

CHoW's Beginning: 1996

When CHoW was founded twenty years ago, it was a time when culinary history was not considered as an academic study by very many in the United States, although it was an accepted area of study in Europe. In the U.S., culinary history courses were sometimes found within history or "American Studies."



CHoW's founder, **Shirley Cherkasky** (at left), was a Coordinator of public programs at the National Museum of American History in the 1980s and 1990s. One of our best programs was her *Good as Gold: Foods the Americas Gave the World* (Oct. 1991) in preparation for the observance of the Columbian Quincentenary.

Shirley knew that a good number of people enjoyed coming together to discuss food history, whether it was through her work with Smithsonian

symposiums such as the "What's the Catch?: Fish, Shellfish and American Fisheries" (1994) at the NMAH, or her friendships in the American Folklore Society, or her regular participation in the International Commission on Ethnological Food Research, a mostly European organization founded in 1971 at the University of Lund, Sweden.

In 1996, Shirley gathered bylaws from the Culinary Historians of Boston—of which she was a member—plus the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor and Houston. She and a few other future CHoW members perused the bylaws and devised a new set that would serve as the structure and guidelines for the new Culinary Historians of Washington, D.C.

Shirley sent out about 50 postcard invitations, and on October 15, 1996, the first meeting was held at the Eckles Library of Mount Vernon College on Foxhall Road. Many of those attending, such as **Rodris Roth, Willis Van Devanter, Warren Belasco, Dianne Hennessy King, Francine Berkowitz, CiCi Williamson** and others, became charter members of CHoW (see list at right). We met at Mount Vernon College's Eckles Library and began our collection of food-related books that was shelved there for several years until the George Washington University took over the Mt. Vernon College campus.

Today, the importance of culinary history is recognized throughout academia, museums, media, and national and international public policy. How times have changed!

Shirley has been CHoW's guiding light for more than two decades. She also helped found two sister culinary history groups, Culinary History Enthusiasts of Wisconsin (chewisconsin.com) and the Association of Culinary Historians of the Philippines (<http://chopphilippines.blogspot.com/>).

..--Dianne Hennessy King

60 Charter Members of Culinary Historians of Washington in 1996

Joan Bacharach	Martha Kaiser
Warren Belasco	Dianne King
Francine Berkowitz	Mary Sue Latini
Debbie Bowles	Quentin Looney
Gretchen Brodtman	Robert Magee
Joseph Carlin	Carolyn Margolis
Carol Carpenter	Brigitte Martin
Claire Cassidy	Margaret McKenna
Elizabetta Castleman	Sidney Mintz
(Elizabetta G. Giacom)	Milton Mortman
Karen Cathey	Vilma Ortiz
Joan Challinor	Robert Parker
Shirley Cherkasky	Catherine Pressler
Cecilia Chin	Frances Price
Laurene Church	Betsy Robinson
Susan Clark	Cathy Romano
Audrey Davis	Anne Romines
Joel Denker	Rodris Roth
Susan Derecskey	Molly Schuchat
Christine Donnelly	Monya Shannon
Catherine Evans	Goody Solomon
Jane Finn	Anita Stemmerman
Gail Forman	Mary Thompson
Sidney Gottlieb	B.L. Trahos
Rayna Green	Carter Van Devanter
Elaine Hawes	Willis Van Devanter
Sylvia Hopkins	James Wallace
Peter Barton Hutt	Sally Waltz
Virginia Jenkins	Lelia Washburn
Eve Jochnowitz	CiCi Williamson

CHoW Presidents

Following are the past presidents of CHoW since its inception.

1996-1997 Shirley Cherkasky (served as temporary president for the organizing period)
1997-1999 Shirley Cherkasky
1999-2001 Francine Berkowitz
2001-2003 Dianne Hennessy King
2003-2005 Claudia Kousoulas
2005-2007 Kari Barrett
2007-2009 Laura Gilliam
2009-2011 Katherine Livingston
2011-2013 CiCi Williamson
2013-2015 Katy Hays
2015-2017 Bruce Reynolds
2017- 2019 Barbara Karth
2019-2020 Tina Lima
2020-2022 Pamela Simon