

Echoes OF THE
Enslaved

SEPTEMBER 28, 2024



INTRODUCTION



***Echoes of the Enslaved* is an annual event commemorating the enduring legacies of chattel slavery in Prince George’s County, offering a space for conversation, connection, and reflection.**

The program cycles between various historical sites across the county; this year’s gathering centers and celebrates women.

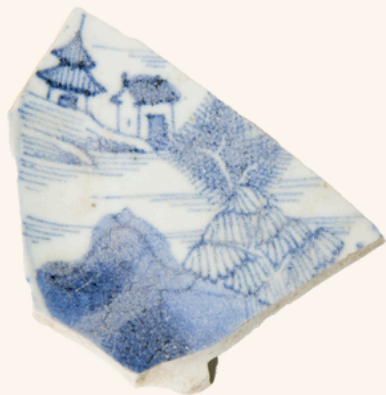
Darnall's Chance, built in 1742, opened as a public museum in 1988. Archaeologists and historians collaborated in curating the *History in Her Hands* exhibit to showcase the lives and labor of the women who walked its halls. By engaging with this past, *Echoes of the Enslaved* aims to honor these histories and create a space of reflection and community for the attendees.

This annual event highlights the significant work being undertaken by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Department of Parks and Recreation, Natural and Historic Resources Division (NHRD).

Developed by the M-NCPPC Archaeology Office with support from the M-NCPPC Black History Program and NHRD historic sites, *Echoes of the Enslaved* is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the lasting legacies of slavery.



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



September 28, 2024

Exhibit and dinner	4:00pm
Panel discussion	6:30pm
Fireside chats	8:00pm
Program conclusion	9:00pm

PANELISTS



PSYCHE WILLIAMS-FORSON, Ph.D., is the Chair of the Department of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. She is the author of *Eating While Black* (James Beard Media Award, 2023) and *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs* (Elli Kögäs-Maranda Prize). Dr. Williams-Forson is also an affiliate faculty member in several departments, including African American Studies, Anthropology, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies.



COURTNEY C. HOBSON is the Program Manager for the Dresher Center for the Humanities at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. A Prince George's County native and Bowie State University graduate, she previously worked at Darnall's Chance House Museum, leading tours and researching an 18th century enslaved family's freedom petition. Courtney has also served as a history consultant for organizations such as the National Park Service and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.



MACIE CLERKLEY is a doctoral student in Anthropology at Brown University. She earned her Bachelor's in Anthropology and African and African American Studies from the University of Virginia. Macie previously worked as an archaeologist for the M-NCPPC Archaeology Office. Her research interests include plantation landscapes, place-making, and community engagement.



PATRICIA SAMFORD, Ph.D., the panel moderator, has directed the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum since 2007. She holds a B.A. in Anthropology from the College of William & Mary and spent 13 years as an archaeologist at Colonial Williamsburg before earning her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on African American spirituality, personal identity, gender, and English ceramics. Dr. Samford's publications include *Subfloor Pits and the Archaeology of Slavery in Colonial Virginia* (2007) and *Below Baltimore: An Archaeology of Charm City* (2023).

in this
BOOK



History in Her Hands brings you into the lives of three African American women enslaved at Darnall's Chance: **Margaret, Eleanor** (Nell) Bentley, and **Clair**. These women were three of the 32 people enslaved on this property. The Bentley sisters were skilled cooks with a long family history of freedom suits, while Clair was an enslaved lady's maid to Lettice (enslaver) since both were children.

Previous archaeological discoveries at Darnall's Chance include three peach pits and a corn cob dating to the late 18th and 19th centuries. These artifacts were uncovered beneath the floorboards of a cellar, a space likely used by the enslaved people who lived and worked there. They serve as a powerful reminder of the long-lasting and life-giving power of good food.

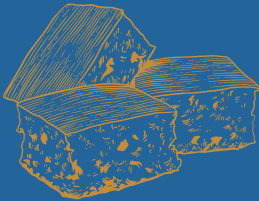
The recipes in this booklet are modern adaptations of the dishes the Bentley sisters may have prepared. Take this booklet home, cook, eat, and share. Follow the recipes as they are, or add your own twist. Through this act, you are honoring generations of Black history and bringing their stories to your table.

CRACKLING CORNBREAD

Today's cornbread has come a long way from its humble 18th century ancestor, the hoe cake (also known as johnycake). Back then, most Black families did not have access to leavening agents like flour or baking powder. Instead, they crafted simple patties made from cornmeal or hominy grits mixed with water. These patties were cooked over an open fire, often on the flat side of a hoe or wrapped in leaves and nestled in the hot ashes. This rustic origin of cornbread is a testament to the creativity and resourcefulness that continues to shape our culinary traditions today!

Ingredients

- ◆ All-purpose flour, 1 cup
- ◆ Baking powder, 1 tbsp
- ◆ Baking soda, ½ tsp
- ◆ Buttermilk, 1 cup
- ◆ Cornmeal, 1 cup
- ◆ Large eggs, 2
- ◆ Pork belly, 1 cup
- ◆ Salt, ½ tsp
- ◆ Sugar, ¼ cup (*optional*)
- ◆ Unsalted butter (melted), ¼ cup
- ◆ Vegetable oil, ¼ cup



As a general rule, enslaved people did not return to their quarters for meals. Instead, they ate their ashcake, named for being baked in ashes, along with a piece of pork or salt herring, wherever they were working.

Excerpt from the [Life and Times of Frederick Douglass](#)

Instructions

PREPARING THE PORK BELLY

- 01** Cut the pork belly into small pieces.
- 02** In a skillet over medium heat, fry the pork belly pieces until they are crispy, about 10 to 15 minutes. Be sure to stir occasionally for even cooking.
- 03** Remove the crispy pork belly from the skillet and place it on a paper towel-lined plate to drain any excess fat.

BAKING THE CORNBREAD

- 01** Preheat your oven to 400°F and grease a 9-inch pan or cast-iron skillet.
- 02** In a large bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and sugar (if desired).
- 03** Combine the wet ingredients with the dry ingredients, stirring gently until just mixed. Avoid overmixing to keep the cornbread tender.
- 04** Fold in the crispy pork belly pieces, making sure they're evenly distributed throughout the batter.
- 05** Pour the batter into your prepared pan or skillet, spreading it out evenly.
- 06** Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the cornbread is golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

& CREAMY OYSTER FISH PEPPER SOUP

Oysters and fish peppers are quintessential to Black Maryland cuisine. Oysters have been a staple since the 18th century. Oyster shells also served practical purposes, such as lining walkways and enriching gardens. Excavations at Darnall's Chance revealed crab shells, fish bones, and a large ash pit, reflecting the deep connection between food and daily life in this historic setting.

Fish peppers, which add heat without altering the color of dishes, likely originated in the Caribbean and became a key ingredient in Black gardens around the Chesapeake. Beyond their culinary role, fish peppers were valued for their medicinal properties, including treatments for joint pain and indigestion. They also had a practical use in aiding those escaping slavery by masking their scent from bloodhounds. Nearly lost to history, fish peppers were revived thanks to painter Horace Pippin, whose seeds were rediscovered in 1995. Today, all fish pepper plants have descended from these seeds.

This soup celebrates the rich flavors and history of Maryland's past, bringing these traditional ingredients to your table.

INGREDIENTS

- ◆ Shucked Maryland Oysters in their liquor, 1 pint
- ◆ Butter, 4 tbsp
- ◆ Celery (diced), ½ cup
- ◆ Onion (diced), ½ cup
- ◆ Garlic (minced), 3 cloves
- ◆ Flour, 2 tbsp
- ◆ White wine or sherry, ¼ cup
- ◆ Milk, 1 cup
- ◆ Heavy cream, 2 cups
- ◆ Old Bay, 1 tbsp
- ◆ Seeded fish peppers, 1-2 cut in half

INSTRUCTIONS

- 01** Cook the oysters over medium heat in their own liquor until the edges curl. Strain the oysters, reserving the liquid.
- 02** In a soup pot, sauté the celery, onions, and garlic in butter until fragrant.
- 03** Sprinkle in the flour, then add the white wine for a subtle flavor or sherry for a bolder taste.
- 04** Stir in the milk, cream, and reserved oyster liquor, and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat.
- 05** Add the fish peppers, seasonings, and oysters, stirring gently. Avoid boiling. Adjust the pepper quantity for desired spiciness.
- 06** Serve with chopped parsley, additional Old Bay, and oyster crackers.



Our cornmeal mush, which was our only regular if not all-sufficing diet, when sufficiently cooled from the cooking, was placed in a large tray or trough. This was set down either on the floor of the kitchen, or out of doors on the ground, and the children were called like so many pigs, and like so many pigs would come, some with oyster-shells, some with pieces of shingles, but none with spoons, and literally devour the mush. He who would eat the fastest got most, and he that was strongest got the best place, but few left the trough really satisfied.

Excerpt from the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*

SOUTHERN MARYLAND STUFFED HAM

such as kale, cabbage, watercress, and turnip tops. As noted in the community cookbook *300 Years of Black Cooking in St. Mary's County, Maryland*, plantation owners observed, "If jowl could taste so good, ham could taste even better."

INGREDIENTS

- ✦ Deboned 20-22 lbs corned ham
- ✦ Cabbage, 10 lbs
- ✦ Kale, 2 lbs (or a mixture of other greens like watercress)
- ✦ Yellow onions, 3 lbs
- ✦ Scallions, 1 bunch
- ✦ Salt, 1 cup
- ✦ Crushed (or ground) black pepper, 3 tbsp
- ✦ Crushed red pepper or red pepper flakes, 3 tbsp
- ✦ Mustard seed, 1 tbsp
- ✦ Celery seed, 1 tbsp
- ✦ Cayenne, 1 tsp
- ✦ Cheesecloth and butchers twine

INSTRUCTIONS

- 01** Trim the fat off the ham and preheat the oven to 400°F.
- 02** Remove large stems, wash the vegetables, and roughly chop them into uniform sizes. Mix thoroughly in a large bowl with spices.
- 03** Cut slits all over the ham, about 2 inches deep and across. Generously stuff ham with vegetable filling.
- 04** Tie ham with twine into its original shape, wrap in cheesecloth, and tie it again. Cover ham with aluminum and bake for 5 hours.
- 05** Drain the ham and refrigerate overnight. Slice and serve cold.

Recipe adapted from the Maryland Office of Tourism.

Southern Maryland Stuffed Ham is a hyper-regional dish that has remained largely unchanged over the three centuries since its creation by Black people enslaved on tobacco plantations in St. Mary's County. Given pork jowls, they innovatively stuffed them with vegetables from their gardens,

SOUTHERN FRIED OKRA

INGREDIENTS

- ✦ Okra, 4 cups
- ✦ Salt, 4 tsp
- ✦ Black pepper, paprika, cayenne 1 tsp each
- ✦ Oil for frying
- ✦ Fine yellow cornmeal, 1 ½ cups
- ✦ Flour, ½ cup
- ✦ 2 eggs

INSTRUCTIONS

- 01** Wash the okra and cut into popcorn sized pieces. Season with salt.
- 02** Mix the cornmeal, flour and spices.
- 03** Beat the eggs.
- 04** Dip the okra in the cornmeal mixture, then the eggs, then back in the cornmeal. Place in a single layer on a baking sheet.
- 05** Heat the oil in a frying pan. To test the temperature, sprinkle some cornmeal in the oil; it should sizzle but not smoke.
- 06** Being careful not to overcrowd the pan, fry the okra for a until golden brown on each side, 3-5 minutes.

Did you know the garden at Darnall's Chance cultivates traditional African American crops, such as okra?

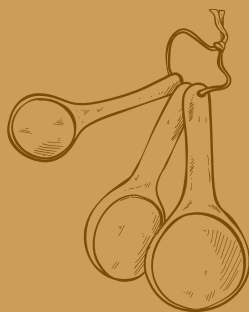
HEIRLOOM PEACH TART

Did you know that Darnall's Chance once boasted a thriving peach and apple orchard? Fresh fruit played a vital role in the diets of enslaved people, as highlighted in the Federal Slave Narratives project (1936 to 1938), which gathered over 2,300 firsthand accounts from formerly enslaved individuals. Peaches were especially abundant in Maryland, with the town of Berlin even earning the title of "Peach Capital of the World" during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Three peach pits are on display, discovered beneath the floorboards of the cellar. This space, where enslaved individuals lived or worked, held these remnants of the past, hidden away for centuries. While the exact age of the pits is uncertain, they likely date back to the late 18th or 19th century. These simple artifacts speak volumes, connecting us to the everyday lives and resilience of those who once inhabited this place.

INGREDIENTS

- ✦ Peaches, 6 large – peeled, pitted, and sliced
Tip: You can easily substitute with apples!
- ✦ Granulated sugar, 1 cup
- ✦ Cornstarch, ¼ cup
- ✦ Cinnamon, 2 tsp
- ✦ Vanilla extract, 1 tbsp
- ✦ Salt, a pinch
- ✦ Flour, 1½ cups
- ✦ Brown sugar, 1 cup
- ✦ Cold butter, 1 stick



INSTRUCTIONS

- 01** Preheat your oven to 350°F.
- 02** Combine the granulated sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, vanilla extract, and salt in a bowl.
- 03** Add the sliced peaches (or apples) to the sugar mixture and toss until the fruit is evenly coated.
- 04** Transfer the mixture to a baking dish and bake on the middle rack for 30 to 35 minutes.
- 05** For the crumble topping, mix together the flour and brown sugar in a separate bowl. Cut in the cold butter, blending it until the mixture resembles pea-sized crumbs. It should briefly hold its shape when squeezed before crumbling apart.
- 06** Sprinkle the crumble topping over the baked fruit and return to the oven for another 10 to 15 minutes, or until the topping is golden and slightly crunchy.

Recipe adapted from DC-based food historian and writer Michael W. Twitty's blog Afroculinaria.



The M-NCPPC Black History Program has compiled a list of reading recommendations for those who are eager to learn more about enslaved cooks like Margaret and Nell Bentley, the lives they led, and the deep history behind the foods that sustained them. We also encourage you to take the insights gained today and explore the work of various local organizations that are committed to Black food security and preserving the legacy of Black culinary traditions.

Readings

Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America

Psyche A. Williams-Forson

Winner of the 2023 James Beard Media Award for Food Issues and Advocacy, this book highlights the profound impact of anti-Black racism on food practices and culture, while advocating for a more sustainable and equitable relationship with food.

A Mother's Inheritance: Women, Interracial Identity, and Emancipation in Maryland, 1664-1820

Courtney C. Hobson

Hobson's masters thesis explores the one-hundred-year struggle of the Davis/Bentley family to obtain their freedom as they navigated the changing legal landscape of colonial and post-revolutionary America.

The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South

Michael W. Twitty

Blending memoir, food history, and genealogy, Twitty traces the roots of Southern cuisine, revealing how slavery, race, and culture have shaped the American food landscape and his personal journey of identity.

Cooking Maryland's Way: Voices of a Diverse Cuisine

Joyce M. White

Accompaniment to the 1963 Hammond-Harwood House Cook Book, which features over 700 historic Maryland recipes. White uses her 35+ year experience as a food historian to reflect on the chief cultural influences of Maryland's early foundational cuisine: Native American, African American, German, and British.

Organizations

Farm Alliance of Baltimore

Community of urban growers that cultivate fish peppers among many other plants. Hosts the Black Butterfly Urban Farmer Academy, a 9-month sustainable agriculture program providing micro-scale urban farm training particularly for the socially disadvantaged.

The Capital Market

Outdoor farmers' market and food truck hub, providing a wide range of goods, produce, and art sourced in Prince George's County and the DC Metro Region. Aiming to ameliorate racial inequality in our food systems, organizers facilitate a space where people can connect with their food and neighbors in a meaningful way.

Riversdale House Museum

An M-NCPPC National Historic Landmark. The site includes an interpretive garden with a section focusing on the crops of the enslaved people of Maryland. Riversdale Kitchen Guild members hold weekly open-hearth demonstrations of historical recipes.

Acknowledgements

The **M-NCPPC Black History Program (BHP)** is a countywide network of historic sites and museums, educational programs and celebrations, and community-based initiatives focused on preserving and honoring black history and culture in Prince George's County, Maryland. This booklet was researched, designed, and written by BHP staff members **Chloe Koulefiadou, Amina Brown, Jewel Khan.**

Food historian **Joyce M. White** contributed historical information for this booklet.

Food provided by the **Lawson Street Group**, a Black woman-owned catering and events company that has been serving the DMV area for over 10 years.

Contact: info@lawsonstreetgroup.com





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