



Hello, World! The GCI Newsletter

PROGRAM PLANNING IDEAS FROM THE GLOBAL CULINARY INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 2015

The GCI Africa Issue

By The Global Culinary Initiative Committee

As we head to Charleston for Les Dames d'Escoffier's Annual Conference, the Global Culinary Initiative is shining a spotlight on contributions from the continent of Africa to today's global culinary scene.

Our issue ties into the October 30 Session #3, African Influence in Lowcountry Cuisine. Dames will learn about the unique culture of the Gullah/Geechee people. Descendants of slaves from West and Central Africa, they maintained many of their African food traditions and their history, providing a foundation for understanding the food traditions of Charleston and the Lowcountry.

Our compilation of links in this issue is not meant to be exhaustive, but represents some interesting related stories and insights.

The American South

- [An Illustrated History of Soul Food](#), written by James Beard Award-winning author and noted soul-food scholar Adrian Miller, provides an excellent overview from slavery to today's new culinary directions.
- Dora Charles, 61, a descendant of sharecroppers and slaves, cooked for Paula Deen for 22 years. She is now a

star in her own right with her first cookbook, "[A Real Southern Cook: In her Savannah Kitchen](#)," a book about her culinary roots and the culture that shaped her cooking.

- Reminiscences from [Valerie Erwin](#), the chef-owner of Geechee Girl Rice Cafe in Philadelphia (now closed) describes her affinity for food from the Lowcountry.
- Consider [healthier soul food](#) and take a peek at the food exhibition planned for the new African American Museum opening in 2016 in Washington, D.C.

African Nutrition

- [Africa's super vegetables](#) go well beyond collard greens and yams. Many are richer in vitamins, iron and other nutrients than Africa's non-native crops.
- What we can learn from [West Africa's eating habits](#) is featured in this story.
- There are [ten African super foods](#) that you should be eating right now.
- Gluten-free teff from Ethiopia and Eritrea has been named a [Grain of the Month](#) for November by Oldways Whole Grains Council.
- Download the [West African food composition table](#).

Africa in the World

- ❖ **Los Angeles:** The [North African taco](#) looks like this: Algerian flavors wrapped in the embrace of Mexico's national bread.
- ❖ **London:** The city's food scene includes a [new wave of African cuisine](#), with Ghanaian food about to make its mark.
- ❖ **Paris:** [The best meal in Paris](#) might not be French! With more African immigrants and entrepreneurs, restaurants and food trucks that specialize in regional African cuisine are popping up.
- ❖ **California:** Top California chefs are working with [African spices](#).
- ❖ **EU:** The EU collaborated with partners in Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Madagascar, Senegal, Ghana and South Africa to fund the [AFTER Project](#), a program to enhance the processing of 10 traditional foods and drinks from Africa for EU countries.
- ❖ **New York:** Chef Pierre Thiam talks to NPR about his [cookbook](#), *Senegal: Modern Senegalese Recipes from the Source to the Bowl*.
- ❖ **Italy:** Kenya is one of about 25 African countries participating in [Expo Milano 2015](#).

African Trends

- Take note of [5 African food bloggers](#) you need to follow now to keep up with the latest trends in African cuisine. From the historical to the trendy, they're documenting the continent's gastronomy.
- [10 African trends](#) for 2015 examine the consumer landscape. Among the trends: Africans promote their cultural identity, intra-continental tourism explodes, and there's an attitude of eco-reverence.
- [15 of Africa's favorite dishes](#): specialties are from Mozambique, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Namibia, Angola, Zanzibar, Kenya, Egypt and Morocco.
- Do you know these [South African foods](#)? They're trending in the UK: bobotie (a dish of spiced ground meat) and melktert (a custard tart).
- No need for Ghanaians to be homesick for their native cuisine; the [availability of ingredients](#) from Ghana has become widespread around the globe.
- South African wine is known worldwide, but [other African nations](#) are producing fine wines, too.
- [African heritage cuisine](#) is predicted to go mainstream with chefs like Marcus Samuelsson, who leads an African fusion trend, and food historian Jessica B. Harris shining the spotlight.

For Further Study

Books recommended to Dames by soul food scholar Adrian Miller:

- Carney, Judith A. and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*, University of California Press, 2009.
- Harris, Jessica B., *Beyond Gumbo: Creole Fusion Food from the Atlantic Rim*, Simon and Schuster, 2003.
- Harris, Jessica B., *Same Boat, Different Stops: An African Atlantic Culinary Journey*, 2001.
- Walker, Sheila S. (editor), *African Roots / American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001, pp. 169-182.

Books recommended by GCI:

- Cross, Wilbur, *Gullah Culture in America*, John F. Blair Publishers, 2012, pp. 197-211.
- Snyman, Lannice and Sawa, Andrzej, *Rainbow Cuisine: A Culinary Journey through South Africa*, Konemann, 2000.

GCI Hosts a Conference Session

To learn more about African contributions to American Lowcountry cuisine, be sure to attend the GCI breakout session, Session #3, at the LDEI Conference in Charleston on Friday, October 30.

To learn more about our speakers, visit:

- [Jonathan Green Studios](#), home page of the artist Jonathan Green and his work
- [ChefFarmer Matthew Raiford](#), website for his remarkable Gilliard Farms
- Chef Kevin Mitchell's [Facebook page](#)



Geechee sweetgrass basket maker, Charleston City Market

Newsletter Credits

The GCI Committee members are Sandy Hu (San Francisco, Chair), Roberta Duyff (St. Louis), Rachel Gaffney (Dallas) and Susan Fuller Slack (Charleston).

Cover art for this issue: Lowcountry Blue House, from the collection, *UNENSLAVED: Rice Culture Paintings* by Jonathan Green. Used with permission. Page 2 photo: Geechee sweetgrass basket maker by Susan Fuller Slack.



Global Culinary Initiative

Program Ideas

Here are some ways to use the content of this issue to develop GCI programs.

- Work with Dames in your chapter who are steeped in African culinary heritage to prepare an African-inspired program. It could be historical, tracing the roots of the continent's influence in cuisine; or inspirational, looking at how African cooking can stimulate innovation.
- Invite a food historian to talk about how African crops like groundnuts (peanuts), fed to slaves on ships during the Middle Passage to the Americas, became a part of the foodways of the countries where the slaves landed.
- As the rest of the world has been influenced by the food and cooking of Africa, Africa has been influenced by the food and cooking of other cultures. Invite an expert to speak about how various cultures have influenced cuisine in African countries.
- Follow the blog of one or all of the African bloggers featured in this issue (African Trends) and discuss, as you might in a book club. Communicate with the bloggers through their blog sites or use technology to arrange an interview.
- Experiment with African spices, ordered online or locally. Create a chefs' challenge for best use of the spices.
- Start an international culinary book club. Read a cookbook by an African cookbook author or an author writing about African culinary influences in your own country. Cook some of the recipes and discuss the book.
- Visit a restaurant specializing in soul food or other styles of cooking that have been influenced by Africa. Ask the proprietor or chef to talk to the group.
- Research African vegetables and invite an expert to discuss selection, storage and preparation.
- Visit the African art section of your local museum and arrange a private tour with a docent to educate your group. Get steeped in African art and culture.
- Hold a wine tasting of African wines with a wine expert who can discuss the terroir of each country and each region, as well as any specific characteristics of the particular wines.
- Plan a nutrition session on African foods and cooking with a dietitian Dame. Discuss the specific foods, the styles of cooking and the ways of eating that make meals healthy.