



Celebrating Food, Art & Culture

# International Edition

Feeding the Gastronomical Mind

Food Lore and Recipes from  
South Africa, the Republic of Turkey,  
Trinidad and Tobago

The Soweto Gospel Choir

The Fine Art Collection of  
Elizabeth City State University



"Casolare" by Drusiano Scerbo



Photo by Jean-Paul Vellotti



Photo by Andrzej Sawa from Rainbow Cuisine

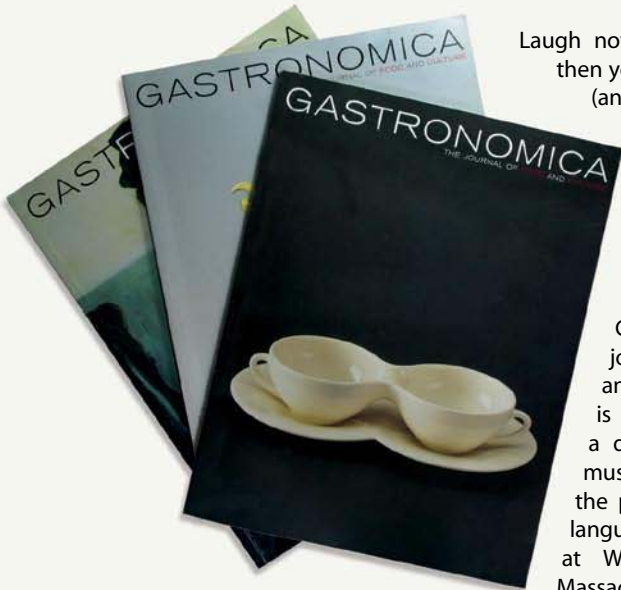


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## The Intellectual Appetite

Before you laugh, let the idea digest for a moment. Darra Goldstein has a good point. She believes the study of food as a segue into human understanding has an intellectual gravitas on par with say, the study of anthropology, psychology, economics, or politics. Her idea hasn't completely caught on at leading universities, but it is gaining respect.



Laugh now if you want, but then you owe it to yourself (and Goldstein) to read an issue of *Gastronomica*, the hyper-intellectual journal of food and culture published by the University of California Press. Goldstein is the journal's founder and editor, and she is a bona fide foodie, a dedicated mother, a museum curator, and the professor of Russian language and literature at Williams College in Massachusetts.

"Since 2001, we've been renewing the connection between sensual and intellectual nourishment by offering readers a taste of passionate inquiry through scholarship, humor, fiction, poetry, and exciting visual imagery," says the publication's Web site. Smitten with insatiable curiosity, we asked Goldstein to send us a few copies — after all, *Unity* is supposed to be "in the know" on all things related to food and culture. What we found was a cornucopia of tastefully written stories that can make intellectual foodies salivate.

"Before we turn to the criminal career of Harry Solomon Dolowich, let's pause for something cold and sweet," begins Andrew Coe's story, "The Egg Cream Racket." Who knew Brooklyn egg cream had such a shady history? Or that the sole function of the Knights of the Giant Omelet is to make (omelettes you ask?) omelettes with anywhere between 5,000 and 15,000 eggs. It's a French thing with a Napoleonic history, and it has spread from Bessières to Quebec to Louisiana. And if you ever wanted to know what Japanese sumotori eat to look the way they do, (it's considered an insult call them "wrestlers"), the answer is chankonabe, or a giant wok of chunky meat and vegetable stew.

Yet, as fun as those stories are to read and talk about, there's more to *Gastronomica* than food trivia and history: there are plenty of places to find that kind of information. Taken as a whole, *Gastronomica* presents the subtle notion that one can gain a unique understanding of humanity — its triumphs and failures, its motivations and accomplishments — through the thoughtful savoring of our most basic need, nourishment.

"Food touches everything," says Goldstein. "If you think about any area of human endeavor, in some way, food connects to it." You can read more *Gastronomica* stories by visiting [www.gastronomica.org](http://www.gastronomica.org)

### La Cuisine de Cognoscianti

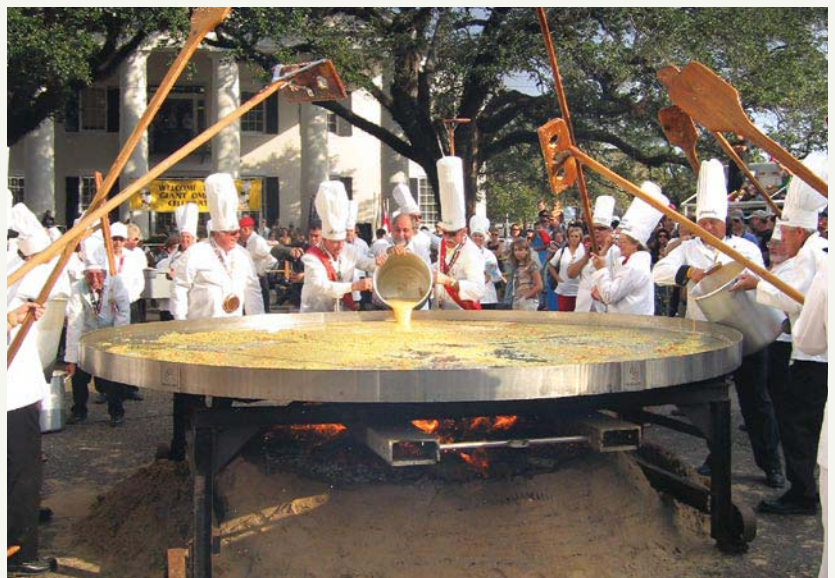
While *Gastronomica* presents a smart, yet somewhat entertaining discussion of food and culture, perfect for a relaxing read, serious intellectuals who want their information uncooked, unspiced and full of statistics can cozy up with a number of academic publications that tackle the plight of mankind as influenced by tastebuds.

*The Anthropology of Food* is an academic journal produced by serious researchers with a cerebral affinity for the social science of food. Its focus is often deeply philosophical. Do women who are devoted to losing weight constitute a "religious" group? Perhaps not in the traditional sense of the word, but Michelle Lelwica of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., writes that the symbols, rituals, and beliefs surrounding the pursuit of thinness has come to function much like a religion. Can the future of Hinduism in Guadeloupe, French West Indies, be determined by the dishes served at the family table? Meritxell Martín-i-Pardo of the University of the South, Virgin Islands, opines that dishes like Colombo Cabri, a curry flavored with sacrificial meat, and vegetarian meals are at the center of a roiling debate among traditional and global Hindus on the island. If those kinds of discussions stoke your appetite and you're ready for a heavy course of food studies, you can read these stories and more in their entirety at [www.aofood.org](http://www.aofood.org)

If you are Mensa material and an unabashed glutton for intellectual stimulation, check out *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, ([www.csafe.org.nz/ijsaf/index.htm](http://www.csafe.org.nz/ijsaf/index.htm)). This journal will put you in the know on the implementation and maintenance of neoliberal agriculture in Australia, how farm women are driving tractors while negotiating gender, and the roles that authority, power, and value play in contemporary industrial food systems. Perfect for having something to talk about at your next soirée.

If you've had your fill of the hyper-intellectual and you're ready to just eat some great food, all you need is this edition of *Unity*, which explores the foods and recipes of three international, culinary hotspots.

*This strange scene is from the Giant Omelette Celebration in Abbeyville, La. If you must see it to believe it, the 2007 event will be held this November and includes an art show, live entertainment, a kid's world, and more. Photo by Luc Collee.*



## About This Edition of *Unity*

History, politics, economics, conquest: How big are the roles they play in forming a nation's culinary traditions? Undeniably, their roles are dominating, as demonstrated by foods of three countries selected for this year's international edition of *Unity*. South Africa, the Republic of Turkey, and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are renowned as global gathering places for adventurers, business people, and foodies. Those influences have blended with the ancient foodways of each country's aboriginal peoples to create true, international cuisine. We hope you enjoy this edition of *Unity*, and read the articles referenced below and recipes on the food pages that follow.

### South Africa

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, you couldn't watch the evening news or read the daily paper without encountering at least one story on South Africa's struggle to end apartheid. Times have changed. Today, catching up on the news in front of a television or with the local paper is nearly passé, and news from South Africa is rare. Yet something delicious is cooking in Africa's southern-most country. Wines from the area are earning international acclaim, dining out is a more eclectic and casual affair, and according to Lannice Snyman, an expert on the cuisine, national introspection has led to new appreciations for the ingredients, recipes and cooking traditions of tribes living in the area long before the Dutch arrived. Her story makes it clear that South Africa is, and has been for centuries, not a black and white country, but a human rainbow that includes cultures and traditions from every part of the globe.

### The Republic of Turkey

It's hard to imagine a country more internationally-minded than Turkey, a country that has been at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe for nearly the same amount of time that humans have wandered the Earth. Anyone who has played the game *Risk* knows how tumultuous the Anatolia peninsula can be, which is not to make light of the conflicts that have taken place there. The study of Turkish history includes a Who's Who of empires going back to the biblical Hittites nearly 4,000 years ago; it includes being the center of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, as well as occupation by the Huns. It is a history celebrated today in a rich medley of foods that are the pinnacle of international cuisine. Istanbul is at (or near) the top of must-visit places for bonafide foodies, and gastronomic writer Henry Shukman tells us what it is like.

### Trinidad and Tobago

Chances are, you know these islands as popular destinations for vacationers and ports of call, but you probably don't know where they are or how to pronounce their names. That is the conclusion of Ramin Ganeshram, who has spent a lifetime explaining such matters to friends as she shares stories about her East Indian great-grandfather, who arrived in Trinidad 150 years ago as an indentured worker. The islands, 23 of them in all, are just off the northeast coast of Venezuela, and Tobago is pronounced TOE-BAY-GO. Originally settled by Amerindians at least 7,000 years ago, Trinidad and Tobago were colonized by Spain, the Dutch, France, and eventually England, which led to the importation of slaves from Africa and India. There should be no surprise that the food here qualifies as some of the best in international cuisine. A review of Ramin's island cookbook is on the back page.

*South Africa has 1,739 miles of coastline, Turkey has 3,999, while Trinidad and Tobago has 225 (but they are islands!). It's no wonder that food from the sea is a centerpiece of the food, art, literature, and daily living in those countries.*



## Soweto Brings Home a GRAMMY

Just days before the 2007 GRAMMY Awards were presented, the Soweto Gospel Choir released *African Spirit*, a collection of moving traditional South African spiritual music, South African pop, American gospel and popular inspirational songs from around the world. The CD would feature the choir's unique interpretations of popular songs written by Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff and a moving version of U2's hit "One" performed with Bono. But it was *Blessed*, the CD the choir released last year, that stole the show at the GRAMMYS, winning "Best Traditional World Music Album" award. It was a tremendous accomplishment for the group which was created only five years ago.

The Soweto Gospel Choir is filled with musicians who love more than music. Following their faith, they serve as ambassadors for Nelson Mandela's aids foundation, 46664; they support two South African charities, Unite Against Hunger and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund; and they raise money for their own charities, Nkosi's Haven and Nkosi's Haven Vugani, to assist struggling orphans with AIDS who are in constant and desperate need for the basic necessities of life.

The choir just completed a U.S. tour and plans to return in 2008, but you can check out their sound at your favorite music store.





"Chiesa con due Cipressi" by Drusiano Scerbo

## Elizabeth City State University's Journey through Treasures of Fine Art

Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) was founded on March 3, 1891, when House Bill 383 was enacted by the North Carolina General Assembly, establishing a normal school for the specific purpose of "teaching and training teachers of the colored race to teach in the common schools of North Carolina." When ECSU first began operations, it housed 23 students in rented quarters on a scant budget of \$900. The institution was later elevated from a two-year, normal school to a four-year teachers' college in 1937, and the institution's name was officially changed to Elizabeth City State Teachers College in 1939. Its mission was expanded to include the training of elementary school principals for rural and city schools. Curricular offerings were expanded between 1959 and 1963 from a single elementary education major to 12 additional academic majors, and effective July 1, 1969, the college became Elizabeth City State University. In the fall 2005, the university made history with its highest enrollment ever of 2,664 students, and the campus has become increasingly multicultural.

There are several journeys one can take to encounter a visual arts experience on the ECSU campus. The top three picks are taking a

"Convento" by Drusiano Scerbo



walking tour of the campus where ECSU's permanent collection is dispersed, visiting the recently built Fine Arts complex and studios, and viewing works and objects created by faculty members and local artists who are in partnership with the university.

### Walking Tour

As the University owns several works by prominent African American artists — artistically dispersed in offices and locations across the campus — a walking tour becomes a treasure hunt for art seekers and collectors. "As artists and educators, we fully understand the importance of an art collection to a university," says Professor Alexis Joyner, Chair of the Fine Art Department and a very prominent artist and sculptor.

He goes on to explain, "The potential impact that a collection has on the *community* is beyond measure in terms of both education and public relations. In addition to being an

invaluable teaching and recruitment tool, our collection serves as a conduit for inspiration for our students. There are few avenues available to us as art educators that provide students with immediate access to aesthetic stimulation as does an art collection. It fosters a sense of ownership and pride in the students."

### Fine Arts Complex

The Fine Arts Complex is home to the art and music departments and features ECSU's newest buildings, which opened in January 2000. In addition to hosting ECSU's theatrical, musical, ballet, and dance events in the auditorium, the Fine Arts Complex is home to an art gallery and several unique fine art studios that are designated for the creation of jewelry, sculpture, design, drawing, ceramics, and painting.

### Meeting the Faculty

In the fine art department visitors can interact first-hand with faculty members and gain introductions to several local artists who have ECSU partnerships. The department of art offers students a solid foundation in a variety of courses, with emphasis on the imaginative use of materials, development of skills, and study in art media techniques and aesthetics.

Students have a wide variety of courses from which to choose, including drawing, design, painting, sculpture, filmmaking, computer graphics, photography, printmaking in intaglio, and serigraphy. Additionally, courses are provided in ceramics and jewelry. There is a full range of instruction in art history including Western and non-Western art from a multicultural perspective. Museum studies, art therapy, and theater minors are also available as part of the ECSU arts curriculum.

The works featured on these pages are from the collections of faculty and local artists who exhibit at the university, each bringing a unique perspective while demonstrating the power of diversity with respect to the artists and their works.

Pictured below, left to right



## About the Artists

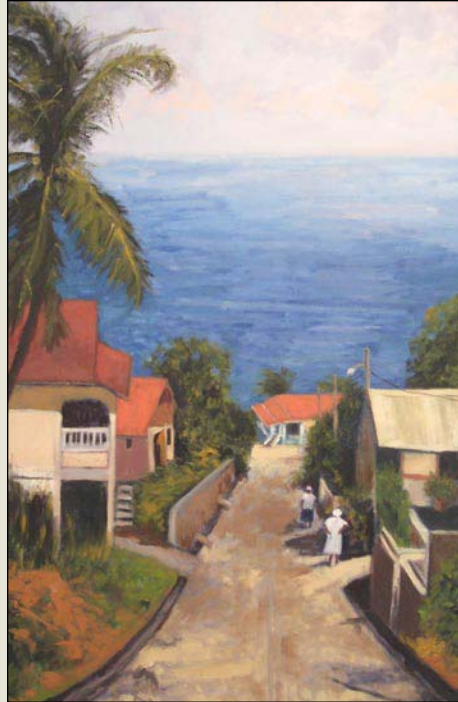
### Professor Alexis Joyner, M.F.A.

Dr. Alexis Joyner is the Chair in the ECSU Fine Art Department and holds a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) from Norfolk State University and Old Dominion University.

"My work continues to be an exploration of my personal take on life's vibrations," says Joyner on his inspirations. "I am profoundly influenced by my connection to the African Diaspora. My travels to Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa have provided added fuel to stoke an already bellowing fire of inquisitiveness. Those travels have helped me connect the dots. Images that were instinctive and came through me as a child, I now better understand their origin. It makes one want to put some stock in the idea of cultural memory."

Most of Joyner's recent work has been experimental in nature and heavily influenced by his visits to West Africa. The wealth of African icons and symbols, especially the Adinkra symbols, have proven to be invaluable instruments in the development of his visual vocabulary. They have information which clarifies the narrative and meaning of his pieces. "Several of my works are mixed media, abstract, figurative sculptural forms in which found and fabricated objects have been incorporated for visual interest and surprise. These art objects are meant to be reminders of morals and old fashion values," he explains.

Left: "Peace Devine" and "Improv" by Alexis Joyner



Pictured left to right: "Island Time" and "Weeksvillesky" by Dru Thompson

### Professor Drusiano Scerbo, M.F.A.

Drusiano Scerbo is a professor in ECSU's fine art department and holds an MFA from Norfolk State University and Old Dominion University.

"I was born in a small town in southern Italy in the region called Calabria, but grew up in northern Italy," notes Scerbo. "Through the years, I learned to admire the landscapes of those regions and the people that are part of it. I wasn't able to pursue my dream of becoming an artist while in Italy. Instead, I studied to become a land surveyor and learned technical drawing and architectural rendering, which was the closest I could come to working in the visual arts. This background is what laid the foundation of what I call my artistic content."

Scerbo came to the United States in 1980 and enrolled in the fine arts program at the University of Akron in Ohio. From the beginning, his work was formed from images, colors, people, and landscapes brought from Italy. His work, visually fluctuates between representing the human figure within targeted settings and representing the physical and psychological space that the land offers through its panoramas. The content of Scerbo's work has moved from a social realism to an implied existential realism.

### Dru Thompson

Dru Thompson is a professional artist living in North Carolina and a local partner of ECSU.

Sixteen years ago, Thompson made a real commitment to her art. She explains, "Even if I am not working on a painting, I'm painting in my mind. It's always been that way. I'm always looking to stretch myself. It does not mean a conscious change in style, but something better. I paint because I have to."

Nature has always been Thompson's inspiration, and she tries to capture its many moods on canvas. "Color excites me and I want to share that experience with others," says Thompson.

She has received several awards and recognitions, and her paintings are displayed in galleries in North Carolina and Virginia. When she is not traveling the countryside looking for new subjects, Thompson can usually be found in her riverside studio working on her latest painting. In 2003 Dru opened her own gallery, Red Rabbit Art Gallery, in Elizabeth City, N.C. The gallery has helped her develop her own personal expression, and it has helped her grow closer to the local art community and university by showing the work of other students and artists.

**Promoting Cultural Awareness and Diversity through the Arts:** Diversity, as it is represented through art, provides a personal and visual expression of our valuable cultural differences. *Unity* and the artwork it showcases can supplement your diversity program. It is the perfect way to discover the vibrancy of new cultures and lifestyles.

For more information on our cultural fine art collection, visit [www.picture-that.com](http://www.picture-that.com)

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## South Africa's Rainbow Cuisine

In South Africa, the local cuisine is evolving, spurred on by a vital force that lets us borrow from the past and take into account the present, yet still look into the future. Back in the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company decided that the Cape was the perfect place to plant a garden, and in no time intrepid seafarers plying the lucrative spice route from Europe and the East were popping into the Cape for quality R&R, fresh edibles, and, eventually, fine wines. Three hundred and fifty years is a brief moment in the history of the world, yet during this period of time South Africa has developed a national cuisine that is so much more than the sum of its parts.



Photo by Andrzej Sawa

VhaVenda women in the far north make a cooking fire for the preparation of King's Porridge.

dumplings and *madumbe* tubers. West Coast fisherfolk sizzle just-caught seafood over open fires. Those are simple meals designed for sustenance rather than culinary fame.

A more profound effect on our cuisine was made by slaves from India, Madagascar, and Indonesia, then known as Batavia. The Cape Malays, as they came to be known, were in great demand as cooks in early Dutch homes, and their definitive use of spices with the existing food repertoire resulted in what is now called Cape-Malay cuisine. Excellent examples of Cape-Malay dishes include *bobotie*, pickled fish, sumptuous curries and *bredies*, and syrupy sweet *koeksisters*, all of which have become synonymous with South African cuisine. The origins of South Africa's Indian population date back to the 1860s when Indians came to KwaZulu-Natal to work in the sugar cane fields. They were greeted by a paucity of familiar foodstuffs, so in their tiny gardens they sowed the precious seeds of vegetables and herbs brought from home. Indian recipes pass from mother to daughter, taught by example rather than by the written word.

As for present trends in South African cooking and predictions for its future, the story continues to unfold. With urbanization, the dismantling of apartheid, and improved interracial harmony has come a re-evaluation of long-fragmented traditions. Urban Blacks have adopted aspects of the Western diet, which has led to the demise of some indigenous ingredients, traditional dishes, and cooking methods. On the other hand, Whites are looking to their roots with renewed interest and also embracing more often the ingredients, recipes, and cooking techniques traditionally favored by Black communities. Home cooks, food writers, and restaurateurs are rethinking their inherited culinary traditions and merging a myriad of styles into a harmonious, yet varied, whole. This newfound respect for the local is one of the nicest surprises on the scene in recent times.

South Africans are a warm and hospitable people. We never count how many potatoes we're putting into our casserole or curry — there must always be sufficient for unexpected guests. Those who visit our shores, enjoy our special brand of hospitality, and follow our recipes will find much on the table that bears testimony to all who comprise the rainbow of South Africa.

Originally printed in *Gastronomica*, Winter 2004. Written by Lannice Snyman. Excerpted with permission.

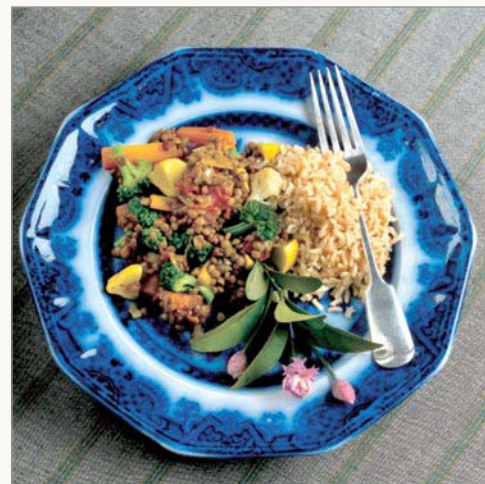


Photo by Andrzej Sawa

### Dhal Vegetable Curry

Meat is a luxury in many South African homes, and housewives are adept at creating wonderful main dishes using vegetables. From *Rainbow Cuisine* by Lannice Snyman, here is a flavor-packed Cape-Malay curry, in which a strong Indian influence is evident. Serves 8.

- 1 cup dried brown lentils
- vegetable oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 3-4 peeled, crushed garlic cloves
- 1 green chili, sliced and seeded
- 2 sticks cassia
- 3 cardamom pods
- 1 tablespoon roasted masala or curry powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon turmeric
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 ripe tomatoes, finely chopped
- 3 cups vegetables (cauliflower and broccoli florets, sliced carrot, sliced baby marrows)
- 3 cups water

Pick over the lentils and soak them in plenty of cold water for an hour. Tip the lentils into a colander to drain the water.

Heat a little oil in a large saucepan and fry the onion until golden. Add the garlic, chilli and spices and stir for roughly 30 seconds. Add the tomato and lentils with 2 cups of the water, cover and simmer gently for approximately 40 minutes until the lentils are almost tender.

Add the vegetables and remaining water and cook for about 20 minutes until cooked. Check the flavour and add a little more salt if necessary. If the curry is too moist, cook uncovered for a few minutes. If it's too dry add a little extra water. Serve with rice and sambals.

More recipes at [www.lannicesnyman.com](http://www.lannicesnyman.com)

# Istanbul: Fresh as the Morning, or Rooted in Centuries Past

Napoleon said that if the world were a single state then its capital would be Constantinople. Even today, amid the traffic-choked streets of modern Istanbul, among the high-rises, the steep alleys and the glowing ancient churches and mosques, you can still feel exactly what he meant. As you'd expect in the capital of the world, there are restaurants from all over. But I didn't come to Turkey to eat Chinese, Italian or Russian. Cognoscenti say that Turkish is the best of the eastern Mediterranean cuisines, so I sallied forth in search of the most interesting indigenous kitchens.

As a visitor to Istanbul, you're sure to be sent to Kumkapi, a district packed with fish restaurants. In fact, it's nothing but fish restaurants, and by night it's busy, frantic, overwhelming — a bit like wandering into a cross between a hotel theme-night party and a 1970 disco. With the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, the Black Sea and the Aegean all within a morning's drive, Istanbul is a great city for fish. But more interesting than any place in Kumkapi is Tarihi Karakoy Balikcisi in the Karakoy district. Finding the restaurant, however, just behind the fish market near the Galata Bridge, is anything but simple. Down an alley lined with hardware stalls, past 200 yards of screws, drills and hinges, all that gives it away is a wood-framed doorway and a little display window with a small sample of the day's catch. Everything here is "of the day." When they run out, they close. Its owner, Hakan Ozkaraman, owner also of a ball-bearing store around the corner, is passionate about fish. "I'm amateur — this is the special thing," he said, raising a finger. "Here, just I am selling fish. Not ambience, not view, not fancy plates — just fish."



*Fish market in Istanbul. With nearly 4,500 miles of coastline, seafood is a large part of the Turkish diet.*

Asitane, a white-cloth establishment with a terrace under the almond trees at the back of the Kariye Hotel, offers not just rare Ottoman cuisine, but actual dishes from a feast given in 1539 by Suleiman the Magnificent to celebrate the circumcision of his two sons (which may not sound too appetizing, but the dishes are sumptuous). Under the Ottoman Empire the guilds of cooks were fiercely secretive about their culinary tricks. Consequently few recipes survive from the four and a half centuries of Ottoman rule (1453 to 1918). Asitane has devoted itself to the re-creation of this lost cuisine. Eating here is a live history class. This ancient cuisine, though filling, is light in grease and fat, and surprisingly clean. The Turkish-Finnish chef Mehmet Gurs is a star of the moment. With his own TV show and three establishments in his portfolio, he's something like an Istanbul equivalent of the Naked Chef.

Istanbul has enjoyed a resurgence at the prospect of joining the European Union. Sleek new trams run with great efficiency through the downtown district, Beyoglu. One restaurant that clearly

reflects this is Lokanta, Mr. Gurs's original retro-minimalist place. You can tell what a chic place it is by the name: "Restaurant." It also happens to have one of the tallest restaurant lobbies you are likely to encounter (it goes right up to the roof six stories above).

You couldn't get near Borsa the night we went. We had to make our way on foot the last half-mile to the outdoor terrace. Borsa — which means Stock Exchange — has been going since 1927 and used to be downtown near the Golden Horn and the old stock exchange. Now it has moved to a rather anonymous setting in a conference center, but the food is anything but anonymous. For eight decades this family-run establishment has been renowned for the highest quality Anatolian cuisine. Anatolia, as one Turk explained to me, is a big word meaning more or less all Turkey that is neither on the sea nor Istanbul. The high point was unquestionably the sis (or shish) of lamb — proving once again, as the Middle Ages knew, that there is no better way to cook meat than on a spit over a fire. With a smoky mash of charcoaled eggplant on the side, like the very best food it was both simple and complex, and memorable.

*By Henry Shukman, originally printed in The New York Times, excerpt reprinted with permission.*



*Dolma are stuffed vegetable dishes in the cuisines of the former Ottoman Empire, including Turkey, Armenia, the Middle East, the Balkans, Greece, and Central Asia. The popular grape-leaf dolma is more precisely called yaprak dolma or sarma. Dolmas include stuffed tomatoes and peppers, and the stuffing may or may not include meat.*

## Stuffed Vine Leaves in Olive Oil

From [www.turkishcook.com](http://www.turkishcook.com), © 2004. Serves 18.

- 1 pound vine leaves pickled in brine
- 1 pound rice
- 7 medium onions
- 1 1/2 glasses olive oil, divided
- 4 glasses water
- 2 tablespoons currants
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- 1 bunch dill
- 1 bunch parsley
- Salt, black pepper and spices

Place vine leaves in boiling water to remove their salt. Put 1/2 glass olive oil and chopped onions into a pan and sauté over moderate heat while stirring with a wooden spoon, add the washed rice and continue to stir. Add water, spice, salt, chopped parsley and dill, black pepper, currants and pine nuts. Pour in 1/2 glass olive oil and cook gently while still stirring. Put aside to cool.

Cut off the stalks of the leaves and place stalks on the bottom of the pan where the cooking will be done. Over those put one layer of vine leaves. Place 1/2 tablespoon of the filling on each leaf, roll and line up in the pan. After all the leaves are stuffed, cover the entire surface with a layer of leaves and pour the water, the remaining olive oil and lemon juice over and cook on moderate heat. When the leaves become tender remove from heat, and put on a serving plate after they have cooled down. Decorate the plate with lemon slices, serve along with the remaining lemon juice if desired.



*The Hindu Temple By the Sea in Waterloo signals the influence of Indian culture in Trinidad in Tobago. Photo by Jean-Paul Vellotti.*

## Sweet Hands

“In Trinidad, the best compliment a cook can hope for is to be told he or she has ‘sweet hands,’ writes Ramin Ganeshram in her recently released cookbook, *Sweet Hands: Island Cooking from Trinidad and Tobago*. “It means the person is so talented in the kitchen that anything they make — sandwich or seven-course meal — is like manna from the gods.” For those who know this Caribbean country is home to trance-inducing steel-drums, top-shelf rums, plenty of sand, and not much else, *Sweet Hands* is a thought-provoking study of how aboriginals, colonists, and slaves have created a healthy diet that rivals anything along the Mediterranean. Of course, the book is also a tasty collection of island recipes — perfect for summer meals.

Alongside traditional dishes of curried fish, roti, and coconut cream pie are the tidbits of information foodies crave. For instance, at any given time only five people know the unwritten recipe for Angostura bitters, the beverage accoutrement manufactured in Trinidad since 1824. The making of this product is so secretive, workers are kept under total lockdown while they prepare mixtures from unmarked bags. Getting the product to market is a real-life, clandestine operation that would make Tom Clancy envious.

Buffalypso are the beastly, yet revered animals that produce milk and, a particularly well-loved island favorite, yogurt. They are actually water buffalo, or calypso buffalo, and can be quite fierce. Jean-Paul Vellotti, the book’s photographer, was chased by one momentarily, until the huge bull lodged the former tree to which it had been chained (and now dragged behind it) between two other trees.

The most appetizing foods of the islands are abundant varieties of fresh, perfectly delicious fruit. Soursop, guava, mangos, and chinet are just a few that can be found at the village market, and nearly every little town has its own market area. “My personal favorite fruit of all time is pomerac,” Ganeshram says yearningly. “It is sweet, yet tart, sort of a cross between a pear and an apple, and it is the first thing I look for when I arrive,” she explains.

*Sweet Hands* is available in many bookstores, or you can order through the publisher at [www.hippocrenebooks.com](http://www.hippocrenebooks.com)

### Green Seasoning

This spice mixture is unique to the Caribbean and is used copiously in Trinidad dishes. Use cilantro, but the authentic recipe calls for shado beni, or Mexican culantro. Makes 1 cup.

- 3 tablespoons chives, chopped
- 1 tablespoon shado beni or cilantro, chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced

## Trinidadian Shrimp Creole

From *Sweet Hands: Island Cooking from Trinidad & Tobago* by Ramin Ganeshram. Serves 4.

- 2 pounds shrimp, shells removed, deveined
- 2 tablespoons green seasoning (recipe below)
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 stalk celery, chopped
- 1 small red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 16-ounce can of chopped tomato
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon hot pepper sauce
- 1 bay leaf

Combine the shrimp and green seasoning, and set aside in the refrigerator.

Heat the oil in skillet and add the onions, celery, and bell pepper. Saute until the onion is soft and add the garlic. Stir well and cook for 1 to 2 minutes more. Add the tomatoes, salt, and hot pepper sauce. Mix well and add the bay leaf.

Simmer, covered for 20 minutes, and add shrimp. Cook until the the shrimp just turn pink. Remove from heat and serve with rice.



Process all ingredients in a food processor until the mixture becomes a thick paste.

Alternatively, process in a blender with 2 tablespoons of water.

Use immediately, or if you are preparing ahead of time, store in a tightly sealed glass jar in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

## Send Us Your Stories

Diversity is a core value of Thompson Hospitality and Compass Group. To serve you better, visit us at [www.thompsonhospitality.com](http://www.thompsonhospitality.com) or e-mail us at [diversity@thompsonhospitality.com](mailto:diversity@thompsonhospitality.com) to give us your comments and suggestions for future stories. Visit [www.thompsonhospitality.com](http://www.thompsonhospitality.com) for information on our many diversity initiatives.

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