. This latter group, in their letters and reports, show less concern about food, except as supplies, than did the visitors.

In May, 1775, Colonel Richard Henderson started from Cumberland, Maryland, on his trip into the wilderness, encountering several food problems. Hunting a supply of fresh meat in the sparsely settled area was especially difficult:

> We found it very difficult at first, and indeed yet, to stop great waste in killing meat. Many men were ignorant of the woods and not skilled hunting, by which means some would get lost, others, and indeed at all times, shoot, cripple and leave the game, without being able to get much, tho' always able to keep from want, and some times good store by them. Others of wicked and wanton disposition, would kill three, four, five, or half a dozen buffaloes, and not take half a horse-load from them all....[2]

Animals killed for meat included cattle, buffalo, bear, and elk. This success did not eliminate Colonel Henderson's food problems, however, for their bread supply was inadequate. The men were forced for a time to "continue eating meat without bread," the meats being "fat bear with a little spoiled buffalo and elk," until others, sent to bring up the food left about fifty or sixty miles below, returned.[3] Nicholas Cresswell recorded detailed information about

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[2]Richard Henderson, "Extracts from the journal of Col. Richard Henderson," in Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, ed., Plantation and Frontier Documents: 1649-1863 (Cleveland, 1909), pp. 228-229.

[3]Ibid., p. 220.

the foods he ate on his trips into the wilderness. The supplies his group took were inadequate. They were "short of flour, no more bread," on June tenth, and on the eighteenth they had "Nothing but jerked meat without bread." The flour was gone, and the last of the Indian Corn was eaten on July first. On July second they ate a buffalo fish which an eagle had killed. On July fifth, not having eaten the previous day, they found a deserted "plantation" and consumed vegetables for the next several days.[4] Cresswell seemed determined to continue his travels in the riskiest manner possible. He and his friends started another trip on August 22nd, with "2 bottles of Rum, two loaves of Bread, and a Bacon Ham," but drank the rum and left the food. This trip was less harrowing than the earlier expedition, for they were in "Indian Country," and the Indians fed them.[5]

Meat and bread or "biscuit" made up the basis of the travelers' food supply. Cresswell, George Washington, and Sir William Johnson's correspondents "Phyn & Ellice" took pork on their respective wilderness expeditions.[6] Most travelers killed animals for fresh meat, and some renewed their stock of provisions by getting venison from the Indians.[7] The Cresswell party killed a buffalo and "jerked" the meat to preserve it. Cresswell thought the buffalo meat was much like beef, "only ranker taste," and the lean meat "eat very dry."[8] Venison was eaten

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[4]Thornely, pp. 83, 89, 94, 95.

[5]Ibid., p. 103.

[6]Ibid.; Sparks, II, p. 19; Flick, VII, p. 912.

[7]Thornely, pp. 105-106; Flick VII, p. 727; Woolman, p. 269.

[8]Thornely, pp. 74-75.

by Cresswell and John Woolman, both getting it from Indians. Cresswell shared in their meals of hash of dried venison and bear's oil for supper, and dried venison for breakfast.[9] Enroute to Toronto, on a trading expedition, Messrs. Ferrell Wade and his partner, Keiuser, met some Indians who "Hallood" to them, and presented them with gifts "after a Little Ceremony," the gifts including venison, corn and sturgeons. The traders gave in return "a Dozen of Biscuit, & three Quarts of rum."[10] Apparently no traveler killed a deer.

There were scattered references to other meats eaten in the wilderness. Wild turkeys were shot and eaten by Cresswell and a companion, and the former thought they were "an excellent supper."[11] Jehu Eyre and Cresswell both ate turtle.[12] Still more unusual meats, such as porcupine, which "proved to be Delicious food," were eaten by members of the Wade and Keiuser trading party, and Peter Kalm was told by "both Englishmen and Frenchmen" that they had eaten polecats. The Indians also ate polecat, "but when they pull off its skin they take care to cut away the bladder, that the flesh may not get a taste from it." The meat was described as "very good...and not much unlike the flesh of a pig."[13] Fish were mentioned only three times by wilderness travelers, twice by Cresswell. He ate catfish in soup, and the aforementioned buffalo fish.[14] The third fish was the sturgeon given

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[9]Ibid., pp. 105-106; Woolman, p. 269.

[10]Flick, VII, p. 727.

[11]Thornely, pp. 69, 75.

[12]Eyre, p. 299; Thornely, p. 74.

[13]Flick, VII, p. 726; Benson, I, p. 146.

[14]Thornely, pp. 72, 74-75.

Wade and Keiuser.

The settlements within the wilderness and along its fringes also enjoyed a diet different from that of the more urbanized areas. Richard Elliott visited several of these settlements on the Georgia-Carolina frontier. He thought that this was a good area for army recruitment, for "many of those men are young men and would be very proper for the service as they have little and some no property, but live on the cattle of the neighboring stocks and deer they kill by fire hunting at night."[15] Beef was a common food in these settlements. Henderson's party killed beef during their first day's travel from Cumberland, while Jehu Eyre "had a fine feast upon a bullock's liver," and helped eat "Colonel Cockerill's milk cow" in a frontier garrison.[16] Cattle had several advantages over other domestic animals along the frontier. They were large enough to defend themselves adequately against predators, and they could travel long distances in search of food. A cow could provide milk for people at the same time as for her offspring. Oxen could be used as draft animals, and both milch cow and oxen could be killed for meat when their productive years were past or when a food shortage existed.

Travelers described only a few wild vegetables that were eaten in the wilderness. "Greens" were cut and eaten by Henderson's company and Kalm described a lichen, "tripe-de-roche," that was eaten "in the case of extreme necessity." Although it is doubtful that it can be correctly termed a vegetable, its preparation was the same: "boiled in water and...improved by the addition of some fat."

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[15]Elliott, p. 283.

[16]Henderson, p. 220; Eyre, p. 306.

If cooked with salt and white fish it was termed "fairly good." The lichen was known as "a food which neither nourishes nor satisfies hunger, nor has it a pleasant taste. It serves only to sustain life."[17] Some Indians ate:

> the water taregrass...which grows plentifully in lakes, in stagnant waters, and sometimes in rivers which flow slowly. They gather its seeds...and prepare them in different ways, and chiefly as groats, which taste almost as good as rice.[18]

Peter Kalm decided that Indians could live on the harvest of their "trifling" agriculture only briefly, so he searched for information about the herbs and roots they ate. He was told about four: "Hopness," "Taw-ho," "Taw-kee," and "Safittarea." "Hopness or Hapness" was a bread substitute, similar to potatoes. "Taw-ho and Taw-him" or "Tuckah" had roots that were "reckoned a poison in that fresh state." The Indians buried them in a pit and built a fire above it, then cooked the roots until they thought them safe to eat. Taw-ho roots' taste was described as being like that of potatoes. The third plant was "Golden Club," called "Taw-kee," "Taw-kem," or "Tackvim." The seeds of the plant were dried, then boiled and eaten like peas. When the Swedes gave the Indians butter or milk, the Indians "boiled or broiled the seeds in it." They also ate the roots of the plant "Sagittarea" or "Katness." These roots were boiled or roasted in hot ashes. Kalm ate some and described them as good roasted, but "rather dry," and tasting much like potatoes. Of the four foods, the "Golden Club" peas were the favorite among the colonists who had

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[17]Henderson, p. 229; Benson, II, p. 585.

[18]Ibid., p. 533.

eaten them.[19]

Most of the vegetables eaten in the wilderness were crops cultivated by the Indians. Kalm listed corn, kidney beans, pumpkins, squash, and gourds as "the vegetables they grow." He stated that squash were grown more frequently than pumpkins, but neither was commonly mentioned by any other source.[20] Cresswell ate young cabbages, squash and "cimbilines" boiled together with salt and pepper.[21] Kalm best described the ways Europeans prepared squash, but did not note any Indian methods.[22] The Indians cooked pumpkins by boiling them whole or roasting them in ashes. They were also dried, first being cut into strips which, when fastened together, were placed in the sun or near a fire in a room. "When they are thus dried, they will keep for years, and when boiled they taste very well," Kalm thought. This dried pumpkin was sometimes eaten with dried meat without further processing.[23]

Corn was the vegetable most often mentioned by wilderness inhabitants. Kalm was served "corn and native Iroquois beans boiled together," by some Indians in Canada, and the French who traveled in the wilderness ate a mixture of corn and animal fat to supplement any fresh meat they killed. The corn was prepared by putting it "in lye

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[19]Ibid., I, pp. 259-260, 261-262.

[20]Benson, II, pp. 533, 608.

[21]Thornely, p. 95.

[22]Benson, I, p. 74.

[23]Ibid., II, pp. 517-518.

for an hour until the hull becomes loosened, then they wash it well so that the taste of lye is removed. The kernels are then dried and carried along in bags."[24] He did not give a name for this product, but the process is similar to that of making hominy. Hominy was cooked after the husks were removed, and the process described delays the cooking until the dried kernels are being prepared for eating. Cresswell ate corn boiled, and in "Hasty pudding." Boiled corn "with a little Elk fat," was reserved for Sunday dinner, and they "thought it delicious."[25]

The wilderness had many wild fruits, and travelers and Indians alike ate them. Kalm especially noted the Indian choices. "Whenever they designed to treat me well," he recorded, the Indians served "fresh corn bread mixed with dried huckleberries, which lay as close in it as raisins in a plum pudding." The huckleberries were thought to be "a dainty dish." They also prepared "many a delicious meal of the several kinds of walnuts, chestnuts, mulberries, acimine, chinquapins, hazel nuts, peaches, wild prunes, grapes, whortleberries of several sorts, various kinds of medlars, blackberries, and other fruits and roots."[26] Cresswell and his traveling companions ate wild fruits, sometimes as their only foods. Red and white plums,

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[24]Ibid., II, pp. 563, 566, 575.

[25]Thornely, pp. 94, 95.

[26]Benson, I, p. 262; Ibid., II, p. 533. The word acimine could not be found. Perhaps Mr. Benson meant acinus, defined as a droplet in a multiple fruit, or a grape. Medlars were Eurasian trees, whose fruit resembles a crabapple.

small black cherries, a "most delicious Grape" and berries were all mentioned. The Indians served him a "sort of Dumplings made of Indian Meal and dried Huckleberries" in "White-Eye's Town."[27] He wrote more frequently of wild fruit than others, for his unfortunate habit of traveling with inadequate supplies forced him several times to rely on foraging.

Some of the meals in the wilderness were the results of ingenious use of resources. Cresswell dined on pancakes made with turtle eggs "equal in goodness to those made with hen's eggs."[28] A companion of Kalm's had lived for five days on "prunes (sour)" and lichens, and Kalm wrote of young burdock shoots being peeled and eaten "like radishes."[29] The diet of those in the wilderness was far more varied than a description of their staple supplies would indicate.

One of the favorite diversions of people in the rural areas was the cook-out, called barbecue, feast, "frolick" or other similar designation. The foods varied with the area, but this type of social gathering was mentioned in colonies stretching from Canada to South Carolina.[30] Only two of the affairs mentioned seem to demand the name picnic. On these occasions the foods were prepared, then taken to the site for the meal. Eliza Pinckney's company "dined under the Oaks at the Meeting House, upon... very fine Tongue and turkey."

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[27]Thornely, pp. 103-104, 107, 115.

[28]Ibid., p. 74.

[29]Benson, II, pp. 387, 585.

[30]These festivities were found in South Carolina, Virginia, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Canada.

They used new shingles for "platters" and "cups of white paper, contrived by Tomm, for glasses." She thought it a "pretty rural meal," if not a "fete-champetre."[31] John Adams participated in an outing on Rainsford Island, in Boston Harbor, where they ate "Mutton and Cyder" on a large flat rock, in the shade of a fine tree.[32]

The most common outdoor festivity was a barbecue. The menu was "roasted Pig, with the appendages."[33] Cresswell went to a barbecue near St. Mary's River, and was "highly diverted," but Fithian described one as differing "little from the Fish Feasts" he had previously attended.[34] Dr. Alexander Hamilton did not mention going to a barbecue, but he was deprived of a companion on a portion of his trip when the gentleman stopped "to eat some roast pigg with a neighbor of his."[35] The Army recruiter, Richard Elliott, "gave a Barbacue to the recruits with leave to invite their friends and their lasses of the Vicinage... ." About forty people "was served up" and then "the old Virginia dance began."[36]

The names given the other outdoor meals varied with the foods served. Fish feasts were twice noted by Fithian, and a "frolick... of fish & Lobsters" was described in more detail by Mrs. William Willett of "Harisons Purchase, New York."

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[31]Ravenel, p. 258.

[32]Butterfield, I, p. 140.

[33]Farish, p. 183.

[34]Thornely, p. 30; Farish, p. 83.

[35]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 169.

[36]Elliott, p. 280.

> The first thing we did after we got to the place, was to prepare dinner of fine black fish and Lobsters where we had them in perfection, for the poor fish was jumping after their guts and scals was off and the Lobsters crawling in the boiling Pot. We then sat down upon the green grass, and din'd most daintely, musick playing all the time, after this we had several dances, by this time it was near Sun sat, and we all prepared for returning home....[37]

Hamilton watched the crew of a man-of-war having a "festival" on the shore of Turtle Bay, New York, where their commander, Commodore Warren, was giving them a treat: "They were a roasting an entire ox upon a wooden spit and getting drunk as fast as they could."[38] While in Canada, Daniel Claus, Commander of the Indians, was very disappointed when the "fat ox" he had purchased did not arrive, and instead of "giving them a Treat," he could offer his friends only "some Pork bread & c."[39]

Hamilton was in New York when he wrote of the "diversion here, very common, which is the barbecuing of the turtle, to which sport the chief gentry in town commonly go once or twice a week."[40] These seem to have been held far oftener than the "diversions" elsewhere, if Hamilton was correct. The champion of brevity on the topic was Cresswell, who stated, "Turkey feast in the neighborhood."[41] This was also the only mention of turkey as the chief food at such a

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[37]Farish, pp. 156-157, 172; Willett, IX, pp. 137-138.

[38]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 172.

[39]Flick, p. 952.

[40]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 89.

[41]Thornely, p. 132.

gathering.

Very few references were found to the diet of slaves in the colonies. Kalm mentioned that okra was grown in gardens in Philadelphia, and was "reckoned a dainty by some people and especially by the negroes," but he gave no hint whether they were slaves or freemen.[42] Quaker abolitionist John Woolman wrote of his contacts with Maryland slaves, who had "in common little else allowed but one peck of Indian corn and some salt, for one week, with a few potatoes; the potatoes they commonly raise by their labor on the first day of the week."[43] Fithian naturally observed slaves during his tenure on the Carter Plantation in Virginia. His first knowledge of their diet came shortly after his arrival, when he discussed it with the plantation "Clerk and Steward." Fithian was told:

> expecting some favourites about the table, their weekly allowance is a peck of Corn & a pound of Meat a head!— And Mr. Carter is allow'd by all, & from what I have already seen of others, I make no Doubt at all but he is, by far the most humane to his Slaves of any in these parts.[44]

In July of the following year he described an incident when "an old Negro Man came with a complaint to Mr. Carter of the overseer that he does not allow him his Peck of corn a Week." Fithian was very disturbed over the incident, and the "humble posture" the old man assumed. He concluded, "I cannot like this thing of allowing them no meat & only a Peck of Corn & a Pint of Salt a Week, & yet requiring of them

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[42]Benson, I, p. 42.

[43]Woolman, p. 215.

[44]Farish, p. 38.

hard and constant Service." Whether this indignation lasted is uncertain, for his only later reference was to note, "all the Negroes & most of the Labourers eat Corn," when telling about the "100 lb." of flour used by "the great house" weekly.[45] These few comments about the supplies given slaves are not numerous enough to lead to the conclusion that their diet was monotonous or unhealthful.

Medicinal uses of foods depended in large measure on the medical profession in the colonies, which was still in its infancy in the period between 1742 and 1775. There was no general theory concerning causes of disease, and reliable tools for observation had not yet been developed. Medical training was commonly an apprenticeship with an established medical practitioner, and the physicians available "floundered in confusion."[46] With the shortage of doctors and knowledge, it was inevitable that untrained persons would also "practice the healing arts." Louis Wright was discussing the 17th century when he wrote:

> Most colonial libraries had a book or two on medicine, surgery, and the compounding of drugs. Colonial men and women studied the books, listened to old wives' tales, picked up folk remedies, and prescribed for their families and friends.[47]

The situation had changed little in the years before the American War for Independence. Almost one-half of the "receipts" in The Complete

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[45] Ibid., pp. 129, 199.

[46] Nye, pp. 74-75. See also J. T. Adams, pp. 124ff. and Wish, pp. 175-176.

[47] Wright, Cultural Life, p. 219.

Housewife were for medicinal preparations. In the preface the author gave a brief history of foods, and stated that for two thousand years food and physics were one.[48] Most of the remedies in the book, as well as others found in contemporary writings, confirm this traditional role of foods as curatives.

The lack of a widely accepted explanation of the cause of illnesses left much room for speculation.[49] Many persons felt that eating fruit, especially watermelon, was a cause of the ague. Kalm thought eating "melons, cucumbers, pumpkins, squashes, mulberries, apples, peaches, cherries, and such fruit," as well as watermelon, "during the great heat" and on an empty stomach would "altogether contribute to the attacks on the ague," but Adams thought them "very wholesome."[50] Although today tooth decay itself is not considered a disease, colonial inhabitants hypothesized about its cause as they had about the reasons for ague. Hamilton thought eating "raw hung beef sliced down in thin chips in the manner of parmezan cheese" was the cause of the poor teeth and gums of the people in Albany, New York.[51] Cresswell decided mulberries, although "very sweet and pleasant fruit," were "bad for the teeth."[52] These were the only mentions found of

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[48]Smith. See the title page for numbers of the recipes by type of preparation. Ibid., A. 2. [Numbers, 1776 ed.].

[49]Nye, p. 74.

[50]Benson, I, p. 194; Butterfield, II, pp. 26-27.

[51]Bridenbaugh, Progress, p. 74.

[52]Thornely, pp. 88-89.

food as the cause of health problems.

Milk was used in the treatment of several medical problems. A gruel of corn meal and milk was recommended by Kalm for a toothache with swelling. The gruel was placed on a cloth and used as a hot compress to lessen the pain, stop the swelling, and to "open a gathering, if there be any," and procure "a good discharge of pus." Truffles, an edible fungus, drunk in milk, were recommended as a cure for dysentery. Drinking fresh milk after a piece of steel heated to a red heat was put into it would end "cough, whooping-cough, and pain in the chest." Repeated dosings were recommended.[53] The Rev. Mr. Asbury was told of a man who cured himself of gout with "milk and moderate diet," but he "threw himself into a dropsy." Whether the dropsy was thought to be the result of the aforementioned diet was unclear.[54]

"Everywhere the women of the household practiced the simple forms of physic," wrote J. T. Adams, and they treated many different illnesses.[55] When Fithian was "unwell, so as not to go out" his employer's wife, Mrs. Carter, selected his foods. He had coffee for breakfast, hot barley broth for lunch, and hot green tea and "several Tarts" for supper. Mrs. Carter also sent him Spirits of Hartshorn, an ammonia preparation, for his head.[56] Deborah Franklin used

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[53]Benson, I, pp. 151, 201, 228.

[54]Clark, I, p. 68.

[55]C. F. Adams, p. 61.

[56]Farish, pp. 32-33.

capillaire for colds, and sent some to her husband, Benjamin, when he was away from home.[57] Capillaire was a simple syrup prepared either with maidenhair fern or with orange flowers or orange flower water. A Swedish lady in Raccoon, Pennsylvania had told Kalm of the use of milk in treatment of the aforesaid "cough, whooping-cough, and pain in the chest." A different course of treatment was given for chills. The patient was to eat a baked apple, after some spiders' webs had been placed in it. A woman in Raccoon, after several failures in search of a remedy, tried the same treatment after suffering "a long time from chills." After she ate the third such apple she fell into a coma, recovered, and "became well."[58]

Laymen, as well as women, were involved in the treatment of illness and disease. Joseph Chew sent Johnson black currant jelly to use for sore throats as "a Pleasant G[argle] and safe remedy."[59] Benjamin Roberts included the advice of an insistent friend in a letter to Johnson about the use of horseradish, mustard and scurvy grass dressed up "as may be palatable," for the same illness.[60] Asbury treated himself for "several small ulcers on the inside" of his throat by first using a gargle of sage tea, honey, vinegar and mustard, then mallows with a fig cut into pieces "to accelerate the gathering." Finally Asbury resorted to a gargle of sage tea, alum,

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[57] Labaree, Franklin, pp. 364-365.

[58] Benson, I, pp. 197, 201.

[59] Flick, VII, pp. 234-235.

[60] [Dorothy C. Barck], Papers of the Lloyd Family of the Manor Queens Village, Lloyd's Neck, Long Island, New York: 1654-1826, Vol. I (New York, 1927), p. 375.

rose leaves and sugar to "strengthen the part."[61] The only treatment recorded that was acknowledged unsuccessful was described in a letter from George Croghan to Johnson. He had "allmost Cured" his patient with a diet of hominy and broth, "Butt a Love-Fitt" threw him into a "Prelipss." Mr. Croghan was sure that "Nothing butt a ground Swe[at will] Cure him." Damage to the manuscript had obliterated the name of the illness so treated.[62]

Foods were frequently used in curative measures suggested by lay-persons; however, only one reference was found of such a remedy being used by a doctor. Henry Lloyd was sent a recipe for a "Diet Drink for Rectifying Your blood," by Dr. George Meurson. It contained shavings of Lignum Vitae, raisins, spring water, bark of sassafras root and slices of "liquorish" root.[63] The woods were thought to have curative powers, and the raisins may have been added only to make the mixture palatable.

The uses of food mentioned in this chapter were not unique in colonial life, but neither were they everyday occurences to the people describing them. When involved with extraordinary activities, foods became more important to the people, particularly when used to sustain and enrich life. Cresswell, Asbury and Eyre may not have described a normal meal in their writings, but all discussed foods. Their descriptions reflected their attitudes and circumstances just as the

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[61]Clark, I, p. 147.

[62]Flick, VII, p. 79.

[63]Barck, I, p. 443.

descriptions of a novelist mirror his feelings and those of his time. Both the uses and preparations of the foods, as well as their written descriptions, were cultural expressions of the people in the American colonies.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Studies of foods can be of great importance to historians. What people ate, the music and amusements they enjoyed, their styles of clothing and architecture, and the common practices used in medicine and agriculture may be compared with those from other regions or countries. Such comparisons may likewise help to define social and economic levels within the colonial society. Some of the changes in diet are evidence of adaptation to local agricultural conditions, and others show the spread of information about native foods. Ethnic differences are reflected in food and menus, and the acculturation of these groups may be traced through the breakdown of these patterns as well as through changes in religion, dress, language, and intermarriage with other groups.

Food is given most attention by historians when its lack, or nature, made survival doubtful or difficult. Thus when the first permanent colonists arrived in America and were dependent upon supplies that were transported to them from England or Europe, the discussion of food is an integral part of historical treatises. The failures of the first English colonies because of the problem of food supply is an accepted fact. But as the colonies became established, and survival was not in doubt, the role of food disappears from most historians' view. Food did continue to play an important and sometimes

decisive role in the lives of the colonists. Harvest and planting seasons surely dictated when most migrations took place, and the ability to produce foods was of paramount importance in choices of areas of settlement. The need for supplements to food supplies, and markets for surplus products, helped to build patterns of trade within the continent. Food was not solely responsible for these developments and choices, but its role is often overlooked.

This study has clearly shown that a varied and usually balanced diet was commonly eaten by the colonists who lived in North America from 1742 to 1775. Although the available writings reflect the authors' personal choices, and did not include all possible foods, the colonials wrote of so many different ones that it was evident that the middle or upper class colonial citizen was not haunted by dietary deficiencies. Even the poorer colonists in rural areas could supplement their diet with many wild fruits, vegetables, and meats or fish. While the popularity of some of the food choices and forms has not survived to the present, foods from all four nutritional groups, the meat family, fruit and vegetables, the milk family, and bread and cereal grains were preserved to allow year-round consumption by the colonists.

The staples in the colonial diet most commonly noted by historians have been pork, bread and corn. While the first two were often mentioned in the colonists' writings, corn did not receive a proportionate share of contemporary attention. Perhaps its role as an ingredient in many foods, and its diverse forms, obscured its role in colonial cookery. Seafoods, preserved and fresh, made up the third most popularly mentioned groups of foods. The colonists' preference for

meat and meat-family dishes was apparent in all mentions of food.

While several cookbooks were published in the colonies during the period of this study, none was written by or edited for the use of American colonists. This limited their usefulness as guides for cookery, for several of the staple meats relied upon the books were not commonly available in the colonies, and native foods that were included in the menus of Americans were not mentioned. The importance of these books may have been not as cookbooks, but as sources of extensive material concerned with health problems and medicinal preparations. None of these books was published in sufficient quantity or frequently enough to be available to a large portion of the colonists of this era.

This study of foods in the colonies is only a small part of the research that needs to be done to form a comprehensive picture of the diet of the colonists and the importance of food in relation to political, economic and cultural events and changes. Limiting my sources to a literate group composed principally of male travelers whose judgments were biased by personal standards, and who often had little contact with each geographic area, creates many problems. Items common to the diets were readily apparent, and when several writers mentioned a food or groups of foods with admiration, its popularity was noticed. But when only fleeting mention was made of a food, it was not possible to judge whether it was a food rarely used, or whether it was so familiar that it aroused no enthusiasm. The comments about the foods usually shed some light on these questions, but some questions remain unanswered.

In this study it was the examination of comments that were made

about foods as parts of the diet, rather than the available supplies of foods, that was of greatest importance. Foods in trade, the kinds of plants and animals which were raised, and judgments about food quality were noted, but all such comments were accepted without further efforts to verify the accuracy of the observers' comments. No judgment can be made to determine whether the experiences and observations of the authors or the sources were typical. It was the composite picture that they presented that was examined, and much work would be necessary in agricultural and economic history to verify or disprove this evidence compiled from colonial writings. In no way should those conclusions be generalized into a "colonial" dietary picture, for far too many changes took place in all areas of life from 1607 to 1775, to allow any single description to be accurate. Only after research into a much broader group of sources has been done, and the results examined within regions and over short periods of time, can a completely accurate idea appear regarding the many foods and diets that were popular and common during the colonial years. What is presented here is a description of the foods as seen by the colonists and their visitors. The judgment of quality, be it complaints or compliments, and information about food supply, are as contemporaries viewed them, without twentieth century ideas imposed on statistics of another era. In understanding the actions of the colonist, often what he thought was true is more important to a historian than what may have been the truth. This study is a composite of colonials thoughts about foods.

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VITA

Mary E. Beard DeWhitt

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: FOODS IN COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA: 1742-1775

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Ponca City, Oklahoma, May 3, 1944, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David V. Beard.

Education: Graduated from Sperry High School, Sperry, Oklahoma, in May, 1961; received Bachelor of Arts degree from Oklahoma State University in 1965, with a major in History; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1971.

Professional Experience: Grading assistant, Department of History, 1964-1965; graduate teaching assistant, Department of History, 1965-1966; Phi Alpha Theta.