

## The Archaeological Dimensions of Soul Food: Interpreting Race, Culture, and Afro-Virginian Identity

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In 1997, Tiger Woods clinched the Masters' Tournament and walked away with the coveted green jacket. A mere twenty-one years old, Woods had achieved superstardom and demonstrated his ability to excel in an overwhelmingly white dominated sport. Yet if Woods had seemingly broken through the color barrier, fellow golfer Fuzzy Zoeller was there to put him in place with a remark that probably made as many headlines as Woods's spectacular Masters' win. Tradition has it that the winner selects the menu for the awards dinner the following year. On the day of Woods's victory, Zoeller commented to CNN (*Golf Magazine Online* 1997): "That little boy is driving well and he's putting well. He's doing everything it takes to win. So, you know what you guys do when he gets in here? You pat him on the back and say, 'congratulations' and 'enjoy it' and tell him not to serve fried chicken next year. Got it? Or collard greens or whatever the hell they serve."

Zoeller's blatantly racist remarks served as yet another public reminder that denigrating racial stereotypes remain prevalent in American society. His statement required no reading between the lines. In plantation-era fashion, Zoeller first emasculated Woods by snidely referring to him as "that little boy." He then revealed his contempt for Woods, and African Americans in general, by concocting an image of him as a "fried chicken and greens eatin'" black who might be too ignorant to realize that dignified whites could

not be expected to eat such lowly black fare. It mattered none that Woods, whose mother is from Thailand, does not self-identify solely as African American (referring to himself as "Cablanasian," or a mix of "Caucasian, black, and Asian"), nor that he went to Stanford and remains more bankable than Zoeller.

Zoeller's outrageous remarks serve as a point of departure for this chapter by foregrounding issues regarding the construction of race and identity, and the ways in which white racist ideology essentializes cultural practices in order to reinforce negative black stereotypes, and to reinvent the bounds of whiteness. Further, the incident underscores the metaphorical power we bestow upon foodways in negotiating identity and drawing group boundaries (Beoku-Betts 1994; Brown and Mussell 1984a; Gutierrez 1984; Kalcik 1984; Moore 1984; Zafar 1999). This chapter touches upon all of these issues from an archaeological perspective that focuses on identity formation among enslaved Virginians, and the ways in which foodways served as a cultural means to position themselves within colonial society. To state the obvious, we eat to survive, but what and how we consume—and further, the meaning and symbolism we tie to food—are altogether embedded in cultural mores, social relationships, and in our performance of identity (Kalcik 1984). The discussion that follows first situates this study within

African diaspora scholarship, which foregrounds race analysis and issues of identity formation. I then argue that eighteenth-century enslaved Virginians responded to the conditions and constrictions of their enslavement (including poverty, plantation food rationing, and surveillance of their activities) through active collaboration in forging a system of foodways that demonstrated self-sufficiency, creativity, and careful strategizing in creating this cultural institution.

My interpretations are further supported by considering the parallel development of Anglo-Virginian foodways. Anglo-Virginians recognized the emergence and form of black foodways, and in constructing themselves as racially different and superior, particular foods associated with black consumption were stigmatized. Evidence suggests that white Virginians made both conscious and unconscious efforts to physically and symbolically distance themselves from foods they perceived as fit only for the enslaved (see Kalcik 1984 for more contemporary case studies of this phenomenon). Eventually, however, the foodway practices of enslaved peoples would come to greatly define the substance of southern cooking for all.

#### THE AFRICAN DIASPORA, RACE, AND IDENTITY FORMATION

Scholars typically use the term "African diaspora" when referring to Africans or African-descended peoples dispersed through forced migration and enslavement to the Americas and the Caribbean, and their descendants (e.g., Gordon 1998; Lemelle and Kelley 1994; Orser 1998a; Singleton and Bograd 1995; Skinner 1993). The African diaspora further encompasses the post-emancipation immigration of Afro-Latino and Caribbean groups to the United States in particular. Thus, the African diaspora is typically understood to incorporate groups of people who, though geographically dispersed, are variously related through history, culture, and racialization.<sup>1</sup> Scholars of the African diaspora have largely produced a body of work where they attempt to define a series of traits that diasporic groups are thought to possess

(see Clifford 1994:315-321; Shepperson 1993). One key characteristic is that such groups profess a black racial identity as a result of white racial oppression. Yet some current researchers contest these etc, largely static, and essentialist interpretations (e.g., Gilroy 1993; Gordon 1998; Gordon and Anderson 1999). While not denying the centrality of racial hierarchies and white racial ideology in African diasporic identity formation and cultural production, these scholars propose that researchers refrain from imposing a priori assumptions onto groups or individuals whom they define as "black" and therefore as members of the African diaspora. Instead, they suggest that self-ascribed identities be foregrounded. Further, rather than focus on the features that members of the diaspora should or must possess, Edmund Gordon and Mark Anderson (1999:284), for example, argue that "the various processes through which communities and individuals identify with one another, highlighting the central importance of race—racial constructions, racial oppressions, racial identification—and culture in the making and remaking of diaspora" must assume primary importance. This requires a shift from a descriptive to an interpretive approach in studying African Diasporic groups.

Gordon and Anderson's (1999) research on Afro-Creole populations testifies to the complex, unbounded ways in which people position themselves both culturally and racially. Further, their work highlights the fact that these fluid identities are situational. For example, Afro-Nicaraguans alternatively shift between identities privileging indigenous, African, or English origin and heritage depending on the social and political moment. Yet Afro-Nicaraguans are phenotypically "black" and African-descended, and as such they recognize that they are victimized by dominant racial constructions. In opposing white racial hegemony, they have allied themselves with blacks elsewhere by unifying into political interest groups under a banner of blackness in recognition of their shared plight (Gordon 1998; Gordon and Anderson 1999:293-294).

In a similar vein, Garifuna youth stylize themselves culturally in the symbols associated with black urban youth in the United States (Gordon and Anderson 1999:290-293). In their own words, this is a demonstration of "black power," of forging alliances with blacks elsewhere who are subject to the same or similar racial subjugation and marginalization. Gordon and Anderson (1999:289) clarify, however, that "this does not imply that Black identities are derived from dominant racial constructions but they necessarily engage them in the effort to imagine a discrete sense of peoplehood." It is in the spirit of forming a sense of "peoplehood," where individuals can pool their knowledge and resources, that racial affiliation with other African diasporic groups potentially becomes an empowering strategic move. Thus, while dominant racial ideology has served the political, economic, and social interests of whites (e.g., see Paynter this volume), it has in turn served as an impetus for group formation among peoples of the African diaspora in furthering their own interests across space and time (e.g., Epperson 1997, 1999a:172, this volume; Franklin 1998; Gilroy 1993; Gomez 1998; Hull, Scott, and Smith 1982; La Roche and Blakey 1997; Mullins 1999a, 1999b; Smith 1983; Thomas 1998).

While this chapter deals specifically with how enslaved individuals produced a collective Afro-Virginian identity, I recognize that these same individuals were not solely defined by this group construct. Alternative subject positions were undoubtedly crucial in negotiating the cultural and social terrain encountered during their lifetimes. Still, given the inextricable tie between race and enslavement, and the overwhelming influence of these twin oppressions in the lives of most Afro-Virginians, I find it necessary to foreground these factors here. Further, since race, as a social construct, possesses no fixed meaning, I do not intend that the experiences of the Afro-Virginians I discuss here are necessarily equivalent to those who came before or after. Finally, identity is situational, dynamic, and highly dependent upon the partic-

ular context within which it is defined and lived. I therefore locate my research within the Tidewater region of Virginia during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, when racism and plantation slavery were ubiquitous in the Chesapeake.

#### SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL LOCATION

Africans and American-born blacks were present in Virginia throughout most of the seventeenth century, yet they constituted no more than 7 percent of the entire population of the Chesapeake during most of this period (Walsh 1997:25). Little is known about their lifeways from the archaeological record because seventeenth-century sites are rarely investigated from the perspective that enslaved, indentured, or free Africans were present (see Miller 1996) or, alternatively, could have left physical evidence that can be conclusively linked to them.<sup>2</sup> Although these individuals acquired a range of identities based on birthright, religion, gender, and their status as free, enslaved, or indentured servants (Billings 1975:155-173; Morgan 1975; Rose 1976:15-27), their ability to reposition themselves within the existing social hierarchy, though precarious, was still possible (Berlin 1998:29-46; Breen and Innes 1980; Epperson 1999a). With the displacement of white indentured laborers by an enslaved African workforce toward the end of the century (Galenson 1986; Morgan 1975) and the construction of racial difference fully realized (Allen 1997:240; Epperson 1999a; Smedley 1999), enslaved Africans entering Virginia found themselves shackled to a system resolved to keep them and their descendants subjugated for life.

Between 1700 and 1740, Virginia's enslaved population escalated to the point where Africans constituted half of the total population, and more than 60 percent in some counties (Kulikoff 1986:37-38, 64-69, 319-345; Minchinton et al. 1984). This was largely due to the British control of the Atlantic slave trade, which doubled the numbers of Africans in North America every twenty years between 1700 and 1780 (Gomez 1998:19). Aggressive slave trading brought

Africans from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Bight of Biafra, Bight of Benin, and the west coast of Central Africa (Gomez 1998:17-37; Morgan 1998:63; Walsh 1997:55) to the Tidewater, where they mixed with American-born blacks, mulattos, and black Indians. Most would come into contact on plantations where they were commonly forced to work as field hands.

Alienation, disparity, exploitation, and terror marked the experiences of newly arrived Africans as white planters sought to dehumanize their human property through enslavement. Their sanity was further tested as they acclimated to a foreign environment and learned to interact with strangers often vastly different from themselves (e.g., Berlin 1998:128-129). The imposition of a black racial identity and the English language were additional demoralizing tactics meant to control the enslaved population by erasing their tribal and language affiliations (Gomez 1998:169-181).

By the 1740s, tobacco plantations were a common feature of the Tidewater landscape. Most enslaved Africans and blacks belonged to wealthy planters who dispersed their large workforce among a number of quartering sites (Walsh 1993). Although enslaved Virginians began to form families (Berlin 1998; Blassingame 1972; Gutman 1976a; Kulikoff 1986; Sobel 1987; Walsh 1997), and the subsequent number of American-born blacks rose, during the 1740s there still existed culturally heterogeneous enslaved communities that included the African-born (Berlin 1998:110-111; Gomez 1998; Walsh 1997). Racism and enslavement together, however, served to underscore their shared plights within an otherwise sea of divergent experiences and backgrounds. For most, race was an unfamiliar social category. It was within this context that people exchanged and transformed cultural knowledge and practices as they engaged with their imposed identity of "enslaved black." Foodways no doubt served as one of the earliest vehicles for the expression of culture and identity.

Although what follows draws together evidence from a number of historical sources

and archaeological sites, I will focus on one particular site, the data for which spans the period of 1740 to 1778. Thus, the site dates from the time when cultural and social heterogeneity among the enslaved population was likely at its peak, to the time when the number of Africans entering the Chesapeake declined and native-born blacks prevailed. The central case study concerns an enslaved community that once lived in the Tidewater on an outlying tobacco plantation known historically as Rich Neck. The remains of their occupation, particularly the faunal assemblage, comprise the main body of evidence for foodways.

#### *Rich Neck Plantation, Williamsburg*

Over the past twelve years, Colonial Williamsburg archaeologists have surveyed and excavated Rich Neck Plantation (Site 44WB 52; Franklin 1997a; McFaden et al. 1999; Samford 1991). Located approximately one mile from what was once the colonial capital of Williamsburg, Rich Neck Plantation lies two and a half miles north of the James River. Archaeological and historical research affirms the presence of elite slave owners, white indentured servants, and enslaved Virginians, all of whom variously occupied the area from the 1630s through the nineteenth century. The prominent Ludwell family acquired Rich Neck in 1665 and owned portions of it well into the nineteenth century.

Following a survey that uncovered portions of what appeared to be the remains of a slave dwelling, excavations in 1994-1995 exposed the footprint of a duplex consisting of fifteen root cellars and the brick foundations of a central chimney. The artifacts and primary sources together indicated that the dwelling was occupied between 1740 and 1778. Phillip Ludwell III was the absentee landowner of Rich Neck during this period and lived at Greenspring Plantation about five miles away. Thus Rich Neck operated as a satellite, or outlying, tobacco plantation. As one of the wealthiest Virginians of his time, Ludwell owned nine plantations and 235 enslaved blacks at his death in 1767 (VMHB 1913:395-413).

The occupation date range coincides with the peak of the trade in enslaved Africans in Virginia (c. 1740). By this time relatively stable enslaved families and communities had begun to form (Morgan 1998:503), and by the end of the eighteenth century most enslaved blacks were American-born. By 1767, Rich Neck's enslaved community was composed of twenty-one individuals: ten men, five women, three boys, and three girls (Franklin 1997:27-54). As many as five people (four men and one woman) were above the age of sixty. Importantly, two individuals may have been in their seventies. The remaining eight adults included women still in their child-bearing years and five mature men. Along with the presence of six children, this suggests that the community consisted of mixed nuclear families, extended family groupings, and individuals who were single or had families on other plantations. It is likely that two family groupings, or roughly half of the Rich Neck slave quarter's population, occupied the two-room dwelling that was excavated.

The previous discussion regarding Virginia's slave trade suggests that by midcentury plantations were still the settings for cultural exchange between individuals with divergent backgrounds. Ludwell's probate inventory indicates further that this community did not simply vary along gender and age lines, for the presence of four elder men and a woman strongly suggests that at least some, if not all, of these individuals were born and raised in Africa.<sup>3</sup> Although the remaining populace was probably creole, or American-born, in all likelihood their parents or other close family members were African-born. Many creoles therefore received the skills and knowledge remembered from a homeland long gone but reproduced in Virginia through their African relations. As a result, Rich Neck's community was quite heterogeneous with a mixture of language skills, ages, genders, tribal origins, and the various worldviews, values, and cultural lifeways embodied in each individual. Such dynamic situations could be found on other Tidewater plantations, but their occurrence was mostly limited to the first half of the

eighteenth century, coinciding with the astounding growth of the enslaved African population that consequently shifted the racial balance in colonial society. Thus, during the early years of Rich Neck's habitation (c. 1740s), the social and cultural scene of the slave quarter was highly dynamic, and rapidly transforming. Not only did these diverse individuals manage to form social institutions through kinship ties and codependence, but the archaeological evidence indicates that they endeavored to produce a unified cultural identity in line with their enslaved and racialized one. We can assess foodways as one example of this identity-in-the-making process. 

#### CULINARY AND SUBSISTENCE PRACTICES AS MEANINGFUL AND MUNDANE

For Virginia's enslaved population, a number of factors variously influenced the form, content, and meaning of their foodways. Although interaction and the exchange of ideas fostered the development of a foodways system, plantation management, poverty, and the environment also played influential roles. With regard to cultural exchange, enslaved Africans likely expressed a strong inclination toward flavors remembered from home, and favored their particular ways of assembling, preparing, serving, and consuming meals. On Virginia plantations, these myriad traditions combined with those of American-born blacks, whites, and, either directly or indirectly, local Indians (Morgan 1998:477-485) to form a "cultural continuum" (Drummond 1980) of practices from which they could alternatively choose in transforming their subsistence practices. While some plants and animals indigenous to Africa were brought to Virginia (e.g., guinea hens, yams, cowpeas), enslaved Virginians had little available for consumption other than the native flora and fauna that the Indians had relied on for millennia, and the livestock and crops introduced from Europe (e.g., cattle, sheep, swine, wheat, and barley). The first half of the eighteenth century must have been a period of widespread experimentation with these new foodstuffs, using alien cooking and serving

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SOUL FOOD

Table 6.1 Taxa and Species Recovered from the Rich Neck Slave Quarters

Wild Mammal	Domestic Mammal	Fish
Opossum	Swine	Sheepshead
Raccoon	Cattle	Pumpkinseed
Eastern grey squirrel	Sheep/goat	White perch
Eastern fox squirrel		Redear sunfish
Red squirrel		Yellow perch
White-tailed deer		Atlantic herring
Rabbit		Alewife
		American shad
		Sucker
		Freshwater catfish
		White catfish
		Bluegill
		Gar
		Sturgeon
		Channel pickerel
Bird	Reptile	Crustacean and Shellfish
Chicken	Snapping turtle	Blue crab
Turkey	Slider/cooter	Oyster
Grouse/partridge	Red-bellied turtle	Clam
Canada goose		
Pigeon/dove		
Perching bird		

Note: Table does not include commensals.

instruments. To compound the challenge, enslaved Virginians would have had to develop cooking methods that coordinated well with their demanding workdays. Importantly, since planter provisions scarcely met their caloric needs, they needed to develop strategies for ensuring their own and their family's physical well-being. While the food provisioning system controlled by slave owners played a major role in slave diets, it neither ruled their palates nor dictated how they attached meaning to food.

Although the assessment of the Rich Neck slave quarter's faunal assemblage is still in progress, more than 27,000 bone fragments from five root cellars have been analyzed. To date, zooarchaeologists at the Department of Archaeological Research at Colonial

Williamsburg have identified forty-five wild and domestic species (Andrews et al. 1997; Franklin 1997). Of these, Rich Neck's household consumed more than thirty species (Table 6.1), not including the shellfish recovered. With regard to the botanical remains, ethnobotanists identified sixteen families and species (Table 6.2; Mrozowski and Driscoll 1997).

My thesis is that Rich Neck's inhabitants during the 1740s were a mixed lot, with creole blacks and Africans forced to live and work together. During this community's life cycle, twenty years later, we can pinpoint twenty-one enslaved men, women, and children residents in 1767. This illustrates their success in forming families and suggests cooperation within a number of realms.

Table 6.2. Charred Seed Remains from the Rich Neck Slave Quarters

Latin Name	Common Name
<i>Vigna</i> sp.	bean
<i>Vigna sinensis</i>	cowpea
<i>Phaseolus limensis</i>	lima bean
<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>	common bean
<i>Zea mays</i>	corn
<i>Zea hordeum</i>	pearl barley
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	wheat
<i>Secale</i> sp.	rye
<i>Cucurbita pepo</i>	squash
<i>Citrullus lanatus</i>	melon
<i>Prunus</i> sp.	cherry
<i>Rubus</i> sp.	blackberry
<i>Juglans nigra</i>	black walnut
<i>Quercus</i> sp.	acorn
<i>Gleditsia tricanthos</i>	honey locust
<i>Arachis</i>	peanut
<i>Galium</i> sp.	bedstraw
<i>Carex</i> sp.	sedge

Source: Mrozowski and Driscoll 1997.

Shocker, Hester, and the remaining elderly individuals were probably present during the entire occupation of the dwelling remains in question (c. 1740–1778), serving as a source of cultural inspiration and familial continuity. As the entire community dealt with the reality of their enslavement and racialization, they built upon this foundation of commonality over time in forging a collective identity, the evidence for which should be recognizable in the archaeological record. Since I proposed that the cultural production of foodways played an important role in this transformation, it was necessary to be able to discern subsistence changes *over time* that might support this.

The faunal remains were recovered from two major episodes of backfilling: an early period between 1740 and 1765, and a late period from 1765 to 1778. It was therefore possible to delineate any potential changes in

subsistence practices over time. I considered the evidence for food choices (particularly with regard to wild species), element distribution (specifically, meat cuts consumed from domestic species), and meal preparation methods, and found that during the forty years that the dwelling was occupied, Rich Neck's household endeavored to create a distinctive foodways style that was strongly associated, by themselves and others, with their collective identity as enslaved Afro-Virginians.

#### *Livin' High off the Hog*

Domestic livestock provided most of the meat protein consumed by the residents of Rich Neck. The evidence from faunal remains from other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century enslaved Virginian sites indicates that this held true for the enslaved belonging to most wealthy planters (Atkins 1994; Bowen 1993, 1995; Crader 1990; McKee 1987). At Rich Neck, the bulk of the bones came from cattle and swine, with sheep a distant third (Figure 6.1). Ludwell's probate inventory (VMHB 1913) shows that twenty-two head of cattle, four calves, ten hogs, and twenty-five sheep were being raised on the Rich Neck property, so it is fair to surmise that the enslaved household received their rations from these livestock.

We tend to assume that the enslaved were rationed only the poorest cuts of meat and innards, while slave owners and their families enjoyed the most tender and meatiest portions, such as hams and roasts. Joanne Bowen, however, argues that this is a modern assumption that has been uncritically imposed onto our interpretations of the past (Bowen 1993:39, 41–45, 1996:116). In fact, the faunal remains from Rich Neck (Franklin 1997a:196–199) and two contemporaneous slave sites—Mount Vernon's House for Families (Atkins 1994:57–58) and Monticello's building "o" (Crader 1990)—support her argument that blacks were commonly provisioned with whole animals. Moreover, evidence from Williamsburg's elite households indicates that the heads of calves and pigs

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SOUL FOOD

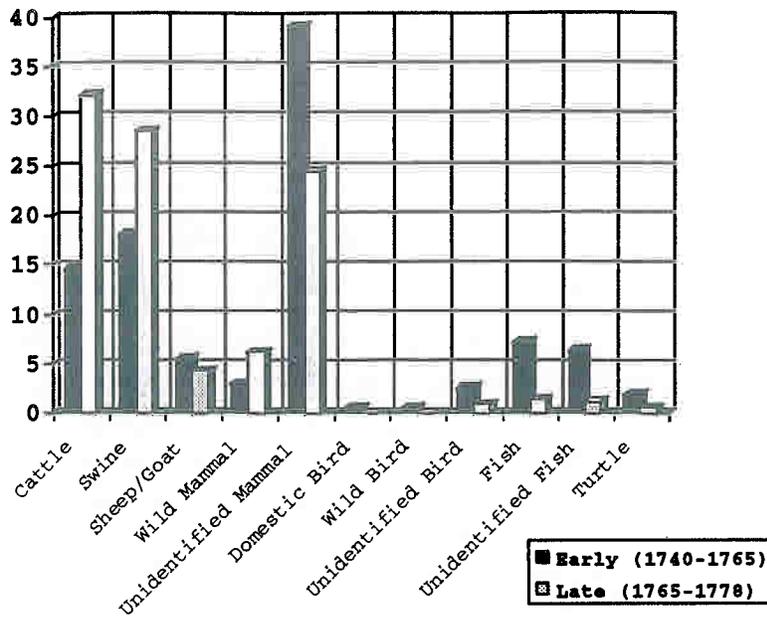


Figure 6.1. Percentage of total biomass, Rich Neck slave quarters, c. 1740-1778.

were commonly consumed by the wealthy (Walsh et al. 1997:162-173), and even the innards were not wasted (see Noël Hume 1978: 14-20). What we today would consider the cheapest, least desirable portions of an animal were consumed eagerly on a regular basis by even elite slave owning whites during the colonial period.

Ludwell's probate inventory also indicates that corn was both raised and stored at Rich Neck. Indian corn was regularly rationed to enslaved blacks throughout much of the plantation South (Hilliard 1972; McKee 1999; Moore 1989:72-73), and this was likely the case at Rich Neck. We also recovered pearl barley and rye (see Table 6.2), which were probably cultivated on any number of Ludwell's plantations. The rest of the charred seed remains came from garden variety fruits and vegetables, including cowpea (i.e., black-eyed pea), lima bean, squash, and melon (see Table 6.2). Although we found no evidence of garden plots in the form of fence lines close to the quarter, historical sources suggest that enslaved Virginians often kept personal garden plots (McKee 1999; Morgan

1998:140). Through gardening they supplemented their diets and seized the opportunity to earn money or goods through sale or barter of produce. Gardening also allowed them greater leverage in constructing their foodways (see also Joyner 1991:86). Likewise, enslaved Virginians raised fowl for their own use (McKee 1999:226; Morgan 1998: 139-140). At Rich Neck we recovered both immature and adult chicken bones along with egg shell fragments, lending further support for the conventionality of this household activity. While the faunal evidence demonstrates that Rich Neck's household members consumed both fowl and eggs on-site, it is highly probable that both were sold in town as well (Walsh et al. 1997:89). We found coinage at Rich Neck, and the quarter itself was a short distance from Williamsburg's marketplace.

Domestic livestock and grains, as well as cultivated fruits and vegetables, were important foodstuffs consumed by Rich Neck's household. Whether acquired through Ludwell's food rations or raised by themselves, domestic animal and plant species largely

dominated the substance of their diets. Still, Rich Neck's household did not depend solely upon these foods, and individuals sought to diversify and supplement their diets by integrating wild plant and animal species into their foodways.

*Searching Beyond the Bounds of the Quarter: Wild Plants and Animals*

As did gardening and raising fowl, exploiting the environment for its natural resources also helped to shape black creole foodways (Atkins 1994; Crader 1990; Hilliard 1988; Jenkins 1999; Joyner 1991:85-86; McKee 1987, 1988; Reitz et al. 1985; Walsh 1997: 101-102; Yentsch 1994). The faunal and botanical evidence from Rich Neck intimates that this group was deeply familiar with the lay of the land. As historian Rhys Isaac (1982:52-55) posits, enslaved Africans lived within an "alternative territorial system" that contrasted with the heavily modified landscape preferred by elite whites (see also Upton 1988). Blacks understood the advantage of familiarizing themselves with their untamed surroundings—landscapes that remained wooded and natural—for they facilitated secrecy and anonymity. Before long, enslaved Virginians acquired an in-depth knowledge of their environment, and the flora and fauna sustained by it.

Successful subsistence strategies depended largely upon the Rich Neck household's familiarity with animal behavior and habitats, and the seasonality of a wide range of wild game (Reitz and Scarry 1985:81-83; e.g., Tuma 1999). Although some wild catch, most notably shellfish and turtle, may have been obtained through "opportunistic collecting" (McKee 1987:38), others required specialized skills such as the making of traps, fishing with hook and line or a net, and hunting with dogs or guns (e.g., Jenkins 1999). Africans may have been familiar with certain skills, fishing in particular, before coming to Virginia (Yentsch 1992). Finesse with firearms and traps may have been acquired initially through interactions with Anglo-Virginians and/or Indians, and then passed along through generations of black families.

That one or more people from Rich Neck hunted with musket was confirmed by the discovery of gun flints, various-sized lead shot, and the remains of migratory bird species (Canada goose) and white-tailed deer. Some of the remaining bird species were likely trapped, snared, or netted (Reitz and Scarry 1985:81). Squirrel, raccoon, and possum were often caught by setting traps, downfalls, or snares (Atkins 1994:75). Ex-slave Peter Randolph (1969:29-31) related that slaves caught a variety of wild game with traps made of thin strips of white oak. The traps were checked at night and on Sundays, when there was time off from work. Thus, firearms were not required to catch most wild game, and some people alternatively caught possums by using dogs to track and run them up trees (Campbell 1994; Genovese 1972: 527; Killion and Waller 1973:59; Randolph 1969:29-30).

The fact that fifteen different species of fish were recovered from Rich Neck underscores the reliance on resources collected from the Chesapeake Bay's tributaries. Rich Neck is bordered by College Creek, a major waterway once navigable during the eighteenth century, that flows into the James River, itself only a few miles away. Thus, Rich Neck's household had easy access to prime fishing spots and did not have to travel far if traps needed to be checked. In addition to the use of traps, fishing was accomplished with hook and line or with nets or seines (we found one lead net weight from a root cellar). The remaining wild species included various aquatic and land turtles, oysters, and blue crabs. Shellfish were collected in shallow water habitats along beaches and tidal flats (White 1989). Folks from Rich Neck probably traveled to Archer's Hope, a neighboring Ludwell plantation on the James River, to gather crabs that migrated to shallow waters from the bay during the summer to molt.

The macrobotanical remains demonstrate that the individuals from Rich Neck not only actively participated in acquiring wild game and fish, but also foraged for black walnuts, acorns, blackberries, and chokecherries (see Table 6.2). We also found relatively large

amounts of honey locust pods, which were used as a sweetener (Stiverson and Butler 1977:37); sugar was a luxury item that if provisioned by Ludwell was probably done so in scarce amounts. Locust pods were also brewed with persimmons to make beer (Killion and Waller 1973:40; Randolph 1969:31). Enslaved blacks probably benefited from Indian knowledge of, and expertise with, edible and medicinal plants. The chokecherry seed was one likely example, as the local Powhatan were known to make teas with it to treat various illnesses.

To summarize thus far, between 1740 and 1778, Rich Neck's community relied primarily on cattle and swine for meat protein, provisioned grains (notably corn), and a greater variety of domestic and wild plant and animal species that they themselves grew or procured. Although newly enslaved Africans were initially unfamiliar with most of these species, Anne Yentsch (1994:202-203) suggests that many came from areas of West Africa where a bewildering array of animals was available at market. This may or may not at least partially explain a willingness to try new things. Their knowledge, however, of food preparation clearly influenced cooking methods within the slave quarter.

#### *Slow Stews and Hasty Ash Cakes*

While black victuals largely mirrored everyone else's in terms of content, they diverged from Anglo colonial foodways in terms of assemblage and preparation. And although all the members of a family or household variously engaged in the production of foodways, black women dominated when it came to conjuring up edibles (Fox-Genovese 1988:159; Mitchell 1993:16; White 1991; Yentsch 1994:196-215; Zafar 1999:449-451). They were responsible for preparing meals within the slave quarter, and nearly all of the plantation household chefs were black females (e.g., White 1985:128-129, 1991:109, 119-120). This included Daphne, the Ludwell family cook who was listed in a 1774 probate inventory (Lee Family Papers, 1638-1867). The ex-slave narratives for Virginia underscore the enduring role that black women fulfilled

over the years within the realm of foodways (Perdue et al. 1976:163-164, 181, 216, 311).

Both historical and archaeological evidence for black foodways throughout the South suggest that black women relied heavily on West African cooking methods such as stewing and baking (Ferguson 1992; Hall 1991; Hess 1992; McKee 1987:37; Mitchell 1993; Otto 1984; Walker 2000; WPA 1994:227; Yentsch 1994:218).<sup>4</sup> Using a large iron pot (a common find on slave-related sites in the Chesapeake, including at Rich Neck [see also Ferguson 1992:102-103]), they created "one-pot meals" that were stewed slowly either in the fireplace or on an open fire in the yard. Archaeological evidence suggests that stewing was a widespread cooking method. Many of the mammal bones recovered from Rich Neck and other Virginia slave sites are highly fragmented, and some exhibit cut marks (e.g., Crader 1990; McKee 1987; see also Jenkins 1999). Both traits indicate that larger pieces of meat were butchered into smaller ones for boiling or stewing, and also to extract the marrow.

Black women may have chosen stewing over other cooking techniques for several reasons. Slow stewing, unlike roasting, required little supervision and could be tended from time to time when people were laboring in the fields. Also, tougher cuts of meat were tenderized by stewing (Bowen 1993:55, 1995:11). Finally, and importantly, enslaved women built upon their knowledge of African foodways by concocting nutritious meals starting with corn, rice, or vegetables as the foundation for stews to which pieces of meat were added for flavor and protein (Harris 2001:15; Hess 1992; Yentsch 1994:218). In doing so, they reproduced this traditional practice, but transformed it with new ingredients.

Stewing wasn't the only cooking method used, as the preparation of corn shows. African-born slaves, such as the eldest members of Rich Neck's household, may have tasted corn for the first time in Virginia, but many of them were familiar with grains such as rice and millet, and with their preparation (see Hall 1991; Hess 1992). The mortar and pestle, central to a number of West African

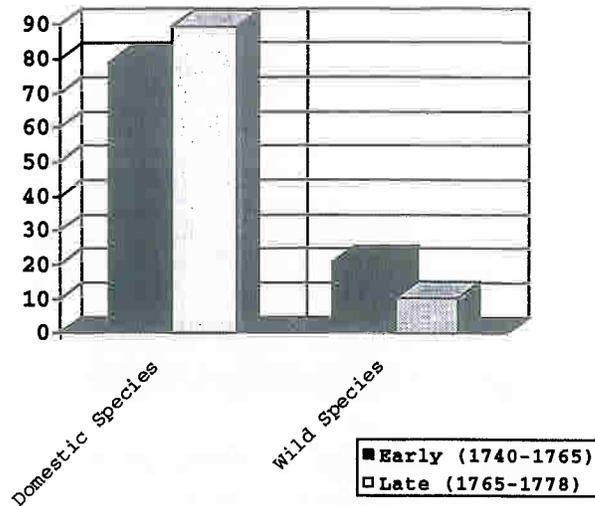


Figure 6.2. Total biomass, domestic versus wild species, Rich Neck slave quarters, c. 1740-1778.

peoples for separating grains from hulls, were also used in the Tidewater. An Englishman visiting Williamsburg in 1732 observed that corn was “the only support of the Negroes, who roast it in the ear, bake it for bread, boyl it when hulled, and like our buttered wheat, the children and better sort breakfast with it and make farmity. The first they call homeny, the latter mush. To hull it they beat it in a mortar as the scots doe their barley” (Stiver-son and Butler 1977).

By using certain West African cooking techniques, enslaved women had at their disposal fairly uncomplicated meal preparations that coordinated well with the demands of forced labor. For example, they baked yams in hot ashes for a nutritious meal that even children learned to prepare (e.g., Hilliard 1988:319; Perdue et al. 1976:154, 163, 189; WPA 1994:78). The popular “hoe” or “ash” cake was prepared expediently by mixing corn meal with water, patting it into cakes, placing it on the blade of a hoe, and then into the fire, where it was covered with ashes and cooked for five minutes. Such filling meals were prepared and consumed hastily before leaving for the fields.

Enslaved women also appropriated European styles of cooking, and wild game was dry-roasted in much the way that the English

preferred to cook fine cuts of meat. Opossum was regarded as a delicacy, and was fattened upon capture by feeding it persimmons. They were then roasted on a spit and often served with sweet potatoes (Hilliard 1988:317; Yetman 1970:96).

The women of Rich Neck excelled at “no-nonsense” cooking. Through their fundamental cooking routines, they not only delivered the culturally salient “one-pot meals” and baked foods, but also managed to integrate efficient preparation methods with the demand of their work cycles. While the discussion thus far has focused on how Rich Neck’s community created a distinctive foodways system by redefining African-derived cooking methods, the evidence for changes over time in their diets reveals how the transformation of foodways may signify a concurrent move toward a shared group identity.

#### *Disciplining Foodways*

The major thrust of this chapter is that by the end of the third quarter of the eighteenth century, enslaved Virginians asserted a collective racial and cultural identity. As the enslaved residents of Rich Neck Plantation worked toward defining themselves as a group, we might expect to find a more stable and meaningful pattern emerging in their foodway

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SOUL FOOD

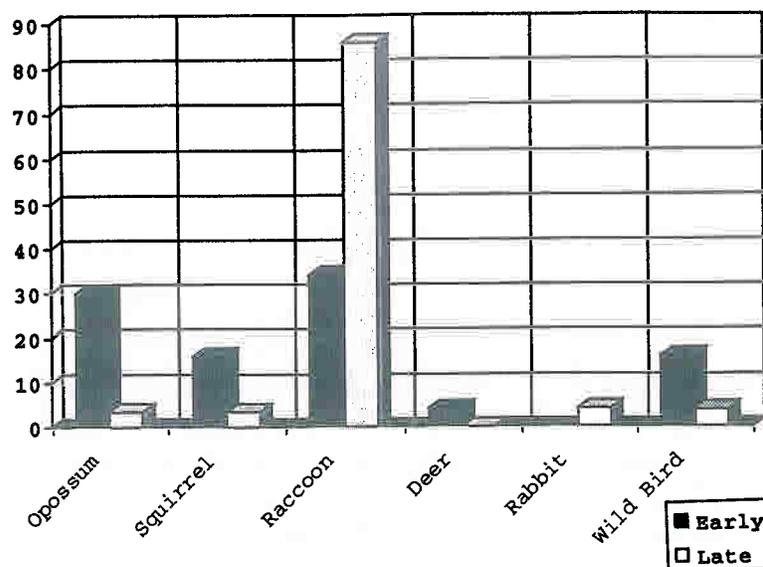


Figure 6.3. Percentage of biomass for wild mammals and birds, Rich Neck slave quarters, c. 1740–1778, in early and late deposits from root cellar contexts.

practices. Although, as stated previously, not all of the faunal remains from Rich Neck have been analyzed, there do appear to be some trends worth noting.

In comparing and contrasting the faunal assemblages from the early (1740–1765) and late (1765–1778) deposits, it is clear that domestic species—specifically cattle and swine—increased in the diet, while there was a related decline in wild species (Figure 6.2). A number of factors may explain the rise in domestic species consumption, including an increase in planter provisions or the independent raising of livestock by the enslaved household. With this shift there was also a decrease in the exploitation of wild species, but nonetheless a continued reliance upon them. For the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the analyses of faunal assemblages from Monticello (Crader 1990), Kingsmill (McKee 1987), Mount Vernon (Atkins 1994; Bowen 1993), and Flowerdew Hundred plantations (McKee 1988, 1999) likewise demonstrate that wild game continued to be central in the foodways of enslaved Virginians. Yet this is a broad generalization, and a closer look at the consumption of wild

species from the Rich Neck assemblage discloses that this household may have relinquished certain animals from their diet while more actively pursuing others.

Figure 6.1 shows a spike in the use of wild mammals over time, and this was due to a nearly three-fold increase in the consumption of raccoon and the initial appearance of rabbit in the diet during the late period (Figure 6.3). Historical sources cite the wide appeal specifically of raccoon, squirrel, and opossum among enslaved blacks well into the nineteenth century (Campbell 1994:61; Genovese 1972:546–547; Yetman 1970:53). No firearms were needed to capture raccoon and opossum, and as nocturnal creatures they could be hunted at night when enslaved hunters were able to move about in secrecy. The marked decline in opossum consumption and the rise in raccoon consumption are difficult to explain at this point.<sup>5</sup> Raccoon meat may have been preferable, as ex-slave Anthony Dawson (Yetman 1970:96) recalled: “Sometimes de boys would go down in de woods and get a possum. I love possum and sweet-taters, but de coon meat more delicate and de hair don’t stink up de meat.” We

recovered rabbit remains in only one root cellar, suggesting that rabbit was eaten no more so than squirrel or opossum during the late period.

It is worth noting that we found no deer remains for the late period, and a decline in wild birds as well, which may mean that firearms were no longer available for use at Rich Neck. This implies that Ludwell's plantation manager or overseer may have attempted to assert more control over the actions and movements of Rich Neck's community than in previous years (Ludwell was largely an absentee slave owner during this period). In response, Rich Neck's enslaved household turned to wild species that could be caught at night or trapped and then retrieved when the opportunity arose. But here, too, more research is needed. An alternative interpretation may be that white-tailed deer were scarce in the area due to overhunting, as well as to the introduction of grazing livestock, which damaged their native habitat (Manning-Sterling 1994:70-72; Walsh et al. 1997:28). As a result, Rich Neck's household would have shifted their subsistence strategies.

It is still possible to surmise, using the preliminary data from Rich Neck, that this group contrived a unique foodways system shaped by a number of factors. These included the influences of an array of cultural traditions, access to the Tidewater's natural resources, and Ludwell's provisioning system. Over time, domestic species consumption rose, although wild game and fish continued to be exploited. Importantly, Rich Neck's household went from experimenting with a wider variety of wild mammals to selecting for raccoon in particular. Similar comparisons of the types of fish species captured over time still require analysis. The dire poverty associated with enslavement and the likelihood that rations scarcely met the caloric or nutritive needs of the household further served as the catalysts to hunt, fish, trap, gather, and raise fowl and garden crops for sustenance.

Despite the number of variables that

shaped Afro-Virginian foodways, what is significant remains the potential for foodways to serve as a meaningful signifier of identity, and to reinforce the cohesion and social ties of the enslaved community as its members participated in the multiple phases associated with food production, distribution, and consumption. The move toward group coalition and definition should be detectable in the archaeological record as patterns exhibiting increasing cultural homogeneity, and there do appear to be trends at Rich Neck that may be discovered at other enslaved-related sites. Still there is the question of uniqueness: Were these foodways exclusive to enslaved Virginians, thus signifying the performance of a group identity? This can be answered only by comparisons with the transformation of Anglo-Virginian foodways.

#### FOODWAYS ACROSS THE COLOR-LINE

One of the more striking features of slave-related faunal assemblages, in contrast to those collected from Anglo sites, is the diversity of wild game and fish species. The typical slave-related faunal assemblage from the Chesapeake region of Virginia consists of 5-20 percent wild taxa (Atkins 1994:21). Although beef and pork provided the bulk of meat protein for enslaved Virginians (Crader 1990:691), over time the meat protein in their diet was quite varied, especially when compared with the diets of Anglo-Virginians. White colonists mainly consumed wild species under "frontier" conditions (Miller 1988; Watts-Roy 1996). Thus, faunal remains from the earliest seventeenth-century settlements along the James River contain high percentages of fish and deer in particular (e.g., Bowen 1996:97, 101).

Over time, whites exploited fewer wild species as areas became more settled and livestock had a chance to proliferate (Walsh et al. 1997:27). Using data compiled from an intensive study comparing rural and urban faunal assemblages from Chesapeake sites, Walsh, Martin, and Bowen (1997) state that wild species were never a significant factor in the colonial diet.<sup>6</sup> From their study of fifty-

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SOUL FOOD

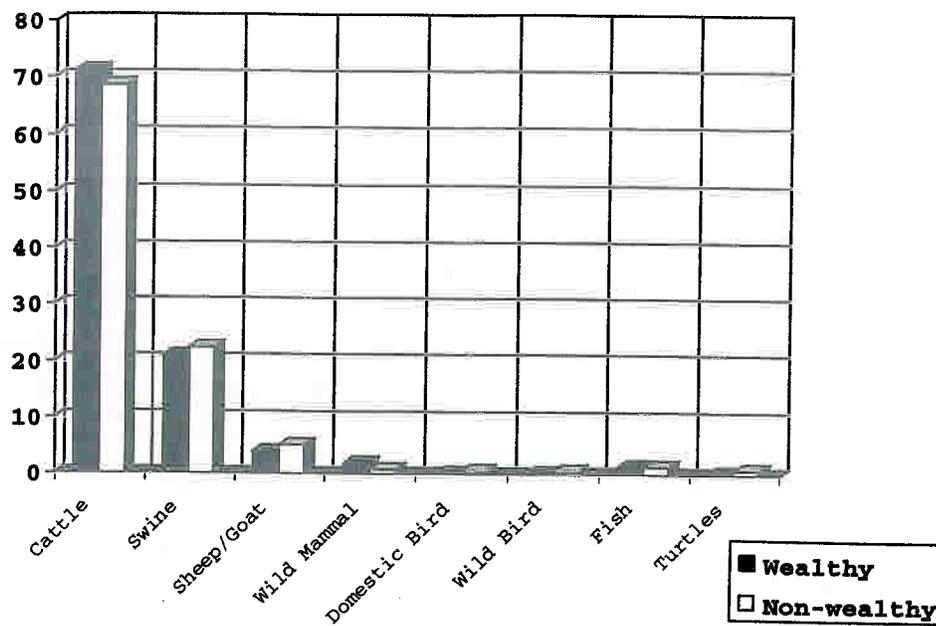


Figure 6.4. Percentage of biomass of identifiable domestic and wild species recovered from rural Anglo-Virginian sites (c. 1750-1800), including Curles Neck (wealthy planter; site 44HE388), the Boothe site (fairly wealthy planters; site 44IWI11), Ferry Farm (middling planters; site 44VBI38), Gloucester-VIMS III (middling merchant; sites 44GL357, 44GL177), Gloucester Point (middling merchant; site 44GL197), and Hopewell (planters; site 44PG381). (From Walsh et al. 1997:243-251)

three sites, I have selected six rural Anglo-Virginian sites dating to between 1750 and 1800 in order to compare the dietary significance of wild species between these households previously discussed (Figure 6.4). I chose rural sites in order to factor in the possibility that location within undeveloped areas coupled with less accessibility to town markets might result in a heavier reliance on wild species. Further, I chose two wealthy planter sites (Curles Neck and the Boothe site) and four "middling" planter and merchant sites in order to account for varying socioeconomic status. The very low percentages of wild mammal (>2 percent), bird (>.5 percent), and fish (>2 percent) consumed by these six households confirms that Anglo-Virginians—even in rural areas—overwhelmingly chose domestic livestock for their meat protein (see also Miller 1984:191-192).<sup>7</sup> Further research is needed, however, to account for the

diets of poor whites, who may have had different subsistence practices that were perhaps more comparable to that of enslaved Virginians.

One of the more potent images of slave foodways is that of "pig's feet and chitlins" (the large intestines of the pig), even though during the eighteenth century, as previously stated, enslaved Virginians used various parts, including the meatiest portions. Although faunal research on later nineteenth-century slave-related sites in Virginia has yet to be done, it is probably safe to say that enslaved Virginians (especially on larger plantations) continued to receive whole animals as rations. This appeared to be the case in the Deep South on larger plantation holdings (Hilliard 1988:323; Jenkins 1999). In contrast, historical and archaeological sources demonstrate that by the end of the eighteenth century Anglo-Virginians were no longer consuming livestock head and feet.<sup>8</sup>

Following a trend that began in continental Europe, meat cuts were increasingly butchered and prepared so that by the nineteenth century, any telling evidence of an animal's original features were discarded by whites as waste (Yentsch 1994:234-235).<sup>9</sup> Market prices, which at first reflected age and species preference, eventually ranked body parts by price (Yentsch 1994:234-235). If slave owners fell under the influence of this foodways trend, the choicest meat cuts would likely have been saved for whites and the rest doled out to the enslaved population rather than tossed as refuse.

The foodways of enslaved Virginians contrasted with that of Anglo-Virginians by the later eighteenth century along at least two lines: wild game and fish were actively sought to supplement and add variety to their diets, and all of the elements from livestock continued to be incorporated. Marrinda Jane Singleton (Perdue et al. 1976:266), once enslaved in Norfolk, remarked of pigs, "You know, dar wasn't much to throw 'way 'cause you, ain't you never stopped to think 'bout hit? Kin use nearly every findin' in de hog, even what you find in de intels, dey use now dese new days for fertilizer." Fatback or bacon was added to vegetable greens for flavor and "substance" (Mitchell 1993:18). The less meatier cuts such as ham hocks and pig's feet were boiled, as they are now, until the meat was tender and falling off the bone.

Such foodway strategies were certainly in part due to economic deprivation, but not entirely. Ex-slave testimonies tell of the satisfaction in hunting and fishing, and the enjoyment in consuming the catch. Remarked one individual, "Oh! I was fond of 'possums, sprinkled with butter and pepper and baked down 'till de gravy was good and brown" (Killion and Waller 1973:79; see also White 1985:155-156). Further, oral recipes for "pig's feet," ham hocks, and chitterlings (or chitlins) were passed down and have come to be synonymous with southern cooking. Yet if foodways served as a cultural signifier for enslaved colonial Virginians, its symbolism worked both ways. Whites living within plantation societies were familiar with the

eating habits of enslaved blacks. In their efforts to sustain domination, whites vilified black cultural traditions such as foodways by concocting stereotypes to perpetuate ideas regarding black inferiority and difference.

#### RACED FOODS AND RACIST STEREOTYPES

Foodways signal identity, and are used both to highlight difference and delineate group boundaries (Brown and Mussell 1984b; Mintz 1996; Thomas 2000; Walker 2000; Zafar 1999). For colonial Virginia, perceived notions of racial difference were manifested in how Anglo-Virginians conceptualized certain foods. For example, although Virginian colonists consumed fish, it was considered a mark of poverty in the Chesapeake (Noël Hume 1978:26-30; see also Randolph 1993:19), as well as in New England (Joanne Bowen, pers. comm.). Fish was commonly provisioned as a cheap and plentiful food source and was considered "slave food" (Atkins 1994; McKee 1999:224-226). Thomas Jefferson thought a diet of sheep, "diversified with rations of salted fish and molasses, both of them wholesome, agreeable and cheap articles of food," an enlightened alternative to corn and pork (Moore 1989:73). In Tidewater Virginia, the low price of fish (Walsh et al. 1997:95) and the decline in its consumption by white households toward the end of the eighteenth century (Miller 1988:190-191) may be related to its centrality in the diet of enslaved blacks. Whites had undoubtedly established the connection between fish and "blackness" given the role of enslaved blacks as major players in the selling of fish and oysters in Virginia markets (Walsh et al. 1997:88-91). Paul Mullins's (1999a) research on race and consumerism in nineteenth-century Annapolis confirms the racialization of fish consumption for parts of the Chesapeake. He states, "Among the most stigmatized of household-based consumption patterns was fishing. Many White writers reduced fishing to the archetypal diversion of lazy and content Black people" (Mullins 1999a:118).

The "fried chicken" comment made by

Fuzzy Zoeller after Tiger Woods won the Masters' reveals another historically racialized meal. Enslaved blacks were adept not only in catching fish, but also in raising domestic fowl. John Hatley Norton's inventory of his Virginian estate (c. 1782-1784; from Mullin 1972:49) reads:

Fowls in the care of Old Betty:  
 10 guse, 6 fatning for Mrs. Norton's use  
 5 Turkies for breeding  
 3 fatning for Mrs. Norton  
 5 Dungle hens  
 8 ducks

Unlike Norton's inventory, Ludwell's fails to mention domestic fowl along with other livestock, although archaeological evidence indicates they were raised on the property. This omission reveals that the fowl were considered the property of the enslaved household. As with fish, a wide variety of fowl were sold at Chesapeake markets, mainly by black women (Walsh et al. 1997:89). In Annapolis, white women dominated the sale of chicken and eggs until the late eighteenth century, when blacks assumed the role (Yentsch 1994:203-204). With this transition, the price of chicken decreased considerably.

These examples show that enslaved individuals were quite self-sufficient and actively created opportunities to provide for themselves and their families through judicious strategizing. For the enslaved, "leisure time" or "day off" is probably a misnomer, as they also labored during this time to produce foodstuffs that were then sold or bartered at local markets. In Virginia, their overwhelming presence on market days was so disturbing to white authorities that statutes were adopted to both curb and regulate their market activities (Walsh et al. 1997:89). In defiance, enslaved Virginians kept selling, and whites kept buying because such trade had become too important to the local economy. Likewise, hunting and fishing were often accomplished by "stealing away" from the slave quarter without the overseer's or slave owner's permission. Such actions were direct challenges to white domination. For whites, the prevailing image of the black hawker sell-

ing fish and fowl stirred and fueled sentiments of racial difference, which manifested themselves in racial stereotypes regarding black foodways. That degrading representations of blacks eating watermelon and fried chicken persist in the minds of white Americans underscores the symbolic power of foodways in projecting our notions of race, culture, and identity (see also Kalcik 1984: 51-52; Zafar 1999).

RECLAIMING THE ARTS:  
 THE AFRICAN AMERICAN ROOTS  
 OF SOUTHERN FOODWAYS

During my undergraduate years in Alabama, nostalgically referred to as the "Heart of Dixie" on its license plates, I could often smell cornbread baking in an iron skillet, greens simmering in a pot with bacon fat, and an assortment of other foods stewing or frying on the stovetop of the house I shared with three other women. Foods I had always associated with a black heritage were being prepared and consumed by one of my white female roommates with regularity and surprising finesse. My "black sensibilities" and, until then, uncontested beliefs that only African Americans privileged these dishes were suddenly challenged. Where was the "soul" in "soul food" if whites ate ham hocks and collard greens too? Having largely been raised in California, the only people I ever witnessed cooking chitlins were black, and not necessarily raised in the South. (I did at least know from my own family relations that "soul food" did originate in the South.) Soul food restaurants such as Mama's Home Cooking in my own hometown were both black-owned and serviced a black clientele. Yet my roommate's response to my puzzlement was simply that she had grown up in Selma eating this stuff too, and that it was simply what southern folks ate. Since then, I have come to better understand the ties between traditional African American cooking and southern foodways from my years spent in Alabama, Georgia, and Virginia. Likewise, as scholars and African American culinary experts (both the academic and nonacademic) have observed, the foodways of enslaved

blacks provided the roots for much of what we refer to as southern cuisine (Beoku-Betts 1994; Genovese 1972:543; Hall 1991; Harris 1989, 2001; Hess 1992:xiv; Mitchell 1993; Moore 1989; Smart-Grosvenor 1992; Walker 2000). I proceed with my tentative interpretations about when and how this development may have occurred.

In Sam Hilliard's (1988) study of foodways in the antebellum Deep South (Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama), he concludes that enslaved blacks and whites, in particular poor whites, shared similar diets. Stewed greens, cornbread, roasted opossum, baked sweet potatoes, wild game and pork characterized white diets as well as black. He concludes that for the most part, enslaved blacks assimilated white foodways: "Having the same basic foods with which to work and living under the close supervision of white masters, it was almost inevitable that slaves would develop similar cooking methods" (Hilliard 1988:324). Yet a counterargument can be leveled using the interpretations of enslaved Virginian foodways above. As early as the colonial period, enslaved Virginians baked potatoes, roasted game, relied heavily on pork, and raised vegetable greens in their garden plots. One-pot meals were the normal fare along with ash cakes, which were essentially the antecedents for greens cooked with pork and served with cornbread. So how did the foodways of the Upper South come to influence that of the Deep South? Considering the forced migration of slaves from Virginia to the Cotton Belt may help to resolve this query.

Unlike the plantations of Virginia and South Carolina (Morgan 1998), which grew tobacco and rice, plantations in Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama centered on cotton cultivation (Vlach 1991:33-37). America did not become a major exporter of cotton until the invention of the cotton gin in 1793. The gin separated seeds from the fiber, replacing the slow and tedious method previously done by hand. As would-be planters eagerly sought their fortunes in cotton, the demand for slave labor dramatically rose. In 1808, however, the U.S. ban of the Atlantic slave trade forced

plantation owners to look elsewhere for enslaved labor. One major source was Virginia, where the peak of tobacco planting reached its height during the eighteenth century and then fell. Soils were exhausted by the nineteenth century, and as large plantation holdings folded, the need for enslaved labor diminished. Thousands of enslaved Virginians were sold south. As ex-slave Lorenzo L. Ivy (Perdue et al. 1976:153) remembered, "Dey sol' slaves heah an everywhere. I've seen droves of Negroes brought in heah on foot goin' Souf to be sol.'" In re-creating their worlds, these displaced individuals formed new families and social networks, and learned the language of cotton planting. They also shared their cultural knowledge within these fledgling plantation communities, thereby spreading the influence of Afro-Virginian foodways to the Cotton Belt. Again, factors such as the surrounding environment, plantation rations, and the influx of diverse European immigrant groups also tempered the form of emergent foodways. Nonetheless, the omnipresence of enslaved blacks in the Deep South and their frequent interactions with whites facilitated their impact on southern foodways even within the "big house."

The enslaved black woman chef's sphere of influence within the plantation kitchen provided opportune moments to control food preparation and thus the menu. Slave-owning families, at least to some extent, consumed victuals routinely eaten within the slave quarter (Moore 1989:81). Furthermore, white mistresses probably learned a thing or two about black food preparation while supervising domestic work. As a consequence, they left indelible evidence of their appropriation of black recipes in at least one early cookbook.

Mary Randolph published Virginia's first cookbook in 1824 (Randolph 1993). No ordinary woman, Randolph was born to a prominent slave-owning family at Tuckahoe Plantation in 1762. Randolph's marriage to a wealthy tobacco planter brought her to Moldavia mansion along the James River, where her husband owned forty enslaved blacks. The recipes in her cookbook suggest that

some credit for Randolph's culinary experience and expertise is due her enslaved cooks. Take, for instance, her instructions for preparing "ochra soup" (okra is indigenous to Africa; Randolph 1993:17-18): "Get... young ochra...put it into a gallon of water...in an earthen pipkin, or very nice iron pot; it must be kept steadily simmering, but not boiling...add three young cimlins [squash], a fowl, or knuckle of veal, a bit of bacon or pork that has been boiled, and six tomatos.... Have rice boiled to eat with it." Randolph provides a litany of recipes for preparing every kind of dish, including meals that bear more than just a passing similarity to the foods of enslaved blacks. She succeeds in erasing the connection by her failure to mention it. Given the racial climate of the time, and the extreme rarity of early African American cookbooks (Harris 2001; Zafar 1999:451), black knowledge claims of southern culinary traditions could easily be dismissed. Meanwhile, the overwhelmingly popular *The Virginia Housewife or, Methodical Cook* was reprinted up until 1860.

 Racial categories as social constructs must continually be reinvented in order to serve the purpose of maintaining structural inequality. The use of racial stereotypes is instrumental in defining difference, and works at both conscious and unconscious levels as "ideological justifications" for white privilege and black subjugation (Collins 1991:65). Their power of persuasion is undeniable. Offensive racial stereotypes implicating black cultural practices such as foodways, however, did not deter whites from absorbing and re-creating black culinary innovations. Nor did their appropriation of black cultural forms compel them to relinquish white racial ideology. Witness the immortalized "Mammy" figure imposed upon black women cooks who "ruled the back rooms with simpleminded power" and "could work culinary miracles day in and day out, but couldn't for the life of them tell anyone how they did it. Their most impressive dishes were described as 'accidental' rather than planned" (Egerton 1993 as cited in Zafar 1999:449). As Rafia Zafar (1999:449) observes, "These buffoonish characters

were the fictive counterparts of legions of unknown culinary workers, African Americans whose legacy and labor shaped much of what we eat to this day" (see also Collins 1991:67-90; hooks 1981:84-85; Combahee River Collective 1982; White 1985:46-61).

#### CONCLUSION:

##### THE BLACK IN BLACK-EYED PEAS

The mass exodus of African Americans during the Great Migrations of the first half of the twentieth century brought thousands from the rural South to cities in the north and west. Although blacks were unable to raise fowl or livestock or keep gardens in urban areas, grocery store purchases were still transformed into meals remembered from home. Outside of the South, soul food eateries still thrive in black neighborhoods. Importantly, their expertise of southern foodways continues to be passed down to younger generations (Medearis 1997; Pinderhughes 1990; Smart-Grosvenor 1992; Smith 1991; Walker 2000; Zafar 1999), although most of us do not rely solely on traditional African American fare, nor necessarily possess the ability to prepare it. Yet for many, black-derived foodways outside of a southern context serve foremost as a signifier of blackness and of cultural identity and heritage. That is, contemporary African Americans also racialize foodways and use them to authenticate and realize black identity. Cultural practices are often strategically essentialized by blacks as a means of establishing common ground and to acknowledge and broadcast a collective identity. Thus, what are perceived as traditional black foods are often served at family reunions, during special occasions such as Kwanzaa, and within the public realm at African American cultural and social events. Foodways are highly charged with meaning and, in turn, possess profound symbolic dimensions. For instance, black-eyed peas (or cowpeas, indigenous to Africa) are still cooked and consumed in black households from California to New York on New Year's to ensure good luck in the coming year. While white Southerners are also known to partake in this ritual, one can simply point to this practice

throughout the Afro-Caribbean as evidence for its African diasporic roots (Thomas 2000; Walker 2000).

In tracing the lineage of black foodways, one will discover regional differences and other characteristic nuances that challenge the notion of a unified African American culinary tradition. My objective, however, was not to provide a definitive statement on black foodways. Instead, I have attempted to demonstrate how race and enslavement served as the catalysts for group identity formation amongst enslaved Virginians, and that this process could be interpreted using archaeological evidence. Foodways seemed a promising candidate for the obvious reasons that food-related remains are common on slave-associated sites, and excavated materials from Rich Neck provided a case study where faunal data could be compared over time. Further, foodways are steeped in symbolism and are customarily used to project group identity and to reinforce boundaries of socially constructed differences (Brown and Mussell 1984b; Kalcik 1984:46). From the evidence considered, I have argued that by the end of the century, the mostly creole enslaved Virginian population possessed kinship ties with generational depth and enacted a group identity forged within a diasporic context as they struggled to survive. Their creation of a novel foodways system illustrates their ability to pool knowledge and resources, and to develop strategies for assuring some level of autonomy in their lives. It was perhaps an unintended consequence of racialization and enslavement that these should in turn serve Afro-Virginians as mobilizing forces for negotiating race and culture, and implementing their own within-group construct of identity.

#### Notes

I would like to thank Chuck Orser for taking the initiative to compose a volume on race and archaeology; it is direly needed, and I am grateful to be a part of this groundbreaking project. I must also extend my deepest appreciation to Elizabeth Scott, who provided an intensive and constructive critique of my very rough first draft. Each author who has contributed to this volume also voiced extremely useful and encouraging feedback in a

roundtable discussion. I would especially like to thank Bob Paynter, Laurie Wilkie, Terry Epperson, Jim Skibo, and an anonymous reviewer. Their insights and comments are reflected in what I hope is a stronger piece of scholarship. This research was possible through the generosity of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Department of Archaeological Research, and the cooperation and support of Marley R. Brown III, Anna Agbe-Davies, and Ywone Edwards-Ingram. Finally, and importantly, my interpretations are based on the rigorous analysis of faunal and botanical materials by my colleagues Joanne Bowen, Steve Atkins, Leslie Driscoll, and Steve Mrozowski. Any errors and missed opportunities here are, of course, due to my own shortcomings.

1. There have been recent attempts to redefine the concept of the African diaspora by recognizing both historic migrations within the continent of Africa (e.g., Larson 1999) and contemporary African immigration to the United States, Europe, and other parts of the globe (e.g., Pierre 1999).
2. The subject of Chesapeake pipes (commonly found on seventeenth-century Tidewater sites) and who was responsible for creating them is one exception, but there are currently competing interpretations as to whether Africans may have been involved (Deetz 1993; Emerson 1994; Mouer et al. 1999). Research regarding the transformation of architecture and space as a result of the construction of racial difference and slavery is the remaining example (Epperson this volume; Epperson 1999).
3. The birth dates for these five individuals fall roughly between 1697 and 1707, when Africans began to enter the colony in large numbers. More than likely, these individuals arrived as young adults.
4. Both stewing (in pottery vessels) and baking were food preparation methods used also by the Powhatan Indians (Roundtree 1989: 50-53). As the English colonists learned how to cultivate and prepare maize, fish, and hunt native fauna from the Powhatan (Roundtree 1989), their potential influence on enslaved foodways should be considered. The Powhatans' subsistence skills may have entered the slave quarter indirectly through Virginian colonists, or directly from interactions between blacks and Indians, some of whom were enslaved. Indians certainly were still present in the Williamsburg area during the eighteenth century (Kern 1999), but more research is needed regarding the nature of their interactions with enslaved Afro-Virginians. However, it must be kept in mind that enslaved Africans did arrive in Virginia possessing these skills.
5. Opossum may have been overexploited by enslaved Virginians, resulting in their decline.

However, I have not come upon any sources that indicate this.

6. Although the authors note that urban and rural households did not rely heavily on wild species during the eighteenth century, their calculations were made by including several enslaved sites (including the Rich Neck slave quarter) with a larger number of Anglo-Virginian sites of varying socioeconomic status. Their objective was to compare rural to urban sites, and not enslaved blacks to white colonists. Using the data compiled from a range of faunal assemblages (see Walsh et al. 1997:223-277), I have specifically selected
7. Anglo sites to compare with enslaved sites.
7. Walsh et al. (1997) do not cite which specific wild species were recovered from the six Anglo-Virginian sites.
8. Elizabeth Scott's (1998) study of a nineteenth-century Louisiana plantation suggests that this may be a distinctly Anglo practice, as French planters were discovered to consume more pig's head and feet than their enslaved Africans.
9. The exceptions include the heads of hogs and calves (e.g., Randolph 1993), but these were served on holidays such as Christmas and were not everyday fare.