

THE GRAPEVINE

Newsletter

Fall | 2023

Issue 35



Teachers College Program in Nutrition

Find out what's *fresh off the vine*

Chicken Adobo: made by first year
students Rui Sun, Alejandro Espinoza,
& Yongnan You

LETTER FROM THE *Editors*



Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni, and Staff,

Welcome to the Grapevine's Fall Issue! As colder temperatures approach, there are so many things for which we are grateful. In this new iteration of the Grapevine, we will explore the unparalleled opportunities we have as Program in Nutrition students.

This fall, second-year students were given the chance to intern at a variety of locations. Sheba, Jingwei, & Sophie join our co-editor Jay to reflect on their unique experiences. Likewise, we hope you are inspired by Alison & Jay's discussions of hands-on nutrition learning. Through fall semester courses, they learned essential skills for inclusive dietetics.

Through our study of food, emerges a conduit for sharing. Wency & Ritu discuss how nutrition coursework has led them to connect with food and cultures across the globe.

Finally, learn the secrets to Tiger's culinary prowess. Discover his Pistachio-crust Lamb with Basil-leek puree, Pani Puri Marsala, Braised Leeks, Chanterelles, and Fried Sunchoke. You may have just found a new star dish for your Thanksgiving meal.



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MNT SKILLS LAB AT THE COLUMBIA NURSING SCHOOL CAMPUS

By Jay Gendron

The second year students in the Program in Nutrition recently had the opportunity to visit the Columbia University Nursing School Simulation lab in order to receive training for skills that fall within the scope of practice for an RDN. While there, students had the opportunity to place nasogastric tubes, administer a Vitamin B12 injection, administer insulin injections, take blood pressure, and take a blood glucose reading with a glucometer.

Overall, students seemed to enjoy the experience. When asked for comment, second year Tiger Liu stated: “I enjoyed the opportunity to learn new skills!” Second year Sandra Chien added, “I think it’s a really good opportunity for us to practically learn clinical knowledge, and I really love it!”





Outside La Savane Restaurant

Exploring West African Flavors at La Savane

By Wency Xiang

As I pondered which restaurant to choose for my review, I coincidentally attended an inspiring guest lecture during Dr. Wolf's Nutritional Epidemiology and Assessment course. The presentation, by Dr. Margrethe Horlyck-Romanovsky from Brooklyn College, focused on the dietary acculturation of West African immigrants in New York City. This piqued my interest in the traditional cuisine of this community, leading me to explore West African flavors at La Savane, an authentic restaurant located in East Harlem. I invited my dear classmate, Alison Garbarini, to join me on this culinary adventure.

La Savane is a cozy eatery offering family-style portions of African cuisine. Upon entering,

we were greeted by vivid African artwork adorning the walls. While the menu is in English, many of the dish names have French origins or are directly translated from French. At first, this posed some challenges for us in understanding. However, the friendly waitress quickly stepped in to introduce herself and explain the dishes to us, alleviating our initial confusion. She graciously offered us a small cup of okra stew to taste, knowing that we had never tried it before. Following her recommendations, we ordered the *gigot* (lamb shank) paired with *couscous* and tomato-onion medley, okra stew served with *fufu*, and two glasses of refreshing *bissap*.

Gigot, derived from the French term for “leg of lamb,” is a traditional French dish featuring roast

leg of lamb ([Ozimek, 2020](#)). La Savane's preparation showcased the perfect balance of a crispy exterior and tender, juicy meat within. Each slice of gigot could be dipped into the flavorful tomato-onion medley, enhancing the overall experience. Couscous, a staple in North and West African cuisine, is made from durum wheat flour, although variants using rice, maize, or cowpea flours are also common ([Couscous, 2018](#)). The couscous we enjoyed contained beans, corn, and carrots, reminiscent of Chinese fried rice, yet with a lighter, less oily texture.

Okra stew, a thick, tomato-based concoction infused with okra, spices, and meat, is a staple of African cuisine ([ImmaculateBites, 2022](#)). Okra is native to Africa, but made its way to Louisiana in the early 1700s ([Ober, 2002](#)). At La Savane, it was served alongside fufu, a starchy and stretchy dish primarily made from cassava and plantains. To enjoy fufu, one must pinch off a small piece, which can then be dipped in stews or soups. We found that fufu paired wonderfully with the okra stew. All the dishes were a delight, but our favorite turned out to be the bissap, or hibiscus juice. Crafted from the Roselle variety of hibiscus flower, it infuses hot water with a vivid pink hue, offering a subtle sweetness that doesn't overwhelm the palate ([Demand Africa, 2017](#)).

This culinary experience allowed me to reflect on Dr. Horlyck-Romanovsky's lecture, which emphasized the challenge of maintaining cultural foodways while facilitating dietary acculturation

among West African immigrants in New York City. As an international student, I have encountered similar dilemmas, desiring to embrace local cuisine while cherishing my cultural foods, as these foods provide comfort. Through this gastronomic journey, I realized that East Harlem boasts numerous African restaurants bustling with customers during mealtimes. People who are savoring their meals there are also seeking a sense of belonging and a taste of homecoming. For individuals like Alison and me, who hail from diverse cultural backgrounds, these establishments warmly welcome us to savor their culinary traditions. Food is more than sustenance; it embodies our identities and underscores the universal challenge of balancing cultural roots with local integration. This challenge is shared by West African immigrants, and it resonates with my own journey of identity and belonging.



Left photo: Clockwise from top to bottom are gigot, couscous, and vegetable medley; fufu; okra stew.

Right photo: a refreshing glass of bissap (Hibiscus juice).

La Savane is located at 239 West 116th Street, New York, NY 10026

GLOBAL EATS

Why learning about cultural foods is necessary for inclusive dietetics care



By Alison Garbarini

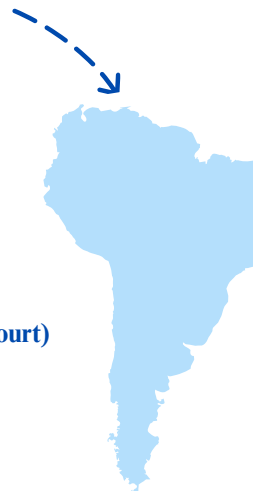
As a future dietitian, one of the most important things to me is providing inclusive care. Without seeing patients as unique individuals, it's easy for providers to get trapped in a "one-size-fits-all" approach that doesn't help anyone. No matter which discipline of nutrition we go into, being able to competently work with individuals from all cultural backgrounds will be essential.

During my experience working in nutrition research, I noticed the eurocentric nature of many dietary measurement tools. Dietary recall surveys can be problematic in diverse populations, as they may not be validated for all groups within the population. The survey used in our study failed to represent the meal patterns of many study participants. As a research coordinator, I would work with participants to understand their typical meals and aid them in matching the components as closely as possible to foods in the survey database. But even with our best efforts, this method often failed. For a study that prioritized representing the diversity of our population, it disappointed me that even the best tools available to us didn't do our participants justice.

As Program in Nutrition students, we are so fortunate to receive hands-on training from Lehman College to prepare and educate us in this area. This semester, through Lehman's Ethnic

& Therapeutic Meal Patterns course, we have had the opportunity to open our minds (and mouths) to foods from a variety of cultures. During our discussion-based course, we critically reflect on sociocultural issues, personal biases, structural inequities, and their connection to food. In the laboratory section, students have the chance to learn unique cooking methods and sample foods from all over the world.

Each week, my classmates and I learn about cuisine from a specific region. We then prepare a dish from this region with our group, and enjoy a post-class potluck lunch. Afterwards, we consider how this recipe could be modified for certain allergies and disease states. This exercise helps us to think outside the box, and consider meal adjustments that would be culturally-relevant for each region.



Cachapas
(Photo courtesy of Christine Torressen Belcourt)

Overall, this course has provided me with much insight into the meal patterns of cultures different from my own. My peers and I realize the importance of this topic to both the dietetics profession, and to society as a whole. Having the opportunity to take this course, as well as witnessing the inclusive perspectives of my classmates, gives me hope for the future of nutrition research and care. No two people eat the same way—and we shouldn't expect them to.



Scandinavian Meatballs
(Photo courtesy of Marilyn Ronnel)



Mediterranean Lentil Salad



Abala
(Photo courtesy of Christine Torressen Belcourt)



Gado-Gado



Exploring Italian Culture through the San Gennaro Feast

By Ritu Dey

NYC is a diverse and versatile city whose history captures the impact of immigrants in the evolution of cultural acceptability. Throughout the year, a myriad of festivals are hosted as a way to showcase one or more cultures through music, food, and activities. One of the famous festivals is The San Gennaro Feast, which is an immense celebration in Little Italy lasting ten days. It was first celebrated in 1926 by Italian immigrants, who settled at Mulberry Street in Lower Manhattan, to honor San Gennaro, a bishop of Benevento, Italy. Since then, the San Gennaro Feast has been a famous festival in NYC, integrating Italian-American culture and its history.

I enjoy exploring cultural festivals because I am a foodie and my connection with food leads me to experience cultures through their cuisines. So, I decided to attend and experience the significance of the San Gennaro Festival for the first time.



I started the day with an iced coffee from Ferrara Bakery and Cafe. This bakery has been open for 130 years (since 1892) and built a reputation through its menu of freshly baked goods. Today, the cafe remains a family-owned business and is operated by the fifth generation.

Walking down Mulberry Street, I came across a cannoli stand outside of Caffe Palermo. Caffe Palermo, also known as Cannoli King, was celebrating its 50th anniversary. They are famous for perfecting authentic cannolis. With my sweet tooth tingling, I had to try one. I chose the chocolate shell cannoli—and every bite was sweet and delicious. You get a crunch from the shell and the icing melts and blends with its chocolate and cinnamon flavors.

For lunch, I went to IL Cortile, a family-owned restaurant that has been around since 1975. Their à la carte menu contains a variety of authentic Italian dishes and they are committed to providing meals made from high-quality ingredients. I tried their fried mozzarella, pepite di gnocchi, and basil pesto spaghetti. I would rate the fried mozzarella as a 7 out of 10.

It is a rich appetizer and the acidity of the tomato sauce breaks the fattiness of the cheese. The pepite di gnocchi was an 8.5 out of 10 for me. It is made from a potato-based dough, which is then stuffed with grilled chicken, spinach, and mascarpone cheese. This came perfectly balanced with their tomato-based pasta sauce. Finally, my favorite dish was the basil pesto spaghetti, which I would give a 10 out of 10. The freshness and nuttiness of the basil complemented the fattiness of the butter. To me, pesto pasta is one of those dishes that epitomizes the beauty of a simple dish made of only a few ingredients.

My day was well spent at the San Gennaro Feast. It provided an exciting and welcoming atmosphere—I walked in hearing someone ringing the bell, shouting to the whole crowd announcing a birthday and singing on the stage. In addition, the service was exceptional at the eateries. I had a lively experience and definitely look forward to attending next year.



Caffe Palermo's chocolate shell cannoli.




Lunch at IL Cortile: Basil Pesto Spaghetti (left) and pepite di gnocchi (right).



RECIPE CORNER

With Tiger Liu



Pistachio-crusted Lamb with Basil-leek puree, Pani Puri Marsala, Braised Leeks, Chanterelles, and Fried Sunchokes.

Ingredients:

Lamb:

1 rack of lamb, frenched
salt to taste

Binder for crust:

2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp dijon mustard
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves

Minced Pistachio Crust:

3 oz pistachio, roasted and crushed
1 tsp each cumin and coriander, roasted and crushed
Chopped mint and basil to taste
Salt to taste

Leek sauce:

2-3 large leeks, washed and trimmed
3 cloves garlic, crushed
1 shallot, minced
3 tbsp butter
3 tbsp heavy cream
2 tbsp pani puri masala
Handful of cilantro, minced
Thyme and rosemary to taste
Salt to taste

Fried Vegetables:

Any root veg of your liking, I went with chanterelles, sunchokes, and some of the braised leek I used for the sauce

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Trim silver skin from rack of lamb, score fat, salt, then set aside covered for at least 30 min
 - Preheat oven to 425 F or convection to 400 F.
2. Mise en place. Wash, trim, and slice leeks into even logs. Mince shallot, crush garlic, take leaves off thyme and finely chop. Finely chop mint, basil, and cilantro. Set everything aside.
3. Melt 3 tbsp of butter into a saucepan and start browning leeks over med heat, making sure to turn them every couple min. Once leeks have taken on a crust, throw everything else, along with some whole thyme and rosemary, as well salt into the saucepan over low heat. Let simmer for 1 hour or until leeks are tender.
4. In the meantime, get a dry pan and toast nuts and spices in preheated oven for 5-10 min, depending on strength of the oven. Set aside into separate vessel and let cool. Crush with knife, mortar and pestle, or food processor.
 - While nuts and spices cool, start browning the lamb in the pan used to dry the spices, meat side down. Once done, feel free to set aside some lamb fat for frying.
 - Mix together 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar, 1 tbsp dijon mustard, 2 tbsp olive oil, and finely chopped thyme leaves (to taste) in a bowl.

5. Take out the browned lamb, lather everywhere with the balsamic binder, then use your hands to crust the lamb in the diced pistachio mixture, preferably while still hot. No need to add crust to bone side.
6. Once crusted, let cool for a bit, then bake at 425 F to preferred doneness (~25 min for med/medium rare), fat side up.
7. Prep your veg of choice while lamb bakes and sauce simmers. I cubed and sliced some sunchokes then deep fried them in canola at 375, pan fried some chanterelles in some residual lamb fat, and extracted a braised leek log before it turned into mush.
8. Once lamb is done, take out of the oven and let rest for at least 15 min.
9. Once leeks are mushy, turn off heat and stir in 3 tbsp cream, 2 tbsp pani puri masala, and chopped cilantro.
10. Dump contents into blender or food processor and puree.

Plate your hard-earned meal, Knife and fork optional!!!



SECOND YEAR STUDENTS

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES IN THEIR OWN WORDS:



Jay Gendron

**FAMILYCOOK
PRODUCTIONS**

“I have enjoyed working with FamilyCook Productions! So far, I have been involved in their Nibble with Willow programming, which focuses on play-based learning for preschool-aged children! It is an evidence-based program that exposes children to new foods in order to reduce their barriers to accepting healthy foods. I have been able to do some behind-the-scenes work for this program, and will also get to be directly involved in their events programming at several schools that have Willow Programs!”



Sophie Noel

CULINA HEALTH

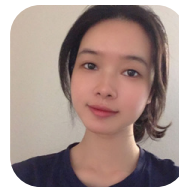
So far, I have loved my experience at Culina Health. I was tasked with doing extensive research on Aspartame and sugar and this was presented by my preceptor at the NYU Dietary + Lifestyle Strategies CME Conference. I attended this conference and got to hear from many health professionals about cardiovascular health. Finally, I practiced my counseling skills by doing many mock sessions with current RDs who gave very insightful and thoughtful feedback. I loved everyone I worked with, and got a glimpse of what it would be like to work at a nutrition-based start-up focused on giving individuals greater access to nutrition counseling covered by health insurance.”



Sheba Bergman-Golden

**ROOTED WELLNESS
HEIDI SKOLNIK RDN**

“For my internship with Heidi Skolnik, I am assisting in multiple projects - recent literature review, creating a quick answer sheet for podcasts, updating Nutrition Ed. presentations using DESIGN framework.”



Jingwei Zhong


**MONTEFIORE'S BRONX
HEALTH COLLECTIVE**

“I enjoyed my experience so far because all the staff at BHC are very nice and welcoming, and I visited patients with different conditions every day. I applied what I learned to real patient cases such as understanding that people with a high BMI can still be metabolically healthy, and that food accessibility is still be big issue for patients in the Bronx area. Currently I’m working on a nutrition in-service presentation for all the staff at BHC (including doctors, nurses, receptionists, etc.) regarding the importance of a weight-inclusive approach to diabetes care in the hope of promoting patients’ self-acceptance and easing patients’ burden of diabetes. “

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Whether you are an avid writer or new to writing, this is a great opportunity to experiment, learn, and get involved. Let us know what you are interested in and we'll help you to turn your idea into a story.

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