



Earline Wilson prepares a dinner featuring her special Spicy Oven-Barbecued Chicken and Souped-Up Macaroni And Cheese followed by her own Deep-Dish Peach Cobbler. She likes meals that are easy to prepare, yet take advantage of a variety of foods, spices and styles of cooking.

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roni and cheese, and a delicious peach cobbler.

Charles, who has developed a hobby of bread making, contributed his own cornbread.

The meal and its preparation reflected a wide range of tastes and ideas applied to traditional foods from different parts of the world. It was typically eclectic. That is, typically New York.

New Yorkers who do not live there are fond of pointing out that Manhattan and New York City are not all there is to New York. There is, for example, Long Island.

At the north end of Long Island, about ninety minutes or so from Manhattan, are the Hamptons, the '20s and '30s playground of the fabled, idle rich. The Hamptons are a long way from Harlem in every sense of the word.

This area of affluence and old money is not one in which you would expect to find a Black heritage, but it is there, and it reaches back before the birth of the country.

The northern end of Long Island, particularly Montauk and Sag Harbor, was one of the centers of the early American fishing and whaling industries. Black freemen, bondsmen and runaway slaves were part of those industries even before the Revolution. By the 1820s, Black sailors were a common sight on ships working in and out of the ports and bays around the island. Some ships were captained by Blacks and a few had all-Black crews.

Some of these men settled their families in the port towns and villages. By 1840, there were enough Black residents in Sag Harbor and the surrounding country to form their own congregation of the AME Zion Church. With the help of local Indians, they built a clapboard house of worship that stands to this very day. Right across the road is the church graveyard. A visitor there can almost read the history of Sag Harbor's Black community on the ancient grave stones.

Today St. David AME Zion church has seven full-time parishioners, who are served by a traveling minister. They and their fellow residents of Sag Harbor are working to have the church building declared a national historic landmark.

In the late '40s and '50s, Sag Harbor became a favorite summer playground and residence for well-to-do Black professionals and business people, most of them from New York City and the Washington-Baltimore area. Many of these people bought or built summer homes in the village and the surrounding countryside. Some later retired to Sag Harbor, creating an affluent new community of Black residents.

Earline Wilson grew up in Baltimore, where there is a great seafood tradition. She has fond memories of fish and crab dinners at home, but the seafood available in local mar-

kets does not usually meet her standards.

"You can get some fine things here, but to get the really good seafood, you have to go down to the piers and get it fresh off the boat. I just don't have the time for that, so I don't serve it too often."

It is a very rewarding hobby for Dorothy Barcliff. It seems somehow to nourish a great Black and Indian tradition, at the same time it points to what may well be the wave of the future.

Heading home from New York there was time to ask just what it was that made Black cooking in the Big Apple different from what he had found elsewhere in the country. In the final analysis, it seems New York cooking is distinguished by a range of individual styles rather than any regional characteristic. Black cooking in New York is more a reflection of the interests and personality of the cook than of the region in which he or she happens to live.

Among these, Dorothy Barcliff developed a special interest in the food and the cooking of the area. A retired educator from Washington, D.C., Mrs. Barcliff finds Sag Harbor a place of constant discovery.

In recent years, many forms of plant and animal life have disappeared from the area as a result of population growth and residential and recreational development. But

Mrs. Barcliff has discovered a place where the wild beach plum is making a comeback.

She picks the plums for wine and jelly, but she steadfastly refuses to tell anyone where she finds them.

"If I did that, there'd be a flock of people in there next season, and that might be the end of them," she said.

Mrs. Barcliff has researched the eating and cooking habits of the local Indian tribes, some of whom still live in the area.

The original settlers of Sag Harbor were much influenced by the Indians, who lived off what the land and the abundant waters could provide. This was no less true of the Black families who made their homes in the area. As a result, they developed a cooking tradition that was almost untouched by the experience of slavery. It coincided with what is generally thought of as the soul food tradition only to the extent that it made use of the same basic foods.

Mrs. Barcliff demonstrated this for guests at a luncheon in her Sag Harbor cottage. She served cod fish caught early that morning off Montauk Point, and two versions of hominy, the traditional soul food grits and an Indian version called samp.

Samp is the whole hominy grain, and it looks like popcorn. It is dried, cracked, soaked over night and slow-cooked until soft. Mrs. Barcliff adds zest to the dish with some sharp cheddar cheese to create her *samp au gratin*.

For comparison, she served the more traditional grits flavored with Cheez Whip pasteurized process cheese spread.

The differences in the taste and texture of the two dishes were a refreshing surprise.

Mrs. Barcliff prepared the cod fish with her own special seasoning of mayonnaise, capers, a little grated onion and "sage and thyme fresh from the garden."

She grows many of her own herbs and vegetables. She picks others wild in the woods and dunes that surround Sag Harbor. She makes her own wines and relishes with fruit and berries from her own garden.

Cooks in New York have a world of foods, herbs, spices and condiments from which to choose. They are limited only by their spirit of adventure and experiment.

There was one final afterthought on the journey home. In the course of our research, we had tasted peaches, plantains, avocados, tomatoes, hominy, spaghetti and macaroni, but not once—in the city that calls itself The Big Apple—had we encountered an apple of any kind, not even a little green one.

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Dorothy Barcliff serves a lunch for guests that includes her own Sag Harbor Cod Fillets and Golden Grits.

School Menu

- February 15: Happy Birthday.
- February 16: Sausage pizza, celery chunks, mixed vegetables, strawberry birthday cake, milk.
- February 17: Country style steak, whipped potatoes, carrot coins, bran muffin, applesauce, milk.
- February 18: Oven fried chicken, french fries, carrot rounds, bulgur roll, orange half, milk.
- February 19: Mexican taco, shredded lettuce & tomato, whole kernel corn, apple wedges, brownie, milk.

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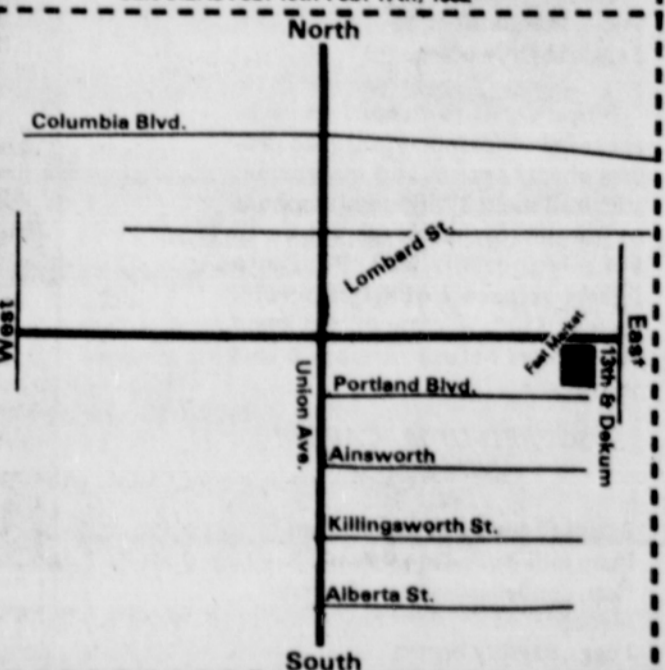
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