



## Out of the cafeteria and into the klieg lights

Ann Cooper's roundtable showed why she's the star of lunchroom reform

by Cheryl Sternman Rule

She's not a rock star, a politician, or a celebrity who gaffed in the Hollywood limelight. But the media has turned its attention to Ann Cooper and her not-so-quiet revolution in Berkeley nonetheless, and the reason is clear: what Jamie Oliver has done for school lunches in the UK with the School Food Trust, Cooper has managed to do in the Bay Area with remarkably little fanfare. Until now.



Photo courtesy of Ann Cooper

Berkeley lunch lady Ann Cooper

In the past six months Cooper, director of nutrition services for the Berkeley Unified School District, has been profiled by *The New Yorker* and *The Nation*, made several national TV appearances, and published a book, *Lunch Lessons: Changing the Way We Feed Our Children* (HarperCollins, 2006). On October 19, Cooper led an SPPFS roundtable in the Berkeley High School cafeteria. An ABC News cameraman chronicled her every move for a *Nightline* segment that aired in late November.

It's easy to understand why Cooper is such a lightning rod in the school food movement. Her energy is palpable, her talk straightforward, and her dedication to the cause is unwavering. For anyone who cares deeply about kids and food, meeting

Cooper is an adrenaline rush. She calls herself "a renegade lunch lady", and at the Food Society roundtable it was clear she wears the title like a crown.

Cooper told the audience that when she arrived at BUSD in the fall of 2005, the food was awful. Everything was processed. Plastic-encased grilled cheese sandwiches arrived frozen, she recalled, ready to be microwaved and served with the packaging still intact. One year later, literally everything has changed. Now, 95 percent of the food in the district's 16 schools is made either in-house by Cooper's staff or off-site by carefully selected local purveyors. White bread, high-fructose corn syrup, and trans fats are gone.

continues inside

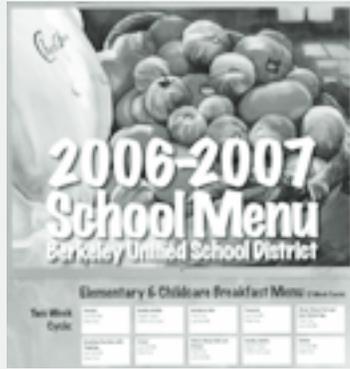
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The outspoken lunch lady laughed as she reflected on the scope of the changes. “It’s like, we’re serving real food to kids,” she said, raising her eyebrows. “I don’t know why we all thought they wanted to eat something else.”



Cooper’s message is that what students eat at lunchtime is important, but it’s only one part of a much larger equation. The district’s schools provide cooking and gardening classes, and many of the foods the students grow and learn to cook mirror what they eat in the cafeteria. At the beginning of the school year, Cooper sent students home with a colorful calendar filled with the year’s school menus and innovative, healthful recipes (see story on next page). In case they didn’t take the hint, she included a letter – in both English and Spanish – encouraging parents to make the recipes with their children. The idea is to teach kids

about healthy food options in class, serve the same wholesome food on the lunch line, and give them recipes to make the dishes at home with their parents. This integrated approach ensures that the healthy-foods message comes from multiple directions, reinforced by different adult role models: school chef, teachers, and parents. Cooper calls it a three-legged stool.

She’s keeping up her end with a vengeance, refusing to kowtow to the lowest common denominator of kids’ sugary-food favorites. She called chocolate milk (which she refuses to serve) soda in drag. “It has more calories than Coke,” she said. Desserts don’t appear at lunch (“nobody needs dessert after lunch”), and you won’t find chicken fingers on Berkeley school menus. “God didn’t make chicken with fingers,” she quipped.

What you will find is a salad bar in every school, hormone-free milk, baked teriyaki fish, Aidells sausages, roast herb chicken, grass-fed hot dogs, and daily vegetarian options. Cooper said students have been remarkably open-minded about the new food. But opposition does exist, and it has come from an unlikely source: the Department of Agriculture, which still has oversight over what foods qualify as reimbursable meals.

“The USDA didn’t want me to put ‘seasonal fresh vegetables’ on the menu,” Cooper said. “They would have preferred canned green beans. You could serve chicken nuggets, Tater Tots, chocolate milk, and canned peaches in high-fructose corn syrup and it would be a reimbursable meal. But if I serve roasted chicken, mashed potatoes, fresh peaches, and low-fat milk, they say I’m not in compliance because there’s not enough calories.”

That kind of irony is what continues to drive Cooper in her battle for reform. “I want responsibility for the school lunch program to be taken away from the USDA and turned over to the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] or to HHS [Department of Health and Human Services],” she said. “I don’t want it to be a dumping ground for surplus agriculture, but a health initiative.” In other words, Cooper wants school lunch to come out of the cafeteria and into the political sphere.

“My goal is to get this to be part of the 2008 presidential debates,” Cooper told the roundtable audience. Given the level of national interest she’s generated in Berkeley in a single year, she just might be able to. ♦

*To learn more about Berkeley nutrition services director Ann Cooper, read her blog, and see a video clip of the Nightline story that was filmed, in part, at the SFPFS roundtable, visit [lunchlessons.org](http://lunchlessons.org).*

## side dish

### Juicy-looking calendar serves up healthy homework

by John Birdsall with Cheryl Sternman Rule

Saving Berkeley school kids from artery-clogging pizza and canned peaches drenched in high-fructose corn syrup is more than restricting what they eat for lunch. Ann Cooper’s giving them homework with a subversive message – and it looks like art.

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year, Cooper made sure that every student in the Berkeley Unified School District got the year’s lunch and breakfast menus to take home. But instead of printouts decorated with lame clip art, destined to sit out the school year crumpled up at the bottom of students’ backpacks, Cooper had an idea. She’d put otherwise boring information on a professional-looking calendar, and make it so beautiful kids would be proud to take it home. And parents would gladly tack it up in their kitchens.

“I did it because I wanted to do some social marketing,” she says of the glossy calendar in vivid orange, purple, and lime green. “To give parents a year’s worth of menus and to showcase what we do.”

The August-to-July, Monday-through-Friday format features watercolors by Santa Clara artist and graphic designer Terri Hill, who also designed it. “At first we thought we’d do children’s art,” says Hill, “but we weren’t sure we could get enough of it.” Cooper found the artist last summer, through designs she’d done for the FullBloom Baking Co., a Menlo Park supplier of healthy pizza crusts and other pastries. The lunch lady spotted three watercolors of fruits and vegetables Hill had already painted. Cooper commissioned nine more, plus a cover.

“I had a two-and-a-half-week period to do the paintings and design 10,000 calendars,” says Hill. Each month features a

portrait of some seasonally appropriate fruit or vegetable: tomatoes in September, dried fruit in December, asparagus in April. Next to it is one of Cooper’s recipes, which also appears on that month’s cafeteria menu. The idea is that parents will talk about food with their kids, and maybe even take a crack at making the recipe with them. That’s the subversive part: to make the suggestion, even subliminally, that healthy eating shouldn’t stop when kids leave the school cafeteria.

“It’s important to make eating both healthy and nice to look at,” says Hill, whose vibrant, juicy images evoke a visceral reaction – you can almost feel your mouth watering. Once the calendars went home, Hill says she got an avalanche of email from teachers and parents who loved them. Hill says one supporter liked the lunch lady’s social marketing idea so much she bought the original watercolors from the artist and gave them away – to Cooper, as a way of saying thanks. ♦

*Get in touch with artist Terri Hill and see some of her watercolors at her website, [designerhill.com](http://designerhill.com). Interested in getting a calendar? Contact Ann Cooper at [lunchlessons.org](http://lunchlessons.org).*

#### Citrus-Jicama Stuffed Lettuce Leaf Salad

*From the Berkeley Unified School District’s 2006-07 School Menu calendar*

##### Ingredients:

- 3 pieces of citrus fruit – tangerines, tangelos, mandarins, or oranges
- 1/2 cup of orange juice
- 1 small jicama, peeled and cut into thin slices
- 3 large radishes, sliced thin (optional)
- Mint, cut into small pieces
- 1 head of butter lettuce

##### Steps:

1. In a large bowl, toss jicama and orange juice.
2. Add citrus slices and radishes.
3. Mix in chopped mint.
4. Separate butter lettuce leaves so they resemble small bowls. Serve salad on top of lettuce leaves.

## Infrastructure maven

Jennie Schacht helped patch the organization's cracks – when she wasn't doing six other things

by Nancy G. Freeman

People often ask SFPFS past president Jennie Schacht how she manages dual careers in public health and food writing. A grant writer, researcher, and all-around consultant to the health care business, she also writes magazine articles and books, including the highly successful *The Wine Lover's Dessert Cookbook* (Chronicle Books, 2005), co-authored with pastry chef Mary Cech. Last year, just to add a little spice to the mix, she took on a major home remodel.

Clearly, multitasking comes naturally to Jennie, who started out in social welfare. "My work in health care is immensely gratifying, but it's very serious," she says. "Writing cookbooks is both a lot of fun and plenty of hard work. But I just can't imagine a better career. I consider myself unbelievably lucky."

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**It was not a flashy task. Jennie sees it more like repairing a cracked foundation so the next person can come along and build a snazzy house.**

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Jennie took on yet another load when she became Food Society president. Reviewing the organization's policies and procedures and board job descriptions, she realized they were seriously out of date. Convinced that all members would benefit if incoming board members could throw themselves immediately into their work, she dubbed herself the infrastructure president and set out to rewrite those policies, drawing the entire board into the process. By the end of the year they were up to date, consistent, and ready to be passed on.

It was not a flashy task. Jennie sees it more like repairing a cracked foundation so the next person can come along and build a snazzy house. But one of her great skills is

motivating people. "From the beginning, I knew it would be important to inspire board members to do good work without telling them how to do their jobs and without



Photo: Mark McLane

doing it for them," she says. "I'm fortunate to have a terrific board. They've accomplished so much in one short year."

And so has she. Not willing to rest on her laurels, this year she jumped into another book project, this one with chef Joey Altman, three-time James Beard winner and host of *Bay Café*, KRON 4's food magazine show. Look for Jennie and Joey's book on the stands in spring 2008. ♦

## Red state wines charmed SIG tasters

by Sam King

The wine Special Interest Group met on a rainy November night in San Francisco to taste wines from Texas and Virginia, states with long histories of wine making. The collection opened everyone's eyes to the fact that quality, quaffable wines don't come from just the West Coast.

Two things in particular impressed the tasters. First, none was over \$18.00. One of our favorites, Fall Creek Vineyards Granite Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2005, was under \$10.00. Second, in general, the wines seemed to represent the character of each state. The Virginia Horton Vineyards 2004 Viognier and the Virginia White Hall 2004 Cabernet Franc were both in a classical, elegant, and refined style (dare I say conservative?). On the other hand, Texas Becker Vineyards 2005 Viognier and Alamosa Cellars El Guapo (Tempranillo) were big on flavor and style. Both were uniquely wild and wonderful explorations of modern wine making techniques.

The next wine SIG will be on February 19 and will focus on Paso Robles Rhone-style reds. Email me at [greenegg@comcast.net](mailto:greenegg@comcast.net) for more information.

## Supporters pony up a little extra

As of December 11, the following members had included a donation with their 2007 dues:

Barbara Anderson	Nancy Freeman	Susan Wisnom Nelson
Kris Balloun	Rosemary Furfaro	Jennie Schacht
Flo Braker	Bill Gillespie	Ann Segerstrom
Lucie Buchbinder	Roberta Klugman	Sally-Jean Shepard
Dolores Cakebread	Kristie Knoll	Linda Sikorski
Carol A. Crawford	John Linderman	Marlena Spieler
Stefanie A. Delmont	Shuna Lydon	Lesley Stiles
Peggy Fallon	Weezie Mott	
Janet Fletcher	Sandra Murray	



Photo: Noel Barnhurst

**Janice Nieder** has been named “dining diva” at Tangodiva.com, a website for women who travel. She invites members to send hot news about restaurants, wines, and social happenings to JNRedsie@aol.com.

**Andre Crump** of TCB CAFÉ Publishing and Media took 50 copies of TCB’s newly revised book, *Chocolate French*, to sign at the New York Chocolate Show. To his surprise, they sold out within a few hours on the first day. The book also received an excellent review in the December issue of *Chocolatier* magazine. Meanwhile, at the budding media mogul’s new TasteTV.com, you can travel the world in five taste areas: Asian, French, Latin, Italian, and Style & Design. Watch his delicious Chocolate Television by following the Chocolate link.

Two members are teaching classes abroad this year. **Pamela Keith** will host a group this spring for La Vie en Périgord, seven days of cooking, wine tasting, restaurant dining, and exploration of France’s Périgord Noir region. In June, she’ll teach a guest chef program at La Combe, her farmhouse teaching headquarters. Also in June, **Dianne Jacob**, author of *Will Write for Food*, is teaching Food Writing for Food Lovers. She’ll be in La Toulzanie, an ancient and picturesque hamlet along a route that’s been called one of the most beautiful roads in France. For information write to pamela@pamelakeith.com, or dj@diannej.com.

**Shuna Fish Lydon** is now pastry chef at Aziza in San Francisco. Go to aziza-sf.com.

After more than two years at Copia, **Linda Carucci** has resigned as Julia Child director of culinary programs. She’s working on a cookbook and pursuing other projects. Linda hasn’t left Copia entirely: she teaches a monthly hands-on cooking series there called Linda Carucci’s Test Kitchen, where students get an inside view on how recipes are developed and tested for cookbooks. For details on this and Linda’s other classes, visit LCKitchen.com.

**Lynne Devereux** has signed on as event coordinator for the first annual Artisan Cheese Festival, to be held March 9-12 and at the Sheraton Sonoma Hotel-Petaluma. A weekend celebration of handcrafted cheeses, foods, wines, and beers from California and beyond, it will feature expert educational seminars, a gala dinner, an artisan cheese marketplace, and more. Presenters will include Joey Altman, Gary Danko, John Ash, Nancy Oakes, **Laura Werlin**, and others. For details, see artisancheesefestival.com.

New members **Jennifer Carden**, a food stylist, and **Michelle Stern**, owner of What’s Cooking (no relation to this column!), did the styling for a Thanksgiving-themed satellite media tour with Guy Fieri of the Food Network. Guy was impressed both with Jennifer’s kitchen magic and Michelle’s growing business, which offers cooking classes and gifts for children.

**The Bread Project** has expanded its culinary training and job placement program to Oakland. Scholarships are offered to low-income individuals who are serious about finding a job in the food industry. Please refer potential candidates to 510-644-4575, or to breadproject.org.

**Nancy Kux**’s Brown Butter Dream Cookies made it into *The 150 Best American Recipes*, edited by Fran McCullough and Molly Stevens (Houghton Mifflin).

Canyon Market, a neighborhood grocery in San Francisco’s Glen Park neighborhood opened in time for Thanksgiving. Owned and operated by **Richard and Janet Tarlov**, the 7,200 square-foot store is a combination natural foods and specialty market located at 2815 Diamond St., near the Glen Park BART station. The Tarlovs invite all SFPFS members to stop by.

**Jill Silverman Hough**’s quince recipes graced December’s *Bon Appetit* – her fourth appearance in the magazine in 2006. Jill’s already completed her first *Bon Appetit* piece for 2007 and is currently ghostwriting recipes for a cookbook.

The fig’s going on the road. **Sondra Bernstein**’s newest extension of the girl & the fig company is the girl & the fig CATERERS! A new catering kitchen lets Sondra offer even more wine country experiences, whether in her restaurants or at the venue of a client’s choosing. Catering menus are extensions of Sondra’s cooking philosophy: seasonal and local country food with French passion. For details, see thegirlandthefig.com/cater.

**Andrea Nguyen**’s *Into the Vietnamese Kitchen* (Ten Speed Press) has been getting great reviews. In late October, eGullet.com excerpted passages, and in December, Andrea conducted a lecture, demo, and tasting at the SF Asian Art Museum with James Oseland, *Saveur* editor-in-chief (see page 11). SFPFS Board member **Thy Tran** moderated. Andrea’s also been doing radio, locally and on Lynne Rossetto Kasper’s “Splendid Table.” The busy writer and cooking teacher is also leading classes at Draeger’s in Palo Alto and San Mateo and at Ramekins in Sonoma.

**Terri Pischoff Wuerthner**’s *In A Cajun Kitchen* (St. Martin’s Press) was chosen by Corby Kummer as one of 19 cookbooks in the *New York Times*’ Cookbook Roundup for 2006.

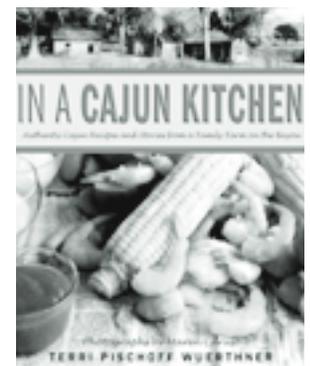
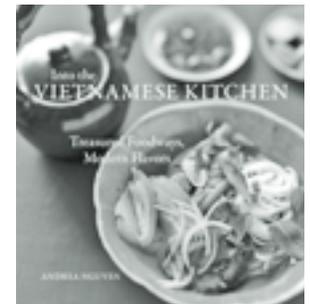
**Amy Traverso** happily reports that she’s finalized a deal with W.W. Norton for an apple cookbook to be published in fall 2008.

**Jeff Davis** will host a Food Fete press event for exhibitors after the SF NASFT Fancy Food Show on January 22nd. The gathering will be held from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Elan Event Venue on Howard Street, just a few steps from Moscone Center. Jeff’s Food Fetes let exhibitors interact with the press after food events. Interested in participating? Contact Jeff at 619-540-7373 or jeff@foodfete.com.

**Tim Hart**’s PR company, Hart Communications, has moved from Oakland to the Hobart Building on Market near Second St. in San Francisco. He says they’re very happy to be closer to clients and local media, and hopes to be able to connect more easily with fellow SFPFS members.

**Mani Niall** has been at Just Desserts for six months, “a consulting gig that turned into full time in August.” He appreciates the fact that “the new owners have such high regard for the fantastic reputation and history of the company. Plus, they are a lot of fun. Everything about it is perfect for my interests and goals in the baking world,” he writes. Just Desserts will be exhibiting at the Fancy Food show for the first time under the new ownership, with several new products Mani is currently developing. He’s “hoping to see lots of SFPFS folks there.”

**Chris Cornyn** reports that DINE, his food and drink agency, recently signed Grimmway Farms as a client. DINE will be updating the Grimmway brand, designing an updated look for its product packaging and devising programs to increase carrot consumption. For information, go to Dinemarketing.com



**Heather Jones** has signed on as public relations consultant with Parcel 104 in the Santa Clara Marriott. Under chef Bart Hosmer, the restaurant serves American fare and has a daily-changing menu.

**Larry Guyer**, owner of A la Carte Digital Studios, is offering training in affordable half-day sessions that can be customized to the needs of a company or individual. Topics can include anything from photographic basics (f-stops to camera settings), principles of lighting, product photography tips and techniques, as well as Photoshop enhancements and preparation of files for websites and printing. For more information, call 650-348-2525 or email [larry@alacartedigital.com](mailto:larry@alacartedigital.com).

**Deborah Olson** of C. J. Olson Cherries in Sunnyvale was featured on *California Country TV*, a weekly program that tours the state's food industry. With national recognition for maintaining one of the last family farms in the Silicon Valley, Olson provides customers all around the world with premium dried fruits, nuts, chocolates, and their popular cherries. Products are available from [cjolsoncherries.com](http://cjolsoncherries.com) and at the retail location at 348 W. El Camino Real in Sunnyvale.

Copia is pleased to announce the advancement of **Jacquelyn Buchanan** to director of culinary programs. She'll be responsible for the research, creative development, and implementation of a wide range of food-related activities, including daily and weekly programs, tastings, and demonstrations, as well as festivals, public tasting events, and guest presentations.

In partnership with the Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco, **Joanne Weir** is teaching an exclusive series of seasonal hands-on cooking classes with Four Seasons executive chef Jeremy Emmerson. Classes are in the hotel's kitchens, followed by a sit-down lunch with wine pairings in the Windows private dining room. Next class is February 11. For more information, go to [joanne weir.com](http://joanne weir.com) and follow the Classes link. ♦



Joanne Weir with a student

Photo courtesy of Joanne Weir



Photo: Noel Barnhurst

## Women chefs' conference dished out history along with grits

by Sam King

Several SFPFS members found themselves in Atlanta at the Women Chefs & Restaurateurs conference in late November.

This year's event focused on Southern roots and traditions. The annual meeting focused on the long life and career of the late Edna Lewis, the Virginia-born chef, teacher, and cookbook author, and the tremendous influence she had on the dining scene in Atlanta and beyond. Attendees toured organic farms and farmers' markets, tasted a variety of mouthwatering sautéed greens, ham and fatback, biscuits, cornbread, coconut cakes, fried chicken, shrimp, and grits, more grits, and then more grits. We talked endlessly about the flavorful secrets of Southern cooking. We ate in world-class restaurants featuring local delights. We attended master-class sessions ranging from the culinary history of the Carolina Low Country to the tradition of Southern cakes. We learned a thing or two about the rich legacy of the African-American plantation cook and her lasting contributions to the American culinary scene.

It's fair to say that anyone who was confused about the true meaning of hospitality at the start of the conference had a good idea by the end.

Women Chefs & Restaurateurs is a national organization of over 2,000 members. Its mission statement includes promoting the education and advancement of women in the restaurant industry. Formed in 1993, its founders include Food Society member Joyce Goldstein and the late Barbara Tropp.

### dish

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Wine SIG moderator **Sam King** is a Berkeley chef committed to quality and excellence. Her focus includes catering and small-event and party planning; she's also an experienced private chef. [greenegg@comcast.net](mailto:greenegg@comcast.net)

**Natalie Kitamura** owns Natalie Kitamura Design, a full-service graphic design studio in Sausalito that creates logos, brochures, catalogs, packaging, and other print materials. Visit [nkdsf.com](http://nkdsf.com). [natalie@nkdsf.com](mailto:natalie@nkdsf.com)

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**Cheryl Sternman Rule** is a freelance food and nutrition writer whose work has appeared in local and national publications including *Eating Well*, Safeway's *Every Season*, and *Metro Silicon Valley*. Future pieces will appear in *Vegetarian Times* and *Sunset*. Her website is [cherylsternmanrule.com](http://cherylsternmanrule.com). [csrule@comcast.net](mailto:csrule@comcast.net)

January

- 17** SFPFS board meeting, 6:00 p.m.
- 21-23** NASFT® Winter Fancy Food Show, Moscone Center, San Francisco. Hours: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Sun.-Mon.; 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Tue. Get more information at [specialtyfood.com](http://specialtyfood.com).

February

- 5** SFPFS annual general meeting and new member reception. Keep checking the Food Society website ([sfps.com](http://sfps.com)) for time and location.
- 19** Wine SIG: Rhone-style reds from Paso Robles. For more information, email Sam King at [greenegg@comcast.net](mailto:greenegg@comcast.net).
- 20-23** Symposium for Professional Wine Writers at Meadowood, Napa Valley. For information contact Antonia Allegra at 707-963-0777, or go to [www.winewriterssymposium.org](http://www.winewriterssymposium.org).
- 21** SFPFS board meeting, 6:00 p.m.  
Member Services Committee meeting, Oliveto restaurant, Oakland, 4:00 p.m.

March

- 5** Tasting SIG: Rice, an exploration of both ancient and trendy varieties. This is a tentative date; contact Rosemary Mark at [RecipeRose@aol.com](mailto:RecipeRose@aol.com) for further details.
- 21** SFPFS board meeting, 6:00 p.m.

SFPFS event

## The war against junk food dominated 2006

What were the biggest food stories of 2006? New York-based Hunter Public Relations came up with its annual list of nominees:

1. The U.S. urged food companies to give kids healthier options
2. Organic went mainstream
3. High-fructose corn syrup named Public Enemy Number One
4. Monster restaurant portions blasted as obesity engines
5. Schools banned junky soft drinks
6. The AMA raised the alarm about salty foods
7. The E.coli scare went beyond bagged spinach
8. FDA clarified the “whole” in “whole grains”
9. New York nixed trans fats
10. Bill Clinton negotiated healthier snacks for school vending machines



### FROM THE STRAITS OF MALACCA TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

At San Francisco's Asian Art Museum on December 10, member Andrea Nguyen (author of *In the Vietnamese Kitchen*) and *Saveur* editor-in-chief James Oseland (*Cradle of Flavor*) discussed the foods of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. Oseland (upper left) talked up chiles; Nguyen (upper right) lectured on Southeast Asian foodways; member Thy Tran (lower right) served as moderator; As Nguyen looked on (lower left), Oseland assembled a sambal. (Photos by Barbara Ries, [barbararies.com](http://barbararies.com))

*Dish is looking for volunteers. We need help assigning photography and putting together the calendar section. And we can always use contributors. Interested?*

*For more information, contact Ana Schwartzman at [ana@anaschwartzman.com](mailto:ana@anaschwartzman.com)*

# dish

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**Check us out online!** The SFPFS website ([sfps.com](http://sfps.com)) is a resource for upcoming events, job listings and information on member services, and ways to get involved.